

Main thematic area: Economics/Science/Technology

Cost: £/££/£££

Understanding and managing community responses to aircraft noise exposure

Aviation growth and noise

Noise disturbance is the single most significant issue raised by local organisations concerned about airport expansion. But aviation growth is forecast to outstrip the rate of technical and operational improvement with the result that the number of people exposed to noise around UK airports is could increase, a trend that is unsustainable.

Improving communication

The absence of a common language of reporting, communication and negotiation in relation to aircraft noise is a key factor. Poor understanding of conventional noise indicators amongst the general public not only restricts the dialogue between airports and their neighbouring communities but can create mistrust between the two groups. This in turn limits both airports' attempts to develop effective noise control programmes and the willingness of communities to contribute positively to them. Unnecessary community disturbance and opposition to airport growth is often the result.

Testing new indicators

This study will test the viability of new measures of noise exposure which have been designed to address these issues. New noise indicators allow users to 'see inside' aircraft noise contours and learn about location of flight tracks and types of aircraft allocated to those tracks. They may also provide a better understanding of the impact of aircraft noise on peoples' lives and the factors that affect the tolerance of aircraft noise.



Local consultation

Working with the Aviation Environment Federation, researchers will conduct focus group interviews of residents living near airports to assess the value of conventional and new noise indicators. They will look particularly at:

- whether indicators allow residents to describe the noise climate at a particular location
- whether or not indicators are easily understood by the general public
- the value of noise indicators in developing new operational practices
- the extent to which indicators could empower local residents to work with the airport to minimise disturbance and improve dialogue.

A sustainable way forward on noise

If the new measures are found to be successful they will improve communication between airports and neighbouring communities relating to aircraft noise disturbance. They will also help introduce improved noise control measures that enhance the potential for airport growth so that the social and economic benefits of air transport may continue.

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Duration: 24 months

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