

# THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

## AVIATION WILL EMERGE STRONGER FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS

*predicts SITA Europe  
President, Sergio Colella*

### *Features*

**BELFAST CITY AIRPORT**  
*Back in business after a tough  
old summer*

**STARR AVIATION EXPERT**  
*explains why insurance  
premiums are rising*

**THE MOST TUMULTUOUS  
YEAR FOR AVIATION**  
*Gatwick CEO, Stewart Wingate*

**WILLIS TOWERS WATSON  
EXPERTS** *examine the human  
aspects of airport recovery*



# THE AOA IS PLEASED TO WORK WITH ITS CORPORATE PARTNERS, AND GOLD AND SILVER MEMBERS

## Corporate Partners



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THE AIRPORT  
**OPERATOR**

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

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## KAREN DEE

### *Introduction to The Airport Operator*



*Welcome to  
this edition of  
The Airport  
Operator  
published to  
coincide with  
the AOA's Annual Conference.*

For the first time ever our conference, on the theme "Covid-19 and beyond: airports for the future", organised in partnership with Willis Towers Watson, one of our corporate partners, will be a live-streamed virtual event, reflecting the extraordinary times through which we are living. Like the conference, this edition of our magazine looks back at the unprecedentedly tough year our airports have had but also forward to the steps they are taking to rebuild for the future.

As Gatwick's CEO, Stewart Wingate, tells us, this has been the most tumultuous year for aviation and the decisions that he and many other airport CEOs have had to take have been the most difficult of their careers.

But amid the sadness there is also optimism about how our airports can rebuild better, reflected in the interview that SITA Europe President, Sergio Colella, gave us, where he describes his expectation that our industry will become stronger after the current crisis by becoming more digital and more collaborative.

The enormity of the challenge that we are facing is not in doubt. The November ban on non-essential travel both abroad and within the UK announced by the Prime Minister will have a devastating effect on UK airports and heralds the start of a bleak winter. The most recent forecasts from our European sister body, ACI Europe, suggest that, for 2020, European airports are looking at a loss of 1.69 billion passengers (compared to 2019) and a €30 billion loss in revenue, down 64% on last year. ACI's expectation is that it will be 2024 or 2025 before we see a full recovery. What happens next will depend partly on what airports do and even more on how long it will take to rebuild passenger confidence, which will also be very closely linked to the

actions that Government takes.

Of course, we are pleased to see that Ministers and officials appear to understand the scale of the challenge, with Aviation Minister, Robert Courts MP, telling us that aviation is one of the sectors worst hit by the pandemic and that he will stand side by side with our sector.

We shall see how those sentiments are translated into action shortly, when the Government sets out its aviation recovery plan. Over recent weeks we have engaged in intensive discussions on this with the Department for Transport and you can read in this edition about our eight-point plan for Government action to secure a brighter future for UK airports.

In the short term it is essential that, working in partnership with the industry, the Government devises and implements a new test and trace travel regime that will make it possible to reduce and eventually eliminate the existing 14-day quarantine period for travellers arriving from high-risk countries. Beyond that we need a package of financial support that will help UK airports to reduce their costs further so that they can get through the new lockdown and what is certain to be a very tough winter.

But we need more than that. As Sustainable Aviation Chair, Adam Morton, writes, there is no better time for the Government to work with the aviation and aerospace sectors to "build back better" by providing £500 million of Government funding for sustainable aviation fuels. By taking action now the Government has a real opportunity to accelerate the decarbonisation of our sector, providing a better platform for long-term environmental and business sustainability.

I expect that at our conference Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, will again underline that Ministers understand the unprecedented scale of the crisis facing UK airports and will signal that Government support is on its way. Now more than ever we appreciate such words of support but what really matters is what the Government decides to do. That will be the acid test. ■

**Karen Dee, Chief Executive**

# AOA CHIEF EXECUTIVE SAYS GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO SUPPORT UK AVIATION TO BOOST THE COUNTRY'S RECOVERY FROM THE PANDEMIC

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*AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, is calling on the Government to announce a “meaningful” package of measures to help UK aviation to recover from the hugely damaging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**S**peaking to The Airport Operator she said that the AOA had been engaging in detailed discussions with the Government over six to eight weeks on the actions that it could take to help to rebuild a thriving UK aviation industry which has a key role to play in the nation's economic recovery.

Dee said that, while many sectors were seeking help from the Government, aviation was unique in providing critical national infrastructure that delivers both domestic connectivity

and international links. That infrastructure would be a vital engine of recovery, playing an essential part in the UK's post-pandemic recovery and in helping to deliver the Government's levelling-up and global trading agendas.

In her view, the Government understands this and says it is something it is committed to. However, she said the acid test would be whether that understanding translates into financial support for the sector, when Ministers set out the contents

of their aviation recovery plan, which they have promised to announce shortly.

Dee said she remains concerned that the Government has not yet fully understood the scale and intensity of the challenges that aviation is facing and the risk that the pressures on UK airports might grow even further if a second wave of infection leads to new restrictions on travel. Already, the AOA estimates that across UK airports losses are running at £83 million a week, with lost revenue for the year expected to be as much as

*The AOA's estimate is that total pandemic-related job losses at UK airports are likely to exceed 100,000, with 20,000 of these being staff directly employed by the airports.*

£4 billion. It has been estimated that the UK economy is losing £32 million a day just because air travel with the US is effectively closed.

At the start of the pandemic passenger numbers, on which airport revenues depend, had been reduced to close to zero. With the opening of some air traffic corridors, those figures had begun to improve a little - to low double digit %s at some large airports (compared to 2019 totals) and single figure %s at smaller regional airports. Faced with these numbers, all airports have been forced to cut back their costs to a more manageable level.

The AOA's estimate is that total pandemic-related job losses at UK airports are likely to exceed 100,000, with 20,000 of these being staff directly employed by the airports. At the larger airports, for example, Heathrow have announced plans that could result in up to 1,200 job losses (a quarter of the company's employees), the three MAG airports have announced plans for nearly 900 job losses and Gatwick plans for 600 job losses.

Taking into account additional job losses at airlines, ground handlers and other support services, the outlook for jobs in the cities and towns where aviation is a significant employer looks bleak. Heathrow, for example, is the largest workplace in Europe, with 40% of the workforce in the surrounding area employed in aviation; neighbouring Hounslow Council has estimated that a third of the

100,000 households in the borough could be affected by job losses due to reduced activity at Heathrow. Reflecting on anticipated job losses at Gatwick, Crawley Council leader, Peter Lamb, has said: "We are looking at a generation of the town's young people having their economic future devastated".

