

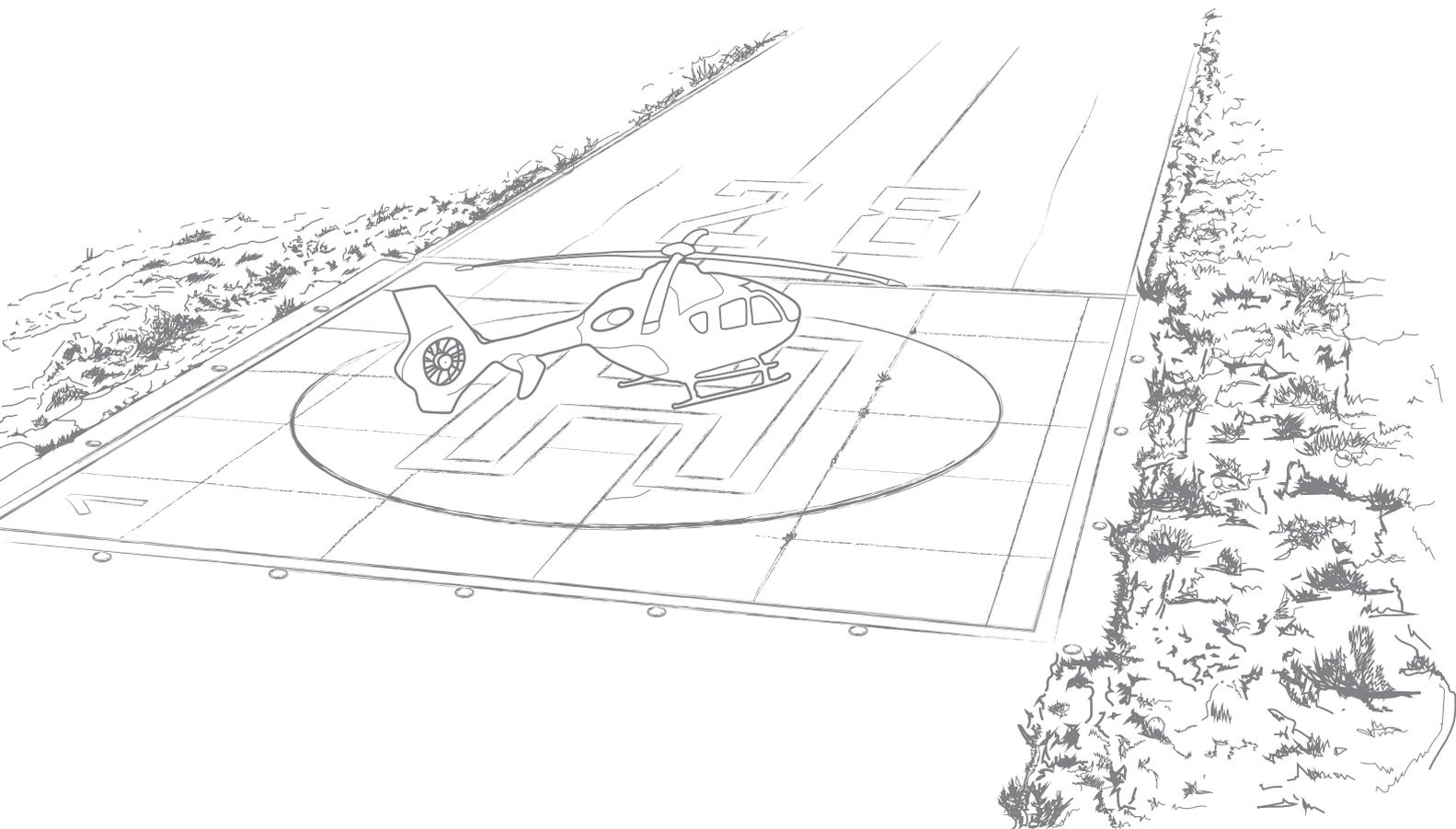


GOZO REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Gozo Rural Airfield

Regional Impact Assessment

Questions & Answers



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GOZO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Proposed regeneration and upgrade of the existing Heliport - Questions & Answers

1. What is the scope of the Airfield Regional Impact Assessment (RIA) Study and the public consultation?

The public consultation being undertaken by the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) is part of the Regional Impact Assessment (RIA) study, which is mandated by Article 8 of the GRDA Act. The Act states that one of the functions of the GRDA is to ensure that an RIA study is carried out whenever a ministry, authority, agency, or any other form of government entity intends presenting a proposal that would affect Gozo. Reference can be made to the GRDA RIA System non-technical guide, which explains the objectives of the RIA and the process involved, on GRDA's website: GRDA Documents – Gozo Regional Development Authority.

The scope of the Airfield RIA Study is to assess the social, economic, and environmental impacts that the proposed infrastructural upgrades of the existing airfield, and associated activities, might have on Gozo. The system/model that would be adopted to operate the Airfield and the operation of the Airfield itself (once developed) are beyond the scope of the RIA study.

