

Subject: Helicopter Noise Update

Report Number: 7

Report to: Environment Committee

Date: 18 November 2008

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the progress being made in implementing the recommendations set out in its 2006 report: *London in a spin – a review of helicopter noise*.
- 1.2 That the Committee approves a formal request for written updates from Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority on the next step for implementing the remaining recommendations.
- 1.3 That the Committee approves a formal request for information from *The London Heliport Consultative Group*, based in the London Borough of Wandsworth, on current issues and concerns.

2. Background

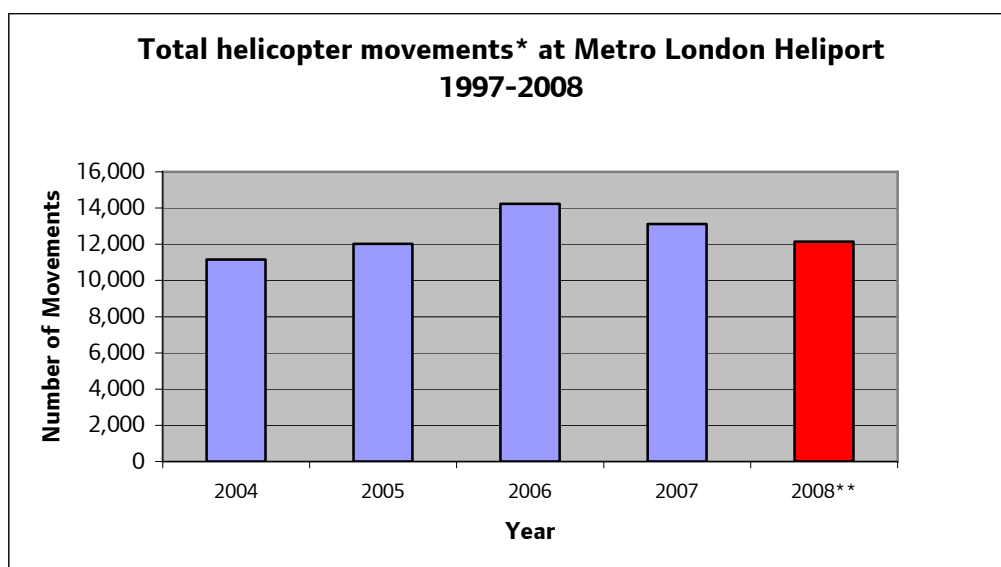
- 2.1 The Environment Committee produced its review of helicopter noise: *London in a spin – a review of helicopter noise*, in October 2006 and Members met with the then Transport Minister, Gillian Merron MP, in December to discuss the report and the recommendations. The Committee's review concentrated on flights into and out of London's only heliport at Battersea and flights over London by; commercial, civilian, military, and police and ambulance services. It was agreed that the Department for Transport (DfT) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) would undertake initial work on the two recommendations to improve helicopter noise data collection and make public complaints procedures clearer for the public¹. This would be followed by a further meeting to consider how best to take forward the remaining recommendations.
- 2.2 In November 2007, an update was submitted to the Environment Committee detailing the progress of the CAA and DfT regarding the delivery of the Committee's recommendations.
 - The CAA has completed its work on helicopter noise data and public complaints procedures. Since July 2007, the CAA has began publishing data on helicopter flights over London (within London and London City Control Zones (CTRs)) on its website at: <http://www.caa.co.uk/default.aspx?catid=1346>
 - The CAA had also published on its website clearer public complaints procedures regarding helicopter noise: <http://www.caa.co.uk/default.aspx?catid=1346&pagetype=90&pageid=8088>

¹ See Annex 1 for a full list of the Committee's recommendations

- The recommendation to establish a *Battersea Heliport Consultative Committee* was implemented last year by Wandsworth Council and Weston Aviation and several meetings have taken place between these organisations and some local residents. This group is still active.
- The Assembly's investigation was helpful in prompting commissioning of 'Research into the Improvement of the Management of Helicopter Noise' by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, now available on <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/noise/research/index.htm>.

3. Issues for consideration

- 3.1 The release of new monthly UK Airport Statistics records² has allowed us to update the statistics used in the 2006 report to show the trend up until 2008, shown below:



