3.0 THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS, SCOPING AND CONSULTATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the approach that has been used in the EIA. It summarises the key methods that have been followed, in line with EIA good practice. This chapter also provides a section on the assumptions made during the EIA process, how the key environmental issues were identified and the consultation which has been undertaken.

3.2 LEGAL AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR EIA

As St Helena has no formal local EIA legislation, and as the UK's EIA Regulations do not apply there, DFID and SHG have set the following objectives for the EIA and planning application:

- The St Helena Airport and Supporting Infrastructure project must meet the highest possible standards of environmental management; and
- Notwithstanding the law on St Helena, the EIA and planning submission are defensible in terms of the normal expectations of the planning process in the United Kingdom (UK).

In addition, the St Helena Land Development Control Plan (January 2007) includes Access Development Policies which specifically relate to the proposed development of an airport at Prosperous Bay Plain including the need for an EIA. Further information on planning and other environmental controls is provided in Chapter 4 of this ES.

In the absence of EIA laws in St Helena reference is made to EIA procedures in the UK and international good practice. In the UK, EIAs have been undertaken for certain major developments since the implementation in the European Council (EC) Directive on Environmental Assessment (EC Directive 85/337/EEC). The Directive was subsequently amended by Directive 97/11/EC. The Directive and Regulations as they apply in England form the basis for the EIA and require that an ES should include at least:

- A description of the development, comprising information about the site and the design and size of the project;
- An outline of the main alternatives considered and an indication of the main reasons for the chosen scheme;
- The data necessary to identify and assess the main effects which the project is likely to have on the environment;
- A description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment;
- A description of the measures envisaged in order to avoid, reduce or remedy significant adverse effects;
- An indication of any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information; and
- A Non-Technical Summary of the above information.

3.3 THE EIA PROCESS

EIA is the process of compiling, evaluating and presenting all the significant environmental effects of a proposed development. The assessment is designed to help produce an environmentally sympathetic project. Detection of potentially significant adverse environmental impacts leads to the identification and incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures into the scheme design.

The main steps in the assessment procedure are as follows:

- Baseline surveys are carried out to provide a description of the environmental character of the area likely to be affected by the development. This information is provided to the scheme designers at the earliest opportunity;
- In addition, we identify relevant natural and manmade processes that may change the character of the site;
- Consideration is then given to the possible interactions between the proposed development and both existing and future site conditions;
- Using the initial designs of the development we predict the possible environmental effects, both direct and indirect;
- Recommendations can then be made to avoid, minimise or mitigate adverse effects and enhance positive effects. Where possible alterations to the design can then be reassessed and the effectiveness of mitigation proposals determined;
- Any uncertainties inherent in the methods used, impact predictions made and conclusions drawn would be identified during the course of the assessment process; and
- The results of the EIA are set out in the ES. A Non-technical Summary is produced to communicate the results to the public.

3.4 APPROACH TO THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

The determination of the significance of the impacts arising from the proposed scheme is a key stage in the EIA process. It is this judgement that is crucial to informing the decision-making process. However, defining what is significant is not a simple task. The following criteria would be used, where appropriate to the issue being addressed, in the EIA to inform the assessment of the significance of an impact:

- Type of impact (adverse/beneficial);
- Extent and magnitude of impact;
- Duration of impact (short term/long term);
- Reversibility of impact;
- Sensitivity of receptor;
- Comparison with legal requirements, policies and standards;
- Comparison with applicable environmental thresholds; and
- Effectiveness of mitigation. It should be noted that the significance of impacts is assessed taking into account mitigation, i.e. the assessment applies to the **residual impacts**. A residual impact is any impact that would remain following the implementation of proposed mitigation measures.

Using these criteria, the significance of the impacts arising from the proposed development would be categorised throughout the ES using a seven point scale, as follows:

- Negligible;
- Minor (adverse or beneficial);
- Moderate (adverse or beneficial); and
- Major (adverse or beneficial);

For some topics, alternative categories may be required where a greater level of definition is required (e.g. "large adverse"). Explanations of the meaning of the 'significance categories' are set out in the various chapters in the ES. Generally, significant residual effects are those assessed as having a major or moderate adverse impact after mitigation measures. Impacts assessed as minor or negligible are not considered to be significant.