2. What does the proposed airfield intervention entail?

The proposed project entails the regeneration and upgrade of the derelict heliport at Ta' Lambert in Xewkija into an airfield to be used by small propeller-driven aeroplanes (fixed-wing), small helicopters (rotary-wing), drones (both fixed and rotary-wing unmanned air vehicles), as well as for other activities.

The objectives of the project are:

- To improve connectivity and to reduce travel time between the two islands through the provision of an alternative Inter-Island air transport service; and
- To make Gozo more attractive to business and high-end visitors through the development of General Aviation activities and other aviation related niche opportunities.

The proposed development of the airfield covers an area of around 76,000 sqm which incorporates the runway, four aprons, and other airside facilities which already exist. The project envisages the extension of the existing 174m long runway by a further 271 metres, to reach a total length of 445 metres. The runway will be 20 metres wide and will include 30 metre wide grass safety areas on each side of the runway.

Three parking areas for light aircraft (aprons) and for other activities, and the connecting taxiways, shall be surfaced with a reinforced-grass paving system, a permeable solution complementing the rural setting. Another relatively small apron, that shall serve as parking spots for two 15m (or less) wingspan aircraft shall be hard surfaced. These aircraft shall serve the Inter-Island air service. The Apron is the one closest to the Passenger Terminal.

The perimeter retaining walls, which are required to relevel the land, such that the runway and aprons have the gradients in accordance with statutory aviation regulations, shall be stepped.

3. What Airfield facilities will the Gozo Rural Airfield include, and will there be additional buildings such as a control tower?

A Passenger Terminal consisting of an arrival/departures lounge, offices, luggage carousel, ablutions and kitchenette is already available on site. The existing Passenger Terminal will be refurbished and modernized. However, the existing structure will be maintained and shall not be enlarged or modified. Photovoltaic solar panels may be added to the roof. A VIP lounge has already been refurbished. No other buildings are being proposed as part of this development.

Aircraft fuel shall be supplied at Malta International Airport. A limited quantity of fuel will be stored in small towed-bowsers on Apron 4, for use in emergency only.

The airfield will be designed with electric-powered and hybrid-powered aircraft in mind. These aircraft, which are expected to become commercially available soon, will help reduce the carbon footprint as demanded by the goals of the EU's Green Deal. Presented in December 2019, the overarching objective of this deal is for the EU to become the first climate neutral continent by 2050. The electrification of the air and land transportation network centered at the designated area at Ta' Lambert in Xewkija, will help Gozo reach these goals years ahead of other avantgarde European countries. The results are a cleaner environment, more affordable transportation, and a better quality of life.

Several options are being considered with regards to Air Traffic Control:

- Option 1 Remote Controlling from Luqa Tower at Malta International Airport.
- Option 2 An 'Information Service' provided from within a room at the Gozo Rural Airfield. Such a room was previously available for the helicopter Inter-Island operations.
- Option 3 Other options are on the cards. One such option is the use of a mobile control 'Tower'.

Passenger security and customs may be handled at either Luqa or Gozo. A decision in this regard will be taken at a later stage.

4. Will the proposed airfield trespass on agricultural land outside the development zone?

The site in question is located Outside the Development Zone (ODZ) but predominately within the area designated for airfield-related activities. The proposed development is in line with the approved land uses in both the Gozo and Comino Local Plan and the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development.

The area that will be intervened upon is predominately already part of the facility and void of any vegetation and therefore landscape impact is minimal. The proposed airstrip will only encompass government owned areas including the existing heliport and the adjacent land which has been in a derelict state throughout the past years. It will not trespass over fertile land Outside the Development Zone (kindly refer to *Appendix 1: Site Location Plan* of the *Project Description Statement*, available on GRDA website).

The proposed project shall not be obtrusive - the proposal shall be soft-surfaced (reinforced grass paving system), with the only hard-surfacing (asphalt/concrete) of currently-soil areas being the runway and one apron for use by the Inter-Island air service aircraft. The proposal also entails the re-levelling (re-grading) of soil over a further 60,000 sqm.

5. Who can use the Airfield and what types of aircraft would be able to operate from it?

The proposed Airfield's main aim is to re-introduce an Inter-Island air transport service between Gozo and MIA, this time by means of fixed-wing aeroplanes, while enabling the development of a General Aviation ecosystem in Gozo. Thus, the Airfield would be used mainly by the Inter-Island air service operator as well as by a wide range of operators within the General Aviation community. The proposal does not exclude helicopter operators from using the airfield. It is meant to encourage helicopter flight schools in setting up base in Gozo.

Potential General Aviation operators include Flight schools, both fixed and rotary, the Aviation Museum Foundation, the Microlight Aircraft Club, and local and foreign private aircraft owners. Aircraft operators and owners may use the Gozo Rural Airfield for training, tourism, and recreational purposes. Drone manufacturers and professional operators have also been taken into consideration.

The proposed airfield would cater for single and/or twin-engine fixed-wing Short Take Off & Landing (STOL) aircraft, seating up to 9 passengers. A 19-seat passenger aircraft such as the Viking Twin Otter, may use the airfield under a special waiver issued by the Civil Aviation Directorate if necessary. Short Take-Off and Landing aircraft are capable of operating in almost all-weather conditions and have an excellent safety record. They may be easily converted from passenger to cargo, making them an ideal tool for Gozo.

