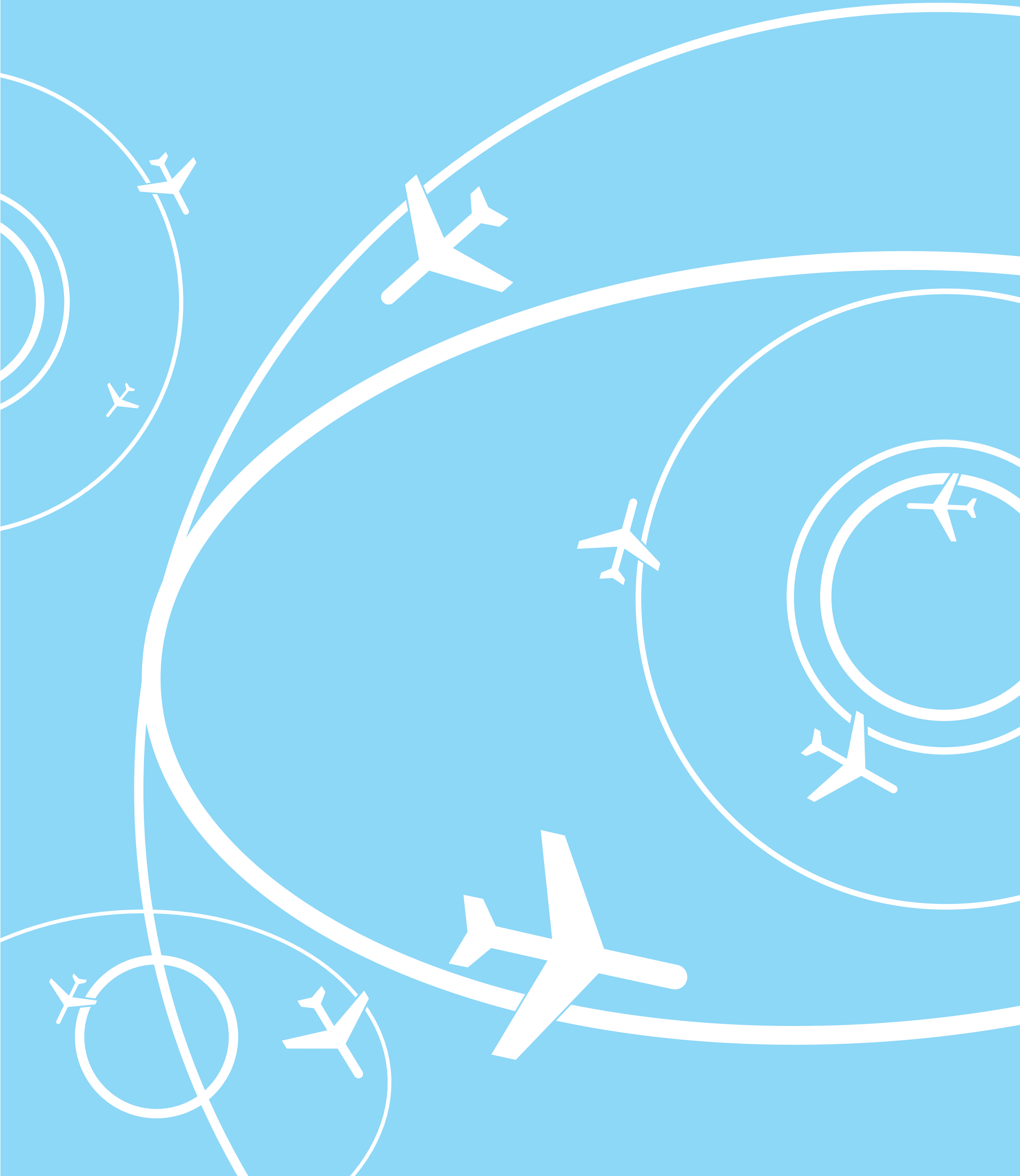




Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Flying to distraction

Future growth in air travel threatens to shatter
the tranquillity of the countryside



2000



Plane crazy

The Government's forecasts for air travel predict that passenger numbers could rise from 180 million passengers a year in 2000, to 500 million in 2030. The implications of such growth for the countryside and wider environment are huge. Existing airports would be used much more intensively, new runways would be needed, entirely new airports could be built, and flight paths will become more busy. New holding 'stacks' in the air (which are used to regulate the flow of aircraft landing at airports) will be required, meaning new areas of countryside will be plagued by aircraft noise.