Against this deeply challenging background at airports across the UK, Dee has been co-ordinating closely with the AOA's airport members to ensure that politicians and officials are left in no doubt about what now needs to be done to secure a brighter future. UK airports are calling on the Government to:

**- devise a new test and trace travel regime that would make it possible to reduce and ultimately eliminate the existing 14-day quarantine period for travellers arriving from high-risk countries**

**- provide business rates relief for English airports for 12 months, bringing them into line with their Scottish and Northern Irish counterparts and with the hospitality and retail sectors (with the Welsh Government urged to do the same)**

**- extend corporate fiscal support measures on a sectoral basis, including support with employment costs beyond the October end of the job retention scheme and general finance measures, such as the corporate financing facility and the**

*It will take time for passenger confidence to recover and that it may well be 2024 before passenger numbers return to 2019 levels.*

**coronavirus business interruption loan scheme**

**- fund the aviation sector's regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority, for the 2020/2021 period**

**- alleviate policing costs to take into account the dramatically reduced number of passengers and depleting airport revenue streams**

**- temporarily suspend Air Passenger Duty to incentivise air connectivity in the recovery phase**

**- work with industry to agree a funding solution for the airspace modernisation programme**

**- reverse the decision to end airside VAT exemption at UK airports after the end of the Brexit transition period.**

Looking ahead, Dee says that UK airports have been planning for what they now expect to be a really tough winter, with many of them effectively in a holding pattern, as they wait for what they hope may be a better spring and summer next year. Their general expectation is that it will take time for passenger confidence to recover and that it may well be 2024 before passenger numbers return to 2019 levels. But while the timing of an aviation recovery may be in doubt, Dee is certain of one thing: "It will recover". ■



# GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT BACK IN BUSINESS AFTER “A TOUGH OLD SUMMER”

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*In March this year the airport which provides Northern Ireland’s main air links to Great Britain suffered a near-death experience.*

**O**n 5 March, with the sudden collapse of Flybe, George Best Belfast City Airport lost 80% of its flights and two thirds of its passengers. Less than three weeks later, as the UK Government, announced a nationwide lockdown, the airport stood on the brink of a temporary closure.

Through the first weeks of the COVID-19 crisis the airport went from up to a hundred flights a day to just one daily rotation to Heathrow, with the continuation of that single route secured only by a multi-million-pound contract from the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK Government.

Yet within seven months of the Flybe collapse and the announcement of flights resuming to Cardiff, the airport is now back to 16 destinations and has rebuilt its entire route network.

Telling The Airport Operator the story of his airport’s rebirth, Chief

Executive, Brian Ambrose, describes it as “the toughest period that any business in our sector could find itself in” and says the airport came through thanks to a combination of a good product and support from Government.

As the national lockdown began, the immediate priority was to save the airport’s link to Heathrow. Without it there would have been no commercial flights between Belfast and Great Britain. Ambrose declines to speculate on whether or not the route could have survived without Government support, remarking only that both the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK Government were quick to appreciate that keeping the link open was essential for Northern Ireland.

Within hours of the Flybe collapse, Belfast City Airport’s team had already begun discussions with airlines about taking over the routes that Flybe had formerly flown. With a gift for understatement, Ambrose

admits that it was “a big challenge” at the outset to convince airlines and their boards that the COVID-19 pandemic was the right moment to commit to new routes.

Asked how that was achieved, Ambrose said “it took some intense debate with the airlines to persuade them to go ahead”. It had helped that Belfast was known to be one of the best performing Flybe bases, that there is no overland alternative to link Northern Ireland to its main market in Great Britain and that the airport could demonstrate strong

*As the national lockdown began, the immediate priority was to save the airport’s link to Heathrow. Without it there would have been no commercial flights between Belfast and Great Britain.*

and diverse demand from business, for tourism and to connect friends and families.

Ambrose said airlines had also been influenced by the airport's location. A lot of the economic growth in Northern Ireland over the last 10 to 15 years has been "on our doorstep", he said. The airport is just a few minutes from both Belfast City Centre and the Titanic Quarter – one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects and home to the Titanic Museum, built on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard where the ill-fated RMS Titanic was built.

Four airlines have now taken over Flybe's old routes: Aer Lingus Regional, adding Birmingham, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Exeter, Leeds Bradford and Manchester to its existing route to Heathrow; Loganair ("Scotland's airline") flying to Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Inverness; and Eastern Airways, with routes to Cardiff, Southampton and Teesside. Meanwhile, British Airways has resumed its flights to Heathrow and taken over the former Flybe route to London City Airport (which had been that airport's fastest growing route in 2019). KLM flights to Amsterdam have also been restored.

The resumption of flights on these routes will inevitably mean more noise for some local residents, but Ambrose stresses that the noise issues are more limited than at some other airports. Belfast City has no dedicated freight services, no night flights and is generally served by quieter types of aircraft. He notes also that firms based at the airport make it one of the region's largest employers and that the airport's long-standing community engagement programmes have been popular with local communities. These programmes – which include apprenticeship placements for young people, a community fund, adopted schools and charity partnerships – have been very well managed over many years, he says, by the airport's Director of Corporate Services,

Michelle Hatfield.

While the complete restoration of the old route network at Belfast City Airport is clearly a major achievement, Ambrose says he is realistic about how long it will take to build back to previous passenger levels – "a few years" is his best guess. In 2019 almost 2.5 million passengers used the airport, but this year the forecast is around 1 million. He says that the airport will "probably go through this winter in second or third gear" at about a third of its previous capacity.

Ambrose is clear that the single most significant step that Government could take now to stimulate demand would be to remove Air Passenger Duty for domestic flights. He declines to speculate on how likely that is to happen but expresses confidence that there will be some further Government support for the three Northern Ireland airports to help them to get through the period between now and Easter. Regular contacts with both the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive at both Ministerial and senior official level have convinced him that there is an understanding that Northern Ireland's economic recovery is closely linked to and dependent on the recovery of its airports.

In the short-term Ambrose expects that some of the 35 companies based at the airport, who together employed 2,000 people last year, will have to make some employees redundant. Over the last decade the airport itself has outsourced many of its services and now employs only 70 staff directly. Ambrose says there is no plan for any of these employees to be made redundant.

With an eye on the longer-term future, Ambrose says that the airport has already begun to talk to airlines about opportunities for expansion into new European markets, mentioning Paris, Brussels and Munich as possible new destinations. He has also been encouraged to consider what he calls "niche" European leisure destinations by the airport's recent success in securing a new service to Verona next summer.

