



Dear Peter K Churchley

Heathrow Airport Noise Preferential Routes Compliance

Thank you for your letter of 12 December to Patrick McLoughlin, the Secretary of State for Transport on Heathrow noise preferential routes compliance. I have been asked to respond.

DfT are aware that the recent airport trials at Heathrow which ended on 12 November 2014 caused a large number of complaints. These are part of a series of trials which are being driven by the CAA's Future Airspace Strategy to simplify and modernise UK airspace by 2020.

These trials helped to help to test for the aircraft's very precise navigation capability (known generically as performance-based navigation). They were also testing a range of concepts such as minimising noise impacts through alternating departure routes to share the noise more fairly and others that cover operational aspects. The information gathered can then be used to re-design Heathrow's future airspace, although any permanent changes are still a few years away. No permanent changes to flight paths will be made before a public consultation and evaluation by the CAA through its airspace change process. The Government may also have a role if there are changes to Noise Preferential Routes (NPRs).

The airport verify that aircraft are within the noise preferential routes as set out in the Heathrow Airport – London (Noise Abatement Requirements) Notice 2010 that you refer to in your letter. Heathrow Airport has a Noise and Track keeping (NTK) system as do most large airports. This takes data from Air Traffic Control (ATC) radars and combines them with flight information, which enables the flight to be tracked. Associated with each NPR is a lateral swathe, which is defined by a pair of lines that diverge at 10 degrees from a point 2 000 metres from the start of roll (when you commence take-off), leading to a corridor extending 1.5km either side of the nominal NPR centreline. Within this swathe the aircraft are considered to be flying on track. Aircraft reaching an altitude of 4 000ft at any point along an NPR may be turned off the route by ATC onto a more direct heading to their destination – a practice known as vectoring.

Response to TO, Chapter ID 124936[2]

Flight Performance Reports which are published on the Heathrow noise page will have details on the number of flights which do not fly on track. I should also draw your attention to presentations on how the trials impacted upon Ascot and Bagshot. These can be see on the link below <http://www.heathrowairport.com/noise/future-plans/modemising-uk-airspace/trial-meetings-and-presentations>

Yours sincerely

Colin Dunn