3.4.1 Construction, Permanent and Operational Impacts

Impacts will be separated into 'types' based on different phases of the development. Construction impacts are temporary, short term impacts which occur during the construction phase only. Permanent impacts are those long term effects which would occur as a result of the development and may include the introduction of new structures, the permanent loss of habitat, or the demolition of structures. Operational impacts are those which occur once the facilities are in use, e.g. noise from aircraft.

3.4.2 Interrelationships between Impacts

For the purposes of the EIA, the potential impacts of the scheme have been considered in terms of impacts on each of the discrete environmental topic areas. In reality, topic areas such as 'ecology' or 'landscape' cannot be considered in isolation since changes affecting one factor may often have secondary implications for other areas. Thus, if one impact of the scheme is to alter local topography, this could affect micro-climate which would in turn affect flora and fauna. Under some circumstances, it is possible for the secondary or indirect impacts to be more significant than the changes that triggered them. Cross references between topics is provided in each of the Chapters.

3.4.3 Cumulative Impacts

The combined effects on specific resources or receptors will be described, where relevant, in each of the specialist Chapters. An example would be where different project elements in different locations have a cumulative effect on a particular species, e.g. the Wirebird.

At a general level the EIA covers the environmental issues and impacts resulting from the potential activities generated by improving access to St Helena. The opening of the airport has wide ranging implications for the community, economy and environment of St Helena. The potential sources of impacts on St Helena resulting from the opening of the airport could include:

- New tourism related infrastructure (e.g. hotels, transport infrastructure);
- Informal and formal recreational activities (e.g. dolphin watching, fishing, walking, scuba diving, bird watching);
- The need for new and improved transport infrastructure, utilities and services including water supply and sanitation, waste management, energy production and distribution;
- Changes in average incomes would influence the consumption of local resources, waste generation, etc.

Chapter 17 provides a brief assessment of the potential combined impacts which may occur during the construction of the project as well as longer term issues.

3.4.4 Socioeconomic Impact Assessment

Volume 6 provides a Socioeconomic Impact Assessment which includes both effects during construction and in the longer term as a result of economic growth stimulated by the airport.

3.5 UNCERTAINTY, ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The EIA process is designed to enable good decision-making based on the best possible information about the environmental implications of a proposed development. However, there will always be some uncertainty as to the exact scale and nature of the environmental impacts. This uncertainty arises because of the level of detail and information about the scheme available at the time the assessment was carried out and/or due to the limitations of the prediction process itself.

Key issues relating to assumptions are described below. Other topic specific assumptions are set out, where necessary, in Chapters 5 to 17 of this ES.

3.5.1 Assumptions Relating to the Airport Development Area

An application to designate an area of land as an Airport Development Area (ADA) has been submitted to the St Helena Governor in Council and the process runs in tandem with the application for development permission for the airport. The ADA effectively sets the limits within which the scheme must be constructed and operated.

For much of the scheme the ADA is set no wider than the area absolutely needed to construct the works, thus reducing the impacts of the scheme. However in places, the ADA encompasses a wider corridor, or area, where there is uncertainty as to how an element of the scheme will be constructed or to allow the contractor to choose the most efficient working method. The main elements of the scheme for which the ADA is been widened are the route alignment of the access road up the steep slopes from Rupert's Valley, the location of a quarry, construction camps, the water pipeline and possible overhead power lines to some of the ROLs.

3.5.2 Level of Design Detail for EIA

It is acknowledged that the scheme that is eventually designed and constructed may differ slightly from the design details that have been used in the EIA and reported in this ES. A

balance has been sought in drawing up the design between, on the one hand, specifying enough detail to undertake an assessment that would meet the requirements of the UK EIA Regulations, and on the other hand, avoiding specification of the design to a point that restricts the scope for cost effective design and innovation offered by contractors and/or the operator.

The environmental impacts that are reported in this ES and the level of mitigation described effectively set the minimum standard which will be achieved by the final scheme. SHG and DFID are committed to seeing that where details of the scheme differ from those assessed in the EIA, the project will not generate significant adverse environmental impacts that are greater than those assessed in the EIA.

Should the Contractor wish to undertake works outside the ADA they would need to seek a separate permission by submitting an application to SHG. Depending the scale and characteristics of the proposals, SHG and DFID may request that an Environmental Statement be prepared.

