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**OIAC HLG/09M2**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE  
OFFSHORE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
HELICOPTER LIAISON GROUP (OIAC HLG)**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2009 at the offices of the  
International Marine Contractors Association, London SW1**

**Present**

**Representing**

Chair:	Steve Haddock	HSE
Members:	Robert Paterson	Oil & Gas UK
	Mike Crabb	HCA
	Dave Howson	CAA
	Vince Reed	CAA
	Peter Norton	BHA
	Ian Evans	IADC/BROA
	Philip Wiggs	IMCA
	Willie Gibson	OCA
	Tony Ridley	BALPA/IALPA
	Mike Lunt	HSE
Secretary:	Phil Sumner	HSE

**Guest presenter:**

Simon Webb, CAA

**Item 1 – Introduction/Apologies**

1. The Chairman welcomed Willie Gibson as a new member of HLG.
2. Apologies had been tendered by Mark Robinson and John Taylor (Unite) and Kevin Payne (CAA – Vince Reed was attending in his place). It was noted that John Monaghan would shortly be leaving HCA and had tendered his resignation from HLG. Members wished to place on record their appreciation of John's contribution to HLG over a number of years. Mike Crabb advised that he would continue as HCA's representative on the Group.

**Item 2 – Status of actions arising from the minutes of the previous meeting**

**ACTION 1: Tony Ridley to provide a note outlining BALPA's concerns about adverse weather rescue and recovery arrangements.**

**Tony Ridley tabled the following documents at the meeting;**

- **BALPA Dacon Scoop/Sealift Policy**
- **Passenger Locator Beacons – Compatibility with Aircraft Beacon Equipment and Equipment fitted to Search and Rescue Assets. (Copies have been circulated to HLG members): ACTION COMPLETED**

### **Item 3 – NUI Firefighting issues**

3. The Chairman referred to the briefing note produced by CAA for consultation with industry setting out its concerns about current arrangements for offshore helideck fire-fighting provision on fixed NUI platforms. He invited CAA to brief the Group on its work to evaluate a possible alternative means of compliance aimed at providing effective fire-fighting systems on existing NUIs.

4. Simon Webb had provided members with a short brief outlining the possible benefits of Compressed Air Foam Systems (CAFS) for NUI helidecks prior to the meeting. This explained that CAFS is a system which injects compressed air into the foam solution to generate a product having a much tighter, denser bubble structure than standard foam solutions, allowing deeper, more effective foam penetration. CAA allows small, special category aerodromes to use CAFS and is keen to see its use extended to other aviation sectors where there are proven safety advantages – it is envisaged the system may have potential application and benefits for existing NUIs. CAA has funds set aside for a full-scale fire testing programme to address issues at UK licensed aerodromes but is looking to the offshore industry to consider sponsoring an extension to the test programme to allow its potential to address NUI FFE issues to be fully assessed.

5. In discussion, the following points were made;

- i) CAA considered that CAFS was an effective firefighting system in an onshore context; further work was needed to establish parameters, including an optimum size/foam capacity, for application on NUI helidecks;
- ii) Mike Crabb believed that CAFS modified to allow the dispersal of foam through a ring main system would have potential to provide an effective system; this should be included as part of a clear specification articulating the system requirements;
- iii) Robert Paterson advised that although evidence suggested that fuel rupture from a helicopter on a helideck was an extremely unlikely possibility, the industry was willing to consider any systems which provided practical solutions.

6. Vince Reed agreed to prepare a specification identifying the characteristics of an effective NUI helideck fire-fighting system in consultation with CAA Aerodrome Standards (ASD) and HCA, by the end of

January 2010; members were invited to advise him of matters to be taken into account. The document would provide a basis for consultations with helicopter operators and the offshore industry.

**ACTION 1: Vince Reed (CAA) to prepare a specification identifying the characteristics of an effective NUI firefighting system by 31 January 2010 in consultation with ASD and HCA and taking account of HLG members' comments.**

**Item 4 – Update on progress to produce draft Guidelines for the design and operation of NUIs by the Energy Institute**

7. Mike Lunt reported that DNV was assimilating the many comments received on its initial draft of the Guidelines – this was proving an extensive task. The more significant comments were due to be considered at the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Project Working Group to be held in December 2009 after which a further draft would be issued for consultation. The final document was expected to be available early in 2010. This would simply advise that NUI helideck firefighting provisions were under separate consideration.

8. Mike Crabb reported on the recent issue by HCA of a Safety Notice advising of en-route navigational hazards posed by certain decommissioned Southern North Sea platforms. Mike Lunt undertook to advise DNV of the issue of the Safety Notice – a copy is attached to these minutes.

