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27 September 2010

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **EMAS alternative could cost millions and delay essential works**

ALTERING plans to extend the safety areas around Guernsey Airport by using a new collapsible concrete system will further delay essential maintenance works and cost the island millions.

Although the programme of essential works approved by the States in 2009 does not involve extending the runway, land to the west of the current airfield boundary is required to provide longer runway end safety areas (RESAs).

These are unobstructed areas at either end of the airfield, designed to protect aircraft and passengers in the event of an aeroplane overrunning the runway on landing or take-off. Currently the RESAs at Guernsey Airport are the minimum length historically permitted, and if they are not improved when the planned maintenance works are carried out, restrictions could be imposed in the future that would have a major impact on existing operations.

An alternative option to use an engineered material arrestor system (EMAS) in place of the existing RESAs was considered in the planning stage, and was one of the options presented to the States.

At the time, EMAS had not been approved by the UK's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), but had been used at a number of US airfields. However the option considered for Guernsey Airport would not have conformed to the standard use applied by the American civil aviation regulator.

If approval had been possible for that non-standard option, the existing boundaries of Guernsey Airport could have been maintained, but at an additional cost estimated to be around £10 million.

Last month the CAA said for the first time it wanted to develop a policy for airfields to install EMAS arrestor beds. It is yet to publish any technical details of how the collapsible concrete system can be used but, according to advice from the local Director of Civil Aviation, the new policy will not permit EMAS to replace traditional RESAs where land is available.

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This confirmed Public Services' previous understanding of the CAA's potential policy on the use of EMAS, and effectively rules out the EMAS option previously considered.

However in light of the new policy, the Airport Project Board is seeking clarification from the CAA on the circumstances where EMAS might be permitted or required in Guernsey. This will also involve discussion with the UK supplier of the system, to assess the costs of any such options and other considerations for the project.

Public Services Minister Deputy Bernard Flouquet said the latest advice from the CAA had clearly indicated that where land was available for traditional grass RESAs, this was still the preferred option.

Deputy Flouquet said the repairs to the runway were critical, therefore the project had to start as soon as possible. Work is expected to begin next year, and will take up to two years to complete.

Any further delay could see a serious deterioration in the condition of the runway, which would have a major impact on operations at Guernsey Airport and potentially cost many millions more to repair. The Department was therefore progressing with the plans approved by the States, but seeking clarification on the various issues regarding EMAS.

'The advice that we have received is that the CAA would approve the use of EMAS principally where there is a physical constraint, such as a river or a housing estate, making it unreasonable for an airport to achieve the recommended RESA length. Essentially it is a means of improving safety where there is no other option. That is not the position here,' said Deputy Flouquet.

'Currently there is no technical guidance from the CAA on the application of EMAS, and it is not clear this will be available within the timescale required for the project. There also remains the fundamental issue of cost.

'We are therefore progressing with the scheme approved by the States, which will extend the airfield beyond the current perimeter. What we have to concentrate on is how we minimise the impact of that.'

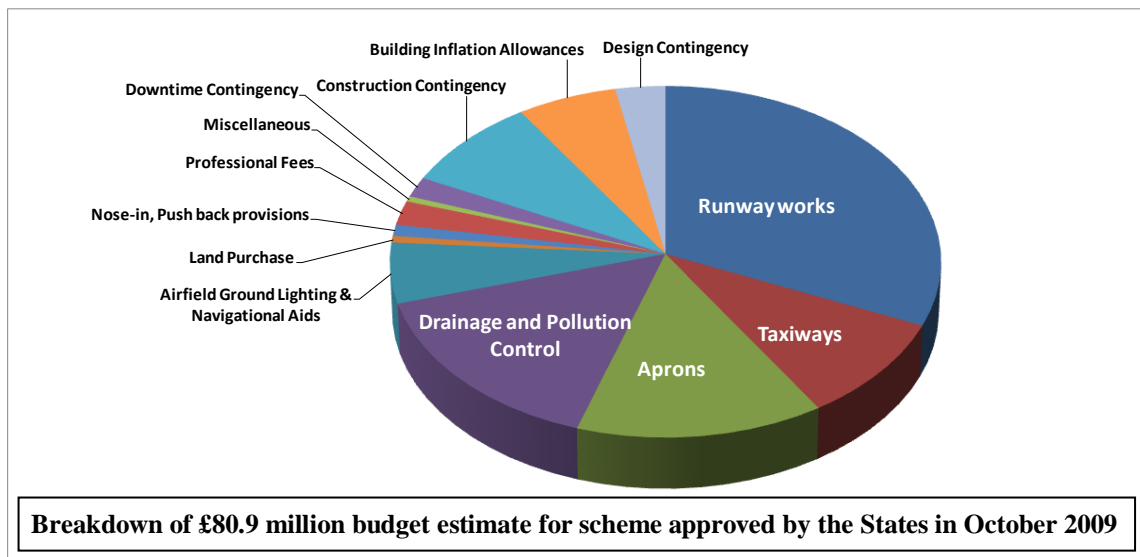
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In July, Public Services issued invitations to tender to four construction companies with specific experience of airfield projects. Bids are expected to be returned next month.

ENDS

**Notes to editors:-**

- Guernsey Airport opened in 1939, and today provides a gateway to the island for nearly one million business or leisure travellers each year.
- In 2009, the States approved a major programme of essential maintenance and improvements, aimed at equipping the current airport to serve the island for the next 30 years.
- The existing runway was last resurfaced in 1974, and would normally be expected to last between 15 and 30 years. Other areas of the airport are of similar age - in some cases older - and also in need of replacement. These include the concrete apron areas where the aircraft park; the airfield ground lighting, which is now obsolete; and the entire drainage system. The taxiways leading from the aprons to the runway also require overlaying, levelling, and realignment.



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