

## THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of The London Heliport Consultative Group held at the Town Hall, Wandsworth, SW18 2PU on Monday, 7th July 2014 at 7 p.m.

### PRESENT

#### Residents' representatives

Mr Seth Stiles

#### Local Authority representatives

Councillor Condon-Simmonds (In the chair)

Councillor Torrington

Councillor Speck

#### Users' representatives

Capt Ian Field

Capt Michael Hampton

#### Observers, advisers and officers

Mr Simon Hutchins (The London Heliport)

Mr Colin Stanbury (Wandsworth Borough Council)

Mr Martin Newton (Wandsworth Borough Council)

#### Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Culhane, David Brown and Eryl Humphrey Jones.

#### Minutes - 25th November 2013

On item 1, the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013 were confirmed and signed as correct.

There were no matters arising.

#### Monitoring of Helicopter Noise Levels

On item 2, Colin Stanbury informed the Group that he had continued discussions with Dr Dance following the last meeting in November and could confirm that appropriate equipment (black box, casing with microphone at the top) had been secured for the noise monitoring previously referred to. He said that Dr Dance was keen to commence the monitoring at the heliport in the old control tower area initially for 6 months to a year to ratify previous noise measurements that had been taken. The intention would then be to take noise measurements in areas further away from

the heliport. Simon Hutchins confirmed that previous monitoring data was still available and undertook to consult with the heliport owners on this proposal and to report back.

Councillor Torrington put forward the view that any further monitoring would work to the heliport's advantage in providing reassurance to residents that the potential for noise disturbance is taken seriously. Simon Hutchins said that the heliport felt that this concern for the locality had already been demonstrated by the previous monitoring carried out over a 6/7 year period and that this monitoring had provided data that had not been questioned.

Colin Stanbury confirmed that the cost of the monitoring would be negligible consisting of electricity to power the equipment and the heliport's time for collecting the information.

#### Information on Helicopter Movements

On item 3, Simon Hutchins updated the Group on helicopter movements for quarters 4 of 2013 and 1 of 2014 and members noted the general improvement in movement figures with the majority of movements continuing to occur between 0800 and 1800. In response to a question from Councillor Speck, Simon Hutchins confirmed that there was little if any impact on movements associated with the greater number of construction cranes in the Wandsworth and Nine Elms areas.

#### Noise Complaints

On item 4, members received Simon Hutchins' update on complaints received over quarters 4 of 2013 and 1 of 2014. In response to a question from Councillor Torrington, Simon Hutchins confirmed that no complaints had been received relating to the sightseeing trips from the heliport.

#### Residents' Concerns - Altura Tower

On item 5, the Group considered the details of concerns raised by the resident of Altura Tower and noted the response sent by Simon Hutchins and the further comments then submitted by the resident (set out below).

***From:***

***Sent:*** 07 July 2014 00:06

***To:*** Newton, Martin

***Cc:*** Seth Stiles; Simon Hutchins;

***Subject:*** Fwd: London Heliport Consultative Group (LHCG) - 7th July 2014

*Dear Mr Newton,*

*Unfortunately, we will be unable to attend as "observers" your consultative meeting on 7th July as we will be out of London. We would appreciate if our comments below are taken into consideration in support of our previous submission through Mr Seth Stiles.*

*As you can see from Mr Hutchins' comments of 4th July, the normal excuses regarding noise and rotor running times have been given as in your previous meetings. It is understandable that if many helicopters are trying to take off / land at the same time the ground crew seem to be losing "control". Again, we fail to understand why identical helicopters "operate" differently and we can only attribute it to either inexperienced/not caring ground crew or pilots (especially those on foreign registered helicopters like DU-140).*

*Although we know about the "special events" dates, not all of the residents may be aware of what these are, apart from the obvious ones like Farnborough Air Show, Formula 1 race, etc. As a matter of good neighbourhood practice and/or politeness, a yearly calendar of the predetermined "special events" should be distributed to Bridges Wharf so the residents can then decide either to stay and bear the noise or go away for a few days.*

*Mr Hutchins mentions that the "five minutes period" has been an arbitrary rule of thumb. Yes, the Heliport has been operating for many years (we have lived in Battersea for the last 30 years, for 20 years of which we have lived very close to the Heliport).*

*The demographic profile of Battersea and specifically of Bridges Wharf / Prices Candles Apartments / Oyster Wharf has changed dramatically from an industrial site to nearly a 100% residential one. Whatever "criteria" were acceptable in 2000 may not be acceptable now.*

