

# Night-time noise abatement objectives for the designated airports from October 2025

## Introduction

Thank you for responding to our consultation on night-time noise abatement objectives for the designated airports (Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted) beyond October 2025.

Closing date is 9 May 2023.

## Accessibility statement

Read our [accessibility statement for SmartSurvey forms \[opens in a new window\]](#).

## Confidentiality and data protection

The DfT is carrying out this consultation to gather views and evidence on what a night-time noise abatement objective should be. [Our DfT online form and survey privacy notice \[opens in a new window\]](#) for more information on how your personal data is processed in relation to this survey.

In addition to the information outlined in the privacy notice, for organisations we ask:

- its [size \[opens in a new window\]](#)
- name of the organisation for identification
- the main activity of the organisation, to ascertain your relationship with the topic

## Personal details

### 1. Your (used for contact purposes only):

name?

email?

### 2. You are responding as an: \*

- individual? (Go to section 'Night-time noise abatement objectives for designated airports')
- X  organisation?

## Organisation details

### 3. Your organisation is:

- a business or firm?

- a trade body?
- an academic organisation?
- a research organisation?
- a community group?
- X another type of organisation?

An Airport Consultative Committee

#### 4. Your organisation name is?

Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee

#### 5. What is the main activity of the organisation?

A statutory committee that works constructively with the Airport to seek to reach a common understanding across a wide range of different interests enabling us to give a balanced view to the Airport, the Government, and/or the Civil Aviation Authority on economic, social, environmental, and passenger matters arising from the Airport's operation and future development plans.

#### 6. What is the number people your organisation employs?

- 1 to 50
- 51 to 100
- Above 100

None

## Night-time noise abatement objectives for designated airports

The government sets night-time operating restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports. These airports are designated for the purposes of noise regulation under the Civil Aviation Act 1982. We last consulted on these controls in December 2020. The decision, published in July 2021, rolled-over the existing restrictions for a period of three years, putting in place the current regime covering the period from October 2022 to October 2025.

Consultation on the next night flight regime can be expected to launch in late 2023. Ahead of that consultation, we are now seeking views and evidence on what night-time noise abatement objectives should be for the designated airports for that next night flight regime. We are also seeking views on how the proposed night-time noise abatement objective should be assessed to ensure it is successful.

The purpose of a noise abatement objective is to act as the enabling statement that provides the focus for any necessary noise measures. The intention of the government is to have a night-time noise abatement objective which is aligned with our national aviation noise policy statement, and which includes measurable and achievable outcomes against which progress can be assessed, and which can achieve a balance between the needs of different stakeholder groups.

For the purpose of the regime to commence in October 2025, we now seek views on using the following night-time noise abatement objective:

"Whilst supporting sustainable growth and recognising the importance to the UK of maintaining freight connectivity, to limit and where possible reduce, the adverse effects of aviation noise at night on health and quality of life".

This night-time noise abatement objective would apply to all three of the designated airports (Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted) and would apply to the night period (11pm to 7am).

**Select the airport for which you wish to provide your views (you may select more than one option).**

- Heathrow (Complete section 'Heathrow')
- X  Gatwick (Complete section 'Gatwick')
- Stansted (Complete section 'Stansted')

## Gatwick

For the purpose of the regime to commence in October 2025, we now seek views on using the following night-time noise abatement objective:

"Whilst supporting sustainable growth and recognising the importance to the UK of maintaining freight connectivity, to limit and where possible reduce, the adverse effects of aviation noise at night on health and quality of life".

**13. To what extent do you agree, or disagree, with our night-time noise abatement objective for Gatwick airport?**

- Strongly agree (Skip questions 15, 16 and 17)
- Agree (Skip questions 15, 16 and 17)
- Neither agree nor disagree
- X  Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know (Go to question 18)

## Gatwick - night-time noise abatement objective

**14. Provide a reasoning for your answer.**

The change to include "Limit, and where possible reduce..." could be considered a strengthening from the previous objective. However, the objective requires a reduction in night

flights only “where possible” without any attempt to define the criteria to be used in determining what is “possible”. GATCOM’s previous responses to night noise consultations have advocated that night flights at the airport should not increase and this continues to be relevant.

