

The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Miss Rosalie James

Lightwater
Surrey

29 April 2016

Dear Mr Gove

Further to our correspondence and discussions regarding the continuing issue of increased aircraft noise, the independent Gate Analysis undertaken by PA Consulting is now complete.

The 86 page report, sent to you by email at the time of completion, analysed the year 2005 (selected to provide a pre-trials benchmark) then each year from 2010 to September 2015.

The summary of the analysis is attached and confirms that there have been changes around minimum altitude, position and numbers of flights. The conclusions are as agreed with Aircraft Noise 3 Villages (AN3V) and Heathrow (HAL) and are now published both on HAL and AN3Vs websites. AN3V has also distributed the information directly to Lightwater, Windlesham and Bagshot residents registered with the campaign.

Changes summarised in the report are not unique to AN3V area as the analyses undertaken for Teddington and Englefield Green, also now published on HALs website, confirm.

Since this scandal began back in 2014, the industry has continually asserted that no changes have taken place and things had 'returned to pre-trial levels'. Only as a result of persistent demands by HCNF Community Representatives for a comprehensive, independent investigation to provide evidence to support the industry's assertions, do we now have proof that these assertions are manifestly incorrect.

As you are aware, we have made enormous efforts to ensure Councillors, both County and Borough, were made aware of the plight of residents now subjected to increased aircraft noise. We have been repeatedly told that evidence provided by the industry, and HAL in particular, confirmed nothing had changed. Councillor Goodman, for example, was readily accepting of this and in turn categorically stated that residents were wrong and that things had indeed returned to normal. The danger of merely accepting the industry's word without insisting on independent supporting evidence is now clear and I would like to think that the testimonies and complaints of residents from across the County will now be treated with the credibility they merit, as they should have been from day one.

It is alarming that attendance at the HCNF by our local Councillors is patchy at best, nor did anyone from SHBC attend any of the meetings held to discuss the analysis in order to agree conclusions. The burden of this task, once again, left solely to Community Representatives who, I might add, are working individuals so their time is of equal value to that of any Councillor. In addition, minutes of the HACC shows that SHBC has not attended those meetings, so where is the engagement from those elected to represent us?

This situation is not confined to local Government. The Department for Transport is also guilty of continually sending out inane responses confirming that nothing has changed. That issue will be dealt with via the ACF which represents airport campaign groups nationwide (such is the level of the problem of aircraft noise now affecting communities UK wide) and meets with the DfT.

On a related matter, I should like to bring to your attention important information regarding complaints made to HAL. We have had heard reports that in our area, residents are being told only 11 people are responsible for all complaints. Once again, this information has been taken at face value. We decided to check the validity of the claim and so a few days ago, sent a short survey to AN3V residents (results attached). It was not scientific but neither were the questions loaded but simply asked if people were still disturbed by noise, if so when, and how often they complained.

Responses are still arriving but of those received to date (192), the number complaining is higher than the 11 being bandied about by some, however, for a variety of reasons, the majority of people either rarely, or never complain.

A quick overview of the 192 responses to date:

- 140 still greatly disturbed by noise
- Early morning and evening/late night noise causing greatest disturbance
- 68 consider noise about the same as during the trials, 40 consider it worse
- 173 rarely or never complain. Why?
 - Unsure how to complain
 - Lack of faith in complaints procedure
 - Too busy
 - Misconception about detail required to include in complaint.
 - Assume complaining to HCNF Community Representative is sufficient

Sample comments (full list in attached document):

'Heathrow has been disingenuous in its statements and dealing with complaints in my view. This is very worrying going forward'

'It is definitely getting worse, particularly at night. The levels of noise and times of disturbance are wholly unacceptable'

'The ongoing impact of flights causing sleep disturbance (with consequent health impacts) before 7am and after 10 pm is totally unacceptable'

'The complaints I logged to Heathrow are still only a small fraction of the planes which disturb me as it is not always feasible to make a complaint'

'I do not complain on a regular basis due to a scripted reply from HAL every time, the facts that HAL refuse to acknowledge is aircraft now perform tighter turns over our airspace resulting in higher engine noise due to manoeuvres with reduced altitude aircraft noise has increased significantly'

We have sent details to those registered as being affected by aircraft noise to address some of the issues residents have cited for not complaining. Coincidence it may be, but the number of complaints on HALs Operational Data site has increased in the last few days since our survey went out.

This means that far from an improving picture, **the scale of the issue of noise is being significantly under-reported**, something which should be of great concern to all parties involved and Government and Councils could have verified for themselves had they taken the time to investigate the situation with residents as we have done. Further confirmation it pays to investigate rather than accept statements unchallenged.

Finally, I would be grateful if you could you advise if you have yet had a response from British Airway' CEO regarding the information on changes to SOI as requested. One of the HCNF sub groups is working on operational procedures and also identified the need to survey airlines on this very subject so it is highly relevant information.

Once you have had the opportunity to read the Gate Analysis Summary, I look forward to hearing from you with the actions you will now take to address the issues raised in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Rosalie James
Aircraft Noise 3 Villages

cc:

Cllr M Goodman
Cllr M Gibson
Cllr C Sturt
Cllr R Jennings-Evans