

# London in a spin - a review of helicopter noise

October 2006





# **London in a spin -a review of helicopter noise**

October 2006

# copyright

**Greater London Authority  
October 2006**

**Published by**

Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London SE1 2AA

**[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)**

enquiries **020 7983 4100**

minicom **020 7983 4458**

**ISBN 10: 1 85261 922 8**

**ISBN 13: 978 1 85261 922 0**

This publication is printed on recycled paper

**Cover photo** © Civil Aviation Authority

## Chair's foreword



We are all aware of the adverse effect that aircraft noise has on residents across most of London. However, Londoners are not just disturbed by aeroplane noise. Our investigation has drawn attention to the less publicised issue of helicopter noise, which is having a negative impact on the quality of life for many people.

The problem is not just confined to those living near the Heliport in Battersea. It is more widespread than that, for we have heard from people living in places such as Walthamstow, Lewisham and Kingston.

Anecdotal evidence points to an increase in helicopter usage by commercial companies, emergency services, the military, advertisers and the media. However, it has been very difficult to obtain accurate data to establish the extent of the problem. We are aware that it is also difficult and confusing to complain about helicopter noise because it is unclear which organisation is responsible for dealing effectively with the complaint. At the moment, it seems to Londoners that there is little that can be done to address helicopter noise. We call for much more effective monitoring of helicopter movements and a clear and accessible public complaints system.

We also believe that there should be a charge to cover the cost of helicopters flying through the airspace of airports and using their air traffic services. This charge could help to control demand for helicopter traffic around London and reduce noise disturbance for residents.

Another way to reduce the impact of noise on residents would be for the Government to offer operators greater incentives to replace older and noisier helicopters by giving a write down allowance of 25% for all helicopters.

We share the frustration of Londoners. The time has come for the Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority to take action in reducing the environmental impact of helicopter noise and thus improve the quality of life of Londoners.

I would like to give thanks to the rest of the Committee and to everyone who contributed their views and comments to this investigation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Darren Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Darren Johnson AM**  
**Chair, Environment Committee**

## **Executive summary**

This is the first comprehensive review of helicopter noise in the capital.

Our investigation has highlighted growing concern among a number of groups of residents as to the impact of helicopter noise on their quality of life. Helicopter movements have been growing over the past few years and will remain a distinctive feature of urban living.

Our report identifies a number of important gaps in the monitoring and available public information of helicopter movements across London's airspace. The report makes a number of short-term practical recommendations to the Government and the Civil Aviation Authority to develop a consistent database to allow the public to monitor helicopter movements and to develop a robust complaints procedure so the public's concerns are taken seriously.

Better engagement with local people directly affected by helicopter noise is needed. To assist with local consultation, we advocate the rapid establishment of a London Heliport Consultative Committee, consisting of the operator of Battersea Heliport, Wandsworth Council and local residents to address residents' concerns about helicopter movements and noise.

The Environment Committee has also examined a number of medium and longer-term issues such as: possible changes to the way London's airspace is managed; the possibility of a user charge for operators which would begin to price the environmental impact of helicopter usage and cover the increased costs for using air traffic services; and more effective write-down incentives for older, noisier helicopters and future heliport provision.

We believe that following through on our recommendations will improve the management of helicopter traffic and reduce the environmental impact of helicopter noise, which would lead to an improvement in the quality of life for London residents. We look forward to an on-going dialogue with Government as to how best to achieve this shared objective.

# Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Chair’s foreword .....	1
Executive summary .....	2
<b>Report</b>	
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Data collection and monitoring of helicopter noise and movements .....	6
3. Public information.....	10
4. Airspace design .....	15
5. Possible ways forward .....	19
<b>Annexes</b>	
1. Recommendations.....	29
2. The Environment Committee.....	31
3. List of those who provided views and information .....	32
4. Aviation management regime.....	37
5. Principles of London Assembly scrutiny .....	38
6. Orders and translations .....	39

# 1. Introduction

## *The purpose of the investigation*

- 1.1 Anecdotal evidence from the public has indicated a growing concern with helicopter noise. There is no comprehensive database of helicopter movements across London, so it is impossible to tell the extent to which this noise nuisance has increased. This report sets out to establish whether helicopter noise is on the rise and what can be done to mitigate its affect on the quality of life in the capital.
- 1.2 The Environment Committee obtained evidence from a wide range of sources including from central and local Government, the aviation sector, environmental organisations and the public more broadly. A Committee meeting on 13 July 2006 brought together a number of interested bodies and concerned residents to discuss the issues and explore possible solutions.

## *Key issues*

- 1.3 The key issues we explore in the report include:
  - data collection and monitoring of helicopter noise and movements;
  - provision of public information regarding helicopter noise data and complaints procedures;
  - airspace design; and
  - possible ways forward, including airspace management, technological issues, existing and future heliport provision.
- 1.4 Why are public complaints on the rise? We discovered a number of reasons for this. The number of helicopter movements across London has increased significantly over the past four years. Most helicopters flying through central London are authorised to follow the route of the Thames, and there has been a boom in residential developments along the River. Also, helicopters have recently been allowed to fly lower over London, as in 2005 the Secretary of State for Transport approved an amendment to reduce the minimum altitude for aircraft from 1500 to 1000 feet to bring the UK in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation recommendations.
- 1.5 We have also been made aware of the concerns expressed by local residents about helicopters being held over some areas of London, such as at Greenwich and the Isle of Dogs. This practice has exacerbated the level of noise disturbance for these residents.
- 1.6 We found that the operational handling of helicopter traffic within the London Control Zone is dictated by the need to ensure safety and there are no specific requirements to minimise noise or environmental impacts. The Civil Aviation Authority is powerless to address the issue of helicopter noise under current regulations. Safety is their prime concern and the environmental impact of helicopter noise does not receive the same priority. When the public complain about helicopter noise nothing seems to be done to address this problem, thus further compounding the sense of frustration.



- 1.7 The Committee has sought to address the problem of helicopter noise by making practical recommendations regarding the key issues identified above. Most of the recommendations that we have proposed are aimed at the Department for Transport, which is responsible for aviation policy. Given the growing public concern and the need for a comprehensive response to the issues raised, we call on the Department for Transport to undertake a full review of the impact of helicopter movements and noise in London over the next twelve months.

**Recommendation 1.**

**The Department for Transport should undertake a full review of the impact of helicopter movements and noise in London over the next twelve months, with the aim of putting in place a series of policy responses designed to mitigate the impact of this form of noise pollution on Londoners' lives.**

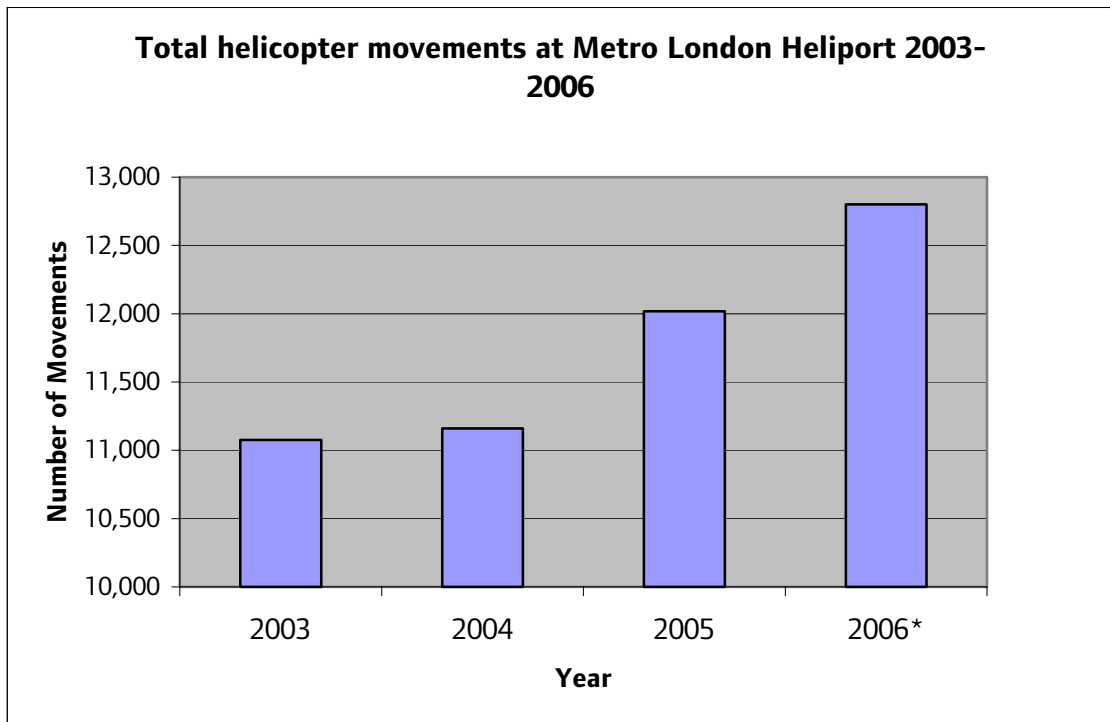
## 2. Data collection and monitoring of helicopter noise and movements

### *Data collection of helicopter noise and movements*

- 2.1 Members of the public believe that helicopter movements have increased and that helicopter noise is a problem. The vast majority of the 200 written submissions we received are from residents disturbed by helicopter noise.

