



# Summer 2023 – Night Flights Review



Heathrow

# Background

*By virtue of the Civil Aviation (Designation of Aerodromes) Order 1981(a) Heathrow Airport London, Gatwick Airport London and Stansted Airport London ('the London Airports') are designated aerodromes for the purposes of Section 78 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982*

*Pursuant to the powers set out in section 78 of the Act, the Secretary of State considers it appropriate, for the purpose of avoiding, limiting or mitigating the effect of noise and vibration connected with the taking-off or landing of aircraft at the London Airports, to prohibit aircraft of specified descriptions from taking off or landing and to limit the number of occasions on which other aircraft may take off or land at those aerodromes*

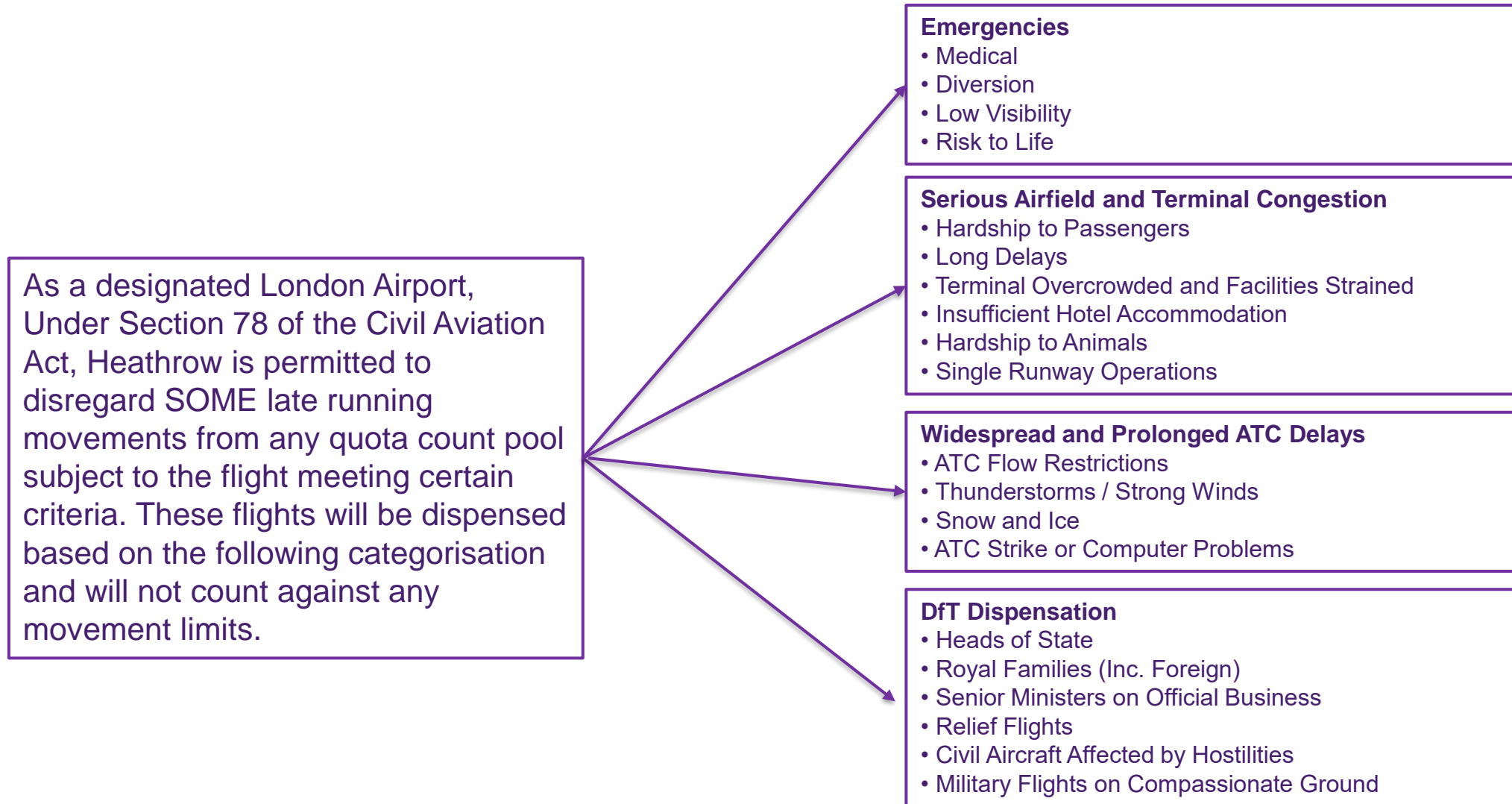
**Night Quota Period 23:30L – 06:00L**

**Quota Count (QC) points limit within NQP for Summer 2023:**  
2735

**Movement limits within NQP for Summer 2023:**  
3250

- Quota is managed on a seasonal basis. Although we report yearly figures, all regulatory reporting is done by season
- An airline with historic night flights rights will receive their own movement limit allocation which is taken from the overall limits above. Limits vary from Summer to Winter
  - The number assigned to an airline with historic rights is equivalent to its predicted use in the forthcoming season for its **planned early morning arrivals (0430-0600)**
