

A royal flightmare

The Queen faces disturbance of her sleep as report calls for more Heathrow jets to pass over Windsor at night

Pippa Crerar City Hall Editor

SHE is used to being woken at 9am on the dot by a bagpiper playing under her bedroom window.

But the Queen could be in for a much

earlier start if ministers take up a suggestion to re-route night flights over Windsor.

A report today recommended night flights to Heathrow should stop altogether – but failing that, should be

redirected so they approach from west of the capital.

The London Assembly environment committee judged that changing the landing pattern in this way would reduce noise disturbance for some

110,000 Londoners in areas such as Richmond and Hounslow, but increase it for 15,600 living in Surrey and Berkshire – including the Queen.

An average 15 flights land at Heathrow between 11.30pm and 6am – most from Asia, touching down after 5am.

The existing flight pattern was meant to split arrivals equally between west and east. But in practice 72 per cent of planes have approached from the east – passing over London – because of a more favourable wind direction.

The committee said that if more planes were allowed to land from the west when weather conditions allowed, only about 40 per cent would fly over the capital.

The Queen spends most weekends at

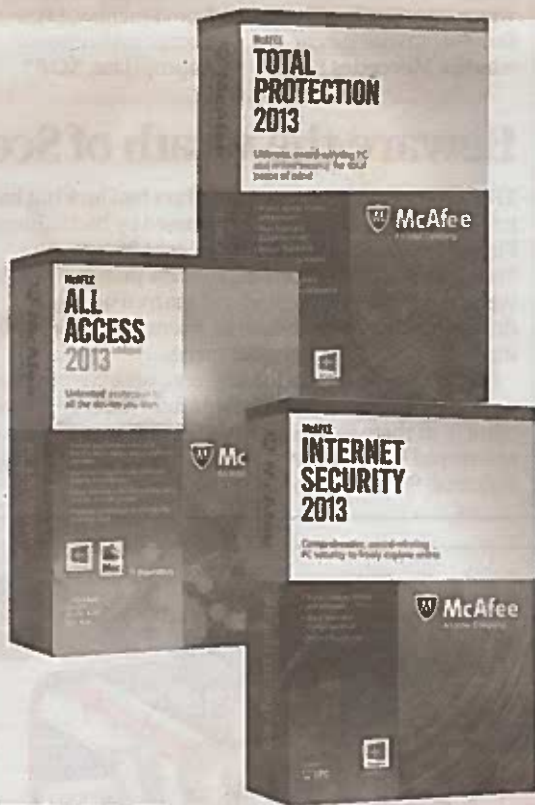
Monarch airline: night flights could be re-routed over Windsor Castle under plans considered by the London Assembly



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KNOWHOW

It is unacceptable that thousands of Londoners are unable to get a good night's sleep because of planes'

Murad Qureshi, chairman of London Assembly environment committee

Windsor – said to be her favourite residence – except when she goes to Sandringham for the Christmas break and Balmoral for a couple of months during the summer. She normally stays at Buckingham Palace in the week.

Murad Qureshi, chairman of the committee, said: "We want to see the end of Heathrow night flights, because it is unacceptable that thousands of Londoners are unable to get a good night's sleep because of planes flying over the capital. But if they must continue, then landing more planes from the west, when the weather allows, would at least share the noise burden more equally."

"The one person of note who will be affected by that would be the Queen.

We're looking after the royal household in terms of their night flights over Buckingham Palace, but Windsor doesn't come under Greater London.

"Ultimately I'm an elected representative for Londoners. The changes would mean that the impact of night flights would be felt by a much smaller number of people."

The committee suggested the Government should significantly reduce the noise footprint from Heathrow night flights, including areas where noise levels exceed 40 decibels.

Existing night flight restrictions run until next year, when the Government will implement new rules. The Palace declined to comment.

New £50m Kent airport 'paves way for further development'

Matthew Beard

THE Government's decision to approve a new £50 million airport despite environmental concerns could pave the way for further developments, experts said today.

A terminal building and 300-metre runway will be built to create "London Ashford Airport" at Lydd, Kent, which its owners claim will be used by 500,000 passengers and create 300 jobs in an economically deprived area.

The airport will be equipped for large aircraft including the Boeing 737, Airbus 319 and Airbus 320, and the owners aim to poach from Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted.

Approval for a regional airport at what is now a local airfield came after opposition from residents and environmental campaigners who forced a public inquiry after Shepway district council granted

consent in 2010. They complained that noise and emissions would harm the wildlife of Romney Marsh and the Dungeness peninsula. There were also concerns that the jets may pose a risk to the nuclear power station Dungeness B which is three miles from the airport.

Aviation expert John Stewart, of anti-Heathrow expansion group Hacan, said: "The decision shows that when there's a choice between an environmental downside and new jobs, then the Government's priority is to go for growth."

Sean McGrath, director of Indigo Planning, which has been advising at Lydd, said: "Our priority has been to balance the economic benefits with the need to be sensitive to environmental concerns. This decision shows that economic development can take place in sensitive locations if planned correctly."



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