

NOISE

Pilots ignoring the effect of their activity on people below may well be ruining the field for everyone, including themselves.

The CAA receives complaints almost every day about aircraft noise over populated areas.

The tone of those complaints reflects residents' considerable frustration with aircraft they believe pay no mind to the effects of their activities.

Typical of such complaints are:

"Last night at 1:30 am a helicopter clattered low over my house waking me up. It took me another three hours to get to sleep again."

"In recent years there has been a marked increase in aircraft noise directly above our suburb, particularly in summer and on weekends."

"Last Saturday the noise was constant to the point of being intolerable – and we were eventually forced to leave our home for the day."

As airspace use increases, as population and tourism increases, the tolerance of affected parties on the ground is also being stretched.

If resident pressure is strong enough, pilots may find restrictions on their operations – curfews for example.

Unless it's related to low flying, the CAA has a limited role in relation to aircraft noise. However, there is the framework in place for the Authority to change or create rules to mitigate the nuisance, should community feeling be acute.

A former CAA policy advisor, Brigid Borlase, who has worked on aircraft noise, including responding to complaints, says reputational damage is hard to repair.

"It's not so easy to improve how locals perceive an operator that they believe is overseeing flights consistently blighting their way of life.

"It can also damage the reputation of the wider aviation sector.

"It's better for everyone, wherever possible, to fly neighbourly to prevent complaints in the first place.

"In some cases, it might be possible to let residents know ahead of time about a noisy activity. If they know to expect it, and that it will be for only a limited amount of time, they may be less stressed or concerned about the impact on them.

"If it does get as far as a group of residents complaining, it's important to acknowledge that residents and aviators will perceive noise differently.

"A sudden 20-second burst of noise can be annoying – even distressing – to people on the ground, but the pilot might think, 'It's only 20 seconds.'"

Residents can also perceive lower-level flying as being less safe.

The International Helicopter Association website has a *Fly Neighborly* guide which lists many good reasons why noise should be mitigated, and tips on how to treat complaints. Visit "www.rotor.org > Resources > Operations > Fly Neighborly".

CAA Aviation Safety Adviser, Carlton Campbell, says some training sessions naturally involve more noise, such as turning.

"In cases like this, 'share the noise' by moving to a fresh place every few minutes.

"If we want continued access to airspace, unconstrained by community pressure, we have to be aware of the considerable impact some of our flights have." ≡

