

**ASK THE GOVERNMENT**  
**January 16, 2002, Radio Montserrat**  
**Topic: Temporary Airstrip at Gerald's Park**

**Guests:** Claude Hogan, Member of Parliament & Project Manager, Gerald's Park Temporary Airstrip, Mike Palmer, Geotechnical Engineer, Halcrow Group; Nigel Harris, Pilot & Airline Operator; Stephen Young, DFID Engineer.

**Moderator: Herman Sergeant**

H. Sergeant: Good evening listeners. You are listening to Radio ZJB broadcasting from the eastern Caribbean. It is 5 minutes after 8. And of course it is Wednesday night and you're listening to **Ask the Government**. As I promised last, week, this week, we'll look at the Airport project. And we have a full house here tonight.

Let me first of all introduce to you the panelists for this evening and I'll start with Mike Palmer. Now he is a geotechnical engineer with the Halcrow Group, consultants retained to provide the final designs of the airstrip at Gerald's. Mike is the lead engineer undertaking the soil survey and analyses at Gerald's. He will discuss the nature and type of survey being conducted at Gerald's with emphasis on its use, that is, its end use. So let me say good night to Mike.

M. Palmer: Good night. Thanks for your welcome.

H. Sergeant: Next, let me introduce Nigel Harris, a pilot that some of you may know and remember. And perhaps, more importantly a former air service operator in the Caribbean with residence on Montserrat but having a place of usual place of residence in the UK. And Nigel has been invited to give emphasis to the operational conditions to be assessed and which will inform the efficient use of the Gerald's airstrip. Good night, Nigel.

N. Harris: Good night. Thank you for that.

H. Sergeant: And of course, we have Mr. Stephen Young, an engineer with the Department for International Development (DFID) here on Montserrat and currently assigned specifically to assist with the implementation of the airport project. Stephen is particularly involved at this pre-construction stage with the logistics and management issues associated with the safety studies to be conducted at Gerald's in addition to the provision of technical advice to the consultants, the Halcrow Group with local company, Ken Cassell and Associates, as partner. Welcome to the program, Stephen.

S. Young: Yes, good night. Good night, listeners.

H. Sergeant: And last, but by no means, least, Mr. Claude Hogan, a Member of Parliament and he is the Project Manager for the temporary airstrip at Gerald's. Good night, Claude.

C. Hogan: Good night, Herman.

H. Sergeant: Claude will lead off the discussion for this evening. He'll sort of give you the purpose of this evening's discussion and the objectives and so forth. So Claude, please take it away.

C. Hogan: Thank you. Good night, Montserrat. Good night, Montserradians. I am very pleased to be here.

And first of all, let me offer apologies for the Airport Manager, who due to an ailment is unable to be here. I'm also asked to apologize, of course, for having planned this program about a week ago but not realizing that we had an incidence of possible overbooking which came up this week with the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Housing, Lands & the

Environment. And thank you very much Minister for realizing that between Radio ZJB Radio and the Information Unit, all efforts were made to have this program put on tonight. And even though I might have been trying to get out of it, it turned out that you also supported the fact that we should go ahead and have this program. So thank you very much Minister Margaret Dyer-Howe.

Montserrat is in a peculiar position in so far as regional and global conditionalities dictate. Indeed most of us wonder why some people do not share fully our complete view of our island as one of the safest places to be on the planet. Montserrat is quite a safe place to live when compared to some neighboring islands with rising crime rates, etc. In other parts of the world, people are poverty stricken and a range of diseases plagues their societies. We pray daily for God's divine intervention to alleviate people from the wars and strife, which run rampant around and about us. That is probably why many of us never resist the urge to support the cause of missions as encouraged by our church leaders.

Unfortunately these conditions in these other countries are assessed (regrettably so) perhaps very differently. Here in Montserrat, there have been very few things that have upset the balance and control of our inner most spirits. And so despite the volcano, we remain a marvel to the world that we have not yet set upon each other or have not given up on our resolve not only to survive but to succeed. Truly in Montserrat, they have found a people the world can call resilient.

What else is peculiar about Montserrat and Montserratians? We live everyday with a live volcano in our backyard, yet we understand that the world is run by generally accepted rules. Much of these rules are not set in stone but they do suggest that for the many to survive and live in peace, there must be, of necessity, be such rules among civilized men to ensure their sustainability as a people.

We in Montserrat have told the world by our actions that we resolved to be a successful people and that we will work with whatever assistance we get to achieve the maximum for ourselves and our children now and in the future.

When the Soufriere Hills Volcano started to erupt in 1995, the rules were written for our island in economic terms. We lost 2/3 of our most habitable lands and 98% of the island's infrastructure including our lone W.H. Bramble Airport. As the years go by, less and less of our visitors understand the nature and magnitude of our loss and they find that we have resettled in North Montserrat as though we have been here for all time.

According to the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, now that we have entered the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the erupting Soufriere Hills Volcano, the prognosis is for at least a few more years of eruptive activity. Taking into consideration that we are unlikely to return to Bramble Airport and that the economic future and health of the island hinges on a proper air transport service, the Government of Montserrat, under the esteemed leadership of the honourable Dr. John Osborne, asked some international experts along with local experts to apply multi-criteria analysis to assess a decision on the way forward for the island.

This decision-making tool was developed for complex, multi-criteria problems such as the choice between a temporary and permanent airport with emphasis, perhaps in some quarters on there being no airport at all. And, of course, perhaps a continued struggle for some time with our benefactors and the consequences of that, we'll have to live with. Or, do something to help ourselves the best way we can.

The points of consideration included safety concerns about an airstrip at Gerald's, the airstrip orientation, wind turbulence, volcanic ash exposure in addition to economics, sustainability, airport usability, traffic, tourism development, land acquisition, people living in the area, the environment—there being a pond with birds and the use of Gerald's as a possible football and cricket facility.

But let's look at some of these issues very briefly before the other panelists talk to you about them.

**Sustainability, Economics, Finance & Investment.** The airport is expected to be sustainable and thus technically save this island the \$12 million per year, which is currently subsidized in transport services—the ferry and helicopter included. Nobody else is willing to pay that kind of money after 2003 for the high level of services, indeed the comfort level of services we need to make for this island to work again.

The revenue for the airport will come from fares, landing charges, parking charges, security charges and handling charges at the airport set at economically, competitive rates. So, we have a good business plan.

**Traffic** is included in that. A traffic forecast was undertaken by our last consultants, shortly called SEA, “S,” “E,” “A,” to support (the Italians that is) to support the viability of the Gerald's airstrip. The forecast gives good support to our justification and our intention to have an airport at this time. By 2004 the Twin Otter aircraft or aircrafts will be required to move—and these are from the forecasts—66,000 people or passengers, 69,000 in 2005, 72,000 in 2006, 75,600 in 2007 and 79,400 passengers, many, perhaps more tourists, in 2008.

The **airport operations** are estimated to be equal to plus 46% of the heliport operating costs that we engaged in 2000, last year. Additional monies earned will go into the Government Treasury to pay for healthcare, education, build new roads, etc.

On the **development side**, Montserrat and the people of Gerald's will be able to establish a full-sized cricket field at Gerald's as was always envisaged. The design consultants have been asked to include a costing for these works and a final cost-estimate for the entire area, which will be considerably improved, including a number of other works, which we'll get to.

**Tourism.** Montserrat's potential as a niche tourism product is uncontested but the market will not be waiting for us. And every day we don't have an airport is an opportunity lost for us to claim global market share for tourists. We have well-developed studies on the tourist traffic beyond 2003 but this will depend on a good and effective tourism promotion plan and strategy as we hear the Chief Minister speak about repeatedly.

**Social issues, environmental impact, noise pollution and employment.** These will all be considered and addressed within the social impact to be undertaken by the Community Services Department.

The choice of a temporary airport was also informed by the type of aircraft. The recommended aircraft is the Twin Otter with a maximum seating capacity for 19 passengers. The recommended length of the airstrip for this aircraft includes all consideration for emergency landings, etc.

**Obstacle limitation services.** Safe operations of any aircraft in to and out of any airport is guaranteed only if the area is safeguarded from obstacles. The obstacle limitation services are laid down in ICAO, that is, the International Civil Aviation Organisation Annex 14 of their regulations and were considered in the preliminary studies.

The **runway.** The analyzed data from a wind rose, including strength and direction of wind at Gerald's has confirmed, so far, the usability of the airport at 98.7%. The ICAO recommends that this should not be less than 95% of the time for obvious safety reasons.

The best **orientation** for the airport is currently near a perfect east-west alignment of 92° from north and 272° from north. For pilots, that is interpreted to be heading 09-27. I have a pilot who'll discuss those with us very shortly.

For **economic, financial** calculations, we can assume 100% usability of the airstrip since all scheduled flights will be able to land at some point on any given day. The runway will be of asphalt with nav aids and adequate lighting for night landing to be provided.

**Apron & taxiway.** These will be designed to allow the simultaneous presence of two Twin-Otter type aircraft with power in or power out operations. These are recommended areas to be paved. There will be a helicopter landing area or a helipad to allow continued helicopter operations during and after the airstrip project.

**Terminal area.** Preliminary indications are that we will need to rebuild the existing terminal depending on the final orientation and alignment of the airstrip.

**Firefighting.** Facilities will be installed to ensure the usual firefighting equipment is available at the airport.

**Roads.** An alternative road will be provided for entry into Geraldts from the main road running across the hospital and possibly crossing under the runway via a tunnel. The current Geraldts road will become a dead-end road, as traffic will not be allowed across the runway, which will cross over the current access road.

**Land acquisition.** The majority of landowners to be affected by the project have been quite cooperative with the exercise so far. A range of options has been discussed with them or those whom we have been able to speak to for dealing with the relocation, re-housing, purchasing and the broader social impact issues to be dealt with. I am to receive a report from the Community Services Department confirming mitigating measures and measures to alleviate the pressures and impact of the relocation exercise.

The project has a positive result for those residents on Geraldts Park currently in the squatter area. They will now need to be given almost immediately, at least between now and June 2002, a solution for their housing. The Housing Department is working overtime to make this possible along with the Land Development Authority and some houses have commenced building. At least one house has commenced building to deal with one of those residents and lands have been identified for another.

**Stages of Implementation.** We are currently at the design stage, which is programmed up to March-end 2002 when we should have the final designs. By June 2002 we hope to go to contract for construction to start by August this year.

**Assumptions we have made.** These include that the lands that we need for the airstrip will be bought, all of the social issues addressed, and people are adequately and effectively relocated.

**Financing** for the project will come from the European Union under the Regional Indicative Program. The financial proposal has already been submitted by the Department for Development, the Development Unit. The rest of that financing will come from the Department for International Development-United Kingdom and a little bit of it, from our own Treasury here from the Government of Montserrat.

**Environmental Impact.** We have agreed a way forward for a full environmental impact assessment to be done at Geraldts before July and for our environmental impact program to be implemented in consultation with our Ministry of the Environment.

**Monitoring and evaluation.** Hopefully, with adequate monitoring and ongoing evaluation on my part and others as we move along, the project will go to construction in time by August this year and be completed and operational, that is, meet all license requirements by early 2004.

