

Biodiversity Duty Report 2018-2020



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1. Introduction

Glasgow Prestwick Airport is located on the West coast of Scotland hosting a wide range of aviation services, as well as a large property portfolio. In recent years, the airport has also been working towards the possible development of a spaceport on site. The position of Prestwick Airport has led to the expansion of aerospace businesses in the area making the Airport an economic asset to the region.

In 2013 Prestwick Airport was purchase by the Scottish Government and now operates as a commercial business at arm's length from the Government, with Prestwick Airport's Executive Team feeding into Prestwick Aviation Holdings Limited Board.

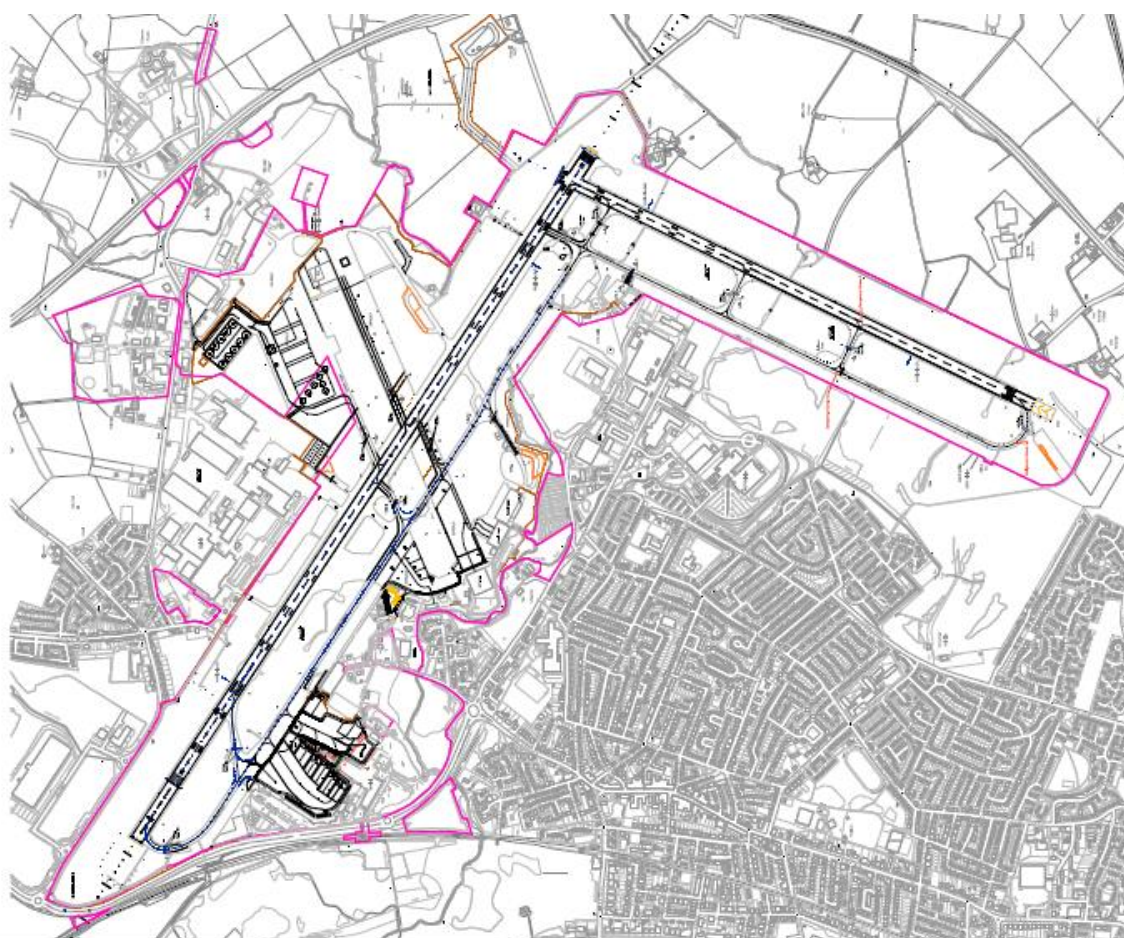


Figure 1.0: The boundary map of Prestwick Airport.

