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Engagement

Creating an Airport Noise Action Plan Consultation

By Charlotte Cooper | 23/02/22 11:38

4 min read

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The aviation industry plays a significant role in the UK economy as it connects people and businesses with the rest of the world. Despite taking a hit during the pandemic, the UK aviation network is still one of the largest in the world- handling over 219 million passengers alone in 2019.

Public consultations are a crucial part of any Airport Noise Action Plan. See how you can boost engagement in yours with a free chat with one of our friendly team members

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While the sector directly provides around 230,000 jobs and contributes almost £22 billion annually, aspects like general airport noise pollution from flights and expansion work can have a massive effect on those who live in aviation-heavy areas.

With such a large and (admittedly noisy) industry, how are airports managing the impact this has on surrounding communities and what can be done to make their voices heard when it comes to new/ongoing aviation developments? This is where Noise Action Plans come into play.

What are Noise Action Plans?

A legal requirement under European Union Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise and important for public health, these plans take the course of five years to 'assess, consider and manage' airport noise, judge how it affects surrounding settlements and consider the best ways to reduce airport noise.

The aim is for each subsequent Noise Action Plan to build on existing progress to manage noise pollution effects near airports. For example, Stansted Airport is currently on its third.

According to the Noise Action Plan government guidance itself, *"The Action Plan must be drawn up for places near the airport, which are affected by noise from the airport operations as shown by the results of the noise mapping... Member States must adopt Action Plans, based upon the noise-mapping results with a view to preventing and reducing environmental noise where necessary and particularly where exposure levels can induce harmful effects on human health, and to preserving environmental noise quality where it is good."*

One major requirement of these actions plans is a formal public consultation. This includes both people who have and haven't had exposure to aircraft noise.

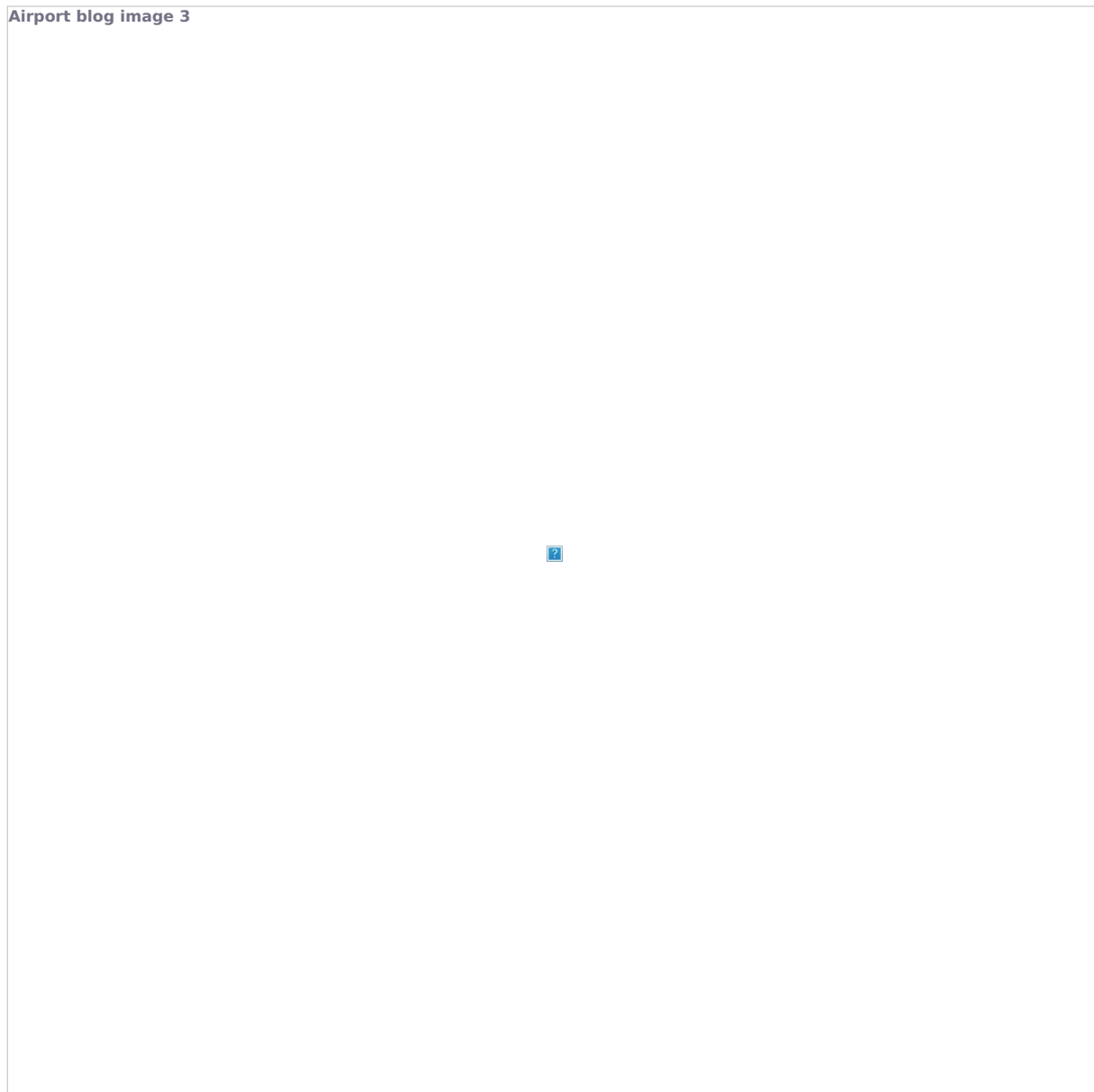
In preparing and revising Action Plans Airport Operators must ensure that:

- The public is consulted about proposals for Action Plans;
- The public is given early and effective opportunities to participate in the preparation and review of the Action Plans;
- The results of the public participation are taken into account;
- The public is informed of the decisions taken; and reasonable time frames are provided allowing sufficient time for each stage of public participation.*

So, how can this be done in an effective manner?

Creating a public Noise Action plan consultation

Airport blog image 3



Even with the large amount of public disruption caused by airport noise pollution, it can still be tricky to present all the information to the local community clearly and to get as many people involved as possible. Like with many kinds of public consultations, it comes down to not just having all information easily and readily available, but generating awareness as well.

According to the Guidance for Airport Operators to produce Noise Action Plans, "The extent and nature of the consultation should be proportionate to the

extent of the noise impact of the airport operations and the actions being proposed. If an area is likely to be particularly affected by a proposed action, the consultation coverage should be relatively greater.”

This is where a full digital-led strategy comes in. Compared to traditional engagement strategies, online tools help make noise consultations more accessible and available to a much larger audience.

Here are some of the key aspects to consider as part of a Noise Action Plan Consultation:

- **Making information accessible:** [An engagement website](#) will act as the hub for everything regarding your Noise Action Plan consultation or Airport Expansion Consultation. Moving the information online makes it accessible to everyone, not to mention available 24 hours a day. With a dedicated news feature, all updates can be clearly shown or dropped directly into your subscribers inboxes so people aren't left in the dark as progress is made. These can help answer common questions like “what can be done to quicken airport noise reduction?” and “what is a safe distance from airport noise?”
- **Being informed of decisions made and timeframes provided:** One of the key aspects highlighted in the government guidance, keeping the local population up to date with all progress is crucial. With a [dedicated news feature](#), all updates can be clearly shown or dropped directly into your subscribers inboxes so people can be aware as soon as something happens. It's also easy to add a project timeline so the public can know what to expect in the coming months and what stage the consultation is at all times.
- **Sentiment Capture:** As it can be necessary to cover a large region around airport noise and impact, using a geospatial solution to capture feedback at scale can help understand area, impact on community and suggestions for ways to improve.

Screenshot 2022-02-23 at 10.58.23



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- **Adding context around your consultation:** [With a 2.0 heatmap](#), it's easy to add specific layers to map existing and upcoming flight paths. This way, members of the community can see exactly how and when noise is coming from, how this may affect them going forward and what kind of airport noise barriers are planned to be put in place.
 - **Giving early and effective opportunities to participate:** One of the easiest ways to let people give their opinions is with a simple [online public survey](#). Depending on the information needed, you can craft questions that will provide you with the most useful data around noise reduction suggestions and what the public believes the main sources of noise are.

- **Accentuate with extra resources:** To create a truly immersive experience around noise levels, link to sound tests or samples to demonstrate the average sound of an aircraft overhead. This is especially helpful for members of the public who aren't yet affected or as part of an Airport Expansion Consultation to demonstrate the possibilities of increased noise.
- **Get your consultation seen on social:** The community can't comment on a consultation if they don't know it's happening. There are a number of ways to make people aware, but a dedicated [social media promotion](#) is one of the most effective. **Our team can easily geotarget people within the consultations area with paid social ads and even define audiences by age, gender, interest and more.**
- **Consider seasonality:** The survey portion of the Noise Action Plan can run continuously for a year in order to capture seasonal variations. For example, with more windows open and outdoor activity in Summer, is the community more sensitive to noise pollution?

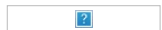
All of these will bring not just clear, but quantifiable data that can be used when trying to work out how to control airport noise.

These methods are also easily adaptable for other kinds of consultations as well, including: Airport Expansion Consultations and other planning works put forward for the area. All require strong backing from the public to ensure a quick and hassle free development, and all can benefit from a digital consultation strategy.

To understand more about what Commonplace can do for Action Plan Consultations, our team will be more than happy to show you with a free demo. Just click below to book!

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Charlotte Cooper

Content Writer at Commonplace

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