Helicopter airport makes its mark as a European offshore wind hub

**German offshore wind contracts and new defence activities emphasize the significance of Den Helder Airport**

Den Helder, the Netherlands, 25 April 2019 **– Den Helder Airport (DHA) will facilitate helicopter flights for the maintenance of the Deutsche Bucht offshore wind farm for Vestas in the coming years. At the same time, offshore wind farm constructor Van Oord has finalized a call-off contract for the same German wind farm. The transport of personnel and small cargo for the contract partners in Germany will be handled by DHSS from Den Helder Airport. Furthermore, the Netherlands Ministry of Defence and Den Helder Airport will also claim additional airport capacity, for example with the deployment of innovative drone applications by the Royal Netherlands Navy, civilian operators and research institutions.**

Due to its new long-term contract with MHI Vestas and its strategically important location, DHA is distinguishing itself as an important helicopter airport for not only the oil and gas industry, but also for the European offshore wind sector.

The decisive reason that DHA was chosen for the new German offshore wind farm maintenance contract is the professional and specialised airport with all the required customs services, military police and handling companies. The close proximity to Schiphol International Airport also played a crucial role. “Specialist personnel in the sector are scarce and therefore expensive,” says Conny van den Hoff, director of Den Helder Airport. “It is important to be able to get specialists on location as quickly as possible, and to have short and fast logistics lines. DHA’s location enables this. Specialized staff come from all over the world; via Schiphol and our professional helicopter airport, they are the fastest on location at Deutsche Bucht.”

Two years ago, various companies based at Den Helder Airport, including DHSS, decided to change their strategy to market Den Helder Airport as a North Sea offshore wind hub. “Den Helder Airport has gone through an intensive period in which a number of processes have been put in motion to promote activities. We see this as confirmation that this chosen strategy is bearing fruit. It also reinforces the vision of six cooperating North Sea airports, united in the North Sea Heliports Alliance,” says Van den Hoff.

**Increasing activity from the Ministry of Defence**With the recently confirmed Dutch ‘Luchthavenbesluit’, the number of civil flight movements at Den Helder Airport is allowed to increase from 27,000 to 29,000 per year, with still space to facilitate a scheduled service. The number of military activities is also increasing. The airport, in collaboration with the Royal Netherlands Navy and various commercial parties, will become the centre for innovative, maritime drones. The Defence Helicopter Command is also stationing twenty NH90 helicopters at De Kooy Maritime Air Base.

Twelve NH90 helicopters will carry out maritime combat tasks and the remaining eight will perform amphibious transport tasks. Van den Hoff: “Together with the existing 860 squadron of the Defence Helicopter Command, this means that De Kooy Maritime Air Base is responsible for management and operations of twenty NH90 helicopters. Because of this, there is no longer any doubt about the future existence of the airport.”

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