*Noise and environmental pollution have come to the forefront of our lives and their adverse effects should be seriously re-considered by Wandsworth Borough Council and appropriate steps taken.*

*Your consideration will be much appreciated.*

*Kind Regards*

**From:** Simon Hutchins

**Subject:** RE: London Heliport Consultative Group (LHCG)

**Date:** 4 July 2014 16:21:54 BST

**To**

**Cc:** Seth Stiles, "Newton, Martin" <[MNewton@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:MNewton@wandsworth.gov.uk)>

*The five minute turnaround time is a rule of thumb indication of what we aim to achieve with rotors-running turnaround of aircraft whether from arrival to shut-down, arrival to departure or start-up to departure. The majority of the time we do achieve well within this value.*

*Our overall aim is always to minimise the noise generated, without unnecessary engine ground running. To shut the aircraft down on many occasions when it is not necessary may actually result overall in the aircraft to be engines-running on the ground longer than it would otherwise need to. The noise generated therefore would be greater.*

*However there may be occasions, due to delays in ATC clearances including obstructing traffic away from the heliport (e.g. police or air ambulance flights which have higher priority than our own largely private or commercial traffic) and sometimes technical or safety reasons why aircraft may be running longer than we would normally wish.*

*Goodwood has not been one of our previously notified "special" events when significantly higher levels of traffic are expected. Last Saturday in particular was a one-off large booking for this event which was specifically planned in co-ordination with the helicopter operators providing aircraft for this bulk-booking. The arrival and boarding of passengers did proceed as planned, apart from one unscheduled arrival not related to these flights which did temporarily upset the turnaround of other adjacent slots, hence the length of time to it took to depart a couple of the aircraft at that time.*

*Please note that this weekend we have a large volume of flights associated with the British F1 Grand Prix on Saturday and Sunday, morning and afternoon, in particular on Sunday which is race-day. Similarly, though not currently to the same degree, we have a high volume of demand for slots in the mornings and afternoons of the first few days of The Farnborough Airshow, week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> July.*

*After Farnborough week our peak of summer demand is normally over as the quieter holiday season begins.*

*With reference to other concerns you have raised previously about heliport operations I note these are contained in the agenda items for the LHCG meeting on Monday evening so I will have the opportunity to address these at suitable length then.*

*Kind Regards*

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**From:**

**Sent:** 28 June 2014 13:17

**To:** [mnewton@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:mnewton@wandsworth.gov.uk)

**Cc:** Seth Stiles; Simon Hutchins

**Subject:** Fwd: London Heliport Consultative Group (LHCG)

*Without Prejudice*

*Dear Mr Newton,*

*Thank you very much for you advising us on the LHCG's forthcoming meeting.*

*However, we would like to strongly protest and complain at today's (Saturday, 28th June) helicopters' operations. Although, the number of flights were below to what has been allegedly agreed, the rotors operating time for nearly all the civilian helicopters was in excess of five minutes, even up to 15 minutes + on occasions. A list of helicopters' registration numbers and times may be supplied if needed.*

*We contacted London's Heliport to complain. We were advised that the increased number of flights was due to the Goodwood Festival of Speed.*

*This extended rotor operating times combined with the unprecedented number of flights within such a short time interval made the noise situation unbearable. It would appear that ground control crew were not able to handle so many flights in such a short time.*

*Surprisingly, during the Royal flight operations later on the Royal helicopter's rotors were kept running for less than two minutes.*

*Kind Regards"*

Simon Hutchins commented that noise and odour concerns, particularly relating to the complaint regarding the air ambulance are sometimes a matter of perception as they affect different people to a different degree. On the positions of helicopters he said that the heliport had 2 stands, one which is next to Altura Tower and one which is next to Falcon Wharf, and that it would not be possible to always for instance use the stand next to Falcon Wharf. He confirmed that the refuelling is carried out nearer to Altura Tower and also said that he was unaware of why one helicopter should omit odour to a greater degree than another. Capt. Michael Hampton made the point that the helicopters used the same fuel and that he thought that exhaust fumes should be similar from one helicopter to the next. He also emphasised that as an operator he would want his aircraft to stay 'clean'.

Capt Ian Field suggested that the problem of exhaust fumes might be attributable to a quirk of coincidence as he was not aware of any great difference from craft to craft. He said that although some of the helicopters using the heliport would be 30 years old and some 3 years old but that all would be equally serviceable although newer models would be more fuel efficient. Capt. Hampton stressed that any older helicopters would be using re-conditioned engines rather than their original engines.