*“There is a feeling that helicopter traffic is increasing and noise problems are becoming a cause for concern.” (Imperial Wharf resident)*

- 2.2 However, we have no way of knowing the true extent of the problem. There is no detailed data available and, as far as we know, no London-wide ‘helicopter noise census’ or mapping has ever been done. The statistical evidence we have indicates a significant increase in helicopter movements over the past four years, although the figures are not out of line with data over a longer time frame.



\*Estimate for 2006

- 2.3 Battersea Heliport is London’s only commercial heliport. It has planning permission for a maximum of 12,000 commercial movements per year, which on average is about 30 helicopter movements per day. There are exemptions for police, air ambulance and military helicopter movements to and from the

heliport. **Therefore, it is possible for there to be more than the restricted 12,000 helicopter movements per year.** The Civil Aviation Authority<sup>1</sup> publishes data on helicopter take-offs and landings at Battersea Heliport, but this does not include helicopters that fly into or across London from airfields around London. The emergency services and military also use helicopters as part of their operations. The Metropolitan Police helicopters fly over 3000 hours per year, the London Air Ambulance flies about a 1,000 missions per year and there are over 900 military helicopter movements per year from Battersea.

***Total commercial and non-commercial helicopter movements at Metro London Heliport***

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
11,057	10,641	11,666	12,875	11,410	11,667	10,834	11,164	12,018	12,800*

\*estimate for 2006

- 2.4 The National Air Traffic Services<sup>2</sup> do not maintain detailed statistical data on low-level air traffic over London. Their primary purpose is to ensure the safety of aircraft operations. They do not need information on helicopter noise or movements for their own business purposes, and they would not want to impose a burden on their air traffic controllers to collect specific data. However, Alan Jack from the National Air Traffic Services told us that they had taken a snapshot of helicopter activity for a few hours each day over a two week period. Their view was that helicopter traffic had not increased significantly over recent years in the same way that fixed wing traffic has increased.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.5 The British Helicopter Advisory Board<sup>4</sup> also do not collect data but they said that commercial helicopter flights have been more or less stable for the previous two years. However, they claim that there has been an increase in police and air ambulance helicopter flights, which combined are said to account for about 60% of helicopter traffic across London. The Board’s representative, Peter Norton, thought that a significant proportion of the increase in helicopter activity was due to police helicopter flights.<sup>5</sup> We have also received some correspondence from residents complaining about police helicopter operations particularly during the night.

*“I do have an issue with the police helicopters which seem to regularly hover over our area, especially at night. It becomes an infernal nuisance when one is trying to get to sleep.” (Leyton resident)*

<sup>1</sup> The CAA is the UK’s independent aviation regulator

<sup>2</sup> NATS provides air traffic control services to aircraft flying in UK airspace, and over the eastern part of the North Atlantic

<sup>3</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006  
<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/index.jsp>

<sup>4</sup> The BHAB is the civil helicopter industry’s trade association

<sup>5</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

- 2.6 Sergeant John Gleeson from the Metropolitan Police Air Support Unit disagreed with the claim that police helicopters were responsible for the increase in helicopter activity. He confirmed that they keep very detailed data on their flights and they had not increased their helicopter activity over the last three years. The police have a budget for 3,300 flying hours per year, this had not increased and they were not permitted to fly more than this allocated amount of hours per year.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, there seems to be disagreement between organisations about which types of helicopter operation are responsible for increases in activity.

### ***Monitoring the impact of helicopter noise and movements***

- 2.7 Phil Roberts from the Civil Aviation Authority told us that data on the impact of helicopter noise does not exist globally in the same way as for fixed-wing aircraft.<sup>7</sup> In particular, data on the human response to helicopter noise was much more limited than for fixed-wing aircraft, which typically generate less variable types of noise. It would thus be difficult to define what statistical information would objectively indicate the impact of helicopter noise. Tim Thomas from the Aviation Environment Federation<sup>8</sup> said that although there might not be any statistics showing a significant increase in flights, his organisation had been getting more enquiries about flights away from the designated helicopter routes. The enquiries were particularly about police helicopters, which are not restricted to the designated routes. The Aviation Environment Federation said that helicopters accounted for almost all of the 95 enquiries that they received from the public in 2005.<sup>9</sup>
- 2.8 In order to assess the environmental impact of helicopter movements, and to establish a baseline, some form of helicopter noise mapping across London would be highly desirable. We are not aware that this has ever been done. Conventional mapping of 'averaged noise', as outlined in the Environmental Noise Directive 2002/49/EC, would almost certainly not pick up what is likely to be causing most disturbance to Londoners.
- 2.9 There was a consensus amongst the experts whom we consulted that there was no joined up collection and monitoring of data between organisations such as the Department for Transport, Civil Aviation Authority, National Air Traffic Services and police. The police keep detailed records of their own operations, but other organisations do not collect and retain data on a consistent basis, and that data is not shared between them, beyond immediate operational needs. To help collective understanding, data on helicopter movements over London needs to be collated, recorded and published on a consistent and regular basis to enable change to be monitored. This view is supported by environmental organisations HACAN Clearskies, UK Noise Association and Aviation Environment Federation.
- 2.10 There are obviously cost issues involved in undertaking such a data collection exercise. The Civil Aviation Authority appears to be best-placed to collect and analyse helicopter data cost effectively, given its relationship with air traffic

---

<sup>6</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>7</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>8</sup> The AEF is a UK-based association that campaigns exclusively on the environmental impacts of aviation

<sup>9</sup> AEF written evidence

controllers, to whom helicopter pilots report at key points. It already has a duty to take account of any environmental impact in discharging its responsibilities on airspace design and this could be extended. We believe that the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority should first investigate and then establish a mechanism to ensure that research on noise and other data on all helicopter movements is effectively collected, collated, analysed, and published. This would enable organisations to monitor the trend of commercial, emergency services and military helicopter movements in specified areas.

**Recommendation 2.**

**As part of its review, the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority should investigate and then establish a mechanism to ensure that research on noise and other data on all helicopter movements is effectively collected, collated, analysed and published.**

### 3. Public information

- 3.1 Some members of the public have informed us about the difficulties they have encountered in obtaining information about flight movements. The public complaints procedures are confusing and it is not clear which organisation is responsible for dealing with their complaints. Therefore, we have identified three main issues regarding public information:
- the requirement for information on helicopter movements and routes to be published and to be made easily accessible;
  - the need for clearer information to the public on the complaints procedures and the organisation/s responsible for dealing with complaints; and,
  - the importance of improving the public consultation process on changes to airspace.

#### ***Publication of information***

- 3.2 There have been calls for information on helicopter movements and routes to be published and to be made easily accessible. For example, people moving house have a legitimate interest in whether the location is likely to be frequently overflown. The Royal Aeronautical Society believes that objective data about helicopter safety should be published to form part of the public debate on helicopter noise issues.<sup>10</sup> At the moment, very limited data is available, and it can be difficult for the public to find.

*“I have tried to find out what rules helicopters have to follow in taking off and landing from Wandsworth Council, who referred me to the Civil Aviation Department. They referred me elsewhere and I gave up.” (Battersea resident)*

*“The anger and frustration of residents is increased by the lack of information on routes and the regulations they are meant to impose on pilots.” (Wimbledon resident)*

- 3.3 For example, there is no single web-site which contains or provides an obvious ‘way in’ to this information. The National Noise Mapping web-site, [www.noisemapping.org](http://www.noisemapping.org) and/or a web-site associated with the new single non-emergency telephone number, could act as a portal for this purpose. There was consensus between the experts we consulted that the publicity for, and publication of, information on helicopters, including movements, needed to be improved. For security reasons it might not always be possible for the

---

<sup>10</sup> RAS written evidence

emergency services and military to publish data on certain helicopter operations. However, we still think that there is a case for publishing most other data on helicopter movements, where it is not security sensitive.

**Recommendation 3.**

**A single national web-site (for example, extending the role of the national noise mapping web-site), or a clearly publicised portal, should be established by the Department for Transport and/or Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to give public access to data on helicopters, including movements, routes used, and places where holding may be expected.**

***Complaints procedures***

- 3.4 There should be clearer information to the public on the complaints procedures. It is important not only that people know whom to complain to, but that the organisation/s receiving the complaint can actually do something about it. Many members of the public have mentioned this lack of information and communication in their correspondence. Some of them did not know which organisation to contact to make a complaint and, even when they did contact either the Department for Transport or the Civil Aviation Authority, they felt that there was nothing anyone could do to address noise disturbance from helicopters.

