

At the last inspectorate meeting (Tuesday), I witnessed Morgan and Morcambe (M&M) employees stubbornly refuse to acknowledge the risk of bird strike with high velocity combat aircraft, which their project poses. They did this by: Failing to produce data from meaningful research. The baseline bird survey that was carried out for M&M fails to address the actual peril posed by future bird populations and their new habitats after displacement by trenching through their old habitats and thereby destroying them. A much more comprehensive study is needed to determine projections of new bird habitat locations and numbers. M&M seem to stubbornly holding on to the idea that a baseline study carried out for Blackpool airport (several miles from BAe) will suffice. It will not. This seems lazy research, at best or refusal to do the appropriate research, for cost or other hidden reasons, at worst.

M7M seem to be rigidly adhering to the idea that any risks mitigated at Blackpool Airport will do very well for BAe – it being a place that also deals with planes. I heard an M&M spokesperson robotically repeat the arrangements made with Blackpool Airport when asked any question regarding risks to BAe and the surrounding area, by the inspectorate. Comparing BAe to Blackpool Airport is like comparing an Aircraft carrier to a car ferry – in that they both carry vehicles. It is ludicrous. Both are vastly different air operations.

Blackpool rarely has high velocity war aircraft taking off from the runways. I have lived next to the airport for over 5 years and have only seen a once yearly Tornado taking off for the Blackpool Airshow. I see small private jets, sometimes. BAe tests numerous powerful war planes that have completed construction, over a densely populated area. Any enhancement of the bird strike risk is unacceptable. The resulting loss of life due to bird strike could be catastrophic (and due to speed at take-off or landing could bank off and crash at one of the several villages or towns along its test route – one of them being mine). Any downplaying or short-cut to writing off the safety objections of BAe is unacceptable, as it is a significant threat to human life.

Paul Forshaw from BAe made the statement 'Some risks cannot be mitigated' at the first round of inspectorate meetings. I have not heard any meaningful information from M&M that contradicts this. It seems as though they would rather stealthily dodge the irritating safety issue than address it.

Errors in M&M seeing, understanding and addressing the BAe safety risk, at the very outset of the project, as evidenced by the M&M lawyer claiming that there did not exist information about this in the initial documents, give me zero confidence that they meaningfully understand the nature of BAe and the surrounding area.

A conversation, with an M&M worker, who claimed to be an environmentalist, revealed to me that he did not have a working knowledge of the shoreline. I had to draw a rudimentary map to correct the errors of his understanding. This is not good. Surely, living here, we have a right to expect those who wish to put cables into our land, have had the decency to properly know the area that they will trench?

Sitting in the recent inspectorate meetings, I became extremely uncomfortable at the nature of the Blackpool Council lawyer, [REDACTED], connection with M&M employees. At breaks, I witnessed, at close hand, her crouching by the seat of a female M&M employee, in a friendly and casual way, both of them enjoying a joke together, evidenced by their mutual laughing. This made me question their connection – why at a business meeting – would a lawyer for an interested party have such a familiar connection with the project proposer?

This led me to wonder why Blackpool Council had employed a lawyer at local council tax payers' expense. The local parish councils have employed a lawyer to represent them, out of their collective pockets. Fylde Council has no lawyer and I believe the other councils do not, either.

It seems irregular that Blackpool Airport has suddenly easily overcome any objections (and that there are some changes made by M&M). M&M seem to wish to use this as leverage to apply pressure to BAe. I wonder what part the Blackpool Council lawyer, funded from the public purse has played – what deal has been brokered?

This also puts me in mind of the 'Non-Disclosure Agreement' that M&M have with Blackpool Council (where information that should be in the public domain has been legally hidden, at the public expense).

I have considerable discomfort with these issues because there is an irregularity here.