There are several different types of STOL aircraft on the market that could fulfill the operational requirements of an airfield such as the one being proposed at Gozo. The 9-seat twin turboprop/piston engine Britten-Norman Islander, and the single turboprop engine Daher Kodiak aircraft, are two such aircraft. They offer the best flexibility, seat capacity, and ticket price. Furthermore, they may be flown by a single pilot. These two aircraft are amongst several other types that have been considered for operations from the Gozo Rural Airfield.

Another aircraft that has exceptional versatility and is capable of operating from short landing strips such as the one being proposed for Gozo is the Pilatus PC-12. The PC-12 is a single-engine turboprop-powered business aircraft, designed for performing multiple roles and to deliver performance and safety equal to twin-engine aircraft. Its cabin can accommodate up to 9 passengers and its 1,800 nautical mile range gives the aircraft true regional capabilities.

Malta registered Tecnam, Piper and Cessna trainer aircraft, vintage aircraft, as well as all the Microlight aircraft, would also be able to operate from the Gozo Rural Airfield. The same applies to a large number of foreign registered aircraft. Aircraft similar to the Pilatus PC-6 Porter which are

used worldwide for parachuting operations, are also be able to operate safely from the proposed Airfield. One such machine operates from the 400m long private strip at Siracusa, Sicily.

The new generation of electric powered aircraft, which have been certified recently, would also be able to provide sustainable training flights and transits between the islands. These include the Pipistrel Velis Electro trainer aircraft, and the Cessna Caravan passenger aircraft that is powered by a MagniX electric motor.

The airfield would also cater for flight school and privately owned helicopters. The proposed airfield shall have dedicated stands for the air-ambulance helicopters. The Armed Forces of Malta's AW139 is expected to remain the largest helicopter to operate from Gozo.

The proposed runway dimensions preclude the operation of medium and large sized fixed-wing aircraft.

6. Is the runway length sufficient for these aircraft to take-off and land safely?

Several types of STOL aircraft would be able to take off and land safely at the proposed Gozo Rural Airfield with a runway length of 445m. The two main types of aircraft earmarked for providing the Inter-Island air transport service, namely the Islander and Kodiak, are both able to take-off in less than 400m with all the aviation safety measures factored in. Landing distances are shorter.



Britten-Norman Islander



Daher Kodiak

Take-off distances must meet stringent European Aviation Safety Agency requirements for Air Operators and aircrews must be trained to operate the specific type from the short airfield.

All calculations, as reproduced in Figures 1, 2 and 3, have been provided by the aircraft manufacturers. They have been confirmed by Transport Malta Civil Aviation Directorate.



ISLANDER AIRCRAFT COMPARISON

The Britten-Norman Islander is a high wing, twin engine 10 seat monoplane. Three Islander variants are currently available, the 260 and 300 hp, BN2B-26 and BN2B-20 Lycoming piston variants and the Rolls Royce turbine engine BN2T. The table below shows the performance comparison between models.

* This is raw data based on current UK flight manual

	BN2B-26	BN2B-20	BN2T	BN2T-4S
<u>Take off distance</u>				
ground roll	621ft/189m	704ft/215m	837ft/255m	1167ft/365m
To clear 50ft	1218ft/371m	1166ft/355m	1250ft/381m	1855ft/565m

Fig 1: Calculations provided by Britten-Norman Ltd.

The Britten-Norman BN-2B piston Islander offers a STOL performance capability with take-off distance (ground roll) of 189m, and the BN-2T turbine Islander offers a STOL performance capability with take-off distance (ground roll) of 255m (Figure 1 above).

The Daher Kodiak has a take-off distance (ground roll) of 293m, as per data obtained from manufacturer. The ground roll take-off distance is the distance moved by the aircraft along the ground just before take-off, as shown in Figure 2.

