

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 19 OCTOBER 2015

### Communities demand that Heathrow take responsibility for damaging health effects of aircraft noise

Communities around London have today written to Heathrow Airport challenging the Airport's engagement with local communities and demanding a range of measures to mitigate the damaging effects of aviation noise on health.

The letter is signed by seven groups who are members of Heathrow's Community Noise Forum (CNF), which was set up earlier this year in response to a record number of noise complaints. It brands the operation of the CNF as "a talking shop and essentially a PR exercise for Heathrow to claim community consultation while taking minimal action" and that "noise from Heathrow has become intolerable".

The groups call for a comprehensive and fully independent investigation into the adverse health and educational effects of Heathrow and outline immediate measures that the airport should take to minimise these including:

- a reversal of changes to flight paths, which have become lower and more concentrated;
- a permanent ban on night flights starting in 2017 and an immediate review of scheduling so that no flights depart after a 11.00pm watershed or before 7.00am in the morning;
- restrictions on the noisiest types of aircraft in the early morning and late in the evening;
- initiatives to prevent known health impacts of aviation noise including high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes and mental illness;
- truly independent research to determine the degree to which the airport has negatively impacted on the quality of life in local communities;
- a comprehensive insulation scheme for homes and schools experiencing noise above World Health Organisation guidelines; and
- funding for additional learning/reading support in schools.

The proposed measures are in response to the publication of a report by the Airports Commission in July (issued as an addendum to their final report) which has been largely ignored by Heathrow and Government, but which documented the serious effects of aviation noise on health including much higher risks of heart attack and strokes as well as negative impacts on children's reading and memory.

A spokesperson for the community groups said:

*"The plan we have presented today outlines a number of immediate measures that Heathrow should take to mitigate the health and child development impacts of aviation noise, but the airport and the U.K. Government need to do more to reduce noise in general. The recent VW scandal demonstrates that public health should not be put at risk to support the profits of big business and the aviation industry is no exception".*

*'Given the seriousness of the issues raised and the stated intention of the Department for Transport to increase the intensity of the use of airspace over the next few years, the groups also call for an independent inquiry to investigate the impacts of aviation on residential communities.'*

For further information, please contact Paul McGuinness on 07958 589894 or [paul.mcguinness@workingfashions.com](mailto:paul.mcguinness@workingfashions.com)

#### Background

1. The Heathrow Community Noise Forum was set up by Heathrow in March 2015 in response to a huge increase in noise complaints from local residents. It includes representatives from 12 local authorities around Heathrow. <http://www.heathrow.com/noise/making-heathrow-quieter/our-noise-strategy/working-with-local-communities/community-noise-forum>
2. The seven community groups that signed the letter to John Holland-Kaye include groups from Lightwater, Bagshot, Windlesham (Surrey), Ealing, Richings Park (Buckinghamshire), Englefield Green (Surrey), Ascot (Berkshire), Teddington (Middlesex) and Harmondsworth and Sipson (Hillingdon).

3. The report *Aircraft noise effects on health* was published by the Airports Commission on 1 July 2015. A copy of the report can be found at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/446311/noise-aircraft-noise-effects-on-health.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/446311/noise-aircraft-noise-effects-on-health.pdf)
4. Complaints figures provided by Heathrow Airport show that :
  - In 2012, a total of 17,655 complaints were received. 3,240 complaints were received in the first six months of the year.
  - In 2013, 18,717 complaints were received.
  - In 2014, 44,682 complaints were received.
  - For the first six months of 2015, 52,728 complaints were received which equates to an annual figure of 106,056.

Complaints have increased by 1,627% when you compare the first six months of 2015 with the same period in 2012.

## **Enclosures**

19/10/15 Letter from community groups to John Holland-Kaye, Chief Executive of London Heathrow