

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

RE-OPENING OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

*a letter to the
Prime Minister*

Features

SMALLER AIRPORTS
*found new ways to survive
the Covid crisis*

ACI EUROPE WARNS
*airports are facing
“an investment crunch”*

ENERGY CHIEF
*predicts bright post-Covid future
for greening UK airports*

**CRAWLEY BOROUGH
COUNCIL** *New plan
to restore economic success*



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OPERATOR

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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



Welcome to this edition of The Airport Operator, which is being published just a few days after a very limited restart to international travel from the UK.

The AOA believes that the current approach of the UK and the devolved administrations is overly cautious and fails to grasp the opportunities resulting from the successful roll-out of the vaccine. We completely understand and accept the importance of safeguarding public health but believe that there are ways that this could be done without doing further damage to our sector, which is so important for the country's economic recovery.

That is why, earlier this month, 19 CEOs from airports across all four nations of the UK wrote to the Prime Minister and to the First Ministers of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales setting out their concerns for the future of UK aviation and outlining what needs to be done to achieve a meaningful restart of travel in a safe and responsible manner. You can read their letter in full in this edition.

Our Chair, Baroness McGregor-Smith, also wrote an opinion piece for The Daily Telegraph underlining that the UK and devolved governments need to change their approach. She argues that the Government must act urgently to prevent unacceptably long queues at airports like Heathrow, warning that they are bad both for passengers' welfare and for safety and security in airports. We have reprinted her article in this issue.

What I really hope is that over the coming weeks the Government will understand the depths of our concerns and that Ministers and officials will work with us to agree how they can improve the flow at the border, introduce affordable, rapid testing for green countries and ease restrictions for vaccinated travellers, as both the US and the EU intend to do.

My colleague, ACI EUROPE Director General, Olivier Jankovec, believes that the UK Government's current approach is risk-averse to the extreme. In an interview with us he notes that the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has said that vaccinated people should be considered as very low-risk and that states could contemplate lifting testing and quarantine requirements for them. He also warns that airports across Europe are facing an investment crunch and will need support from regulators and governments.

For this edition we spoke to CEOs responsible for Bournemouth, Exeter, Liverpool, Luton, Norwich, Southampton and Teesside airports about what the last extraordinary year has been like for them. A common theme that emerged from these conversations is that all have survived thanks to a combination of continuing support from their owners and the strong and professional commitment of their teams through the most trying of circumstances. Southampton Airport, in particular, had an inspiring and optimistic story to tell us about how its local council came to give clear backing to its transformative runway extension plans.

As well as talking to airport leaders, we contacted local authorities close to three of the UK's largest airports to find out how the dramatic fall in passenger numbers at their local airports and the resulting job losses have affected their communities. From Sussex to West London and the West Midlands, the same story emerges of local economies and prospects very badly damaged and councillors and officers working hard to secure Government support and to develop recovery plans which take into account that our sector will be one of the last to recover.

Finally, I would like to suggest that we should all expect the subject of aviation and the environment to take an increasingly high profile as we approach the COP26 meeting in Glasgow in November. In this issue you can read some encouraging news about electric aircraft trials and sustainable aviation fuel deliveries – and green aviation is a theme to which we will certainly be returning later this year. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive



DEAR PRIME MINISTER

**RE-OPENING OF
INTERNATIONAL
TRAVEL**

*As members of the Airport Operators Association,
we are writing to you to highlight our concerns
about the speed of restart for UK aviation and the
actions we believe Government must take to ensure
UK aviation can maintain its global standing.*





Naturally airports understand the Government's desire to adopt a cautious approach – a further lockdown would be hugely damaging. Nevertheless, we believe the current extremely limited green list of countries demonstrates that the UK is being overly cautious and will fail to grasp the opportunities resulting from the successful roll-out of the vaccine.

International travel is not solely about holidays, as important as they are. It is vital for people to visit family and friends abroad and for businesses to connect to customers. There are a million jobs in aviation, with a further half a million jobs relying on aviation in the tourism sector. This is quite apart from the many sectors that need aviation in order to trade with both existing and new, developing markets. With the current restrictions Government is applying, those jobs

remain at very high risk.

If we are to avoid further damage to the sector, to its employees and to the businesses that rely on aviation, then action is needed from the UK and devolved governments to allow for a more meaningful restart of travel in a safe and responsible manner. Measures include improving the flow at the border, introducing affordable, rapid testing for green countries and easing restrictions for vaccinated travellers, as the US and the EU intend to do. AOA has produced a checklist of these essential next steps and we would welcome urgent discussions with you, your ministers and officials to discuss their implementation.

If the UK and devolved governments continue with the current overly cautious approach and serious failures to manage the border

International travel is not solely about holidays, as important as they are. It is vital for people to visit family and friends abroad and for businesses to connect to customers. There are a million jobs in aviation, with a further half a million jobs relying on aviation in the tourism sector.

Despite the UK's early lead, we now see our European neighbours making significant progress on restarting travel in a meaningful way, in light of their increasingly successful vaccine rollout.

appropriately persist, then it is likely passenger numbers will struggle to reach even the historically low levels seen in 2020. This will result in severe financial difficulties for UK airports - the summer season is our most important revenue-generating period - and a need for UK and devolved governments to significantly increase financial support to prevent the further loss of jobs.

Despite the UK's early lead, we now see our European neighbours making significant progress on restarting travel in a meaningful way, in light of their increasingly successful vaccine rollout. With our global competitors, such as France, Germany and the US, having provided significantly more financial support for aviation, this compounds the risk of UK air connectivity falling behind. Without a thriving aviation sector, the Government's economic recovery and its ambitions for a global Britain and to level-up the UK regions will be undeliverable.

1.5m UK jobs are at risk and an entire sector has an uncertain future. We need Governments to act now. ■

Yours sincerely,

Brian Ambrose
Chief Executive
George Best Belfast City Airport

Nick Barton
Chief Executive Officer
Birmingham Airport

Andrew Bell
Chief Executive
Regional & City Airports

Spencer Birns
Chief Executive Officer
Cardiff Airport

Karen Dee
Chief Executive
Airport Operators Association

Gordon Dewar
Chief Executive
Edinburgh Airport

Steve Frazer
Managing Director
City of Derry Airport

Chris Harcombe
Managing Director
Doncaster Sheffield Airport

Vincent Hodder
Chief Executive Officer
Leeds Bradford Airport

John Holland-Kaye
Chief Executive Officer
Heathrow Airport

John Irving
Chief Executive Officer
Liverpool John Lennon Airport

Glyn Jones
Chief Executive Officer
London Southend Airport

Nick Jones
Chief Executive
Newcastle International Airport

Graham Keddie
Managing Director
Belfast International Airport

Dave Lees
Chief Executive Officer
Bristol Airport

Alberto Martin
Chief Executive Officer
London Luton Airport

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE
Chair Airport Operators
Association

Derek Provan
Chief Executive Officer
AGS Airports

Robert Sinclair
Chief Executive Officer
London City Airport

Stewart Wingate
Chief Executive Officer
London Gatwick Airport

David Winstanley
Chief Executive Officer
London Biggin Hill Airport

The letter was sent to The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister and copied to:

The Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA
First Minister

Michelle O'Neill MLA
Deputy First Minister

The Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister

Professor Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Transport Secretary

AOA CHAIR CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO URGENTLY SORT OUT “UNACCEPTABLE” AIRPORT BORDER QUEUES

17 May should have been a great day for UK aviation, with the ban on international travel finally lifted. Instead, the restart will only be limited and risks being overshadowed by the Government’s failure to manage the border properly.

Aviation is not just important for a well-deserved holiday, but for thousands of families across the UK it is a vital link with their loved ones abroad. For example, I have not seen my sister and nephew in the US in more than a year. I know I am not alone: around a quarter of all trips abroad in 2019 were for visiting friends and relatives. Many of us have missed births, graduations and other important milestones of their children or grandchildren.

Let’s also not forget the many businesses across the UK that rely on aviation for their own success, whether to find new customers or

export their products.

Sadly, 17 May will not allow for much travel. Only a handful of countries are on the green list, with some not exactly known for being a vibrant holiday destination. Indeed, there weren’t even flights in normal times to South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

Most of our top destinations for holidays, business travel and visiting family are on the amber list. The high cost of tests and the requirement to self-isolate upon return will remain a major barrier to a meaningful restart of travel. Many would-be travellers

simply cannot self-isolate upon their return, for example people with young children or those who need to be at work.

The UK and devolved governments need to change their approach. No one is arguing that travel should restart without any safeguards for public health. But the success of the vaccine rollout and the evidence that vaccines reduce transmission should give us the confidence that we can restart in a meaningful but safe way. Otherwise, 1.6m jobs relying on aviation and tourism continue to be at risk, while the rest of the economy reopens.



*Baroness McGregor-Smith
CBE – Chair, Airport
Operators Association*

“The UK border experience has long been falling behind our global competitors, but the last year has shown how far behind we are. For a Government that says it wants to see a Global Britain to oversee the chaos we expect, leaves you wondering what they think a global Britain actually means”.

For example, instead of reviewing the green list every three weeks, countries should be added as and when their health situation allow for travel to restart. The cost of testing should also be brought down as well, so everyone can afford to go abroad.

Lateral flow tests are fine for hauliers

arriving in the UK, so why shouldn't they be for the rest of us? Like with schools and the wider economy, any positive lateral flow test could be followed by a PCR test. This also allows for the important genome sequencing to take place.

All of this, however, will come to nothing unless the Government sorts out the border urgently. The queues we have seen at airports like Heathrow are unacceptable. They are bad for passengers' welfare but also for the safety and security in airports.

The current queues are the result of political choices. Airports have put the COVID-19 measures in place for every desk to be staffed by Border Force, but Border Force choose not to do so. They have had months to improve and digitise the Passenger Locator Form, but only now are the necessary improvements being discussed or trialled. Indeed, the upgrades necessary to use ePassport gates again are slated to happen over the summer when passengers are filling border halls when it could have been done while international travel was banned.

