

## **DFT CONSULTATION: NIGHT FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS AT HEATHROW, GATWICK & STANSTED AIRPORTS**

### **GATCOM response**

1. GATCOM's membership brings together a broad range of interests including local authorities, local community and environmental groups, businesses, tourism, airlines, passengers, and other users of the airport to discuss a wide variety of matters concerning the operation and future development of Gatwick Airport. Given this broad range of interests there is a diverse and disparate mix of views on the issue of night flights from those member organisations wishing to see a complete ban on night flights, those wishing to see changes to the existing restrictions to reduce the number of night movements and further reduce the negative impacts on communities and health as a result of sleep disturbance, to those wishing to see either no change in the current restrictions or a potential to increase night movements.
2. GATCOM acknowledges that Gatwick night flights play a critical role in supporting global and regional connectivity for business and for leisure and tourism. It is acknowledged that many of the Low-Cost Airlines Business Models are based on the current regime.
3. However, night flights also create nuisance and disturbance for those communities under the flight paths which have an impact on health as a result of sleep disturbance. The importance of addressing and reducing the negative impacts for communities needs to be given equal weight in a fair and balanced way.
4. There has been no full review of the night flights regime since 2006, therefore the importance of commencing a full comprehensive review of the regime should not be underestimated and should be commenced at the earliest opportunity and not exceed beyond 2028.
5. GATCOM is disappointed that government has not been able to complete the aviation night noise effects (ANNE) study before bringing these current proposals forward. However, GATCOM does acknowledge that the results of the ANNE study and the aviation noise attitudes survey are important and therefore recognises the need to await the outcomes of these studies before suggesting any changes to the regime.
6. GATCOM is pleased that the Noise Abatement Objective has been amended to reflect some of the views GATCOM submitted in the previous consultation.
7. Some GATCOM Members feel that quota rollover from one season to another should not be permitted. The main origin of the rollover is because Easter can on occasion fall in the winter season. Annual allowance had previously been considered but is not felt that is the answer. The carry over allowance is counter to the government's objective to limit and reduce noise. Taken together, the carry over allowance and dispensations can potentially add a significant number of extra night flights in a season. In 2023 Gatwick rolled over more than 300 flights. GATCOM would ask the DfT to remove the roll over option and reduce Winter quotas much closer to actual usage. It should be noted that the Airline Members of GATCOM do not support this view.
8. GATCOM is pleased that the Government has updated the guidance on night flight dispensations and that this will take effect from the start of the winter 2024 to 2025 season with the exception of a requirement for the designated airports to write a letter to the Secretary of State regarding dispensations, which will take effect for the summer 2024 season. GATCOM would like further information to understand what the Secretary of State will do with this information being provided on dispensations.

9. GATCOM welcomes the additions the Government has made in the updated guidance limiting the approval of dispensations and would urge a further tightening in the future, reflecting the principle that dispensations should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.