

North Weald Parish Council – Gatwick Meeting

Wednesday 5 November 2014 10am, The Old Station Groombridge

Present: Mary Symes (MS) Councillor Withyham Parish Council
Marcus Tarling (MT) Councillor Withyham Parish Council
Sarah Codling (SC) Clerk Frant Parish Council
Damon Wellman (DW) Councillor Hadlow Down Parish Council
Richard Streatfeild (RS) Chair Chiddingstone Parish Council
Peter Barclay (PB) GACC Representative

Minutes: Kathryn Scott Asst Clerk Withyham Parish Council

1. Introductions

MS welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions from the group. MS explained that the purpose of the meeting was to ensure that the North Weald Parishes affected by any proposals increasing the number and frequency flights at Gatwick can come together as a group and act as a lobbying body to ESCC and the District Councils. This would hopefully ensure that their views were properly considered by the higher authorities and concerns of residents living within the Parishes are heard. Withyham Parish Council (WPC), Frant and Hadlow Down had all responded to the Gatwick consultation papers in August 2014. All the Parishes had taken the same point that they did not object to any flights going over, but were of the opinion that there had been an increase in frequency therefore noise levels had become unmanageable.

2. Where We are Now

Hadlow Down Parish Council

DW explained that he was new to the Gatwick proposals but had seen the consultation papers. He had noticed an increase in flights and noise levels over Hadlow Down, particularly late at night and early mornings. He had also noticed that flights had been flying at a lower altitude and recently, one particular airplane had its landing gear down whilst flying over Hadlow Down. Hadlow Down Parish Council had written to Charles Hendry with their concerns and received a response confirming that aircraft complaints had risen significantly. The Parish Council had responded to the Gatwick consultation by saying that it had been written in a manner that was unintelligible and that there were a number of contradictions in the document.

Frant Parish Council

SC fed back that Frant Parish Council had come to the consultation late in the day on the back of residents complaining to the Parish Council about aircraft noise

levels. The Parish Council responded to the consultation paper about the noise and environmental pollution caused by the increase in flights. Although the frequency of flights had eased since the summer, they were worried that this would return again. The Parish Council would like to join the High Weald Group and also join up with other groups from different sides of the border.

High Weald Group

RS explained that the High Weald Group comprised of four Parish Councils: Chiddingstone, Hever, Leigh and Penshurst. The group had responded to the first flight path consultation collectively and had agreed the following principles:

1. No second runway at Gatwick
2. Maximum respite i.e. broad flight path sway instead of narrowing
3. No night flights
4. Aircraft to fly as high as possible
5. Retrofit on A320 series (deflector over fuel filler cap)

The High Weald Group had approached Gatwick to see if they could work with them and achieve a maximum respite. They felt that Gatwick had not consulted on the narrowing flight path for arrivals and had not gone through the Airspace Change process. There had been an increase in intensity of flights and the flight path had changed its location, essentially doubling and quadrupling the number of aircraft flying over North Wealden counties. Gatwick had received @11,000 complaints in the first six months of 2014, confirming that there had been a huge change in aircraft traffic.

The High Weald Group had put together a letter to go to stakeholders who had a vested interest in keeping the tranquillity of the High Weald i.e. residents, the National Trust, Heritage sites, County Councils and Parishes. The letter would also go to Airports, Airlines, Gatwick owners and their trustees. The High Weald Group were looking for as many people as possible to form groups and act collectively. RS confirmed that the High Weald Group were not part of the GACC group or ESCAN but did link into them. Any decisions made were ultimately by the Parish Council.

GACC

PB outlined that GACC had formed in 1968 to ensure that the Gatwick expansion was sustainable and within the existing boundaries. GACC was a representative body for stakeholders around the Airport and was the only channel for talking directly to Gatwick. The group had managed to work with West Sussex County Council on achieving noise reduction and enforcing fines to aircrafts for excessive noise levels when taking off. The group had also achieved the cessation of the Heathrow – Gatwick air link due to excessive noise levels. PB confirmed that @14,000 night flights were permitted over Gatwick between 11pm – 6am. The Government Policy outlined that the number of people flown over should be as few as possible which had been translated as more flying over rural areas. This needed to be challenged.

GACC understands that the Commission report and consultation on runway capacity was due to come out on Tuesday 11 November 2014. It is expected that they would be short listing Gatwick for a second runway. The document is expected to run to thousands of pages with a standard three month consultation period. It was likely with consultation periods included, their findings would be presented to the Government in July 2015, but the decision would be made a long time after this.

The biggest concerns for GACC were currently the noise levels and over flying of aircraft. PB explained that GACC had a strong relationship with Civil Aviation, NATS, Department of Transport and Gatwick Airport. However, recently the relationship with Gatwick had deteriorated and communication levels had broken down. The Airport had recently admitted at a meeting of GATCOM (where GACC is the only lobbying body with a seat) had admitted that they needed to talk more to Parish Councils about the noise level issues of aircraft.

PB suggested that the group link into the Aircraft Watch Group and also ESCAN. MT confirmed that WPC does link into ESCAN. MT also said that it is the view of WPC that ESCC were not supporting or representing the views of residents in East Sussex.

3. Scope and Purpose of North Weald Parish Councils Group and Future Steps

MS asked for views on having a North Weald Parish Councils Group. DW agreed that there should be a North Weald group in order to represent the views of Parish Councils and their residents. He felt that there were two issues to be considered: increase in aircraft/noise levels and the proposed second runway at Gatwick. SC said that the majority of Frant Parish Council wanted to take the issue forward on the back of resident's complaints and that it would be beneficial to form a group of this nature.

MS confirmed that there was now the support of three Parish Councils i.e. Withyham, Frant and Hadlow Down with the possibility of Buxted and Crowborough Town Council joining as well. DW suggested that Heathfield Parish Council should be approached about joining the group, which was agreed.

MT said that the minutes should be sent to all Parish Councils in East Sussex for their information, which was agreed.

MS suggested that rather than starting from nothing if RS would share the Scope and Purpose documents that the High Weald Group had formed, they could be a base for this group. RS confirmed that he would send them to WPC clerk. It was agreed that the documents will be circulated to Hadlow Down and Frant so that they

can consult with their councils. WPC will do the same and coordinate the responses. Once these have been received the scope can be agreed at a further meeting. MT said that along with residents there was a need to get local businesses and medical centres on board e.g. The Horder Centre, Doctors surgeries, Burrswood and Crowborough Cottage Hospital.

4. AOB

PB asked if any councillors were members of GACC and circulated information about the group. He also suggested that the group looked at the Aviation Environmental Body for information on noise levels.

MS asked for suggestions on naming the group and it was agreed that the group would be called: *North Weald Councils Against Aircraft Noise*.

MS thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said that a date for a future meeting would be circulated.

The meeting closed at 12.10pm