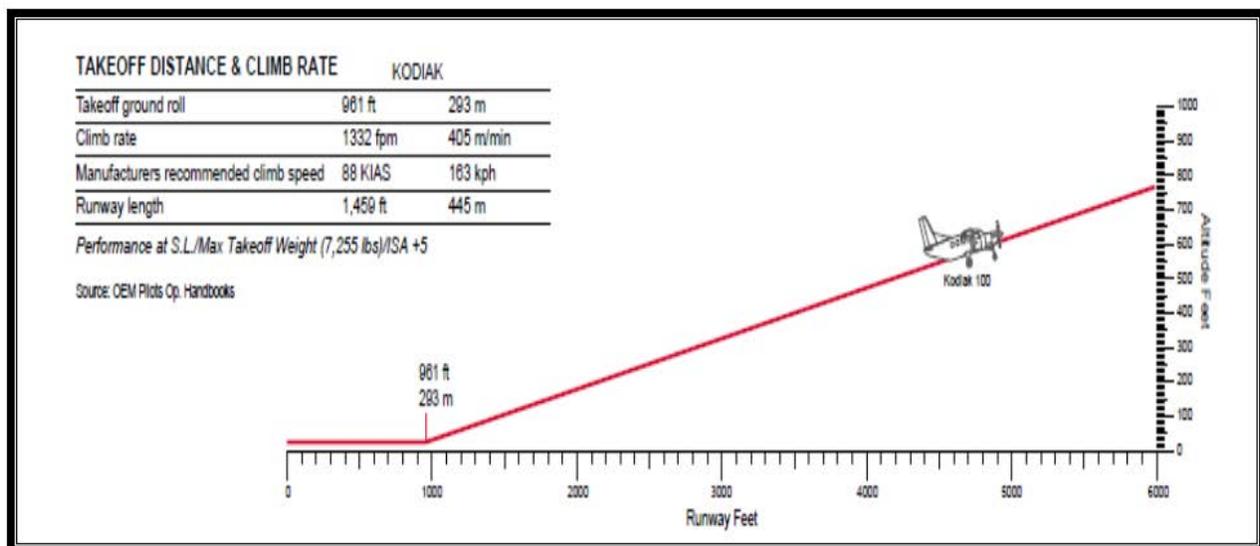


Fig 2: Daher Kodiak take-off distance (ground roll) at 293m.

Apart from the Islander and the Kodiak, several other aircraft have a ground roll distance measuring less than the proposed runway length; they are thus able to take-off and land safely at the Gozo Rural Airfield. Some of these STOL aircraft and their corresponding

technical specifications are referred to below in Table 1.

Table 1: Technical specifications of STOL aircraft able to operate at the proposed Airfield

Aircraft Type	Passenger Seating Capacity	Wingspan	Take-Off Ground Roll (Approximate figures)
Islander BN-2T	9	14.9 m	255 m
Daher Kodiak 100	9	14 m	293 m
Viking Twin Otter ¹	19	19.8 m	245 m
Tecnam P2002 ²	2	8.60 m	192 m
Velis <i>Electro</i> ³	2	10.71 m	241 m
Cessna <i>Skyhawk</i> ⁴	4	11.00 m	293 m
Cirrus SR22 ⁵	4	11.68 m	330 m

7. Given the short length of the runway, is an air connection between Gozo and other European/Mediterranean regions possible?

Malta may be reached in ten minutes. The red circle in the diagram shows the range of the Daher



Fig 3: Range of Daher Kodiak with full passenger load.

Kodiak with a full load of passengers and luggage. STOL aircraft capable of operating from Gozo can easily reach the Islands of:

- **Lampedusa** in approximately 40 minutes;
- **Pantelleria** in around an hour, and
- All of the major airports on **Sicily** also in an hour or less. These airports include Trapani, Palermo, Comiso and Catania.

Aircraft based in Gozo may operate direct flights as well as round-robin Inter-Island trips if necessary.

These Islands open new opportunities to tour operators, day and weekend trippers, and the local dive schools.

In the meantime General aviation aircraft may reach Gozo from across Europe. Some aircraft will arrive in short hops and others, such as the 4-seat Cirrus SR22 aircraft may fly directly from locations as far as Germany.

¹ www.vikingair.com (Twin Otter Series 400 Brochure LoRes)

² <https://www.tecnam.com/aircraft/p2002/>

³ <https://www.pipistrel-aircraft.com/aircraft/electric-flight/velis-electro-easa-tc/#tab-id-2>

⁴ <https://cessna.txtav.com/en/piston/cessna-skyhawk>

⁵ <https://cirrusaircraft.com/aircraft/sr22/>

8. Are the types of aircraft earmarked for the Gozo Rural Airfield limited by bad weather?

STOL aircraft such as the Islander and Kodiak are limited by bad weather. The same applies to the Airbuses and Boeings operated by airlines from Malta International Airport.

Taking the local weather into consideration, aircraft operations at the Gozo Rural Airfield may be affected by:

- Low Visibility: This is experienced at the Malta International Airport once or twice annually and is the result of early morning fog.
- Strong winds: The Islander is certified for take-off in winds up to 55 knots (force 10) with a 25-knot crosswind (although it will be less in reality). Any STOL aircraft operating from the Gozo Rural Airfield would be limited by very strong winds on limited occasions, numbered from seven to ten days annually.

Overall, STOL aircraft would be less affected by bad weather than the Gozo Channel Ferries or fast ferries.

9. Will aircraft fly low over residential areas, especially over Xewkija and Għajnsielem?

Aircraft flying from the Gozo Rural Airfield shall be prohibited from flying over the nearby villages and residential areas. Pilots flying from the Gozo Rural Airfield would be required to follow special offset approach and departure procedures, as shall be published in the **'Malta Air Information Publication'** and as per the **'Pilot Operating Handbook'**, to avoid built-up areas at Xewkija and Għajnsielem.

Climbing at the best angle-of-climb, while making a 180 degree turn at the end of the runway is one option. Heading straight for the coast, rather than over the built-up areas at Xewkija and Għajnsielem, is another option, as shown in Figure 4.

Moreover, by the time STOL aircraft take-off from the airstrip and reach well clear of the outskirts of these villages, the aircraft would have reached an altitude of at least 1,000 feet, which is the normal altitude of a sightseeing flight from Malta. The routes have been planned and shall keep aircraft well clear of the nearby villages.

Circuit activity shall be prohibited north of the airfield, that is towards the Gozo Racecourse area.