This is not good enough. The UK border experience has long been falling behind our global competitors, but the last year has shown how far behind we are. For a Government that says it wants to see a Global Britain to oversee the chaos we expect, leaves you wondering what they think a global Britain actually means. Surely ensuring we can welcome returning residents and visitors alike with a top-notch experience at the border should be the first order of business?

The UK Government has to get the third-biggest aviation market in the world open for business again. Every region benefits from aviation and 1.6m jobs in our aviation and tourism industries rely on meaningful restart, not to mention the many millions of jobs across the economy that are enabled by air connectivity. If the Government is serious about being a global Britain, serious about levelling-up, they have to get this right. ■

**Baroness McGregor-Smith CBE –
Chair, Airport Operators Association**

**This article first appeared in The
Daily Telegraph.**

SOUTHAMPTON AIRPORT'S FUTURE TRANSFORMED BY COUNCIL VOTE FOR RUNWAY EXTENSION

New airlines could be flying from Southampton to Europe's most popular holiday destinations by the summer of 2023 after the airport's local council gave clear backing to its runway extension plans.

Endorsing a recommendation from its officers, Eastleigh Council voted last month by 22 to 13 to approve Southampton Airport's planning application for a 164-metre runway extension. The vote transforms the airport's prospects, averting the danger of closure which had hung over Southampton since the collapse last year of Flybe, formerly its principal airline partner.

Operations Director, Steve Szalay, said he felt a mixture of delight and relief when he heard the news of the council vote to support the airport's £15m investment, which will generate 265 jobs in the construction phase and safeguard the future of the 500 people currently employed at the airport.

There remains a possibility that the plans could be called in by Robert Jenrick, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, or subject to judicial review, but Szalay seems confident that the council's decision will stand. He said that the planning officers' recommendation and the clear council vote in favour were the airport's "two trump cards", noting also that 60% of the residents who wrote into the final consultation had backed the airport's plans. The airport worked hard to win support from local residents by emphasising that it will continue to be a small regional airport operating within its existing perimeter and by improving its noise insulation offer to an average of £5,000 per house for those most affected by aircraft noise.

"I felt a mixture of delight and relief when I heard the news of the council vote to support the airport's £15m investment, which will generate 265 jobs in the construction phase and safeguard the future of the 500 people currently employed at the airport".

It all looked very different in March of last year when Flybe, which accounted for 95% of the routes from the airport, collapsed and the UK went into lockdown, leaving Southampton with only its lifeline routes to the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey. Airport chiefs warned that without the runway extension Southampton Airport's survival would be at stake, since the current runway length prevents many airlines operating their fleets from the site.

Szalay said that his airport would not have been a viable business had the extension plan not been approved. He pointed to passenger numbers last year of 400,000, with an expectation of 330,000 passengers this year. The break-even level of passengers for the airport is 1.2m passengers a year – in 2017, before Flybe's collapse, the passenger total had reached 2m passengers.

The green light for the runway extension will enable the airport to accommodate aircraft from the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737 families, with year-round flights and a full load of passengers. These are the preferred fleets of airlines including Ryanair, EasyJet, Wizz Air and Jet2. Before this month only Aurigny, Blue Islands, Eastern and Loganair were flying from Southampton, though BA CityFlyer is returning to the airport after 13 years, with summer weekend flights to 11 holiday destinations, and KLM is scheduled to resume flights to Amsterdam next month. In the short term the airport should also soon start to benefit from a strong roster of domestic routes, to be flown by Eastern Airways and Loganair, to destinations including Aberdeen, Belfast City, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds-Bradford, Manchester, Newcastle and Teesside.

According to Szalay, "the numbers at the moment are terrible", with substantial losses last year and even higher losses forecast for 2021. However, following the

runway extension vote, the airport is planning for "a good recovery". This will build on its strengths, which include a substantial catchment area of 3m people, great transport links (the airport boasts that its terminal building is just 99 steps from the railway station) and proximity to Southampton's cruise terminal, with Szalay keen to promote fly-cruise holidays to destinations such as Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Malta and Rome.

Business prospects for the area and for the airport are also looking up after Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, announced that the Solent is one of eight areas in England chosen for freeport status. Szalay has described the airport as "a vital component" of the freeport

plans, which it is claimed could lead to £2bn of investment and create 25,000 jobs in the area. The airport's North East business park has been selected as one of the sites that will be given tax advantages and Szalay and the local council are optimistic that it will become a key hub for green technology businesses.

Having so recently stared disaster in the face, Szalay can now plan a 15-year programme of recovery, setting his sights on an ambitious passenger total of 3m by 2037 – all made possible by 22 councillors voting in favour of a recommendation from their planning officers that just 164 metres of tarmac can be added to Southampton Airport's existing runway. ■



Proposed Runway Extension



Proposed Car Park
(subject to demand)



LIVERPOOL AIRPORT CEO PREDICTS EVENTUAL STRONG RECOVERY – BUT CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO CUT AIR PASSENGER DUTY AND BOOST REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

John Irving, Chief Executive Officer at Liverpool John Lennon Airport, is predicting a strong recovery in time, built on the cooperation of his team and help from the airport's shareholders.

But he is highly critical of the Government's failure to provide sector-specific support during the coronavirus crisis, disappointed by its cautious global travel restart announcement and insistent that it should help quickly by cutting Air Passenger Duty and taking concrete steps to boost regional connectivity.

Irving is confident that his airport

will eventually come back strongly and see a return to the passenger numbers of the past (5 million in 2019), but he said he found it "staggering that a sector as strong as ours was and the importance of it from an economic point of view for the country hasn't had a sector support deal. If I am honest, I find it amazing". He said the Government's failure to provide sector-specific

support to an industry that was "vital to an island economy" was in stark contrast to the support that many airports in Europe had received from their governments. While the airport had made maximum use of the furlough scheme, he said the Government could and should have done more to help and he remains concerned that the jobs support scheme and



*John Irving, Chief
Executive Officer, Liverpool
John Lennon Airport*

“The things that have got us to where we are, are the goodwill and the understanding and the sacrifices that our teams have made and our shareholders have made as well. They are absolutely vital to survival and recovery”.

business rates relief may be ended before the sector has fully recovered.

Now he says the Government should deliver on its promises to cut domestic Air Passenger Duty, which could both support Liverpool's most important route to Belfast and stimulate route development. It was also beyond time that the Government came forward with some specific proposals to boost regional connectivity that would support the airport's aspirations to grow.

Looking back over the extraordinary events of the last year Irving is keen to emphasise that “the things that have got us to where we are, are the goodwill and the understanding and the sacrifices that our teams have made and our shareholders have made as well. They are absolutely vital to survival and recovery”.

Irving said that from the outset of the pandemic the airport's focus had been on the steps that it could take to secure survival. Inevitably there had been redundancies, with the

loss of around 40 direct jobs (and hundreds more at partners across the airport site). Every decision to cut jobs had been “painfully tough” but the overall goal had been to protect as many jobs as possible and to protect the recovery. What had made that possible was the flexibility of the staff and colleagues and the understanding of the trade unions.

Another important factor had been the continuing support of the airport's long-standing airline partners. Unlike some other regional airports, Liverpool John Lennon Airport had not been affected by the collapse of Thomas Cook or Flybe. In normal times it has a huge mix of holiday destinations, as well as its “bedrock routes” to Belfast, Dublin and the Isle of Man, which between them account for a fifth of normal passenger numbers.

Commenting on the international travel restart announced by Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, Irving said it was a cautious approach and a limited start to recovery for air travel, rather than a roadmap to

recovery. There was limited mention of testing costs and Irving said he was very disappointed that the Secretary of State used what could have been a positive message to emphasise the view that people should not travel on holiday to amber countries. He said that would again reduce consumer confidence, which would hurt both demand and route connectivity. Irving emphasised that it would be vital for Liverpool Airport to have “a decent summer” and this would be heavily dependent on European flights.

He suggested that the Government should step in to support people going away on holiday by offering them NHS lateral flow tests that they could pack in their suitcases for use ahead of their return to the UK. That would be a practical step that would help by taking away the stress involved in having to find testing sites at holiday destinations. If such tests were good enough to travel around the UK, he said, they should also be sufficient for holiday makers travelling abroad.

Reflecting on the overall position and potential of Liverpool John Lennon Airport today, Irving said that there has been considerable success over the last five years in building the route network and when the recovery begins to gain momentum the airport will be well-served, across both European sunshine and Eastern European destinations.

Nevertheless, to give people choice it continues to look for routes that are either under-served or not served at all. Filling some of the gaps would help the Liverpool City Region to grow and Irving said that the airport will not be satisfied until it has succeeded in restoring some hub connectivity. The goal is a link to Amsterdam, Heathrow, Frankfurt or Paris that will connect strong regional businesses via their regional airport to a hub that would enable travel around the world. Irving concedes that Covid-19 might make achieving that harder in the short term, but there is no doubting his determination to get there in the end. ■

NORTH AIR DELIVERS SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL FOR PIONEERING AIRBUS BELUGA FLIGHT FROM HAWARDEN AIRPORT

Into-plane fuelling company and AOA Gold Member, North Air delivered fuel partly made from waste-based sustainable feedstocks such as cooking oil for the first Airbus Beluga flight from Hawarden Airport in North Wales to use sustainable aviation fuel.

After assisting in early trials, North Air's involvement in April's pioneering Beluga flight was the beginning of the company's first regular fuelling using sustainable fuel to a UK airport. The company provides into-plane fuelling at 17 airports around the country.

North Air CEO, David Atherton, said the company was extremely proud to have facilitated the delivery of sustainable aviation fuel at Hawarden, but he cautioned that wider take-up of the fuel across UK airports would be constrained in the short term by cost and supply, with supply being

the main obstacle at present.

