

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Tim Johnson tim@aef.org.uk / Celeste Hicks celeste@aef.org.uk

New Government study confirms that more people are highly annoyed at lower levels of aircraft noise than previously thought

As airport expansion decisions loom, campaigners call on the Government to urgently update outdated policy

Communities living under flightpaths have long awaited the publication of two landmark studies examining [attitudes to daytime aircraft noise \(ANAS\)](#) and the effects of [night-time exposure \(ANNE\)](#). Together, they represent the most significant update to the aviation noise evidence base in over a decade, with the last comparable study, SoNA, being conducted in 2014. With a wave of airport expansion applications and airspace modernisation decisions now pending, AEF urges the Government to take this new evidence into consideration.

The ANAS study identifies what proportion of the population exposed to specific levels of aviation noise are “highly annoyed” by it, and examines how that annoyance varies across personal, social and environmental factors. It also explores the links between noise exposure and health and wellbeing. The aviation night noise effects (ANNE) study, examines the relationship between aviation noise on sleep disturbance and annoyance, and how this varies at different times of the night.

So what do these studies tell us? The key finding from ANAS is that the noise level corresponding to 10% of the population being highly annoyed has fallen from 54 dB LA_{eq,16h} (identified by SoNA) to 43 dB LA_{eq,16h}. The percentage of people highly annoyed was found to be higher at all levels of noise exposure in the ANAS study, including in areas surveyed for both reports.

The ANNE study tells a similar story, with nighttime aircraft noise causing 10% of people to be highly annoyed at 43dB LA_{eq,8h} and highly sleep disturbed at 44 dB LA_{eq,8h}. At 46 dB LA_{eq,8h}, the percentage of people highly annoyed doubled, with 20% highly annoyed.

While ANAS looked specifically at annoyance, aircraft noise is also a public health issue, as Celeste Hicks, Policy Manager at AEF, argues:

“This study merely confirms what overflowed communities have been saying for a long time - aircraft noise is causing annoyance to a significant number of people. While airlines, airports and manufacturers claim that technology is constantly evolving to protect communities from noise, it seems the opposite is true. Annoyance is related to health impacts, and this study finds what the WHO has known since 2018, that people are affected at levels above 45dB LA_{eq}. Now this CAA study has provided confirmation, the Department for Transport should act quickly to update policy ahead of critical decisions on airport expansion and new flight paths.”

Impacting around one million people in the UK, these findings demonstrate that the harm communities have long reported is real, measurable, and significantly worse than a decade-old policy framework ever accounted for. Specifically, with the draft ANPS on

Heathrow expansion expected to be published in the coming weeks AEF believes it is vital the findings of this research are reflected in the way noise impacts on communities are assessed.

—ENDS—

Contact: Tim Johnson tim@aef.org.uk / Celeste Hicks celeste@aef.org.uk /

Notes to editor:

[1] The Aviation Environment Federation (AEF) campaigns on aviation's impacts for people and the environment, including noise, air pollution and climate change. We represent impacted community groups throughout the UK, and aim to secure effective environmental regulation of the aviation industry at national and international levels aef.org.uk.