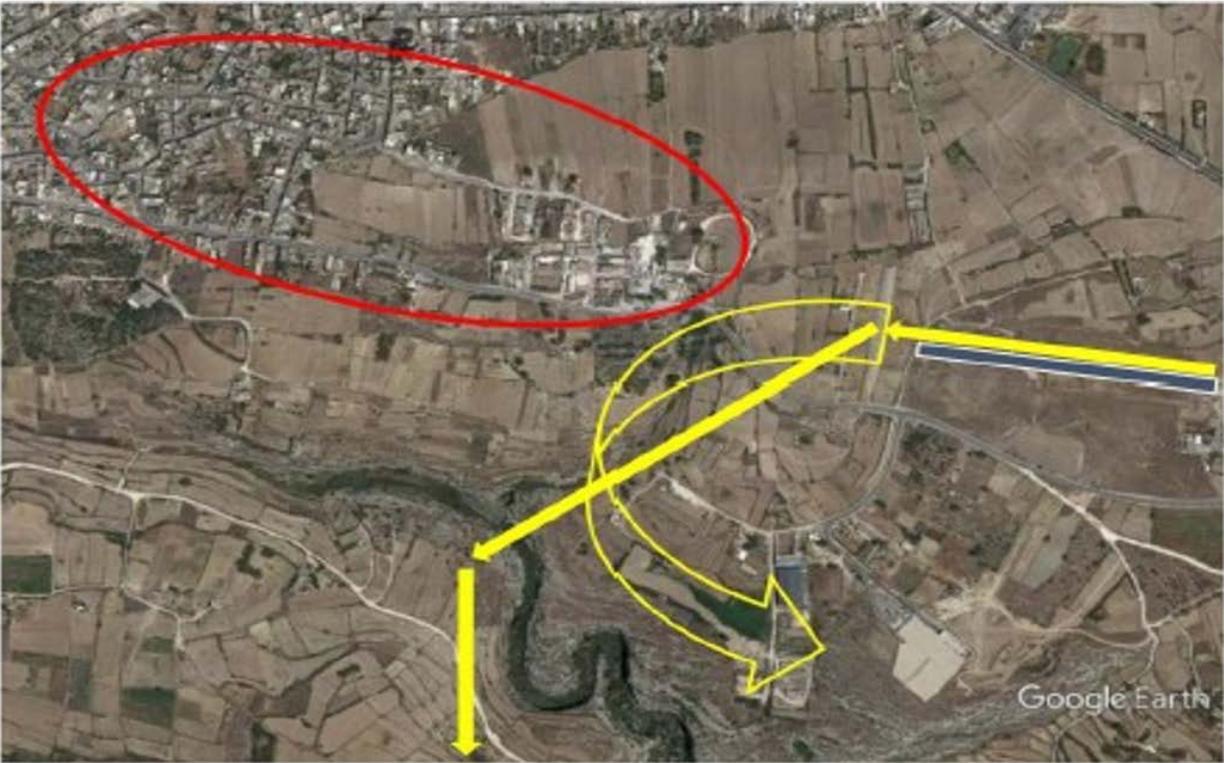


Figure 4: Aircraft operational procedure upon take-off (the closest residential areas in red).

10. Will aircraft operate at night during rest periods?

Operations of General Aviation aircraft shall be restricted to daytime only (30 minutes past sunrise till 30 minutes prior to sunset), whereas the Inter-Island air transport service aircraft shall be limited to flights between 06:00 hours and 01:00 hours local time. The Inter-Island airliner aircraft would operate during early mornings and late evenings, so that the people of Gozo and tourists alike may be able to catch the morning or evening airline flights at Malta International Airport.

However, as per current practice, the air-ambulance helicopter and the AFM helicopter shall continue to operate at night as necessary.

11. Is the noise generated due to activities at the proposed airfield tolerable/ allowable at a site relatively close to residential areas?

Noise will be dealt with in six distinct ways:

1. Airfield design;
2. Clever use of vegetation;
3. Times of aircraft operations;
4. Operations by aeroplanes rather than Helicopters (of the same size)
5. Inter-Island air service aeroplane selection and special modifications, and
6. Operational and circuit procedures.

The proposed airfield is expected to generate a low level of noise pollution when compared to other activities, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Sound Measurement

Decibels dB	
140	Petards (Fireworks)
130	Jet engine
120	Siren and Shotgun
100	Helicopter
90	Twin engine Aeroplane
>70	Single engine light Aeroplane – normal conversation
>60	Electric Aeroplane

The airfield design helps mitigate noise pollution on the surroundings. Engine run-ups would take place in dedicated bays, shielded by hedges and concealed sound deflectors. Aircraft making 180 degree turns at the end of the runway, will use turn pads with engine thrust directed towards the sea. The closest distance of residential buildings to the airfield perimeter is 300m. This is considered as more than adequate for separation.

The clever use of vegetation and the choice of indigenous trees and hedges as boundary fences, should shield aircraft noise on the ground. Grass aprons and taxiways are intended not just to help the airfield blend in with the surroundings, but most important of all, the turf surface smothers engine noise. A green airfield in comparison to airport with large hard surfaces favor micro-meteorology – lower temperatures and less conductive thermals.

