

No: 3/91

Ref: EW/C1186

Category: 1a

Aircraft Type and Registration: Fokker F27 Mark 200, G-BHMX

No & Type of Engines: 2 Rolls-Royce Dart 528-7E turboprop engines

Year of Manufacture: 1963

Date and Time (UTC): 7 December 1990 at 2020 hrs

Location: Teesside Airport, County Durham

Type of flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 4 Passengers - 19

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: No damage reported

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 39 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 4310 hours (of which 235 were on type)

Information Source: AAIB Field Investigation into an incident which was the subject of a CAA Occurrence Report

Following a flight from Aberdeen, the aircraft had been loaded and prepared for the next sector from Teesside to Humberside, with the same operating crew. Shortly after 2009 hrs the latest airfield data was requested from Aerodrome Control on frequency 119.8 MHz. This was passed, by the controller, as "...runway 05 - wind 030°/32 kt - QNH 1001 - QFE 997 - temperature + 2°C - dew point + 2°C". Clearance to start was requested at 2011 hrs, and clearance to taxi shortly before 2015 hrs. Just after 2017 hrs, having passed the departure clearance, the controller asked the aircraft to let him know when it was approaching the holding point as he could not "...see very well from here with the snow". The commander estimated that he had just entered the final part of the taxiway where it parallels the runway, a distance of about 1000 metres from the control tower. Shortly before 2019 hrs the call "...approaching the holding point" was made and the aircraft was cleared for take-off with the wind 040°/33 kt.

The commander reported that the visibility was extremely poor as he approached the holding point, due to heavy rain and snow. He switched on the landing lights to assist, and followed the green taxiway centreline lights. These curved to the left and, having passed the last one, he continued the turn radius and found the aircraft heading towards a line of lights. These he assumed to be runway centreline lights and so started the take-off roll.

The aircraft had lined up on the left-hand runway edge lights, on the junction of the Operational Readiness Platform (ORP) and the runway. As the nosewheel followed by the left main wheels left the prepared surface onto the grass, a vibration was felt and the take-off was immediately abandoned. The commander realised what had happened and, having recovered the aircraft to the runway, returned to the ramp. Neither the aircraft nor the airfield lights had sustained any damage.

On the subsequent departure, the commander made a conscious effort to taxi across the ORP towards the take-off area, rather than to follow the apparent curve of the taxiway lights. He also used only the aircraft taxi-lights, which he found afforded better visibility in the prevailing conditions.

An aftercast obtained from the Meteorological Office at Bracknell indicated that Snow, Frost and Gale warnings were in force in the area. The METAR report for Teesside at 2020 hrs was;

2020 EGNV 03030/40 KT 5000 86XXSN 7ST004 01/01 1001.

Examination of the 05 end of the runway revealed that there were three regularly spaced taxiway centreline lights, in a left curve, past the holding point line; the final one encroached a short distance into the ORP. The yellow centreline continued the left curve and terminated just short of the forward end of the left-hand white 'piano key' runway threshold marking.

It has been recommended that the CAA should carry out an audit of those airfields with ORPs, which are used by civilian aircraft, and consider either isolating the ORP from the runway or ensuring that the taxiway lighting positively leads the aircraft to the runway centreline.