In conclusion, at around \$40 million this project of the airport we're building at Gerald's will be one of the largest, sustainable projects to be implemented in Montserrat to date. This means we will have an air transport system in place, which for the time being, does not cost us anything to run but the customers will pay for the service as they use it. Hopefully, more and more tourists will come to Montserrat and not only support the service but bring or facilitate the overall development of the island's people as they contribute to revenue intake and overall economic activity on Montserrat.

We are moving late on this airport, a few years late, but it is a case of better late than never, at this point. We should thank the many civil servants from the many departments who have added airport construction-Gerald's to their daily work. Together, we can make it possible, Montserrat. Thank you.

I will now continue to deal with the facilitation of the input from our panel here before we go to the moderator, Mr. Sergeant. Could I proceed on that? Thank you. We have as Mr. Sergeant outlined, Mike Palmer with us and Stephen Young and Nigel Harris.

Mike you are here as a geotechnical engineer from Halcrow. Could you tell us why you are proposing to dig pits, trial pits at and around the area earmarked for the temporary airport at Gerald's?

M. Palmer: Ok. Thank you Claude for your welcome and I also would like to thank the people of Montserrat that I have met so far for their very kind welcome. I'd like to say on behalf of Halcrow that we are very pleased to have been awarded this contract and we are also very proud to be involved in this important project for Montserrat.

Last week I had a meeting with the airport team in England and it was decided that it would be beneficial if I could mobilize very quickly to site ahead of the rest of the team to provide some useful information. Now what I will be doing on site will be looking around the area of the airport to undertake some geological mapping and some geomorphological mapping. And, these will be backed up by about 30 trial pits to allow me to examine the subsurface geology and also to take some samples for testing.

Now these—as part of the design of the airport, there's going to be some very large embankments and cuttings. These will help me to design those safely and also there's a requirement to balance the amount of cutting and filling in the optimization of the airport alignment and design. And so these trial pits will allow me to accumulate the information to feed back to the designers on that purpose.

C. Hogan: These data will be analyzed how?

M. Palmer: Well, the—Based on engineering properties of the materials that I have observed in the trial pits and from my mapping, they'll be classified and certain properties can be assigned to these materials. Also from the lab testing, we'll be getting design parameters for that. Also, we'll be identifying where the materials occur and therefore, we'll be able to work out the quantities of material that will be suitable for use in the embankments for the runway.

C. Hogan: And this information you propose to collect and the way the design engineers will use it, how will this impact the air traveling public?

M. Palmer: Well, ultimately the—it will affect the position and the length of the runway. It will—as I mentioned, these earthworks are going to be very high at 40 feet embankments and cuttings and so we'll make sure they are designed safely and also that the runway will be stable and won't be suffering from settlements.

H. Sergeant: Claude, if I can come in with a question? As far as the stability of the runway is concerned, what role would rocks, for example, play in this?

M. Palmer: Well, we'll have to make sure that the rocks and the soils are properly compacted so we want to use different types of materials at different levels in the embankments and the specification will be identified from the materials. And they will also be used in terms of costing. At the moment, we want to find the optimal runway alignment and length and working out where the materials are going to come from is an important part of this optimization.

H. Sergeant: Would that be available in Montserrat in terms of the material?

M. Palmer: Well certainly. In terms of keeping costs down and also keeping the money within the island of Montserrat, we definitely want to find both materials for the embankments and also aggregate materials within the island and as close as possible to the proposed airport.

C. Hogan: And we have Stephen Young as part of this interactive, dynamic process of information elicitation. And Stephen, as you know, is an engineer and there are a lot of things that are said that sometimes fly over my head because I am a social scientist and you're a physical scientist, Stephen, so.

First of all there are these safety issues, which we have been progressing and you have been taking a significant lead and assisting in satisfying the requirements for equipment, installation and so on. Where are we in respect of that?

S. Young: Yes. Thank you Claude. Well, obviously the project is starting to move forward into the design phase now. We've had the Italian consultants working here, SEA, who did the preliminary studies and I think we were very conscious working with them at that time, that safety was really one of the primary considerations, if not the foremost consideration in looking at any airport in this location. And they came back from their initial work with all of the reassurances that the Government and we, ourselves, were looking for in terms of the safety of the site there.

Obviously, there were some additional investigations that were suggested that should be carried out at the design stage and those are the additional activities that Halcrow are now moving ahead with.

C. Hogan: The wind studies, safety studies—everybody is concerned about turbulence. We do have studies being organized for those, right?

S. Young: Yes, that's right. That's right. Some of the studies that have been suggested and indeed are moving ahead now are to do with collecting additional data relating to the wind actually at the site. Your airport team are already collecting data on a regular basis there and indeed that's already been made available to Halcrow, the designers.

But we are supplementing that with additional instruments around the site and the Airport Manager is handling the installation of those. And we were talking about it today and he hopes that those instruments will be up and running by the end of this month. So they'll be collecting that supplementary data to give us a fuller picture of the wind conditions at the site.

H. Sergeant: Mr. Young, if I can come in with a question here. The safety question is a constant question for members of the public. How absolutely sure are you that these safety concerns or the questions are being fully answered?

S. Young: I'm absolutely confident that when we have built this airport, it will be a safe airport. And the reason I can say that so categorically is that there are standards; there are guidelines developed by the International Civil Aviation Authority and those are going to be used within

the design process. So Halcrow will be working closely with ICAO. They'll be working closely with the UK Civil Aviation Authority who will advise on the licensing of the airstrip and so we will make sure that all of the considerations that need to be taken into account to make sure the airport is safe will be taken into account.

H. Sergeant: How many feet above sea level is Gerald's?

S. Young: The Gerald's site it's about 550.

H. Sergeant: Is that high or is that a usual number as a figure in terms of the sea level for an airport?

S. Young: No. I mean, we're, we're obviously higher than, for instance, the old airport site was down at Bramble but to some extent, you know we get away from some of the low-level turbulence. Perhaps, I'll let Nigel talk to some extent, about the wind conditions at that height. But certainly, there is no indication of any problem so far happening with an airstrip at this level.

C. Hogan: Before we get to Nigel because I want to let us get to the operational side of things fully in deference of Nigel as an experienced person. And I know you know some of these answers Stephen but you are an engineer and I want my people to get it from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

We've been talking about the possibility of conditionalities or wind factors, as Herman raised, which give rise to turbulence and this was highlighted in some reports. Our own pilots have spoken about it in the newspaper. Can we have something, looking down the road a bit, a manual of some kind, which will provide the basis for advising aircraft landing at Gerald's?

S. Young: Yes. There will be operational guidelines developed by the operators coming in and out of the airstrip, which will mean that at some instances, they don't fly. Now, the big question, of course, is how frequently will those circumstances prevail? And again, you referred, I think Claude, in your introductory remarks to the 98.7, I think it is, percent availability that is anticipated for this airport. The alignment that we are currently looking at is almost directly aligned parallel with the prevailing winds and so we shouldn't get too many cross winds. And it's the cross winds that are the real difficulty for pilots and so in that sense, the alignment that we are looking at here is a very safe alignment. It is an alignment that should give us a very high frequency of operation.

C. Hogan: Let's talk a little bit more before we get to you Nigel. I'm almost wanting to bring you in right here and now but let's just exhaust Stephen for the time being. Now, I've said and I stand by that that we can have 100% usability even though we are setting it at 98.7 because even if a plane is delayed and we are talking about a scheduled flight here being delayed, at some during the day or during the period, that plane will eventually arrive in Montserrat. But naturally, that could be a problem. Do you envisage that this could be a persistent challenge for pilots, travel agents and people with inter-airline connections to Antigua, St. Kitts, St. Martin or Guadeloupe as the case might be?

S. Young: Certainly, no. It is not anticipated as being that. I mean there will be extreme cases when things will have to shut down but those cases, we anticipate will be very limited. I mean, I myself was going through Antigua airport just before Christmas and there was a freak storm came through and the airport shut down for an hour or so. But it very quickly after that opened and got back to normal. So clearly circumstances like that will happen from time to time but certainly not within any undue inconvenience to travelers.

C. Hogan: And I do recall we did shut down at the Antigua airport and the Puerto Rico airport with ash. I hope we don't shut down our own airport. In any event, Nigel, we have had so much talk on this airport from the experienced people and you are one of those people and getting it from the horse's mouth is really important.

How do you assess the operational potential of the proposed airstrip at Gerald's?

N. Harris: Thank you for that Claude. Before I answer that question, just let me say to the people of Montserrat it's a pleasure being back on the island and both my wife and I thoroughly enjoyed the six years that we operated here as Montserrat Airways right up to the time, they took our airport away, unfortunately. But it is a pleasure being back and we would hope to fly from here again one day in the very near future.

Addressing the question that you've asked me about the operational potential of the airport—the constraint, obviously is the 500 meters. We have to be quite clear on that. Having said that, there are aircraft more than capable of operating into a 500-meter strip. You mentioned the Twin Otter, for example, that will operate at maximum loads quite happily into a 500-meter strip. There are other aircraft also capable. We are looking at possibly a Dornier 228, which may be possible. Certainly an Islander will operate into a 500-meter strip, but not at maximum all-up weight. So for charter purposes, for six people, possibly, an Islander could also come in. So the restriction is the 500 meters.

In terms of the site, I find the site to be a far better site than the old airport at Bramble. It certainly, from my initial opinion, a safer site than the old airport at Bramble, in so far as the approaches are considerably better. So operationally with the constraints of the runway limitation, yes, I don't see any major problems.

C. Hogan: Many people wouldn't believe you about the Bramble but the data even at ICAO and in our license registration information did put Bramble at a 94.8% usability, which is slightly below the 98.5% that they recommend. How come that was acceptable?

N. Harris: I can't answer your percentage in terms of acceptability. In practical terms I can tell you why the new airport should be more accessible. The approach is in to Bramble as you probably remember, with the prevailing wind, meant that we had to make a fairly sharp turn onto finals. During the daytime that was not too much of a problem. At night, it was quite challenging sometimes and if the crosswinds were such that it made it difficult to land, then indeed, flights were cancelled. I can recall many times, LIAT not coming in in the evening due to the crosswinds problems at Bramble and the difficult approach. I cannot see how those problems will exist at the new airport. My view is that the approach would be far easier, far less challenging to a pilot. Therefore, of course, the percentage in terms of landing should be higher.

C. Hogan: So Bramble was a good airport in terms of at the right spot and so on, the right sea level, but I think we did have a plan to change the orientation because it was the orientation that was more than a bit off.

N. Harris: Yes. That's correct. The orientation in terms of the inability to make a direct approach and of course, it was not perfectly aligned in terms of wind.

C. Hogan: Ok. Well let's say if you're doing something twice, you do it right the second time, at least.

You are also involved in the high-end tourism market in the UK where packages are prepaid or I should say in Europe where packages are prepaid for special tourist destinations like Montserrat. From this perspective, can you comment on the potential for Montserrat as a niche market product with inter-line connectivity to Virgin or British Airways where you can book flights and say you have a hub directly to Montserrat when you arrive in Antigua or wherever?