As explained previously in Question 10, operations will be limited to day for General Aviation aircraft, and limited for a period of time at night for the Inter-Island air service aircraft. Air Ambulance and rescue flight helicopters will continue to use the Heliport 24/7.

All general fixed-wing aircraft, that are expected to operate from the proposed Gozo Rural Airfield, fall within the lower limit of the aircraft Noise classification. These aircraft are certified at less than 70dB. To put these metrics into perspective, fireworks measure at 140dB, as shown in Table 2 (twice as much as aeroplanes). Moreover, the larger Inter-Island service aircraft should be equipped with all the manufacturer's Supplementary Type Certificated (STC) noise reduction modifications.

12. Wouldn't the proposed airfield increase light pollution?

Given that the airfield will respect certain hours of inconvenience (the airfield will be open to General Aviation from 30 minutes past sunrise to 30 minutes before sunset, and the Inter-Island air service aircraft will be limited to flights between 06:00 and 01:00 hours), airfield lighting hours will be very minimal.

The simple runway lights shall consist of runway edge omni-directional white lights and runway end bi-directional red/green lights at each threshold end. The runway and the aprons would use the Pilot Activation System, whereby the lights would be switched on by the pilot prior to landing or departure. These lights will illuminate at low intensity for 15 minutes after pilot activation.

There will be no taxiway lights. Blue taxiway vertical cylindrical reflectors (as found on taxiway Quebec at Luqa) will be installed at Apron 1, where night operations are expected. The same apron will have floodlighting. These lights will face downward and towards the north, that is in the opposite direction of the Ta' Ċenc seabird colonies in the south. The intensity of the Passenger Terminal lights will be diffused.

13. Wouldn't the proposed airfield be an eyesore, negatively impacting the Gozitan landscape?

The proposed rural airfield is being planned with due consideration of the context within which it is located. The airfield has been designed to blend in with the surroundings. It shall resemble an ordinary field when seen from afar or the perimeter roads. The dayglo orange windsock shall be the only distinguishable item of special note. Asphalt and concrete surfaces shall be kept to the barest minimum. To this affect, three areas for parking facilities for light aircraft shall be surfaced with a reinforced-grass paving system, a permeable solution complementing the rural setting. Trees and grass surfaces will be watered by 'new water' supplied by the EU funded sewage purification plant at Ras il-Fhobs.

The perimeter retaining walls shall be stepped to avoid sheer heights along the public roads and allow for the introduction of landscaping around the periphery of the site. More than a kilometer of the airfield's perimeter will be planted with saplings and trees. The perimeter retaining walls are required to relevel the land, such that the runway and aprons have the gradients in accordance with statutory aviation regulations.

Moreover, no structures are being proposed as part of this development. The existing terminal structure will be maintained and refurbished and shall not be enlarged or modified.

14. Will the proposed Airfield have any impacts on birds and other species?

Given that the area within the confines of proposed Gozo Rural Airfield is designated as a Bird Sanctuary (the 'Bird Sanctuary' is only nominally an environmental constraint and is related to the establishment of a no-shooting zone for the purpose of heliport safety), potential impacts on birds as a result of the proposed upgrade were analysed in detail. The main impacts that were considered include:

- Potential disturbance to breeding, wintering and migratory birds due to increased ambient noise and activity in the area resulting from works while the project is being carried out; and
- Potential disturbance to breeding and migratory birds resulting from the activities generated by the airfield when it is operational.

The ornithological study included a fieldwork that was conducted to assess habitat type and to conclude which bird species are likely to use the area, both for migration as well as for breeding. Apart from the area within the confines of the proposed airfield, the immediate surroundings extending to beyond the cliffs were taken in consideration for this study.

A total of 16 bird species have been confirmed to breed in the study area. The study concluded that it is highly unlikely that the proposed project would have any impact on these populations of

breeding birds. An amount of noise is expected to be generated by machinery while land is being levelled and asphalted, but since these are only expected to be temporary, it is not expected that there will be any significant impacts on breeding or migratory birds. Also, as the site is quite far from the breeding cliff sites, it is not expected that there will be any effect on cliff-nesting species due to the distance from site. However, even though the closest distance from the airstrip to part of the breeding colony of Yelkouan Shearwaters *Puffinus Yelkouan* is 1.6 km, precautionary mitigation measures were suggested, which shall be taken on board. For more information, the detailed avifauna study can be accessed on the GRDA website.

15. How long would the flight between Gozo and Malta take?

According to route tests which have been conducted, the flight between Gozo and Malta shall take a total of fifteen (15) minutes from startup to shut down. This includes a ten (10) minutes flight and an additional five (5) minutes due to taxiing at MIA and at Gozo Rural Airfield.

If the STOL aircraft providing the Inter-Island air transport service is to wait for other traffic at Luqa, the total travelling time would exceed the indicated time. However, such scenarios are not expected, as these could be avoided through pre-scheduling and proper planning with Air Traffic Control.

16. Why are fixed-wing aircraft going to be introduced, rather than persisting with rotary-wing aircraft (helicopters), given that infrastructure for rotary-wing is already available?