3.5.3 Assumptions Relating to Mitigation

Mitigation measures are set out in each of the assessment chapters in this ES. In stating the mitigation measures in the ES, the SHG and DFID are committed to implementation of all those measures described. Forming Volume 5 of the ES is an Environmental Management Plan (EMP). This document will be a contractual requirement on the company appointed to design and construct the scheme. The Contractor will be required to produce a Contractor's Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and the Engineer will monitor works to ensure compliance with the plan. Details of how, and by whom ,the EMP will be implemented are set out in Volume 5.

In addition to the EMP, and a Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plan has been produced (see Volume 4, Appendix 9). The LEMP recognises the importance and close links between these two topics and the need to provide a holistic approach to mitigation.

3.6 SCOPE OF THE ES AND CONSULTATION

3.6.1 Scoping

Scoping is the process of identifying the likely significant environmental issues that should be considered in the EIA. No formal EIA regulations exist on St Helena and no scoping procedures exist (as understood in the UK). The scoping of the environmental effects of an airport on St Helena was been considered in a number of previous studies the most relevant of which are:

- St Helena - Comparative Study of Air and Sea Access, and in particular Appendix C: Initial Environmental Screening Review and Environmental Appraisal for the Sea and Air Access Options for St Helena and its Dependencies (Final Report, High Point Rendel June 2001);
- St Helena Access Feasibility Study, and in particular Appendix S: Environmental Impact Report (Atkins, 2004).

These studies, together with the recent work undertaken by Faber Maunsell set out in this report; establish the scope for the EIA. In addition, consultations carried out by Faber Maunsell during visits to St Helena identified the concerns of SHG officers and the issues they perceive to be of importance to local people. A range of issues have also been identified as a result of an extensive consultation programme relating to the St Helena Airport and Supporting Infrastructure project as a whole.

Further information on these activities is provided below.

3.6.2 Public Consultation

A wide range of methods have been used to consult with stakeholders and the public on proposals for providing air access for St Helena. Consultation has been carried out in key locations to ensure that Saints living both on the island and away from home have been involved in the process.

The provision of an airport on St Helena is an issue which has been discussed over many years both on the island and overseas. The island's isolation and steep terrain make it difficult to provide an airport, and for many years efforts to provide an airport were short term and low key. Information and consultation activities have increased recently since an airport has become technically possible and economically viable.

3.6.2.1 2002 Referendum

A Referendum was held in February 2002 to determine the public's preference for future access arrangements to the island. Before the Referendum the (then) Air and Sea Access team conducted an island-wide information campaign from September 2001 through to January 2002. The aim of the campaign was to ensure that people were well informed before casting their votes. The target audience was primarily St Helena residents as well as Saints on Ascension Island, the Falkland Islands and on board the RMS St Helena.

A total of 16 public meetings were held, which included discussions on the economics, social and environmental impacts of an airport, as well as the technical aspects of the concept. In addition, displays were set up in 15 shops around the island, on all notice boards and at Prince Andrew School. In December 2001 an Air and Sea Access Information Centre was officially opened in Jamestown to disseminate information and answer queries.

Informative display areas were also set up in locations off the island at Georgetown, Two Boats and the American base on Ascension Island. Two displays were arranged for the Falkland Islands, one at Mount Pleasant and the other in Port Stanley. Information Packs were sent to Ascension Island, the Falkland Islands and to the RMS St Helena.

The Referendum was held on 4th February 2002. Polling facilities were provided on St Helena, the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island and for the RMS St Helena Crew. The specific question asked was as follows:

"I would like to have an airport on St Helena, with alternative arrangements being made for shipping
Or
I would not like to have an airport but would like to have a replacement RMS St Helena"

From a total of 4,473 potential voters, around half cast votes. 71.6% of those who voted on St Helena, Ascension, the Falklands and the RMS St Helena voted in favour of building an airport.

3.6.2.2 Private Sector Participation

In April 2003, SHG and DFID invited expressions of interest for private sector participation and investment in development of an airport for St Helena. Four proposals were received and a full assessment of the proposals was carried out. In April 2004, a press release delivered by SHG's newly appointed Access Project Manager informed the public that:

- None of the four outline proposals offered a basis upon which to start a negotiation for an airport;
- The attempts to develop an airport as part of a package of private sector investment in which air access would be part-funded by proceeds from other private development (the locally named 'Three Legged Stool') would be discontinued;
- Alternative ways of providing air access would be explored. As the costs to DFID were likely to be substantial, a full feasibility study and other investigatory work taking account of all costs and long term impacts would be undertaken.