*"Is there a body to whom I can direct and air my complaint?"  
(South Woodford resident)*

*"It is impossible to make a complaint." (Covent Garden residents)*

*"The response I got from both the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority is that the flight paths are fairly vague, there are no rules about residential disturbance and basically its tough luck." (Kingston upon Thames resident)*

- 3.5 The aviation management regime is very complex with several organisations being responsible for different aspects of policy, regulation, operation and dealing with complaints from the public. The split of responsibilities for handling complaints is as follows:
- The Department for Transport will respond on matters of overall policy;
  - The Civil Aviation Authority on regulation, airspace design and environmental complaints;

- National Air Traffic Services on airspace operations; and,
  - airport operators deal with complaints where, for example, a take-off appears not to follow established procedures, since they have immediate access to data on that take-off.
- 3.6 Currently, people do not have a single point of reference when they wish to complain. This can cause confusion and dissatisfaction amongst members of the public when they are trying to obtain information or make a complaint. The Department for Transport runs an enquiries service on its website, but it is difficult to navigate. Whilst the Department for Transport receives complaints about helicopter noise, because they do not operate a complaints database they have been unable to provide us with more detailed statistics. They explained that the most common complaints refer to low flying and noise at night from police helicopters. As long as pilots observe the Rules of the Air and flew safely, they cannot be prosecuted for noise disturbance.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.7 The Department for Transport has devolved responsibility for handling environmental complaints, such as aircraft noise, to the Civil Aviation Authority. However, the Civil Aviation Authority can only advise members of the public on the regulations. They cannot investigate complaints unless there is clear evidence of any breach of the Rules of The Air. The Civil Aviation Authority reported that it received 328 complaints nationally in June 2006. About 7% of these complaints were from London and some of them were about helicopter noise, although a definitive figure has not been provided.<sup>12</sup>
- 3.8 The Metropolitan Police reported that they receive about 1 complaint for every 100 hours of flying time. They state that procedures are in place to deal direct with these complaints. They report that they have held a meeting with local councillors and residents to discuss issues regarding the noise impact from their operations.<sup>13</sup>
- 3.9 Several local authorities across London have told us that they receive few complaints about helicopter noise. However, they admitted that this was probably because they did not have any statutory powers to deal with this issue; if contacted by a member of the public, they would refer them to the Department for Transport or the Civil Aviation Authority to handle their complaints. However, Wandsworth Council informed us that they had been overwhelmed with complaints about helicopter noise from the public following the announcement of the Environment Committee’s investigation, and a facility on Wandsworth Council’s website for the public to submit comments.<sup>14</sup>
- 3.10 The Blackheath Society feels that the split of responsibilities between various organisations and the airports does not lead to good governance. They spoke of buck-passing and inefficiency in dealing with complaints.<sup>15</sup>
- 3.11 Rob Grafton from London City Airport acknowledged that the complaints procedures are confusing and it is not clear which organisation is responsible for dealing with complaints. At the moment, he said that London City Airport actually handled a lot of complaints even if they were not directly responsible for them, such as complaints about police helicopters. He suggested that there

---

<sup>11</sup> DFT written evidence

<sup>12</sup> CAA written evidence

<sup>13</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>14</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>15</sup> Blackheath Society written evidence



was a need for a central organisation to deal with aviation noise complaints across London. He thought technology could be installed to enable a single organisation to co-ordinate and deal with noise complaints for the whole area.<sup>16</sup>

- 3.12 Public complaints procedures on helicopter noise need to be made clearer and it would be helpful to the public to have a central organisation logging, co-ordinating and dealing with complaints. It would then be possible to fully understand the scale of the problem and propose solutions to reduce helicopter noise disturbance for residents.
- 3.13 There would also appear to be an opportunity for the new single national non-emergency number to be used for all noise complaints. Suitable arrangements could be established with specialist bodies that are in a position to respond promptly on specific local issues. For example, using real time data to assess whether a particular flight conformed to relevant rules. Some airports already operate systems which store radar track data in such a way as to allow easy analysis of individual movements.
- 3.14 Given that helicopters operate from a variety of locations within and outside the boundary of London, the Department for Transport should take the lead to ensure that clear complaints procedures and contact numbers are in place and that complaints are being logged, co-ordinated and dealt with effectively.

**Recommendation 4.**

**As part of its review, the Department for Transport should take the lead to: make the public complaints procedures clearer, including making any telephone number universally known; that complaints are logged, co-ordinated and dealt with effectively; and that consistent data on complaints is published.**

***Consultation***

- 3.15 There was also concern raised regarding the effectiveness of consultation on airspace changes conducted by aviation authorities. The Civil Aviation Authority confirmed that they did try and publicise any consultations on airspace changes as widely as possible. For example, their consultation on the changes to Rule 5 of the Rules of the Air regarding the lowering of the minimum altitude for helicopters from 1500 to 1000 feet, took place in two phases between November 2002 and May 2004. The first letter of consultation was sent to over 1000 organisations and published on the Civil Aviation Authority web-site and they received 267 responses. Their second letter of consultation received 43 responses. They issued a Letter of Intent in May 2004 and this was also published on their web-site and a press notice issued. However, they did acknowledge that, in this case, the consultees on their list were all from within the aviation community.<sup>17</sup>
- 3.16 Therefore, there would seem to be a case for the Civil Aviation Authority to consult more widely with the public that are likely to be affected, as well as within the aviation community. This would help to make the public more aware and better informed about the issues faced by the Civil Aviation Authority and

<sup>16</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>17</sup> CAA written evidence

other aviation organisations in managing air traffic. We were surprised to learn that the Civil Aviation Authority had not consulted the Mayor regarding their proposals. The Civil Aviation has acknowledged in their evidence that the London Assembly should be on its consultee list for aviation environmental changes. We believe that they should also consult the Mayor of London.

**Recommendation 5.**

**The Civil Aviation Authority should include the London Assembly and the Mayor of London in its consultations, and seek amendment to legislation to make them both statutory consultees, regarding matters that have implications for helicopter noise.**

***Consultative Committee***

- 3.17 Airport consultative committees have been established across the country to provide a mechanism for local residents to discuss issues, such as aircraft noise, with the relevant aviation authorities. Tim Thomas from the Aviation Environment Federation suggested using the existing Heathrow Consultative Committee as a model for establishing a similar helicopter noise consultative committee. In this model, the airport operator provides basic support for the operation of the committee, but the committee is able to operate independently. This could act as a focal point for the public to discuss issues with the relevant aviation bodies and local authorities. Phil Roberts from the Civil Aviation Authority argued that some consultative committees were more effective than others and that it would be difficult to manage one committee covering the whole of London.<sup>18</sup>
- 3.18 We believe that a consultative committee could be useful. Despite the potential difficulties, such a committee could address helicopter noise issues, give local people the chance to discuss their concerns with the relevant authorities, and identify practical ways forward. In the short term, the most practical solution is probably for the operator of London Heliport at Battersea, in association with Wandsworth Council, to establish a London Heliport Consultative Committee. This would, as a first priority, address local residents' concerns about helicopter movements and noise, and seek ways of improving local conditions. The committee's work could be reviewed after two years and best practice shared, enabling assessment of the potential for such a committee to cover a wider area across London.

**Recommendation 6.**

**The operator of London Heliport at Battersea, in association with Wandsworth Council, should establish within 12 months a London Heliport Consultative Committee to, as a first priority, address local residents' concerns about helicopter movements and noise.**

---

<sup>18</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

## 4. Airspace design

4.1 We have been made aware of residents' concerns about the routing and flying altitude of helicopters across the airspace of London. This chapter explains the different types of routes for helicopters and what these are, their flight altitudes, and the reasons why they might be held hovering over a particular location by air traffic control. Therefore, this section on Airspace Design will look at 3 key issues:

- designated and non-designated helicopter routes;
- helicopter holding above residential areas; and,
- operating altitudes of helicopters.

### ***Designated and non-designated helicopter routes***

4.2 Designated helicopter routes have been established within the London Control Zone (CTR) around Heathrow Airport for many years. Helicopters flying through central London are authorised to follow the route of the Thames. Outside central London, but within the London Control Zone CTR around Heathrow, single engined helicopters are required to fly on designated routes. Twin-engined helicopters may depart from designated routes, although in congested airspace air traffic controllers may seek to concentrate flights on established routes.

4.3 Nevertheless, some residents have complained about helicopters apparently not flying over the Thames when travelling through central London. Helicopters operated by the emergency services, such as the police and ambulance service, can operate with greater freedom than commercial helicopters, and police helicopters perform some tasks during the night.