He emphasised that from an airport perspective a key advantage of sustainable aviation fuels, unlike hydrogen or electric aircraft, is that airports don't have to build new fuel delivery systems. Sustainable aviation fuels are a "drop-in" replacement for conventional jet fuel, entirely fungible with conventional kerosene and with the same qualities and characteristics.

The maiden flight of a Beluga super-transporter from Hawarden using sustainable aviation fuel took off on

"From an airport perspective a key advantage of sustainable aviation fuels, unlike hydrogen or electric aircraft, is that airports don't have to build new fuel delivery systems".

13 April. Airbus uses the Beluga fleet to transport aircraft wings to the company's other bases in Toulouse, Hamburg and Bremen. The fuel

*David Atherton,
CEO, North Air*



used by the Beluga fleet is made from used sustainable feedstocks, such as cooking oil, and is supplied by Air bp. Sustainable aviation fuels are currently certified by regulators for up to 50% use in commercial flights. The Beluga fleet operating from Hawarden in North Wales will initially be loaded with a 35% blend of non-fossil-fuel-derived fuel and is set to reduce CO2 emissions by more than 400 tonnes over the next three months.

Andy Owen, Beluga Line Station Manager at Hawarden, said that “the progressive deployment of sustainable aviation fuels at Airbus sites is an essential part of our decarbonisation road map. We’re proud to have become the second Airbus site (after Hamburg) to introduce sustainable aviation fuel in our Beluga-fleet operations”.

David Atherton said that in the future his company also hopes to play an important role in facilitating the use of both hydrogen and electric



aviation at UK airports. Meanwhile the company itself is working to become more sustainable and sustainability key performance indicators will be a major company focus over the coming years.

He said that while the company had seen a dramatic fall in volume and activity over the last year, furloughing significant numbers of the workforce and losing more than 30% of its full-time employees,

he was confident that it is well-positioned to respond quickly and safely when the industry starts to get back on its feet. His prediction is that passenger numbers will start to rise steadily from this summer and that UK airports will be back to 2019 levels by 2023. ■

David Atherton has been CEO of North Air Ltd for six years and previously held senior positions at Heathrow Airport and Swissport.



*Alberto Martin,
CEO, London Luton
Airport*

LUTON AIRPORT CEO CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE MORE STEPS TO HELP WITH THE RESTART OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Alberto Martin, CEO of London Luton Airport, says the Government should act to cut the cost of Covid-19 testing and airport border queues and add new countries to the green list as soon as it is safe to do so.

He expects that the effect of this month's announcement by the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, about the resumption of international travel will be "very limited", pointing out that his airport only flies to four of the twelve countries on the Government's green list of safe countries.

Martin's checklist of further steps that he would like to see the Government take includes:

- action to make Covid-19 tests more accessible and cheaper, with

current test costs meaning that many people might not be able to afford to travel.

- measures to ensure that the flow of passengers at the border is safe, smooth and efficient.

- adding countries to the approved green list as soon as the criteria are met.

- and working with the EU and other countries to agree on internationally harmonised standards for testing and vaccine certification.

The Luton CEO said he understood the Government's cautious approach and accepted that safety must come first but he believed that further action would be needed before there could be a meaningful restart of international travel. "All in all, our expectations at the moment are not too high, unfortunately" he said "We know that the demand exists, but with the current set of restrictions it is difficult to see any meaningful volumes, at least for now. It is vital that more countries are added to the green list as soon as the



situation allows”.

Flights to Israel are one potential bright spot for the airport, with the Tel Aviv route having supported more than half a million passengers in 2019 before the pandemic. Martin says that the airport benefits from its proximity to the Jewish communities in London and Hertfordshire and his expectation is there may be a faster and stronger recovery on this route than on others, despite current tensions in the region. He also believes that an anticipated new route to the new airport at Eilat will perform well and predicts that “hopefully we can see that in the not-too-distant future”.

Martin is also encouraged by the recent arrival to Luton of two new airlines, the Ukrainian airline, SkyUp, which is launching a new route to Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, and the Moldovan airline, FlyOne, with a new route to that country’s capital, Chisinau. He describes Eastern Europe as “a big growth market for us, where we have seen significant growth in the past years and we have seen during this period that both our main operators, EasyJet and Wizz Air, have announced some new routes for this and next year to Poland and Turkey”.

Although the Luton CEO expects it to be “a few years” before the airport returns to 2019 passenger numbers of close to 18 million passengers, the airport is nevertheless proceeding

with its application to Luton Council to increase its annual passenger cap from 18 million to 19 million. Martin said that “now it is probably more important than ever to make sure that we are looking at the future to ensure that we can support the local economy and the national economy to recover from the pandemic. I know that it is going to take some time, but we need to be ready for when that happens. It is very important to show to our business partners and to our local communities that we will be ready for when that volume comes back. We can’t afford to wait”.

Reflecting on the last year, Martin said that it had without doubt been the most difficult in living memory for all those working at the airport and challenging for everyone, but what he wanted to highlight was that he was “really proud” of the professional way in which his teams had responded.

The airport is also proceeding with its plans for airspace change, following a consultation which saw more than 11,000 visits to the virtual exhibition and 2,400 formal responses to the consultation. Working closely with NATS, the airport expects to submit a formal airspace change proposal next month. The proposal will create a new holding area and new routes from that area to the runway and Martin says that it will mean “fewer delays for aircraft, safer routes and less noise for all the surrounding communities”.

As well as these changes in the air, the airport will also see significant changes to travel on the ground. An improved frequency rail service from Luton Parkway to London St Pancras will see a direct train running every 30 minutes, in addition to the current services. The opening next year of a new direct air-rail transit service between the Parkway station and the airport will cut the journey time to less than four minutes. Martin says these developments will not only make travelling to the airport quicker and more convenient but, by providing a fully electric journey from London to the airport terminal building, will also significantly improve the airport’s carbon footprint.

Reflecting on the last year, Martin said that it had without doubt been the most difficult in living memory for all those working at the airport and challenging for everyone, but what he wanted to highlight was that he was “really proud” of the professional way in which his teams had responded. He said: “We made significant changes at the airport to react from the very early stages of this situation, to adapt the way that we worked to make sure that we did the best for the business. The way that we all reacted to that I think is something that I am really proud of. My teams have been reacting very professionally at all times”. ■

Alberto Martin is Chief Executive Officer of London Luton Airport Operations Ltd.

ACI EUROPE WARNS THAT EUROPEAN AIRPORTS ARE FACING “AN INVESTMENT CRUNCH” AND WILL NEED SUPPORT FROM REGULATORS AND GOVERNMENTS

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE, has told The Airport Operator that his organisation is very worried that the economic and financial problems of Europe’s airports will make it very difficult for them to invest in sustainability, digitalisation and capacity.

Jankovec said that the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on European airport revenues had been “devastating”, with losses of €30bn last year expected to be almost matched this year by a further €29bn of losses. ACI EUROPE anticipates that revenue recovery will lag behind the recovery of air traffic as airlines insist on rebates and incentives from

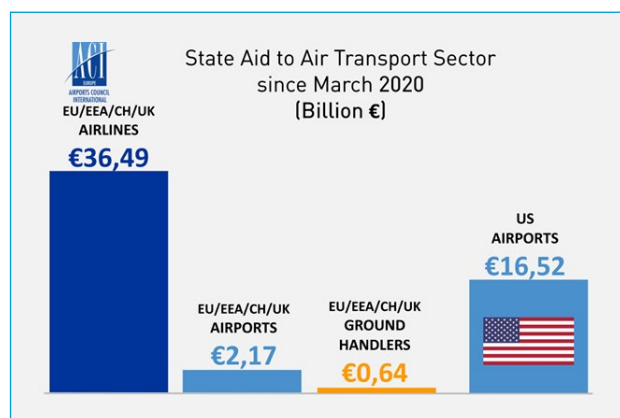
airports to secure restoration of capacity.

He said that there is a dramatic contrast between the situation of European airports and their counterparts in the United States, where the Biden administration has not only given US airports a lot of money in terms of direct financial aid

“We have gone through our most challenging time ever, but also possibly our most fascinating time ever”.

but has also lined up a further \$25bn for their modernisation. By contrast in Europe, while governments have supported airlines to the tune of €36.5bn, there has been only €2.1bn of aid for airports, who are also being discouraged from seeking aid from the Next Generation EU recovery fund.

Jankovec warned that if the potential investment crunch is not addressed it would “have a very detrimental impact on air connectivity, regional communities and the economy at large”. He said that European airports would need to “recover and restore their revenue-generation capabilities and this raises significant issues in terms of regulation and potential financial support”.



ACI EUROPE data show very low passenger numbers for the first four months of this year, down 83% compared to 2019. The forecast for the year as a whole has been downgraded from -54%, forecast last December, to -64% now. That would be only six points better than last year's performance and reflects that the delays in the roll-out of the vaccine in continental Europe are leading to continued travel restrictions and bans. ACI EUROPE's expectation is that by August the numbers will have improved to -54% but the rate of improvement for the rest of the year is expected to be slower.

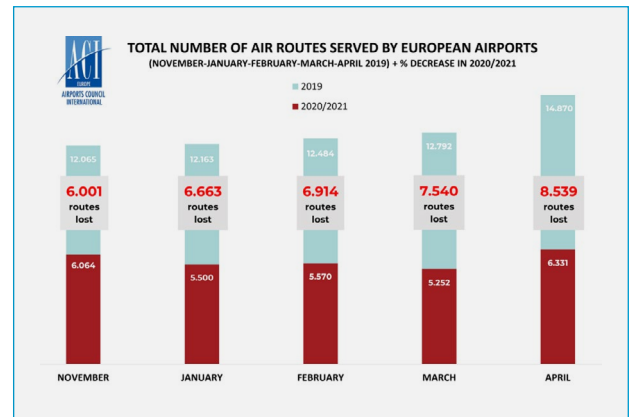
Meanwhile, connectivity has followed traffic patterns – it has not improved at all, but actually has got worse since last November. By November

European airports had lost 6,000 routes and as of April the number of routes lost was up to 8,500. Jankovec said governments needed to realise that this is where it hurts their economies and their ability to recover, “because if you don't support and help restoring air connectivity, it is not going to be good for jobs, for local economies and for the regions across Europe”.

