

# ‘Devastating’ Heathrow noise map

Noise created by a third runway at Heathrow would be "devastating" to thousands of Londoners.

Maps published by local authorities at the end of January showed for the first time the effects of a new runway on much of the capital.

Aircraft approaching the runway at Heathrow would use flight paths over north and south London before beginning their final descent over Kensington, Chelsea and Hammersmith.

The councils have called on the Government to rethink its plans. Hammersmith & Fulham leader Stephen Greenhalgh said: "The maps detail just how few parts of the capital will escape the effects of the proposed new runway. In west London, where all the flight paths come together, the consequences could be devastating.

"The Government has not thought through the environmental consequences of allowing unrestrained growth at Heathrow."

Ministers are also expected to propose the end of runway alternation at Heathrow, which gives some noise relief to communities when aircraft switch runways at 3pm each day.

By allowing aircraft to land and take off in parallel from the two existing runways, the Government hopes to boost the short-term capacity at Heathrow before a third runway is ready to open in 2015.

Heathrow’s capacity was capped at 480,000 movements a year under the terms of the planning permission for Terminal Five.

However, ending runway alternation could increase this to 515,000 and the building of a third runway would facilitate more than 700,000 movements a year.

Wandsworth council leader Edward Lister said the move to increase capacity would cause major problems in the area.

"The loss of runway alternation would be felt particularly keenly in south and west London.

"At least under the current system you know you will get a break from the noise."

"If the Government gets its way, there will be no respite throughout the day," he said.

It is also believed large areas of South Bucks could be affected by the plans for a third runway, with the towns of Burnham, Farnham Common and Stoke Poges experiencing an increase in noise levels.

South Bucks council leader Peter Hard said it would inevitably have a negative impact on the area.

"The third runway will shatter the peace of the small towns and villages of the South Bucks countryside.

When people realise just how badly they will be affected, there will be an outcry," he said.

**SOUNDPROOFING SCHOOLS**

The Port Authority Board of Commissioners has authorised \$35 million to provide quieter classrooms in 10 schools in New York and New Jersey as part of a continuing programme spanning nearly a quarter of a century to soundproof all schools affected by aircraft noise near the Port Authority's aviation facilities. Funding was approved for six schools in New York and four in New Jersey. All 10 of the schools that received funding already have soundproofing programmes under way as a result of previous authorisations under the programme. Seventy-seven schools have been part of the programme since it started in 1983, soundproofing for 48 schools has been completed, and 29 schools are in various stages of design or construction. Total investment in the programme is nearly \$400 million. All schools in federally defined "noise-affected areas" around Port Authority airports are being soundproofed. The programme will continue beyond these areas as long as there continues to be federal funding available, with the agency determining future eligibility on a case-by-case basis. The soundproofing programme is a joint effort of the Port Authority and the Federal Aviation Administration, which typically contributes 80 percent of the funding under its Airport Improvement Programme. The Port Authority administers the programme and provides the balance of the funding.

**AIR AMBULANCE**

Air ambulances, which have been in use in Japan under a central government initiative since 2001, have drawn complaints from citizens over the noise, dust and other problems they create, causing headaches for medical institutions and municipalities. The helicopters, which transport patients and enable doctors to provide treatment on board, have so far been introduced at 11 institutions in 10 prefectures. In fiscal 2005, the helicopters were sent out about 4,000 times. A Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry survey found that the air ambulances enabled doctors to start treating patients 27 minutes earlier than conventional ground ambulances after receiving an emergency call. The number of deaths in traffic and workplace accidents was also reduced by 40 percent, according to the survey. Last spring, the Osaka prefectural government launched a joint committee with the Osaka Medical Association and the Osaka prefectural police to discuss introducing an air ambulance. However, the prefectural government said that because of the Osaka area's dense population, it will be necessary to take measures against helicopter noise. Consequently, it has not been decided when an air ambulance will be introduced or which hospital will be designated as its heliport base. Tokai University Hospital in Isehara, Kanagawa Prefecture, introduced an air ambulance five years ago, but has received complaints from local residents about rotor noise. To cope with the helicopter's frequent flights - about 400 last year - the hospital spent about 35 million yen constructing a noise insulation wall last spring. Kawasaki Medical School Hospital in Kurashiki, Okayama Prefecture, has agreed with neighbours to take off and land. Last year, Saku Central Hospital in Saku, Nagano Prefecture, constructed a hangar away from the hospital for night operations of the air ambulance during snow conditions. However, due to opposition from nearby residents, it has not been used.