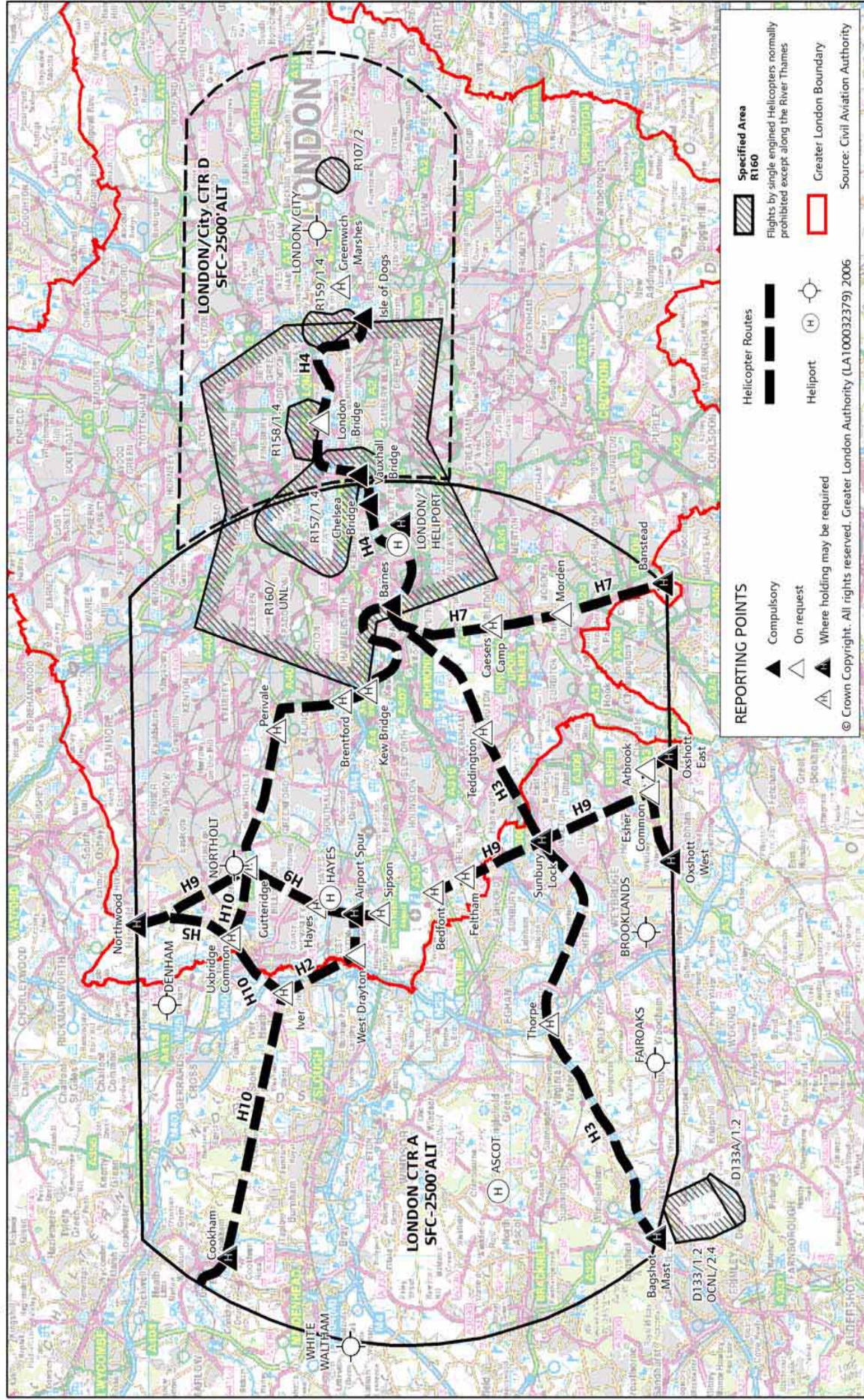
### ***Helicopter holding above residential areas***

4.4 The operational handling of helicopter traffic within the London Control Zone CTR, including holding, is dictated by the need to ensure safety. There appears to be no specific requirements to minimise noise or environmental impacts, other than where there are local arrangements for landing and take-off, and in overall airspace design.

4.5 Many local residents have expressed particular concern at helicopters being held over the Greenwich and Isle of Dogs areas. Environmental organisations have called for a re-examination of the case for holding helicopters over areas such as Greenwich. The Department for Transport needs to consider the issue of helicopter holding taking place regularly in particular areas. They should consider, especially, their policy on 'acceptable' holding periods. The Civil Aviation Authority should review the issue of holding in terms of consulting on options for local airspace redesign.



# Helicopter Routes in the London CTR and London/City CTR





- 4.6 We understand that National Air Traffic Services and the Civil Aviation Authority are considering extending a designated helicopter route along the river eastwards from Greenwich so that helicopters are not held over Greenwich while awaiting clearance to enter controlled airspace. However, this might simply transfer the problem to other parts of East London, particularly with the growth of housing along the river further east. London City Airport have also suggested extending a designated helicopter route to the M25, so the noise footprint would be spread wider and helicopters could be held away from built up areas.<sup>19</sup> We believe that the National Air Traffic Services and Civil Aviation Authority should come forward with proposals on how they plan to deal with the overall issue of helicopter holding at relevant locations across London.

**Recommendation 7.**

**The National Air Traffic Services and Civil Aviation Authority should come forward with proposals on dealing with the issue of helicopter holding at locations across London.**

***Operating altitudes of helicopters***

- 4.7 Helicopters have recently been allowed to fly lower over London. Last year the Secretary of State for Transport approved an amendment to reduce the minimum altitude for aircraft from 1500 to 1000 feet to bring the UK in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation recommendations.
- 4.8 **This reduction in altitude could be a key reason why residents have recently noticed an increase in helicopter noise.** The Aviation Environment Federation argued in their response to the Civil Aviation Authority consultation that any reduction in altitude for flying aircraft would increase noise levels and exacerbate the problem of noise for those residents over-flown by the aircraft.<sup>20</sup> The Royal Aeronautical Society said that helicopters should be required to over-fly at higher altitudes. They argue that there is a direct and dramatic correlation between noise and height.<sup>21</sup>
- 4.9 In 1998, the aviation authorities in Paris raised the minimum height for helicopters from 150m to 200m. This increase was said to have resulted in a reduction in the noise heard on the ground.<sup>22</sup>
- 4.10 We heard evidence that an increase in minimum flying height could not be done in London. Airspace around the city is more constrained; helicopters must be safely separated from fixed-wing aircraft using Heathrow, Northolt and London City Airports. The London CTR Review Group report in September 2005 saw little scope to allow helicopters to operate at higher altitudes because of these separation requirements. The Civil Aviation Authority has confirmed that raising the minimum flying altitude would introduce unacceptable safety risks.
- 4.11 The Civil Aviation Authority considers the environmental impact of proposals when establishing new, or amending existing, controlled airspace. However,

---

<sup>19</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>20</sup> AEF written evidence

<sup>21</sup> RAS written evidence

<sup>22</sup> BruitParif written evidence

they are unable to restrict aerial activity over any particular place or at any particular time for environmental reasons.

- 4.12 The Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority clearly need to take into account the environmental impact of helicopter noise and its adverse impact on local residents, where they can do so without compromising safety. This view is supported in residents' correspondence with us.

*"I understand that the Civil Aviation Authority are only concerned with safety and not noise issues regarding helicopters. It really is about time that helicopters and their flightpaths were subject to noise regulation and stricter controls..." (Banstead resident)*

*"Our quality of life in London is badly affected by aircraft noise. This includes commercial aircraft, private helicopters, police and broadcasting helicopters and model aircraft...we badly need restrictions on this noise pollution or we will all be driven mad!" (Walthamstow resident)*

The Department for Transport should therefore review its guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority so that the environmental impact of helicopter noise is included within its responsibilities.

**Recommendation 8.**

**The Department for Transport should review its guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority so that the environmental impact of helicopter noise is included within its responsibilities.**

## 5. Possible ways forward

5.1 We have discussed the problems faced by residents through the lack of access to and clarity of information about helicopter noise and movements. This has been compounded by the fact that the environmental impact of helicopter operations is given a lower priority when considered by the aviation authorities. We will discuss and propose solutions on how helicopter movements and noise can be best managed to reduce the environmental impact on residents. This section explores solutions to the problem of excessive helicopter noise and will look at:

- airspace management;
- legislation and regulation;
- technology and financial incentives;
- existing and future heliport provision; and,
- future role of the Mayor.

### ***Airspace management***

5.2 As there is a lot of air traffic in limited air space above London, the management of this airspace is complex and requires effective management and control. National Air Traffic Services has overall responsibilities for air traffic control, including for helicopters. Each London airport, including London Heliport at Battersea, has its own air traffic controllers who manage movements within designated airspace around the airport when it is open. Battersea Heliport states that they work with the National Air Traffic Services to smooth the flow into and out of the heliport to reduce the impact of their operation.<sup>23</sup> However, many residents in Battersea and across the Thames in Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea have complained about noise from helicopter operations at the heliport.

5.3 Under its planning permission, to which a strict noise control regime is linked, London City Airport does not permit general helicopter landings and take-offs. Other London airports that have evolved over longer periods - Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted - do allow some helicopter landings and take-offs. The numbers of helicopter movements are limited due to the congested airspace around these airports. Helicopters also land and take-off from airfields such as at Biggin Hill, Denham and Fairoaks. These flights often fly over London.

5.4 Helicopters flying over airports and other areas currently do not pay for air traffic control services from airport operators. If helicopter movements have increased as some of the evidence suggests, and were to increase further, then London City Airport suggests that this may impact on the workloads of its air traffic controllers. London City Airport has expressed concern that there is currently no system to charge helicopter operators for flying over London. Currently, the Airport incurs costs in managing helicopter movements in the area, but does not receive any payment from operators of those helicopters.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Weston Aviation Limited written evidence

<sup>24</sup> London City Airport written evidence

- 5.5 The British Helicopter Advisory Board has confirmed that helicopter operators pay landing charges, which include a cost for air traffic control at the relevant airport. However, they did concur with London City Airport that if there were future growth in helicopter traffic, then it would be reasonable to consider a charge to cover the cost of helicopters flying through the airspace of airports and using their air traffic services.<sup>25</sup>
- 5.6 We believe that, in principle, an appropriate charge could help to control demand for helicopter traffic using the airspace around London. A charge might help to reduce noise disturbance for residents living around a heliport or an airport. Therefore, we agree that it would be sensible to impose a charge on helicopter operators to cover any additional costs for air traffic control services if future demand for helicopter traffic increased. However, before a charge is imposed it would be prudent for the Department for Transport to investigate the feasibility and implications of introducing such a charging mechanism.

