

Helicopter Flights in Urban Areas



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The helicopter industry has a long-established record of proactively working with lawmakers and the public to keep helicopter noise to the absolute minimum.
- Continuous technological advances, industry-led guidelines for noise abatement and pilot training programmes have helped lower helicopter noise considerably.
- We want to educate and inform lawmakers and the public at large about all the sources of noise from helicopters including commercial, private and para-public.
- The industry is law abiding and conscientious, and continuously works to reduce noise levels by working with local communities. We feel proactive self-regulation is sufficient, and avoids the unintended consequences of over-regulation.

BACKGROUND

From time to time, the helicopter industry hears about increased interest by lawmakers to: reduce levels of helicopter noise in urban areas, ensure all helicopter flights are registered with a central agency, incentivise helicopter manufacturers to reduce noise pollution in newer models, ban night-time flights and disincentivise the use of private helicopters in urban areas.



POSITION

We would like to point out that the helicopter industry, in Great Britain and globally, has taken great steps over many years to minimise noise from helicopters. We would like to address some common misperceptions in turn, as we believe clarification of the issues can help lawmakers make better-informed decisions.

ITEM 1: REGULATION IS NEEDED TO REDUCE HELICOPTER NOISE

- Helicopter manufacturers have been producing quieter aircraft over the past 20 yearsⁱ. For example, a 14-passenger helicopter today generates an amount of noise equal to or less than a sports car or truck on the streetⁱⁱ.
- The industry has instituted extensive rules for pilots to keep noise levels to a minimum. The British Helicopter Association (BHA) has an established policy on helicopter noise, detailed in our “Civil Helicopter in the Community” guide, sections 5.1-5.7. This includes “The Pilot’s Code of Conduct,” which details that pilots should fly as high as safely possible, avoid sharp banking, reduce speed by 5-10 knots in urban areas, and conduct prompt landings and takeoffs to minimise noiseⁱⁱⁱ.
- The Helicopter Association International (HAI) produced the “HAI Noise Abatement” training programme^{iv}. It gives clear guidance on the sources of helicopter noise, the factors affecting propagation and recommends careful flight profile management and measures for

operators to minimise noise. All BHA member companies and individual pilots are encouraged to include the HAI Noise Abatement course in their annual training programmes. The HAI also established the Fly Neighborly Committee, which includes a UK component programme. Fly Neighborly is a noise abatement initiative designed to be implemented worldwide by large and small individual helicopter operators, and applies to all types of commercial, private and para-public helicopter operations. They publish the “Fly Neighborly Guide” to promote helicopter noise abatement operations.

ITEM 2: ENSURE ALL HELICOPTER FLIGHTS ARE REGISTERED WITH A CENTRAL AGENCY

- The BHA would support this idea as a means of data collection but, to date, there are no centralised, consolidated records of helicopter flights in London or elsewhere in the UK because many flights are conducted under local notification arrangements, including from private or temporary landing sites. In London, however, all flights have to be conducted under special visual-flight-only rules



in controlled airspace. Many of these flights are made through the Barclays London Heliport at Battersea and records are maintained there. This is the only permanent, Civil Aviation Authority-licensed site in the area (permanent sites are generally regarded as those which have been granted planning consent by a local authority and those which are licensed by the CAA)^v.

ITEM 3: INCENTIVISE HELICOPTER MANUFACTURERS TO REDUCE NOISE POLLUTION IN NEWER MODELS

- Manufacturers are aware of the need to minimise noise from a competitive standpoint, having reduced average noise levels greatly over the past decades. The Clean Sky initiative is one important programme launched in Europe in 2008 to make aircraft less noisy and more fuel efficient. The most ambitious aeronautical research programme ever launched in Europe, Clean Sky is a public-private scheme that aims to develop new technologies to significantly increase the environmental performances of air transport^{vi}. The Green Rotorcraft ITD, a component of the Clean Sky initiative, aims to reduce rotorcraft noise perceived on the ground by 10 EPNdB or halving the noise footprint area by 50%^{vii}.

ITEM 4: BAN NIGHT-TIME FLIGHTS

- Helicopter flights over London are vital to the safety, security, health and well-being of the Capital. The banning of night flights could have dire consequences for the Police,

Air Ambulance and Military. Night flights are restricted to highly qualified, specially trained pilots in purpose-equipped helicopters. Some of these night flights are conducted from Battersea under the strict control of Heathrow radar and the heliport ATC during approved operating hours (the heliport is normally closed at 19.30 local time).

- Police and ambulance operations at night are subject to government regulations. Such public service flights, most notably those conducted by the Police, may be the most intrusive aurally since these often involve hovering over an area for surveillance, both day and night. Military helicopter flights take place by day and night, subject to military regulations.

ITEM 5: DISINCENTIVISE THE USE OF PRIVATE HELICOPTERS IN URBAN AREAS.

