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New Research Shows True Impact of Aircraft Noise Pollution

The Countryside Charity, CPRE, is today (Jan 27) calling on the Government to improve the way it monitors aircraft noise after new research shows current maps seriously underestimate the problem.

This comes in the face of proposals for airport expansion across the country and as the Government prepares a new aviation strategy.

The research, commissioned by CPRE, was carried out by Aviation Consultants, To70. The study maps data which measures the impact of noise pollution at lower levels than those currently mapped in the UK. These low levels, which are already used for monitoring noise pollution in other European countries, are believed to be a better indicator of the true impact of noise pollution on the countryside and urban areas.

The research is a central part of a new report: **‘Flight Blight: The social and environmental cost of aviation expansion’**.

The report uses Gatwick airport as an example and finds that applying appropriate standards **increases the area impacted by aircraft noise fivefold**. If this European style modelling was applied to other airports it is expected it would show large increases in the areas affected by noise.

Campaigners say measuring noise at a lower level than currently mapped is a more accurate representation of the extent and severity of the noise pollution:

“We are becoming more sensitive to low level aircraft noise,” says CPRE Sussex Director, Kia Trainor. “For many people it is not just a minor annoyance: Noise has been linked to serious health issues such as cardiovascular disease, depression and anxiety and disturbed sleep”.

“There are also other less quantifiable impacts such as fear - for example about climate change or safety - and the stress caused by the discovery that a formerly quiet location where you live is increasingly blighted by noise pollution”.

CPRE London Director, Neil Sinden agrees and believes that the impact of noise pollution is becoming increasingly important:

“While much of the debate over aviation expansion has quite rightly focused on the climate change impacts,” he says. “The more immediate impacts of noise pollution that has direct effects on human health are increasingly important. The Government’s forthcoming aviation strategy must fully address both sets of issues.”

The report was commissioned by CPRE’s Network Aviation Group (CPRE NAvG) which is comprised of CPRE branches in the South East affected by aviation noise. The report makes the following four recommendations:

1. The UK should monitor and report at lower noise threshold levels as this better reflects people’s experience of aircraft noise.
2. Government should commission independent research into the impact of aviation noise on health.
3. The Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN) should be given statutory powers so that communities' distrust of the aviation industry is reduced.
4. The Government should include aviation CO2 emissions within the net zero greenhouse gas emissions target and further aviation expansion should be ruled out on climate grounds.

Andy Smith, Director of CPRE Surrey believes ICCAN could play a key role:

“ICCAN should be given additional powers, to genuinely reduce levels of aircraft noise,” he says. “Its role is not to restrict the growth of the industry, but to attempt to reduce the amount people who feel the need to complain about noise.”

The full report is attached.

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