**Recommendation 9.**

**As part of its review, the Department for Transport should investigate user charging for any additional air traffic control services required for helicopters.**

**Legislation and regulation**

- 5.7 Some types of helicopter usage attract more public criticism than others. Most people seem to accept the need for the police and ambulance services to use helicopters. They also appear prepared to accept certain military operations that need to use helicopters. However, some members of the public do not see any need to use helicopters for advertising and media. For example, the London Borough of Hounslow said that they would be meeting the Department for Transport to discuss residents' complaints about the increased use of TV helicopters in their area.<sup>26</sup> Helicopters appear to have been increasingly used in recent years by the media, advertising companies, for sight-seeing trips, and for transporting celebrities, for example to pop concerts in Hyde Park.

*"Helicopters taking people for sight-seeing joy rides over London, or helicopters being used for private purposes, seem to us to be an entirely different matter. These uses of helicopters seem to us to be highly objectionable when conducted over a large city. It is very difficult to see how, in view of the amount of disturbance and the environmental impact, these flights can be justified on any ground." (Blackheath resident)*

- 5.8 Carrying advertising banners or flags by helicopter was banned until 1995, when the Government changed the regulations. The Civil Aviation Authority is now empowered to grant licences to operators to allow helicopters to carry advertising. The Authority can, however, only take account of safety, notably whether the helicopter is suitably equipped to carry a banner. It cannot take

<sup>25</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>26</sup> Hounslow Council written evidence



account of the environmental impact of a helicopter flying above a populated area to display advertising.<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly, the Advertising Association supports the freedom of helicopters to carry advertising if it is conducted in a responsible and safe manner. It does not have its own code of conduct on the use of aerial advertising but notifies its members of the British Helicopter Advisory Board's code of practice "Helicopters in the Local Community."<sup>28</sup> At present, Cabair is the only company permitted by the Civil Aviation Authority to fly advertising banners over London.

- 5.9 It is evident from the correspondence which we have received from residents that they do not see the need for helicopters to be used for advertising.

*"In recent months a new insult has been added – commercial advertising. A helicopter higher than most but more noisy as its engine strains towing a massive flag. The progress of the helicopter is slow and so the noise has to be endured for ages." (Islington resident)*

- 5.10 Although the use of helicopters for advertising and media is not essential, we would not want to be draconian and request that it be banned altogether. However, because helicopters used for advertising and media can have a significant noise impact on residents we believe that their activities should be restricted. This could mean that they would have to fly higher, use quieter helicopters and avoid flying at weekends.
- 5.11 We feel that the Civil Aviation Authority should be able to take account of the environmental impact as well as safety issues when issuing licences to operators wishing to use helicopters for advertising and media. This would require a change of the regulations (**see Recommendation 8**). The Civil Aviation Authority could also be given a power to regulate TV helicopters, on the grounds of the specific nature of their use (e.g being more likely to hover over a particular location or fly in the early morning). If the regulations were changed, we believe that the Civil Aviation Authority should impose restrictions on the use of helicopters for advertising and media so that the environmental impact can be minimised.<sup>29</sup>

**Recommendation 10.**

**Following changes to the Regulations, the Civil Aviation Authority should impose restrictions on the use of helicopters for advertising and media so that the environmental impact can be minimised.**

<sup>27</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>28</sup> Advertising Association written evidence

<sup>29</sup> The One London Member would like to see conditions placed on helicopters used for advertising and media only if they are appropriate

## **Technology and financial incentives**

- 5.12 We believe that operators should be offered incentives to use newer, quieter helicopters. The British Helicopter Advisory Board told us that manufacturers of aircraft are making good progress in producing quieter aircraft.<sup>30</sup> However, we believe that it will take time before this will have an impact on reducing aircraft noise.
- 5.13 In the immediate term, the Government should give operators greater incentives to replace older and noisier helicopters. Current tax rules encourage owners to refurbish their existing helicopters rather than replace their older machines. It is not unusual to find 30 year old helicopters still in service.
- 5.14 The British Helicopter Advisory Board believes that HM Revenue and Customs should treat helicopters in the same way as fixed-wing aircraft. Revenue and Customs currently consider fixed-wing aircraft as short-life assets and subject them to a 25% write down allowance. Helicopters are, in contrast, considered to be long-life assets and are subject to a write-down allowance of just 6%.<sup>31</sup> If helicopters were brought in line with fixed-wing aircraft as short-life assets, the British Helicopter Advisory Board believes operators would be more inclined to replace older, noisier helicopters with newer and quieter ones.<sup>32</sup>
- 5.15 Current Inland Revenue rules on Capital Allowances<sup>33</sup> try to distinguish between long and short-life helicopters, when in reality patterns of use are likely to be more complex. The Treasury has accepted in other areas that taxation should reflect environmental costs and encourage sound environmental choices. The Inland Revenue should not impose simplistic asset life distinctions, but take account of the environmental benefits of replacing older helicopters with quieter modern machines. The number of helicopters involved is likely to be small, and the revenue implications modest; the noise reductions, in contrast, could benefit large numbers of the general public. The Department for Transport should work up proposals for submission to the Treasury that would lead to a change in the finance rules to give a write down allowance of 25% for all helicopters. This would encourage operators to write down the capital value of older, noisier helicopters.

### **Recommendation 11.**

**The Department for Transport should submit proposals to the Treasury that would lead to a change in the finance rules to give a write down allowance of 25% for all helicopters.**

### ***Existing heliport provision***

- 5.16 Battersea Heliport opened in 1959. It is limited to a maximum amount of 12,000 commercial helicopter movements per year, which on average is about 30 helicopter movements per day. Weston Aviation informed us that commercial helicopter movements have not risen significantly in recent years, although there were now more movements by the emergency services. **As**

<sup>30</sup> BHAB written evidence

<sup>31</sup> Other than those used for more than 1,000 hours a year, or 600 hours with 2,000 or more landings, or with a maximum take-off weight less than 650 kgs

<sup>32</sup> BHAB written evidence

<sup>33</sup> Inland Revenue Tax Bulletin 46 April 2000 and Inland Revenue Tax Bulletin 68 December 2003

**previously mentioned, emergency services and military helicopter movements are exempt from the 12,000 limit, so it is possible for there to be more than the restricted 12,000 helicopter movements per year.**

Commercial helicopter flights can operate between 7am and up to 11pm every day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's day. There are no scheduled passenger services operating from the Heliport.<sup>34</sup>

- 5.17 The area around the Heliport has, however, been transformed recently with residential apartments replacing industry and warehouses on the river front. Wandsworth Council said that they apply the standard Government guidance on noise under Planning Policy Guidance Note 24 when giving planning permission to new residential developments. However, from the complaints they had received from the public it seemed to them that residents living in these new developments were reporting adverse effects at noise levels lower than the official Government guidance would suggest. **Wandsworth Council have stated that they do not believe that Battersea Heliport is a suitable location long term and that alternative location(s) should be identified to contribute towards meeting future growth in demand.**<sup>35</sup> It is, however, important to note that there are no powers available to force the current operation at Battersea to cease simply if another operation is provided elsewhere.
- 5.18 The increase in housing development near to the Heliport has led to a rise in the number of noise complaints from residents. There is concern amongst local residents that more of the movements are taking place at sensitive times, and by bigger helicopters.

