



Aircraft Noise Action Group

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

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Dear Mr Jones

This is an open letter. It is being sent to all the Airport's Board members and stakeholders and, because it is an open letter, it is also being published on our website. Any reply you send us will also be made public unless you stipulate otherwise, in which case will say publicly that you have replied in confidence.

This is a long letter for which we make no apologies, there are detailed and serious issues that need to be addressed and which we think are being ignored by Newcastle Airport. We want to ask you some questions.

1. Consultants report on departure route options for change.

On the 19th March 2019, at a meeting at the Airport and at a public meeting in Heddon on the Wall later the same day, Graeme Mason presented the results of work carried out in 2018, commissioned by the Airport, to look at options for modifying departure routes to provide respite from noise for residents. Graeme Mason made it very clear that the Airport would not be considering a submission under CAP1616 for an Airspace Change until the annual movement count reached 80,000. In 2018, the number of movements was 55,000 meaning that the number of movements will have to increase by 45% over the 2018 figure before a submission might be considered, resulting in a major increase in noise impact over a long period before any possibility of respite. It was suggested to Graeme Mason at the public meeting that this could mean that it could be at least 10 years before a change might be implemented if the 5 year CAP1616 Airspace Change process lead time was included. He confirmed this and indicated that it could be longer. In practice, we would expect this period to be a lot longer given the static and/or downward trends in the Airport's recent aircraft movement figures.

Graeme Mason also made it clear at both meetings – Airport and public – that the Airport would not now informally discuss departure route options outwith a formal CAP1616 Airspace Change submission because the Airport takes the view that informal ongoing discussions would prejudice a future formal application and that **this is a CAP1616 requirement**.

2. Informal discussion of departure routes and respite options and CAP1616:

Following the public meeting, an email was sent to the Airport around the issue of departure route changes to provide respite from noise. The reply from Helen Hughes reiterated the position stated by Graeme Mason as in this extract from her email:

"As stated at the meeting, I am unable to discuss any further details on any alternative routes as this would jeopardise any future Airspace Change Proposal. The current position as outlined remains, that a decision has been taken not to proceed with an alternative departure route, this will be periodically reviewed."

So, there is no doubt that Airport will not now discuss route changes to achieve respite unless a formal application is made.

However, in CAP1616 on page 136: Appendix C: Consultation and Engagement, paragraph C6 says the following:

“In particular for the largest, most impactful and most complex airspace changes, engagement activity will be most effective if stakeholders already have a reasonable understanding of how airports, airlines, air navigation service providers and related airspace operate. While direct stakeholder engagement should be greatest during the stages of a formal airspace change, ongoing engagement and information can help stakeholders understand the context for proposed changes and provide constructive feedback and comments.”

Specifically, this unequivocally states that CAP 1616 **encourages Airports to have informal** discussions around Airspace change issues outwith any Airspace Change proposal. We have also asked the CAA about Newcastle Airport’s position on this and have received a reply that confirms that CAP1611 does not place an embargo on **informal** discussions about routing and respite with communities. Any decision on whether or not to have informal ongoing discussions is entirely down to the sponsor – Newcastle Airport in this case. Quoting from the CAA letter:

“Newcastle International Airport has correctly identified that significant changes to their departure routes would be captured by the CAP 1616 Airspace Change Process (information concerning airspace change can be found here: <https://www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-industry/Airspace/Airspace-change/Airspace-Change/>).

In the context of your query, if and when a potential change sponsor’s engagement with its local community is a matter for the sponsor to determine. If that engagement subsequently developed into formal consultative stage ahead of a potential airspace change, the CAP 1616 process would then apply.”

QUESTIONS:

- In the light of the above, can you say whether you continue to think that CAP1616 explicitly forbids informal ongoing discussion of potential routing and respite options outwith a formal CAP1616 Airspace Change submission?
- If you do think so, can you provide detailed evidence from CAP1616 that supports your current claim that CAP1616 specifies that future Airspace Change submissions would be prejudiced if informal discussions are held?
- If you can not substantiate either of the above, will you confirm that Newcastle Airport will resume open and informal and constructive discussions about routing and respite with ANAG and with all affected communities and their representatives?

3. Periodic internal reviews

Following up the email from Helen Hughes referred to above, we asked what "periodically reviewed" means. She replied as follows:

"In answer to your questions, we have not set any timescales or parameters for a periodic internal review of departure routes. Any such review would involve the Board/Shareholders, the Airport Consultative Committee and the Noise Sub Group, should it be formalised."

QUESTIONS:

- Can you tell us how often you propose to carry out internal reviews of departure routes?
- Can you tell us what the triggers will be for such reviews to take place?
- Can you tell us whether the detailed output of such reviews will be made public?
- Can you say what you envisage the role of the Airport Consultative Committee and other representative groups and organisations will be in these reviews.

- **Do you expect to carry out these reviews transparently with full public information being available?**

4. Appraisal of Westerly Departure route

Graeme Mason asserted at both the Airport meeting and the public meeting on the 19th, that a Westerly departure route up the Tyne Valley (effectively a mirror of the current approach route when aircraft are landing into an easterly wind) was neither economically nor environmentally viable for aircraft operators. He was asked how the analysis that supported this conclusion had been arrived at and validated – he was unable to say. He was also asked whether the report that came to this conclusion could be made publicly available so that it could be properly scrutinised. He refused, saying that it was a specifically internal Airport document.

QUESTION:

- **In the interests of transparency and trust, will you release this report on the westerly departure route options in full so that the evidence and conclusions can be properly understood and discussed?**

5. Health impacts of aircraft noise

At both the meetings on March 19th 2019, concerns were raised by residents about the effects of aircraft noise on health in the context of Newcastle Airport's operations. As you should know, there is an increasing body of evidence that higher aircraft noise levels are associated with increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attack, stroke and dementia as well as loss of sleep. These concerns were effectively brushed aside.

QUESTIONS:

- **Do you think that Newcastle Airport's operations – especially but not exclusively aircraft departures – are having an effect on the health of people living under or close to your flightpaths?**
- **If you do not think this is so, can you cite evidence to support your conclusion?**
- **If you do think so, can you say what measures you propose to put in place to address these health issues?**

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,