  - Airlines with an assigned pool are responsible for ensuring that any late running (post 23:30) movements are recovered by delaying or cancelling pre-06:02 arrivals to ensure a season ends within allotted limits
    - Being assigned a pool does not automatically entitle an airline to operate post 23:30. Any movements are subject to HAL approval
      - For any movements left over, these create the Heathrow Pool
    - To divide the remaining pool up in a fair and equitable manner, we allow up to 5 movements for other airlines (criteria must be met)

# Dispensation Reasons



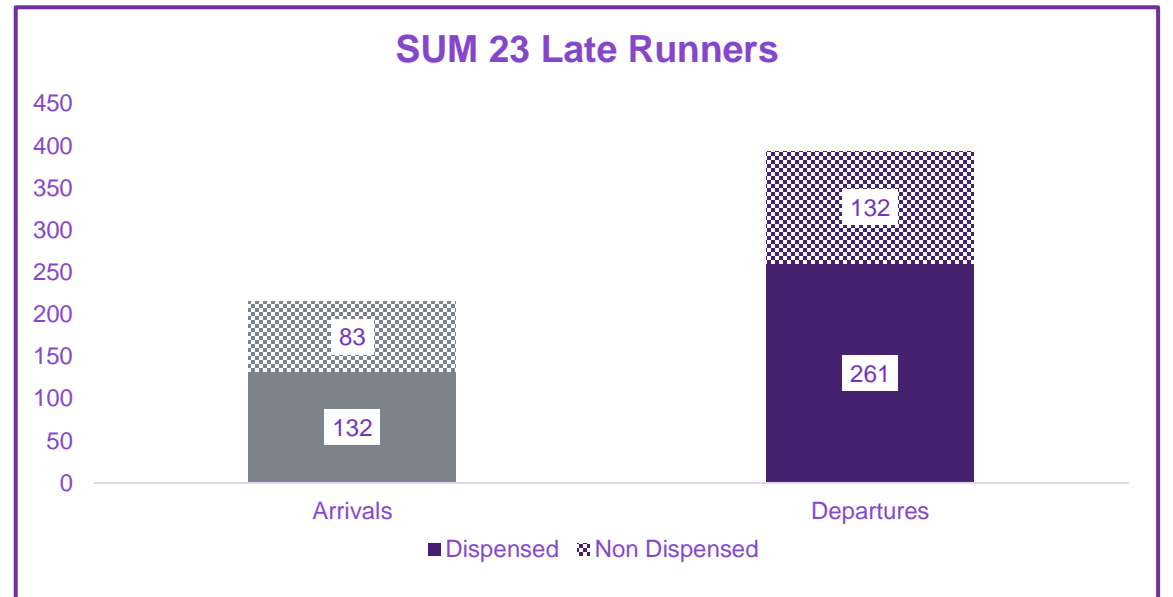
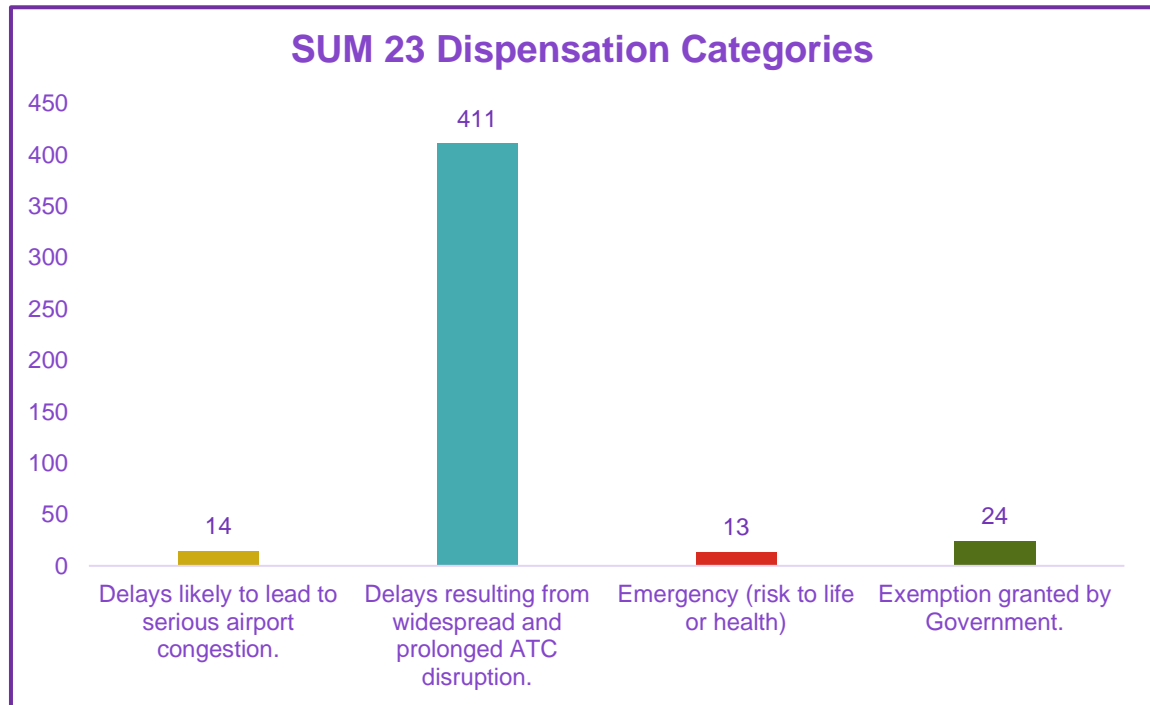
# Dispensation Scenarios