The option to persevere with the present Heliport infrastructure to re-introduce scheduled helicopter flights is not attainable. This is because the current Heliport was designed as a 'fixed-wing runway' for use by helicopters when standards and requirements were quite different. Changes and upgrading of infrastructure are required so that the Heliport meets today's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards whilst also meeting operational requirements. Therefore, the existing heliport cannot be currently used for scheduled helicopter flights as it is outdated and can at present only be utilized for emergency helicopter landings. In a nutshell, it may be used for unlicensed unscheduled operations (Air Ambulance) but not for licensed scheduled operations (Inter-Island service). The latter entails considerable investment in both infrastructure and administration.

Upgrading the present infrastructure to current regulations (to cater for scheduled helicopter flights) was taken into consideration. This option was assessed in depth, and it was concluded that it is a less desirable option from a social, economic, and environmental point of view. The assessment considered several aspects including the below analysis.

Helicopters are noisier than STOL aircraft. This merits a detailed explanation. Sound is a longitudinal wave carried by the movement of air particles. Helicopter rotor blades direct a large volume of air and the engine noise downwards towards the ground, whilst aeroplane propellers direct it towards the rear where it is dissipated before reaching the surface. This is very similar to aircraft wake turbulence. Also, helicopters generate more carbon emissions than STOL aircraft as helicopters are less fuel efficient. Helicopter engines must produce more power to generate the same amount of lift as do aircraft engines.

With regards to the environment, a benefit of re-introducing scheduled helicopters is that a smaller

area of land within the designated site would be used, and less land would be hard surfaced.

From an economic point of view, helicopters are inherently more expensive to buy and operate than aeroplanes. They also require more maintenance hours to operate in comparison to aeroplanes. The higher operational cost of helicopters results mainly from the added fuel consumption, the cost of spares and additional maintenance manhours. There are no locally qualified helicopter pilots whilst at the same time aeroplane pilots are readily available. Almost the same can be said for aircraft technicians.

As already stated, helicopters use much more fuel than fixed-wing airplanes because their engine-driven rotors are responsible for creating all of the required lift. On the other hand, a fixed-wing aircraft uses the engine to propel the plane forward, whilst the 'fixed' wings generate the lift. Due to the higher operational and maintenance costs, the one-way air ticket fare of a helicopter operated air transport service would be expected to be more expensive. This would negatively impact the attractiveness and marketability of the service, resulting in lower number of users of the helicopter operated Inter-Island air service and reducing its financial feasibility. In fact, a helicopter Inter-Island air transport service has been tried and tested by five different helicopter operators over a period of more than thirty years, and all operators incurred losses.

When comparing the overall economic and environmental impacts and benefits of this alternative option (upgrading the current infrastructure to cater for scheduled helicopter flights) with the proposed intervention (upgrading the current infrastructure to introduce fixed-wing aircraft, as well as rotary and drones) it is evident that this alternative is a less desirable option than the proposed intervention.

17. Is there a demand for such an airfield?

The demand analysis carried out as part of the Cost Benefits Analysis for the Gozo Rural Airfield Project indicates sufficient demand for the airfield project to cater for both the Inter-Island service as well as General Aviation operations.

The demand for the scheduled Inter-Island air transport service is expected to emanate from four main sources, including inbound tourists travelling to Gozo both as a twin- and a single-centre destination, Gozitans travelling abroad and Gozitan workers travelling to Malta for professional reasons. Based on regional statistics and assumptions thereof, the demand analysis estimates that the airtlink project could potentially operate around 69,783 passenger trips in a year.

On the basis of flight statistics, and discussions held with potential users of the airfield for General Aviation activities, the demand analysis also revealed a strong demand from General Aviation operators to operate from the proposed airfield. The evaluation of flight statistics for MIA for a period of 11 months between November 2018 and September 2019, determined that 9,336 flight movements operated by flight schools in Malta took place. Such a value demonstrates that a considerable air traffic volume emanates from General Aviation activities such as flight schools.

General Aviation operators expressed a common sentiment that Malta International Airport has become saturated with priority given to commercial airlines. Furthermore, beaurocracy and an 'Airline first' mindset, puts General Aviation at a disadvantage. Consequently, General Aviation operators revealed a great interest to operate from the proposed airfield, away from the congested environment of the Malta International Airport. They also showed a desire to operate in a less stringent environment, similar to that experienced at other General Aviation airfields across the whole of Europe Continent.

18. Who will manage the airfield?

The operating model being proposed at this stage by the Ministry for Gozo is similar to the one adopted for the fast ferry service between Mgarr Harbour and Valletta, whereby the government will invest in the airfield infrastructure, while the Inter-Island air transport service would be liberalized, hence operated by one or more private operator/s. This would imply market competition.

The Airfield and Passenger Terminal would be managed by a private operator (may be different from the one providing the Inter-Island transport service) or by a government company set up to manage the Airfield Terminal. The private operator or government company who is responsible for the Airfield Terminal would manage and control the Passenger Terminal and Airfield, at a leasing fee to be paid to the government. The Terminal operator would generate revenue from any activity taking place at the airfield, including the Inter-Island flights, private chartered flights, flight schools, drones' testing, and any other activities such as historical meets and revivals, and parachute operations. Given that the Terminal operator's revenue depends on activities that take place at the airfield, the Terminal operator would strive to attract such activities which secure its operation.

