



Aircraft Noise Action Group

Noise Complaints report: 04/08/2023

1. Introduction

This report covers noise complaints submitted via the form on ANAG's web site. Periods run from 03/03/22 to 31/12/22 and from 01/01/23 to 03/08/23. The UIDs in table ii are anonymised strings derived from the raw data. People are steadily signing up as supporters of ANAG's campaign which means that complaints are coming from a campaign supporter profile that is changing and growing over time. The vast majority of complaints arise from the use of flightpaths to the west of the Airport.

2. Making complaints

Time stamps in the raw data indicate that 89% of complaints are submitted on the same day specified in the complaint, 11% on another, subsequent day. Around half of complainants submitting a *single* complaint did not submit on the day of the noise event and it will be interesting to see how this pattern evolves over time.

With reference to the decision to complain, it is possible that a proportion of people experience aircraft noise, decide to complain at the time but don't and then don't complain on the following day(s) due to lack of time and other pressures or simply forgetting. Our untested assumption is that this scenario might partly account for people who complain a few times but then stop. ANAG will be adding an age range question to the form to enable profiling the distribution of complaints across age groups. This might, for example, help to understand whether older (retired) people complain more than younger (working) people; is it because they have more time? In any event, it seems likely that adverse aircraft noise is more likely to be complained about if the complaint is submitted close to the time of the event or, at the very least, on the same day. An easy complaints process that is quick to complete and allows complainants to communicate their experience without having to write text and which asks for information they are able to provide is key to this.

ANAG also suspects that people do not report every time they are affected by aircraft noise even if they could easily do it on the same day and/or at around the time of the noise event. Anecdotally, reasons seem to include: "Can't always be bothered to complain"; "Nothing ever changes"; "The Airport doesn't listen or do anything"; "I could complain all the time but I've got other things to do". In any event, it can not be assumed that the cohort that complains occasionally/infrequently is not negatively affected by aircraft noise on an ongoing basis.

3. Complainants

Table i: Count of complainants

	2022	2023	All time
Complainants	53	39	70

Table ii: Complaints per complainant in 2022 and 2023 – 10 or more complaints

Year	2022		Year	2023	
UID	Total	%	UID	Total (up to 03/08)	%
NE15QXPH	536	48.33%	NE15QXPH	166	44.39%
NE15BZKA	173	15.60%	NE15BZKA	55	14.71%
NE40TARO	108	9.74%	NE40TARO	45	12.03%
NE15BYSS	103	9.29%	NE15BYSS	27	7.22%
NE40SRKN	38	3.43%	NE40SRKN	19	5.08%
NE15DXJE	16	1.44%	NE15DXJE	12	3.21%
NE15DXJN	15	1.35%			
Ne15qxLA	15	1.35%			
NE40SYSA	12	1.08%			

2022 was the first year of operation for the complaints form. The number of complainants is for 2023 is 75% of the count for 2022(table i).

Data for 2022 was skewed (table ii) as a result of the data form offering the option to either complain about a single flight or about multiple flights per part of the day. One complainant submitted over 500 single flight complaints in the initial period of the form being available, often many times a day, with others submitting complaints by part of the day. The single flight option was removed so that everybody submitted on a consistent basis though some complainants can and do often specify one or more flights in the free-text comments section of the form.

Patterns across 2022 and 2023 show that a majority of complainants submit less than 10 complaints in the year with sizeable proportion submitting one or two complaints. This is similar to patterns experienced by aircraft noise campaigns elsewhere and it is expected. It would be an error, however, to assume that people who complain once or twice do not continue to have bad experiences of aircraft noise. People have busy lives and the Airport’s long term failure to address the issue of noise (“Nothing ever changes”) and the unhelpfulness of its default response to complaints act as disincentives (also see section 2 above).

4. Location

Table iii: Distance from the Airport in a straight line

	2022		2023 up to	
Distance from Airport	Totals	%	Totals	%
Between 3 and 5 miles away	896	80.87%	285	76.20%
Between 5 and 10 miles away	196	17.69%	77	20.59%
Less than 3 miles	16	1.44%	12	3.21%
Grand Total	1108	100.00%	374	100.00%

Unsurprisingly, most complaints come from people who live nearest to the airport, between 3 and 5 miles away in this case. This was very clear from the 2022 data though, as indicated above, the first year of operation includes skewed data. In 2023, the difference between the 3 to 5 miles band and the 5 to 10 miles band is less. In any event, clearly people are disturbed by noise from close to the Airport up to some distance away.

Distances entered using postcodes have been set and validated using a lookup table of postcode data sorted into bands. The “Less than 3 miles away” band shows a smaller number of complaints than expected. This may be due to people not being aware of the campaign yet, though people in this band are now signing up. It may also be due to the location of housing in this band in relation to the flightpaths.

