

Update from the FACC meeting (21st March 2024)

As ever, these meetings are extremely frustrating. The public are progressively being excluded from them, relevant information is not being communicated, questions are not being answered and the issues that are important to the public are not being discussed. Below are some of the key points from the meeting. On a positive note, the YouTube recording has been made available within a few days, rather than five weeks like last time. <https://www.facc.org.uk/meeting-information/>

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1) Farnborough Airport – Heading in the wrong direction

Most people recognise we have to reduce fossil fuel consumption, and quickly, to tackle climate change. With private jets being the most polluting form of transport, an average of only 2.5 passengers per plane and 40% of aircraft operating from Farnborough being empty, it is inconceivable that Farnborough Airport is putting forward plans to double the number of flights and operate larger aircraft. Q. Why are larger aircraft needed when on average there are only a few people on each one? A. The increase in luxury in private jets is driving up the size of aircraft, not more people in each aircraft. People who choose to fly in private jets for convenience are morally bankrupt as they cause harm to people who are not using them (as well as the environment). The objective MUST be to progressively reduce the number of private jets operating, not increase them. This is not being challenged by the FACC or Rushmoor Council who have a responsibility to the public's health. Responses from FAL such as "*we are increasing the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel*" are deliberately misleading as SAF doesn't reduce emissions.

2) Worrying information about the planning application to increase flights

The expansion planning application resulted in more than 2,200 letters of objection to Rushmoor Council. More than 5,000 members of public signed a petition against it. The council delayed the decision and asked for more information from the airport. So far so good.... What we found out at the FACC meeting is that Rushmoor Council and it alone will decide on the application. That is normal for planning applications and it makes sense where an application impacts the borough alone. But this application is different. The surrounding areas and their populations are negatively impacted by the increase in flights and they receive no benefits. It is therefore a concern that Rushmoor Council may look at the benefits it receives against the disadvantages for its constituents and support the application. The additional information now being requested by Rushmoor Council to the airport for the planning application largely relates to Rushmoor alone. If Rushmoor is going to make the decision on behalf of other councils, it needs to collect the information that is relevant to the populations in those constituencies. It is important that surrounding councils consider this and make their views known to Rushmoor Council. Of the 140 parish, borough and county councils consulted, 45 responded to the planning consultation process (the responses by council will be put on the FNG website). Those who responded will be informed of the additional information collected in about May. FNG has reviewed all the documentation. We will be happy to help councils if asked (farnboroughnoise@gmail.com).

3) Farnborough Airport and NATS will not have any discussions with FNG

For the past few years, FNG has repeatedly requested meetings with the airport and NATS to discuss the issues the public are raising. This cannot be done by bouncing emails backwards and forwards. FAL wanted to put restrictions on what we could share and what we could say in public communications about the airport. We would not agree with the restrictions as the dialogue needs to be open and the public should have all the information we are party to. At the March FACC meeting, NATS and FAL confirmed they would not have discussions with FNG. The airport is legally obliged to respond to questions and it is not even doing that. FNG submitted questions on 2nd November 2023 for the November FACC meeting on 9th November 2023 (as required by the FACC's constitution). The questions were not answered before or during the November FACC meeting. They still haven't been answered and at the March FACC meeting, the chair of the FACC said that the November questions had not been submitted in accordance with the FACC constitution, so no action had been taken on them (see section 6. *FACC engagement*).

4) Information provided by FAL and NATS is generally true – but misleading

For many years, information provided by FAL and NATS has in general been factually correct but unless the recipient has all the background information and knowledge, it is often misleading. At the FACC meeting, Gareth Andrews stated that the airport was planning to improve its air pollution measurement to include particulates. Concerns were raised that it was taking months to make progress. The reality is that the airport has been required to properly measure pollution since planning consent was given in 2010 (in the S106 agreement). There was also an issue raised about non-Farnborough Airport aircraft flying through NATS controlled airspace and over surrounding rural areas at heights that are too low. This was recognised as a potential issue in the 2014 consultation regarding the changes to airspace. Alex Culley, the NATS representative on the FACC, stated that NATS is only looking at Farnborough aircraft and it has no responsibility for non-Farnborough aircraft, despite it giving clearance to these aircraft. He said that complaints about non-Farnborough aircraft should be sent to the CAA. Most people will not be aware that submitting a complaint to the CAA is a complete waste of time and FNG has for years been trying to discuss this issue with the CAA (see section 5 - *The CAA is not fit for purpose*).