N. Harris: You're asking me several different questions there, Claude. If I can sort of ...

C. Hogan: I'm giving you a big ball field to walk or roll around in.

N. Harris: If we can sort of break that down and take them one at a time. In terms of a tourist destination I think we've covered that fairly clearly that Montserrat is an ideal niche market, in terms of the volcano, in terms of the climate, etc., etc. I think we've covered that ground many times. So, yes there is potential as a niche market into Montserrat.

Accessibility is one of the major keys; it is not the only one. Certainly tourists will put up with so much trouble in getting to somewhere but as things progress in the world people are used to getting somewhere in a day and I think it's this one day of travel that is one of the key elements. If people can fly from Europe or North America into a connecting airport, which doesn't have to be Antigua even though it's the obvious one—there are other suitable interconnecting airports in the region such as Guadeloupe, San Juan and St. Martin—providing they can have a fairly painless transit through these airports and on to Montserrat in the same day, then I think that will encourage people to come here. And people do not like overnighing in Antigua. It is definitely a one-day operation.

In terms of packaging, yes this can be done. We're not looking at mass tourism. We are looking at the niche players, the small packaging companies, the small tour operators who tend to work at the expensive end of the market which I think is good for Montserrat. And yes they would be attractive and I would propose that we should look at that as part of the development of the airport.

In terms of inter-line agreements and interlining, that's another separate question. If someone is going to buy a ticket in Europe or northern Europe or northern America, they want one ticket that takes them through to Montserrat. And the way we have to do that is to enter into inter-line agreements with the major carriers such as British Airways, American and the other people that come down long haul into Antigua and Guadeloupe. This we can do and I would hope to have that in place before the airport opens so that people can actually check in at Heathrow or New York directly through to Montserrat.

H. Sergeant: Nigel, obviously Montserrat would have the potential for charter services being in quite a unique spot really. You had a charter service in Montserrat at one point. Would you be interested in starting up something again in that area?

N. Harris: We'd be interested in scheduled services, which we do in the UK and indeed charter services as well. On the question of charter services, there are two dimensions. There are charter services from the island off the island, which many people will recall we operated for shopping trips to Guadeloupe, trips to St. Martin and of course, air ambulance flights which are effectively a charter, which we were doing between one and two air ambulance flights to Antigua, Barbados and Guadeloupe, every week. I think people may have forgotten that.

So there is potential for charter flights off island for local people and indeed tourists. If people are staying here for some time, they quite enjoy the opportunity to visit another island without having to change aircraft in Antigua as they do at the moment. And then there is indeed, all island charters, where not only ourselves but other charter operators with appropriate equipment, appropriate aircraft, indeed can make charters into Montserrat, which helps the economy here and the viability of the airport.

H. Sergeant: So you've been having discussions already in terms of starting up this business in Montserrat?

N. Harris: We have indicated that we would be very interested in returning to Montserrat. We like it here very much indeed. And yes, we have the ability to operate an airline here. And I shall be talking further with Claude and his colleagues as the project develops.

H. Sergeant: And the scheduled service, would you be starting that out—I'm not sure, Claude, if LIAT already has any opinion on this.

- C. Hogan: No. We haven't reached that point yet. I think that in respect of how it's going to go. I have my own views, but we have to discuss it with the Minister of Finance, which is the Chief Minister.
- H. Sergeant: I have a question. Nigel you mentioned that this airport here—proposed site for the airport is safer than Bramble. Many people would find that very difficult to actually believe. On what do you base that?
- N. Harris: Well, there are several considerations and criteria for establishing. I mean we have some more work to do. We're looking at doing some survey flights in the near future to actually assess the impact of any potential turbulence or wind shear on the proposed site and until those tests are carried out, it is very difficult to emphatically say that it's a 100% safer than the old airport.
- C. Hogan: This is personal opinion, I think.
- N. Harris: However, the indications that I have at the moment for the reasons I gave earlier and I'll reiterate that. The direct approach from a pilot's point of view makes it considerably safer. This having to turn finals at 500 foot with a sharp turn, it is safe, but it is not comfortable. So a direct approach makes it safer. The fact that the runway is aligned pretty much into wind, considerably more into wind than the old airport makes it easier. We don't have to cope with crosswinds as often. So those two criteria make it a safer airport in my view. It just looks fine to me at the moment but we have some more work to do. We have some more work to do. But on those two points alone I think it makes this a safer airport.
- C. Hogan: Might I comment on the inter-wind situation? Because I think up to this point, we had thought that flying in Gerald's could overturn a plane, the winds are so heavy, but the way I understand it and we have a pilot here and we have engineers here, the way I understand it and I'm telling the people is that when you fly into the wind directly, in fact, it improves your landing ability.
- N. Harris: Yes. It effectively shortens the length of the runway by the amount of wind so the greater the headwind component, the shorter the runway we actually need. So, yes, that leads on to it being safer, I suppose.
- An aircraft is certified for certain wind conditions and the manufacturer of that aircraft will recommend specific winds for that particular aircraft. And it's specified in two different ways. We talk about a maximum crosswind limit. By a crosswind, the maximum crosswind will occur 90° from the runway. OK? And at 90°, the manufacturer will say, we recommend you do not fly in more than, for example, 30 or 35 miles per hour winds, which are quite strong. So most aircraft would cope with a 90° wind at something like 30-35 knots, dependent on the type of aircraft.
- Flying directly into wind there is not a manufacturer recommended maximum. However, operationally, we would put a maximum on that in conjunction with talking to the authorities, the civil aviation authorities of something like 50 or 60 knots so that the maximum wind straight on the runway we would fly on would be something like 50 knots.
- H. Sergeant: What aircraft is the safest aircraft to use at Gerald's like this with the shortness of the runway, the crosswinds like we mentioned and all the other factors?
- N. Harris: Well, there are more than one but for various reasons we have to look at the Twin Otter first. It's a very rugged aircraft. It's an aircraft that's been proven over a long period of time flying into difficult airports. I emphasize that this is not a difficult airport. The Twin Otter is used in Alaska and Africa and all sorts of places, off of dirt strips, for example. It is a rugged

aircraft. It is capable of handling crosswinds and it's a relatively easy airplane to fly from a pilot's point of view. It also has very, very reliable engines.

H. Sergeant: Can I bring in one of the engineers, here?

C. Hogan: Let me ask him one last question.

H. Sergeant: Yes, please do.

C. Hogan: You said—I am in an interesting position because people don't expect me to ask questions but we are doing a dynamic forum, presentation—listeners, so that you are able to get the same information from a multiple number of experts, which are available to me and I myself will be handing to the moderator shortly so we—I'll be available to you for questioning on those issues in which I have competence.

My question is—you mentioned that you might be interested in operating charter services over here or even getting involved in regular service operations, scheduled service operations. Would you (and I'm being the devil's advocate) would you want your plane to overnight in Montserrat? Would you overnight your plane in Montserrat? This is important because tourists would come to an island. They want to know they can get off the island overnight if something happens, there's a plane down there on the pad waiting. Will you—would you consider overnighing and what would you want?

N. Harris: The emphatic answer to your question is yes. I think we should have overnight. I think we should be a Montserrat airline. I think it should be based in Montserrat, not off island for lots of considerations. I think there's a psychological one that says people would like to have an aircraft based on Montserrat. The aspect of air ambulance evacuations is obviously one point in hand and the fact that people can get off island. So, psychologically I think it would be exceptionally good to have an aircraft based on Montserrat. But I think we need to have an airline of our own. I think for the last few years, we've depended on people off island.

C. Hogan: Ok, we have to wait for the Minister of Finance on that. Let's go to DFID. DFID what do you think about his point on that?

N. Harris: I'd like a hangar, please.

C. Hogan: He says he would like to have a hangar.

N. Harris: I would like to have a hangar.

C. Hogan: We don't have a hangar in our plan.

S. Young: Clearly what we've seen already is the designers of the airstrip have been talking to operators in the region. We must at the end of the day have operators prepared to come into and out of this strip. As Nigel has indicated, you know it's something that he finds very attractive. I think we all would want to see some competition in actually developing the service so that we make sure that obviously Montserrat is getting the best value it can. In specifying that service, the Government may choose to make certain criteria. And perhaps one of those criteria may be there has to be an aircraft in Montserrat overnight. But that's something obviously to specify with the operators at that time.

N. Harris: If I could just quickly come in and say that yes, I would like to have an aircraft based on Montserrat overnight but due to the ...

C. Hogan: We haven't talked to the Minister of Finance, yet so hold on.

N. Harris: It's completely an operational comment, Claude, completely an operational comment that says if you're going to base an aircraft here it must be hangared because of the salt and the potential for corrosion. The expense of having an unhangared aircraft here would probably throw it out the window.

C. Hogan: Point taken, point taken. I thought you were going to talk as the Minister of Finance.

N. Harris: No, no, no. Actually it's operational.

C. Hogan: Let's retire from this part of the session, the interactive, dynamic forum and we'll pass the entire question moderation to Mr. Sergeant who'll deal with telephone calls.

Gentlemen I think we have given the people of Montserrat the relevant information to get them to consider what we are doing for Montserrat and for the future of Montserrat. I can't say thank you yet because the program is not over. Let's hear the feedback through the moderator. Thank you.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much Claude and listeners, you can now call in if you wish and I'll give you two numbers. Of course, most of you would know them but I'll repeat them anyway: 491-7227 and 491-9064. And right away, our telephone lines are going so gentlemen, can you please put on your headsets so we can get our first question from our first caller. Good night.

Caller: Good evening, panelists. Good evening, Herman.

H. Sergeant: Good evening.

Caller: I have been listening to your program from the beginning. Did you say that the new airstrip at Gerald's can accommodate Twin Otter?

C. Hogan: Yes, that's what we aid.

Caller: And that's 19 seats, right?

C. Hogan: Yes.

Caller: Is there anyone on the panel who can determine whether we'll have an air shuttle service like every hour or what? Because I'm thinking in terms of the numbers of people that will want to come in and out of Montserrat at any one time. And let me ask you another question. How would the ferry factor into this? Would we still have a ferry service? I'll hang up and listen to the responses.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much, caller.

N. Harris: Nigel Harris. If I can take the first part of that question in terms of shuttle service, whoever the operator or operators end up being into the airport. I mean, they will produce a business plan on the viability of it and that would dictate the services and clearly we're looking at several return flights per day as a schedule basis. And that would have a seasonal effect to it in the period leading up and after Christmas. Obviously, we would do more flights than we would do possibly off-season. In a (*indecipherable*) we would be doing charter flights, I'm sure. In terms of a shuttle service on the hour, every hour, my initial indication, certainly in the first year would be that would not be a viable proposition.

C. Hogan: On the question of the ferry, I'm really concentrating and strictly focused on getting the airport into place. The Government of Montserrat has an overall comprehensive transport study done by a company called Roughton and that study speaks to the more adequate use of

the ferry once the airport comes into commissioning. Now I can say that to make this airport a successful venture, we will need to maximize the number of passengers we transport by aircraft and we are anticipating that most people will choose to fly. I cannot comment on the total future of the ferry but I'll ask Stephen to also comment since he's closer to the study.

