



www.stanstedairportwatch.com
info@stanstedairportwatch.com

PO Box 311
Takeley
Bishop's Stortford
Herts CM22 6PY
Tel: 01279 870558

16 June 2022

Dear Supporter

It's been some time since our last newsletter but, as they say, "no news is good news". It's certainly true that there is no immediate threat of another airport planning application for additional flights but the past few months have not been entirely uneventful. The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you up to date on a number of airport-related matters.

Covid-19

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic Stansted handled just 7.1 million passengers last year, even less than the 7.4 million passengers it handled in 2020. This compares to its pre-pandemic (2019) throughput of 28.2 million passengers. However, since the start of 2022, passenger numbers have recovered strongly and we expect Stansted to handle about 24 million passengers this year. It remains to be seen whether this level of rapid growth will continue. Some industry analysts attribute it to pent-up demand after two years of air travel restrictions and expect growth to flatten in 2023.

There are a number of other reasons for believing that growth will flatten. The current 'cost of living crisis' will reduce consumer spending on non-essentials such as leisure air travel, and the price of aviation fuel has more than doubled in the past year; this will feed its way into higher air fares. In any event, it is now abundantly clear that the uplift in Stansted's planning cap from 35 to 43 million passengers per annum, approved following last year's Public Inquiry, was – at best – premature.

Night Flights

You may recall that towards the end of last year we reported that the Manchester Airports Group ('MAG') had made a submission to the Department for Transport ('DfT') which included a proposal that the current limit on the number of permitted night flights at Stansted should be removed. We immediately wrote to Uttlesford District Council ('UDC') pointing out that this was in clear breach of a planning agreement which Stansted Airport signed with UDC in 2003, as follows:

"From the date of this agreement not to seek any relaxation of the night flight restrictions currently in force for the night period of 23.00 – 06.59 or for the night quota period of 23.30 – 05.59"

MAG has since sought to claim that it is not seeking a relaxation of the night flight restrictions but only a change in how they are applied. MAG argues that the current numerical restrictions on night flights could be removed and their noise impact could be controlled solely by a Quota Count ('QC') system. This counts each night flight against an overall noise quota (or noise budget) for an airport according to the noisiness of the aircraft used. The aircraft types used by Ryanair could score only 0.25 QC points whereas a long-haul cargo aircraft could score 8 points. It therefore means that a single night flight by a long-haul cargo aircraft could be replaced by 32 Ryanair night flights.

We completely reject the argument that there is no need for a numerical limit and we will continue to press the DfT to maintain a dual control system. Our colleagues who represent the communities around Heathrow, Luton and Gatwick, have precisely the same view as ourselves on this issue.

The submission we made to the DfT last year on the rules governing night flights is available at: <https://stanstedairportwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Stansted-Airport-Watch-response-to-DfT-Night-Flights-Restrictions-Stage-2-Consultation-3.9.2021.pdf>. The DfT is expected to publish a further consultation on this matter in the course of next year. In the meantime, if you are disturbed by a noisy aircraft at night – or during the day – you should always try to report this because it can lead to the airline being fined and, longer term, it could lead to the phasing out of the noisiest aircraft and even to the realignment of flight paths. It only takes a few minutes to register an aircraft noise complaint. Simply go to <https://stanstedairportwatch.com/take-action/report-noisy-aircraft/>.

Airspace Modernisation

You may have seen recent local press coverage about plans to revise Stansted Airport flight paths as part of an airspace modernisation programme. The development of local flight path plans is the first stage of a long-term national programme co-ordinated by the CAA and there is an emphasis upon local consultation. The main public consultation on flight path options is expected early next year. Whenever flight paths are changed there will always be 'winners' and 'losers' and so it will be important for local communities to engage fully when the options are published. Our overall position is that changes in flight paths should only be made where there are **clear and compelling** benefits for local communities. We will continue to keep you updated on developments.

Community Calendar

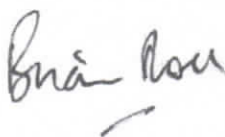
For a number of reasons, we have decided not to produce our Community Calendar this year. We have advised The Hundred Parishes Society (<https://www.hundredparishes.org.uk/>) of our decision and they may wish to produce a similar calendar. You may recall that their secretary, Ken McDonald, was involved in the early days of our calendar, almost 20 years ago! We'll let you know the outcome in our next newsletter.

Financial Position

Finally, I am pleased to advise that we continue to make steady progress in rebuilding our financial resources following our four-year battle over the 43mppa planning application which cost in excess of £300,000. This severely depleted our reserves and we ended the last financial year (30 September 2021) with just £39,500. However, thanks to the ongoing support of our members, our financial position has improved month-by-month and, as at the end of May 2022, we have reserves of just under £70,000. Sooner or later there will be another major battle to fight – possibly over night flights – and it will be important to ensure that we have the financial firepower at our disposal.

With many thanks for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



Brian Ross, Chairman