Summing up, Ambrose declares that, in spite of all the challenges ahead, he remains optimistic about the airport's future. He says that Belfast City is a "very pragmatic" airport and will respond flexibly and quickly to changing demand. He is keen to pay tribute to the quality of his colleagues at the airport and concludes: "We have a great team and when you work with talent even more things are possible". ■



11:10	BUCHAREST/OTP
11:30	KIEV/BORISPOL
11:35	DUBLIN
11:45	EAST MIDLANDS
12:15	SOFIA
12:30	LONDON/LGW
12:30	NEWCASTLE
12:40	ST PETERSBURG

# HOW GATWICK AIRPORT IS MASTERING TECH TO TRANSFORM ITS INSPECTIONS

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*SafetyCulture explains how its iAuditor app is helping the airport's teams*

**T**his year has been the toughest year yet for airport operators in terms of compliance. As the hardest hit sector in the wake of COVID-19, airport operators have a tough job on their hands to ensure that inspections are done efficiently. This means that processes are not admin-heavy, that response times are improved upon, and that compliance data can be circulated to the right people at a moment's notice.

Airports in the UK have been quick to respond to new challenges. Whilst UK ministers formulated an aviation recovery strategy, Luton

Airport became the first to receive the International Airport Health Accreditation; a measure to see how it's COVID-19 standards align with worldwide standards, with many others keen to follow suit.

So how can airports understand best practice, in a world of ever-evolving guidance?

#### **Gatwick Airport's compliance**

As the second largest airport in the UK, Gatwick has a substantial operational challenge in order to maintain high levels of safety. COVID-19 has taken its toll on Gatwick, incurring losses that they

are working hard to recoup.

Over 40 different auditable tasks are carried out at the airport within the Fire Service alone, covering a range of Total Quality Management subjects including Local Authority Liaison, Driver Training, Contingency Planning, Aviation Incident Response, Training and Development and Operational Equipment Inspection and Evaluation.

Across these tasks, staff members of all roles must undertake the responsibilities of performing the checks and completing any corrective actions needed.



Gatwick AFS operate a tiered audit system comprising three levels: Watch inspections, Peer Watch Audit & Senior Manager Audit. They reached a point where their operating platform wasn't able to support their developing inspection and audit requirements.

Gatwick AFS needed a more flexible solution to reduce the time spent on manually updating and allocating tasks: which led to the team searching for an alternative.

iAuditor, a digital inspection mobile app, was the best fit. All inspections can be scheduled and staff can assign tasks for other team members. Gatwick can easily create actions for other team members, with notifications to five key members who can work to solve the problem and ensure the corrected action is taken.

The station manager, Adam McCulloch believes this digital tool allows them to meet their standards:

"iAuditor gives us flexibility to build the system how we need it to be. It's got a brilliant notification system where each level can be notified of their audit responsibilities for the following quarter." - Adam McCulloch, Gatwick Airport Station Manager

Reporting data is held in the cloud, and the ability to customise reports has been invaluable for meeting regulatory criteria through task allocation, inspections and audits. Gatwick Airport is able to demonstrate the systems capabilities with continued support from the SafetyCulture technical team and aims to present to the Civil Aviation authority during its upcoming audit.

### Raising standards to maintain COVID-19 free airports

If you're considering a new solution due to COVID-19, a mobile solution such as iAuditor will empower your frontline teams to keep your airport clean and safe.



## *SafetyCulture has worked with the AOA to build compliant-ready checklists for airports across the UK.*

Using a mobile app on the ground amongst a large, distributed workforce means that issues are quickly spotted and resolved on the move, as every person becomes a pillar of safety in the fight against the pandemic.

An intuitive, user friendly app enables every staff member to take ownership of checklists. With a clear and simple digital interface, making those inspections will provide a better user experience for your workforce, making the task feel easier and more straightforward.

Any issues on the ground can be flagged and marked, along with screenshots and photos which help distribute critical information at a rapid speed. Speed of response is vital to keeping safety standards in airports high during the pandemic.

Using a mobile app that is carried on someone's person also eliminates any hygiene concerns that may have been present for those still relying on paper-based checklists.

A real time analytics dashboard helps Airport Operators stay risk free and on top of any concerns, and reports can be personalised and sent to different user groups at the touch of a button. Critical data like the frequency of cleanliness checks or

how certain parts of the airport are performing can be analysed to flag trends and patterns.

### Keep up to date with airport checks and stay risk-free

[SafetyCulture](#) has worked with the AOA to build compliant-ready checklists for airports across the UK.

These are aligned to UK government guidance, so you can rest assured that your airport will continue to provide a safe experience for your staff and customers.

By downloading [iAuditor](#), you can automatically access these checklists along with many more in their public library, and maintain quality checks throughout your airport to remain COVID compliant:

- [UK GOV - Working Safely During COVID-19 in Close Contact Services Checklist](#)
- [Social Distancing in Communal Areas Checklist](#)
- [COVID-19 Warehouse/depot Check](#)
- [COVID-19 Cleaning and Personal Hygiene Inspection Checklist](#)
- [Post COVID-19 Cleaning Site Visit Checklist](#) ■



*Sergio Colella,  
SITA Europe President*

# SITA EUROPE CHIEF PREDICTS THAT AVIATION WILL EMERGE STRONGER FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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*SITA Europe President, Sergio Colella, has told The Airport Operator that he expects the aviation industry to become stronger after the current crisis by becoming more digital and more collaborative.*



**H**e described COVID-19 as “the best digitalisation agent ever in our life” and predicted that the aviation industry would continue to evolve in the direction of much more widespread digitalisation. At the same time, with every aviation player facing pressures to cut costs, he said that there would be a growing awareness of what could be achieved by different industry players working more closely together.

Colella, who has responsibility for the IT multinational across Europe, said that SITA had been working hard to help its customers to “navigate through the storm”. He forecast that one effect of the COVID-19 crisis would be to accelerate the industry’s adoption of mobile and biometric self-service, resulting in a safe, frictionless passenger journey before, during and after travel and ultimately in lower costs for airlines and airports.

He described the company’s new “Runway for Future Operations” as a suite of solutions and technologies that could help UK airports of all sizes to resume safe and efficient travel operations at manageable cost. He stressed that SITA’s next

generation platforms had all been designed to work with existing commonly used platforms. The company could help airports to update their existing infrastructure and was not suggesting that they should “start from scratch”.

Colella said he hoped that the aviation industry would “not let this crisis go to waste. We need to learn in the future to do much more with much less”. The more airports invest in automating the airport journey, the more their costs would be lower and the benefits higher, with airport staff increasingly freed from conducting basic tasks and able instead to focus much more on providing a great passenger experience. While the scale of investment would differ, these principles were as applicable to small and medium size airports as to large airports.

Launched in July, SITA’s Runway document outlines four airport-relevant product offers: Smart Path, Flex, Airport Management and Omnichannel services.

