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*Press release*

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## **SPS calls for radical approach to aircraft stacking**

Countryside campaigners in Suffolk say that if the practice of aircraft stacking has to continue it should do so only over the sea rather than inland.

Suffolk Preservations Society (SPS) has written to National Air Traffic Services (NATS), the business responsible for the UK's airspace, whose 17-week consultation into proposed major changes to flight paths in South East England ends tomorrow (19 June).

SPS Director Richard Ward said that as air traffic continues to grow a more radical approach is needed to the issue of aircraft stacking.

He said NATS' consultation process and proposals were flawed because the primary purpose seems to be to reduce the number of people affected by stacking without examining whether it is possible to stack away from populated areas or the alternative to stacking.

In his letter to NATS, Mr Ward says that if stacking aircraft in the skies prior to landing has to continue, it should do so only over the sea, away from populated areas.

"We can see no rationale or justification in the consultation why stacking has to take place over any part of the Suffolk countryside, or any inland area altogether," he writes.

Mr Ward says that SPS was also supporting those organisations who are calling for stacking to take place on the ground before take-off rather than in the air before landing – if the practice has to continue at all.

"Holding aircraft at the end of their journey is both disruptive, wasteful on fuel, adds to climate change problems and is the worst possible way of dealing with the phasing of the landing of aircraft," he writes.

**- more follows -**

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“With others, we would support a wholly different approach where stacking effectively takes place at the commencement of the journey, on the runway before departure, rather than at the end.

“We do not underestimate the significant work and changes that would be made to facilitate this but believe such an option requires proper and careful consideration.

“It could deliver a significant number of major benefits for airlines, not least a saving in fuel, reduced costs, greater efficiency and mean that aircraft movements have less impact on the population as a whole.”

The biggest change proposed for the Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and North East Essex area is to increase the number of holds for Stansted and Luton arrivals from two to three.

The two Stansted holds would be to the south of Newmarket and between Ipswich and Stowmarket, and the Luton hold would be to the west of Cambridge. This means that aircraft heading to land at either airport would route towards these holds; arrivals from the east would cross the Stour and Orwell Estuary and fly in the vicinity of Ipswich.

NATS claims that the changes it is proposing are designed to reduce delay while maintaining safety and improving environmental performance.

### **Ends**

#### **Notes to editors:**

1. For more information about NATS and the biggest-ever consultation on airspace change, visit [www.nats.co.uk](http://www.nats.co.uk)
2. SPS, founded in 1929, originally worked to protect the county's buildings and landscape. Today, the society has broadened its focus to help shape Suffolk's future, largely campaigning for sensitive and appropriate development, more and better quality affordable homes and to ensure sustainable infrastructures are in place to support the county's communities.

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