It should be clarified that the scope of the Regional Impact Assessment (RIA) being undertaken by the GRDA is to assess the social, economic, and environmental impacts that might result from the proposed infrastructural upgrading of the existing airfield, and associated activities. The Regional Impact Assessment shall not delve into the operating model that shall be adopted to manage the Airfield and the Inter-Island air transport service. These aspects of the project are beyond the scope of the RIA.

19. What would be the Inter-Island air transport service ticket price?

Given that the proposed fixed-wing Inter-Island air transport service would be liberalized, the ticket price would be established by the private operator/s providing the air transport service. As explained previously, the proposed operating model would introduce an element of competition which would have a direct effect on the ticket price.

Based on the demand analysis, referred to previously, it is estimated that the Inter-Island air transport service could potentially operate around 69,783 passenger trips in a year. Using this demand as a baseline, the Cost Benefits Analysis estimates that the average ticket price for the inter-island air transport service would be around €30 per one-way trip, including the carriage of one luggage. The €30 one-way ticket price takes in consideration the cost of alternative means of transportation and financial sustainability of the service.

The Cost Benefits Analysis (CBA) considered a number of different scenarios when analysing the financial feasibility from the point of view of the economic operator who would provide the inter- island air transport service. One possible scenario where the Government would finance the capital expenditure for the regeneration of the airfield, and a private operator would run the service (Gozo-Luqa) was considered. According to the CBA, this scenario would generate a healthy internal rate of return with average prices of around €25 per one-way trip.

20. Will the proposed airfield contribute anything to Gozo's economy?

Apart from the social benefits, such as saved travelling time between Gozo and its mainland, which are expected to emanate from the Airfield project, it is expected that the proposed development shall act as an enabler to the creation of new economic activities and jobs, as well as enhancing Gozo's potential to attract quality tourism. The proposed airfield would be designed to facilitate the development of a General Aviation ecosystem in Gozo which shall contribute to Gozo's economy.

The economic impact of General Aviation activities was analysed from a macroeconomic perspective in terms of potential value added, and employment to be generated in Gozo, as part of the Cost Benefits Analysis. The analysis estimates that the development of General Aviation and ancillary activities in Gozo would generate an annual average direct value added of €895,777. This would rise to over €1.7 million worth of value added when considering indirect effects, reaching €2.5 million when including also induced multiplier effects generated from earned income. Moreover, an annual average of 20 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs are estimated to be created in the economy as a direct effect of these activities, increasing to 34 FTE jobs when considering indirect effects and rising to 48 FTE jobs when including also induced multiplier effects, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Economic contribution in terms of value added and employment

Annual Average Effects	Value Added Generation (€)	Employment Generation (FTE)
Direct	895,777	20
Direct + Indirect	1,752,574	34
Direct + Indirect + Induced	2,483,048	48

Considering only the direct effects generated from General Aviation activities together with other net benefits to be generated from the Inter-Island air transport service, this project is expected to render an Economic Net Present Value of €10.4 million consistent with a social discount rate of 5%, an Economic Rate of Return of 30% and a corresponding Benefit-to-Cost ratio of 2.06.

21. Will the development of the Airfield affect the air ambulance service?

In view of the requirement for the air-ambulance service to continue operating from the current heliport site, the airfield would remain operational during the construction works involved to upgrade the existing airfield. This would be achieved by initiating works on Apron 4, shown in Figure 5, at the start of the project. The proposed Apron 4 situated directly adjacent to Triq ta' Lambert shall incorporate two stands for air-ambulance helicopters. These helicopter stands would be hard surfaced while the remaining area of Apron 4 shall be finished in reinforced grass.

It is crucial that the air-ambulance helicopters remain operational. It has thus been decided that while works are ongoing on Apron 4, the air-ambulance helicopter would continue to operate from the existing helicopter stands located on the 178m runway. Once Apron 4 and the incorporated air-ambulance helicopter stands are completed, the helicopter would operate from these new stands, such that works on the rest of the Airfield can initiate. It should be noted that a

new gate on Triq ta' Lambert will provide direct access by the ambulance to Apron 4.

Plans to shift Air Ambulance operations to the Gozo General hospital instead of the airfield remain high on the agenda.



Figure 5: Schematic Diagram of the Proposed Airfield at Ta' Lambert Area in Xewkija, Gozo.

22. Will the Civil Protection Department operations be affected by the proposed airfield?

The Civil Protection Department (CPD), situated directly adjacent to the proposed Apron 1 (shown in Figure 5), shall not be affected by the proposed intervention. The proposed upgrading of the existing airfield does not entail any modifications or enlargement of the existing Civil Protection Department structures and buildings. There would be no requirement to shift the CPD facility to support the airfield. The only additional support that should be provided by the CPD is a firefighting support vehicle, which is to be parked in such a place as to face the runway during flight operations.

Also, it should be noted that the area earmarked for the CPD facility extension, area shown as a red rectangle in Figure 5, shall neither be affected by the proposed airfield intervention, and has been reserved for future CPD extension.



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