*"It is literally impossible to listen to a TV, even at full volume, whilst a helicopter is passing by and impossible to have a telephone conversation unless all doors and windows are closed which, in Summer time, is unbearable. It is only when you live here day in, day out that you realise how damaging the Heliport noise is to one's enjoyment of living here." (Fulham resident)*

*"The noise from the helicopters is so bad that our living room windows, which face the river, actually shake and rattle." (Battersea residents)*

*"We do understand that living near the Heliport must involve a certain amount of inconvenience and noise disturbance but feel that it is now getting out of control and affecting our lives." (Battersea residents)*

<sup>34</sup> Site visit to Battersea Heliport on 25 July 2006

<sup>35</sup> Wandsworth Council written evidence

- 5.19 A resident from the Imperial Wharf East Residents Association has complained about the noise and fumes generated from helicopters warming up their engines on the tarmac for a considerable amount of time before taking off.<sup>36</sup> A resident at Price's Court, next door to the Heliport, also claims that the ground running of rotors prior to take-off lasts longer than what was understood to be the maximum of 5 minutes stipulated by the Heliport operator.<sup>37</sup>

*"As a resident of Prices Court, a new development 300 yards from the London Heliport, I am becoming very unhappy at the increase in noise pollution and air pollution from the aircraft's engines (a strong smell of exhaust fumes is often present downwind from the Heliport)." (Battersea resident)*

- 5.20 The Committee has not had sufficient resources to provide independent corroboration. We understand that warming up of a helicopter's engines and other checks prior to take-off are safety requirements. **However, with the aim of minimising disturbance to residents, we would urge the Heliport operator to ensure that pilots adhere to rules and operate the engines and rotors for the minimum period necessary prior to take-off.**
- 5.21 Residents at Price's Court informed us that they were not against the operation of the Heliport but requested an improvement in the management of helicopter traffic to and from the Heliport. They also accepted the use of helicopters by the emergency services and military. It was the commercial use of helicopters for transporting people for 'corporate entertainment' purposes, at events such as Royal Ascot, they objected to.<sup>38</sup>

*"It beggars belief that a "key" part of the Heliport's business is transporting customers to and from events such as Ascot and the Grand Prix. These flights are far from essential and no doubt comprise large companies taking their customers on 'jollies'. Whilst others are enjoying champagne, canapés and other corporate hospitality Battersea locals are suffering the consequences ... the noise and air pollution." (Battersea resident)*

- 5.22 We have some sympathy for local residents who have to endure the noise from helicopters. The operator, Weston Aviation, confirmed that during the week of the Farnborough Airshow between 17-23 July 2006, 306 helicopters used the Heliport, which means that there were 612 helicopter landing and take-off movements during that week.<sup>39</sup> This is nearly 90 helicopter movements per day. The Civil Aviation Authority has confirmed that they received about 40 complaints about noise from residents and these complaints were mainly due to

<sup>36</sup> IWERA written evidence

<sup>37</sup> Written evidence from Price's Court resident

<sup>38</sup> Site visit to Battersea on 25 July 2006

<sup>39</sup> Site visit to Battersea Heliport on 25 July 2006

the helicopter shuttle services that were operating between Battersea Heliport and Farnborough.<sup>40</sup> Battersea residents have argued that better management of helicopter flows was required and restrictions on the usage of helicopters, limiting landing slots, avoiding weekend flying and rationing the use of airspace, would all help to alleviate the nuisance of excessive helicopter noise.<sup>41</sup>

- 5.23 The Civil Aviation Authority or any other body cannot restrict helicopter flights, as long as helicopters are being operated safely and comply with the aviation regulations. Wandsworth Council confirmed that they could not change the existing planning restrictions at Battersea Heliport to impose more stringent operating times and ban certain types of noisy aircraft. They could only do this for any future plans that might be proposed.<sup>42</sup>
- 5.24 We believe that the best way forward would be for Weston Aviation, Wandsworth Council and local residents to negotiate in detail and come to an appropriate agreement over issues including the management of helicopter traffic, hours of operation and performance and types of helicopter. This could help to find a sensible solution to relieve the noise and disturbance for residents at sensitive periods. **We believe that the proposed London Heliport Consultative Committee would be able to facilitate such a discussion. (see Recommendation 6).**

### ***Future heliport Provision***

- 5.25 Alternative locations for a new heliport have been considered previously. Following a public inquiry, a proposal for a heliport in the City of London was rejected in September 1991. A study chaired by the Department for Transport, published in 1995, looked at the potential for a new heliport.<sup>43</sup> This estimated demand of between 10,000 and 25,000 movements a year for a new heliport to the east of the City. The main determinants of growth in business demand were identified as general economic (GDP) growth, the presence of a “helicopter culture” within an organisation and surface access time. Many of the sites that the study considered in Docklands have since been developed for other purposes, or are in areas where the land use has changed from industrial to residential, which is a similar situation to what has been happening around Battersea Heliport.
- 5.26 No major commercial proposals for a new heliport in East London have emerged. A proposal for a floating heliport moving between a number of sites on the river, claiming not to need planning permission, was the subject of legal action brought on behalf of London planning authorities. Following a Court ruling in 1996 which confirmed that planning permission would be required, the proposal did not proceed.
- 5.27 Regional Airports Limited<sup>44</sup> stated in evidence to the Committee they have been in discussions regarding a proposal for a small ‘cab-stop’ helipad either on a barge or close to the Thames near Docklands. They argue that this would be a better location than Battersea, close to the City and useful for the Olympics.

---

<sup>40</sup> CAA written evidence

<sup>41</sup> Site visit to Battersea on 25 July 2006

<sup>42</sup> Transcript of Environment Committee meeting 13 July 2006

<sup>43</sup> DfT written evidence

<sup>44</sup> Regional Airports is the owner and operator of two London regional airports - London Southend Airport and London Biggin Hill Airport, each operated through a subsidiary company.

They would plan to run a helicopter shuttle service between Biggin Hill airport and the new helipad site.<sup>45</sup> No planning proposal has yet been referred.

- 5.28 There is some pressure on London City Airport to open to helicopters. The airport currently has one of the most comprehensive and restrictive noise regimes in the UK; its planning permission does not permit helicopter operations from the existing airport. Flying TV advocate in their evidence that London City Airport should be opened up to helicopters, maintaining that this would remove a lot of helicopter activity from central London and act as a hub for business users connecting from flights at the Airport.<sup>46</sup> The Helicopter Club of Great Britain said that modern helicopters (such as the Eurocopter EC120, EC130 and EC135 and the MD Notar series) are vastly quieter than older helicopters and some fixed-wing aircraft. The Club feels that these types of helicopter should be allowed to use London City Airport.<sup>47</sup>
- 5.29 However, it does not seem likely that London City Airport will be opened to helicopter movements. London City Airport issued a press release in July 2006 expressing an interest in undertaking research to identify the location options for an East London Heliport. The Airport states, "we would be able to enforce a co-ordinated approach, maximising the use of airspace and minimising the impact on the environment."<sup>48</sup> However, as there is existing or potential residential development along much of the Thames in the Docklands area, there is a risk of replicating the current situation, at Battersea, in East London. A new heliport surrounded by residential housing would lead to an increase in the number of complaints about helicopter noise and a decrease in the quality of life of residents. It is hard to see how a new heliport could be built or even considered if it were in the close vicinity of residential development.
- 5.30 More research is required before new heliport provision can be contemplated. This includes establishing predictive relationships between helicopter noise and human response, and underlying data for noise modelling, both of which are available for fixed-wing commercial aircraft, but not for helicopters. Such work has implications for national planning guidance, and is of a scale and nature that is best funded on at least a national, and preferably at a European level.
- 5.31 The most sensible way forward would be for the Department for Transport to establish a working group to develop a programme with both short term and longer term outputs. Stakeholders include the Civil Aviation Authority, National Air Traffic Services, Metropolitan Police Service Air Support Unit, British Helicopter Advisory Board, helicopter/heliport/airport operators, Mayor of London, local authorities, environmental groups and any affected residents groups. This programme of work would include:
- estimating future demand for helicopter movements;
  - examining noise assessment and control issues;
  - reappraising airspace management;
  - commissioning and undertaking research; and,
  - assessing options for existing and future heliport provision, building on the London Heliport Study (Department for Transport, 1995).

---

<sup>45</sup> RAL written evidence

<sup>46</sup> Flying TV written evidence

<sup>47</sup> HCGB written evidence

<sup>48</sup> London City Airport press release July 2006

**Recommendation 12.**

**The Department for Transport should establish a working group including the Civil Aviation Authority, National Air Traffic Services, Metropolitan Police Air Support Unit, British Helicopter Advisory Board, helicopter/heliport/airport operators, Mayor of London, local authorities, environmental groups and any affected residents groups to:**

- **update estimates of future demand for helicopter movements;**
- **examine noise assessment and control issues;**
- **reappraise management of airspace;**
- **commission and undertake research; and,**
- **assess options for existing and future heliport provision.**

***Future role of the Mayor***

- 5.32 The Mayor's Noise Strategy was published in March 2004 and contains three policies regarding helicopters. Policies 51 and 52 urge the Government and industry to: tighten noise emissions and lessen impacts by improving technology; and review helicopter use and routes. Policy 53 states that any proposed heliport or similar facilities should be assessed in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 24 and noise impacts minimised. The Mayor will work with East London Boroughs to consider the need for and practicality of identifying sites in East London for an additional heliport. These policies seek to influence Government policy, including the National Noise Strategy. Preparation of the National Noise Strategy has been delayed, but it is now expected to be consulted on and then published during 2007.
- 5.33 However, it must be noted that the Mayor and local authorities do not have any powers to control the numbers or types of helicopters flying over London, the heights at which they fly, nor the routes they use.<sup>49</sup> The best way to exercise such control is probably through existing air traffic control arrangements. It could be very expensive to set up an entirely new control system; existing organisations already have radar surveillance and other relevant systems.
- 5.34 The Mayor should clearly have a role in decisions on any future heliport and helipad provision. The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000, SI 1493, already includes a provision for applications regarding heliports, including floating heliports and helipads on buildings, to be referred to the Mayor, who is empowered to direct refusal of permission. The Government announced on 13 July 2006 that the Mayor's planning powers would be extended. The Mayor is expected to be given discretion to determine planning applications of strategic importance, though exact details are still being debated. It is the Government's intention that the Mayor will only be able to use this power sparingly.
- 5.35 In conclusion, although we believe that the Mayor should not be given any additional powers regarding aviation, we do believe that the Civil Aviation

---

<sup>49</sup> GLA written evidence

Authority should give regard to the Mayor's London Ambient Noise Strategy when developing proposals on environmental matters, including helicopter noise.<sup>50</sup> We also believe that the Mayor should take account of our findings and recommendations in this report when he next reviews his London Ambient Noise Strategy.