5. Part of the day

Table iv: Part of the day when the noise event happened

Part of the day	2022		2023 up to 03/08	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
Early morning	470	42%	215	57%
All day	21	2%	57	15%
Morning	192	17%	41	11%
Night time	51	5%	25	7%
Afternoon	302	27%	25	7%
Evening	73	7%	11	3%
Grand Total	1109	100.00%	374	100.00%

Table v: Where were you when the noise happened?

Where were you?	2022		2023 up to 03/08	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
Indoors	885	80%	321	86%
Indoors and outdoors	29	3%	40	11%
Outdoors	195	18%	13	3%
Grand Total	1109	100.00%	374	100.00%

Early morning complaints dominate as do indoor complaints. In 2023 so far, 97% of early morning complainants were indoors (98% in 2022) when the noise happened. In 2023, 93% of these complaints reported being woken up by aircraft noise (60% in 2022). ANAG thinks that this clearly points to a health issue, noise is known to affect people while asleep, causing potentially health damaging fight or flight responses even if they remain asleep. Being woken up by aircraft noise will have a similar effect. The health consequences for people thus affected will be further exacerbated by repeated noise events arising from dense batches of departing aircraft from around 0600 as well as at other times of day when people are fully awake.

6. Effects

Table vi: Number of effects per complaint)

Number of effects reported	2022		2023 up to 03/08	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
3	516	47%	186	50%
1	195	18%	95	25%
2	375	34%	86	23%
4	11	1%	6	2%
5	2	0%	1	0%
0	10	1%		0%
Grand Total	1109	100.00%	374	100.00%

Table vii: Distribution of reported effects overall (2022 and 2023 – total complaints 1483)

Effect reported	Total	%
Made me feel anxious	1041	70%
Made me angry	958	65%
Woke me up	583	39%
Couldn't hear someone talking to me	511	34%
Couldn't go to sleep	308	21%

Most complainants, 75%, report multiple effects per complaint, it is rarely just one thing that is disturbing. Anxiety and anger dominate the reported effects, both of which represent significant health risks especially when repeated and especially in the early morning. Table viii shows how multiple effects have been grouped and selected by complainants.

Next page: Table viii: Grouping of reported effects and Conclusions

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Table viii: Grouping of reported effects

Row Labels	Count of Postcode	Count of Date
["Woke me up","Made me feel anxious","Made me angry"]	250	16.9%
["Made me feel anxious","Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	237	16.0%
["Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious","Made me angry"]	166	11.2%
["Made me feel anxious","Made me angry"]	94	6.3%
["Woke me up","Made me feel anxious"]	93	6.3%
["Woke me up"]	89	6.0%
["Made me feel anxious","Couldn't hear someone talking to me"]	86	5.8%
["Couldn't hear someone talking to me"]	81	5.5%
["Woke me up","Made me angry"]	64	4.3%
["Made me feel anxious"]	53	3.6%
["Made me angry"]	52	3.5%
["Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	46	3.1%
["Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious"]	32	2.2%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep","Couldn't hear someone talking to me"]	21	1.4%
["Couldn't go to sleep"]	15	1.0%
["Couldn't go to sleep","Made me angry"]	15	1.0%
["Woke me up","Couldn't hear someone talking to me"]	13	0.9%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep"]	13	0.9%
	10	0.7%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious"]	10	0.7%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep","Made me angry"]	8	0.5%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious","Made me angry"]	8	0.5%
["Couldn't go to sleep","Couldn't hear someone talking to me"]	5	0.3%
["Woke me up","Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	5	0.3%
["Couldn't go to sleep","Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	5	0.3%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious","Couldn't hear someone talking to me"]	4	0.3%
["Woke me up","Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious","Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	3	0.2%
["Couldn't go to sleep","Made me feel anxious","Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	3	0.2%
["Woke me up","Made me feel anxious","Couldn't hear someone talking to me","Made me angry"]	2	0.1%

7. Conclusions

Noise is a known and proven health risk. In this context, aircraft noise from Newcastle Airport is a particular health risk as this report indicates. This has been heightened since 2017, when departing flights were no longer laterally dispersed and were, instead, focussed down narrow flight paths. Aircraft now fly 1 mile either side of the centre line where they used to fly up to 5 miles either side. This has delivered a greatly increased frequency and severity of aircraft noise for people living under or close to the centre lines of these flightpaths, especially but not exclusively, to the west of the Airport. Before 2017, noise was dispersed widely and only an occasional nuisance to this cohort of people but the concentration of flights down narrow flightpaths has materially changed the issue to a serious level. People's mental and physical health is being affected and they are complaining about it.