

## THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the London Heliport Consultative Group held at the Town Hall, Wandsworth, SW18 2PU on Thursday, 20th October 2016 at 7.00 pm

### PRESENT

#### Chairman

Councillor Torrington (Wandsworth Borough Council)

#### Residents' representatives

David Brown (Battersea Reach Residents' Association – LB Wandsworth)  
Christina Smyth (LB Hammersmith and Fulham)

#### Local Authority representatives

Councillor Condon-Simmonds (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)  
Councillor Belton (Wandsworth Borough Council)

#### Users' representatives

Capt Michael Hampton (Capital Air Services)  
Capt John Roberts (National Police Air Service)

#### Observers, advisers and officers

Simon Hutchins (The London Heliport)  
Martin Newton (Wandsworth Borough Council)  
Craig Raybould (Planning Enforcement - Wandsworth Borough Council)  
Dr Stephen Dance (London South Bank University)

3 residents were also present.

#### Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Culhane (Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council), Capt Ian Field and Ms Humphrey Jones.

Colin Stanbury (Wandsworth Borough Council) and Guy Denington (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)

#### Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, particularly those attending the Group for the first time, and everybody present introduced themselves.

## Minutes - 16th May 2016

On item 1(a), it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May be confirmed and signed as correct.

The minutes were thereupon signed by the Chairman.

On item 1(b), no further matters were raised.

### Monitoring of Helicopter Noise Levels

The Group noted that item 2 would be discussed concurrently with item 5 later on the agenda.

### Information on Helicopter Movements

On item 3, the Chairman asked Simon Hutchins whether the heliport could provide a breakdown of movement numbers into specific categories for future LHCG meetings to expand on the information currently reported to the Group. She asked that this information identify the number of movements for sightseeing trips, the police, air ambulance, military, other commercial flights, private flights, etc.

Simon Hutchins said that a more comprehensive list is sent to the CAA that covers private, military, police and local flights (which includes the sightseeing movements) and he undertook to take the LHCG's request for more detailed information at future meetings to the next meeting of the Heliport Board.

Discussion ensued and Dr Dance and Councillor Belton asked why the current quarterly movement breakdown was in specific half-hour to two-hour time slots covering 0700 to 0800 and then 1800 to 2300, whereas the majority of movements in a day were reported in one extended time block of 0800 to 1800. The Secretary said that the current reporting method to the Group followed that which was agreed when the LHCG was established in 2006/7. The Chairman then asked why the movement figures sometimes showed different numbers of arrival and departure movements and Simon Hutchins confirmed that these differences related to time periods that were not identical. Debate continued on the emergency services' use of the heliport and Simon Hutchins said that these flights were relatively small in number related to the overall total. This point was reinforced by Capt. John Roberts who said that the police use of the heliport is currently at its lowest in the 17 years that he has been involved.

### Noise Complaints

On item 4, the Chairman raised the issue of helicopters 'orbiting' due to not being able to land at busy times and causing noise and disturbance. Simon Hutchins said that helicopters had time slots for landing and that it was not usually necessary for aircraft using the heliport to be 'managed' by air traffic control in this way other than to ease congestion during special circumstances such as a large sporting event that increased normal traffic.

Christina Smyth then referred to the increases in heliport movements and Simon Hutchins confirmed that the heliport had benefited from a general increase in overall

business, about 50% of which related to sightseeing flights (classified as local flights). The Group noted that another example of an increase in business related to flights for aerial photography.

### LHCG Sub-Group

On item 5, and also with reference to item 2, the Chairman referred to the timing options for undertaking the proposed noise study. Dr Dance said that a 6 month period should be used for the monitoring to ensure enough of the year was covered to be indicative of the usual situation with movements. He suggested March / April onwards would be preferable and reaffirmed that a number of locations would be required for noise sampling, along with a controlled position at the heliport itself as close as possible to the site of the previous monitoring equipment to provide for the best analysis of historic and new data. In response to a question from the Chairman, Simon Hutchins confirmed that consent had been given for the release of the historical data collected by the previous on-site monitoring and undertook to discuss with the Heliport Board the request for reinstatement of the noise monitoring equipment at the heliport and a financial contribution toward the overall noise study.

Discussion continued and the Group noted the contents of Papers D and E. with regard to the restrictions on 1,500 movements (out of the 12,000 annual limit) for helicopters not able to comply with the local noise standard of 81dB(A) at 150m distance from the take-off position, Craig Raybould confirmed that the section 106 legal agreement that relates to the heliport's planning permission therefore provides some theoretical limit on the numbers of the noisiest helicopter types. The Chairman said that the noise study would provide opportunity for monitoring to ensure these necessary restrictions are in force. Capt. John Roberts then raised the question of the CAA noise certificates for each helicopter make and Dr Dance told the meeting that the aircraft's noise impact would be greater in a built-up area and therefore above the certificated level. Dr Dance also confirmed that the intention is to make the results of the noise study publicly available after completion.

