

AIRCRAFT NOISE ACTION GROUP (ANAG)



BRIEFING: Newcastle Airport: 2014 Airspace Change Proposal: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) assessments.

A. Background

1. In February 2014, Newcastle Airport (NIAL) submitted an Airspace Change Proposal (“ACP”) to the CAA to allow it to use P-RNAV (satnav) to manage aircraft departures. It was approved in September 2014 and implemented in early 2017.
2. Satnav technology enables the Airport to send departures down a very narrow flightpath, on or close to its precise centre line. It also reduces the role of Air Traffic Controllers working from the NIAL control tower.
3. Previously, departing aircraft were widely spread either side of the flightpath centre line and noise was spread over a wider area. Residents were overflown less frequently and therefore experienced fewer noise events. The noise impact was shared and diluted.
4. After implementation, residents under and close to the departure flightpaths are being overflown frequently, with nearly all departures flying down or very close to the centre line and are consequently experiencing a major increase in noise impact.

B. What the Civil Aviation Authority did with NIAL’s ACP

The Civil Aviation Authority (“CAA”) assessed the Airport’s 2014 Airspace Change Proposal (“ACP”) under three headings: **Operational; Environmental; and Consultation**. ANAG has copies of these obtained by a Freedom of Information request.

The ACP was not submitted because of any shortage of airspace around the Airport, there was none and there is none now. It was done to achieve cost and efficiency savings for the benefit of the business, this was clearly stated in the application and repeated in the assessments made by the CAA.

The **Environmental Assessment** is the most contentious of the three. It was passed in spite of the Airport’s failure to mention or assess the increase in noise impact that would result from the change. The CAA commented on this omission several times as it also commented that the Airport had failed to provide any evidence to back up claims it made around fuel savings and reduced CO2 emissions. Noise pollution, fuel use and CO2 emissions are major elements in any environmental impact assessment and these, at least should always be fully laid out and validated by evidence.

The CAA also commented that there were significant technical plus other inconsistencies and omissions in the NIAL ACP proposal.

ANAG thinks that it is inconceivable that NIAL, with the considerable technical knowledge and expertise at its disposal, would not have worked out that the change to flying aircraft down a very narrow flightpath would increase the overfly rate for residents close to or under the flightpath centre line and therefore increase the frequency of noise events (see section **A** above). Even with minimal technical

knowledge it would be possible to work this out, or, having worked it out, NIAL chose to omit or ignore it.

As a consequence, at the very least, ANAG thinks that NIAL was negligent in this respect. ANAG goes further, however, and is of the view that NIAL was making sure that information on the noise issue was omitted so that residents would not be aware of the negatives when the proposal went out for public consultation. ANAG is surprised that the CAA, with its specialist knowledge and experience, did not identify this and take this view as well and did not insist on full disclosure and did not then reject the public consultation for at least this reason alone (there are others).

If the public had known unambiguously about the noise impact issues, it is reasonable to assume that there would have been significant objections to the proposal – in practice there were none. ANAG is of the view that even if the public consultation **process** was adequate in terms of scope and detail (ANAG's view is that it wasn't – this will come in a separate briefing), the content of that process was missing key noise impact information that might have resulted in a substantial challenge to the proposal.

So, in conclusion:

- ANAG thinks that the evidence indicates that NIAL probably covered up the noise impact issue in its 2014 ACP. **NIAL should be held to account for this by the CAA.**
- ANAG also thinks that CAA failed to apply its own rules adequately and failed in its duty of care by approving the proposal in the light of its own negative comments in the assessment about the noise issue and other elements of the proposal. **The CAA should have rejected NIAL's ACP.**

A zipped file with the 3 CAA Assessments in it can be found here:

<https://cp.sync.com/dl/ebf473220#c6j8idv5-wgqhhptj-6azk78hi-gi7vqmg7>

The Assessments as separate documents can be found here on ANAG's website

<https://www.aircraftnoiseaction.com/links-and-downloads> in the Downloads list

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