

Night flights

Gatwick has always been a 24 hour operation and the Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for formulating the restrictions on the types of aircraft that can be scheduled to fly at night. In setting the restrictions the aim has been to preserve a balance between the need to protect local communities from excessive aircraft noise at night and the operation of services where they provide economic benefits.

Gatwick Airport Limited has no authority to formulate any restrictions but strictly monitors compliance with all Government restrictions in force, reporting regularly to the DfT and the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee. This is an independent consultative forum made up of representatives of Local Authorities, Councillors, business and airlines and the DfT.

The restrictions are divided into summer and winter seasons. They consist of a movements limit and a quota count system whereby points are allocated to different aircraft types according to their noise certification levels. The noisier the aircraft type, the higher the points allocated. This provides an incentive for airlines to use quieter aircraft types. The latest night flying restrictions came into effect at the end of October 2006 and will apply until the end of October 2012. The movements and quota limits are as follows:

	Winter					
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2001/12
Movements Limits	3250	3250	3250	3250	3250	3250
Quota Points	2300	2240	2180	2120	2060	2000

	Summer					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Movements Limits	11200	11200	11200	11200	11200	11200
Quota Points	6700	6600	6500	6400	6300	6200

The quota count values range from 0.25 to 16, the lower figure being applied to the quietest aircraft types. Under the restrictions aircraft with a quota count of 8 or 16 are not allowed to operate during the night period. QC4 aircraft such as the old, noisy DC10 are not permitted to be scheduled to operate at night.

Although unable to formulate restrictions, Gatwick Airport Limited has been given powers by the DfT to grant dispensations for aircraft not normally permitted to fly during the night period. Dispensations are only given in certain exceptional circumstances and these include: (a) delays to aircraft which are likely to lead to serious congestion at the airport or serious hardship or suffering to passengers or animals and (b) delays to aircraft resulting from widespread and prolonged disruption to Air Traffic Control. Further exemptions may be granted by the DfT in respect of flights carrying VIP's, relief flights carrying supplies during a period of emergency, military aircraft operations in the event of war and civil aircraft affected by hostilities. The DfT also retains the right to grant exemptions from the night restrictions to specific flights.

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