

LOCAL RULE 1

HEATHROW NIGHT MOVEMENT QUOTA AND ALLOCATION PROCEDURES

EFFECTIVE FROM: 23 MARCH 2026

ISSUED BY: HEATHROW CAPACITY PLANNING

1. POLICY

Under Sections 78 and 80 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, the Department for Transport (DfT) prescribes restrictions at Heathrow Airport to the operation of all aircraft movements at night. All Night Flights operating within the Night Planning Period require the prior allocation of a slot and corresponding Night Quota (movement limit and noise quota). The total Night Quota permitted per scheduling season is determined by the DfT periodically. Heathrow Airport is responsible for managing the Night Quota, including approval of unplanned Night Movements in the Night Quota Period, and monitoring its use. Heathrow Airport's Coordinator, Airport Coordination Limited (ACL) administers the allocation of Night Quota for operations with historic rights.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. To manage and track night flight operations within the DfT declared seasonal Night Quota
- 2.2. To make best use of the Night Quota Limits
- 2.3. To ensure the method of allocated Night Quota is transparent and fair
- 2.4. To respect the historic right of night flights from the previous equivalent season
- 2.5. To provide for off-schedule operations beyond airlines' control
- 2.6. To provide for new operators or operations, including ad-hoc services, where Night Quota permits
- 2.7. To limit the adverse effects to the local community.

3. DEFINITIONS

In this document, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

Night Quota Period: *The timeframe during which all aircraft movements are counted against the seasonal night quota limits; it is defined as the following time:*

2330 to 0600 local time

Night Planning Period: *The scheduling window designed to prevent movements falling in the Night Quota Period by accounting for typical taxi times; it is defined as the following times:*

Departures 2310-0550 local time

Arrivals 2330-0615 local time

Night Shoulder Period: *The time immediately adjacent to the Night Quota Period, to account for operational delay, during which aircraft movements are more strictly regulated but do not count against the night quota limit; it is defined as the following times:*

Departures 2250-2305 local time

PM Arrivals 2300-2325 local time

AM Arrivals 0620-0630 local time

Night Movement: *An aircraft take-off or landing during the Night Quota Period.*

Night Flight: *An arrival or departure scheduled during the Night Planning Period.*

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Historic Night Flight:	<i>A Night Flight allocated slots within the Night Planning Period based on historic precedence.</i>
Movements Limit:	<i>The maximum permitted number of Night Movements in a season.</i>
Noise Quota Limit:	<i>The maximum permitted sum of Quota Count of all Night Movements in a season.</i>
Night Quota:	<i>The combination of the Movements Limit and Noise Quota.</i>
Available Night Quota:	<i>The total Night Quota available for allocation in a season.</i>
Quota Count:	<i>The amount of quota (QC points) assigned to an individual night movement as specified in Appendix A (Current Aircraft Noise Classification).</i>
Pool:	<i>The proportion of unallocated Available Night Quota in a season.</i>
Predicted Use:	<i>The forecast utilisation of Night Quota by an airline in a forthcoming season, as calculated by ACL and agreed with the airline concerned.</i>
Minimum Pool Size:	<i>Of the Movement Limit: set at 5% of the movements of the Available Night Quota</i> <i>Of the Noise Quota: the number of pool movements multiplied by the typical Quota Count per pool movement.</i>

4. ALLOCATION OF NIGHT QUOTA

4.1. Night Quota is determined by the DfT periodically. For the period October 2025 to October 2028, the DfT has set the following Movement Limit and Noise Quota Limit for each coordination season as per below:

Season	Movement Limit	Noise Quota Limit
Winter	2,550	2,415
Summer	3,250	2,735

4.2. Heathrow Airport is responsible for managing the Night Quota, including the approval of unplanned night movements, and monitoring its use. ACL administers the allocation of Night Quota for operations with historic rights.

4.3. Operators are expected to make all reasonable efforts to prevent flights scheduled outside of the Night Planning Period from operating within the Night Quota Period. Flights occurring during the Night Quota Period must obtain prior approval from Heathrow Airport as outlined in the Administration and Enforcement of Night Aircraft Movement and Quota Limits Document (ASEnv_OSI_038).

4.4. Requests for new night flights or changes to historic night flights (such as retiming or aircraft type changes) will only be approved where a sufficient Night Quota allocation is available to meet the Predicted Use.

4.5. Historic Night Flights

4.5.1. An airline with historic flights in the Night Quota Period will receive a Night Quota allocation equivalent to its Predicted Use in the forthcoming season. Such allocations are reviewed

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seasonally based on the previous equivalent season's usage and using latest available actual data.

- 4.5.2. Airlines must inform ACL of any operational changes likely to affect Predicted Use (such as a change in flight routing) as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the airline should also request a change to its slot time.

4.6. Night Quota Pool

4.6.1. After the allocation of Night Quota to historic night flights, a Pool is created consisting of any unallocated Available Night Quota.