Jankovec said that what actually happens next will be crucially dependent on the decisions that European governments take over the coming weeks on easing travel restrictions. In his view the UK Government's current approach was “risk-averse to the extreme” and he was “very disappointed” that the UK had not really taken into account the impact of vaccination in terms of allowing vaccinated people to travel without quarantine. He said he really hopes

that “the UK will reconsider its stance in the coming weeks because I think the risk is for UK airports and airlines to miss out on the restart and the recovery compared to the rest of Europe”.

He noted that the UK's stance contrasts with the latest guidance from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, which says that vaccinated people should be considered as very low-risk and that



states could contemplate lifting testing and quarantine requirement for vaccinated people.

In continental Europe many states have already made it clear that they will welcome vaccinated and/or tested travellers without quarantine. The European Commission has proposed that for travel into the EU vaccinated people should be allowed potentially without quarantine and potentially even without testing. It is expected to make a similar proposal for travel within the EU. Jankovec said that “the closer the regime in continental Europe and in the UK is aligned the better, since our markets depend on each other”.

Beyond restart and recovery ACI EUROPE has been working in parallel on the aviation industry's decarbonisation goals, as the world heads towards the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November. Jankovec sees COP26 as an opportunity for the aviation sector to raise its profile and to draw attention to the concrete commitments that it has made to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. With 170 airports in Europe making good progress on reducing their emissions and 52 of them already carbon neutral,

Jankovec sees COP26 as an opportunity for the aviation sector to raise its profile and to draw attention to the concrete commitments that it has made to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.



Olivier Jankovec,
Director General,
ACI EUROPE

“Politically the UK and the EU may no longer be integrated, but when you look at aviation the reality is the aviation markets of the EU and the UK are integrated and need to remain integrated. This is something where certainly ACI EUROPE and the AOA have worked hand in hand”.

Jankovec sees this as an area where Europe’s airports are world leaders.

He said that ACI EUROPE is discussing with its members to what extent Covid-19 has made it more difficult to deliver their carbon emissions goals and what needs to be done about this. He noted that, while sustainable aviation fuels would not require massive changes to existing infrastructure, hydrogen and electric planes would be different “because there you need to basically rebuild the infrastructure to accommodate these new

energy supplies and that is going to be very costly. The investment needs will be significant”. ACI EUROPE reaffirmed the European aviation industry commitment to Net Zero CO2 emissions by 2050 at its Sustainability Summit on 20 May, with many airports also committing to an even more ambitious target of Net Zero by 2030.

Jankovec said that this is an area where governments should step in to help Europe’s airports. The airports should be able to participate in national recovery fund programmes. The European

“The airports should be able to participate in national recovery fund programmes”.

Commission should also revise its “ludicrous” existing rules on state aid, which currently prevent European governments from providing investment aid for decarbonisation to an airport with more than 5m passengers and place stringent limitations for others.

Looking back over the last year, Jankovec described it as “a massive roller-coaster for the organisation and the team. We have gone through our most challenging time ever, but also possibly our most fascinating time ever”. Like its member airports, ACI EUROPE had downsized but it had been “very proactive” throughout the crisis. It had been an opportunity for ACI EUROPE to prove its value to the members and the number of airports in membership had grown. ACI EUROPE had also worked very closely with other aviation stakeholders and with the airline, tourism and hospitality trade associations. “On all Covid-19-related issues” Jankovec said “we need to speak with one voice, otherwise we are not audible”.

Finally, asked if Brexit had impacted on ACI EUROPE’s relationship with the AOA, Jankovec said that it had not. “Brexit has no impact on our relationship” he said. “On the contrary I think we have been even closer than before Brexit. Politically the UK and the EU may no longer be integrated, but when you look at aviation the reality is the aviation markets of the EU and the UK are integrated and need to remain integrated. This is something where certainly ACI EUROPE and the AOA have worked hand in hand”. ■

Olivier Jankovec is Director General of Airports Council International Europe.

CHAIR OF BACKBENCH AVIATION GROUP SAYS THE GOVERNMENT'S INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM IS "SIMPLY NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE"

Whilst the restart of international travel on 17 May is a step forward, it is the smallest of steps forward with an overly cautious approach risking holding back our national economic recovery.

We all understand that we need to remain vigilant against Covid-19 and in particular variants of concern, but it is hard to escape the belief that this is simply a restart in name only that will prolong the pandemic's devastating impacts on our airports.

Over the last year, we have had a conveyor belt of mixed messages from Government ministers that have been confusing, damaging and puzzling. Sadly, this approach has continued with number of unanswered questions following the announcement of the traffic light system.

On testing, there is little justification for putting fully vaccinated people under the same restrictions as those yet to be vaccinated. There is little justification for the insistence of PCR testing for green list nations, when rapid testing is rolled out across all other parts of society. There is little logic in forcing passengers to pay sky high costs for PCR tests and no logic whatsoever for the Government to continue to charge VAT on tests at all.

Like many, the APPG for the Future of Aviation Group called for the introduction of a traffic-light system which would allow the safe restart of

international travel whilst protecting against high-risk nations and variants of concern. However, we have ended up with a traffic-light system that simply is not fit for purpose. Whilst many of us expected a small green list, nobody expected it to be limited to just 5.5% of regular summer traffic.

Alongside this, most people accepted that the majority of Europe would be on the amber list but expected that travel would be restarted to these nations with testing and a limited quarantine period. The Government's 'don't travel' message was an unexpected and unnecessary shock and one that will significantly

hold back our national ability to begin the long road back to recovery.

Over the next few weeks, I will be calling for the first review period to look again at whether testing is required for low-risk nations and if it is that costs should be kept as low as possible, with fully vaccinated people exempt in line with approaches taken throughout Europe. As well as this, I will be calling for an extension to the overly cautious and damaging green list with key leisure markets like Spain and Greece and key trading markets like the USA clear contenders.

At the time of writing, we all expect that the even the limited restart of international travel will be met with lengthy and unacceptable delays at our borders. It is a significant failure of Government that they did not use the last few months to fully digitise checks and ensure that e-gates are fully operational, and the current deadline of 'Autumn' is not something that we could or should accept. Our restart is dependent on a number of factors, but a fully functioning border is one of the most important and in this area, it is clear that the Government has much more to do.

Understandably, the media debate will focus on summer holidays given the time of year but the last year has shown very real human impacts of the collapse in international travel that go beyond leisure travel. Impacts that are often untold, neglected and forgotten. From the airport and airline staff who have lost their jobs, to the businesses in the supply chain who have shut their doors for good, to the many families who have been unable to visit loved ones living overseas.

The Government must also not forget that aviation is a major economic enabler and one which will be central to our economic recovery. We know that a 'lost summer' of international travel will put a million more jobs at risk and cost the economy £19bn if the green list remains so limited. We know that our hospitality, retail



Henry Smith MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Future of Aviation.

The Government must also not forget that aviation is a major economic enabler and one which will be central to our economic recovery.

and leisure sectors will not fully recover without the £30 billion that international visitors spend every year in our restaurants, high streets and attractions.

Despite the initial hope that we would see a restart of international travel this summer that would boost our recovery, our airports face a second summer of low passenger numbers, pushing the impacts of the pandemic across two full years of lost revenue. We need to ensure that the Government understand and accept that for our aviation, travel and tourism industries that survival and recovery remains the biggest challenge and that it needs

continuing financial support and needs it now.

The current overly cautious international travel framework risks being another false dawn for our aviation sector and for our national recovery. I urge the Government to use the review periods to put in place a proper restart of international travel and one that allows our airports to begin their long road towards recovery. ■

Henry Smith MP is Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Future of Aviation.

*Councillor Steve Curran,
Leader of the London
Borough of Hounslow*



WEST LONDON COUNCIL LEADER CALLS ON AVIATION COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO WORK TOGETHER TO SEEK GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Hounslow Council has long been clear in our recognition of the significant local and national economic benefits of Heathrow Airport, and about our belief that the benefits of proximity to Heathrow need to be greater for our whole community.

That recognition has driven our calls to Government for an Aviation Communities Fund to support the local economy and communities through skills and re-employment initiatives, business support and investment in local infrastructure.

We have been clear too, that our partnership with the airport to maximise those benefits can address negative impacts, the climate crisis, and our local environment. We are committed to working together to secure local employment and to shape the area around Heathrow as a better place to live, work and visit. Together we must ensure that future airport and airport-related development delivers sustainable, suitable facilities and infrastructure, well-located and coordinated to minimise disruption and maximise community benefit.

That challenge and that partnership has never been more necessary. In 2019 Hounslow was among London's fastest growing economies, with growth in transport, distribution and accommodation, and information, media and communication. But Covid-19 slammed the brakes on, with aviation hit hardest, along with retail, hospitality and leisure.

Hounslow has seen over 25,000 residents furloughed (the seventh highest furlough take-up rate in the UK and at its peak this figure was in excess of 55,000) and over 9,000

Hounslow has seen over 25,000 residents furloughed (the seventh highest furlough take-up rate in the UK and at its peak this figure was in excess of 55,000) and over 9,000 jobs lost.

jobs lost (with young people twice as likely to suffer job losses as the over 50s). Previously unimaginable job losses at Heathrow and associated businesses - concentrated in lower-skilled roles - hit women, those on low-incomes, the unemployed and those from BAME communities hardest.

Oxford Economics' new analysis of Covid-19's impacts on West London's economy which updates their 2020 study, now shows Hounslow's GVA to have contracted by an estimated 11.3% last year (more affected than London as a whole at 9.4%), with some of our biggest sectors - travel, hospitality, and leisure - severely affected. Accommodation and food services saw GVA almost halve. Transportation and storage may see a GVA drop of 19%, demonstrating Hounslow's critical exposure to reductions in Heathrow's activity.

