

## ‘Unchecked increases’ in aviation over tranquil areas must stop, says Transport Select Committee

AEF handles calls on a wide range of issues. Recent enquiries have included how best to export a piano, whether UK airport expansion was a Nazi policy, and whether the brown blobs appearing on the laundry in one caller’s garden were falling from aircraft.

But the single topic we are asked about most frequently is airspace. People who have been disturbed by aircraft over their home want to know where the planes are coming from and whether they’re going to keep coming, while those looking to buy a house in a new area often want to know whether the property will be under a flight path.

The Transport Select Committee – a body of MPs charged by the House of Commons with scrutiny of the Department for Transport – announced a year ago that it would be conducting an inquiry into the use of UK airspace. AEF submitted comments and in February appeared before the committee to give oral evidence.

Counting among its members the former chair of Manchester Airport and a man who claims that manmade climate change is a con, we never expected the



final report to make particularly strong recommendations on the environment. In fact, a number of its conclusions reflect AEF’s arguments.

### Government responsibilities

Clearer government guidance is needed for the CAA, the report argues, on how noise and efficiency considerations should be prioritised in cases where diverting planes away from populations who are disturbed by noise would require longer, more fuel-intensive routes. AEF has argued for some time that the Department for Transport cannot simply deflect such conflicts by instructing the CAA to minimise all environmental impacts simultaneously while handling ever-increasing numbers of flights.

Better guidance is also needed, said the Committee, on tranquil areas. The report argues that

“the DfT and the CAA should examine the case for adopting maximum limits on noise levels and numbers of aircraft permitted per hour” over National Parks and AONBs. It supports the development of long-term airspace master plans and, quoting AEF, emphasises the need for timely consideration of airspace issues in the planning process.

On more strategic issues such as levels of expansion, the Committee was rather more coy. See the news story on our website for our comment for the Evening Standard on the Committee’s nod towards Heathrow expansion in its discussion of how to tackle stacking. Nevertheless, there was some useful material in this study from a group that’s not a natural ally.

Cait Weston, [cait@aef.org.uk](mailto:cait@aef.org.uk)

# Let me out! Helping children affected by aircraft noise to access outdoor learning

For children under a flight path, it can be hard to hear the teacher above the rumble of aircraft passing overhead. Reading comprehension, memory retention, and overall concentration can all be affected, with development retarded by up to eight months. Medical studies published in the Lancet found that for children attending schools near airports reading scores and cognitive memory performance improved when the airport shut down, while children going to school near new airports experienced declines in testing scores. Stress responses such as significantly increased blood-pressure and significantly higher levels of resting adrenaline have also been found in children exposed to chronic aircraft noise.

At BAA airports, schools exposed to noise levels of over 63 dBA are eligible for financial support towards double glazing, which can go some way to minimise disruptions to classroom learning. But what happens when the bell rings for

play time? The 2006 Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, emphasises the benefits of access to outdoor experience for all children, including increased engagement, better environmental awareness, and improved attitudes to learning, together with improved overall well-being. But for schools affected by aircraft noise this can be hard to put into practice.

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## The 2006 Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto emphasises the benefits of outdoor learning for all children

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The Government does acknowledge that there's a problem. The 2003 White Paper on Aviation, for example, recommends trips away for schools affected by noise, especially when this causes the loss of outdoor amenities. AEF

would like to make sure this happens. With the support of AEF board member Julia Welchman, a teacher at Kew Gardens, we are preparing an application for the Natural England Access to Nature Grant Scheme, which facilitates access to the natural environment. We are currently seeking partner organisations owning sites that are suitable for outdoor learning, as well as schools that would like to participate.

The visits will be based around the concept of soundscapes—helping children record and understand the aural quality of their environments. Children will be encouraged to record and describe the noises they hear at home and in the school grounds, and then in a rural location. Alongside our ongoing work to reduce noise levels, we want to ensure that children can, from time to time, escape for long enough to hear birdsong, wind, and water.

*Laura Simpson,  
laura@aef.org.uk*



**Pupils at Springwell Junior School, under the Heathrow flight path. Double glazing has helped to reduce the noise inside classrooms but outdoor activities are still a problem. Headteacher Debra Kane has said the noise is "unbearable"**  
*Evening Standard*  
[www.esadvertising.co.uk/media/images/heathrow30\\_3612.pdf](http://www.esadvertising.co.uk/media/images/heathrow30_3612.pdf)

# Noise news

## Revised Environmental Noise Regulations plus look out for your airport noise action plan

In the Spring edition of *Flying Green* we outlined our concerns about the proposed changes to the UK's Environmental Noise Regulations and encouraged members to respond to the Government's consultation. Thanks to all those who got in touch with us about this.

We're glad to be able to report that Defra has relented on our key demand: that the Secretary of State should have a duty to set limit values or other criteria for noise action plans. This leaves us a hook with which to argue that the Government cannot delegate all responsibility for standard setting to airports themselves.

The next challenge will be to persuade them that one mention of 69 Leq in their guidance to airport operators on noise action plans is not an adequate way of meeting this requirement.