There was a strong negative reaction to the press release and further questions were raised and answers provided via radio interviews, a live radio phone-in, public meetings and a public surgery.

3.6.2.3 St Helena Access Feasibility Study, 2004

The 2004 St Helena Access Feasibility Study was announced in a press release in July 2004, which recorded the activities of surveyors on Prosperous Bay Plain and the imminent arrival of a study team to discuss social, economic and environmental topics.

The public were kept informed of progress throughout the Feasibility Study through press releases, radio interviews and public meetings. In August 2004, the final shortlist of three access options: medium runway; the longer runway; and the RMS St Helena, was announced to the public. In November 2004, a report showing the work carried out to identify the final short-list of access options for further analysis was made available in the Jamestown Public Library.

The Feasibility Study was made available (in redacted form) to the general public in 2005.

3.6.2.4 Consultation on the Land Development Control Plan

The Land Development Control Plan was prepared in parallel with the Feasibility Study in 2004. The Plan (see Chapter 4) includes a wide range of policies relevant to the development of the airport, and involved a number of stages during which the public and other interested bodies were consulted including:

- Early in 2004 a UK Planning Advisor was appointed who, working with the Local Planning Officer, held over 30 meetings and a public meeting to discuss the Plan and encourage comments; and
- A Consultation Draft of the Plan was placed on deposit on St Helena from December 2004 to February 2005, and comments were encouraged from Saints living on the island and at various locations elsewhere. In addition, public 'surgeries' and exhibitions were held on the island to provide information on the Plan. All written comments were recorded and reported to the Land Development Control Agency. Comments made about air access and policies related to airport development were a key part of this process. The Plan was adopted in 2007 following approval by the Governor-in-Council.

3.6.2.5 Announcement of Decision to Provide Air Access

Following completion of the St Helena Access Feasibility Study, on 14th March 2005, the Governor of St Helena announced the UK Ministerial decision to fund the development of air access for St Helena subject to a rigorous environmental assessment and acceptable bids. The decision was widely publicised, both on the island and overseas.

3.6.2.6 Public Information and Consultation Post Decision

In April 2005, Advisors from DFID's Overseas Territories Department (OTD), visited St Helena and, along with SHG's Access Project Manager, hosted a public meeting to talk about the recent Ministerial decision and the project plan. This was the first of many air access related meetings/forums, radio interviews and press releases following the announcement a month earlier.

3.6.2.7 Public Information and Consultation Period April 2006

A year later, in April 2006, a focused public information and consultation period was provided. The purpose of this consultation was to update the public about the air access proposals and to get feedback on the developing proposals. In addition to SHG officers, a number of key people participated in the consultation period. These were representatives from DFID, Atkins (the technical design team), Faber Maunsell (the environmental impact assessment team), and Professor Michael Adler (Professor of Genitourinary Medicine / Sexually Transmitted Diseases).

The consultation programme included meetings, distribution of leaflets, displays, opportunities for informal dialogue and family fun days. Question boxes were also located throughout the island during the consultation period to give people a further opportunity to raise issues and make comments. The consultation events were well publicised through posters, television, radio interviews and press releases.

One of the concerns raised during the April Public Information and Consultation Week by visiting Saints, was the limited information that is disseminated amongst Saints abroad; mainly on Ascension and the Falkland Islands. To address this, the SHG Access Project Manager visited both Islands in September/October 2006 and hosted a number of meetings. Posters showing details of the proposed haul road, new BFI, jetty and airport were also displayed. The main concern, a very strong one from both islands, was the future use of Wide-awake Airfield on Ascension. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office is addressing these concerns.

3.6.2.8 Consultation Relating to the Tender Process

In February 2006, it was announced that three consortia had pre-qualified for the Airport Contract. August 2006 saw another spate of meetings with SHG departments, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and members of the public following the sudden withdrawal of one consortium and the confirmed non-compliance of the other two. There was widespread concern and the meetings, radio interviews and press releases were used to explain the situation and to reassure the public that air access would continue to be pursued.

