

Summary of Presentation from Michael Nidd to Berkhamsted Public Meeting 10/6/08

Flaws in the process

- Failure on the part of NATS to respond to material questions about the proposals. Luton Airport Consultative Committee, submitted a list of 36 substantive questions about the contents – after 5 weeks there had been no response whatsoever from NATS, and those responses which eventually arrived remain unsatisfactory.
- Failure to ensure that copies of the consultation, the response forms and versions of the three-fold leaflet were available in the declared list of public libraries, and relying on Councils and Parish Councils to publicise and describe the consultation on NATS behalf.
- Allowing insufficient time - just one week more than the Cabinet Office **minimum** consultation period - for the more-than-12-million people potentially affected to become briefed on what is a highly technical document and respond. The subsequent extension of time will have been unknown to many potential respondents as it was ineffectively publicised.
- Failing to declare, at the outset, that NATS is a commercial organisation whose income derives from maximising air traffic.
- Amending consultation “evidence” at least twice: once by presenting alternative methods for counting “persons overflown” which produced different results from the original data; and again by issuing amended maps showing the area overflown at below 4000ft on Luton departures to the south-west. The majority of people affected will not know of either of these changes, as indeed many remain unaware that the consultation period has been extended.
- Failure to provide any alternatives, including the consequences of the “do nothing” option - presenting the proposals on a “take it: or take it” basis.
- Refusal to meet with any representative group smaller than a County or equivalent local authority to discuss the proposals.

Flaws in the proposals

- The basis of the case does not follow CAA’s guidance in CAP725: no evidence-based case which could be post-audited to “assess the efficacy of the change”, together with an objective monitoring scheme, exists.
- No alternatives, including the “do nothing” option, have been considered. For example, no thought has been given to relocation of the Bovingdon stack for Heathrow arrivals, whose location fails even the simplified “stack location test” set out in the consultation document: *“This means that holds must be carefully positioned so they do not obstruct*

other traffic flows.” There is no doubt that Bovingdon is severely obstructing Luton departures to the south-west, both current and proposed.

- The basis on which decisions about routing traffic over rural rather than urban areas was based derives from work done in the 1960s and 1970s which has never been verified or updated despite considerable changes in public attitudes to tranquillity and quality of environment. No proper consideration is given to the increase over ambient noise level of flights, which is far more significant over rural areas.
- There are almost no quantified benefits. “Greater **safety**” is hinted at but altogether unquantified in terms of “reduction of airprox incidents in the TMA to be reduced from x per ten thousand movements to y”. The **environmental** benefits in terms of “people overflown” are based on erroneous data and also ignore large housing developments which have existed in Regional or sub-Regional strategy documents and plans for some years. **Economic** benefits appear to consist of “reduced flight delays”, which amount to 17 seconds per flight when expressed in the sort of terms used in the consultation – and altogether ignore the balance-of-tourist spending gap (currently £18 billion a year and rising) caused by the 80% of flights which are leisure-related. They do, however, omit reference to the economic benefits which might accrue to NATS shareholders through increased numbers of aircraft movement.

We remain concerned at the extent to which “tactical vectoring” will make a nonsense of the flight-paths delineated on the various maps; at the evident errors in the forecasts of “persons overflown” and at the extent to which so many additional households would fall within the DfT’s unsatisfactory definition of “subject to significant noise disturbance”.

We also believe that virtually all of the claimed environmental benefits of the proposals, as they affect Luton Airport, could be achieved without changing routes themselves, by:

- raising the compliance altitude to 4000ft in all cases;
- restricting speeds in turns and vigorous management of it within the TMA. with meaningful financial penalties for infractions (clear evidence now exists of excessive speed causing track-following failures on NPRs and SIDs);
- narrowing the departure swathes through better navigation accuracy (already achievable) and enforcement, with meaningful financial penalties for infractions.