

Milestone for runway works at RAF Lossiemouth as aircraft return

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) awarded a £75-million contract for the airfield operating surfaces project to VolkerFitzpatrick in August 2019.

For most of the work, which started in May, aircraft continued to operate from RAF Lossiemouth. However, a short period of relocation was needed while the intersection between the station's two runways was resurfaced. This started in August and saw the RAF's new P-8A Maritime Patrol Aircraft being delivered to nearby Kinloss Barracks and operating from there. RAF Lossiemouth's Typhoons also operated from Kinloss Barracks as well as Leuchars Station.

Works continued night and day, seven days a week to allow the aircraft and their crews to return to RAF Lossiemouth as soon as possible. As a defence critical project, work also continued despite the difficulties presented by coronavirus, with various safety measures taken to make the site COVID secure.

The first aircraft to land and use the newly-resurfaced intersection was a Typhoon returning from a training sortie on Exercise JOINT WARRIOR, having taken off from Leuchars Station. The return of the Typhoons will shortly be followed by the P-8A Maritime Patrol Aircraft. The RAF currently has two P-8As with a further seven on order from manufacturer Boeing. They are submarine hunters which locate and track potentially hostile submarines.

Home to four fast-jet squadrons flying the Typhoon, it has been some time since RAF Lossiemouth has regularly operated a larger aircraft such as the P-8A Poseidon. Resurfacing works are one of many improvements being made, future-proofing the Moray base for years to come. Other improvements include accommodation for personnel, a new Air Traffic Control Tower, upgrades to drainage and electrical supplies, and upgraded facilities for IX (Bomber) Squadron

Russ Liddington, DIO's Project Manager for the resurfacing works, said:

It is great to see the aircraft return to Lossiemouth and to see the arrival of P-8As is particularly pleasing as it represents a new era in operations from this Station. This significant investment in Scotland introduces a new UK Defence capability and has definitely focused minds and efforts.

With this important milestone achieved we can now look to complete the remainder of the project works to enable full use of the airfield for future aircraft operations.

Wing Commander Pete Beckett, Director of the Lossiemouth Development Programme, said:

The partial completion of the new runway surfaces marks a major milestone in upgrades to RAF Lossiemouth's infrastructure, with the project expected to be complete mid-2021.

This is a really exciting time for RAF Lossiemouth with further upgrades and improvements planned, ensuring the Station is fit for all of the challenges the future holds. Over £400-million has been invested in Moray, with the creation of around 550 additional military posts, and employment opportunities for many local contractors.

Station Commander RAF Lossiemouth, Group Captain Chris Layden, said:

It was a privilege to be the first to land on our newly resurfaced runway today!

My team have been working exceptionally hard from Leuchars Station and Kinloss Barracks to deliver Typhoon and Poseidon operations, and I am delighted that all our aircraft can now return back to RAF Lossiemouth. We are back in business as a next-generation maritime patrol and fighter station!

Tomorrow we will welcome the first of our Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft to their new home with Team Lossie. My thanks go to my team, and contractors VolkerFitzpatrick for their hard work in successfully delivering the main runway on time.

Keith Maplethorpe, VolkerFitzpatrick development director, said:

The collaborative efforts of all parties to ensure the continued resurfacing of RAF Lossiemouth is to be applauded. The arrival of the Typhoon onto the intersection was a spectacular sight, and our team will continue to work hard to ensure all remaining sections of the airfield are resurfaced on schedule to allow RAF Lossiemouth to resume its normal duties and operate larger aircrafts from site.

Work on the remainder of the airfield operating surfaces continues and is expected to be completed next spring.