Scenario	Suitable For Dispensation?	Category	Considerations
Delays across Europe due to ATC strikes/upgrades	Yes	Widespread and prolonged ATC	Rotational delays may not be subject to dispensation
Emergency runway works at outstation	Yes	Delays as a Result of Disruption leading to Serious Hardship and Congestion at the Airfield or Terminal	If runway works are planned then no dispensation can be applied
Aircraft tech issues	No	Nil	Will be taken from airline allowance
Aircraft declares emergency and needs to land pre 0600	Yes	Emergencies	Aircraft needs to declare PAN PAN/MAYDAY
Strike by ground handler	No	Nil	Will be taken from airline allowance
Delay coming through control post	No	Nil	These types of events will be handled on a case by case basis
Crew sick	No	Nil	Will be taken from airline allowance

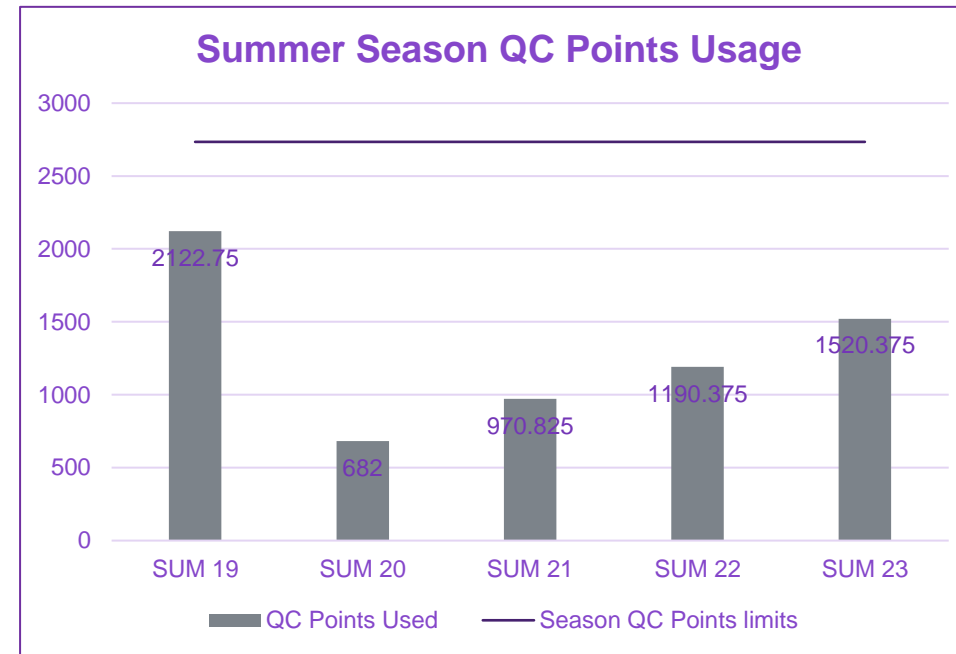
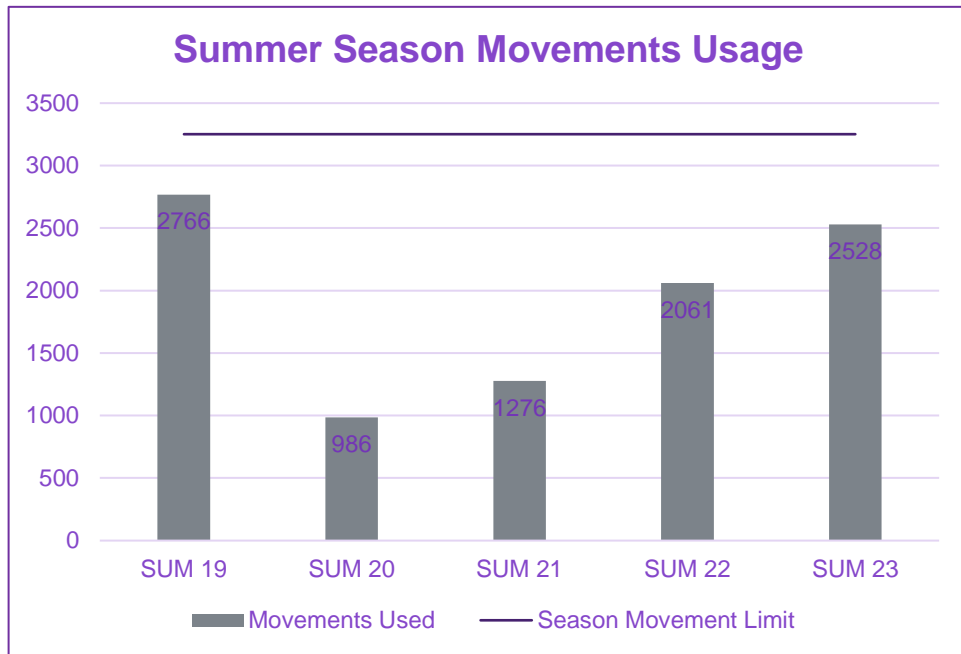
**Before we dispense, we require full evidence to ensure dispensations are being applied fully. This can include:**

- Regulation codes
- Weather information
- NOTAMS
- Ambulance Information
- Completion of an application form

