

# 'Farnborough Airport claim behind the PR, pollution reign

The centre-page article in the paper with the Q&A *Farnborough Airport CEO lifts the lid on flight expansion plans* will have angered people who have struggled to get their concerns across to decision makers for many years.

Farnborough Airport, with its large budgets and professional PR and media consultants, does not need another platform to provide its misleading information. The public does.

Let us go through some of the points made by Simon Geere and challenge them with some facts.

First of all, with only 2.5 passengers per plane and 40 per cent of flights being empty, private jets are the most polluting form of travel. In fact, when these factors are included, private jets operating from Farnborough are 30 to 40 times more polluting than a commercial flight (per passenger mile).

The government's Climate Change Committee has stated there should be no increase in any airport's capacity until the aviation industry has started to reduce its emissions.

Half of the flights from Farnborough are for leisure purposes – for example, the airport launched another service two weeks ago to fly pets to Dubai at £8,000 a seat, one way.

Given the airport is only licensed for business flights, how is that a business flight "generating revenue to the UK"? The airport is used by a very small number of very wealthy people, largely for leisure purposes, who are having a massive impact on the environment in terms of noise, emissions and pollution at the expense of everyone else.

Another comment made by Mr Geere, that the airport is "committed to actively listen to the community's views", is misleading. Last year MPs wrote to Mr Geere saying they expected better engagement with the public. It hasn't happened. For years many of the questions submitted by the public to the airport, either directly or through the Consultative Committee (FACC), have been ignored.

Last year the airport went as far as submitting a planning application to enable it to ignore complaints from the public and just a few weeks ago, as the airport's consultation started, the former chair of Farnborough Noise Group was issued with an Anti Social Behaviour Injunction by Surrey Police, stating he had been "conducting an aggressive

Farnborough Airport's proposals to lift its annual cap on flights from 50,000 to 70,000 and more than double its weekend flights from 8,900 to 18,900 per year has become a hot topic since the plans were announced in early September. Airport SEO Simon Geere provided more detail on these plans in a Q&A in this paper on October 5 – justifying the increase in flights by emphasising business aviation's economic benefits. This week it is the turn of campaign group **FARNBOROUGH NOISE** to respond...



and relentless campaign against Farnborough Airport, the FACC and individuals connected with these organisations over the past two to three years". It is incredible that such bullying tactics, that are clearly intended to undermine opposition to the airport, are pursued by a public body and the taxpayers' expense.

Great play is made by the airport that it supports 3,000 jobs and generates £200 million for the local economy. It would be polite to say this is "misleading". The numbers quoted are for all the businesses at the airport. The majority have no connection with flight operations. They are HR, IT and other businesses.

In fact, Farnborough Airport Limited employs just 170 people, as reported a few days ago in its 2022 HMRC accounts.