It is estimated that these two sectors alone will account for half of all jobs losses through 2020 and 2021. Restrictions-easing is expected to help partial economic recovery in London, but we don't expect to see employment return to pre-pandemic levels until at least 2023.

Against that backdrop, we can perhaps remind ourselves that Hounslow Council has sought to be at the forefront of the campaign to recognise the particular damage done to Aviation Communities nationwide by the pandemic. In November last year we organised and led the 'Aviation Communities 2020: From the Ground Up' summit, alongside partners in the West London Alliance, at which prominent parliamentarians and senior council leaders from across the UK highlighted how communities around airports have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

At that time, Oxford Economics' independent research forecast that up to £1bn could be lost from Hounslow's local economy due to Heathrow's downturn, with more than 40,000 jobs at risk across West

“Our partnership with the airport to maximise those benefits can address negative impacts, the climate crisis, and our local environment.

We are committed to working together to secure local employment and to shape the area around Heathrow as a better place to live, work and visit.

London. Official figures from August 2020 reported 40% of the borough's working population were either unemployed or on furlough.

The summit was the first concerted effort to bring together aviation communities nationally and to highlight the challenges and opportunities they faced. As I said then, hundreds of thousands of people in communities reliant on the aviation industry are facing widespread unemployment, deprivation and barriers to securing future work. Those communities, so impacted by the pandemic, are still missing from the discussion around the impact on airports and airlines.

At that time, I called on the Government to recognise the devastating plight of aviation communities, and for a place-based approach which targeted investment in training, reskilling, low carbon jobs and local infrastructure which would support wider recovery to enable Britain to build back better and greener.

We had hoped that the summit



As a council, with that uncertainty about long-term Government funding, Covid-19's costs and Brexit's impacts, we will do our part. We will work in partnership to help rebuild the economic cornerstone Heathrow represents for us; building back better, not bigger.

would be the start of raising the levels of consciousness within Government, and with other key people and organisations, about the very real plight our communities are facing. We hoped for a national, shared commitment to finding solutions together. Sadly, so far, the response from Government- as with our calls for certainty about longer-term council funding to meet the costs of Covid-19 - has been silence.

As a council, with that uncertainty about long-term Government funding, Covid-19's costs and Brexit's impacts, we will do our part. We will work in partnership

to help rebuild the economic cornerstone Heathrow represents for us; building back better, not bigger. We will keep supporting those who need it and deliver our recovery ambitions, without losing sight of those who face real barriers during the rebuilding.

We recognise that communities across the country are facing difficulties. Aviation communities are feeling this particularly so and the sector and its supply chain are amongst the hardest hit and least likely to recover at pace as the rest of the economy speeds up when the roadmap ends. This necessitates a common response from those areas

home to aviation and requires targeted investment and support from Government.

Hounslow Council and the West London Alliance have a long history of collaboration and partnership working. We now want to broaden the conversation. The political administrations are working collaboratively, cross-party, to identify and remedy shared challenges for the collective benefit of communities. We now wish to extend this to all aviation communities. Collective voices are more powerful than lone voices and that is why we must now to come together to work collaboratively with each other and Government in pursuit of solutions.

Together, we can support aviation communities from the ground up and ensure they are not forgotten.

We want to hear from those that want to be part of the conversation. ■

Councillor Steve Curran is Leader of the London Borough of Hounslow.

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT FLIGHT CUTS AND JOB LOSSES HAVE DAMAGED THE WEST MIDLANDS ECONOMY – ITS GRADUAL REOPENING WILL BE CRITICAL FOR THE REGION'S FUTURE SUCCESS

The West Midlands has been one of the UK regions most affected by the coronavirus pandemic, with the region at risk of losing more than a quarter of its jobs in the aviation and aerospace sectors, according to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

In the first half of 2020 the region's GDP fell by over 25%. Aviation and aerospace have historically been key sectors for the region, employing 45,000 people directly and across supply chains. Of these,

around 7,000 people have in normal times been employed either on-site at the airport or within its immediate vicinity.

Pre-Covid the airport generated

£1.1bn towards the regional economy, supporting over 25,000 jobs, directly and through supply chains. The dramatic fall in the airport's 2020 passenger numbers was a significant contributor to the fall of the region's



visitor economy last year, with the number of visits down from 134m to 48m and spending falling from £13bn to less than £5bn. Only a partial recovery is forecast for this year, with the number of visits expected to be around 72m and spending forecast to be just over £7bn.

In the spring of this year over 327,000 workers in the West Midlands were on furlough and unemployment is expected to increase as the job retention scheme tapers away. One of the West Midlands Combined Authority's top priorities is to help job seekers to secure employment, with the authority funding training for local people to learn new skills in areas such as construction, digital and health and social care.

According to the authority, the airport is "critical for the region's economy" for three main reasons:

- its size and direct and indirect economic value, including jobs on site and across the tourism, retail and hospitality sectors

- its links to the wider aerospace sector and ability to drive low-carbon technologies, helping the

region achieve a net-zero carbon position by 2041

- the strategic connectivity to international markets that it normally provides, ensuring that the wider region continues to be seen as a global hub for trade and innovation.

As the West Midlands recovers from the pandemic, Birmingham Airport is seen as particularly important to allow the region to maximise its unique recovery platform. Key

The dramatic fall in the airport's 2020 passenger numbers was a significant contributor to the fall of the region's visitor economy last year, with the number of visits down from 134m to 48m and spending falling from £13bn to less than £5bn.

elements in that platform are Coventry City of Culture 2021, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the eventual arrival of HS2.

The City of Culture programme, which includes a strong international flavour, kicked off this month, with the main opening event taking place early next month. Next year's Commonwealth Games is expected to create at least 35,000 jobs, with the spotlight of the games being used to highlight the region's international connectivity and its tourism, business and industrial strengths.

HS2's arrival in Birmingham, expected towards the end of the decade, will, the authority says, further improve the region's connectivity and the attraction of Birmingham Airport. Journey times from the airport to London are expected to be cut from just over an hour and 20 minutes to a little over 50 minutes. The authority says that the new Birmingham Interchange Station for the airport and the National Exhibition Centre will be at the heart of "one of the most attractive and accessible developments in Europe". ■

COLLAPSE IN PASSENGER NUMBERS AT GATWICK DRIVES NEW CRAWLEY PLAN TO RESTORE ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Crawley Borough Council will consult local residents next month on a new economic recovery plan for the town, driven in part by the “catastrophic collapse” in passenger numbers and resulting redundancies at neighbouring Gatwick Airport.

The plan is endorsed by an economic recovery taskforce set up by the Council last year in the wake of an alarming report shortly after the Covid-19 crisis hit from the Centre for Cities thinktank, which identified Crawley as the place at highest risk of job losses in Britain. The Council’s Head of Economy and Planning, Clem Smith, said that “the pretty alarming forecasts” from the thinktank had helped to galvanise the Council and its partners to set up the taskforce and to draw up the economic recovery plan.

While the reality of the last year has

not turned out to be quite as bad as initially forecast, the figures still make for grim reading. Nearly a third of the workforce at the airport was made redundant and unemployment in Crawley has trebled. A follow-up report from the Centre for Cities confirmed that Crawley now has the 7th highest claimant count across the UK’s largest cities and towns at 8.6%, rising to 12.9% among the town’s young people, and the highest take up of the Government’s job retention scheme at 18.7%. The Council anticipates an increase in claimant figures when the furlough

scheme ends.

Faced with a crisis on this scale, Crawley Borough Council has sought additional support from the Government. Smith said that inexplicably Crawley is considered by the Government to be the lowest priority category (category 3) for “Levelling Up” funds, meaning it will be very unlikely to secure funding from that source. At the same time, he said, Crawley will need significant further Government investment to enable delivery of the recovery plan. Prior to the pandemic Crawley was selected by the Government



as a priority for the Towns Fund and therefore will be able to draw on £21.1m from Whitehall, which will be used to help deliver ten regeneration schemes between now and 2026.

Smith said “we have successfully been unlocking investment not

A follow-up report from the Centre for Cities confirmed that Crawley now has the 7th highest claimant count across the UK’s largest cities and towns at 8.6%, rising to 12.9% among the town’s young people, and the highest take up of the Government’s job retention scheme at 18.7%.

just from the Government but also from the private sector to invest in infrastructure and regeneration improvements within Crawley, in order particularly to attract alternative employment sectors into the Borough. An excellent example of that is the fact that the new Town Hall is being built at this very moment and it includes 78,000 sq ft of Grade A commercial office space and the intention is to let that out to digital industries, fin-tech and professional services businesses, such as management consultants, lawyers, accountants and commercial agents”.

Another example of private sector investment cited by Smith is a £23m investment by CityFibre designed to transform Crawley into one of the world’s best digitally connected towns. Work is already underway to build a full fibre network to reach homes and businesses across the town. Smith described this as “absolutely critical to the ability for Crawley to attract new business investment and jobs”.

Crawley Borough Council Chief Executive, Natalie Brahma-Pearl,

said that, in spite of the major economic challenges the pandemic had brought Crawley, the town was perceived to be “rolling with the punches” and was demonstrably continuing to be a place to do business, attracting significant new commercial investment in Manor Royal Business District and Crawley town centre, including £70m of private sector investment by the Arora Group, which will include delivery of a modern and upgraded town centre railway station.

Lynn Hainge, the Council’s Economic Regeneration Manager, emphasised the focus that the Council has on helping local people to develop new skills. She said she was “very confident that the town will bounce back. We are already seeing and we have seen throughout the pandemic new investment coming in, development happening on the ground, cranes in the sky in the town. I am confident that we will recover. It may take a while and certainly from the aviation sector side we know that is going to take a bit longer, but we have plans and we have the people with us, so I do remain confident”. ■

LEADING AVIATION CONSULTANT SAYS AIRPORTS WILL NEED AGILITY TO REBUILD THEIR BUSINESSES AFTER COVID

UK airports will need all of their renowned agility to reshape their businesses for the post-Covid world, according to Capita Real Estate and Infrastructure Aviation Director, Ruairi Martin.