S. Young: Yes. Thank you Claude. I'll say one of the key things that we're hoping to do with the installation of the airport is obviously get away from the very heavily subsidized services of the moment Claude has referred to, the millions of dollars that you are currently have to expend on keeping the ferry and keeping the helicopter going. As we move to the opportunity for operators to come in and out of the airstrip on a regular basis, so obviously, the need for a subsidized ferry service goes away. Clearly there may be some operators wanting to run a ferry service in and out Montserrat but I would suspect that a commercial one without a subsidy would probably operate on a very different basis than the one that we're presently used to.

H. Sergeant: Ok panel, we'll keep the discussion going while we wait for our next call. And callers, once again, you're invited to call in with your questions to members of the panel and I'll repeat their names to you just in case you joined us late and you've been hearing voices on your radio.

Well we have Mr. Claude Hogan and he is the Project Manager for the implementation of the Gerald's Airstrip Project.

We have Mr. Stephen Young, an engineer who works here on Montserrat with DFID.

We also have Mr. Nigel Harris, a pilot and I think he operated in Montserrat many years ago before the volcano started.

And we have Mr. Mike Palmer the company, Halcrow Group and he's geotechnical engineer, whatever that means. These technical names and positions and so forth, but he is very good at what he does. And he'll be doing some work here on Montserrat in preparation for the construction of that airport.

Well the numbers to call: 491-7227 and 491-9064 and you can put your questions to any member of the panel. God night, you are live on the program.

Caller: I'm just calling back because there are no other callers at the moment. How soon are we likely to see work beginning on the actual airport? And can you factor in the relocation of the people of Gerald's and where would they go? Thanks.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much caller.\

C. Hogan: I think that's my question. First of all, timing—we have a very tight schedule. By the end of this month we expect more members of the Halcrow team to be on island and by March we anticipate that we'll be looking at the results of the final design including the orientation and alignment of the airport. By June-July, we anticipate that we'll be dealing with contract details, negotiating the final details for the contract for the construction of the airport facility or facilities supporting the airport. And we anticipate that work will commence on the airport construction at and around August 2002, that is. That is a very tight schedule and we are trying to stick with that schedule. All of the other dynamics, including the proposal for financing and so on are in place.

Now the matter of the relocation. We have begun consultations with the residents to be affected. There are two types of relocation activities to be undertaken in Gerald's and one set are the people who currently live on the Gerald's Park itself. And some of these people, or most of them will not be moving as a direct consequence of the airport because the airport is

not taking up the entire Gerald's Park, just the southern tip of Gerald's Park as it runs across the first portion of that piece of land back down to the ghaut. It's running across where the current heliport is. So really the only number of houses we see an immediate impact to are those first six houses that are on the left on the main road into Gerald's. That is immediately opposite the current aerodrome building. Most of those—most of that land is multiple family, undivided property. There are possibly about 3 or 4 owners in total. Except for one owner on the left going down there, we have what looks like good negotiations with the others. A number of the properties we hope to come to be able to come to a conclusion for purchase before we have to go to any acquisition at all; we're trying to avoid that.

The relocation of those people will fundamentally take on two or three different options. (1) We have already started a house for one of the residents and we'll include also the relocation of his business activity, which is mainly agricultural. The second one, we have identified the lands and we propose to start construction on that house very shortly so we'll have two houses in progress at the moment.

A number of other houses on the property, which are not substantive structures, per se. They have been offered to us for sale. The problem with those houses, of course, is that the occupants of them are paying rent and we'll need also satisfy ourselves that we're dealing with their relocation in an appropriate way, which is why the Social Development Officer will have to visit these people to clarify their issues.

The other relocation activities on Gerald's Park—the Housing Department is dealing with. Where will these people go? Some will be going to sheltered housing; some will be getting self-build options; some will be getting material grants scheme and any one that falls through the net will be picked up by the Project.

H. Sergeant: Well, we had someone holding on for quite some time. I hope he or she—are you still there? Good night. Thanks for holding on so long. Go right ahead with your question.

Caller: Yeah. I head one of the panelists say that—in answer to the question from the previous caller that this 19-seater aircraft would not be operated on an hour by hour basis at least for the first year. But my question is, what is going to happen when, for instance, in the peak times like Christmas, St. Patrick's, say, weekends and so on. At one time—I was at the Port twice last year, when over 250 people came in on the ferry. Operating a 19-seater aircraft means then that we would have to have at least 15 flights if my mathematics is correct.

H. Sergeant: How many flights you said?

Caller: Probably about 15 to accommodate that many people. And, of course, the baggage again would be a problem. When I saw what happened there, on at least one occasion when they had to use a large dump truck plus the other small truck that they use to move the baggage from the pier. What will happen if we have such a situation develop at least in the first year operating a 19-seater aircraft?

H. Sergeant: Fair question. Do you have any more questions or will you hang up and listen?

Caller: I'll hang up and listen.

N. Harris: Hi. It's Nigel. Thank you for that question. We'd be very happy to operate hourly during the peak times if the volume of traffic permit it, but we haven't yet defined how many aircraft we're talking about. If we started off with one well, that's a possibility. Ideally we would like to start with two. But until we actually look at the figures and put together a business plan, we're unable to determine exactly how many aircraft it will take.

We're looking at two movements an hour per aircraft so on your figures, that 38 people per hour. And that's obviously going to be enhanced by charter flights that come in from other carriers as well. So I think we can cope with the numbers without too much of a problem. Specifically, how many aircraft, I think we would actually have to get a little bit deeper into the plan.

In terms of baggage, we know that baggage consistently is a problem moving into Montserrat and with 19 people, baggage will be limited certainly to around one suitcase per person. In peak times at Christmas, there is always the option of removing seats and operating with 16 people with considerably more baggage. And again, the aircraft is flexible. It's quite easy to do a (*indecipherable*) a role change and remove seats. These are the sorts of questions that we will be addressing.

H. Sergeant: Can we take this other caller? Good night.

Caller: Yes. Good night. We were told that this airport would be temporary. How long is temporary, one? And two, why can't a temporary airport be built at a place where it could be extended in future, which would be cheaper eventually to Montserrat than have to go and build a new airport in case of this one becomes unusable?

H. Sergeant: Well thank you so much. You have any more questions?

Caller: No. That's it for now.

C. Hogan: I'll ask Stephen to assist me in answering this question and on the definition of temporary and then to speak to the question of why not another site, I think I should hazard an answer. Because no answer you give can be the perfect answer except to say in my entire discussion, I've really given the answer that the choice of an airport at Gerald's is an economic—is based on economic and the social conditions of Montserrat in addition to the fact that we considered the volcano that we have and the fact that we have a product, which is declining in value. The longer we stay to have people coming here and seeking to have a safe stay here—we really waste time getting market share.

“Temporary” I think in the context of this airport is defined that way because it is, under the current circumstances, the airport that we can afford to build. Although, of course, based on where we are coming from, and where we were before, we would have liked to feel that we could be more advanced in our airport building and looking at a greater return to Montserrat on the building of the airport.

But, all of the economic considerations within the tools that were used suggest that a temporary airport, meaning an airport fitted within the limits of the financing available to us at this time is what we are best able to build.

So, Gerald's is only temporary in that sense. It is not temporary in the physical sense. It's temporary in the physical sense because we cannot afford, at this time, to think about making Gerald's physically permanent. An airport can be permanent at Gerald's but it would have a cost that we couldn't afford. I might even say that nobody is even interested to finance at this time under the prevailing circumstances. I leave my answer there and without getting too technical and let Stephen have a go.

S. Young: Yeah, thanks. Claude, yes. I would agree really with the points that you make. I think when we say “temporary” here that's really temporary in terms of it's ability to satisfy demand. I think we are all looking to the future and looking to Montserrat's regeneration, regrowth of population numbers, regrowth of business activity.

And as we look into the future, perhaps in a few years time we may have demands that exceed that—that can be provided by a 500-meter airstrip. But as Nigel has indicated in response to the previous question, we can move a lot of people through an airstrip of this size using the sort of 20-seater planes that he talked about. We can certainly meet our present demands and for the sort of immediate future.

The caller referred to extendibility and I mean it is very unfortunate in a sense that Gerald's is not more readily extendable. We are asking Halcrow that they look at the designs to consider the potential for extension of this site but obviously, going very much longer is going to get very expensive there.

In terms of could we have put the temporary airstrip at other locations where there is extension possible into the future—that has been looked at. But in every other case where there is the site that could be used for a longer airstrip, the costs are much, more significant in doing any work there at all and as a consequence, the cost of the temporary airstrip, that which we want to do now, would be much, much more expensive.

And quite honestly the problem is that that money just isn't available within the resources of the Government at the present time. And so the strip that we are looking at is the strip that is affordable at the present time.

People have talked about Blakes and in a way that has been suggested as a possible permanent site, but even to put a 500-meter strip at Blakes would cost significantly more than the money that we are talking about at Gerald's. And, that's a real obstacle at the present time in terms of the money availability.

C. Hogan: I just wanted to. Yes, I want to get you in here. Go ahead and then I'll explain

N. Harris: I was just going to make the point that technology on aircraft is changing at very rapid rates. Engines are becoming far more efficient and more powerful and if the technology keeps moving like it has for the last five years, I see no reason why, in that period, that aircraft with possible 40-seat potential should not be able to operate out a 500-meter strip. So it's quite possible the existing strip will be capable of carrying bigger aircraft during that period.

H. Sergeant: Let's take this call Claude and then you'll have your question. You're on **Ask the Government** and tonight we are discussing the airport. Do you have a question?

Caller: Yes. I do, a couple of them. Good night. A good program so far. I would like to ask Stephen, Claude, the pilot or whoever on the panel might know, what is the length of the airstrip in the Falkland Islands, one and what's the population on the Falkland Islands? I'll wait on line.

H. Sergeant: I'm not sure if anyone here has the answer to that.

N. Harris: I can give you a partial answer to that. I don't have the figures immediately to hand as to the length of the runway at Stanley in the Falkland Islands. However, they have a different problem in so far as access has to come from far—further away than it does in Montserrat. In Montserrat, we have the benefit of several international airports within 15-20 minutes flying time. In the Falklands, you have to fly for many, many hours to actually get there, which requires a longer strip. So yes, it is longer in Stanley, but for very significant reasons.

Caller: Approximately, what length?

N. Harris: I would hate to hazard a guess, I'm afraid. I don't know but it would be considerably longer than we're talking in Montserrat.

Caller: And the population is approximately?

C. Hogan: To tell you the truth I haven't been doing any studies on the Falklands because I'm strictly dealing with the project and I would like to see where your question is leading to because I can't...

Caller: I would like to make some comparisons here because I think one of the things I've listened to is that when you look at population size and viability and tra la la down the line, but if my memory is serving me well, the Falkland's population is just about the size of Montserrat's population. The airport in the Falklands could carry jets.

A further point is multiplied millions were spent on putting that airport on the Falklands, multiplied millions, plenty, plenty more millions than we're talking about in Montserrat for a similar sized population. So whoever it was that says, ok, if you look at other sites in Montserrat the costs would be greater. Ok fine, let's accept the cost would be greater but I think, personally, honestly, sincerely, if the British really want to give us an airport, a proper one, it's not a big issue because I guarantee you right now that the British going to move over to Afghanistan and what they're going to spend there on repairing and building new airports and new tra la la, so if Montserrat even gets that amount of money, it would even sink it under the sea. Thank you.

