

The Luton Noise Trap

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An OPSGROUP member was recently caught off guard by a **day-time noise violation** while departing EGGW/Luton in a Falcon 7X.

Despite flying the published departure procedure accurately and easily meeting the AIP's only climb requirement, they busted the day-time limit of 79 decibels by 0.6. The result was a **fine of £1250 GBP** (\$1700 USD).

While being fined for a six tenth of a decibel sounds harsh (and it is), **strict enforcement** of noise is common at many airports around the world.

What bothers us here is the **lack of clear guidance** at Luton as to what to fly, and getting stung nonetheless – there's no published NADP procedure, and for pilots the rules are murky at best.

Welcome to the Luton noise trap...

How do we hit the number?

Things work a little differently at Luton. Rather than prescribing a vertical climb profile (NADP 1 or 2), the airport relies on **Noise Preferential Routes (NPRs)** to keep departures away from sensitive areas. Lateral track accuracy is essential, until reaching the prescribed day or night 'release altitude' – 3000 ft and 4000 ft respectively.

NOISE ABATEMENT PROCEDURES

For additional depiction refer to 50-4.



Every jet ACFT shall, after take-off attain as soon as safety permits, a rate of climb of at least 500' per minute at power settings which will ensure progressively decreasing noise levels at points on the ground under the flight path.



The Noise Preferential Routings and Procedures are compatible with ATC requirements. Whether routing inside or outside Controlled Airspace, the tracks are to be flown by all departing jet ACFT and by all other ACFT with a maximum certified weight exceeding 5700kg unless otherwise instructed by ATC or unless deviations are required in the interests of safety.

The obligations of Noise Preferential Routings for conventional SIDs cease when a height of 3000' QNH (0700-2300LT) and 4000' QNH (during night time, 2300-0700LT) has been reached.

The obligations of Noise Preferential Routings for the RNAV1 SIDs cease when a height of 4000' QNH has been reached.

Here's why – Luton concurrently runs a noise-monitoring program. You won't find it in the AIP, it's buried in the airports' Charges and Conditions of use.

Since January this year, the daytime limit is 79 dB and 78 dB at night. This is tracked by 'noise monitoring terminals' nestled in the surrounding suburbs. **Fines of £1250 (\$1700 USD) and £2250 GBP (\$3050 USD) apply if you bust the limits.**

Noise Limit Violation Charge

Each Aircraft Operator shall pay to LLA a "noise limit violation charge" for each of its Aircraft (undertaking a Flight) which breaches an applicable noise violation limit stated below, calculated as follows:

£1,250 per applicable Aircraft recorded at a Noise Monitoring Station as louder than the day time noise violation limit of 79 decibels between the hours of 07:01 and 22:59 (Local Time); and

£2,250 per applicable Aircraft recorded at a Noise Monitoring Station as louder than the night time noise violation limit of 78 decibels between the hours of 23:00 and 07:00 (Local Time).

Noise limit violation charges are paid by LLA into the LLA Community Trust Fund. For more details please visit <http://www.london-luton.co.uk/corporate/community/community-trust-fund>.

Track Violation Charge

Each Aircraft Operator shall pay to LLA a "track violation charge" for each of its Aircraft (undertaking a Flight) which commits a Track Violation, calculated as follows:

£1,250 per applicable Aircraft determined by LLA to have caused a Track Violation between the hours of 07:01 and 22:59 (Local Time); and

£2,250 per applicable Aircraft determined by LLA to have caused a Track Violation between the hours of 23:00 to 07:00 (Local Time).

Track violation charges are paid by LLA into the LLA Community Trust Fund. For more details please visit <http://www.london-luton.co.uk/corporate/community/community-trust-fund>.

The flight in question (a 7X near max take-off weight on a warm summer's day) measured 79.6 dB and **triggered a fine.**

I am writing at this time to give you advance notice that the following flight departure, operated by [REDACTED], has exceeded the day-time noise violation limit, as defined within London Luton Airport's 2026 Charges & Conditions of Use.