5) The CAA is not fit for purpose

There is a lot that could be said about the CAA's failings but the one that is relevant to the latest FACC meeting is the failure of the CAA to properly manage the operation vs the design of airspace. This leaves Farnborough and NATS to do what they like. The new airspace that was implemented in 2020 had many operating principles set out. For example, flying specific flightpaths (used to justify the change as a "*reduction in number of people overflown*"). The height that aircraft should operate at was also set. Aircraft are supposed to be above 4,000ft altitude by the time they pass over the A31 (see below). Between 7th – 10th March, using the airport's Webtrak data, 98 complaints were submitted to FAL for breaches in height/track. These cannot be explained conveniently by "weather" or "safety" and they can't be blamed on "repeat complainers" because they are the result of "repeat breaches" by NATS/FAL. NATS and FAL will not discuss these issues with FNG because they would have to recognise the problem and do something about it. Many complaints regarding low-flying aircraft that breach the regulations have been reported to the CAA but the CAA requires "*photographic evidence of the aircraft against a man-made object of known height*". That is clearly not possible in the countryside. The CAA knows EXACTLY what height an aircraft is flying at and who is flying it. If they don't, we should all be very worried. In reality, there is no monitoring of 50% of aircraft in the air and there is a total reliance on pilots following the regulations, which they frequently don't. The CEO of the CAA (previously Richard Moriarty, now Rob Bishton) repeatedly explain the regulations to FNG that of course we are fully aware of (the letter from Rob Bishton is available should anyone want a copy) but do nothing to address the root causes.

2.3.7 This is all consistent with Feedback Report B's prediction following the original consultation ([link to Feedback Report B](#), see Figure 4 on page B17).

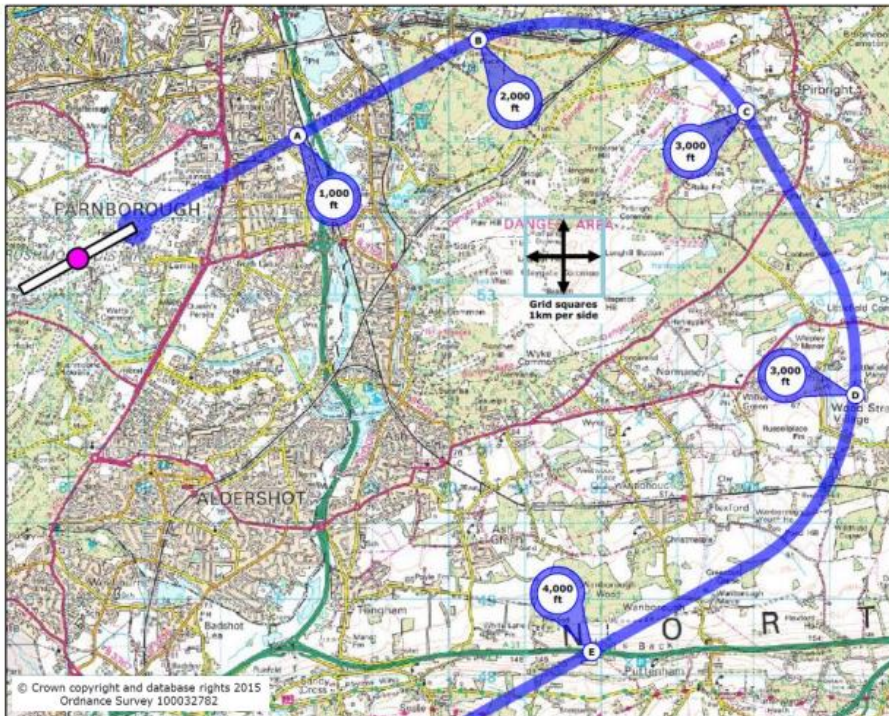


Figure 3 Extract from original material, illustrating the same region

2.3.8 See section 2.8 on page 13 for Post-ACP departures from both runways, 4-7,000ft.

6) FACC engagement

In the past four years there have been considerable changes to Farnborough Airport's airspace, proposed expansion, the introduction of new legislation such as the Environment Act, the PIR and the Airspace Modernisation Strategy. These events have a huge impact on the lives and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of people in the area and millions further afield. It has been extremely difficult to get the FACC and FAL to discuss the issues that are important to the public. Regulations such as the Air Navigation Guidance 2017 states *"The aviation industry should seek to have high quality and open engagement with their local communities with respect to not just the forthcoming proposals but also with regard to their day-to-day operations. Similar expectations are set out in the 2014 "Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees"*.

