



for a quieter life

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LADACAN

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The growing noise burden

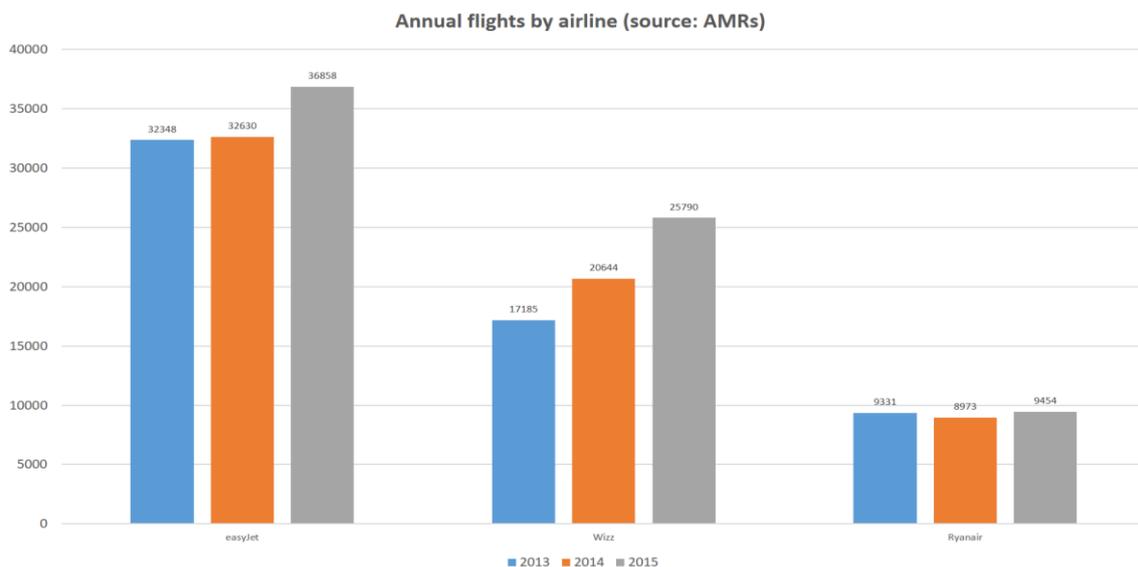
LADACAN regularly receives emails from people living all around Luton airport who are noticing an increase in noise as the airport gets busier. Individual flights may not be getting significantly louder, but there are many more of them, and some of the flight tracks have become more concentrated.

In this newsletter we will focus on what's been happening since expansion permission was granted, and what we all need to do in order to push back against the growing noise burden.

Keep an eye on our website for latest updates at www.ladacan.org and email us at info@ladacan.org

Numbers of flights

Passengers have been using Luton Airport in ever increasing numbers since the end of the recession. As a result, the airlines have been introducing larger planes, packing more people onto each flight, and adding more flights. On the busiest route out of Luton Airport, which flies to all parts of Europe and further south, there was a 50% increase in flights between 2013 and 2015. Figures from the Annual Monitoring Reports show the increase for the major airlines flying out of Luton:



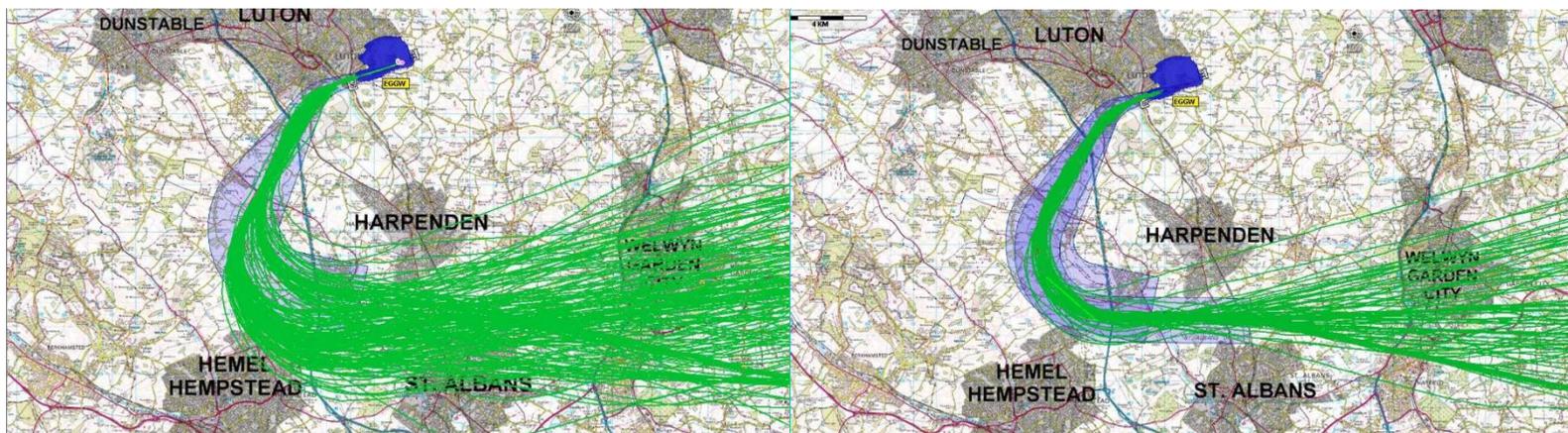
Aircraft mix

We are seeing a significant increase in the number of flights made by larger and heavier planes – particularly Airbus A320s – and a slight reduction in the use of smaller Airbus A319s. Between 2013 and 2015 there was a 50% increase in the number of flights by A320s at Luton Airport. On average these aircraft register 0.7dB(A) more noise at the fixed noise monitors than the lighter A319s. This is not a perceptible difference per flight, but it is certainly not – as the airport claim – evidence that the planes are getting quieter. In fact, they are getting noisier, and the predicted investment in quieter “neo” engines has yet to occur and is not expected to start until end of 2017 at Luton.

Flight concentration

In August 2015, the majority of aircraft on the “26 Match Detling” departures route started using a more accurate GPS-based navigation system which keeps them more accurately on the prescribed centre line. This route departs to the west, tracks southwest between Flamstead and Markyate, and then turns east to fly between Redbourn and Harpenden to the north, and Hemel and St Albans to the south.

In technical terms the system works, and the aircraft tracks are now far more concentrated than they were before. However, this also means that the noise is far more concentrated also – very bad for anyone living directly under the centre line, and more intrusive for those living to either side of it. The track plots below show the concentration effect before and after the new RNAV system:



Typical track spread without RNAV

Typical track spread with RNAV

For those on the ground, the difference is a change from having planes sometimes directly overhead and sometimes far more distant, compared to having planes repeatedly directly overhead or close to it. The significantly increased number of noise complaints received by the airport recently is likely to be related to the greatly increased numbers of flights, and this much greater noise concentration.

Noise monitoring

At a recent briefing meeting to discuss RNAV, LADACAN made a strong case for a more structured programme of noise monitoring so that the impacts of change due to increased numbers of flights or concentration of tracks could be quantified and compared more accurately. This was accepted, and the airport operators have committed to purchasing new mobile noise monitors and putting in place a more carefully planned noise monitoring regime in the wider area.

Community involvement

Given that Luton is one of the “early adopters” of RNAV technology, it is important that any lessons to be learned are communicated more widely. The CAA will be conducting a “post implementation review” of the RNAV introduction at Luton in August 2017, and it will be important to receive good feedback from the affected communities. We shall contact members nearer the time to advise on how such feedback can be provided.

In the meantime, the LADACAN committee is considering options for more independent research, and continues to represent its member communities at the airport Noise and Track and Consultative Committee meetings every quarter. We shall be looking for some new committee members in 2017 and will be organising a public meeting at Breachwood Green in the New Year to discuss this and to update on all matters of concern.

If you are affected by aircraft noise from particular flights, do use the Travis flight tracking system to complain – simply google “Luton Travis” and use the replay facility to locate the flight and then the complaint button in the toolbar to complain about it. For more general issues, email noise@ltn.aero