Martin believes that the unprecedented challenges of the last year have given airports an opportunity to reset their business models to ensure that they are well positioned to meet the multiple challenges that the coming decade will offer.

Beyond the immediate tasks of recommissioning airport assets, dealing with skill shortages and reopening, he cites airline relationships, health and sustainability as some of the key issues that airports will face.

Martin says that for all airports the immediate priority is to work out the optimal way of re-opening and starting to generate revenue again.

He suggests that Capita Real Estate and Infrastructure is well-placed to assist and to provide advice on recommissioning assets and on how airports can use retraining and reskilling to fill some of the gaps left

The expectations of passengers have changed too. In the short term they will be looking for reassurance from airports about their health and safety.

as a result of many people leaving the industry.

Acknowledging that airports and airlines have had a year of very little revenue, he anticipates an intense focus on how to regenerate that again quickly. As airspace change starts to save airlines time and money by reducing congestion in the air, he expects that their attention will increasingly turn to achieving cost and time savings on the ground. Low-cost carriers in particular will be looking to airports to help them to achieve maximum efficiency in turnaround times from arrival to departure.

The expectations of passengers have changed too. In the short term



*Ruairi Martin,
Aviation Director,
Capita Real Estate &
Infrastructure*

they will be looking for reassurance from airports about their health and safety. That is likely to include an expectation of an increasingly touch-free journey through the airport, which will encourage the early adoption of facial recognition technology. Such use of artificial intelligence for routine identity checks will free staff to move from a functionary role to one where they become the arbitrators for potential issues flagged up by the technology.

With a renewed focus from the UK Government on carbon emissions in the run-up to the COP26 meeting in Glasgow in November this year, Martin also expects that environmental issues will move up the agenda for many passengers. He acknowledges that Gatwick, Heathrow and many other UK airports have been working on these

issues for a decade but suggests that expectations around sustainability are now much higher than they were.

This means that airports will need to demonstrate not only the actions they are taking to cut carbon emissions, but also to look closely at issues around air pollution and environmental resilience – the ability of airports to adapt to the changing climate, including, for example, ensuring that their drainage systems are still adequate to cope with the likelihood of more frequent episodes of very wet weather.

Martin predicts a big debate over the coming decade on what will replace jet fuel and how much change to airport infrastructure that will require. In the case of sustainable aviation fuels the impact is likely to be modest, since they are mixed at source, but hydrogen would be

a completely different story and electric aircraft, which Martin expects to be operating within five years, would also require very considerable infrastructure adaptations.

For Martin the common theme across many of these issues is that airports will be facing a period of profound change at a time when their finances will be constrained. His expectation is that this will offer Capita some very positive opportunities to work with airports to help them to develop bespoke solutions that will meet the particular challenges that they face.

Accepting that the last year has been devastating for airports and their people, he now sees cautious signs of optimism about the recovery. He says that Capita is looking forward to working with airports to make a success of that by helping them to respond with the agility for which the aviation sector has been famous for over a century. ■



Bournemouth Air
Regional & City Airports

Arrivals

SMALLER AIRPORTS FOUND NEW WAYS TO SURVIVE THE COVID CRISIS

Airports across the UK have cut costs to survive over the last year and Bournemouth, Exeter and Norwich airports were no exception.



*Andrew Bell, Regional
& City Airports Chief
Executive*



But what is striking about their Covid-19 story is that the three smaller English airports, all owned by Regional & City Airports, also found alternative revenue sources to help compensate for the loss of commercial passenger traffic.

Regional & City Airports Chief Executive, Andrew Bell, said that cash preservation had been his company's number one objective over the past year. Right-sizing the operations had been a key part of that and the company today is 30% smaller than it was pre-Covid, but it hadn't all been about trying to save money. It had also been about trying to identify new ways of earning money.

From the outset the company had been active in offering its airfields to airlines who needed fleet parking capacity. For several months early on British Airways parked most of their short-haul fleet and some of their long-haul aircraft at Bournemouth. There are still a large number of aircraft parked at Norwich, including BA CityFlyer aircraft and planes from a number of other airlines.

The company also increased its

engagement with the military, offering its airfields for training sorties. That had proven to be popular and also helpful in terms of generating some additional revenue.

Regional & City Airports had also very quickly explored the potential for offering cargo-handling capability, an opportunity arising from the fact that much of the UK's belly capacity for freight had just disappeared overnight. Bell said that had presented an obvious opportunity to help get freight flowing in and out of the country. This had included handling PPE imports at Bournemouth, where the airport has "essentially grown in a year from having no air freight at all to where we are today, which is a significant air freight operation – and the partners we are working with are confident that there is a long-term future for it".

Reflecting on Government support for aviation over the past year, Bell's verdict is mixed. On the one hand, he said, the furlough scheme had been excellent and there was no doubt that it had saved jobs. The company had also taken advantage of the Airport & Ground Operations Support Scheme. That apart, he said, "there has really been very little of the targeted support that other sectors have had

and that is a surprise, to be honest, because aviation is not just about the businesses within the sector. It is about the whole pandemic recovery and connectivity and economic restart, not to mention the million jobs that are associated with it directly and indirectly. It feels like there has been a bit of a disconnect there".

Bell is crystal clear that the single most useful thing that the Government could do to help airports like his now would be to cut domestic Air Passenger Duty, ending the anomaly that the duty is currently payable on both legs of domestic return bookings. He says

“Aviation is not just about the businesses within the sector. It is about the whole pandemic recovery and connectivity and economic restart, not to mention the million jobs that are associated with it directly and indirectly”.

that for as long as he can remember airlines have told the company that “the reason that routes are too risky to introduce, or the reason that additional frequencies are too risky or that route viability is marginal or not sustainable, is APD”. He said there were tangible examples of where routes had either been withdrawn or hadn’t started because of APD, so he had no doubt that if the tax burden were less onerous airlines would make sure that they were “serving a market that they just can’t quite make work at the moment”.

The issue is particularly important for Regional & City Airports because of its former reliance on Flybe, whose headquarters and home base were at Exeter before it collapsed just two weeks before the first national lockdown. During that two-week period the company had reached agreement with a number of different airlines to operate routes from Exeter, that had previously been operated by Flybe – though, in the event, the new operators didn’t start flying because nothing was flying. Bell said he was pleased that the new airlines had remained in place and had restated their intention to start flying this summer.

He said that the company had prioritised replacing the routes that had been lost. That would be largely achieved over the next 12 months, but he cautioned that rebuilding the volume of passenger traffic would probably take longer. His expectation is that the switch from Flybe to other operators will result in a change in available capacity. The network had been largely restored but the aircraft might initially be smaller and the frequencies lower.

Turning to the restart of European routes, Bell said that he expects the key challenges to be around the practicality and cost of testing and the implications of quarantine. He noted that while some European countries were indicating that people who had completed the vaccination process would be free to travel, the UK Government’s approach seemed



Reflecting on the past year, Bell concludes that it had been, in equal measure, extremely challenging but also positive in terms of everyone in the company working together to achieve common objectives.

to be more cautious, in spite of the success of its successful vaccine rollout which was “miles ahead of the rest of the world”.

While his immediate focus is on this summer’s travel restart, Bell is also paying close attention to the industry’s progress in cutting carbon emissions and says he is really excited about a project in which Exeter Airport is involved to demonstrate the feasibility of electric aircraft, beginning with trial flights of small commuter aircraft this summer.

He said that what is important about the project is that it is not just about the planes themselves, but

also what would be needed on the ground in terms of infrastructure, power sources and skills to maintain and support electric aviation. He said that Exeter is keen to become a focal point in the industry for research on these issues.

Reflecting on the past year, Bell concludes that it had been, in equal measure, extremely challenging but also positive in terms of everyone in the company working together to achieve common objectives. He describes the year just gone as unprecedented and hard work, but said he feels more positive about the future now than at any point since the start of the pandemic. ■



HOW ARRIVALS DUTY FREE CAN SUPPORT AIRPORT RECOVERY AND DRIVE GROWTH

*By Francois Bourienne, Chair of the UK
Travel Retail Forum*

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated how important it is for airports to develop alternatives to non-aeronautical revenue. Since the commercialisation of civil aviation, duty free has been an important source of such non-aeronautical revenue for airports across the UK. For some smaller airports, retail sales can account for nearly 40% of all revenue. More than that – retail supports growth of the local economy and supports jobs in and around the airport campus. It allows airports to keep ticket prices competitive, reinvest in development and go after the routes needed to boost connectivity.

Throughout the last year it is clear that the aviation industry has been disproportionately affected. As airports look to restart and recovery, now is the time for the Government to give them the ability to get back on their feet as quickly as possible. The introduction of policy for arrivals duty free stores would speed the recovery and more.

The need for duty free stores on arrival

As a policy, arrivals duty free entirely aligns with the Government's priorities. It will generate jobs and revenue, has the potential to deliver environmental benefits and all at no cost to the taxpayer.

“Since the commercialisation of civil aviation, duty free has been an important source of non-aeronautical revenue for airports across the UK”.



*Francois Bourienne,
Chair of the UK Travel
Retail Forum*

Throughout the last year it is clear that the aviation industry has been disproportionately affected. As airports look to restart and recovery, now is the time for the Government to give them the ability to get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

Focusing on the Government's levelling up agenda, arrivals stores will have a greater benefit for regional airports than for large hubs, where retail sales can constitute as much as 40% of revenue. Independent research indicates that arrivals duty free would increase spend by 20-30% by passenger. Regional airports have a larger share of British residents as customers, with whom arrivals duty free will likely be popular, as it allows them to purchase on their return home. While the large London airports will, of course, benefit from arrivals duty free, the greatest impact will be felt regionally.