2030



Key


AIR TRANSPORT LEVELS

Flights per annum






-  **Band 3**
150,001+
-  **Band 2**
75,001-150,000
-  **Band 1**
less than 75,001

Note - Projected air transport movement levels at Finningley airport in 2030 are not yet available

HOLDING STACKS

-  Existing and possible future stacks

FLIGHT TRAFFIC FLOW

-  35 flights/hour or less
-  36 - 50 flights/hour
-  51 - 60 flights/hour
-  61 flights/hour or more
-  New flight path

Note - These maps are purely illustrative and provide a general picture of what could happen if the Government's forecasts for the growth in air travel are realised.

These two maps illustrate the situation now, and in thirty years time, if the Government's forecasts are simply provided for. In both cases flight paths fan out across the country. The width of the lines shows how many aircraft are using them – in 2030 some routes could see almost a plane a minute. An entirely new flight path may be needed along the east coast over the North York Moors National Park and other valued areas of undisturbed countryside and coastline.

The number of holding stacks would increase too. Three new stacks could be required – one to cater for the expansion of Stansted, another for a new airport at Cliffe, and a third in the Midlands to feed a possible new airport between Coventry and Rugby. The expansion of Manchester airport might also lead to the need for a new stack. And these maps only show some of the impact, since they exclude noise generated by extra traffic on existing roads and new routes which would be built to access the airports including, in the case of Stansted, a new rail link.

Assessing the impact of noise

One of the biggest threats posed by the expansion of air travel is its impact on communities and countryside from noise. The disturbance caused by planes taking off is well known and already unacceptable in certain areas. But with the Government forecasting a tripling of traffic in the next thirty years, the effects are likely to get much worse. Aviation is likely to intrude into previously tranquil areas, and make hundreds of thousands of people's lives a misery. Studies have shown that excessive noise has been linked to stress, poor health, educational under-achievement, and a low quality of life.

To find out what is at stake, CPRE commissioned respected consultants TRL to examine the Government's forecasts and what they would mean for future patterns of air travel. Using official data and their best professional judgement, the consultants set out where growth is likely to occur and the effect on exposure to noise. Their assessment is based on a scenario of unconstrained demand which has been developed by Government.

The results of TRL's work are frightening. They found that:

606,300

people will be seriously bothered or subject to unacceptable levels of noise in 2030 – more than double the number of people affected today. This is equivalent to twice the population of Coventry.

2,090 km²

of land will be exposed to high levels of noise from aviation.

The table shows where this growth could occur. In the Coventry/Rugby area, for example, an area approximately 230 km² would experience noise of 54dB(A) were a new airport to be built there. The expansion of Stansted could see a ten-fold increase in the number of people seriously affected by noise from aircraft, and a huge increase in the area of countryside affected. But greater disturbance from noise will be experienced throughout the country.

Measuring noise disturbance

Currently, the Government measures noise using a measure of L_{Aeq16h} . This stands for the average sound experienced over a 16 hr period. It does not address the effect of sudden or sporadic changes in noise (by planes for example), or exposure to noise during quieter periods of time (eg. 7pm - 7am). The Department for Transport publishes noise contours for each airport, showing the area likely to be exposed to different levels of noise. The areas inside the contours experience levels of 57dB(A) or more – which the Government takes as the limit above which community annoyance occurs. Maps with 54dB(A) contours are also available for the South East. CPRE believes this is a crude measure which does not accurately reflect the intrusion of noise on communities or the countryside. The World Health Organisation (WHO) believes that 50dB(A) is more likely to represent the threshold above which community annoyance occurs – but no maps are currently available showing the area within this noise contour.