SITA describes Smart Path as the industry’s most comprehensive whole-journey identity management solution. Your face becomes not

just your boarding pass but also speeds your airport journey through check-in, baggage-drop, security and border control, shopping malls and airport lounges. Crucially in the post-COVID world, the whole experience is based on the passenger’s mobile phone and is therefore completely touchless. The company says that biometrics can be easily integrated into existing common use airport infrastructure.

SITA Flex is the next generation of mobile-enabled common-use technology that facilitates contactless passenger processing.

*The more airports invest in automating the airport journey, the more their costs would be lower and the benefits higher, with airport staff increasingly freed from conducting basic tasks and able instead to focus much more on providing a great passenger experience.*



It helps airports and airlines to seamlessly transition to mobile passenger service applications that leverage passengers' mobile devices for interaction with all key touchpoints within the airport.

Airport Management works to ensure that the airport experience is frictionless, with safety and distancing – it helps to “mind the gap”. With its help airport staff can quickly identify how to ensure safe distancing and to control passenger flows and crowd density, so that travel can restart safely and cost-effectively.

Omnichannel Services make it easier to support passengers with flexible contact centre solutions – being there when plans change, keeping journeys stress-free and helping passengers on their way, all using multiple channels to keep passengers fully informed about the things that matter most to them.

While Colella expresses optimism about the future for aviation, he says it is clear that the scale of the collapse in passenger traffic this year was unprecedented. By September SITA data showed that, compared to the period before the crisis, three out of four international passengers had disappeared, while almost half of domestic passengers had also stopped flying. That had left a big gap to fill to return to 2019 passenger levels and it was probable that would not be achieved until 2024.

Reflecting on the effect of the crisis on SITA's own operations, Colella said he had been surprised by how quickly the company had been

*SITA describes Smart Path as the industry's most comprehensive whole-journey identity management solution. Your face becomes not just your boarding pass but also speeds your airport journey through check-in, baggage-drop, security and border control, shopping malls and airport lounges.*



able to adapt to its people working remotely. They had continued to deliver a high quality of customer service in a seamless way, an achievement that had been reflected in SITA's most recent customer satisfaction surveys. At the same time, the company had been taking steps to cut its non-personnel costs in order both to remain competitive and to minimise the social impact of the crisis on the company. Colella said that he had quickly adapted to using technology to meet colleagues and clients, though he was also convinced that the quality of the interaction that can be achieved through physical meetings was difficult to replicate completely through remote meetings.

Summing up, Colella said he believes that COVID-19 is playing the role of

another 9/11. Just as the security controls put in place after the New York terror attacks broadly remain in place today, so the health controls that are now being adopted by airports and airlines would follow a similar path. They too would not be just short-term crisis measures but would also be adopted for the long term. He forecasts that health concerns will remain a real topic in the industry long after the worst of the pandemic is over. “I expect the implications will continue” he concluded. “What I have learned from the last couple of months is that this is not a crisis. This is structural”. ■

**Sergio Colella is President of SITA Europe. SITA is a corporate partner of the Airport Operators Association.**

# STARR AVIATION EXPERT, DAN CRISPE, EXPLAINS WHY INSURANCE PREMIUMS ARE RISING

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*Looking back to March, it was clear that the aviation industry faced a period of unprecedented uncertainty, but nobody knew how long that would last.*

**A**s I write this piece, we look like we are heading for a second wave of COVID-19 and continued period of disruption for airports, airlines and everybody involved in supporting the industry. So with that as a backdrop, why are we seeing the cost of our insurance rise?

The Aviation insurance market is global and the majority of insurers underwrite business from all around the world. The market is broken down into three sub-sectors. Airline covers damage to the hull of the aircraft and liability arising from the airline's operations. General Aviation covers hull and liability of a wide range of aircraft from single seaters up to turbo props and business jets. Aerospace incorporates all non-flying aviation risks, including Airports, Aircraft Product manufacturers,

service providers and all other companies that support the aviation industry.

Over the past 15 or more years premium rates have been on a downward trend, driven mainly by overcapacity in the insurance market and ambitious growth targets to increase market share, which is in complete contrast to the aviation industry which has been grown steadily in terms of aircraft in service and passengers carried. Although safety across the aviation industry has been improving, this combination of reducing premiums and increasing exposures has ultimately resulted in insurers reporting underwriting losses consistently over the past few years, even though major claims have been few and far between. Over the past 2 years there have been a number of large high-profile

*The Aviation insurance market is global and the majority of insurers underwrite business from all around the world.*

losses across all sectors, which has exacerbated the problem faced by insurers.

Clearly this isn't a sustainable situation and many insurers have been reviewing and overhauling their business plans, with a renewed

focus on returning a profit to their shareholders.

Other contributing factors to the rising cost of aviation insurance are as follows:

- **Further cost control measures, trying to do more with less, with a lack of investment in talent and new technology**

- **Mergers and acquisitions. This is not purely an aviation issue, but insurance companies have been consolidating in order to reduce central costs and improve their economies of scale. This has had an impact on the insurance capacity available, as more often than not both parties would have participated on the same risks**

- **Underwriting restrictions imposed by Lloyd's of London has caused capacity to withdraw from the market**

Like any market place when supply outstrips demand, the prices fall, but when supply becomes scarce, then prices rise.

### **So how does this impact the premiums paid by the UK airport community?**

Although there have not been any significant losses associated with airports in the UK in recent years, there is a high frequency of smaller claims that arise, such as bodily injury to passengers, employees of third parties or members of the general public caused by slips, trips and falls on airport premises. We also see claims made against airport policies for accidents that occur airside, involving vehicles or ground support equipment. These are the more common and less complex claims. Nonetheless, according to our own market data, over the past 5 years these attritional losses have eroded more than 70% of the premium received by insurers.

Generally airports with commercial aircraft operations are required to carry large liability limits. Some



*Dan Crispe, Deputy Chief Underwriting Officer, Starr Aviation*

*We as your insurers are focused on long term partnerships, not just an insurance transaction, and the better we understand the risks you bring, the more likely it is that you will have a competitive and sustainable policy for many years to come.*

opt to buy in excess of one billion pounds, to provide financial protection in the tragic event that they are found to be liable for a major accident. For Insurers to provide such limits they are required to allocate capital against the policy, which comes at a cost.

Some of the rating factors that are taken into consideration when underwriting an airport risk are:

- **Limit of liability**
- **Number of passenger and aircraft movements**
- **Responsibility of the airport, such as security screening, and ground handling**
- **Claims history**
- **Risk management and mitigation measures put in place**

So, when taking into consideration the level of attritional losses, there isn't sufficient premium building up to provide sustainability should a

large loss occur.

