



Additional Runway Works to Allow for Future Expansion



An artist's Impression of the Airport on PBP

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St Helena Airport

We have finalised a number of important changes to the airport runway design that have the potential to deliver significant benefits for St Helena.

Last November a contract was signed with Basil Read to construct an airport with a 1,550m long landing runway. With this length of runway the largest aircraft that can use the airport are the Boeing 737-700 and Airbus A319, both of which carry around 120 passengers. The runway would also be suitable for new generation aircraft like the Bombardier C series, also with 100 to 120 seats, should these become available in the region.

The 2011 Reference Design for the airport included an Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS) which allowed us to reduce the length of Runway End Safety Area (RESA) and make considerable savings on the amount of rock that would need to be placed in Dry Gut. At the tender stage, Basil Read offered to construct a full 240m RESA in place of EMAS, at no additional cost to their tender price.

There are a number of advantages to the RESA option. Under the EMAS option, it would be practically impossible ever to extend the runway. The runway construction is based on balancing the amount of excavated material from Prosperous Bay Plain with the amount of rock required to fill Dry Gut. Once the airport is operational, if we wanted to extend the embankment we would have to bring in huge quantities of rock from another site at a prohibitive cost. However, by constructing a full length RESA, we leave ourselves the option of adding EMAS at a later date to allow us to increase the declarable distance, allowing operations by larger Boeing 737-800 or Airbus 320 aircraft, which can carry around 160 passengers. We therefore accepted Basil Read's offer to construct a full 240 m RESA at the southern end of the runway.

In order to accommodate larger aircraft, in addition to increasing the runway length, we also need to do a number of relatively minor works. These include widening the embankment over an additional 40 m at the southern end, paving an additional 100 m of the runway with concrete, providing larger turning circles at the runway ends, and increasing the size of the apron. By spending a relatively small amount to do these works now, while Basil Read has the equipment on island, we can limit future works to the placement of EMAS, significantly reducing the costs of any future extension.

Additional runway works have therefore been agreed. We won't be able to use the additional runway length for landing the Boeing 737-800 or Airbus 320 until further work is carried out to add an EMAS, but it is much more cost effective to do these preparatory works now than it would be in the future.

A variation order to this effect was issued on 17th July. It is expected to carry out this work within DFID's existing budget for the airport. The additional earthworks and concrete will add 12 weeks to the length of the contract. The revised contractual completion date for the project is now 25th February 2016.

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