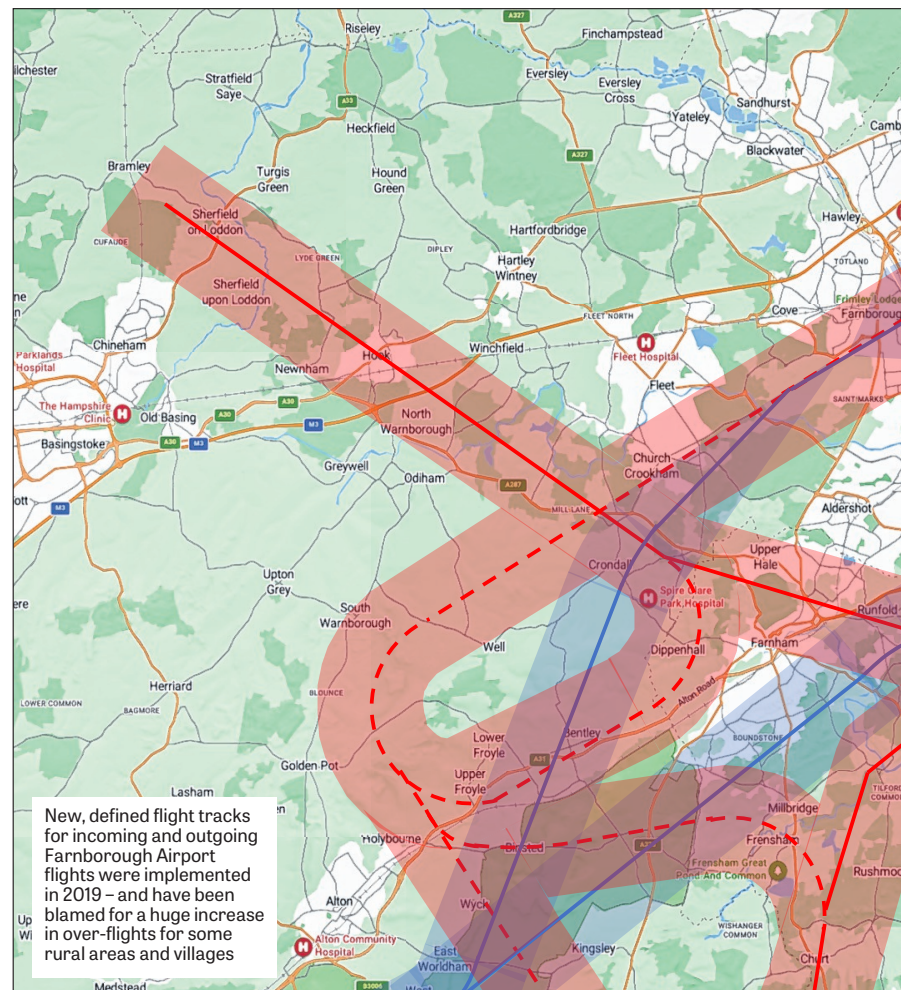
Of its £98.7m revenue, £47.7m was on fuel sales that carried no tax, £11.7m went as dividends and just £4.7m was

paid in corporation tax.

Remember, this business is owned by Macquarie, the business that owned Thames Water and is now the majority shareholder of Southern Water. Macquarie's business model is to buy businesses, increase their value and sell them on. Maybe the growth plans of the airport should be considered in this context.

Much of the employment in this area and the value generated is due to its proximity to London, good road and rail connections and the many high-value businesses in the M3 corridor/Thames Valley area. In fact, only one-fifth of jobs at the airport are people living in the borough of Rushmoor and the majority of jobs are unskilled in catering, cleaning and security (*Lichfields Economic Impact Assessment 2022*).

Mr Geere also suggests that without expansion, private jets will go elsewhere and that will "make the UK a less attractive



place to do business". He is well aware that countries such as France and Netherlands are reducing the number of private jets operating and it is the UK that is out of step with other

countries as the largest use of private jets with nearly one in ten flights now being private jets.

Mr Geere goes on to say the airport is "restricted" to small aircraft for business users that require privacy and immediate access to travel where they want, when they want. Why are most flights to destinations already served by regular commercial flights? Half the destinations the airport serves are holiday destinations in the Alpes (Chambery, Sion, etc) or the Mediterranean (Bodrum, Palma, Ibiza, Nice).

The chart on the left shows there has been hardly any growth in flights during weekdays while almost all the growth is at weekends. Current flights are at 32,000 a year with a limit of 50,000. At the current growth rate, it will be 2085 by the time the airport gets to 50,000 flights, so why apply for 70,000?

Why is the airport consulting on flying more of the larger aircraft (eg Boeing 737s)? These are aircraft capable of carrying 100

passengers, not small jets for a few business passengers. The airport will never be licensed for scheduled flights so why are more of the larger aircraft needed?

There is also reference made to the government's proposals to change airspace. This is the Airspace Modernisation Strategy and the public has no idea how it could impact them as it hasn't been consulted.

The government aims to double aircraft capacity in the south east by 2030. That means two million flights a year. And the flightpaths will be changed so anyone could have a flightpath over them.

What is even worse is that the design principles, that have already been confirmed, plan to put these routes over rural areas. This design principle is the reason why areas like Churt, which used to have a few flights a day, now has 100 a day flying over at low height.

What Mr Geere doesn't tell you is Farnborough Airport has now joined with Gatwick and Heathrow in designing the new airspace in the south east, so

Historical performance statistics and evidence of failure of Airport Operator to meet its own previous Master Plan\*