**Recommendation 13.**

**The Civil Aviation Authority should give regard to the Mayor's London Ambient Noise Strategy when developing proposals on environmental matters, including helicopter noise.**

**Recommendation 14.**

**The Mayor should reflect the findings and recommendations of this London Assembly report in the next review of his London Ambient Noise Strategy.**

---

<sup>50</sup> Green and Labour Members would like to see greater powers given to the Mayor regarding aviation matters that affect London



## **Annex 1 - Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1.**

The Department for Transport should undertake a full review of the impact of helicopter movements and noise in London over the next twelve months, with the aim of putting in place a series of policy responses designed to mitigate the impact of this form of noise pollution on Londoners' lives.

### **Recommendation 2.**

As part of its review, the Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority should investigate and then establish a mechanism to ensure that research on noise and other data on all helicopter movements is effectively collected, collated, analysed and published.

### **Recommendation 3.**

A single national web-site (for example, extending the role of the national noise mapping web-site), or a clearly publicised portal, should be established by the Department for Transport and/or Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to give public access to data on helicopters, including movements, routes used, and places where holding may be expected.

### **Recommendation 4.**

As part of its review, the Department for Transport should take the lead to: make the public complaints procedures clearer, including making any telephone number universally known; that complaints are logged, co-ordinated and dealt with effectively; and that consistent data on complaints is published.

### **Recommendation 5.**

The Civil Aviation Authority should include the London Assembly and the Mayor of London in consultation, and seek amendment to legislation to make them both statutory consultees, regarding matters that have implications for helicopter noise.

### **Recommendation 6.**

The operator of London Heliport at Battersea, in association with Wandsworth Council, should establish within 12 months a London Heliport Consultative Committee to, as a first priority, address local residents' concerns about helicopter movements and noise.

### **Recommendation 7.**

The National Air Traffic Services and Civil Aviation Authority should come forward with proposals on dealing with the issue of helicopter holding at locations across London.

### **Recommendation 8.**

The Department for Transport should review its guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority so that the environmental impact of helicopter noise is included within its responsibilities.

### **Recommendation 9.**

As part of its review, the Department for Transport should investigate user charging for any additional air traffic control services required for helicopters.

**Recommendation 10.**

Following changes to the Regulations, the Civil Aviation Authority should impose restrictions on the use of helicopters for advertising and media so that the environmental impact can be minimised.

**Recommendation 11.**

The Department for Transport should submit proposals to the Treasury that would lead to a change in the finance rules to give a write down allowance of 25% for all helicopters.

**Recommendation 12.**

The Department for Transport should establish a working group including the Civil Aviation Authority, National Air Traffic Services, Metropolitan Police Air Support Unit, British Helicopter Advisory Board, helicopter/heliport/airport operators, Mayor of London, local authorities, environmental groups and any affected residents groups to:

- update estimates of future demand for helicopter movements;
- examine noise assessment and control issues;
- reappraise management of airspace;
- commission and undertake research; and,
- assess options for existing and future heliport provision.

**Recommendation 13.**

The Civil Aviation Authority should give regard to the Mayor's London Ambient Noise Strategy when developing proposals on environmental matters, including helicopter noise.

**Recommendation 14.**

The Mayor should reflect the findings and recommendations of this London Assembly report in the next review of his London Ambient Noise Strategy.

## Annex 2 – Environment Committee Members

Darren Johnson, Chair	Green
Angie Bray	Conservative
Roger Evans	Conservative
Peter Hulme Cross	One London
Murad Qureshi, Deputy Chair	Labour
Valerie Shawcross	Labour
Mike Tuffrey	Liberal Democrat

Terms of reference for the helicopter noise in London review:

- To establish what impact any increase in helicopter traffic and noise has had on Londoners and how this is being addressed;
- To determine helicopter routeing in London and to assess if improvements can be made to the way helicopter air traffic is managed;
- To establish the noise performance of helicopters typically used and the different types of helicopter use in London; and,
- To examine the effectiveness of the three policies on helicopter noise in the Mayor’s Noise Strategy.

Contact:

Richard Davies, Assistant Scrutiny Manager  
Richard. Davies@london.gov.uk  
Tel: 020 7983 4199

## **Annex 3 – List of those who provided views and information**

### **Written evidence**

The Committee contacted a wide range of government, aviation and environmental organisations inviting them to provide written evidence to the investigation. They also advertised in local media to encourage members of the public to send in their views and experiences of helicopter noise. The Committee was greatly encouraged by the response and nearly 200 pieces of written evidence was received in total. The following organisations and members of the public provided written views and information to the Committee:

#### **Organisation**

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
The Greenwich Society  
Rosemary Houlston - Isle of Dogs resident  
Hacan Clearskies  
UK Noise Association  
Greenwich resident  
London Borough of Enfield  
Imperial Wharf East Residents Association  
London Borough of Hackney  
London Borough of Brent  
London Borough of Hillingdon  
British Helicopter Advisory Board  
Metropolitan Police Service - Air Support Unit  
The Advertising Association  
London Borough of Croydon  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
London Borough of Ealing  
London Borough of Hounslow  
London Wetland Centre  
Royal Aeronautical Society  
Greater London Authority - Policy & Partnerships  
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
Weston Aviation Limited  
London Borough of Lewisham  
National Air Traffic Services  
London Borough of Westminster  
The Blackheath Society  
Southwark Resident  
London Borough of Wandsworth  
Holborn resident  
British Airports Authority  
Soho resident  
Big issue seller Bow street  
Flying TV  
Southwark resident

#### **Contact**

Chris Newport  
Derek Fordham  
Rosemary Houlston  
John Stewart  
Val Weedon  
Kenneth May  
Rob Leak  
James Hawken  
Joe Ben Davies  
Clive Dinsey  
Mike Rickaby  
Peter Norton  
Sgt John Gleeson  
Jim Rothwell  
Clive Barwis  
Wendy Hartnell  
Liza Ctori  
Rob Gibson  
Kristenne Pickles  
Prof Keith Hayward  
Max Dixon  
Rebecca Brown  
Simon Hutchins  
Chris Howard  
Alan Jack  
Mike LeRoy  
Mr A Neil  
Pauline Benington  
Andrew Waren & Colin Stanbury  
Michael Southwell  
Nita Easey  
Phillipa Suarez  
Alex Albion  
Mike Smith  
Guy Mannes Abbott

Battersea resident	Jonathan Harris
Harmondsworth and Sipson Residents Association	Mrs B Sobey
Hampstead resident	Simon Norton
London City Airport	Rob Grafton
Fulham resident	Richard Hale
Covent Garden residents	Margaret and David Chandler
Lewisham resident	Peter Halsall
Fulham resident	Nick Bishop
Islington resident	Christopher Seddon
Aviation Environment Federation	Tim Johnson
Willesden resident	Dave Statham
Edmonton resident	Vivienne Aiyela
Archway resident	Piercy Hamilton
Canonbury resident	Wendy Baverstock
Harefield resident	Nandish Patel
Civil Aviation Authority	David Butcher
Fulham resident	Simon Pugh
Brockley resident	Suzanne Easton
London Development Agency	Neil Hutchinson
Enfield resident	Jeanette Redding
Newham resident	Guy Tolmarsh
Green World	Richard Scrase
Isle of Dogs resident	Jeff Daley
Covent Garden resident	Paul Stannering
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Jen Hicks
Walthamstow resident	Liz Simpson
Fulham resident	Alison Trauttmansdorff
Lewisham Councillor	Cllr Michael Keogh
Greenwich resident	Niall Bell
Newington Green resident	John Adams
Ealing resident	Veronica Heley
Islington resident	Kath Rooney
Walthamstow resident	Graham Bennett
Battersea resident	Geraldine Higson
Islington resident	Chris Bulford
London Borough of Newham	Robin Whitehouse
Roehampton resident	Malcolm Cotton
London Borough of Ealing	Andrew Lyon
Battersea resident	Jeffrey Aubrey
London Borough of Greenwich	Eric Broom
Waterloo resident	Emma Gilman
Fulham resident	John Wolstenholme
Canonbury resident	Michael Barron
Battersea resident	Katrina Macfarlane
Battersea resident	Anne King
Battersea resident	Keith Holmes
W14 resident	Norrie Buxton
Plumstead resident	Mr Vernon-Hunt
Battersea resident	Pauline Sennett