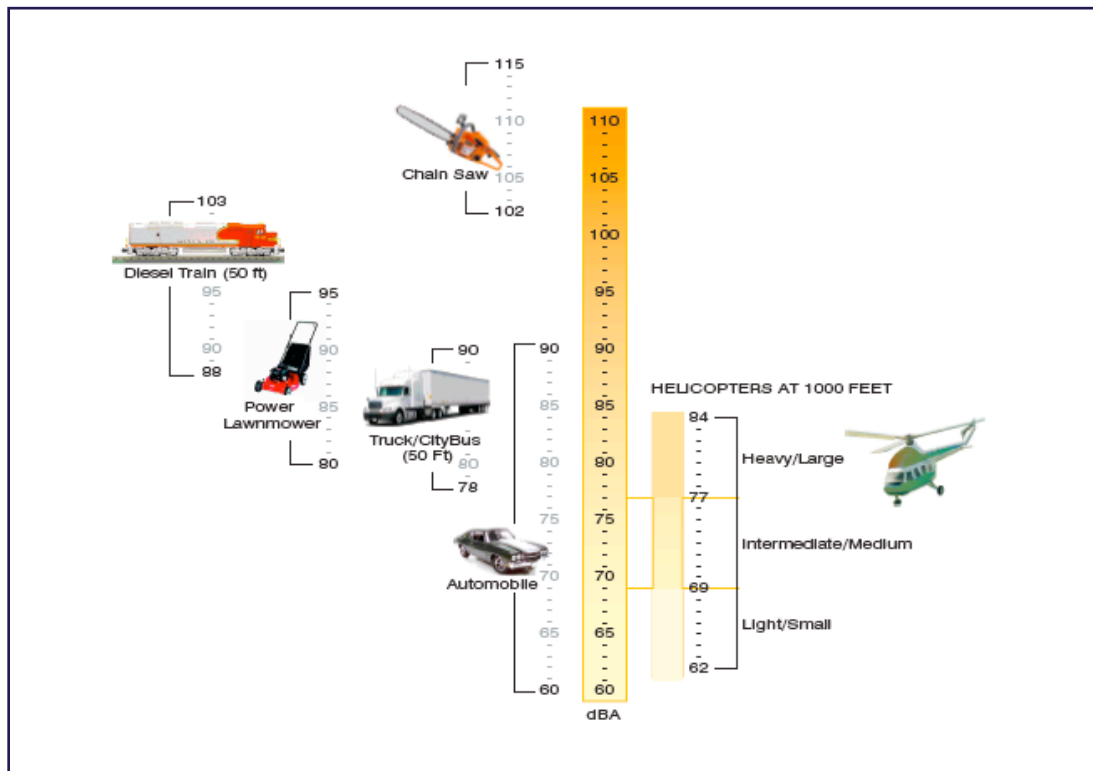
- Such an action would have an adverse effect on business flights that facilitate executive productivity and security.
- A recently released report by Oxford Economics found that business aviation delivers substantial benefits to not only its clients, but also to local governments and communities. For example, the report concluded that each additional passenger flown on a business aviation flight generates the same GDP as nine business passengers on a scheduled flight^{viii}. Further, research by the European Business Aviation Association showed that the sector supported a total of 164,000 jobs around Europe in 2008^{ix}.



SUMMARY

The helicopter industry is aware of the importance of minimising noise levels to the greatest extent possible without impacting safety. The BHA will continue to encourage the efforts of manufacturers, industry groups and others to build quieter aircraft, train pilots on noise abatement and work with lawmakers and the public to lessen the environmental affect of helicopter noise.

Comparison of Sound



Graphic from Fly Neighborly Guide

FOOTNOTES

ⁱ "Noise Abatement Procedures," Helicopter Association International, rotor.com/Resources/NoiseAbatementProcedures.aspx

ⁱⁱ "Fly Neighborly Guide, Helicopter Association International: Figure A2 - Comparison of Sounds, p. 25. new.rotor.com/portals/1/Fly%202009.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ "The Civil Helicopter in the Community," British Helicopter Association: britishhelicopterassociation.org/?q=about-the-bha/guidelines

^{iv} "Noise Abatement Training Programme," Helicopter Association International, rotor.com/Resources/NoiseAbatementTrainingCD.aspx

^v "The Civil Helicopter in the Community," British Helicopter Association: Section 4.1, Permanent Landing Sites, britishhelicopterassociation.org/?q=about-the-bha/guidelines

^{vi} Clean Sky – About Us: <http://www.cleansky.eu/content/homepage/about-us>

^{vii} Clean Sky – Green Rotorcraft: <http://www.cleansky.eu/content/page/green-rotorcraft>

^{viii} The Role of Business Aviation in the European Economy, Oxford Economics, October 2012
The Economic Impact of Business Aviation in Europe, 2008, PricewaterhouseCoopers