It is important to remember that this policy considers duty free purchases that the passengers are already very likely to make and currently do so on departure from their overseas airport. What this policy does is give retailers and airports the opportunity to bring those sales home to the UK, retaining all the benefits of

increased sales in the UK economy, rather than in the economies of other countries.

The environmental impact may not be an angle that most people immediately think of, but arrivals shops have the potential to help here as well. By giving passengers the option to buy on arrival, the total weight of carry-on baggage could be reduced for flights, lowering fuel requirements and lowering associated emissions.

Given the devastating impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on airports and the travel industry, introducing arrivals duty free would be a win for all. It would give airports the opportunity to speed up their recovery and provide a boost to local economies. It is rare to come across a policy option that provides benefits to all sides. The Chancellor should seize this opportunity to deliver for the UK's aviation sector, its regions and the UK population eagerly looking forward to getting back in the skies. ■

*Ian Smyth, Director of
UK Power Networks
Services*



ENERGY CHIEF PREDICTS BRIGHT POST-COVID FUTURE FOR GREENING UK AIRPORTS

The head of one of the UK's leading energy infrastructure companies has some good news for UK airports as they start to contemplate their post-Covid future.



lan Smyth, Director of UK Power Networks Services, says that airports can be at the heart of the UK's national infrastructure strategy and that his company has "a firm conviction that the airport sector will rebound very well from Covid. We can look out optimistically at a new world post-Covid and the role that aviation has to play in that, because it will play a role and it will be a central role. We are an island and the aviation sector will be absolutely critical".

But Smyth, whose company builds and operates energy infrastructure across all transport modes, also emphasises that the opportunities for the aviation sector will only be realised if airports take action to secure a greener future and if air flights become sustainable. He foresees a system where high-speed rail and sustainable aviation will enable passengers to decarbonise their journeys door-to-door, especially if rail routes connect airports across

the country and electric vehicle infrastructure is available to charge road transport.

Over the last year, UK Power Networks Services has been working with airport clients on how to develop and maintain the resilience of their networks and how to get their costs and emissions down. Smyth describes the last year as "truly challenging for airports and we were there throughout all of that.

"We were often the only organisation with the core skeleton airport staff. That was incredibly powerful for building relationships for us and working together in many ways".

We didn't stop. We stayed at the airports. We were often the only organisation with the core skeleton airport staff. That was incredibly powerful for building relationships for us and working together in many ways".

For Smyth, three innovative company projects in particular exemplify how UK Power Networks Services is seeking to help the country's airports to secure a sustainable future – its digital model project at Bristol Airport, its microgrid project at London City Airport and its membership of a consortium with Cornwall Airport Newquay, Exeter Airport and others to demonstrate the feasibility of regional electric aviation.

Smyth's company is working with Bristol Airport to help it to identify opportunities and cut emissions as it works to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025 and net zero by 2050. At the heart of the modelling and analysis is a plan to digitally represent the airport's physical assets. Smyth says that

once the digital model is complete “you can very cost-efficiently look at the asset and identify things like constraints in where the asset operates, assets that are overloaded and where you might need to reinforce or develop them and areas that are under-utilised”

With evident pride, Smyth describes the Bristol project as “very innovative”. He says an advantage of having a digital model could be to provide access to identify ways to innovate on the network and integrate new technologies without having to enter the physical airport environment.

UK Power Networks Services has been a close and long-standing partner of London City Airport and its £500 million development programme. The airport asked it to advise on the optimum size and combination of technologies for it to meet its energy demand, reduce energy costs and decrease carbon emissions.

Smyth says that his company’s work with London City has “developed an innovative way of addressing the airport’s energy requirements through the integration of a microgrid, supporting London City’s leadership on sustainability”. A crucial stage in that project was reached last month when part of the airport’s renewable solar photo-voltaic generation facility went live. The solar PV facility was carefully constructed to ensure that it complied with airport glint and glare restrictions. Electric vehicle infrastructure has also been a key element in the project, meeting the airport’s own needs, providing a service for passengers using the airport’s car park and attracting others, like black cab drivers. Summarising the overall value of the project, Smyth says that it “improves the carbon footprint of the airport, increases its resilience, reduces costs and potentially identifies revenue opportunities that help with the financial position”.

While the focus of the Bristol and



UK Power Networks Services has been a close and long-standing partner of London City Airport and its £500 million development programme.

London City projects has been on airport emissions, Smyth says that the most important element of aviation carbon emissions relates to what comes to the airport and what flies out. That, he says, is why UK Power Networks Services is very proud to be part of the consortium, announced in March, that has been set up to demonstrate the feasibility and advantages of regional electrical aviation.

Led by the US electric aviation specialist, Ampaire, the consortium’s work will include demonstration flights in the South West of England originating from Cornwall Airport Newquay and Exeter Airport. The role of UK Power Network Services will be to advise on airport electrical infrastructure, to realise charging solutions for the demonstrations and to look ahead to a future scale-up for the wide use of electric aircraft, connecting power demand to sustainable electrical power sources. Smyth says he expects the project to confirm that short-range point-to-point domestic flights will prove

to be the best prospect for electric aircraft and an important element in what he predicts will be “an explosion in diversity” of aviation fuel sources.

Beyond these three projects, in the immediate future UK Power Networks Services expects to have a particular focus on regional airports. That is partly because, looking back, the impact of Covid on these airports has been greater and deeper than for larger hub and international freight airports. But, more positively, looking forward, also because it sees regional airports as a particular “area of growth” between now and 2024/2025, with domestic flights recovering more quickly than international flights. Smyth says that his company recognises that UK regional airports are a particular group with particular needs and believes that it is well-placed to help regional airport chief executives, not least to ensure that “they don’t get left behind in their pursuit of innovation to decarbonise”. ■

WHERE ARE WE GOING ON AVIATION TAXATION?

Taxes will always be with us, but that does not mean the exact nature and their effects might not change.

We all know that APD in the UK is the highest such tax, probably in the world. It holds back the economic development of our country, and our regional and global connectivity. While the Treasury admit it is there for revenue-raising not sustainability purposes, many see it as justified on that front – even though it is the worst type of environmental tax; not stimulating change to a better way of working but just bluntly harming an industry, while restricting lower income people's access to it.

So how can we expect APD to change in the near future and the longer term, and what can we as an industry work for?

The Treasury is currently consulting on proposals, which we believe they will end up implementing, to cut domestic APD at the expense of an increase in (probably) very long-haul flights. Those are flights to destinations more than 6,000 miles from London, so half of South America and from Malaysia and the Philippines onwards in south-east Asia and Oceania.

AOA is still finalising its position on these proposals with members



*Christopher Snelling,
Policy Director, AOA*

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regarding these proposals but in general we hope to be supportive. Collectively we may benefit from the change, and it is the only 'improvement' on the table at the moment.

If the change does go through, a potential halving of the tax on domestic journeys could make some more routes viable – especially for smaller non-London airports. This would be a great boost for 'levelling up', ensuring improved connectivity between the UK's nations and regions, and to the global business centre that is London. On the other side of the ledger, the very longhaul change may, at the margin, hurt our very largest airports by shifting the balance further towards Continental competitors for those markets. This could be particularly so for flights for travellers outside London, who might already be catching a connecting flight to then travel longhaul.

Nevertheless, in the adverse conditions airports face at the moment, on carbon as well as other issues, any broadly positive move counts as a big win. It shows the value of demonstrating to political audiences over the long term the value aviation can bring to parts of

the UK economy and society.

Given these adverse conditions, what is happening elsewhere in aviation taxation? From our work with ACI we know that in the past year, Austria and the Netherlands have introduced or increased aviation taxes. Sweden introduced a tax in 2018. France already had a wide range of specific taxes on aviation and is looking to increase those. Though they will all still be lower than UK APD. ACI World last summer published a policy brief aimed at explaining the negative effects of aviation taxation, but the reality is that the reaction to this work in Europe was muted. We understand it was received with skepticism by the European Commission and some European governments, because they are focused on the negative externalities of aviation. While all these changes are bad news collectively, at least this may start to erode the international competitive disadvantage the UK has landed itself with.

Other adjustments are suggested such as a frequent flyer tax, or exact distance charging instead of bands, but we expect (and will campaign) for these not to move forward due to their massive complexity and, in the case of distance charging, distorting effects on the UK market for very short European routes. Other ideas campaigners pick up such as taxing

“We have to fight the tax argument strongly and repeatedly, to defend our industry from campaigners who simply want to achieve their ends by preventing people travelling, and politicians who will see us as an easy source of revenue”.

aviation fuel remain off the table due to the difficulties of making such a change globally.

Devolution on the other hand will be part of the future of APD in the UK – with Northern Ireland and then Scotland gaining the ability to control the tax in recent years. However, especially with the strength of the Green Party in Scotland that does not necessarily mean an economy boosting cut. It does though allow some move to protect airports in Northern Ireland against unfair competition from the Republic, though Northern Ireland can only set the long-haul rate.

The most interesting area for possible change will be sustainability. As stated above, APD is a bad tax as it does not stimulate change. But with the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) becoming a possibility through the 2020s, that could change. A reduced rate for flights or airlines that meet a given use threshold could be a way to help

our industry change for the better, instead of just trying to hold us down. Beyond SAF, surely zero-emission flights, when they become possible, should be seen as harm-free public transport, and taxed, or rather not taxed, accordingly. AOA is pursuing these issues through Sustainable Aviation and directly with Government.

But for now, the continual fight will be to show the collective negative effects of aviation taxation, and the benefits positive change could bring. We have to fight the tax argument strongly and repeatedly, to defend our industry from campaigners who simply want to achieve their ends by preventing people travelling, and politicians who will see us as an easy source of revenue. For AOA as a trade body, taxation will remain a perennial source of concern, and a focus for our work, just as it is for our members. ■

Christopher Snelling is Policy Director of the AOA.