One of the requirements of the Regulations is that all major airports, and all airports causing

noise greater than 55 L<sub>den</sub> or 50 L<sub>night</sub> in an 'agglomeration' need to produce noise action plans. The updated deadline for this (pushed back several times since the Regulations became law) is 30<sup>th</sup> November this year and many airports are now putting out draft plans for consultation. It's a good opportunity for you to influence the airport's noise policy so check the Defra website (or contact AEF) to find out if your airport is covered by the legislation.

Paul Grimley of Loughborough University and Melbourne Civic Society (an AEF member association) is working on a nationwide review of whether the noise action plans meet the European Commission's requirements. To undertake this research he needs to hear from people with local knowledge of all airports producing noise action plans. If you are able to contribute to Paul's work, please contact [cait@aef.org.uk](mailto:cait@aef.org.uk) who will put you in touch.

## Helicopter Noise Coalition update

Ever been disturbed by helicopter noise? A Government study in 2006 identified "increasing opposition to the development of heliports on the grounds of noise disturbance". The Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC) formed in 2007 with the aim of gathering evidence from across the country to support the case for better regulation of helicopter noise.

In May 2007 AEF organised a meeting between our own members, HNC, and a representative of the GLA who was keen to try to follow up some of the recommendations made in the GLA's 2006 report on helicopter noise, *London in a spin*. It emerged that Defra had, possibly as a result of the GLA's work, commissioned a UK-wide research study into the management of helicopter noise.

Sadly, last year HNC's energetic chairman was forced by health problems to stand down from his post. The Coalition was by that time an AEF member group and we agreed to handle inquiries to the site in the short term to get a feel for the workload involved before deciding how best to take things forward. We have been responding to one or two enquiries per week,

though the website – [www.hnc.org.uk](http://www.hnc.org.uk) – has not been updated since last March. The Defra study was published three months later, in June 2008.

In the spring *Flying Green* we advertised for someone to take on editorship of the HNC website. Several members said that while they would not be able to commit to overall responsibility for the site they would nevertheless like to be involved. We've been encouraged by this response and are rethinking our plans so that we can make the most of what our members have to offer.

If you would like to support HNC in any way – whether participating in occasional meetings, writing some content for the website or helping to respond to inquiries – please contact [cait@aef.org.uk](mailto:cait@aef.org.uk).

**In other news... thank you to all those who responded to our fundraising appeal. We raised a total of £4350 and interest free loans of £11,500 – a real help in getting us through a difficult time. Laura continues to work on our longer-term fundraising needs.**

# AEF behind the scenes

- **Tim J** attended a week-long meeting on the work programme of the UN ICAO committee he participates in, presented at a Transport Times seminar on aviation and climate change, and wrote an article for the Ecologist's new website on raising funding for international development through a proposed new air tax.
- **Nic** represented the AEF at a meeting with new transport minister Lord Adonis, and has added lots of new material to the AEF website covering the conflict between windfarms and aircraft, a new report on the problems with carbon offsets, and the impact of air pollution on children.
- **Tim T** has given advice on a range of general aviation issues including helicopter noise in Portsmouth and in London, and possible changes to the General Permitted Development Order. He will soon be sending out subscription renewal forms so please keep an eye on the post!
- **Laura** – in addition to her ongoing fundraising work – has been keeping an eye on parliamentary debates, and wrote a consultation response on consultation procedures under the Planning Act.
- **Julia**, an AEF Executive Council member, held a meeting with the Environmental Law Foundation to discuss children's legal protection children from excessive noise and has been working with AEF to secure funding for a project to help children access quiet places (see page 2).
- **Cait** has got married! She enjoyed a plane-free honeymoon taking in Swiss mountains, Austrian architecture and Parisian ballet. She has also submitted several consultation responses and produced a two page guide to what's wrong with emissions trading for aviation; and
- **Roger**, a member of the AEF Executive and an active campaigner, has volunteered to come in one day a week to act as our office administrator.

## Aims and Objectives

### The objectives of the Federation are as follows:

- to foster a climate of opinion which takes full account of the environmental issues arising from aircraft and aerodrome use;
- to promote a relationship between the environment and aviation in which the detrimental effects of aviation on quality of life and on the natural and man-made environment are kept to a minimum;
- to encourage wide discussion of the problems involved and to seek practical solutions;
- to consult and co-operate with local, national and international governments, the aviation industry, regulatory authorities, universities, professional institutions, research bodies, and any others for the purpose of reducing noise, disturbance and all forms of pollution by technical and operational means;
- to pursue these objectives with policy-making and legislative bodies
- local, national and international - so that laws and policies include measures for effective environmental protection;
- to provide relevant advice and information to assist its members;
- to publicise and promote the viewpoint of the Federation through the media and through representation among bodies responsible for aviation matters as appropriate.

## Your input needed on third party risk

In our last newsletter we told you about our upcoming meeting with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) about third party risk around airports. The meeting went well with DCLG being receptive to the suggestion that local authorities might benefit from clearer guidance regarding what public safety zone policy can and can't do in terms of safety. But they said that before taking the matter further they would need examples of discrepancies in how third party risk had been treated at different aerodromes. So far, we have information on the approach to PSZ policy, and risk more generally, only from Luton, London City and Farnborough aerodromes. Has third party risk ever been discussed in the context of planning applications at your airport? Do you have concerns about safety that you feel are not being addressed? Have safety issues ever been considered constraint on expansion? Please contact [cait@aef.org.uk](mailto:cait@aef.org.uk).

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