Globe Theatre	Eva Koch-Schulte
Chislehurst resident	Douglas Clegg
Islington resident	Tom Worsley
Globe Theatre	David Marshall
Globe Theatre	Celia Gilbert
Globe Theatre	Brenda Vel
Battersea resident	Lester Pereira
Globe Theatre	Jo Matthews
SE12 resident	Nalletamby
Waltham Forest resident	Sheena Dunbar
W6 resident	Rick Burne
Waterloo resident	Peter Fey
Kensington & Chelsea resident	Tim Nodder
NW4 resident	Robert Pearlman
N19 resident	Silba Knight
Woodford Green resident	Sue Hammans
Greenwich resident	Chris Dance
Isle of dogs resident	Mr R Richardson
Fulham resident	Digby Jones
Battersea resident	Rachel Hadwen
Chingford resident	Mike Rowland
London, Fire & Emergency Planning Authority	Roy Bishop & Sally Winter
Westminster resident	Dr Andrew lee
Highgate resident	David Snook
Plumstead resident	Mr D'Silva
Islington resident	Robert Hills
Battersea resident	Julian Wannell
Battersea resident	Noelle Greenaway
Kennington resident	Simon McKeown
W10 resident	Spencer Carter
Battersea resident	Alan Boddy
Battersea resident	Ronald Monjack
New Cross resident	Jean Hodgins
Greenwich resident	Marcia
Ministry of Defence	Caroline Welch
Battersea resident	Jon Taylor
Greenwich resident	Susan Merrells
Cabair	John Miles
Battersea resident	Simon Cooper
Globe Theatre	Jean Willett
Fulham resident	Don Maclean
SW6 resident	Michael Blagg
W3 resident	Sue Clay
Bruitparif	Mike Tyzack
Battersea resident	Fanny Mietlicki
Regional Airports Limited	Michael Shine
Battersea resident	Andrew Walters
Helicopter Club	Becky Goldsmith
	Jeremy James

Islington resident	Hazel Barrett
Battersea resident	Chris Bowles
SE12 resident	Richard Lock
E17 resident	Anita Miller
SE7 resident	Terry Edwards
E6 resident	Katie Munro
E14 resident	Leigh Tiff
SW15 resident	Paul Phillips
SW15 resident	A Fairfax
E4 7RY	JP Claxton
SW6 resident	Sophie Foll
E17 resident	Adrian Stannard
	Susan Pares
Wandsworth Common resident	Dennis Hooker
Greenwich resident	Harrie Brom
SW11 resident	Mrs L. Kash/Mrs C Allen
W5 resident	John Noakes
Corporation of London	Chris Duffield
Battersea resident	Mr K Lucas
Hammersmith resident	Mr Clive Beautyman
Tower Bridge Resident	Mr Nick Napier
Kingston Upon Thames Resident	Mr Tim Kimber
Bromley Council	Mr Steve Glass
South Woodford Resident	Mr Greg Eaborn
Leyton Resident	Mr Adrian J Liddle
SE1 Resident	Mr Andrew Lindesay
W6 resident	Ms Madeleine Bailey
SW11 resident	Mr Dennis Rooke
Wandsworth Resident	Ms Yvonne Axford
SW6 resident	Mr Brian Mooney
SE10 Resident	Ms Catherine Hand
Albion Riverside Resident	Mr Ramon Benardout
Department for Transport	Mrs Fozia Chughtai
Upminster resident	Mr Peter Caton
NW3 Resident	Ms Susn West
Battersea resident	Ms Emma Slaymaker
E14 resident	Mr Ralph Withers
Kennington Oval and Vauxhall Forum	Ms Maureen Johnston
New Malden Resident	Mr Andy Barrett
Worcester Park Resident	Mr Evan Jones
Battersea resident	Mr Peter Hickman
	Mr Charlie Orton
UB6 Resident	Mr John Winget
W2 Resident	Mr HRF Keeling
Sutton Resident	Mr D. G. Sullivan
SW1 Resident	Mr Peter Handley
Fulham resident	Ms Yvonne Deng
Edgware Resident	D Chambers
Howell Hill Residents Association	R E S Farrar

Sutton Resident	Ms Carol Walters
Worcester Park Resident	Mrs Ann Gordon
Worcester Park Resident	Mrs P Poullier
Worcester Park Resident	Mrs S Brady
Epsom Resident	Lesley LM Hays
Worcester Park Resident	Mrs M Phillips
Epsom Resident	P. S. Dicker
Worcester Park Resident	Mr A R Mays
Surrey Resident	Mr Andrew Larnar
Surrey Resident	Mr D T Leeves
Surrey Resident	Mrs Christine Crocker
The Residents Association of West Wimbeldon	Mr Derek Frampton
Sutton Resident	Mr John & Mrs Kathleen Guthrie

### **Evidentiary hearing**

The Committee held an evidentiary hearing in public on 13 July 2006 to obtain further evidence from representatives of:

- Civil Aviation Authority;
- National Air Traffic Services;
- Metropolitan Police Service Air Support Unit;
- London Borough of Wandsworth;
- London City Airport;
- Regional Airports Limited;
- British Helicopter Advisory Board; and,
- Aviation Environment Federation.

Members of the audience were also invited to participate and express their opinions at the meeting.

### **Site visit**

The Committee also visited Battersea Heliport on 25 July 2006 to take evidence from Weston Aviation Limited and they also met with local residents living at Price's Court, near the Heliport.



## **Annex 4 – Aviation management regime**

Responsibility for managing air travel around London is shared between the following organisations:

- The Department for Transport is responsible for aviation policy;
- The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is the aviation regulator and is responsible for safety and ‘airspace design’ (including designation of helicopter routes where these exist);
- The National Air Traffic Services (NATS) operates the air traffic control system; and,
- Local airport/heliport operators have certain responsibilities for air traffic control in designated zones around their facilities when these are open.

## **Annex 5 – Principles of London Assembly scrutiny**

### **An aim for action**

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

### **Independence**

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

### **Holding the Mayor to account**

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

### **Inclusiveness**

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

### **Constructiveness**

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

### **Value for money**

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.

## Annex 6 – Orders and translations

### **How to Order**

For further information on this report or to order a copy, please contact Richard Davies, Assistant Scrutiny Manager, on 020 7983 4199 or email [Richard.davies@london.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.davies@london.gov.uk)

### **See it for Free on our Website**

You can also view a copy of the report on the GLA website:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports>

### **Large Print, Braille or Translations**

If you, or someone you know, needs a copy of this report in large print or Braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on 020 7983 4100 or email to [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk).

আপনি বা আপনার পরিচিত কেউ এ রিপোর্টের সারসর্ম ও প্রস্তাবের কপি বিনামূল্যে বড়ছাপা বা ব্রেইল, অথবা তাদের নিজের ভাষায় চাইলে 020 7983 4100 এ নান্বারে ফোন করুন বা ই-মেইল করুন এ ঠিকানায়:  
[assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

જો તમને કે તમે જાણતા હો તેવી કોઈ વ્યક્તિને, આ અહેવાલમાંથી કાર્યકારી સંક્ષેપ અને બેલામણોની નકલ મોટા અક્ષરોમાં છપાયેલી, બ્રેઈલમાં કે તેમની પોતાની ભાષામાં વિના મૂલ્યે જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને ફોન દ્વારા 020 7983 4100 ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો અથવા આ સરનામે ઈ-મેઈલ કરો [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

Se você, ou alguém de seu conhecimento, gostaria de ter uma cópia do sumário executivo e recomendações desse relatório em imprensa grande ou Braille, ou na sua língua, sem custo, favor nos contatar por telefone no número 020 7983 4100 ou email em [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਤੁਹਾਡਾ ਜਾਣ-ਪਛਾਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਇਸ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਦਾ ਅਗਜ਼ੈਕਟਿਵ ਸੁਮਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਝਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਕਲ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਬ੍ਰੇਅਲ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਫਤ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ੍ਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ 020 7983 4100 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk) ਤੇ ਸਾਡੀ ਈ-ਮੇਲ ਕਰੋ।

Si usted, o algún conocido, quiere recibir copia del resumen ejecutivo y las recomendaciones relativos a este informe en forma de Braille, en su propia idioma, y gratis, no duden en ponerse en contacto con nosotros marcando 020 7983 4100 o por correo electrónico:  
[assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

اگر آپ یا آپ کا کوئی جاننے والا اس انگریزی کیٹوسری اور اس رپورٹ میں سے سفارشات کی ایک کاپی بڑے پرنٹ میں یا بریل یا اپنی زبان میں بلا معاوضہ حاصل کرنا چاہیں تو براہ کرم ہم سے فون 020 7983 4100 پر رابطہ کریں یا [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk) پر ای میل کریں۔

Ta ba ri enikeni ti o ba ni ife lati ni eda ewe nla ti igbimo awon asoju tabi papa julo ni ede ti abinibi won, ki o kansiya lori ero ibanisoro. Nomba wa ni 020 7983 4100 tabi ki e kan si wa lori ero [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk). Ako ni gbowo lowo yin fun eto yi.

Haddii adiga, ama qof aad taqaanid, uu doonaayo inuu ku helo koobi ah warbixinta oo kooban iyo talooyinka far waaweyn ama farta qofka indhaha la' loogu talagalay, ama luuqadooda, oo bilaash u ah, fadlan nagala soo xiriir telefoonkan 020 7983 4100 ama email-ka cinwaanku yahay [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

**Greater London Authority**

City Hall

The Queen's Walk

London SE1 2AA

**[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)**

Enquiries **020 7983 4100**

Minicom **020 7983 4458**