*Movements are a measure of Flights into and out of the Heliport

**Estimate for 2008

- 3.2 The Committee's 2006 report indicated that helicopter activity at Metro London Heliport at Battersea was steadily increasing, with a 7.65 per cent increase in activity between 2004 and 2005, and projections for 2006 showing a further 7 per cent rise from 2004. New data shows that the increase was in fact well above estimate, reaching a record figure of 14,225 movements for 2006 (up 21.54 per cent from 2004).
- 3.3 However, while helicopter activity from Metro London Heliport continued to rise at the beginning of 2007, in spring, activity went into decline, with the final two quarters showing activity levels similar to that of 2005. Subsequently, 2007 ended with a 7.7 per cent decline in helicopter activity from the previous year. This decline has continued into 2008, meaning that since 2006 there has been a sharp overall decline in helicopter activity at Metro London Heliport.
- 3.4 The new CAA data, which is also recorded daily, enables mapping of all the peaks and troughs throughout the year. With these statistics much clearer links can be illustrated between high-level activity and events such as: horse racing events at Ascot, Cheltenham and The Derby, the Formula One Grand Prix and Farnborough Air show. It should be noted however that residents are increasingly aware of these event-induced increases, and at the start of each year London Heliport has to publish details in advance of when these busy days will occur at www.londonheliport.co.uk

² <http://www.caa.co.uk/default.aspx?catid=80&pagetype=88&pageid=3&sglid=3>

Next steps

- 3.5 There appears to have been little further progress in implementing the Committee's recommendations since the 2007 update, and it may therefore be timely to seek a response from the CAA and DfT on possible next steps. For example, the establishment of a working group, as originally intended, to take forward the Committee's recommendations could be an important first step, preferably including officers from; the Department for Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority, NATS and the GLA.
- 3.6 A response could also be sought from other stakeholders to gauge what, if any, further steps they would wish to see taken. Given the London Heliport Consultative Group is still active, it would appear to offer the best avenue for an alternative perspective.
- 3.7 The London Ambient noise strategy is due to be updated in the coming months and Committee may wish to obtain responses prior to this to allow for input into the strategy.

4. Strategy Implications

- 4.1 The report is relevant to the Mayor's Noise Strategy: policies 51, 52 and 53 regarding helicopter noise and the Government's consultation on the National Noise Strategy.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in the report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no costs arising from this report.

Background Papers:

The Environment Committee's report, "London in a spin – a review of helicopter noise".

<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/environment.jsp>

Agenda and Minutes, Environment Committee 17 November 2008

Contact: David Bellman 0207 983 4791

Annex 1 – Recommendations from “London in a Spin – A review of Helicopter noise”

Recommendation 1

The Department for Transport should undertake a full review of the impact of helicopter movements and noise in London over the next twelve months, with the aim of putting in place a series of policy responses designed to mitigate the impact of this form of noise pollution on Londoners’ lives.

Recommendation 2

As part of its review, the Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority should investigate and then establish a mechanism to ensure that research on noise and other data on all helicopter movements is effectively collected, collated, analysed and published.

Recommendation 3

A single national web-site (for example, extending the role of the national noise mapping web-site), or a clearly publicised portal, should be established by the Department for Transport and/or Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to give public access to data on helicopters, including movements, routes used, and places where holding may be expected.

Recommendation 4

As part of its review, the Department for Transport should take the lead to: make the public complaints procedures clearer, including making any telephone number universally known; that complaints are logged, co-ordinated and dealt with effectively; and that consistent data on complaints is published.

Recommendation 5

The Civil Aviation Authority should include the London Assembly and the Mayor of London in consultation, and seek amendment to legislation to make them both statutory consultees, regarding matters that have implications for helicopter noise.

Recommendation 6

The operator of London Heliport at Battersea, in association with Wandsworth Council, should establish within 12 months a London Heliport Consultative Committee to, as a first priority, address local residents’ concerns about helicopter movements and noise.

Recommendation 7

The National Air Traffic Services and Civil Aviation Authority should come forward with proposals on dealing with the issue of helicopter holding at locations across London.

Recommendation 8

The Department for Transport should review its guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority so that the environmental impact of helicopter noise is included within its responsibilities.

Recommendation 9

As part of its review, the Department for Transport should investigate user charging for any additional air traffic control services required for helicopters.

Recommendation 10

Following changes to the Regulations, the Civil Aviation Authority should impose restrictions on the use of helicopters for advertising and media so that the environmental impact can be minimised.

Recommendation 11

The Department for Transport should submit proposals to the Treasury that would lead to a change in the finance rules to give a write down allowance of 25 per cent for all helicopters.

Recommendation 12

The Department for Transport should establish a working group including the Civil Aviation Authority, National Air Traffic Services, Metropolitan Police Air Support Unit, British Helicopter Advisory Board, helicopter/heliport/airport operators, Mayor of London, local authorities, environmental groups and any affected residents groups to:

- update estimates of future demand for helicopter movements;
- examine noise assessment and control issues;
- reappraise management of airspace;
- commission and undertake research; and,
- assess options for existing and future heliport provision.

Recommendation 13

The Civil Aviation Authority should give regard to the Mayor's London Ambient Noise Strategy when developing proposals on environmental matters, including helicopter noise.

Recommendation 14

The Mayor should reflect the findings and recommendations of this London Assembly report in the next review of his London Ambient Noise Strategy.