H. Sergeant: Stephen would answer your question.

S. Young: Well it would be nice to see Montserrat sinking under weights of money. I think one of the things I want to say is that in looking at the airport, there has been quite a lot of studies into the potential in terms of the journey numbers, the passenger movements that we are going to need. And obviously in each different situation, be it the Falklands, be it Montserrat, one has got to look at what the potential demand is and as Nigel has indicated, I think with the strip that with the strip that we are looking at here, that seems to be possible and capable of meeting the reasonable demands of Montserrat at the present time and therefore is a wise investment of the money that is available to the government here.

C. Hogan: The comment I will make, of course, is the question is a political question and the economic consideration of Falklands would mitigate against our proposal, in fact, because as Nigel pointed out, we have so many international airports close to us that to raise Falklands as a point of discussion would immediately mitigate against us because they can cite so many examples where you can do a small hop flight from – which is where the airline industry is heading, really—that you have to operate for these satellite islands from a hub. And it's very unlikely that we could justify having Montserrat established as a hub.

H. Sergeant: Before we get Nigel in, let's take this call. Go ahead. Good night.

Caller: I'm listening with interest to your program, Mr. Hogan.

C. Hogan: Our program.

Caller: Not our program, your program. The thing is that to say that the Falkland Islands is far away from the hub of any activity, so to speak, I think that is very misleading, in that don't you believe that Montserratians coming from England or America would be glad to get on an airplane that could drop them right into Montserrat the same way as the Falkland Islanders would like to go right to the Falklands?

C. Hogan: We don't have any—Do they have oil in the Falklands? I don't know how they pay for that, you know but ...

Caller: And let me give you a further fact and you must check it because from my readings, I am learning that only about 1000 tourists per year go to the Falkland Islands.

But let me ask you a further question? Mr. Harris has publicly indicated his interest in operating on Montserrat. Don't you think that having Mr. Harris on that program would indicate some bias? Because if he is indicating an interest to operate here whatever happens, Mr. Harris is going to say he can fly into Montserrat.

Why couldn't we have heard a Caribbean voice? Why do we have to always be hearing an English voice speaking on these issues? I think that to have Mr. Harris there creates a bias on the whole issue because he has indicated an interest to operate in Montserrat. Thank you.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much. We have somebody on line 2. Good night.

Caller: Yes. I'm back in rebuttal to Mr. Hogan's statement re the Falklands' location in terms of distance and Montserrat being much closer to other jumping points, Antigua, St. Kitts, Guadeloupe, tra-la-la. That is why Mr. Hogan, I feel, that the whole statement about temporary airport is a big hypocrisy.

The fact that we're so near to Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis—is what will militate against us getting any airport from now until forever. And worse yet, having an airport at Gerald's, you see the British, the Montserrat Government, the Russian Government, the Timbuktu Government building another airport a couple hundred meters away? It just does not make sense and that is why the "temporary" is irritating. Tell us straight up, this is what you're going to get from here to forever, permanently, full stop. Just be straight up. Thank you very much, Mr. Hogan, sir.

C. Hogan: I would like to say that but I can't say that because I am not in a position to say that. And I can only outline what they say "temporary" means and I am happy they've agreed it's temporary. To tell you the truth, it's a good negotiating start for me for the next round, if we have to talk about permanent because then they are basically saying they recognize that they're giving me a temporary airport. And I'm hoping that we could use the same economic considerations that we use now when it comes down to that point when we feel that the time is right, Montserrat has blossomed, Montserrat has started small and it's time to get big again.

I've mentioned—We have a little—You know when—Development is a thing that is irreversible and people hate to—having to creep to walk again but Montserrat is in that state. I mean I'd prefer if we could start off back from where we were at Bramble's and grow again.

When we were at Bramble's we had reached the point where we had saturation point at Bramble's, to the extent we were going to re-orientate and realign the airport. But nature mitigated against us and I can't defend the position for a permanent airport. I can only sustain an argument for an airport and that is what we have done here—an airport that will serve the well being, the purpose of the development of Montserrat and to provide means for us to live by before things get too depressingly bad that we set upon each other.

H. Sergeant: Well Claude, we have two callers here. I recognize that you are wearing two hats tonight, your political hat and of course, you are Project Manager. We have two calls. Let us go to line 1 and say good night.

Caller: I would like to know where the road would take you from St. John's to Gerald's Bottom when they do the airstrip? And how much it will cost for making a new road around down to there. All this money that they are putting in all these other projects that money would not have helped if they moved to another environment?

H. Sergeant: Thank you and rather than keep the other caller waiting, we'll take their question and answer both of them at the same time or well not the same time, you know what I mean. Good night.

Caller: Mr. Hogan? Good night.

C. Hogan: Good night. How are you?

Caller: Not too bad.

C. Hogan: I haven't seen you for a while.

Caller: I'm around still, holding on listening to you.

C. Hogan: You have any cassava bread out there?

Caller: Yeah.

C. Hogan: Okay, I'm going to come tomorrow.

Caller: I'll make one for you.

C. Hogan: Okay, tell us.

Caller: Mr. Hogan, Mr. Brandt refused that airport and all you were kicking against it and the same thing all you were kicking against, it's the same thing all you come back and take. Mr. Hogan, Montserrat people, we people, but anyhow, somebody looking down and we all will pay for it.

Some people come here from Antigua, some pilots and they speak about the wind and say that the time will come when the aero plane will drop on the house them in Lookout and now all you go and take this to say it's going to bring more people here. Anyhow, we are moving on. Some will see the temporary and some wouldn't see it. Thank you.

C. Hogan: Thank you very much. Stephen, you will take the question about the road to Gerald's, the new road and the cost?

S. Young: Yes. Thank you caller. In response to the question about the road, the consultants looking at the design previously had suggested that the best alternative road location is to the east of the airstrip. So that would start just below the hospital and then come round and join in coming up towards the—just by the old sort of remand center area. And that road alignment is actually a road alignment that is shown within the Physical Development Plan for Northern Montserrat so it fits in with the plan that's always been envisaged for that area.

What Halcrow are doing is they are looking again in looking at the detail of the design is confirming that that is the best route to take but essentially that is the line that is being mapped out at the moment.

In terms of the cost of that road when we quote costs for the airport, we are quoting the total cost so that is not only the construction of the strip itself and the associated buildings but it is also the infrastructure that's needed to provide it in that place, which includes in this case the cost of the road diversion. So the \$42 million that has been quoted for the airport and the figure that we are working to includes the cost of the road diversion around there.

H. Sergeant: Well, you have two numbers, listeners. You have 491-7227 and 491-9064. We just lost our next caller, so I think Nigel has been trying to get in a comment for some time.

N. Harris: I was just going to go back to the gentleman with his question on the Falklands and see if I could draw a better parallel within the region—that we have very small strips in St. Bart’s and at Nevis that actually manage to carry far more passengers in and out than we are envisaging here in Montserrat. So, in fact, a small strip is actually capable of moving a lot of people and does that in the region.

H. Sergeant: We have two callers. Let’s take Line 1 first. Good night.

Caller: Good night. This might be a little bit of technical information I am trying to seek. And it is the wind factor at Gerald’s and how different is that when a helicopter is being used as opposed to an aeroplane. And I just want to say that any permanent airport that will be built in Montserrat will be done by the people of Montserrat in time, just like the new radio station was built by the people of Montserrat. Thank you very much.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much. Line 2, good night. Hello. Good night.

Caller: Hello. Good evening. I’d like to bring up the subject of the length of the runway for a 19-seater Otter. The Gibb Report and the MacDonald Report, which were previous consultations that the British Government and the Montserrat Government commissioned, categorically stated that the length of the runway for an aborted flight for a Twin Otter is between 700 and 800 meters. Can Mr. Harris answer this question please?

N. Harris: Yes. I can answer that question for you.

H. Sergeant: Before you answer that question, do you have any more questions?

Caller: Well yes because the International Civil Aviation who came and did a report actually condemns Gerald’s for 19-seater Otter because it hasn’t got the safety distance required for an aborted flight.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much. And Mr. Harris will respond to your question.

N. Harris: The specific performance data that I obtained from the manufacturer of the aircraft indicated that at maximum all out weight, the required landing and take-off distance for a Twin-Otter, in fact, was nearer to 350 meters rather than the 500 meters we have available. We will be looking a lot closer at specific performance data, obviously as the project unfolds but at this point in time, the information I have from the manufacturers would indicate that 500 meters is acceptable.

Caller: You are talking about a 19-seater Otter, which is virtually an obsolete aeroplane? And De Havilland (I’ve got the specifications) are quoting a 695-meter strip full of weight for an emergency procedure for an aborted flight. And I think you’re distorting the facts from the aspect that yes, you can probably land and take off a 19-seater Otter on 500 meters but what happens if you lose an engine or something happens to a tire, where do 19 people go because there is no distance for this at Gerald’s?

H. Sergeant: Ok caller, thank you so much.

C. Hogan: I think as Nigel highlighted the Twin Otter does not require full 500 meters and folks who have seen planes land in Montserrat know the length of the strip as dimensioned by ICAO includes safety for aborted flights or what have you.

Earlier, I was trying to get to an explanation on this question of the 500 meters. The SEA consultants were asked to design a runway length for 500 meters because the Twin Otter requires between 340, just about 341 meters up to 500. And that was—that proposal was to

design it for operations of an aircraft with STOL capability or STOL mode capability, which is what a Twin Otter aircraft is—it can land—It has short-take-off-and-landing capabilities.

Now we asked—as Stephen mentioned earlier, we have asked Halcrow to remove this conditionality, which was placed on the previous consultants and look at us having a strip for a Twin Otter in conventional mode, meaning a strip length for conventional mode landing would be between 655 and I think 850 as you say, which is confusing the issue really because the Twin Otter in conventional mode would therefore be able to land using those new lengths.

This is what Stephen has said, the consultants, Halcrow Group will be trying to do. That is why we are waiting for the proper orientation that will probably give us the additional 200 or so meters that we need at the airstrip. I think we are trying to get some of it on the east side but we have to quantify the fill and we also want to get some on the west side so we have to quantify again the fill that would be required and what impact that will have on the road, which was just discussed, whether the road then will have to pass under the strip because the strip length then would be longer. So those are minor details, which we are waiting for.

And the underlying point is that we cannot on this medium, heard throughout the world, on the Internet and everywhere, try to confuse the people about design specifications. The consultants have to design this airport to international rules and regulations as set down by the International Civil Aviation Organization or it will not be licensed. And any Montserratian or any other person with an interest in Montserrat who feel that there are any of these rules which might be violated, can raise a question. And the authorities—the Government of Montserrat through the Governor's office, which is the one authorized to deal with licensing procedures, will be required to answer questions.

In fact, this airport cannot happen unless it is licensed and the procedures are rigorous and have nothing to do with the power of the Government of Montserrat or the British government for that matter.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much Claude. Some one has been holding on for quite some time. Let's hope that they are still there. Good night and thanks for holding on.

