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Operating from the Channel Islands presents some challenges, but, with incoming technologies and a focus on supporting economic enablement in its home market, Aurigny must continue to provide essential air services. Alan Dron reports From: [Low Cost & Regional Airline Business](#) | [Volume 13, October 2018](#) | [Airlines](#) [I+](#)



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Aurigny Air Services, one of the smallest scheduled airlines in the UK's crown dependency, must contend with one of aviation's oldest problems as a major hindrance to its operations.

The carrier faces up to 60 days of disruption a year because of the sea mist that frequently rolls in over its home base of Guernsey and the nearby island of Alderney, which it links with a vital air service. Now, it hopes that technology will help ease that problem.

Aurigny is to be the lead airline customer for the ClearVision enhanced vision system that is designed to allow aircraft to operate in poor visibility.

ClearVision is an optional fit on the ATR 42-600 and 72-600 turboprop and Aurigny plans to buy three of the latter models. The system contains four options.

The first is Skylens, a head-mounted display visor, worn by the pilot, which provides flight guidance symbology and runway highlighting information.

This can then be combined with a Synthetic Vision System (SVS), which generates images of terrain and obstacles from a database, or an Enhanced Vision System (EVS), which displays an augmented outside view to the visor, provided by cameras and sensors in the aircraft's nose cone. The final option is the Combined Vision System, which connects both EVS and SVS via the Skylens headset.

ATR said that a study had shown that, over a year, ClearVision could have saved 24 of the 48 landings that Aurigny had been forced to abandon because of fog. This would have a significant impact on the costs the airline faced resulting from the disruption of its operations, from delays, diversions or cancellations.

Aurigny operates three aircraft types – unusual for such a small company and a situation that Commercial Director Malcolm Coupar accepts is not the most efficient solution when it comes to maintenance costs. However, the nature of the carrier's route network demands the use of the Dornier 228 for the ultra-short Guernsey-Alderney sector, ATR turboprops for Dinard (France), Southampton and other UK regional airports, plus a single Embraer E195 for what the island's government deems to be the critical 'lifeline link' to London-Gatwick.

For decades, Aurigny was famous as an operator of the Britten-Norman Trislander, the three-engined 'big brother' to the Islander.

The company used the Trislander specifically for the 22nm/40km Guernsey-Alderney hop and finally retired its last example in 2017 after the type had clocked up a remarkable 42 years of service.

Finding a replacement for such a niche aircraft was never going to be easy, and the shortlist came down to the Viking Aircraft Twin Otter, the Dornier 228 and the Let-410.

All were, to some extent, a compromise, says Coupar, but the best of the available types for the Alderney route was the Dornier, now built by Swiss company RUAG.

The type's short take-off and landing (STOL) performance (Alderney's runway is only 875m long) plus good crosswind tolerance made it the preferred choice.

By early August, Aurigny had two 'classic' Do228s and a single Do228 New Generation (NG) in service, plus a third 'classic' on loan from the manufacturer while the airline waited for its second NG to be delivered. That was in RUAG's paint shop and should have been delivered by the time these words are read.

Delivery of the new Dorniers – particularly the latest one – has taken longer than Aurigny would like, admits Coupar. “When we made the decision, there was quite a long waiting list and they were manufacturing them in batches, so you had to wait for a certain number to be ordered before they started up the production line.”

With the arrival of the second 228NG, the loaned ‘classic’ will be returned to RUAG and another will be disposed of, leaving a single older model to act as a back-up aircraft to the two 228NGs.

The next step up the ladder in terms of size are the ATRs – three ATR 72-500s plus a single 42-500 – that are scheduled to be replaced by three ATR 72-600s, for which the company signed a letter of intent in July.

Assuming the purchase is confirmed (sign-off by the Guernsey government is required), Aurigny will receive the first in late summer 2019, with the remaining two arriving at roughly monthly intervals.

This is where the new ClearVision system comes in. Aurigny has ordered it as a factory-fitted system on the new aircraft.

“It’s not proven in commercial service,” says Coupar, “although it exists in business jets and military aircraft, obviously. It’s proven technology but the upsides haven’t been demonstrated in a commercial, scheduled environment.

“ATR came up and conducted tests. They and we believe it’s a significant step forward; around 50% of the disruption we suffer will be nullified.” The company’s flagship is its sole jet, an Embraer E-195.

“The rationale for that and for having a one-fleet Embraer is that we’ve got six pairs of slots at Gatwick and used to compete with Flybe [on the Guernsey route]. It’s the most important route for the economy of the island and, when Flybe announced that they were leaving, the [Guernsey] government required us to replace as much of the lost capacity as we could.

“Up to then, we were just running ATRs. We did an evaluation of what aircraft could operate between Gatwick and Guernsey; the limiting factor is the runway length at Guernsey and the E-195 fitted the bill best. We operate four times a day to Gatwick with the E-195 plus two ATR rotations.”

As well as Gatwick, Aurigny also operates a daily service to London-Stansted. This is a much more leisure-orientated sector. Historically, Aurigny operated into the Essex airport more frequently than today, but the Gatwick service superseded it. However, Coupar affirms: “We have a fairly strong Eastern European workforce on the island, and they find Stansted the most useful place to get transfers back to Eastern Europe.” >>



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