The aerodrome covers 880 acres of land, this includes two runways, aprons, grassland, and small sections of woodlands: the airport boundary can be seen in Figure 1. Within this area of land there are several watercourses that intersect our site including the Pow Burn and the Dows Burn. The Pow Burn runs along the airport boundary and is home to a wide range of flora and fauna, where sightings of species such as kingfishers and otters have been spotted. The burn eventually reaches the

sea just beside a Special Site of Scientific Interest at Troon Golf links. The airport may cover a large area of land but the types of biodiversity we can support is limited, as wildlife within the vicinity of the airport can cause a serious threat to aircraft.

Aircraft Safety

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) impose requirements on licensed airports to adopt measures to minimise the likelihood of collisions between wildlife and aircraft. Prestwick Airport is also required to ensure that the airspace in the surrounding 13km is safe for aircraft operations. Prestwick Airport follows the guidance set out in CAP 772 “Wildlife Hazard Management at Aerodromes” this is produced by the CAA and provides information on how to establish and maintain an effective bird control management plan. Prestwick Airport understands the responsibility it has under The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to meet its biodiversity duty, however the measures in which we achieve this will also ensure that we meet compliance with EASA and CAA legislation.

This report will outline how Prestwick Airport has met its biodiversity duty throughout 2018 to 2020, as well as how the airport has helped contribute to Scotland’s Biodiversity, delivering on the international Aichi Biodiversity Targets set out by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

2. Actions to Protect Biodiversity & Connect People with Nature

Invasive Species Management

Prestwick Airport has been working with Ayrshire River Trust since 2010 to treat the spread of Giant Hogweed in sections of the Pow Burn. The Airport continued to work with Ayrshire River Trust in 2018 and 2019 to treat Giant Hogweed before flowering, to prevent the further spread of this invasive species. In 2019 we saw a decrease in the number of flowering plants at a site near our short runway due to grass cutting which is preventing the seed from being able to grow and allowing other native species to develop.



Figure 2: Giant Hogweed growing at a site located in the airport in 2018

There are some challenges in completely eradicating the growth of Giant Hogweed as landowners upstream are not treating the species so seed is travelling downstream. The airport is also looking at developing our management system to include annual photographs of sites along the watercourse, as well as mapping exact areas where Giant Hogweed is treated, so we can document our progress.

Woodland Management

Prestwick Airport has an annual tree survey completed to check for structural defects, any logs from trees that require to be cut down are kept on site if possible and arranged into a log pile allowing us to support insects and other invertebrates. In addition to this we are looking into developing a program that would allow us to plant trees to replace the trees we have had to fell.

Pollution Prevention

Prestwick Airport has taken many measures to ensure the local water courses are not impacted by our operations. There is an airport spill response plan and training in place for handling any fuel spillages. In 2020 we distributed mobile spill kits to key personnel for quick response to any incidents. We also have three interceptors on site that capture any fuel and filter drainage water before being discharged to local watercourses. In 2019 we completed water sampling from our outfalls to ensure our operations were not impacting the water course; the results all came back satisfactory and within our discharge licenses. In addition to this we have started undertaking a drainage project where we will be liaising with other airport users and increasing awareness on the proximity of local water courses and the importance of preventing pollution.

In 2019 Prestwick Airport produced their Litter Prevention Strategy outlining how we aim as an airport to prevent litter on site. Robust procedures were already in place for airside locations to prevent Foreign Object Debris (FOD) from aircraft, however this strategy focussed on landside areas and identified key responsibilities for different departments. Online training was also provided to all staff on the issues surrounding litter and the impacts it has on biodiversity on a local and global scale. In 2018 Prestwick Airport supported World Environment Day where the theme was Plastic Pollution, we held online informative PowerPoints as well as a local litter pick with a short presentation on the issues of plastic pollution and how it is affecting our local wildlife.

Habitat Management

As previously mentioned, the majority of land at the airport falls under strict safety legislation imposed by EASA and the CAA and therefore we can't support all types of biodiversity however there is one section of land at the airport which used to be a golf driving range that has been allowed to grow wild, see Figure 3. This stretch of land includes the Pow Burn and acts as a wildlife corridor, it is home to a wide range of biodiversity, where there are often sightings of deer, foxes, mallard ducks, kingfishers and woodpeckers.



Figure 3: The Old Golf Driving Range, where there are regular sightings of wildlife.

3. Mainstream Biodiversity

In 2019 Prestwick Airport produced its first Environmental Report which was released to all staff. The report included a section on Biodiversity outlining key activities that were undertaken to help protect and support biodiversity in 2019, as well as the goal for 2020 of creating a biodiversity action plan. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 Prestwick Airport's biodiversity action plan is yet to be published but will hopefully be completed and implemented 2021.