4.6.2. Available Night Quota in the Pool may be allocated to new series or ad-hoc night flights, or changes to historic night flights, subject to maintaining the Minimum Pool Size of the Available Night Quota for the season or, once the season has begun, of the Available Night Quota remaining

4.6.3. The Minimum Pool Size may be varied by agreement of Heathrow Airport and ACL.

4.6.4. The priorities for the allocation of Available Night Quota from the Pool are as follows:

1. Unchanged historic night flights requiring additional Night Quota based on the most recent calculation of Predicted Use
2. Changes to historic night flights requiring additional Night Quota. For example, changing to a larger aircraft type that requires additional Noise Quota, or a retime within the Night Planning Period resulting in higher Predicted Use
3. Retimes of historic flights from outside of the Night Planning Period
4. New requests for flights within the Night Planning Period.

Within priorities 1-4, priority will be given to year-round continuations from the previous season.

4.6.4 All night movements of airlines with an allocation of Night Quota will count against the airline's allocation of Movements and Noise Quota. Night movements of airlines without an allocation of Night Quota will count against the Pool.

4.6.5 Airlines will be informed of the rate of use of their movement and quota allocations if their pro-rata usage exceeds what is expected based on the schedule of that season.

4.7 New Night Flights

4.7.4 Newly allocated night flights will receive a Night Quota allocation equivalent to the Predicted Use in the forthcoming season. Where actual data for the airline/route is not available, the nearest comparable data may be used. Such allocations will be reviewed seasonally using latest available actual data.

4.8 Night Shoulder Period Flights

4.8.4 Airlines with flights scheduled within the Night Shoulder Period *may* receive a Night Quota allocation for a proportion of the planned flights based on Predicted Use. Such allocations are on a non-historic basis and will be reviewed seasonally using latest available actual data.

4.8.5 Requests for new slots within the Night Shoulder Period may be refused where there is not a sufficient Night Quota allocation available to meet the Predicted Use.

5 **SEASONAL CARRY OVER**

5.1 The DfT Night Restrictions permits unused Night Quota of up to 10% of the seasonal limit to be carried forward into the next season, and the anticipation of up to 10% of the Night Quota from the next season in the event of an overrun.

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- 5.2 A season's Available Night Quota may be set at a level to protect carry over into the next season or assuming carry over from the previous season. Normally, the Available Night Quota will be set based on a 5% carry over from a Summer season to the following Winter season. The planned use of seasonal carry over may be varied by agreement of the Heathrow Airport and ACL.

6 POOL EXHAUSTION

- 6.1 If at any point during the season the use of Night Quota is predicted to exceed the Available Night Quota by the end of the season, appropriate corrective procedures will be implemented.
- 6.2 These procedures will be lifted once Predicted Use of Night Quota is within the Available Night Quota for the season. Heathrow Airport and ACL will notify operators of the implementation and lifting of any corrective procedures.
- 6.3 The allocation of new ad hoc night flights that do not qualify for dispensation and are not exempt aircraft types may be suspended.
- 6.4 Any operator either:
- a) without an allocation of Night Quota that has used a significant amount from the Pool;
 - or
 - b) with an allocation of Night Quota that has used more than its allocation on a pro rata basis
- may be required to take whatever corrective action necessary to prevent continued excessive use of Night Quota, including the cancellation and/or rescheduling of flights. The operator may also be required to appear before the Slot Performance Committee.
- 6.5 ACL may identify any airlines that are forecast to have surplus Night Quota allocation in that season and seek its return to the Pool. The voluntary return of Night Quota will not automatically affect an airline's Night Quota allocation in future seasons.
- 6.6 Heathrow Airport may also invoke procedures to prevent night movements without a Night Quota allocation that do not qualify for dispensation and are not exempt aircraft types.

7 SEASONAL OVERRUN

- 7.1 A seasonal overrun occurs when the total use of Night Quota at the airport exceeds the seasonal Available Night Quota, resulting in a reduction in the Available Night Quota in the following season. All parties must make every effort to avoid such an overrun occurring.
- 7.2 If an overrun occurs, the following rules are applied to the following season:
- 7.2.4 Up to 10% of an overrun in movements and/or noise quota usage in one season (not being covered by carry-over from the previous season) will be deducted from the corresponding allocation in the following season.
 - 7.2.5 An overrun of more than 10% will result in a deduction of 10% plus twice the amount of the excess over 10% from the corresponding allocation in the following season.
 - 7.2.6 The maximum overrun is 20% of the original limit in each case.
- 7.3 When season overrun occurs, any airline with a Night Quota allocation which overused its allocation will be required to appear before the Slot Performance Committee. If its overuse cannot be justified based on reasons outside the airline's control, then the airline will be required to reduce Predicted Use of Night Quota in the immediately following season by an amount equivalent to its overrun.
- 7.4 If a shortfall remains, then the Night Quota allocation will be reduced by the same proportion across all airlines with an allocation and the Pool.

8 TRANSFER OF NIGHT QUOTA

- 8.1 Airlines are free to transfer Night Quota allocation from one route or type of service to another.

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- 8.2 If an airline exchanges slots with another airline where only one set of slots is within the Night Planning Period, then the associated Night Quota allocation will transfer to the airline holding the slots within the Night Planning Period after the exchange.
- 8.3 All transfers or exchanges are subject to confirmation of feasibility by ACL. The test of feasibility will include whether a sufficient Night Quota allocation is available to meet any revised Predicted Use after the transfer or exchange.