In order to be prepared for a successful renewal you should:

- **Engage the market early**
- **Provide up to date information, including details of the challenges faced through the pandemic**
- **Have risk mitigation plans in place for the current level of operation**
- **Have future plans for ramp up/return to more normal service levels**

In closing, we as your insurers are focused on long term partnerships, not just an insurance transaction, and the better we understand the risks you bring, the more likely it is that you will have a competitive and sustainable policy for many years to come. ■

**Dan Crispe is Deputy Chief Underwriting Officer at Starr Aviation.**





# ADAM MORTON, CHAIR OF SUSTAINABLE AVIATION, EXPLAINS HOW £500 MILLION OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR SUSTAINABLE FUELS COULD HELP THE UK TO BECOME A GLOBAL LEADER IN GREEN AVIATION TECHNOLOGY

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*When I took over as Chair of Sustainable Aviation (SA) early this year, it was less than a month after UK aviation had made the unprecedented commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.*



It was also only a matter of days before the World Health Organisation classified the spread of COVID-19 as a pandemic and most of Europe, including the UK, started to restrict travel.

We are all conscious of the growing direct health impact of the virus, and how this has badly affected the lives of millions of people. Those of us who work in aviation will at the same time be aware of the huge challenges it presents to the industry. Suspension of international air travel, as well as the local and regional lockdowns, have required swift action to reduce costs and address pressing financial difficulties. Furloughing and job losses have compounded concerns about the health and wellbeing of our friends, colleagues, relatives and the wider community.

In the face of operational and financial difficulties, some may have questioned the industry's continued commitment to sustainable business. Today, I am much more confident that support for delivering net zero is actually growing, as shown by the recent oneworld announcement involving carriers from far and wide. I sense a common understanding that regaining and maintaining the confidence of passengers will be

the key to our future prosperity. In the short term, that means we need to grow peoples' confidence that it is safe to fly. In the longer term, we will only maintain our social 'licence to operate' if we can also assure present and future flyers that we have a clear route to delivering on net zero.

The carbon roadmap work published by SA earlier this year reinforced our belief that we all have a fundamental role to play in addressing the sector's environmental opportunities and challenges. My colleagues in aerospace remain committed to investment in research and development (R&D), with this still being focused on dramatically improving the environmental performance of engines and aircraft. By working together in conjunction with organisations such as the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI), the next generation of aircraft will be considerably more efficient,

supporting business, customers and environmental sustainability at the same time.

As fellow engineers and scientists would remind me, better aircraft are necessary but not sufficient in isolation. There is growing recognition that delivering our net zero commitment means we need to prioritise solutions to deliver the quickest way to decarbonise aviation. Right now this means we need to accelerate the transition to Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). Unlike some other decarbonisation solutions, suitable SAF products already exist and can be used alongside normal jet fuel without extensive modifications to existing aircraft.

They can also deliver genuinely lower life-cycle carbon dioxide emissions for aircraft of all sizes, over a variety of distances. However, SAFs are currently produced in insufficient quantities

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*“Today, I am much more confident that support for delivering net zero is actually growing, as shown by the recent oneworld announcement involving carriers from far and wide”.*

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*“By taking action in 2020, the Government has the opportunity to accelerate the decarbonisation of our sector, providing a better platform for long-term environmental and business sustainability”.*

be built in clusters in Scotland, the North East, the North West, Humberside, South Wales and Hampshire. E4Tech also concluded this would generate an annual Gross Value Added (GVA) of economic impact of £929 million, creating 6,500 jobs and saving 3.6 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent when fully operational. Many of the jobs would be created in areas that have been hardest hit by historic changes in industry or are exposed to similar future threats. In addition, investment could help unlock even larger economic benefits and jobs as export opportunities are realised for technologies and businesses overseas.

By taking action in 2020, the Government has the opportunity to accelerate the decarbonisation of our sector, providing a better platform for long-term environmental and business sustainability. At the same time, by helping companies here to build a world-leading low-carbon industry, other sectors beyond our own will be able to capture associated jobs and economic benefits. There is no better time to act in a concerted way to “Build Back Better”. ■

**Adam Morton is Chair of Sustainable Aviation and Head of Environmental Technology at Rolls-Royce.**



*Adam Morton, Chair of Sustainable Aviation and Head of Environmental Technology at Rolls-Royce.*

to have the required impact.

Like many other now well-established environmental technologies such as wind turbines and solar panels, scaling of production will require an influx of investment from the private sector. There is already evidence of this happening to some extent, but promising technologies still struggle to overcome early stage obstacles when constructing plants at commercial scale. That is why we have called on the UK Government to commit £500 million between now and 2025 to support SAF commercialisation and some R&D. The majority of this funding is in the form of Government-backed loan guarantees for first-of-a-kind SAF production facilities built in the UK.

In our discussions with UK Government, we have agreed that this level of investment in SAF technologies must also deliver benefits beyond the aviation sector. In addition to being of key importance to sustainable flying, the Government standing ready to support the private sector with this investment should assist the UK's wider green recovery. Crucially, investment should also create future-proofed jobs in industrial regions where the facilities will be located, as well as in rural areas where the feedstock that is the basis of the fuel will be sourced.

SA commissioned the sustainability consultancy E4tech to look at long-standing economic impacts recently. This work showed that by 2035, 14 SAF facilities could

# WILLIS TOWERS WATSON EXPERTS EXAMINE THE HUMAN ASPECTS OF AIRPORT RECOVERY

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*Compared to any other pre-pandemic restriction on passenger movements, COVID-19's impact has been catastrophic. No one is really sure when we will start flying again in anything like the numbers seen only a few short months ago. And clearly in the meantime, most airport operators are focused on surviving a pandemic that is threatening 4.8 million jobs across the global aviation industry according to the latest figures from IATA and Airports Council International.<sup>1</sup>*

**T**he possible routes to that survival, ultimately all lead to people and human factors. The confidence of consumers to fly again, the confidence of employees that it is safe to return to work, and the ability of organisations to keep people in employment, with or without government support. Also, in the medium to longer term, as the industry recovers, the ability to once again attract, engage and retain the human talent needed in an industry that, in all likelihood, will have reinvented the way work is done and the customer

experience. In short, the industry needs a new “psychological contract” with its employees, customers and investors.

#### **Eco-systems that connect people**

At the turn of the millennium, airports began evolving from basic transportation hubs to complex ecosystems designed with human interaction and connectivity in mind. In many cases, this shift provided fertile environments for sustainable revenue growth and investments in infrastructure.

The pandemic changed all that in a matter of months. The aggressive spread of the COVID-19 virus quickly turned many airports into ‘ghost towns’, barely operating with limited users and minimal staff.