Date: [REDACTED]
Time: [REDACTED]
Flight No: [REDACTED]
A/c type: FA7X
Registration: [REDACTED]
Noise level: 79.6 dB(A)



As you are aware the daytime and night noise violation limits set by London Luton Airport Operations Ltd have been defined at 79dB(A) and 78dB(A) respectively, as from 1st January 2026. Details of the sanctions to be applied are detailed below. A surcharge invoice for £1,250 will be sent to you directly from our Accounts department but our procedure is to notify you directly out of courtesy before the invoice is generated.

The day and night Noise Violation Limits (NVLs) set by London Luton Airport Operations Ltd are 79dB(A) and 78dB(A) respectively. Since the reduction of our daytime noise violation limit, there has been an increase in noise violations from operators. If you would like to discuss this noise violation further and possible future mitigation actions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Here's what we don't like about this.

Crew are being left with decibel limits with **no guidance** on a profile that will achieve it – if you happen to know how to operate your aircraft to within 0.1 of a decibel, **please let us know**.

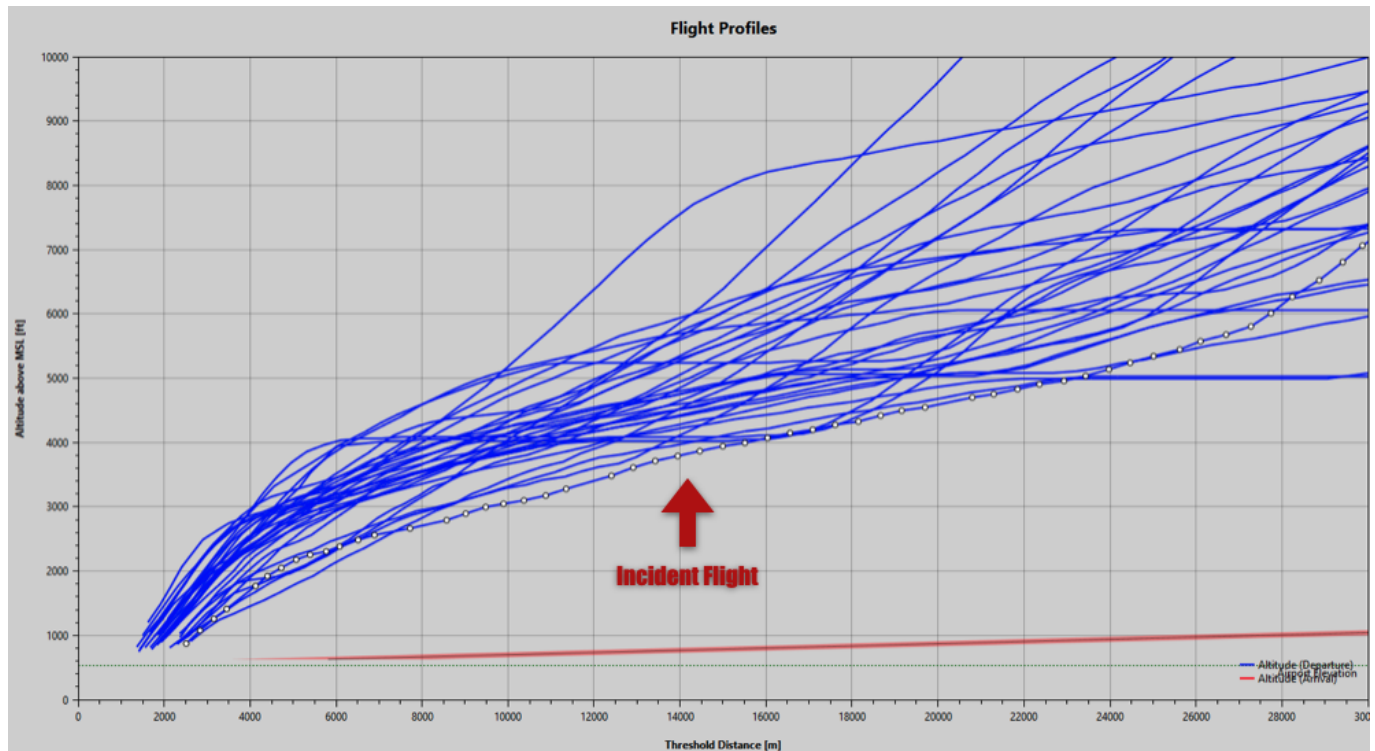
In fact, the only additional guidance in the AIP is pretty vague. It contains a general instruction to climb at *"power settings which will ensure progressively decreasing noise-levels."* Hardly earth-shattering advice.