Caller: Good night. Has the EIA been done for the airport and if not what if the EIA report is not in favour of an airport at Gerald's or has the result been premeditated? Number two: what would be the approach for the landing? Is it coming in from the Little Bay area? If so, how low the aircraft would be flying over Little Bay and what impact that would have on Little Bay development, which maybe heavily populated in the future, in terms of safety? And also, is it possible that the soil test result could be unfavorable for the construction of an airstrip? That's it. Thank you.

H. Sergeant: I see you have a question for most members of the panel. Let's start with Mike. Mike is from Halcrow, the engineer—Should I what—geotechnical engineer.

M. Palmer: Yes. Good night. Thank you for your question. It is possible that some of the soils could be unfavorable for the site and that's part of the investigation now is to eliminate that risk—that—so that we know what we are dealing with. So that if any of the materials that are involved in the excavations that can be recycled for the embankments, then we know exactly how much material will be necessary to do that and whether we have to go elsewhere on the island to find the material. And this will all go into the balancing equations.

H. Sergeant: And the approach? Stephen?

C. Hogan: The EIA, Stephen.

H. Sergeant: Oh, EIA, right.

S. Young: Yeah, that's right. Some preliminary environmental studies have been undertaken as part of the SEA consultancy and that's not flagged up any undue problems but of course the whole purpose of much of the environmental study is to work out what are the best mitigation measures that we can incorporate in the design to ensure that the impact on the environment is the minimum that we can. So further environmental assessment work will be part of Halcrow's work and indeed, when we met the team in London, their senior environmental planner was very much part of the discussions there. So that environmental considerations will be integral to the design of the airport but certainly at the moment, we don't see any showstoppers, if you like, any issues associated with the environment that will prevent the project going ahead.

H. Sergeant: And the approach would be over Little Bay as he sort of questioned? The approach for landing?

S. Young: That would generally be the approach. I mean Nigel is the expert on flying planes but essentially, yes, you would normally come in into the prevailing wind.

N. Harris: Yes, I would expect to be at around 1500 feet at that range from the airport.

C. Hogan: I wanted to explain something as well before we take the next call.

H. Sergeant: Please hold on, caller.

C. Hogan: The question of the EIAs, the modus operandi, which I'm involved in—the first set of EIAs, which were done and incorporated in discussions or in the preliminary studies was by the SEA consultants. These next Environmental Impact Assessment surveys are not designed to be pre-requisites. They are assessments that will suggest the elaboration, later on or within due course of the project before construction, at least, of an environmental management program.

Remember initially, we had also thought that wind studies would mitigate against the airport. In fact, we understand that the way the winds are, the prevailing winds are—having the studies, in fact, enhance the airport capability in terms of orientation and planes landing.

So we have to wait now for the environmental impact assessments to see what are the best things we can do to Gerald's like: How do we put the cricket pitch? What do we do with the rest of the area? What happens to the material that will be moved? Where will it go? Will we have dust affecting the people? How will we contain these? So we are at a dynamic level of environmental impact now, not at a level of deciding whether the project will go or not since that has already been informed.

H. Sergeant: Caller, you're still there?

Caller: Yes I am.

H. Sergeant: Please go right ahead.

Caller: Now the first question that I have and I'll hold please: Are Twin Otters still being produced?

N. Harris: No they're not. They haven't been produced since the mid-80s.

Caller: Ok. They haven't been produced since the mid-80s. That means they are basically obsolete, am I right?

N. Harris: No. I wouldn't accept that as a statement. I mean, I came across some United Kingdom in the British Airways 747 that was also manufactured in the 1980s and I wouldn't call that an obsolete aircraft. They are out of production but there are many, many, many flying worldwide.

Caller: One of the things that I have learned is—is that it's basically even hard to find manuals for Twin Otters in this region at this point in time. Anyway, let's move on. You—well the panel keeps saying they are working to ICAO guidelines ...

S. Young: Yes, exactly.

Caller: ... and if you—I take it that (Mr. Young is the name, right?)

S. Young: Yes, that's my name.

Caller: ... has read the report of July 9-13, 2001 by Michael Vreedenburgh.

S. Young: I have it in front of me here. Yes, if you want to refer me to it.

Caller: On page 11,

C. Hogan: Yes, go ahead.

Caller: Page 11, 2.6.3, states clearly, “undertake an aeronautical wind and climatological study to confirm the suitability of the Gerald's Bottom location for an aerodrome to accommodate safe operations by the aircraft it is intended to serve.” Basically, what—from my observation, it seems as if you are putting the cart before the horse. Have the studies been undertaken? And how long will it take for these studies to be undertaken before the airport is being built?

S. Young: OK. Thank you. Yes, the studies that you talk about there: additional wind studies, additional climatological studies, we've also talked about the additional flight tests that will be undertaken to simulate approaches to the airstrip. They are all ongoing at the present time. You see, the words in the phrase you talked to me, are “to confirm” the suitability of the Gerald's Bottom location. And I think what we are seeing from all of the studies that have gone on before is that there is no difficulty anticipated in putting an airstrip in at this location.

Some further studies have to be done as part of the detailed design and it's right that they are done as part of the detailed design. And—But, the, the—every evidence that we've seen so far is that there should be no difficulties so those additional investigations will confirm the suitability of the site.

C. Hogan: We are going to start flying the planes about next month, I think?

S. Young: Let me just make a comment on Twin Otters as well once I've got the chance and a microphone in my hand. Nigel earlier referred to the Dornier 228 and what we've said to Halcrow is in doing the design is that they have to think about the Twin Otter as the primary aircraft, but also to consider the requirements for Dornier 228 which are—seem to be in the region—seen as the replacement aircraft. They are being used by Air Caraibes and people like that in the region, at the present time. And their flight characteristics are perhaps not quite as compact as Twin Otters but quite similar.

And again, while I've got the microphone, Claude talked about the fact that we are trying to look at the alternatives in terms of runway alignment and runway lengths to try to squeeze the maximum that we can out of the finance that's available. And essentially what we are seeking to do between us, the Government, ourselves and the designers is to look at getting the best

possible value out of—that we can out of the airstrip so that we have a flexible airstrip that’s capable of being used by a number of aircraft in different modes of operation so that we have the maximum operational availability to people to come in and out of there.

Caller: I am looking still at this Report from the ICAO Regional officer, Vandenburg and I am looking now at page 8.

S. Young: Yep. I’m there.

Caller: And section 4 because if I’m not mistaken, I heard Harris said that a Twin Otter can take off at full payload but if you read it properly, you will see it says, in the first instance, that “the proposed runway length of 500 meters is insufficient for operations of the design aircraft Twin Otter in conventional mode with a full payload on the Antigua-Montserrat sector.

S. Young: I’m very pleased you referred to that paragraph because I’ve heard that paragraph misquoted so often before, because if we look just 3 lines below that, it says, “it is therefore being proposed by the consultants that the Twin Otter operations be in STOL (short-take-off-and landing) mode which results in reduced runway length requirements below 500 meters. So what they are saying is that the Twin Otter operates quite satisfactorily with a runway of, in this case, less than but at least at 500 meters. So it’s good to put those two phrases together because the second one qualifies the first and demonstrates categorically Mr. Vreendenburgh of the ICAO is quite happy with a Twin Otter operating on a 500-meter strip at this location.

Caller: Now, I am glad that you qualified it because what I want you to explain to us now is what is S.T.O.L.? What is the short-take-off-and-landing mode?

N. Harris: It’s an aircraft, which is designed to operate in and out of small strips. It does not have to be a large aircraft—A 146 aircraft, an (?) 146 is a STOL aircraft.

Caller: Does this mean that an aircraft operating under STOL mode coming into Gerald’s will have to come in at virtually near stalling speed?

N. Harris: No. It doesn’t mean that at all. The performance of the aircraft is based on 1.3 times the stalling speed so normal approach speed would be at a minimum of 1.3 of the stalling speed of the aircraft.

C. Hogan: STOL is not stall here. It’s “S” “T” “O” “L” – short ...

Caller: Mr. Hogan, Mr. Hogan, don’t try to patronize me.

C. Hogan: Oh, I thought you were ...

Caller: Don’t try to patronize me. I know the difference between “STOL” and “stall” so don’t patronize me, Mr. Hogan because we have heard other experts, other pilots—different to Mr. Harris (that’s why I still say that the whole process is being biased by having Mr. Harris who is expressing a desire to operate here, speaking there) because we have heard others state, categorically, that coming into Gerald’s—at any airport in Gerald’s means that planes, especially of Twin Otter types will have to come in at near stalling speed, basically. And no mind how you try to qualify the third sentence with the first sentence—with the first part of the thing—it still means that 500 meters is [in]sufficient for an aircraft to operate in a conventional mode. Isn’t that right?

N. Harris: It has to operate in that ...

C. Hogan: Let me to just try to help to answer because this matter is not fully resolved as I said before that one of the delays (it's not really a delay) but during my meeting in London in December, I put to Halcrow that—or we did—I was supported fully by DFID—that it would be better if we had a conventional length strip because when the Twin Otters go out of circulation, then we could go the replacement aircraft, which they are building already, now. It's the Dornier 228.

Secondly, and I could go into more detail since the matter is not fully resolved, in that same report, you'll realize that the ICAO outlined that for a 500-meter length runway, we will have to have greater width. So the width of an airport for STOL landing at 500 meters, would be wider and what we have said to the consultants is that why don't we try to optimize length for the same cost or marginally more or maybe even less than to try to go for width? So this is this is what is before the consultants and we are trying to get a minimum of 655 meters which is what is required if we are to entertain the ...

Caller: At Gerald's, Mr. Hogan?

C. Hogan: Yes, yes.

Caller: 655 meters at Gerald's?

C. Hogan: We can get as much meters as we want at Gerald's but we have to get it within the monies we have. That is the only problem. It's not that it can't be done. It is how much will it cost. These people can build an airport in the sea, if we want an airport in the sea. They can build an airport anywhere we want the airport but it's the dollars, my friend. They are asking us how much can you afford to pay. So one of the design options—They are going to give me about three, maybe four. I've told them to give me as few as possible—to fit within the dollars I have but to maximize the airport that I have. So, I have potentially greater usability of it for different types and different range of aircraft. So it's not the physical terrain so much that is the problem. It is the money.

H. Sergeant: We have several callers. One more question please.

Caller: I'm going to wrap up now because one caller earlier stated that Britain will now be going into Afghanistan and be spending monies there like wild. If they wanted to give us the money, they would have given us the money. And looking at the same report again and coming back to the question of temporary, Mr. Hogan and Mr. Young—Mr. Young could answer this because I mean if you look at page 4 where you see the development stage,

C. Hogan: Which one? The same ...

Caller: The same report. The development stage—At the bottom of the page there's a table which says Development state—Initial, Medium-term, long-term. And if you look at the long-term, the long-term is something like 10-20 years. But Mr. Hogan, please don't try to fool the people because the only airport that we'll be ever getting in Montserrat is an airport at Gerald's once it goes there. Thanks.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much and I ...

C. Hogan: I have to respond. I'm not—As I said before, I cannot accept any notion that I will fool the people of Montserrat. I am the GoM and the people of Montserrat representative on the project and I am merely seeking to optimize the benefits and returns for Montserrat on what Montserrat has.

