

PE1804/GG

Anonymous submission of 11 December 2020

As a serving Air Traffic Control Officer (ATCO), safety **IS** my top priority...How does downgrading 2 services to Flight Information Service Officers (FISO) increase safety?? How does monitoring Airports from 100+miles away by camera increase safety?? I believe that both are purely financial add-ons (or subtractions) to make the project slightly more financially viable, nothing to do with safety

HELIOS study – The most risky and expensive model was the preferred option by HIA with financial projections based on guesstimates. This was robustly questioned by ATS staff with, I believe, no real answers given. Was this put to the Board, and subsequently the Transport Minister, as the **ONLY** option worth considering, at a realistic cost?? The major flaw here is that the surveillance equipment planned is not going to be available so at least 3 Radar “heads” (old technology) at c£5Million each need to be added to the cost. Be aware there is/was **NOBODY** on the HIA Board with any ATS experience, **NOBODY** who actually lived on any Island affected, in fact some don't even live in Scotland!!

EKOS report – Ripped apart by ATS staff as a work of fiction!! (I'm being kind there). Some Managers agreed but passed off as “Water under the bridge, let's move on”. Ridiculous. The only reason Inverness was the “preferred” location is that the majority of ATS staff work there.

ATMS Board – Regular meetings are held with highlights published on a portal. It appears the project is being rail-roded through apace with a large sum of money already spent. If this was my project I would be delighted with the blinkered vision of the project management team, they are very focussed on achieving their set goals...Unfortunately, in my opinion, the goals are wrong!!

CONSULTATION – After initial meetings where ATS staff put forward robust arguments and (mainly unanswered) questions the “consultation” has mainly been, sometimes embarrassed looking, Senior management telling us what is going to happen. It's a done deal is our thought.

RECRUITMENT/RETENTION – Basically caused by HIA's own policy of not trying very hard to recruit locally, no adverts placed in local newspapers etc. It is proven that locally recruited staff (ATS/AFS) stay with the company for lengthy periods so is better value over the long term. HIA policy is based on short term budgets, recruiting part qualified staff who generally leave after 2-3 years (very onerous on local Instructors too). The ridiculous policy of looking to Sweden/Finland for ATS staff needs to be seriously investigated too!!

DOWNGRADING – The project was originally designed to provide modernised ATS to 7 Airports (6x HIA + Dundee). Out of the blue it was decided to downgrade 2 Stations to FISO with no consultation at all. I believe that is not a safety improvement, completely the opposite. One of these stations is having the prospect of a FISO Training Centre suggested as a carrot to appease the ATCOs based there. Dundee is proving difficult and has been placed last to be “improved”. Will it be quietly “forgotten”?? So that leaves 4 in the project.

NECESSITY - It is NOT something HIA “must” do, Remote is a step too far. I realise it is happening in Sweden to geographically remote airports with very few aircraft movements and no separation between aircraft required (ie 1 in and then the same 1 departs) with an ATS now being provided where it was not provided before. That is an improvement, the HIA plan is NOT. It is also happening at stations with highly defined Approach/Departure profiles on single runways, the HIA plan involves complex mixes of IFR/VFR movements from various directions on to 2 or 3 runways and sometimes VERY cramped Apron/Taxyway configurations in the worst of British weather conditions.

CONSULTATION – I’m sure ATS staff will be happy to meet with the Petitions Committee and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee however our MD probably has more access to these than we do. Remember in 2018 he told Senior Parliament figures at the Convention for the Highlands and Islands that the project “enables aircraft to land on a sixpence” AND “allow aircraft to land on Island airstrips more often in conditions of darkness”, demonstrating an embarrassing lack of awareness of what can be achieved. Please feel free to ask him to explain his thinking on these statements.

ATS STAFF – We are ALL for modernisation and would welcome Surveillance Approach as a huge safety improvement, Controlled Air Space will provide a lesser improvement. The very thought that we cannot have these without going down the remote route is all smoke and mirrors. The remote aspect is purely to make improvements more financially sound, not safety based. If HIA were really interested in safety they would have installed Tower-based surveillance, purely for situational awareness, years ago- This has been a mitigating factor in EVERY airborne safety report for the last 9 years at least.