What the data had to say

The operator here asked the airport authority about the fine in question, who in turn pulled the **actual data**.

It seems the noise event was recorded at 2900 ft – just 100 feet below the daytime release altitude.

The included graph did indeed show that the incident flight was flying a slightly shallower gradient than most other departures. Despite what the AIP says, it appears **many other operators are informally applying their own NADP to steepen their initial climb**, most likely to avoid the same trap.



But it's a workaround, because unlike the payment of the resulting fines, **the airport doesn't mandate it**. It's simply left up to the operators – and for that, we cry foul.

So what's the answer?

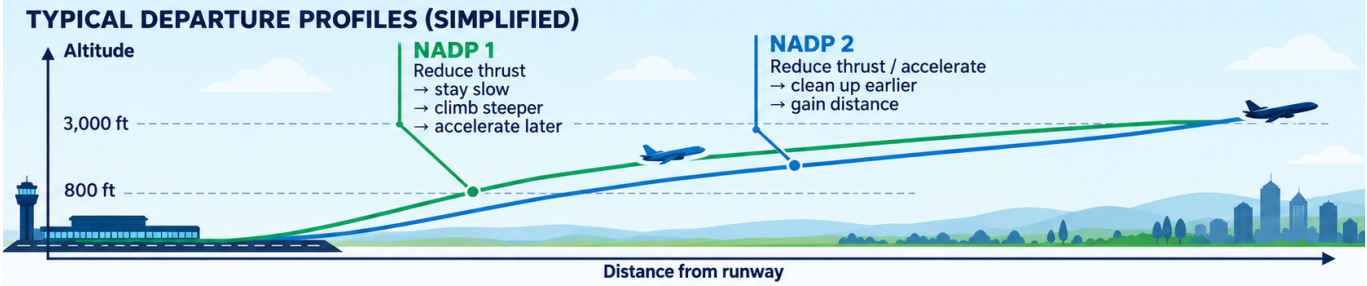
The case above shows that you can't rely on the AIP alone to protect you from a fine – especially when performance is limited (hot, heavy etc). **Your best protection is to apply an NADP anyway.** ICAO defines two of these:

NADP 1 (noise near). Maintain $V_2 + 10 - 20$ kts and delay flap retraction until reaching 3,000 ft AGL, while reducing power at or above 800 ft. This keeps your aircraft close-in and configured, which reduces noise nearer the runway. This is what we suggest for Luton.

NADP 2 (noise distant). Early acceleration and flap retraction (usually 800 ft AGL) and then maintain your designated manoeuvring speed until 3000 ft AGL. This means that noise reduction is spread out further from the airport since you're climbing faster and higher sooner. This trades close-in quiet for less noise down the track.

Here's a handy summary:

		NADP 1 Noise near the airport	NADP 2 Noise farther from the airport
	Main objective	Reduce noise close to the airport	Reduce noise farther from the airport
	Thrust reduction	Relatively early	Usually after acceleration & configuration changes
	Acceleration	Delayed	Earlier
	Flaps / slats retraction	Delayed	Earlier
	Initial climb	Stay slower & climb steeper	Accelerate sooner, giving more forward speed
	Best for	Communities near runway departure end	Communities farther along departure path
	Memory aid	NADP 1 = Noise near	NADP 2 = Noise distant



Do you know of other noise traps?

Luton probably isn't the only airport with these kinds of issues. Do you have one to share? Please reach out to us so we can share it with the group. You can reach us around the clock at blog@ops.group.