



Why are Calibration Flights Needed?



Beechcraft Super King Air 200 aircraft and some of the crew who will be taking part in the calibration flights

Arriving on the RMS on Tuesday 11 August 2015 were Basil Read Certification & Operational Readiness Manager, Simon Walker, and Basil Read Airport Manager, Nigel Spackman.

During his short visit, Simon will be working with Nigel and the Basil Read team to finalise plans for the calibration flights, currently scheduled for mid-September. They will also be preparing for the November audits.

St Helena Airport will have a number of navigational aids (NavAids) available to aircraft flying into and out of the Airport. The NavAids allow pilots to locate the Island and then zero-in on the runway itself, so it is essential that they are as accurate as possible to ensure pilots know their exact position relative to both the runway and to any obstacles that may be around the Airport.

The NavAids need to be calibrated to ensure accuracy, and the calibration flights will check that the information received by pilots from the NavAids is all correct. Once calibrated, the NavAids will then be inspected and tested on an annual basis, as a minimum, to ensure they maintain their accuracy.

In addition to calibrating the NavAids, the calibration flights will also check and verify the Instrument Flight Procedures (IFPs) that have been designed for use at St Helena Airport.

IFPs are standard procedures that tell a pilot how to fly using instruments when it is not safe to solely rely on visual flight techniques to maintain safety. For example, when flying through cloud, particularly near airports or in congested airspace, a pilot cannot just rely on looking out of the cockpit window to ensure that his aircraft is in a safe position - pilots must also rely on their instruments and on information from Air Traffic Control to ensure they know exactly where they are, and in particular, where they are in relation to other aircraft and high ground. Once the NavAids have been calibrated, the calibration pilots will practise using the IFPs to check that they are correct and make any adjustments as necessary.

For technical reasons the very first flight to St Helena - the calibration flight - will need to use visual flight procedures so the weather and visual range will need to be sufficiently good to allow the pilot to locate the Island and land safely on the runway. The weather will therefore be a significant factor in determining the date and time at which the calibration aircraft takes off from western Africa to reach St Helena. Further updates will be provided in due course.

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St Helena Airport

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