9 SPECIAL DISPENSATIONS

- 9.1 Airports are permitted to allow dispensations for certain night flights in the night quota period for specific reasons as outlined below:
 - 9.1.4 Those granted by the government for specific reasons such as VIP, humanitarian, and ad hoc flights considered in the national interest.
 - 9.1.5 Those granted by Heathrow Airport in the event of emergency, widespread and prolonged air traffic disruption, and delays as a result of disruption leading to serious hardship and congestion within the terminal and/or airfield.
The details of which flights are permitted dispensation can be found in Appendix B (Flights with Dispensation).
- 9.2 Pre-emptive dispensation should no longer be assumed when flights land early on poor weather days.

10 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

ASEnv_OSI_038 (Latest version can be found at [Operational Safety Instructions | Heathrow](#))

Date of Local Rule	March 2026
Version Number	4
Previous Version Date	September 2007

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CURRENT AIRCRAFT NOISE CLASSIFICATIONS (All times Local)

Noise classification	QC	Permissions
Below 81	0	Can be scheduled to operate between 2300-0600 subject to Night Quota Limits
81 to 83.9	0.125	Can be scheduled to operate between 2300-0600 subject to Night Quota Limits
84 to 86.9	0.25	Can be scheduled to operate between 2300-0600 subject to Night Quota Limits
87 to 89.9	0.5	Can be scheduled to operate between 2300-0600 subject to Night Quota Limits
90 to 92.9	1	Can be scheduled to operate between 2300-0600 subject to Night Quota Limits
93 to 95.9	2	Can be scheduled to operate between 2300-0600 subject to Night Quota Limits
96 to 98.9	4	Cannot be scheduled between 2330-0600 but can operate if authorised. Will count against Available Night Quota.
99 to 101.9	8	Cannot operate between 2300-0700
Greater than 101.9	16	Cannot operate between 2300-0700

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APPENDIX B: FLIGHTS WITH DISPENSATION

Dispensations under a notice given by the Secretary of State

Flights involving VIPs on Official Visits

- a) The King's Flight and those for senior members of the Royal Family
- b) UK government Ministers and Service Chiefs of Staff
- c) Senior members of foreign Royal Families, Heads of State, or Senior Ministers or Service Chiefs of Staff on an official visit for business where the person is being met by a Government representative.

Repositioning flights preceding or following the use of that aircraft for carriage of a VIP are not permitted if the aircraft is classified as QC4, QC8, or QC16 in accordance with the ban on these aircraft in the Night Period.

Relief / Humanitarian Flights

Flights carrying cargoes such as medical supplies required urgently for humanitarian purposes.

Military Aircraft

Except during war/hostilities, movements by military aircraft should not take place at night unless one of the following applies:

- a) The aircraft has been classified for night operations
- b) Special approval has been given by the DfT in exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances

The Secretary of State is permitted to provide dispensations in exceptional circumstances to enable flights during the Night Quota Period. Examples of previous dispensations under this category include the following:

- a) Periods following the Volcanic Ash Crisis in 2010
- b) Severe prolonged winter weather in December 2010

Changes to Airspace Arrangements due to Government Decisions

When there is a temporary change to airspace because of a Government decision with consequences for airline schedules, dispensations can be provided. Such dispensation can be granted in the event of:

- a) Flypasts on ceremonial occasions
- b) Celebrations where scheduled flights due to land or depart during the day were pushed into the Night Quota Period.

Dispensations granted by Heathrow Airport

Emergencies

Flights involving emergencies where there is an immediate danger to life or health, whether human or animal.

Widespread and prolonged air traffic disruption

Dispensation to flights landing or departing in the Night Quota Period may be given due to:

- a) Strikes by Air Traffic Controllers
- b) Computer problems in Air Traffic Control
- c) Political difficulties abroad
- d) Disruptive weather resulting in Low Visibility Procedures

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- e) Diversions from other airports due to weather conditions (provided the aircraft had departed unaware that its destination was unavailable)

Problems arising from snow and ice should not constitute sufficient reason for dispensations, especially for departures.

Delays due to Disruption Leading to Serious Hardship and Congestion at the Airfield or Terminal

Delay covers disruption to air traffic as set out under 'Widespread and Prolonged Air Traffic Disruption', emergencies, and disruption caused by any hijacking activity.

Serious hardship or congestion covers cases when passengers are subjected to long delays when the terminal buildings are overcrowded, facilities are strained, with insufficient hotel accommodation available. This may be due to reasons under 'Widespread and Prolonged Air Traffic Disruption', emergencies, or disruption caused by hijacking activity.

This does not cover:

- a) Strikes by ground handlers
- b) Delays that arise by additional security checks
- c) Air Traffic Control staffing issues due to illness

Delayed cargo flights may not be granted dispensation for reasons of serious hardship, and these movements should be counted against the Movement and Noise Quota Limit.

All dispensation granted by Heathrow Airport are subject to monitoring by the DfT.