

European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre Environmental Statement

Chapter 16: Aviation



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16 AVIATION

16.1 Introduction

- 1 This chapter considers the potential implications of the European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC) in relation to potential aviation issues.
- 2 Aberdeen airport serves more than three million travellers a year and is the world's busiest commercial heliport, transporting more than 500,000 passengers in support of the North Sea oil and gas industry.
- 3 The presence of helicopter traffic is the most significant aviation issue for the site. Following early consultation with the relevant authorities it was identified that in certain weather conditions the helicopters may descend to 1,000 feet (or lower), while the tip height of the wind turbines could be in the region of 640feet. This would breach the minimum clearance limit required for helicopter safety and consequently the wind farm layout has been amended to account for the helicopter corridors. This was a major revision to earlier wind farm layouts, and has dominated all subsequent layout considerations.

16.1.1 Methodology Consultation

- 4 In order to address any potential aviation issues that could arise from the proposed development an Aviation Working Group was established as early as 2005.
- 5 Although there have been periods of lesser activity the group were active during 2010, with over four meetings discussing a range of issues.
- 6 The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) was an early attendee at these meetings, but in recent years they have been content to allow aviation issues – largely operational in nature – to be discussed by National Air Traffic Services (NATS) (Aberdeen) and BAA (Aberdeen). These meetings have also been attended by the three helicopter companies operating out of Aberdeen airport – Bond, Bristows and CHC Scotia. Also in attendance has been Oil and Gas UK, the main client for their helicopter operations.

16.1.2 Key Guidance Documents

- 7 NATS studies have taken due account of all relevant aviation guidance documents.

16.1.3 Data Information

- 8 The data used for these studies has come from existing NATS operational data. The following reports have been prepared/ are underway:
 - Aberdeen Wind Farm Analysis, April 2011, produced by NATS Procedure Design Group at Heathrow House, Bath Road, Cranford, TW5 9AT
 - Aberdeen Wind Farm Radar study - report in preparation by NATS technical specialists
 - Assessing the Impact of the Proposed Vattenfall/AREG Wind Farm on Perwinnes MSSR, QinetiQ, March 2010

16.2 Baseline Assessment

16.2.1 Helicopter Routeing

- 9 As part of the agreement on the final layout of the wind farm, it has been agreed that the northern helicopter route into Aberdeen could be moved to the north, thereby allowing greater clearance between the wind farm and Aberdeen Harbour entrance. The change would be brought about by applying for an Air Space Change, the project has entered into a contract with NATS to bring this into effect.
- 10 The presence of the EOWDC would also require some minor changes to helicopter procedures in the event of encountering problems during take-off and landing phases at Aberdeen which may be exacerbated in icy conditions.

16.2.2 Primary and Secondary Radar Facilities

- 11 The proposed layout is within 10 km of the secondary radar facility at Aberdeen airport and as such it has been necessary to assess the potential impacts of the project on this function. The Applicant has commissioned a study from QinetiQ and the report has been passed to NATS. The report shows that although there may be potentially significant effects there are a number of technical solutions available to solve them. The project is currently negotiating a contract with NATS to determine the most efficient and effective technical solution to this issue. The project has also requested that this work include a confirmation that the project does not cause difficulties for the primary radar at Aberdeen airport.

16.3 Impact Assessment

16.3.1 Change to Air Route Maps

- 12 The project has entered a contract with NATS in order to apply for an Air Space Change. This would be implemented by NATS, in consultation with the Aviation Working Group.

16.3.2 Primary and Secondary Radar Facilities

- 13 The project is currently negotiating a contract with NATS to determine the most efficient and effective technical solution to this issue.

16.3.3 Mitigation and Monitoring

- 14 Through the creation of the Aviation Working Group early consultation has ensured that mitigation has been built in to the development process. As a result it is not anticipated that any further mitigation would be required.
- 15 The implementation of these measures would be the subject of ongoing monitoring by the Aviation Working Group, thereby ensuring that the objectives of minimal impact are sustained.

- 16 Details of the development would be provided to the Defence Geographic Agency as required.

16.4 Summary

- 17 Close liaison with key consultees and the formulation of the Aviation Working Group has ensured that there are not likely to be any detrimental effects upon aviation as a result of the EOWDC proposal. Ongoing monitoring during construction, operation and decommissioning would ensure that if any unforeseen issues arise they can be dealt with promptly.