*In short, the industry needs a new “psychological contract” with its employees, customers and investors.*

*Amol Mhatre, Managing  
Director, Willis Towers Watson*



*“While technology and automation can support the control of contagions, employees are the first line of defence for airport security, as well as the health and safety of passengers. So employee trust, confidence and wellbeing are crucial to an effective pandemic strategy”.*

Ancillary services, once thriving contributors to airport operations, have been shut for months; revenue losses, shrinking capital reserves and deferred or declining infrastructure investments have become all too common.

Due to the nature of their operations, it also falls to airports to marshal a first line of defence against the spread of communicable disease. The

skill with which airport operators respond to the pandemic will help to rebuild the public’s confidence that the threat is under control. But reassuring the public – both workers and end-users – about their health and safety is a complex challenge.

### **Customer Confidence**

On the user side, building consumer confidence will require airport managers to build safe passenger corridors from drop-off locations to the aircraft and vice-versa. Airport transits will need to be redesigned to optimise the flow of people, and technological and digital solutions will need to be introduced to minimise the potential for human contact and interaction.

All of this is likely to mean significant increases in operating cost, even as revenues fall.

Risks to the public are greater during communicable health crises and they are interconnected; this means no airport can be an island, and mitigation strategies need to reflect that. Ensuring public health and safety will require collaboration across a facility’s commercial and regulatory ecosystem, which includes other airports, governments, airlines and other employers.

### **People matter**

While technology and automation can support the control of contagions, employees are the first line of defence for airport security, as well as the health and safety of passengers. So employee trust, confidence and wellbeing are crucial to an effective pandemic strategy.

A recent Willis Towers Watson survey of 230,000+ employees from more than 50 unique employers across many industries found more than half of respondents to be suffering from moderate to high degrees of anxiety due to the pandemic; 25%

felt that the current environment was distracting them from work, and almost a third were worried about money.<sup>2</sup>

These numbers could be significantly higher for airport employees, who are facing reduced work hours, furloughs and layoffs. Even those who remain fully employed are likely worried about their own health (as well as their family’s) and safety every time they come to work.

Airports now face a growing challenge of attracting, retaining and engaging their employees who, given the widespread use of third-party contractors, may only comprise part of their facility’s overall workforce, but have a disproportionate impact on the health and safety of passengers.

In the short-term, airports will need to work differently, with the focus on keeping employees safe and managing labour costs. To help their businesses emerge from the crisis stronger, airport managers will need to focus on how their employees work, build resilience to deal with fluid workplace challenges and maximise the return on investments in their employees.

### **Helping employees cope**

Strategies that minimise the distractions employees face and help them to remain focused on customer safety and experience are critical to restoring stability in a highly uncertain and stressful environment. This may include initiatives to:

- **Understand employee concerns by conducting frequent and regular pulse surveys so that targeted strategies could be implemented, such as flexible work arrangements and short-term revisions to leave policies. For such strategies to be effective, it is important for managers to listen to employees with empathy and help them manage stress and remain engaged.**

- **Help employees manage their health risks and keep their families safe by providing access to frequent testing and pandemic cover as well as access to ‘tele-health’ services.**
- **Build trust by communicating frequently and transparently, consider risk-based pay and incentive strategies for front-line employees, and build awareness and promote the use of benefits and wellbeing programmes.**

Regardless of the above, cost management is likely to be the key focus for most operators. In order to spend money where it matters, it remains important to understand and budget for costs of employee rewards programmes and to free up cash by eliminating or suspending programmes that are underutilised, whilst negotiating vendor costs and services that matter more to employees.

#### **People strategies for a different future?**

Airports have always offered a dynamic work environment and opportunities for employees. While that perception may be fading and the future less clear, the current environment offers a defining moment for leadership, which can be seized to embed strategies that will endure over the long-term.

The cost of work can be reduced by redesigning jobs, accelerating automation and digitisation strategies and adopting talent-sharing/borrowing models. There are options to restructure reward programmes by aligning pay with new ways of working, reskill and upskill talent and redesign career pathways to engage employees and offer benefit programmes that employees need and value. Through the pandemic many employees have reset their priorities and what is important to them may have changed. Aligning spend with employee values will

*The pandemic may have significantly derailed the plans of most airport operators and had a profound impact on the way they operate, perhaps permanently. But it also presents an opportunity to find new ways of working, build resilience and optimise labour resources to create businesses that are better than they were.*

help manage costs and increase the return on investments made in employee programmes.

Reframe the employee experience, tidy up legacy arrangements and break down silos both within HR and across the business to create one common, foundational people infrastructure that supports the business to be agile and respond to external changes quickly. Designing and implementing a transparent people framework that provides the business with a view of skills, capabilities and people, enabling leaders and HR to deploy talent flexibly and efficiently will drive an employee experience to enable business resilience.

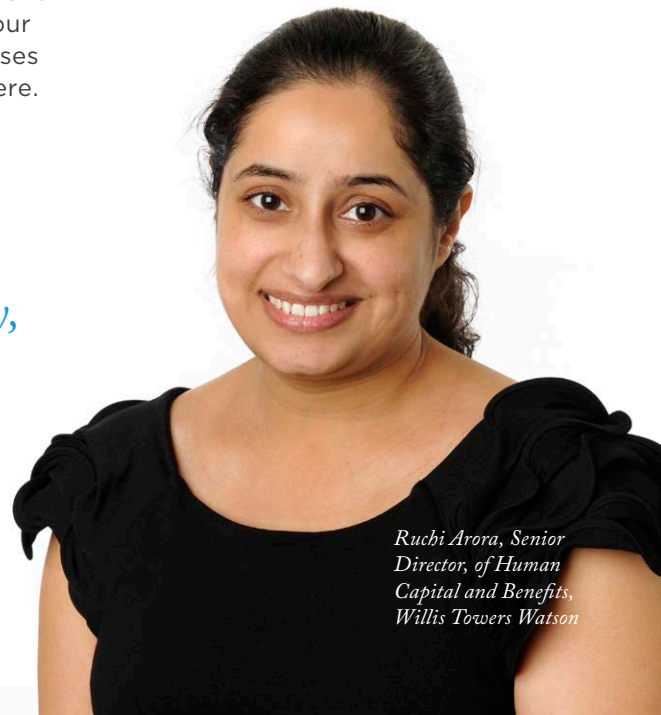
The pandemic may have significantly derailed the plans of most airport operators and had a profound impact on the way they operate, perhaps permanently. But it also presents an opportunity to find new ways of working, build resilience and optimise labour resources to create businesses that are better than they were.