# Summer 2023 Final Figures – Late Runners



# Summer 2023 Final Figures – Overall Limits



## Summer 2023 Max Movement Limits Airports Comparison

Heathrow Airport: 3,250  
 Gatwick Airport: 11,200  
 Stansted Airport: 8,100

## Summer 2023 Max Movement Limits Airports Comparison

Heathrow Airport: 2,735  
 Gatwick Airport: 5,150  
 Stansted Airport: 4,650



# Case Studies

Heathrow

# Day to Day Management

- All requests to operate in the curfew are to be made through the Aircraft Operations Duty Manager in APOC
- Requests should be made with as much notice as possible for consideration
- The AODM will monitor a number of tools to ensure aircraft schedules are working to plan
- For the purpose of arrivals in the curfew, approval to arrive must be secured before the aircraft departs the outstation.
- If a late arrival will push the departure into the curfew the airline should contact the AODM to discuss prior to the aircraft departing the outstation. If we can't support the departure, then the airline can decide if they wish to operate the inbound.
- The AODM work with our HOEC (Heathrow Operational Efficiency Cell) to improve any timings
- Onus is placed on an airline to be realistic with their requests and to provide their own mitigations before relying on a late movement
- The AODM has a very challenging role. They are required to balance the needs of the local communities, airlines, airport stakeholders and our passengers



**The Aircraft Operations Duty Manager team are on shift 24/7 and their role is to ensure a smooth traffic flow throughout the operational day**



# Interventions

Airline had technical issues with their Boeing 777 fleet. They eventually departed the outstation getting into Heathrow at 22:30 and required a 120 min turn. The passengers had been at Heathrow for over 12hrs that day because of the technical issues with the fleet. I had agreed with the airline that they could depart no later than 23:30 and this would have caused a late runner. They were instructed to leave cargo and have all passengers called to the gate prior to the aircraft arrival. The stand was amended to the closest stand to the departure runway. As a result the turn was reduced and aircraft pushed back prior to curfew and was airborne not long after due to the short taxi.

An airline had requested a NJM for their flight to the USA which had a sick pilot who they were looking to replace. An early refusal resulted in the flight making it in well before curfew, landing at 23:07.

Airline called to say their Far East flight (which pushed almost on time) had a baggage discrepancy that they were trying to resolve (the aircraft was on the taxiway close to the departure threshold), but if they couldn't resolve, they may have to return to stand. They requested a NJM to cover a potential late departure. In reviewing the circumstances, I wasn't clear when they would eventually depart since they had already taken 40mins to try and resolve the issue. We had already refused several other airline requests for late runners & looked like we could have a clear night, so for these reasons I refused a NJM. They spent the next 25mins resolving the issue and were eventually able to depart at 23:18

I received a call from an airline advising their arrival from Greece would be late in due to a tech issue and they would conduct an aircraft change. They advised that the linked departure from LHR would therefore be late out and may need a NJM. I checked with them on their estimated arrival into LHR, and their normal turnaround time indicated a push at 23:20. I asked them what steps they have in place to improve this estimate. Given the close proximity to the curfew I refused the NJM & suggested they improve their departure from Greece and look at their turn time here. They subsequently arrived on stand at 22:07, 13mns earlier than estimated and following a quick turn, got their departure airborne at 23:10.

Late rotation due to tech challenges in Middle East. The flight had called ready to depart at 2310 allowing plenty of time to taxi and be airborne by 2329. However, it was caught in a European airspace delay with a 23:46 slot time assigned due to the restrictions. I called Eurocontrol to negotiate a better time to which the slot was reduced to 2331. ATC were able to expedite the aircraft and was airborne at 23:29:56.

# Refusals

An airline had requested a post-midnight departure on their Middle East service. This was due to no standby 1<sup>st</sup> officer on the airport and the standby 1<sup>st</sup> officer was 2hrs drive away plus processing time. The previous night the airline had cancelled the same service due to reasons unknown. This service was refused a night jet movement as the standby crew would still not be able to make a reasonable departure time so the flight was night stopped as the reasons were well within the airline's control. This resulted in some unrest at the gate as the passengers had been displaced for two nights, but as explained to the airline on both occasions, the issues were down to the airline

Handling agent called at 23:10 to advise the aircraft had a technical issue. They called again at 23:35 to say the issue had been fixed and they were ready to depart and requesting NJM. Refused & aircraft night stopped due to lack of engagement

Aircraft arrived 2 hours late at 2030 pushing the departure back to 2230. As the new departure was close to curfew and the flight had already faced a significant delay, I gave a courtesy call to advise on actions required should there be any issue with loading or any potential further delay, including requesting not to load cargo etc. Communications direct to the airline were difficult so this was done via the ground handler.