Britain has given us an aid framework up until 2005 and I am happy that people are agitating. I want them to hear that people are agitating. I want them to know people are agitating. But I

am the one who have to keep a level head and try to get the best thing done while we are agitating. I hope they hear what we are saying. I am not antagonistic towards people who don't want the airport at Gerald's. I want them to make strong points.

I am obligated to give you the correct answers so that they can see that we are talking sense. I don't think they are going to change midstream and say that we're going someplace else, but we are doing our best within the resources they gave us.

After 2005, we re-enter negotiations again for aid from Britain again that will go back to the British Parliament. Right now, we are on a fixed sum allocated over a—Different amounts for the different years to 2005, I think, it is, 2004 to be exact. And they are not—and even if we went back to the British Parliament now, it's still going to take us to 2005 if they want us to take—if they wanted to take till 2010, it could take that time, too. So we have to live in the meantime. So I'm not opposed to the views I'm getting. I'm writing them down. I hope that I can get more money.

- H. Sergeant: Okay. We have two callers on line. Shall we take them now? Line 2 has been holding on for some time. Good night.
- Caller: Good evening. When we are talking about the cost of 500 meters, can they tell me what the estimate is for this particular project, as it is done by the SEA consultants?
- C. Hogan: The entire project? The cost? The cost of it?
- Caller: Yes.
- C. Hogan: EC\$40 million.
- Caller: 40 million—that's for 500 meters
- C. Hogan: To complete the airport, whatever it turns out to be
- Caller: Yet we don't know how much cut and fill there is.
- S. Young: Yes we do. We have some preliminary figures on that from SEA. I mean SEA were looking at a cut of 68,000 cubic meters, a fill of 94,000 cubic meters; total earthwork movements of 162,000 cubic meters, so ...
- Caller: But you are proposing to change the orientation and try to get some more length there and if you could get the length then this project would be prohibitive from a cost point of view, surely because the fill—where would you get the fill from?
- S. Young: Well, I'll give Mike the chance to speak because that's exactly why he's here at the moment because what his investigations are and why they are so critical to the project are that if we can find the right fill in the right location, then obviously that affects, very much, the costing of the overall project. What we're doing is, we're working within the budget that's now been agreed by EU, agreed by DFID, which is this 42 million. And what we're then trying to do is to see how we can use that to best effect. And that's why Mike's investigations are so important. I don't know if you want to comment, Mike. We'll give him a chance.
- H. Sergeant: Thanks. Please hang up now sir, so that we can get some other callers in. Thank you very much.

M. Palmer: That was the main reason that Halcrow asked me to come out ahead of the rest of the team and the original estimates have been based on a estimate of how much of the excavated material can be reused as part of the embankment fill and also in the pavement design.

Now, hopefully from my studies, we'll be able to firm up on that number and we might actually find that we've gained a certain amount of material and therefore make it considerably cheaper. And the other factor is where the other fill is coming from. In the original reports, it was quite expensive. Now, by identifying local areas, closer to the airport, then we will be making a savings on cost there. And there was always a deficit of materials that needed to come from somewhere and that's what we'll be achieving.

C. Hogan: Let me just add a little bit of detail to that. We are also trying to use Halcrow to help us to identify—I think it's all right to say this because this is on the Government of Montserrat side—helping to identify that wherever they think on Montserrat, they might be able to get this fill, which was identified in previous reports—There's a second spot which they identified in a previous report as— Remember we had Trants and we were doing quarrying there. They identified in a report at the same time as Trants, that the second spot would have been in the area of Silver Hills.

We're using this situation with Halcrow now to ensure that they look in the direction in which the Government of Montserrat is looking so that when we establish or when the Government of Montserrat establishes this quarry plant, they would be able to establish it at that same spot that Halcrow used to take the materials. So Mike is now going to work with Public Works, while he is here to make sure we get in a spot where we can put the hot-mix plant and have a quarry for the foreseeable future for Montserrat. So this is going to have a dynamic impact on our own situation as well. It will help.

H. Sergeant: Has anybody mentioned the volcanic stuff, we have lots of that going to waste in Plymouth and all those places. Hold on please, caller and let's get an answer from Mike for this one.

M. Palmer: Yes, there's certainly lots off material around Montserrat especially around Plymouth and that area but obviously one of the problems comes from the exclusion zone so there would be difficulty in safety. But the main thing for the bulk fill is that the main cost is not in the excavation; it's actually in the transportation. And so being able to find fill within a few hundred meters of the site is a bit different than finding fill, which is 20 kilometers away from the site. That's a significant cost. So the benefits in finding sites which are safe—not only safe through access, but also close to where it's going to be re-used.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much caller. You can go ahead with your question now.

Caller: Yes. Hello. Good evening. We all realize that this temporary airport at Gerald's is a done deal. There's nothing that can be done about that no matter how you all come and talk, talk. My question to you all is have you identified a site for the permanent one? In that you say this is temporary, have you identified a site for the permanent one?

H. Sergeant: Ok. Thank you very much. That's a question for Claude?

C. Hogan: As I said before—and that's one of my main supporters—It is a good thing I am not wearing my political hat tonight. As the Project Manager, I think that, as I said before, the definition of permanent is not necessarily in location. The permanency as we explain it, is the fact that we believe firmly that we will see a need in the not too distant future for an airport which has greater capability than the one they are giving us for now.

In fact, this one, we feel, some of us very strongly is not even as close to Bramble capability, even though it was on the wrong orientation and we were moving to reorientate it to make sure that it could satisfy our needs for that time.

The permanent airport considerations will come into play, not as a physical site but in terms of all of the economic conditionalities, which will inform whether we are ready to have it, whether we have the throughput to justify it. And then, as I said also, it doesn't say that Gerald's cannot be a permanent airport. It's just that the cost of making Gerald's into more maybe at the time when we want to do it—and as one caller said, the people of Montserrat will decide to build their airport. It may very well be at Gerald's; it might not be at Gerald's. But permanency should not be seen as a physical place.

H. Sergeant: Ok. Well we are getting close to the end of our program for tonight. But perhaps we have time for a few more calls. Let's take this one. Good night.

Caller: Good night. How are you? Let me say something. Why have Nigel on this show? I don't like Nigel there, to be honest with you. Let me go on.

Since the 70s—let Montserrat people know, since in the 70s when the Venezuelans, there's an ICAO representative came out here—Gerald's was condemned, of putting an airport down there. LIAT condemned it and BBDC condemned it. Why put an airport at Gerald's when we know that there's trouble down there? Because, Frank Delisle who was one of the greatest pilots who was around these parts, who can fly all the coastline—has discarded Gerald's.

Two. I haven't trusted Halcrow because when Halcrow was doing some work for the realignment of Bramble's Airport or Blackburne—there was a difference of \$13 million and they never—when they carried out all the costing, they left out purposely the cartage of the fill on Option A, which if you take it into account, that Options A and B would be the same cost. So I don't trust Halcrow because I have my experiences, which I won't go in detail.

And I will not put in the cart before the horse by carrying out the excavation before we carry out all the aeronautic studies. I was looking at the television today where they talked about wind gusts and a 737 came out of the air with the wind gusts in a 25-30 knots per hour and all 137 people went down.

Why Claude doesn't tell the people of Lookout that the flight path over Gerald's will be right over them and in case of anything, they are in problems? Thank you. Good night.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much. Several things to chew on there.

C. Hogan: Thank you caller. First of all let me compliment on the wealth of information which you seem to have in respect of airport on Montserrat. I think I recognize the voice but I will not identify the person. And I would secondly like to invite you to share your experience with Halcrow with me because we are all Montserratians together and I'm sure you wouldn't want them to out maneuver me, and you have some information that you can tell me about before that time.

We're still a little bit away from the construction so the question of the cart before the horse—and excavation. We really haven't started any excavation. We're not programmed to start any excavation until about August so the airport is not as advanced in terms of construction as you would want, which I think you really are encouraging us to move quicker.

The question of the 70s report and the caller who promised the cassava tomorrow also mentioned that we're putting the airport where somebody else—where we said we didn't want it before.

In fact, the SEA report has done a good job of building on all the reports on the airport at Gerald's. And I think it's a different alignment because most of the studies before thought of putting in a quick-fix solution and landing the plane in any direction once the conditions were right.

In fact, there's one of the studies that have the airport running from across from the Defence Force straight across the entire portion of Gerald's, taking up the whole village. There's another one that starts right in the middle of the village and ends up somewhere on the end.

This solution does not pass through the village; does not disturb it fully. It is on the very tip of Gerald's, the very southern tip of Gerald's and it runs in an east-west direction and therefore it does run down between Lookout Village and the school.

I am not sure—probably I should ask Harris to comment on whether he—or maybe Stephen—do you envisage that we have any problems with an aircraft passing, even over a village because as far as I know in most countries the airport is in a city? The aircraft approaches over houses in Antigua, as well, for example and we fly over houses all the time. But in this case, it's not directly over the houses. It could take a shortcut over them. Is that a problem? Is that something ...

N. Harris: Not in itself, it's not. Claude no. When we actually get to fly around the local area, we'll get a better idea of what the profiles of the approach is and the departures will be. I mean most airports these days have what's called a noise abatement departure, which means that we can actually alter the profile at the departure to avoid noise sensitive areas. We can take this into consideration when we actually look at those departure areas.

H. Sergeant: A comment from Stephen?

S. Young: Yeah. We've already talked to the world about the environmental assessment that's going to be undertaken and part of that will be a noise study as of aircraft movements associated with the airstrip so that we can understand what impact there's going to be and obviously, if necessary, make sure that the planes take appropriate routes.

H. Sergeant: Good night, you're on the program.

Caller: Good night. I'm back again. Whether the airport costs one dollar or \$1 million, my main concern is safety. A few years ago, at Bramble Airport landing on a strip of over 3000 feet, a Twin Otter, in take off or just at the moment of takeoff, lost an engine and it had to come back down and that over 3000 feet, it barely made it to the end of the runway. What are we playing with at Gerald's? A mere 500 feet, 500 meters, in comparison to over 1000 meters, isn't that true? So how would we address this situation? If one of the aircrafts, whether it's a Dornier, whether it's a Twin Otter or what it is, what happens if in mid-take off that that aircraft loses an engine on an airstrip of 500 or even 600 meters?

H. Sergeant: Ok. You have a safety concern in case of an emergency?

Caller: A safety concern -- In case of an emergency. Let me just say one more thing again. I was speaking to a pilot in Antigua the other day who will remain nameless and he said to me that he looked at the proposal for—at the proposed site that they say they have at—the Minister claims to have at Blakes and he said to me that that site is just about the same as Gerald's but the only difference is that we would have a much longer strip to play with, which means that it will be just that much safer than Gerald's. Thank you.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much caller. Caller on line 2, please hold on a while, while we get an answer, I think from Nigel.

N. Harris: Happy to comment on the question regarding emergency landing and takeoff distances and in addition to the airfield being certified, the operators operating in to the new airport will also have to be certified and one of the parameters that a pilot would have to satisfy himself on before any flight is that the aircraft is capable of making the flight safely. He takes into consideration weather, weight and balance on the aircraft and of course, performance. And

performance is the length of the runway he's going into. That performance calculation that he makes, which comes from the Operator's Manual will allow for an engine failure situation on all phases of the flight and he has to satisfy himself, and indeed the authority that the flight can be made allowing for those potential emergencies at any phase. So, if in fact, it's not possible to go into a 500-meter strip then the performance calculation would allow for that. That is not the case with a Twin Otter.