*In the short-term, airports will need to work differently, with the focus on keeping employees safe and managing labour costs.*

1. <https://airlines.iata.org/news/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-aviation>

2. Willis Towers Watson Employee Opinion Norm Database results as at May 2020, representing over 230,000 employees of 50+ unique companies. ■

**Amol Mhatre is Managing Director and Ruchi Arora, Senior Director, of Human Capital and Benefits at Willis Towers Watson. Willis Towers Watson is a leading global advisory, broking and solutions company and a Corporate Partner of the AOA. In 2018 Willis Towers Watson created the Airport Risk Community (ARC) providing a network through which knowledge and expertise can be shared, whilst advising on emerging risks and trends within the sector.**



*Ruchi Arora, Senior Director, of Human Capital and Benefits, Willis Towers Watson*

# THREE NEW MEMBERS JOIN AOA

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*The AOA has welcomed into membership three new members with expertise in inspection management, aviation training and ground handling.*



**SAFETYCULTURE**, who have joined as a Gold Member, are looking forward to working with AOA members to raise standards of safety and culture across UK airports. The company has digitised best practice airport industry templates and put them into iAuditor. They are completely customisable and can be adapted to any airport environment.

iAuditor is a free inspection app used to empower airport workers in the field. Combined with the web platform, iAuditor can be used as an inspector software that provides visibility and insights to help raise safety and quality standards across an organisation. Also as an inspection management software, iAuditor allows teams to collect consistent data, standardise operations, send reports, identify failed areas and get problems resolved with easy-to-use checklist software. More information can be found at <https://safetyculture.com/airport-operators-association>



**GLOBAL AVIATION TRAINING SERVICES** is a Gloucestershire-based company providing a wide range of aviation training services and custom-built solutions in the field of Air Traffic Management. Its customers come from over 35 countries, many of which are fast-growing emerging markets. Its services can be provided either in-house or at its Gloucestershire Airport facility, a CAA and ICAO ATC training college. The company is now diversifying into a wide range of service areas, including Air Navigation Services, Aeronautical Information Management and Services, Communications Navigation and Surveillance Engineering, 2D and 3D simulation and Aviation Safety Management.



**SWISSPORT**, is the world's leader in airport ground services and air cargo handling, active at 300 airports in 47 countries, with 64,000 employees. In 2019 it provided airport ground services for 265 million airline passengers and handled 4.6 million tons of air freight in 115 cargo warehouses worldwide. Its vision is to be the aviation industry's most trusted single-source ground services and cargo handling provider. The company says it is focussed on consolidating and strengthening its market position to ensure it is constantly driving industry innovation in key areas such as service, quality and reliability.



*Stewart Wingate, Chief  
Executive Officer, London  
Gatwick Airport.*



**“THE MOST  
TUMULTUOUS YEAR  
FOR AVIATION...  
THE BIGGEST CRISIS  
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*- Gatwick CEO, Stewart Wingate*



**2**020 will go down as the most tumultuous year for aviation. The biggest crisis the industry has ever faced – a more than 80 per cent drop in passenger demand over all UK airports for months on end, catastrophic financial losses, jobs and livelihoods lost. As the CEO of an airport, the decisions I have had to make over the last few months on the restructure of Gatwick, the redundancies and the continual calls on government for support, have been the most difficult of my career. Like many who have worked in the industry for a long time I have never witnessed anything like the dramatic, negative impact that this pandemic has had.

I am incredibly proud of staff at Gatwick for going above and beyond at every stage of this

crisis. We were the first UK airport to mandate the wearing of face coverings; we've rolled out hand sanitisers, signage and social distancing measures throughout the airport in super quick time; and we have introduced such innovations as the UV treatment of security trays – all to keep passengers and staff as safe as possible.

Of course, we will continue to work with government on unlocking quarantine, urging consolidation behind an affordable and consistent testing regime and, most importantly, restoring passenger confidence.

Despite all this, we know that the sector is strong. Passengers will again start flying, albeit not at 2019 levels until the middle of the decade. The industry will continue

*I am incredibly proud of staff at Gatwick for going above and beyond at every stage of this crisis.*

to innovate. Airport capacity in the south east will again become a focus for policy makers.

In the eye of the COVID-19 storm, it may seem strange to some that I say this. But the industry has bounced back from terrorism, global economic shocks and freak weather events in the past. We know what it is like to adapt, to continue to press forward, to look towards the horizon.



At Gatwick, this is what we plan to do. In 2021 we will again push forward with our Northern Runway project. Through bringing our standby runway into routine use, we will be able to add between 10 and 15 additional hourly aircraft movements in peak hours, supporting up to 70 million passengers a year by the mid-2030s. Next year should not just be about surviving but thriving. As an industry, we must continue to look to the decades to come. As an island, UK air travel is not just a nice to have, it is a necessity for leisure, business and everything in between.

Having consulted our community on our masterplan previously, we know that 66% of those who responded were in favour of Gatwick making best use of existing runways. Next year, we hope even more are with us as we again become, as the Coast to Capital LEP as termed us, the “beating heart of our area.”

### **Rebuilding better**

Airports do not exist in isolation, but rather are integral to the local communities in which they sit. For Gatwick, we know the devastation of job losses on our locality, with

often many generations within families working at the airport. The Centre for Cities has warned that Crawley could be the worst impacted by the COVID-related economic crisis, because of the importance of Gatwick. All airports therefore have a responsibility to recover and to again become the economic centres of local communities.

We also know that the pausing of capital investment projects at Gatwick and elsewhere will have knock-on effects on building and infrastructure companies throughout the region. Gatwick is used to investing hundreds of millions of pounds each year, creating and sustaining jobs. As we build back better, we must also have one eye on the sustainability of the communities that rely on us. And of course, government must play its part too, with financial support for the communities worst affected.

As an industry, we are also committed to achieving net zero by 2050, a huge but necessary challenge. With investment in sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), industry and government must work together to start addressing this

*As we struggle to look beyond the here and now, we must all look towards the horizon and to what our sector can and should be.*

shared objective. And we must look further ahead to what hydrogen and electric technologies can offer as we begin to shape a future of aviation without carbon.

Rebuilding better is not about recreating a shadow of an industry that has gone. But building something bigger, stronger, and more sustainable than what went before. We are all in aviation to serve our passengers, but we must also recognise our obligations to our local communities, and the planet too. As we struggle to look beyond the here and now, we must all look towards the horizon and to what our sector can and should be. ■

**Stewart Wingate is Chief Executive Officer of London Gatwick Airport.**

# “I URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO ACT AND MY PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH ALL THE SUPPORT IT CAN DURING THIS TOUGH TIME”

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– *Shadow Transport Secretary, Jim McMahon MP*

I want to begin by sending my support to you at this really tough time for the aviation sector. You'll all know the Covid-19 crisis has resulted in a reduction of air traffic of approximately 90%. This has had a devastating impact on the whole aviation industry, which contributes £22 billion and 267,000 direct jobs and a further million employed through the supply chain. The UK is home to the largest aviation sector in Europe and the second largest in the world.