**Item 5 – Feedback from Oil & Gas UK Aviation Seminar and Helicopter Task Group**

9. Robert Paterson reported considerable interest in the Aviation Seminar held on 1 October 2009, with attention focussed on recent helicopter incidents. Issues covered included lessons learned from the Flight 85N, with particular reference to 'soft' issues, improvements to the Vantage system, progress towards the reinstatement of passenger personal locator beacons in helicopters and the joint initiative between helicopter operators and the industry to introduce 'multilateration' as a means towards improving the tracking of helicopters during the duration of offshore flights.

10. The Helicopter Task Group (HTG) had provided a focus for progressing issues discussed at the Seminar as well as commissioning work to improve communications with the workforce on helicopter issues in response to concerns expressed. With HTG support, good progress with implementation of HUMS Advanced Anomaly Detection (AAD) was being made; updates will be posted on the HTG website. A DVD was being produced and a half day seminar for safety representatives was being organised by the helicopter operators.

## **Item 6 – Status report on the update of Guidelines for the Management of Offshore Helicopter Operations**

11. Robert Paterson advised that progress to update the Guidelines had been affected by other helicopter related issues. However, the amendments required had been scoped and Oil & Gas UK was looking to publish a new issue of the Guidelines early in 2010.

## **Item 7 – Update on the use of passenger personal locator beacons on offshore helicopter flights**

12. Robert Paterson reported on work taking place which it was hoped would lead to the reintroduction of passenger personal locator beacons in helicopters early in 2010.

## **Item 8 – Contractor perspective on offshore helicopter safety issues**

13. Willie Gibson advised members that he had used the opportunity of a recent offshore visit to obtain opinions from the workforce on helicopter safety and helicopter travel generally. A wide range of issues had arisen which are summarised in the document entitled 'Snapshot of personnel views' attached to these minutes.

## **Item 9 – Overview of HCA's helideck inspection regime**

14. Mike Crabb provided a presentation on HCA's role and organisation, drawing attention to the issues its inspectors typically addressed during their three yearly inspection cycle of offshore helidecks. Mike Lunt stressed the need for improved liaison between HCA, HSE and the Verification bodies as the three main organisations comprising the inspection process when issues affecting helideck safety are identified.

## **Item 10 – New helideck lighting scheme**

15. Dave Howson had circulated to members a draft interim report covering the development and testing of a new helideck lighting scheme incorporating the 'H' and touchdown /positioning marking circle lighting. He advised that it was intended to introduce the scheme by means of an interim update to CAP437 to be issued in 2010. The final version of the report would be produced following completion of the in-service trials on the CPC-1 in Morecambe Bay (some of which had been witnessed by HLG members). As noted by Ian Evans, there was some material to be added at Appendix B, and the report could be subject to some limited amendments to cover matters such as lighting intensity and, at the suggestion of Mike Crabb, lighting of the installation name. Any further comments would be welcomed.

### **Item 11 – Research update**

16. Dave Howson circulated to members an updated table of helicopter safety research projects under the joint industry HSRMC research programme, briefly outlining their status. No significant comments or questions were raised. A copy of this update is attached to these minutes.

### **Item 12 – Any other business**

17. Ian Evans reported that OFCOM had issued a consultative document covering its proposal to charge for spectrum data, ie the aeronautical use of radio frequencies. This was a tax raising initiative which could affect 'emerging' radio frequencies. It was noted that CAA's response as a consultee would be important.

18. Mike Lunt advised of a recent Dangerous Occurrence on a helideck in which a member of the helideck team came near to being struck by a helicopter tail rotor. He was concerned this was not reportable either to HSE under RIDDOR or to CAA as a Mandatory Occurrence Report. He intended to raise this at ASTG's meeting in December 2010 as a helideck training issue. Robert Paterson considered that ASTG provided an adequate vehicle for the sharing of helicopter incident details.

19. The Chairman advised members that he and Mike Lunt would be retiring from HSE in the near future and would not be involved in future meetings of HLG. Members expressed their appreciation of the contribution towards the work of HLG made by both and extended to them their best wishes for the future.

### **Item 13 – Date and venue for next meeting**

20. It was agreed to hold the next meeting in June 2010 in London, using HSE's Rose Court offices, if possible. The secretary would contact members regarding dates and venue.

## **ACTION ARISING FROM THE MEETING**

**ACTION 1: Vince Reed (CAA) to prepare a specification identifying the characteristics of an effective NUI firefighting system by 31 January 2010 in consultation with HCA and taking account of HLG members' comments.**