

Proposed changes at Farnborough Airport and Heathrow/Gatwick flightpaths that will significantly impact everyone

The government is towards the end of a design process to double the number of flights in the South East by 2030. That will mean more than 2 million flights a year. 1 million of these will be from Heathrow, Gatwick and Farnborough. On average, that's about 4,000 flights a day¹. Flightpaths are also changing so there will be very few areas in the South East not under a flightpath. Increases in nighttime flights are also proposed. It has already been agreed that most flightpaths will be put over rural areas and national parks but everyone will be impacted by the increase in noise and pollution and property prices will fall as a result². The public and most organisations are totally unaware (or have been misinformed) regarding the impact these changes will have³.

The government is legally obliged to meet net zero emissions by 2050 and the aviation industry is tasked to reduce emissions by 45% by 2030. However, rather than reducing, aviation's emissions are growing rapidly and will more than double by 2030 with the proposed increases in flights. The aviation industry's strategy to reduce emissions (Jet Zero strategy) was thrown out by the high court in May and is having to be re-drafted to properly account for emissions⁴.

Farnborough Airport is totally unregulated by the authorities that are supposed to have oversight. The airport only has a licence to operate business flights. It claims the harm caused is justified by the economic benefit to the country. The airport has refused to provide data on how many flights are business vs leisure. Report after report⁵ has shown that most of the airport's flights are for leisure (or even flights for pets) and now, after years of challenging the CAA, it is reporting that **just 4,164 of the 33,000 flights last year were business flights**. The Post Implementation Review required by the CAA following flightpath changes in 2020 is three years overdue. Information required by the airport following its 2023 expansion planning application has not yet been provided. Breaches of the airport's licence have not been challenged.

The airport's many breaches are too extensive to list here but as an example, the CAA advised in 2021 that FAL would be instructed to measure the impact of all aircraft noise up to 20,000ft as part of the airport's airspace change application. In addition, the CAA clearly stated that the impact of all aircraft within the changed airspace should be measured. To date, none of this information has been provided so we can presume FAL has ignored that direction. Under duress, FAL carried out a noise assessment in Churt in 2023. However, the assessment not only ignored all non-Farnborough aircraft within its airspace (and up to 20,000ft), it also seems to have removed a significant number of the Farnborough aircraft impacting noise levels at Churt – so it completely misrepresents the aviation noise impact that the public experience in and around Churt. The report has been seen by the FACC's Noise Sub Committee but these points haven't been challenged.

Time and time again we have seen authorities and regulators fail in their duties to protect the public (e.g. Grenfell, river pollution, Post Office scandal⁶). We are walking into another one.

What should happen next

- The public should have a say in what happens at Farnborough Airport and the proposed changes to flightpaths and the number of flights as it affects them.
- Rushmoor Borough Council should not make a unilateral decision on Farnborough Airport's planning application where the council stands to gain financially without involving

surrounding councils who are negatively impacted. This was what MPs highlighted at last year's consultation.

- The airport's business case is unsound and should be scrutinised properly by an independent body. Challenge to the business case from organisations like Farnborough Noise Group should be included for consideration.
- MPs and councils should step-up and represent the valid concerns of the public and their constituents.

References

1. Heathrow movements: 2021 – 195,274. 2022 – 380,317. 2023 - 457,000. Currently at capacity with a record 2,700 movements a day in April 2024. Gatwick movements: 2023 – 253,000. 7.7% growth in 2024 and now breaching night flight restrictions. Second runway constructed and in consultation. <https://www.caa.co.uk/Documents/Download/10288/81d07410-dbcd-46e7-aacc-d0a5accf0d90/16452>
2. Farnborough Airport is part of the national airspace change programme (the Airspace Modernisation Strategy) and its flightpaths will be changing again. New holding stacks at 3,000ft above Farnham, Petersfield and other areas are being proposed.
3. Airborne pollution is the biggest killer in the UK responsible for 28,000 – 36,000 deaths a year. Deaths are distributed so not visible. More people die from airborne pollution in three days than the number of people who died in the recent Spanish floods. Aviation is a significant and increasing contributor to airborne pollution yet it is not properly measured (e.g. ultrafine particles not measured by Rushmoor Council).
4. The aviation industry persists in touting Sustainable Aviation Fuel to meet zero emissions. But SAF produces as much CO2 as fossil fuel aviation fuel and there is less than 1% of the sustainable vegetable oil needed for renewable fuel. Most of this is already being used by other transport like busses & trucks or is being imported as palm oil resulting in more deforestation.
5. Ultra-rich using jets like taxis, climate scientists warn. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2lvq4el5vo>
6. The way our airspace is being used is similar to the way water companies treated our rivers – a commercial commodity to increase profits at the expense of the public. Airspace is for everyone, including the peace and quiet that should be enjoyed by the 50% of the UK population who do not fly. Aviation's emissions & pollution is killing people and destroying our wildlife. Macquarie is the owner of Farnborough Airport. They are the major shareholder of Southern Water and were previously owners of Thames Water.

Abbreviations

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| CAA | Civil Aviation Authority |
| FAL | Farnborough Airport Ltd |
| RBC | Rushmoor Borough Council |
| SAF | Sustainable Aviation Fuel |