TEESSIDE AIRPORT MANAGING DIRECTOR IN BUOYANT MOOD, CELEBRATING NEW ROUTES, NEW AIRLINES AND A BIG TERMINAL REDEVELOPMENT

In spite of a near-total shutdown during the Covid-19 lockdowns, Phil Forster, the Interim Managing Director of Teesside International Airport, is optimistic as he surveys the future of an airport that had once looked doomed to fail.

Since it was acquired by the Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority in early 2019, the airport has added multiple new destinations to its departure board, welcomed new and returning airlines and started work on the transformation of its terminal building. Forster, appointed to his current role in December, says he is determined to consolidate and build on these successes and to “create an airport that Teesside can be proud of”.

The airport’s prospects have also been enhanced by a new Government focus on the Tees Valley region, with announcements that it will be home to the UK’s largest freeport and to a new Northern Economic Campus, in Darlington, for several Government departments, including the Treasury, the Department for International Trade and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Forster’s most recent cause for celebration is Ryanair’s 18 May

“The airport’s prospects have been enhanced by a new Government focus on the Tees Valley region, with an announcement that it will be home to the UK’s largest freeport.”



announcement that it will launch a new twice-weekly service from Teesside to Faro, Portugal, from 16 June. That was a response to the Government's decision to place Portugal on its "green list", which means that holidaymakers will not need to self-isolate when they return. It will be the airline's first departure from Teesside since it committed last November to a seven-year contract with the airport and, in addition to Faro, there will also be summer routes to Alicante, Corfu and Palma de Mallorca.

Forster began his aviation industry career at Newcastle and Leeds Bradford airports. When he came to Teesside Airport in early 2019, initially as Head of Development and then as Commercial Director, there were just two destinations left on the airport's departure board, Aberdeen and Amsterdam. Since his arrival, the airport has secured a Loganair-operated service to Heathrow,

added Bristol, Belfast, Dublin, Jersey, Newquay and Southampton to its UK and Ireland routes, secured the seven-year deal with Ryanair and announced the return of TUI, the UK's biggest holiday company next summer (for the first time since 2013).

Forster's short-term priority will be to make a success of this greatly expanded route map. He acknowledges that it will be hard work to keep all of these routes in today's intensely competitive and difficult market. But he will also be working to add more international destinations and hopes that the airport will eventually be able to offer winter sun in the Canaries, more capacity to Spain and Portugal and new routes to Cyprus and Turkey.

In 2019 a total of 150,000 passengers travelled through Teesside. Last year the airport remained open, particularly to support the

offshore oil and gas industry with continuing flights to Aberdeen, but the passenger total fell to just 38,540. This year Forster hopes for 220,000 passengers and the airport remains committed to its long-term passenger target of 1.4 million. He is

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keen to stress, however, that it is not just about numbers, but also about the quality of the passenger journey through the airport, which is why, he says, that the terminal redevelopment is so important.

Work on the multimillion-pound transformation of the building from landside through to airside is well under way. It will include new coffee shops, bars, restaurants and lounges, as well as new seating, state-of-the-art x-ray equipment and a new hold baggage system. As Forster is fond of saying, “you don’t get a second chance to make a first impression”. With that in mind, he said the airport was “trying to leave no stone unturned” in its quest to create a terminal building fit for the 21st century that would impress first-time visitors to the Tees Valley and contribute to the region’s economic regeneration.

Among the visitors that Forster has in mind are businesses newly attracted to the region by its freeport and civil servants travelling to the new Darlington campus. He describes both of those Budget announcements as “momentous for Teesside” and says that the airport has been “inundated with business inquiries” as a result. He describes the freeport, in particular, as “a key enabler” that will help Teesside Airport to deliver its plans for a big new business and logistics park on the airport’s south side. He foresees that the creation of a new civil service campus in Darlington, which will be home to officials from the Department for Business, the Ministry of Housing, the Department for International Trade and the Treasury will boost demand for flights between London and Teesside.

Reflecting on the last year, Forster said it had been “a horrible, tragic and testing time”, but it had given the airport a unique opportunity to focus and work hard on its plans for the future. Unlike many other UK airports there had been no job



*Phil Forster, Interim
Managing Director of Teesside
International Airport*



“It had been “a horrible, tragic and testing time”, but it had given the airport a unique opportunity to focus and work hard on its plans for the future”.

losses at Teesside, reflecting a commitment to safeguard jobs made by the Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen.

Forster said that, as the airport begins to get back to normal and to start growing again, “we

wanted to make sure that we will have the same staff that helped us to get through the testing times and indeed those who had been at the airport during earlier challenging times, so that everyone can come on the journey with us and we really do all share in the success”. ■

THREE AOA MEMBERS PLAY KEY ROLES IN PIONEERING PROJECT TO DEMONSTRATE THE FEASIBILITY AND ADVANTAGES OF ELECTRIC AIRCRAFT

Exeter Airport, Cornwall Airport Newquay and AOA Corporate Partner, UK Power Networks Services, are leading members of a new consortium set up to show how electric aircraft can help UK aviation to move away from its dependence on fossil fuels.

The two South West airports and the energy infrastructure company will support demonstration flights this summer of a six-seat electric aircraft, to be followed later by flights of a 19-seat hybrid-electric aircraft. The flights will be used to develop and evaluate requirements for a fully integrated electric aviation infrastructure.

Heading up the consortium is the US aircraft manufacturer, Ampaire. Other participants in the project are Rolls-Royce, the University of Nottingham, Loganair and the Heart of the South-West Local Enterprise Partnership. The project, which will run to May 2022, is part-funded by a £2.4m grant from UK Research and Innovation's Future Flight Challenge. The project team believes that success could catalyse a fundamental shift in regional airline operations, with emissions cut by up to 70%.

Andrew Bell, Chief Executive of Regional & City Airports, which owns Exeter Airport, described the project as "really exciting". He said that Exeter and the group were "trying to lead the way. We want to become the focal point in the industry for research about electric aircraft maintenance and skills".

Bell said that the trial flights from Exeter to Cornwall Airport Newquay were only part of the project. What made it really interesting was its holistic nature. It wasn't all about the aircraft and its performance, but also about the infrastructure requirements for the planes when they are on the ground, including battery charging and changing and the power source. He said that his company was very much advocating the need to make sure that all of the necessary ingredients would be in place at the same time to make electric and hybrid-electric flights possible, including an appropriately trained workforce. The project was important for Regional & City Airports because it was clear that short-haul flying

"Cornwall Airport Newquay is proud to be part of the team developing electric regional aircraft that aim to be carbon neutral"

would be moving to a sustainable power source much more quickly than longer-haul.

Cornwall Airport Newquay described electric aircraft as "the next logical step towards greener flight in the UK". The airport's Commercial Estates Manager, Graeme Scrimgeour, said: "Cornwall Airport Newquay is proud to be part of the team developing electric regional aircraft that aim to be carbon neutral". He explained that part of the energy used to charge the aircraft batteries would be generated by the Cornwall Council-owned solar farm that is adjacent to the airport.

Ian Smyth, Director of UK Power Networks Services, said that his company's role in the project would be to advise on electrical infrastructure issues, including charging solutions, connecting to

power supplies and what would be needed as the sector scaled up to mass deployment. He said he fully expects that micro grids and self-generation would have important parts to play.

Smyth said that he imagined that there would be "an explosion in diversity" of aviation fuel sources and there would not be a single type of fuel for all types of journey. It would be a challenge for some regional airports to "make sure that they don't get left behind in their pursuit of innovation to decarbonise". His forecast is that by the early 2030s all-electric aircraft will be in use for short-range domestic flights and hybrid-electric aircraft for hops to other European cities. But he expects that "longer international flights will be more challenging and on longer time scales".

The UK Government aims to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with electric aviation making a substantial contribution on domestic routes. Susan Ying, Ampaire Senior Vice President for Global Partnerships, emphasised that: "For electric aviation to become commonplace and play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gases, we need to look at not only electric aircraft but the entire ecosystem to support electric aviation. That will be a key aim of the programme". ■



AOA WELCOMES LEADING INSURANCE BROKING, FACILITY MANAGEMENT AND IT SERVICE PROVIDERS INTO MEMBERSHIP

Three well-established international providers of airport services have joined the AOA as Silver Members.



Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

Gallagher Aerospace says that it has one of the world's leading aerospace insurance broking teams, with a reputation for innovation, client-focused service and performance. With a global team of over 350 aerospace insurance specialists, Gallagher says that it is one of the largest and most highly resourced brokers in this class of business.

The company provides insurance placement and risk advisory services across the spectrum of the aerospace industry. It says that it has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a sector it describes as dynamic and highly diverse, as well as a wealth of experience in the design and management of tailored insurance programmes.



Sasse, a family-run international organisation, has been providing integrated facility management services to the aviation and transport sector for more than 45 years. In 2020, there were around 7,000 employees working for the group.

With over 25 years' experience servicing some of Europe's most high-profile airports, Sasse says that it is dedicated to delivering excellence throughout its operations, working closely with clients to exceed their

expectations and achieve their goals. The company says that its up-to-date knowledge of the aviation industry guarantees that it is always industry-leading in its service provision and able to deal with any new situation. Sasse describes its approach as being aligned to make use of digital technologies, digital tools and operational methods, which will deliver service excellence and value for money for its customers.



ServiceTec describes itself as the world's leading independent provider of managed IT services specifically for airports and airlines.

Established in 1989 and now with multiple bases in Europe and North America, the company says that it has an unsurpassed reputation for the maintenance and support of business-critical systems across the entire airport infrastructure. ServiceTec says that it can help to ensure that every area of an airport's IT infrastructure is meticulously organised and carefully controlled. The company says that it offers the right combination of remote and onsite services, including service desk, preventative and reactive maintenance and repair, infrastructure and asset management and IT disposal, as well as advice and support on cyber security.





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