A number of airlines have announced plans to make a significant percentage of their workforce redundant. This is at a

time when the sector is undergoing structural changes which have already led to job losses, for instance, as a result of the collapse of Monarch, Thomas Cook and Flybe. Today we are faced with one of the greatest challenges facing aviation which remains a critical part of the UK economy.

This is clearly devastating for those affected and could have a serious knock on effect on the rest of the supply chain and potentially lead to further job losses. Even as we transition to a green economy, protecting jobs now, so they can be reskilled for the future economy, is critical. It is far easier to transition

*This is at a time when the sector is undergoing structural changes which have already led to job losses, for instance, as a result of the collapse of Monarch, Thomas Cook and Flybe.*

our aviation sector to become greener from a point of strength rather than weakness.

The aviation sector must become environmentally sustainable and the commitment to sustainable aviation fuels is a good first step, but to protect against short term unemployment and to help stimulate that change, the Government must take action now to ensure that long term needs are met.

The Government must balance the urgent need to protect jobs, with its role as a custodian of public money. Public funds must be spent in the national interest in a transparent manner and with conditions clearly set-out. As you expect we have engaged extensively with the unions in this sector, airlines and airport operators such as yourselves. Labour has called for any Government support to have the following conditions:

**1. That jobs are protected, and staff salaries are protected with a clear commitment to workers' rights.**

**2. That there is a clear commitment to tackling climate change and for the industry to use cleaner fuels and other cutting-edge low or zero emission technologies.**

**3. Any company in receipt of money must ensure its tax base is in the UK.**

**4. No dividends should be paid until the company is proven to be commercially viable, as we have seen in other countries.**



*Jim McMahon MP,  
Shadow Transport Secretary*

**5. A commitment to pay UK based suppliers as a priority.**

**6. All operators fully comply, without delay, with all consumer rights regulations - particularly regarding full customer refunds, and that they offer customers the opportunity to choose the greenest flight option.**

I urge the Government to act and my party will continue to provide you all the support it can during this tough time. ■

**Jim McMahon MP is Shadow Transport Secretary.**

JOIN THE  
**AIRPORT  
OPERATORS  
ASSOCIATION**

If you would like more information about AOA membership and benefits of joining our trade association, please contact us at [membership@aoo.org.uk](mailto:membership@aoo.org.uk)

**AOA**  
THE VOICE OF UK AIRPORTS



# “TRAVEL AND AVIATION ARE AMONG THE WORST HIT BY THE PANDEMIC ...I UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDING SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE SECTOR AT THIS TIME”

– *Aviation Minister, Robert Courts MP*

**T**he Coronavirus pandemic has changed our modern world. From the loved ones we have lost to the crippled businesses and livelihoods many have suffered, no one can claim they have been untouched by this invisible threat. However, by the very nature of this global pandemic, travel and aviation are among the worst hit.

The Government is determined to help us all bounce back. Before the pandemic, the aviation industry generated 230,000 jobs within the UK, contributing £22bn to

our economy. While relatively new to this role, I understand the importance of standing side by side with the sector at this time, ready to listen and engage, and determined to do everything in my power to help.

Within two months of becoming Aviation Minister, I reversed the curfews for hospitality operators in airports to help ensure income is still generated beyond 10pm. The Department also worked quickly back in spring, to take action on airport slots, meaning airlines

*Before the pandemic, the aviation industry generated 230,000 jobs within the UK, contributing £22bn to our economy.*

didn't have to use their resources to fly needlessly. The Government

*Robert Courts MP,  
Minister for Aviation,  
Department for Transport*



provided financial support for more than 55,000 aviation employees through the furlough scheme and gave £1.8 billion to the industry through COVID Corporate Financing.

More recently, we guaranteed travel vouchers to encourage people to book holidays and get back onto planes. And then we made steps in quarantine-free travel, through creating Travel Corridors, further supporting families to travel once again.

I know there is far more to do and while these may seem like small steps, they are helping contribute to the ongoing recovery of the sector. This is just the start and we will continue to listen.

The Transport Secretary Grant Shapps is delivering five speeches to different sectors of the industry this autumn, and we are also preparing to launch our Aviation Recovery Plan, setting out more measures to boost air travel, while continuing to prevent the spread of the virus. The department is sending representatives to all these events, to respond to your questions, report back to ministers, and ensure the

speed of recovery continues to increase.

We're now also taking the next steps to boost international travel, with our Global Travel Taskforce working at pace on a means to test international arrivals to the UK. We aim to allow people to travel more freely, and to more destinations, without having to self-isolate for two weeks. We know testing will entice even more people back into travelling, but we need to make sure it does so in a way that guarantees the safety and protection of UK public health.

As we build back better, we want to lead the way in developing an international standard of testing, that all countries can opt into, making travelling easier and simpler for all. The Global Travel Taskforce has already made real progress in this area.

But as people do start to take to the skies in large numbers again, we need to think about the long term. We have big ambitions for aviation, but this pandemic has given us a rare opportunity to build back with a new focus in mind: the environment.

I'm optimistic about the future of aviation, so it's only right we financially invest in it. We are the first major economy to commit to achieving net zero emissions in aviation by 2050. We want to be the first to complete a zero-emission transatlantic flight. And we want a future where people can fly carbon-free. Succeeding in this challenge will benefit not only the planet, but the economy, potentially giving us a share of a market expected to be worth £4 trillion globally by 2050.

We already have a range of programmes supporting research and technology on zero-emission flight. I've already seen how our investment into aviation research and technology has helped progress the first hydrogen-electric powered plane. I visited Cranfield University recently to watch ZeroAvia's hydrogen-electric plane complete its first flight. A feat in modern engineering, I witnessed the future first hand - it's only a taste of what's to come.

As we turn to our post-covid-19 economic recovery, I'm confident that our work developing sustainable aviation fuel in the UK has the power to revolutionise the way we travel, reducing emissions, securing green growth and supporting the jet zero agenda for years to come. The sector will also boost our prospects as a nation, creating green jobs in an industry that could generate up to £1.7 billion each year for the UK economy by 2040.

This year has brought unprecedented challenges, not least for aviation and travel. But as we look to the future, I continue to be inspired by the positive progress that is taking place across this fantastic sector each and every day, and I look forward to taking the next steps into recovery, together. ■

**Robert Courts MP is Minister for Aviation at the Department for Transport.**



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