Prestwick Airport's Environmental Policy outlines our commitment to ensuring progressive environmental improvement, preventing pollution, and adopting sustainable procurement procedures. The airport has a Safety Health and Environment Committee where updates are provided on any biodiversity projects or progress being made. There are also Safety & Environmental Reps that feed in any issues or thoughts on how we can improve our environmental performance, this includes supporting biodiversity.

In addition to these measures, the Airport has a Bird and Wildlife Hazard Control Plan and Risk Assessment which are implemented by the Airfield Operations Department. These documents outline the measures in which Prestwick Airport take to prevent attracting bird and wildlife activity within the airfield. The measures we implement such as cutting grass to between 6-8 inches, deterring bird activity and conducting bird related soil sampling, all aid in making the habitat undesirable to birds. This may have a negative impact on the variation of biodiversity present however we are protecting many species of birds from a hazardous environment.

4. Nature Based Solutions, Climate Change & Biodiversity

In 2018 Prestwick Airport undertook a project to stabilise a section of embankment along the Pow Burn where erosion was starting to undercut a main road through airport infrastructure. The airport contracted a specialist in river engineering and river restoration where a green bank solution was chosen to stabilise the bank. Log terraces were the best long-term option, that also allowed us to protect local ecology and support existing tree stems and roots. As part of this project trees were also planted to further support the stabilisation of the embankment. By choosing a green bank solution instead of grey bank there has been a less negative impact on biodiversity and has helped to reduce further disturbance to the bank side habitat.

Prestwick Airport has started working on a climate change adaption plan, the impacts of climate change will have a serious impact on the airport with more extreme weather and the possible risk of flooding. The climate change adaption plan when complete will outline the measure the airport is taking to adapt to the pressures of climate change including how we can adopt measures to support biodiversity.

5. Public Engagement & Workforce Development

Throughout 2018 and 2019 the airport hosted several high school students for their work experience where they spent time with various departments at the airport. The Environmental Manager spent time with each of the students discussing key environmental issues including how the airport is meeting its biodiversity duty and the challenges faced.

Throughout 2018 and 2019 the Environmental Department at the airport worked on increasing awareness on global and local biodiversity issues through online PowerPoints and internal articles on our intranet. The airport also conducted onsite litter picks for staff with discussions on plastic pollution and the impact this has on wildlife.

6. Research & Monitoring

Prestwick Airport has reached out to other airports to discuss the challenges around supporting biodiversity in an airport environment. This has allowed the exchange of information of successful and unsuccessful at other airports. In addition to this further research has been completed on what species the airport would be able to support such as pollinators where projects will be developed in the future.

Prestwick Airport does not undertake any direct monitoring of biodiversity species on site however Airfield Operations record any bird activity at the airport as well as any sighting of deer. The airport is looking at developing a centralised wildlife recording system for any sighting of wildlife out with the airfield.

7. Biodiversity Highlights & Challenges

Throughout 2018 to 2020 Prestwick Airport has worked on contributing to the key steps stated in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. As an airport we have ensured that our operations have not impacted local watercourse and have put procedures in place to prevent pollution. The work the airport has undertaken to treat Giant Hogweed is finally starting to see improvement in the local area. It has also helped contribute to the international biodiversity targets set out to reduce direct pressure on biodiversity as well as the key steps set out in Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy to encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management.

As mentioned throughout this report the restrictions imposed by EASA and the CAA have made undertaking several projects challenging however we have been able to support small habitat development in other areas such as supporting insects and invertebrates through the felling of structurally defected trees and through our bank stabilisation project. In addition to this the airport allowing the old golf driving range to grow wild is proving to show a wide range of biodiversity that in following years we hope to be able to monitor and report on.

One area where we are making good progress is through increasing awareness on the issues biodiversity is facing, this has been achieved best through online training materials, annual environmental reports, and environmental policy commitments. This has also allowed us to help contribute to the international target of ensuring people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

2020 was a challenging year to roll out any new projects on supporting biodiversity due to the Covid 19 outbreak. The airport continued with previous projects but plans to plant wildflowers and publish our biodiversity action plan have had to be postponed to 2021. The next few years should see the development of a tree planting program for any felled trees, continued work on treating giant hogweed, working with local wildlife groups, and developing a climate change adaptation plan for the airport.