



Aircraft Noise Action Group

Chief Executive Officer
Newcastle International Airport Limited
Woolsington
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE13 8BZ

3rd July 2019

Dear Mr. Jones,

Thank you for asking Graeme Mason reply on your behalf - we had hoped that you would show us the courtesy of replying yourself rather than delegating the task to somebody else. In any event, his reply answers virtually none of the specific questions we asked and does not properly address any of the key issues. We suspect that you will never answer the specific questions so they won't be repeated here but they still stand and we think it is reasonable to expect you to answer them, don't you? So, in response to that letter, another long one from us (as always, the devil is in the detail):

Departure routes and respite options.

- Even if we did not already know (we do), it is now formally confirmed that NIAL will not be initiating an Airspace Change Process ("ACP") in the foreseeable future. And because you won't be doing this, we understand that there is, of course, no mandatory requirement for you to formally discuss a change that you won't be making with us or, indeed, anybody else. Of course, as we all know, you can voluntarily discuss noise and respite issues if you so choose, the CAA CAP1616 ACP framework makes that quite clear. Indeed it specifically encourages airports to develop constructive informal dialogue with communities irrespective of an ACP, it's one of the core CAP1616 principles.
- In any event, this means you will not be using the two principal high impact options available to you to provide respite to people living under the sat nav managed departure flight paths any time soon. These principal options include alternative departure routes and reverting to the pre sat nav configuration (pre-2017) of lateral dispersal of aircraft either side of the flightpath centre line to provide respite.
- NIAL has stated, principally through Graeme Mason, that both of these options would need an ACP. However, you have also indicated that the trigger for initiating an ACP would be an increase of around 50% in the number of aircraft movements over the 2018 figure. This figure, as indicated by NIAL, was the lowest since 2006. So, far from not initiating an ACP in the near future, it will actually be a very long time before this happens, if ever.
- So, those of us under or near flightpaths will either have to put up with many years of increased noise as you slowly close in on your 50% increase target or we will have to put up with the current and unacceptable levels of noise for ever if you never reach your target while trying to get there or just stay as you are or, conceivably, shrink.

- In practice and given the downward trend in NIAL aircraft movements even before any effect Brexit might have (the North East is forecast by the government to be nearly the worst hit region in the UK – you should be aware of that) and other issues with the volatile local, European and global economies and the devastating and imminent economic and environmental effects of accelerating climate change, it seems extremely unlikely that NIAL will ever increase its traffic by over 50% or, possibly, at all (though this could be said of any airport in the UK, even Heathrow). **If we can work this out, so can you and so can anybody else. We think you know that you will never hit your 50% increase target or even come near it but you are just saying that you have an expansion target to boost stakeholder and creditor confidence. In consequence, we will have to face being permanently stuck with the noise from the Airport and we think that you are not bothered by this at all. Or are you? – we would like to know.**

Periodic internal reviews and the Airport Consultative Committee (“ACC”)

- We think that, in the absence of timescales and parameters for reviews to take place, you are offering the idea of these up as a sop to reassure us that you will do something about respite at some time or other. It does not reassure us at all and strikes us as an empty gesture and that you have no intention of carrying out such reviews for a long time to come. **Would you care to comment?**
- We are also alarmed to note that you seem to regard the ACC as part of the internal decision making process of NIAL (see Graeme Mason’s letter). We had thought that the Newcastle Airport ACC, as with other ACCs elsewhere, was supposed to be an independent body entirely separate from and external to the Airport. Clearly, you don’t think so and in being so clear about this you have probably destroyed any remaining shred of the ACC’s credibility as an independent critical body holding the Airport to account. **Again, would you care to comment?**

Discussion shut down?

- So, NIAL having just confirmed that it will do nothing meaningful to provide noise respite (beyond enjoining aircraft operators to use less noisy aircraft or using minor modifications to take off profiles), you also appear to have shut down any further discussion of respite by hiding behind an interpretation of the consultation principles embodied in the CAP1616 framework which nobody else shares, not even the CAA, a government agency.
- **You also say you want to continue informal discussions with interested parties but, given what you have so recently ruled out, can you please tell us what NIAL will discuss informally around respite from aircraft noise and other environmental impacts and with whom?**

Appraisal of westerly departure route: Pre-determination of future CAP1616 Airspace Change Process.

You reported that your consultants’ had indicated that an alternative westerly departure route heading more or less due west would not be a viable option though you won’t allow anybody to see or validate your reasoning. In doing this, **you have breached your self imposed embargo** based on your interpretation of CAP1616 on not pre-determining the outcome of a future ACP. **Having breached that self inflicted embargo, why not go the rest of the way (without CAP1616 consequences, you know you can) and just talk to us and others about respite and show us that report?**

Health impacts of aircraft noise

We know that NIAL is not located within an Air Quality Management Area and that, in effect, NIAL is its own judge and jury in this respect. We also know that where Local Authority Air quality monitoring includes noise, it addresses aggregate and average levels and does not split out aircraft noise or the effects of individual high noise events.

Taking your lead from Government on health issues is essentially a passive position, you are choosing not to be proactive. But you are being actively and consistently told by residents suffering from aircraft noise from NIAL that there are issues, of which NIAL is the cause, affecting their health. You also should know (we think you do) that there is ample and growing and well researched evidence for the negative health impacts of aircraft noise along with other forms of environmental pollution from aircraft. You don't need to wait for Government to tell you what to do to take proactive action to address these issues now.

Finally (for now), we have been challenging you on all these issues for some time in the context of trying for a constructive and open dialogue but you have now effectively introduced a dead end conflict to the situation. We hope we can find a way out of this impasse with you and would be interested in hearing your own views (not delegated to somebody else) on this. In this context, we are aware, as we are sure you will be too, that the CAA is currently consulting on the implementation of PPR (Planned and Permanent Redistribution of air traffic) as a foreshortened sub-set of the 14 stage CAP1616 Airspace Change Process. Our reading of the PPR framework is that it would allow airports, including NIAL, to reconfigure departure routes to allow a significant degree of respite without the full CAP1616 overhead. **Would NIAL be prepared to use PPR when it is implemented – possibly in December 2019 - in order to provide noise respite much sooner that would otherwise be the case? Are you prepared to discuss this?**

In the meantime and because we have no other option, we will continue to press the Airport to change the way it works, expose its inconsistencies and behaviour and we will continue to do this publicly and continue to ask for answers and dialogue. It's called holding you to account.

Yours sincerely

Aircraft Noise Action Group.

CC: NIAL Board members; AMP; Graeme Mason