Separately, the Government is undertaking a noise mapping exercise in accordance with a European Directive on Environmental Noise. It is promising an Ambient Noise Strategy which will aim to reduce exposure to noise and protect 'relatively quiet areas in open country'. Decisions to be made on aviation risk undermining the strategy before it has even been written.

Neighbours from hell coming to visit?

Airport	Area Affected	Present (1999/ 2000)		Future (2030)	
		Population affected*	Area exposed km ²	Population affected*	Area exposed km ²
South East and East					
Alconbury **	Rural	0	0	800	22
Cliffe	Rural	0	0	12,800	176
Gatwick	Rural	3,300	87	15,000	172
Heathrow	Mixed	194,400	195	272,300	269
Luton	Rural	3,100	59	15,600	194
Stansted	Rural	1,800	46	19,100	393
Midlands					
Birmingham	Mixed	22,400	31	133,100	142
Coventry	Rural	<200	2	3,000	15
East Midlands	Rural	3,100	18	12,100	146
Rugby	Rural	0	0	11,500	227
Northern					
Humberside	Rural	NA	3	<200	10
Leeds & Bradford	Mixed	9,200	15	18,600	25
Liverpool JL	Mixed	3,500	18	11,000	36
Manchester	Mixed	32,500	81	61,300	130
Newcastle	Mixed	1,000	11	4,800	34
Sheffield City	Mixed	< 200	1	800	4
Teesside	Rural	< 200	8	1,500	16
South West					
Bournemouth	Rural	1,300	9	5,500	24
Bristol	Rural	500	15	2,600	35
Exeter	Rural	< 200	3	1,000	10
Newquay	Rural	0	1	0	3
Plymouth	Mixed	1,000	2	3,800	7
Total		277,500	605	606,300	2,090

* The figures for populations affected by noise relate to those who will be 'very much bothered' or who will experience 'unacceptable' levels of noise according to the most recent UK survey of aircraft noise disturbance. These are likely to be conservative estimates and do not include figures for airports which have not been modelled by the Department for Transport or where data is unavailable.

** Alconbury future figures are for 2015 and not 2030.

What can be done?

It need not be like this. The aviation industry has benefited from massive tax exemptions over the years. This has meant that demand for aviation has been kept artificially high. It has also been exempt from paying the full costs which it imposes on the environment and society. We believe this situation – and the soaring growth in air travel it produces – must end.

Those who protest about noise are sometimes labelled NIMBYs. However, our research shows that the effects of unconstrained growth in aviation will extend far beyond the immediate environs of airports – it is a problem that will affect the nation as a whole. CPRE believes the Government needs to take a lead in tackling this issue. We are urging it to:

- develop and implement an environmentally sustainable aviation policy which manages demand, rather than simply provides new and bigger airports;
- adopt the World Health Organisation's internationally recognised standards on noise for assessing the effect of community annoyance;
- update the noise maps around airports so they include 50dB(A) contours – which are more appropriate for assessing the impact of noise from aviation in tranquil areas and on vulnerable groups, like school children and the elderly;
- extend restrictions on the most intrusive night time flights, at all airports;
- include the adverse effects of noise from aircraft on the countryside in calculating the cost of air travel on society; and
- commission research to examine how noise in tranquil areas impacts on people's quality of life and experience of the countryside.

Campaign to Protect Rural England

The Campaign to Protect Rural England promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We promote positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside and to ensure change values its natural and built environment.

Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen. We have 59,000 supporters, a branch in every county, nine regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in central London. Membership is open to all.

Founded in 1926, CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. Our President is Sir Max Hastings.

128 Southwark Street London SE1 0SW
Tel: 020 7981 2800
Fax: 020 7981 2899
Email: info@cpre.org.uk
Website: www.cpre.org.uk

To obtain a copy of TRL's full report, *Aviation, Noise and the Countryside*, on which this leaflet is based (price £50), please contact CPRE Publications at the address above, or through our website www.cpre.org.uk