In response to a question from Colin Stanbury about whether rotas running during refuelling would increase omissions, Capt Field said that the helicopters engines would be idling and rotas would not be spinning fast and that this should not affect omissions. Simon Hutchins confirmed that engines were idling during the refuel which is limited to 200 litres and takes 2 or 3 minutes to complete. He explained that if a helicopter has arrived to pick up passengers that are not at the heliport then the engines would be shut down. If passengers were present then they would often board whilst the rotas were still running. He said that there would sometimes be a small delay whilst clearance was given for take-off but that the overall aim was always to keep noise generation to a minimum with a five minute turn-around aimed for.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Capt. Field confirmed that the ideal situation when picking up passengers is that they are ready when the helicopter arrives and the helicopter engines do not have to be turned off and then on again – he said that some passengers wanted the rotas to remain on but others were a little more cautious about walking under the revolving blades.

Colin Stanbury then asked a question about excessive fuel burn due to possible engine management faults and Capt. Field confirmed that if this happened a warning light would be displayed in the helicopter and it would be unable to fly until the reason for the warning light had been investigated. Councillor Speck raised the question of air quality monitoring and Colin Stanbury said that monitoring of this kind does not take place and could only be carried out by sophisticated equipment measuring on a long-term event-by-event basis.

Discussion continued and Simon Hutchins made the point that exhaust omissions are sometimes a little more noticeable with different wind direction or no wind at all and Capt. Field confirmed that a number of slack wind days have been in evidence recently that could have contributed to the problem identified. Simon Hutchins said that he had been onto the apron to try and detect the omission odours raised by the resident but had been unable to detect anything.

During further discussion, Simon Hutchins confirmed that the military helicopter identified by the resident on 11<sup>th</sup> June would be part of the next set of quarterly noise complaints reported to the LHCG. The helicopter arrived to collect military VIPs and resulted in 2 noise complaints one of which related to the helicopter manoeuvring. The complaint by the resident of Altura Tower related to time taken by the helicopter. The crew were told that they could not 'shut down' and the helicopter went away and then returned to collect the VIPs. A further delay was attributable to helmet distribution. Simon Hutchins said that the use of the heliport by a helicopter of this size was unusual (it was too large to taxi on the apron) and that it was 2/3 years since a similar sized helicopter landed there.

Capt. Hampton said that pilots of military helicopters were not 'drilled' in the same way as pilots of smaller helicopters using the heliport to try and minimise noise. Capt. Field further explained that the military pilots were used to flying at much lower altitudes. In response to a question regarding destination of the military helicopters often flying along the river, Simon Hutchins said that it was likely a number of them were en-route to Essex where military training ranges were situated.

Simon Hutchins went on to say that landing site guidance for military helicopters is soon to be re-published and circulated and that this would include instructions for air traffic control in relation to the helicopters joining air circulation and landing. During further discussion, Councillor Torrington put forward the view that the question of military helicopters operating at increased heights should be raised with the Ministry of Defence and she undertook to speak to Jane Ellison, MP about this. It was noted again that the US Embassy in Nine Elms did not include plans for a helipad.

#### Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees

On item 6, the Group noted the recently published and updated DfT Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees and the latest position on the LHCG's bid for the heliport to become a designated airport under section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

Colin Stanbury told members that he had visited the DfT, along with Steve Mayner, to discuss the issues and that the DfT had been interested in the success of the LHCG – he said that he would like to think that revisions to the guidelines were in part based on the LHCG 'model'. Possible future changes to update the list of

designated airports were to be considered by the Minister and hopefully the end result would be the inclusion of the heliport, the advantages of which would include far greater involvement in consultation on matters affecting the heliport.

### Any Other Business

On item 7, the following matters were raised:-

- (i) Colin Stanbury raised the question of the production of a 'hospitality event calendar' to raise greater awareness of the heliport's busy periods. Councillor Torrington put forward the view that appropriate residents' associations could be contacted to ensure they knew about these dates. Seth Stiles said that current information available to residents was helpful but incomplete and suggested that a more comprehensive list of days and events could be made available. Simon Hutchins said that these dates could be publicised via the heliport's website and information possibly made available to concierge services for onward transmission. The Chairman asked that consideration also be given to making this information readily available to Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham residents.
- (ii) Simon Hutchins referred to the changes in membership of the Group and said that the heliport would be happy to arrange a convenient time for new members, and also some local residents, to visit the heliport and be shown around. The secretary undertook to contact those appropriate to arrange a date or dates for this.

### Date of Next Meeting

On item 8, the Group agreed to meet again on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

The meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.