



From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State

Edward Garnier Esq QC MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Department for
Transport

Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

Tel: 020 7944 2566
Fax: 020 7944 4309
E-Mail: karen.buck@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.dft.gov.uk

Our Ref: AD/KB/019767/05

Dear Edward,

25 OCT 2005

Thank you for your letter of 26 September to the Secretary of State, on behalf of your constituents and those of your parliamentary neighbours, about Nottingham East Midlands Airport. You also enclose a copy of your letter to Mrs Penny Coates, the Managing Director of NEMA, about a letter sent to Mr Steve Charlish from Mr Neil Robinson, NEMA's Divisional Manager, concerning low flying aircraft.

It was helpful to discuss these issues with you last week. I appreciate your and Mr Charlish's concerns and those of your other constituents. I also understand the need to find as clear a line of responsibility as possible for when aircraft noise causes disturbance. There are a number of ways in which data is collected as I have set out below. There is no comprehensive single source and no complete record of all flights. The organisations concerned will seek to be helpful in response to enquiries with their areas of competence.

As you know, NEMA operates a Noise and Track Keeping system. This is specific to their own movements and limited to a range of approximately 25 miles. This is the case at most airports operating this system. Complainants can call, email or write to the airport with details of the date and time when they were disturbed. The airport can then provide information such as the height of the aircraft, the operator and the destination. NEMA has, I understand, sought to provide responses to all such complaints, although the recent dialogue with Mr Charlish acknowledges the resource implications of a substantial number of cases for analysis. The airport is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of how it handles noise complaints and the level of information it should reasonably be expected to provide to complainants.

The other source of information about aircraft movements would be NATS. However, they keep radar data for the purposes of incident investigation and then only for 30 days. In any event, it would take them some time to do individual checks and, even then, they would only be able to provide height information. Sometimes they might also be able to say what the destination and point of departure had been although the information is not always available. However, as far as I am aware, they would not be able to identify the operator or aircraft type.

The CAA, as the industry regulator, is not directly involved in the provision of an air traffic control service so does not have routine access to the information. The same would apply to the Department.

Some of the aircraft that are subject to enquiries could involve movements, including transits through the area that had taken place in uncontrolled airspace in circumstances where an air traffic control service, whilst often available, is not obligatory. These movements might be impossible to identify in the absence of an air traffic control service from NATS or NEMA. It should be noted that operations in uncontrolled airspace are quite legitimate at any time although, in practice, civil commercial air transport flights would normally only take place in uncontrolled airspace at night when there was little other traffic.

The letter from Mr Neil Robinson of NEMA to Mr Charlish provides the information that the airport are able to provide from their Noise and Track-keeping System. Some data, such as speed, are not held in the system and are not crucial to determining the performance of an aircraft relative to route and altitude.

I can assure you that I am not taking a detached view of the airport's activities - officials have met recently with the airport management to review the current situation and I did so myself when meeting Manchester Airport Groups last week.

Your sincerely



KAREN BUCK