

Gatwick Noise Management Board (NMB) Public Meeting, 31 January 2017

The NMB is a forum which includes representatives from the Department for Transport, Civil Aviation Authority, National Air Traffic Service, Air Traffic Solutions (Gatwick Control Tower Operator), Gatwick Airport Ltd, airlines using the airport, four local county councils, and, representatives from a number of community groups affected by aircraft noise across the southern home counties.

In August 2015, Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) commissioned an "Independent Arrivals Review" which published its report in January 2016. It made 23 recommendations including one to establish the NMB. All recommendations were accepted by GAL. This was the fourth meeting of the NMB and was the first public meeting, called to report on the progress made by the Board in its first year.*

The recommendations referred only to flight arrivals at Gatwick, not departures, which will be an issue for the NMB to address in the future.

Whilst Buckland is affected by noise from arrivals and departures at Gatwick Airport other communities are more adversely impacted. (The NMB has no remit to consider aircraft movements to and from Heathrow). However, with the proposed expansion of Heathrow, and the fact that policy to consider the future allocation and management of UK airspace is currently being reviewed by Government, it is helpful to understand the work currently being done to manage aircraft noise in our locality.

At the public meeting the NMB produced a report on progress against each of the twenty three recommendations set out in the Independent Arrivals Report. This was followed by a question and answer session, largely dominated by questions concerning noise levels experienced by individual speakers resident in different geographical areas relative to the airport; each speaker commenting their own specific issues on the subject. Those areas currently unaffected by any noise were clearly not represented at the meeting but the NMB is acutely aware that any redistribution of aircraft movements would need to address the concerns of those people too.

Whilst it is fair to say that the forum has achieved some progress towards implementing the report recommendations, the thorny question it currently faces, as part of its ongoing remit is to arrive at a definition of what is described as "Fair and Equitable Dispersion" ("FED") of aircraft departing from, and arriving at Gatwick Airport, in order to guide future deliberations. There are many conflicting opinions based on the levels of noise experienced in various geographical locations and determining a definition for FED is critical before any further progress may be made by the NMB. It is this which will determine the success or otherwise of the NMB in the longer term.

(*The Gatwick Arrivals Review Progress Report is published on the internet)