The wording does reflect the movement away from an objective focusing on the number of people affected by noise, to a greater focus on the adverse effects on health and quality of life and this is welcomed.

With regard to ‘freight connectivity’ Gatwick has almost no dedicated freight flights. To exclude Passenger flights in the Gatwick statement establishes a disproportionate restriction on the airport’s activity compared to using the same term for other London airports. Both long and short haul passenger flights, but not cargo currently use Gatwick airport in the night period.

This proposal is also inconsistent with policy in other sectors where the working hours of most noise generating commercial operations are much more robustly controlled by regulations or planning conditions.

## Gatwick - night-time noise abatement objective

**15. Would alternative wording be preferable for the night-time noise abatement objective?**

Yes

No (Go to question 18)

Don't know (Go to question 18)

## Gatwick - night-time noise abatement objective

**16. Provide a reasoning for your answer.**

Many GATCOM members want to see fewer night flights and some GATCOM members advocate a total ban on night flights, and suggest if any night flights are to be permitted, they should be limited to those that are of very substantial economic importance or emergencies.

Some GATCOM members feel that a change to incorporate passenger flights is advised as per Government Policy: ‘There should be a balance between the local and national economic and consumer benefits of night flights, both in terms of passenger and freight operations, against their social and health implications, in line with ICAO’s Balanced Approach’

**17. Provide alternative wording on a night-time noise abatement objective.**

We suggest the wording to include passengers as detailed above

In addition, whilst allowing flights of substantial economic importance that could not be operated at other times or emergencies, to limit and substantially reduce, year on year, the number of night flights and the adverse effects of aviation noise at night on health and quality of life.

## Gatwick - assessing the night-time noise abatement objective

In recognition that each of the designated airports and its environs has different characteristics, consideration was given to setting different night-time noise abatement objectives for each designated airport. However, on balance, we believe that the core noise abatement aim remains the same at each airport.

The different characteristics of each airport and its environs could be addressed by the use of different metrics to measure achievement against the objective, rather than within the objective itself.

The wording of the night-time noise abatement objective reflects our movement away from an objective focusing on the number of people affected by noise, to a greater focus on the adverse effects on health and quality of life.

Although number of people could obviously remain an indicator used to measure success against the objective, we are keen to hear views and evidence on what metrics could be used to measure success against the objective.

### **18. How should the proposed night-time noise abatement objective for Gatwick airport be assessed to ensure it is successful?**

Clear targets should be set to reduce aircraft noise at night and operations measured against the targets.

The wording reflects the movement away from an objective focusing on the number of people affected by noise, to a greater focus on the adverse effects on health and quality of life. Although number of people could obviously remain an indicator used to measure success against the objective. Health is an important factor affecting residents when there is some sleep deprivation and must be considered and assessed.

GATCOM is pleased that the DfT have commissioned an aviation night noise effects (ANNE) study, to examine the relationship between aviation noise on sleep disturbance and annoyance, and how this varies by different times of the night. There should be similar assessment of the health impacts on the workforce that facilities night flights.

## **Final comments**

### **25. Any other comments?**

The Act which governs the night noise regime was passed in 1982. Since then, night noise has grown all around the country and other UK airports almost certainly now surpass the number of night flights the designated airports had in 1982, but only same 3 airports remain designated. It seems unfair that Gatwick should have a regime but not others (given any flights may cause health issues for residents).

There is a case for strengthened and more consistent night flight regulation, and reductions in night flights, at all UK airports. DfT should consider additional airport designation to achieve that goal, provided it does not result in additional night flights or night noise at Gatwick.