The Group continued to debate the noise study and Councillor Condon-Simmonds said that she understood that Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea may be reluctant to contribute toward the study and the Secretary said that he would contact officers to confirm funding arrangements after the meeting.

Christina Smyth then referred again to the helpful information in Paper D. She asked whether the marked residential change in the area surrounding the heliport compared to when the heliport first opened enabled a reconsideration of the planning permission that the site operated under. Craig Raybould confirmed that it would not be possible for any retrospective consideration of the permission even though the nature of the surrounding area may have changed and that only a new application by the heliport (to vary the current permission for instance) would be able to be assessed in terms of the current residential position. This point was accepted by the Group.

Consideration then turned to Papers F and G and Christina Smyth referred to the potential health issue associated with over exposure to helicopter noise and the recommendations in paragraphs 10 and 11 of Paper F. She suggested that contact be made with the Aviation Environment Federation who may be able to assist in supporting research by the Group and to help in taking forward any policy

recommendations to Government. Christina Smyth said that aviation is virtually above the law as far as noise and pollution are concerned. Her view was that, as the Secretary of State had designated Heathrow Airport for aircraft noise and vibration controls under section 78 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, a similar request for the heliport's designation should be explored.

The Chairman thanked Christina Smyth for producing her interesting papers. The Group acknowledged the Chairman's comment that the LHCG's remit on wider aviation policy issues was limited and that lobbying of Government on these matters needed to be conducted on a 'larger platform'. Discussion continued and Councillor Condon-Simmonds said that the weight of the Mayor of London and MPs would be necessary. Christina Smyth agreed that the Mayor's involvement would be a positive step. The matter of air quality was then raised and, in response to a question from the Chairman, Dr Dance told the meeting that it was difficult to measure volatiles as specific equipment is required

Debate continued and Christina Smyth and Councillor Belton asked about the heliport's designation under section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982. The Secretary confirmed that the LHCG has lobbied the Department for Transport on a number of occasions in the past, most recently at the beginning of 2014 as part of the Group's response to DfT consultation on guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees. The LHCG's request for section 35 designation in 2014 was also supported in writing by the Leaders of Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham and Wandsworth Councils, along with the riparian MPs from those boroughs. The DfT's later response to this request said that it intended to 'scope out' the work involved in updating the list of designated airports, which would include the possibility of adding new ones to the list such as London Heliport, but that there was no timeline for the process at that stage, pending consideration of the necessary steps that would need to be taken. With the agreement of the Group, the Secretary undertook to contact the DfT again on this issue.

As discussion on this item started to draw to a conclusion, Christina Smyth said that she would like to see more people able to put time into these important issues and to be more ambitious about achieving better outcomes for residents, and the Chairman put forward the view that pressing ahead with the noise survey would be an important start. Councillor Belton agreed that it would be important to ensure this 'homework' was done first.

### Use of Heli-Lanes by the USAF

On item 6, the Group discussed an issue raised on behalf of Tim Fauchon (British Helicopter Association).

Capt. John Roberts said that there was nothing to stop the USAF from using the heli-lanes and Simon Hutchins confirmed that any USAF flights would be traffic control co-ordinated / separated with the heliport's flights. The Group noted Capt. Roberts comment that the usual flight statistics from the CAA may not include figures for USAF flights. In response to a question from Councillor Condon-Simmonds, Simon Hutchins also informed the meeting that he was unaware of the destinations of the military chinook helicopters that pass over the area.

Debate continued and in response to a comment from Christina Smyth about impact on residential amenity of additional flights using heli-lanes, Capt. Roberts made the point that these lanes were over the least populated areas, whilst acknowledging that twin-engine helicopters were permitted to fly away from these routes. Christina Smyth then raised the question of whether such flights would be included for consideration as part of a future flight path review.

### Any Other Business

On item 7, the following matters were raised:-

- (a) The Group noted Councillor Condon-Simmonds' concern regarding the influence of the LHCG and members debated the value of the Group and its successes to date.
- (b) Simon Hutchins undertook to investigate recent concerns raised by a resident of Altura Tower, and brought to the meeting's attention by David Brown, regarding rotors running, landing floodlights, fuel supply tankers present at the same time as helicopter refuelling, etc.

Capt. Roberts confirmed that the police and air ambulance are aware of the inconvenience that their operations may sometimes bring and said that engagement with the public (for instance the 'twitter' account 'mpsinthesky') was reflective of the services' very real attempt to explain and reassure the public about what they were doing and why. He said that the services always tried to operate as high in the sky as possible in order to minimise disruption on the ground. Capt. Hampton also explained to the Group that the policy of heliport users was to keep noise and disturbance to a minimum with engines turned off / take-offs accomplished as soon as possible. He also confirmed that he was aware of the intention of helicopter manufacturers to build quieter aircraft.

### Date of Next Meeting

On item 8, the Group agreed to meet again on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 at 7pm at Wandsworth Town Hall.

The meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.