

**PE1804/C**

Loganair submission of 2 October 2020. Updated to include annexe on 29 October 2020

Thank you for your letter of 2 October 2020 inviting Loganair to comment on the above petition, which we did as follows:

In January 2020, Loganair publicly commented on the proposals. Chief Executive Jonathan Hinkles said:

*The upgrade to air traffic systems at HIAL airports will be a significant step forward in the islands' infrastructure. The new technology will provide additional safety protections versus those available with the current systems based on technology and procedures dating back several decades, and these will also help to reduce flight times and consequently reduce carbon emissions. From a safety and operational perspective, we welcome the developments. The key questions to be addressed are really around the economic impact of the removal of jobs from the island communities and how it will be ensured that the transition can be achieved given that the current ATC units will need to be fully manned right up to the day of transition to the new systems. In a world where air traffic controllers are amongst many groups facing skills shortages, this is a significant challenge that should not be under-estimated.*

Our opinion today (29 October 2020) remains completely unchanged but would like to further submit the assessment from our Flight Operations Department (see annexe).

I trust that this provides a complete and concise view of Loganair's position on the matter, and as before would be happy to answer any specific questions that the Committee may have. Both myself and Jonathan Hinkles would be pleased to appear before the Petitions Committee in person, if required.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Stewart Houston, CEng FRAeS**  
Manager, Flight Support

## Annexe

Loganair's role in Scottish aviation is dominated by providing connectivity between centres of population and remote communities. This connectivity serves the needs of business, supports health provision, and the fundamental social and community needs to visit friends and relatives (VFR). We also operate cargo flights within the Highlands and Islands on behalf of Royal Mail, largely with dedicated freighter aeroplanes, but also carrying items such as pharmaceutical supplies, mail and newspapers on our passenger fleets.

Our primary responsibility in the fulfilment of this important role is safety, but we are also obliged to ensure regularity of service and efficiency. None of these responsibilities can be achieved in isolation and require us to work in partnership with other stakeholders. In this regard, HIAL is our sole provider of Air Traffic Control services to support our delivery of safe and regular flight operations at destinations outside of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

From Loganair's perspective, our interest in HIAL's ATMS strategy lies beyond more than just the remote tower project: for example, innovations such as Pentland Radar - providing coverage of the Kirkwall and Wick airspace volume for the first time - will transform air traffic control from its current procedural service, to a full radar service.

The remote towers project itself, in principle, offers real synergistic benefits by having expertise focussed at a single location, rather than distributed across the various sites. In doing so, this shared controller expertise – in a single location at a given time - could be variously brought to bear on whatever operational problems might present themselves on a day-to-day basis. Likewise, localised staff issues such as sickness or duty time constraints that have an adverse impact on the regularity of the Loganair operation could be mitigated, perhaps obviated completely, by the opportunity to distribute controller tasks amongst the staff in the centralised location. Compromised regularity can adversely affect efficiency too, requiring services to hold in the air or even be rescheduled or repeated; as we are determined to ensure that we continue to improve our carbon consumption by all possible means, efficiency improvements are close to the top of our list of priorities. Environmental benefits are strongly coupled with efficiency in terms of the reduced track miles, emissions and fuel burn that will come about as a result of controlled airspace and centralised surveillance.

In summary, we envisage HIAL, as the operator of multiple air traffic control sites, to provide additional benefits in safety, regularity and efficiency more effectively with remote towers by focussing shared, rather than distributed expertise, in a single location. HIAL has a proven track record in the successful delivery of modern ATMS provision, specifically the implementation of RNAV (now called RNP) approaches across their aerodrome estate. To the lay person, this technology uses GPS to provide pilots with guidance to land in adverse weather conditions. In the UK, HIAL are quite literally years ahead of other ATMS providers with this technology and their ATMS plan, specifically remote towers, is an ideal complement to this earlier quite separate programme of delivery that will serve to future-proof air traffic provision at aerodromes across Scotland.