Organisations and people are judged on outcomes rather than intentions (FNG is no exception). Despite huge amounts of effort over the past four years, the only things that FNG can claim credit for is 1) informing a much larger group of what is happening regarding the airport and 2) helping to mobilise support against the proposed expansion. Looking at what the FACC has achieved over that time, despite the best efforts of several FACC members, unfortunately there have been no achievements. Even an annual objectives plan for the FACC, as defined in the guidelines for consultative committees, hasn't been set out. The reasons for this are evident in the attached response from the chair of the FACC, Philip Riley. It took three months to get a response. Several statements are not compliant with the FACC's own constitution or are misleading e.g. suggesting FNG *"was invited to give a presentation at the last FACC meeting on behalf of FNG, as agreed at the preceding FACC meeting"*. That was a 10-minute presentation, the only one in sixteen meetings in the past four years and it wasn't on the agenda the day before the FACC meeting so a complaint had

to be submitted to get it included. The overall tone is pretty clear – the FACC does not want to engage and that means the public and the issues they are raising are not being covered.

7) Definition of Business Aviation and why it is important

A question was submitted to the FACC meeting but it was not answered. The airport has a permit to operate Business Aviation and the alleged income to the UK from Business Aviation was used in the business case to justify the recognised harm caused by the flights. Business Aviation is defined internationally and nationally as *“That sector of aviation which concerns the use of aircraft by companies, individuals or organisations as an aid to the conduct of their business. These flights are generally of an unscheduled, on demand nature providing a premium, flexible and secure service”*. The airport describes itself as a Business Aviation airport in its Master Plan. The public’s perception is that the airport is for Business Aviation and not for leisure. But most of the growth in flights is at weekends and for leisure. FAL has quietly dropped the “Business” component and Rushmoor Council hasn’t challenged the airport on this, and that is important. Firstly, it means there isn’t a business case for expansion (because leisure flights export rather than import value) and secondly it results in a greater proportion of flights at weekends, when most of the public experience disturbance and expect peace and quiet to enjoy the outdoors and their sleep. This situation has been raised as a complaint to Rushmoor Council (they refused the complaint), to the Local Government Ombudsman (they didn’t have the resources to investigate) and to the DfT (they said they can’t comment). So we have a situation where Rushmoor Council is using an incorrect interpretation of the licence and that has a key impact on how Farnborough Airport is developing its business.

Addendum - Blocking free speech

People who have followed the FACC and the meetings for some time will be aware that the FACC chair has repeatedly refused to recognise FNG and has denied its role as a Community Group representing the concerns of a large number of people. Despite the extensive knowledge and experience in the group, and the offer to FAL that the group could help to provide information to the public, the group has been progressively excluded with questions not being answered and access to FACC meeting being denied.

Things came to a head when the Chair of the FACC, Philip Riley, made defamatory and false statements to Surrey Police that were used in court against Colin Shearn, the previous chair of FNG. He was given a two-year Anti Social Behaviour Injunction and £70,000 costs awarded against him. The background is on the FNG website (<https://www.farnboroughnoise.org/blog>) and has been reported in the national press (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/jan/03/farnborough-airports-biggest-critic-silenced-as-expansion-plans-continue>). Philip Riley made these comments in his capacity of FACC chair, though he now says they were made in a personal capacity but declined to inform the court of this for a year before the trial. Colin asked a valid question to Philip Riley at the FACC meeting, asking why he submitted such false allegations and why he refused to correct them before the trial or retract them. He was shouted down and was unable to complete his question. We are supposed to live in a democracy where freedom of speech is a fundamental principle, even if people don’t like what they are hearing. A formal complaint will be made against the FACC.