

London Ashford Airport Proposed Runway Extension

Review of Proposed Bird Control Management at LAA



Airport Solutions Ltd
International Aviation Consultancy 

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Natural England commissioned Airport Solutions Ltd to evaluate the proposals submitted by London Ashford Airport (LAA) in connection with their Bird Control Management Plan (BCMP). Airport Solutions were requested to focus their review on the viability of the BCMP with respect to the management of Airport Operations rather than an assessment of the actual techniques which were proposed as these would be subject of separate review by experts in Wildlife Hazard Management.

1.2 Airport Solutions are an International Aviation Consultancy company specialising in providing advice and training to airports worldwide. The company offers a range of services to the aviation industry including :-

Aerodrome Auditing:-

- GAP analysis of Safety Management Systems
- Compliance with national and international regulations
- Independent compliance audits and risk assessment on behalf of insurance companies, international sporting bodies, regulatory authorities and governments

Development of Documentation and Procedures:-

- Aerodrome Manuals, Emergency Plans, Security Plans and Safety Management Systems
- Operational procedures for Airport Operations including Fire and Rescue and Air Traffic Control
- Safety Compliance and Assurance Documentation
- Tender documents for airport construction projects and equipment
- Pavement maintenance procedures, condition surveys, strength testing and analysis

Aerodrome Management:-

- Organisational requirements and competencies for staffing
- Assist with the recruitment of Airport Operations, Technical and Senior Management
- Training programmes specific to the airport operational staff, management and department needs
- Provision of staff to assist with management of airports

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- 1.3 Debbie Riley has had 30 years experience in the aviation business, commencing her career in the Royal Air Force as a Fighter Controller.
- 1.4 She joined Manchester Airport in 1989, where she held a number of different roles, from Operations Duty Manager, to Airfield Policy and Planning Manager. During that time, she managed the Bird Control Unit at Manchester Airport, in particular, the transition of the unit in preparation for the introduction of Manchester's' Second Runway.
- 1.5 Whilst at Manchester, Debbie was also seconded to Blackpool Airport to undertake the role of Operations Director.
- 1.6 Debbie co-founded Airport Solutions in 2004 and today she is employed as Operations and Safety Director
- 1.7 Airport Solutions has significant experience in Airport Management and Operational Procedures for small, medium and large airports throughout the world
- 1.8 This report will focus on the viability of the BCMP in the context of feasibility from an Airport Operations Business viewpoint.
- 1.9 In order to achieve this, the report will review the BCMP, providing a conclusion and overview at the end.
- 1.10 In addition, this document will also supplement the Proof of Evidence as prepared by Dr John Richard Allan with comments from an Airport Operations Management perspective.

2.0 Documentation Reviewed

2.1 The following documentation was provided by Natural England between 25th November – 7th December 2010 and was subsequently reviewed by Airport Solutions Ltd:-

- Proposed Runway Extension – Planning Statement dated December 2006
- Runway Extension Environmental Statement dated December 2006 (part)
- Main Report and Executive Summary dated December 2009

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- Draft Bird Control Management Plan dated December 2009
- Proof of Evidence submitted by Dr John Richard Allan dated December 2010

2.2 A background of the scope of the project was gathered from the first three documents (Planning Statement, Environmental Statement and Main Report / Executive Summary).

3.0 **Summary of the Project**

3.1 LAA have developed a Master Plan and the proposed developments for the future include in the first stage an extension to the runway of 294m at the 21 end, which is supplemented by a 150m Starter Extension. This will enable operations of larger jets, such as Boeing 737 and Airbus 320 aircraft to operate without being load constrained. Although the airport is currently able to handle these larger aircraft types, the restrictions on aircraft weight mean that its viability for passenger operations with such aircraft types is limited, therefore the extension proposed will alleviate the operational constraints.

3.2 LAA have indicated that this will enable the airport to expand to a capacity of 300,000 passengers per annum. The airfield development will then be supplemented with the construction of a new Terminal Building in order to achieve 500,000 ppa.

3.3 The airport is aware that the increase in such traffic may give rise to an increase in birdstrikes unless LAA can develop and implement robust Bird Hazard Management Procedures which will be acceptable to the airport authority, the UK CAA (from a licensing perspective) and the airlines intending to operate from the airport.

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4.0 Proof of Evidence – Dr John Richard Allan

4.1 The Proof of Evidence as submitted by Dr Allan was also examined as part of this review. As stated previously, the intention is not to provide technical information regarding Bird Hazard Techniques, but rather comment on the implementation of Bird Control from an Airport's Operations Management perspective.

4.2 In his Proof of Evidence, Dr Allan, documents the results of the Vantage Point Survey undertaken by FERA. From this evidence it is apparent that there was an intense level of bird activity in close proximity to, and overflying, the aerodrome on a continual basis during the survey. The Airport are also advocating that one of their primary methods for ensuring that aircraft operations continue safely will be to "hold" aircraft until such time that the surrounding airspace is clear and aircraft can then safely depart. However, active bird control, both on and off aerodrome would be expected to be the primary methods for bird control and would be supplemented by the need to occasionally hold aircraft as a result of bird activity overflying the aerodrome.

4.3 Airlines accept that they may be held in response to bird activity and indeed this can happen at any aerodrome, especially those located near to large bodies of open water. However, it is the frequency, as well as duration of such incidents which may well become an issue for airlines, both from a safety perspective and also from a business perspective. An overreliance on holding aircraft for bird activity may result in the airline operation becoming uneconomical as a result of the number and length of delays, missed approaches and potential aborted take-offs which are incurred. If these incidents do become more than occasional, then it may result in any airlines or prospective airline operators to either cease operations or decide not to commence operations. In order to alleviate these concerns, it is essential that the airport develops very robust procedures associated with Bird Hazard Management to reduce such instances as much as possible.

4.4 Moreover, if an airport is perceived by the public or media that it is unsafe as a result of bird activity, this also has the potential to damage the business, either by airlines pulling out, being unwilling to start new services, or the public simply choosing an alternative airport. The management at LAA should therefore be seen to be proactively managing the Bird Hazard.

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- 4.5 The implications for airport and airline insurance must also be considered in the context of bird activity. If an airport suffers an unduly high number of birdstrikes, without robust Bird Hazard Management Procedures in place, then this could have an adverse impact on insurance premiums for all parties. Airlines which have suffered damage to their aircraft from birds have successfully sued airports for compensation where it has been judged that the airport had not taken reasonable measures to mitigate the consequences of the wildlife hazard.
- 5.0 **Conclusion**
- 5.1 The airport must have a robust Bird Hazard Management Plan implemented, both on and off airfield to ensure that regular operations by Air Transport Movements are indeed safe.
- 5.2 In reference to Dr Allan's Proof of Evidence, he indicates that the numbers of birds, overflying the airport, its Approach and Take-Off Paths have been underestimated by the Airport. If the need to hold aircraft does indeed become very frequent or of long duration, then it may well have implications of the viability for operations.

Debbie Riley:

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December 2010