At 2230 the aircraft had not requested a pushback so cameras were consulted and it was clear that cargo was being loaded and passengers still boarding. We could not get through to the airline directly, so a Heathrow terminal rep was sent to the gate and airfield operations dispatched to check on progress.

With still no contact from the airline, the last resort was to call the tower watch manager and request a pushback refusal if a request was received later than 2320. The aircraft finally requested a pushback at 2329, despite the onsite HAL staff advising the handler that no NJ had been granted. Once the aircraft had been denied pushback, the airline contacted me.

Throughout the process there was a fair degree of pressure from UKBF and other teams to allow the flight to go due to the passenger profile and the lack of staff at various control points, however I took the view that such poor communication, and no technical reason for the delay did not warrant the movement. Significant pushback was faced by the airline senior managers.

We received a call from the airline advising of an aircraft change for the service with the new airframe located in the maintenance area. The issue lay on how quickly the aircraft could be towed to the terminal which was unclear. No time frame was provided on how quickly they can have their aircraft towed, but they indicated they would be airborne by midnight. Based on this, I declined the NJM request as no firm timescale could be provided and urged the airline to cancel this service now rather than later and causing disruption and inconvenience for their passengers. It took an hour for the aircraft to be towed to the terminal. At this point, I advised that 2310 was the latest they can pushback as it would take close to 20mins to taxi and be airborne. I had advised the tower that they have till 2310 to request a departure otherwise they were night stopped. At 2311 the crew had called ready and ATC called me to confirm whether it'll be allowed or not. Because of the taxi time and the airline was past its agreed cut off, the flight was night stopped.

Late outbound flight delayed due to a bird strike on its previous rotation however the flight had plenty of time to make curfew on its next sector to Ireland. The turnaround was delayed however as the ground teams had an electric wheelchair that was supposedly unnotified to the airline and the ground handlers did not have enough time to locate a new cargo bin and straps which led to an ETA into Heathrow of 2345. The request was refused and the flight night stopped as this was not an unforeseen issue and well within the airline's control.

An airline was operating their South Africa service. The airline didn't contact me until about 8.30pm telling me they have a maintenance issue with a number of components on the aircraft. Each part was due to take an hour to replace, and then paperwork needed to be signed off. As the night progressed, I kept tabs with the airline to see how they were getting on but the time was getting closer to the curfew. At about 10pm, I told the airline we would not allow a night jet movement for this situation as it was scheduled maintenance, and we wouldn't be able to support on this occasion. All other avenues were pursued including an aircraft swap, but nothing could be done. This flight then night stopped and did not depart. A similar issue occurred a few nights later with the same airline and aircraft was night stopped.

# Approvals + Summary

A NJM was granted as a result of a missile strike at TLV which meant the flight was late to leave TLV. Although sympathetic to the situation in Israel, the airline is still required to communicate schedule slippage and obtain approval to operate. When they requested, they advised they would not be taking any cargo, and the crew would also assist with cleaning. The arrival flight landed as a TEAM lander to assist the turnaround and save 5 minutes on the taxi time. The aircraft did use a night jet on departure but due to the actions that evening, we reduced its departure time by around 20min

Initially delayed at the outstation due to operational challenges, the aircraft had arrived and had approximately 2hrs to fully turn the aircraft around and depart before curfew. The airline was back on track and had boarded 425 passengers in 20mins and called ready to depart at 2305. However, the Jetty had failed and could not be removed from the aircraft. This was quickly escalated to engineering to see if they had a team nearby but none that were able to reach. The handling agent had managed to remove the jetty to give enough clearance for a safe pushback. A night movement was permitted due to the nature of the unforeseen incident where HAL infrastructure had failed (at the worst moment) therefore there was no fair reason to have the flight night stopped. The aircraft was airborne at 2336.

## Summary

- Interventions take place daily to identify late runners
- It has been proven that engagement with airlines is key and early communications can prevent late runners
- Our focus is a balanced outcome – considering communities, airlines and their passengers
- The overall number of late runners and night jet movements have been decreasing when compared to 2022
- Heathrow is consciously endeavouring to increase the amount of nights without late runners, despite challenges across the European network and other aspects outside of our control