

CAGNE
Communities Against Gatwick
Noise and Emissions
The umbrella aviation community and
environment group for Sussex, Surrey and Kent

26th March 2024

Rob Bishton
CEO of CAA
Gatwick Airport
Gatwick
West Sussex

Cc Jonathan Drew, Gatwick Airport MPs and Aviation Minister

Dear Mr Bishton

With reference to the letter to Jonathan Drew chair of the Gatwick Airport Noise Executive Board (14th March) concerning the CAA meeting of 12th February. We firstly thank Mr Drew for facilitating this meeting that CAGNE has requested prior to the outset of FASIS.

Firstly, CAGNE is the umbrella aviation community and environment group for Sussex, Surrey, and Kent; as such, we are fully aware of the CAP1616 process, being party to the (then) CAA meetings to move from CAP725 to the new seven-stage consultation process. This process has subsequently been weakened to reduce costs for aviation, although the most recent change to sectionalise must be welcomed.

We therefore find the CAA letter to be 'basic' and not answering key questions that were posed to you and your team. We would expect a more specific response from a statutory body, seeking to answer questions instead of providing history and rules, we find this to be non-respectful of our members and organisation now in its 10th year.

The CAA refusal to re-undertake the move from stage 2 to 3 of CAP1616 is, at the least, negligent of a statutory body. The CAA must therefore be seen as supporting a poor consultation process that has been operated by the sponsor, Gatwick Airport. This poor consultation process has been raised with both Gatwick and the CAA by many, including elected members.

You state, 'designs continue to be influenced and amended after stage 3'. How have the designs been influenced today, when only aviation understands what is being presented and has a fixed agenda to have airspace changed at any price to those on the ground?

The lack of understanding is clearly illustrated by the questions asked by elected members who have attended FASIS workshops at Gatwick. CAGNE therefore ask how can designs 'be influenced' going forward, if such poor mapping (not even over OSM) continues to be used? You mentioned at the meeting that this was 'by design'. Does this mean that it is 'by design' that relevant lay people cannot understand the mapping or the process? This will seem negligent if you sincerely wish for informed feedback to be provided as part of the CAP1616 process.

You cannot build sound foundations for a process if the undercurrent is one of mistrust of the operator; yet to date, there is considerable distrust by residents of the Gatwick FASIS process.

You mention a 'balanced approach' which we do not believe has yet been offered by the Gatwick FASIS process. What is going forward with ACOG and NATS illustrates further that residents are to be 'like lambs to the slaughter' for the sake of aviation growth.

The 'call in criteria' is 'last chance saloon' for residents, yet the hurdle is set so high that it will be difficult for rural communities to achieve, especially as the process seeks to pitch communities against each other as they fight not to have the increased (new) noise. To date, the sponsor has not communicated with those who could be newly impacted, which alone points to the process being flawed. Those who chose not to live under flight paths in the past are now threatened with being subjected to unwanted noise and devaluation of their homes, due to a desire for growth from the CAA, aviation, and government.

The complexity of the process that seems to be 'by design' actively prevents those on the ground from being informed or party to airspace change. We raised this in our presentation and through various CAA consultations, and letters to your office. Not that the process or the subject matter should be complex in themselves, but that the poor CAA consultation and lack of details by the sponsor (in this case, Gatwick Airport) are signs of neglect of duty to be transparent.

CAGNE, having been invited by your environment team to meet to discuss our 'pledge to fly less' campaign, posed a direct question to you in our presentation, which you have not answered. Why is the consumer not informed, when booking a flight, of the carbon it would release, where there exist alternative greener forms of airline or transport to that destination? This is similar to the warning on a cigarette pack, educating the consumer so they can make informed decisions. NATS holds this data, so it would seem a simple objective for the CAA to implement as mandatory on all booking sites.

Compensation is offered with a new runway but not currently by this process, yet you mention the noise metrics. These metrics are out of date and do not reflect the noise events that residents experience, or the loss of house value, due to Gatwick being surrounded by rural areas valued on tranquillity. We appreciate this is down to policy, but is something that we would hope that the CAA, as a statutory body, would bring to the Minister for change, to reflect the damage that the modernisation of airspace is inevitably going to cause to innocent residents.

You state ‘CAA does not meet individually with local stakeholders or campaign groups’. During the meeting, you referred to ‘when we met last time Mr Lloyd, you set me challenges which I took to the board’, or words to that effect. Mr Lloyd wears many disguises in which he has had privileged access to the CEO of the CAA and, from the meeting, it would seem your predecessor as well. CAGNE was a founder of ANCF which is now part of AEF. We have checked with AEF and no mandate was given through ANCF for any challenges to be set or discussed with you, so we can only presume the meeting(s) with Mr Lloyd were conducted as an individual or as a member of two Gatwick noise campaign groups; this suggests that privileged access and influence has been accepted by the CEO of this statutory body.

We attach two documents, the CAGNE ACOG consultation response and the CAGNE paper on ‘an unbalanced approach’.

We look forward to hearing from you with key answers on where you are to act to ensure that all communities have a balanced and fair voice going forward; that includes those who could be newly impacted by design and the planet. We do not believe the government has set out to fly over new communities, so we can only presume that this is the desire of aviation being facilitated by the CAA ‘by design’.

Yours sincerely

CAGNE Committee

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