Following another round of contract advertising, the Access Office announced to the public at the end of March 2007 that all four of the interested consortia (Basil Read, Lagan, Impregilo and China State Construction Engineering Corporation) had passed the pre-qualification stage. Soon afterwards, it was announced through radio interviews and press releases, that the pre-qualifiers would visit St Helena in June 2007. A further range of meetings was held with the private sector building trades and other service providers to help prepare them for the impending consortia visit and to ensure local workers and local businesses had the best possible chance of securing any opportunity that might become available. Arrangements were also made for the St Helena Development Agency to work with the private sector and the public on updating their business portfolios and CV's.

Two consortia withdrew their interest in the project in early June and the remaining two consortia, Basil Read and Impregilo made their visit to St Helena during the 14th to the 22nd June 2007. The pre-visit consultation with local businesses ensured both consortia received details of most of the island businesses. Two receptions were also arranged at Plantation House on the 15th June and at the Consulate Hotel on the 20th June, which allowed the local private sector to have one-on-one meetings with members of each consortium.

3.6.2.9 On-going Consultation Activities

Since the announcement of the decision to develop air access, a range of consultation and information activities as described above have been and are still on-going including:

- **Press releases** - over 50 press releases have been published since the announcement providing project updates and related information;
- **Visits** - a series of visits to the island have been made by key professional specialists and organisations;
- **Public meetings** - often coinciding with visits to the island, a number of public meetings have been held in various venues to keep local people updated on the progress of the project;
- **Meetings with Government departments and key organisations** – a range of meetings and presentations have been held with organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, St Helena Development Agency, Solomon & Company, Cable & Wireless, Builders & Allied Trades Association, Prince Andrew School, , etc.;
- **Radio interviews** – project updates have been aired periodically on the radio; and
- **Displays**, including a video display of the project flight trials. Footage of flight trials that were undertaken in May 2006 were shown in the Canister Window, in Jamestown.

3.6.2.10 Issues Raised and Responses

The impact of the scheme on the environment is an issue which has been raised by international organisations and environmental specialists. Concern has focused on the island's endemic species, in particular the invertebrate community of Prosperous Bay Plain and the Wirebird. These issues have been included in the scope of the EIA and are discussed in Chapter 9 Terrestrial Ecology.

Local Saints have expressed concern about the impact of increased tourism and activity on the currently peaceful atmosphere of the island. Careful planning will be required to ensure that increased activity is successfully accommodated without generating unacceptable impacts. It is intended to cap tourism at say, 52,000 visitors per year which, combined with the anticipated increase in resident population, was assessed as being a maximum sustainable visitor level. A Socioeconomic Impact Assessment has been carried out and is included as Volume 6 of this ES.

Residents in Rupert's Bay, Deadwood and Longwood have expressed concern about the impacts of construction and traffic during operation. These people live close to the proposed haul and access road alignment and are concern about issues such as noise, dust and safety. These issues have been addressed through the design of the scheme, the avoidance of private property and a wide range of mitigation measures to minimise impacts on residents. These issues have been included in the scope of the EIA and are principally discussed in Chapters 6 Noise and Vibration and 7 Air Quality and Dust.

Local people expressed concern about development cutting off recreational walking routes, including routes to recreational fishing grounds. In cases where it will be necessary to close existing routes, suitable diversions have been identified and are included within the proposed development. These issues have been included in the scope of the EIA and are discussed in Chapter 12 Roads, Traffic and Footpaths.

Consultees were also concerned about the impacts of the development of the new wharf at Rupert's Beach in Rupert's Bay which is the only swimming beach on the island which is accessible by car. These issues have been included in the scope of the EIA and are discussed in Chapter 14 Marine Environment.

3.6.3 Summary of Key Environmental Issues Identified

The outcome of the various consultation activities and preliminary environmental studies was the identification of the key environmental issues forming the scope of the EIA. These are listed below in the order that they appear in this ES:

- Land Use
- Noise and Vibration
- Air Quality and Dust
- Carbon Emissions
- Terrestrial Ecology
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Cultural Heritage
- Roads, Traffic and Footpaths
- Geology, Contaminated Land and Hydrogeology
- Marine Environment
- Surface Water Environment
- Waste Management
- Combined Effects

In addition a Socioeconomic Impact Assessment is included as Volume 6 of this ES.