H. Sergeant: Good night. You are on the program.

Caller: Yes, good night. First I would like to ask Mr. Hogan if he will permit the public to be able to speak to these men in another forum, an open-air meeting?

C. Hogan: Oh, yes. We have planned for next Wednesday, although it's not fully organized, an open-house display program, which I've discussed with the Airport Manager and I've alerted Ken Cassell who is the partner with Halcrow to facilitate—where we'll have photographs and aeronautical designs and pictures and maps and everything of—where the airport is supposed to go and so on. And people will be on hand to explain what is what and the orientation and so on. And you can ask questions of the experts, who will be available.

Unfortunately, one of the reasons why we got this program tonight is that some of my—most of these people will be traveling in and out. And we'll try to put up a permanent display and then say when, who is going to be there. But next Wednesday, we are planning to have the first one. Nigel will miss that because he is leaving tomorrow.

Caller: Ok. Second thing, is it true that Halcrow has included the UK CAA as consultants to the engineering team to advise on aeronautical matters?

C. Hogan: No, there's one guy who—Marsden—who works with CAA who, of necessity, will have to advise Halcrow because we have to build the airport in order—to specifications so we can have it licensed. So, he'll have to work along with them to advise them. Stephen, help me out on that one.

S. Young: Yeah. That's true. I mean Halcrow—the chap is included in their team is an advisor to CAA. But also, within the UK, CAA have been speaking to the DFID office in UK and have indicated that they will be very keen, as well, to have contact with the designers at an early stage and work with them to ensure that the strip that is designed and is installed here is able to be licensed, very readily.

Caller: Is it true that Mr. Harris has bought his planes already?

N. Harris: I wish, I wish. No it's not.

S. Young: Is that an advantage or a disadvantage?

C. Hogan: We might go for Dornier, then he'll be stuck with two Twin Otters.

Caller: Does he?

C. Hogan: Or does he have Islanders?

Caller: Can he answer that?

N. Harris: We do have Islanders, yes. But we're looking at Twin Otters, if in fact, we were involved in the project. But, no we haven't bought them.

Caller: Ok, great. I'd love to see us have an open-air meeting where people could discuss. One of the things that I'd like to say, especially as far as DFID is concerned and I've said this on the radio before. Development is about people and development entails democracy and discussion and the end result is decision-making in the best interests of the country.

And I'm hoping that it's not too late that we will have some sort of discussion in the not-to-distant future. I'm sorry that Mr. Harris is leaving tomorrow.

C. Hogan: But, he'll be back, I think though. We'll use him at some point.

N. Harris: I'm available tomorrow. I'm leaving on Friday.

Caller: Ok, great.

S. Young: And I can assure you that I'm not leaving and I'm very happy to continue the discussion in whatever forum is appropriate. We stand squarely behind the Government of Montserrat and support them as they go forward with the project.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much caller. We have another call. This might be our last call, actually. Let's see who it is. Good night. Please go ahead with your question or comment.

Caller: Good night. To God be the glory, great things he has done. I think that you know we might talk, and we can talk and we can talk, but if we're going to get a airport at Gerald's, if we don't have the money to have it anywhere, put it anywhere else, we are going to get it there.

But I believe that Bramble—the runway is still down there. And Mr. Hogan, what you were saying that maybe 2005 or 2004, we might be functional, operating from our new site?

H. Sergeant: Can you ask all your questions so we can ...

C. Hogan: Yes, early 2004.

Caller: Ok. I am hoping that by that time our volcano will subside and I believe that instead of having one airport, we probably might have two because I think that the runway is still intact at Bramble's airport. You have a few debris and mudflow on it, but it's still down there.

But I think that safety must be first—you know, our first priority. Safety must come first. And whatever happens, I just pray and hope that we will not have to go around crying and whatever. But I think that the engineers and whoever there, they must know and they should know but that is what democracy is all about. We have to talk and we have to give our views. But let's hope that everything works well.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much caller. Hello, good night.

Caller: Good night. Two quick questions.

H. Sergeant: You're our last caller actually so two quick questions from you.

Caller: Ok. One, what's the maximum possible length, all things considered, the maximum possible length at Gerald's? And the other question has to do with the closeness of the hospital to the site in question. What negative impact would the airport, being that close to the hospital, have-- re the hospital? Thank you.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much. That's a question for?

C. Hogan: I'm going to answer the ...

N. Harris: In terms of the hospital, I'm very happy to take that one, Claude. It's the same question as Lookout. When we actually get to fly in the area and see the location, we will obviously devise a flight path to give minimum impact to the local area that might environmentally, noise, pollution, and every thing.

C. Hogan: I've been advised that the decibel level from an aircraft are less than the helicopter.

N. Harris: That is absolutely correct.

H. Sergeant: Well I did say, last question, but it is difficult to refuse callers, you know, so let me make this the last, last, last call. Good night.

Caller: Yes. Good night.

C. Hogan: And it's the right person. How are you?

Caller: I'm fine Claude. Has the heliport been certified yet, licensed?

C. Hogan: Well, they are working on the heliport. I'm not really involved in that program. It's the Airport Manager. Unfortunately, he couldn't make it tonight.

Caller: OK, the reason I am asking is that it has been in operation for going on five years now; it is not yet licensed. You mentioned earlier that we can't have aircraft operating that isn't licensed, yet we do. So what guarantee do we have that we won't have an unlicensed airport? Bye.

H. Sergeant: Bye. Thank you so much. That's a question for Claude?

C. Hogan: Stephen, you ...

S. Young: What I was going to say was that the heliport was first introduced as an emergency facility. Obviously, its use has changed over the time but still the operator coming in and out of there has exactly the same sort of licensing procedures that Nigel has talked about but obviously for his operation, and that has been fully studied and agreed with the various authorities, so there is no problem with that. Obviously, as we look to the future, then we are working, yes, towards yeah, licensing procedures for that. And that is the Governor's responsibility and one that he is addressing.

But I think these licensing procedures are very important. I mean we've talked about the safety of the airport and Nigel was helping us earlier today talking about the licensing that needs to go on at the airport, the licensing that needs to go on at the operators themselves. All of those procedures are statutory procedures that need to take place. But the purpose of them is to absolutely guarantee, as far as anyone can guarantee, the safety of the operations.

And so, as we are getting near towards the end of the program, I just want to leave the listeners with that message really that the procedures that are in place will ensure that the airstrip that is built here is safe. It can account for any emergency that can occur in the operations. And safety is the paramount issue.

H. Sergeant: Thank you so much. Well, we are at the end of the program. Unfortunately, we cannot take any more calls. The calls are still coming in. It is 11 minutes past 10 but as Claude promised, there'll be other occasions when, you the listening public would be able to put your questions, perhaps, directly, face-to-face with Mr. Hogan and some of the Consultants.

We are wrapping up now and we would like to thank you for your input this evening but we'll ask for final comments from each of the panelists this evening and then we end off the program. I'll start with Nigel.

N. Harris: Well I would like to thank you very much for inviting me to join your panel this evening. It was a most enjoyable experience and we hope we have put a few of the myths to rest that have come up in the last few months. I look forward very much to flying again from Montserrat's airport in time for Christmas 2003, I think we said, Claude. Thank you.

H. Sergeant: Ok, thank you very much. Mike?

M. Palmer: I would also like to thank Claude for inviting me to this panel and hopefully in a couple of weeks, I'll be able to have some information, which I can pass straight back to our designers and they'll be coming back to you with some optimization schemes.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much, Mike. That was Mike from Halcrow. We'll hear now from Steve Young.

S. Young: Yes. I think it's exciting to see this stage in the airport design reached. We have the designers working now, working hard to progress things. And I too actually look forward to flying out of the airport as soon as possible and certainly, hopefully, by early 2004.

H. Sergeant: And finally, Claude.

C. Hogan: Folks, we are putting our best foot forward as usual and we're, as a Government of Montserrat— Can I put on my second hat now?

H. Sergeant: Yes you can.

C. Hogan: We are trying out best to ensure we get the best output from this project. As I said earlier, it is the biggest project, which is geared towards any sustainable activity on Montserrat. Everything else was spent on temporary stuff, on temporary things that we have to renew. Almost as we build them and continue to subsidize them, this one, we won't have to subsidize. We can find better things to do with our money: Improve our health system, maybe get more salary increases (you never know)—better healthcare, build a radio station for Radio Montserrat ...

H. Sergeant: Most certainly.

C. Hogan: ... maybe make it FM or AM or whatever. But it's all part of a comprehensive plan of ideas, which has to come together.

I think I have to pay special tribute to Nigel for coming because he had to take the brunt of a lot of not so good sentiments and he is our guest. And I think he was here to help us. And I think most of us would realize that a lot of what he has said—are verifiable. There are a lot of people listening who know about aircraft and flying. And I don't think he would want to damage his credibility in the Caribbean and around the world by coming here to tell us some fancy stories. So and I don't think he could be as eloquent as forceful and forthright and informed as he was, if was giving us a nightmare story.

And Nigel, I want to pay special tribute to you for coming. I think you are brave knowing that you have an interest in the airport. But naturally, as I said before, that is a question that we'll settle under the leadership of the Minister of Finance and Development and really has nothing to do with where we are at the moment. That is a separate matter. Maybe, they'll rehire me to help them in those areas. You never know.

But certainly, I am fully committed. And I want to say thank you very much, particularly to Stephen Young who the engineer at DFID and I don't know what I would have done or we as a Government of Montserrat would have done without him. I think that we have to give him a housing lot and put him in one of the programs to stay here. I'll have to talk to LDA. You might not be pre-approved; your salary is too high.

S. Young: I'd start to lie.

C. Hogan: You'd start to lie? I have some land up on Fogarthy Hill, I'll take you up. But Stephen has been a source of strength and he is quite intelligent. He is an engineer of formidable wealth of knowledge. And I really appreciate the fact that he was here and I hope, he'll be able to work with us through to the end, despite the restructuring of DFID.

Herman, first of all, Mike, I know that you have a lot of work to do down there on Gerald's. You'll be looking at some soils and so on and we look forward to see that informing the designs. I have met the people from Halcrow and they are warm, respectable and I trust them. But this project that we're doing is not based on trust. We are dealing with strict facts, figures and real data, in real time and in real space. So you'll see the results and I'll keep you informed. The ball game is opened. We have prepared up to a point where we are now just releasing the gels and everything is hopefully going to come through. And by March, you'll be in tiptop shape and informed about what is really happening fully at Gerald's. And maybe, you'll even get a job doing some transportation and providing lunch for the workmen and making sure the firemen are all right and everybody's job security is good.

So that's good for me. Keep hope alive. Thank you all very much.

H. Sergeant: Thank you very much Claude. That was Claude Hogan and before that, you heard from each of our panelists for tonight and I hesitate to say what next week's program would be because of the confusion we had today. But we'll keep you informed and updated as to what we'll be discussing next Wednesday on **Ask the Government**. Be assured that it will very informative and exciting. Thanks once again for listening.