

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

AVIATION MINISTER ROBERT COURTS

*predicts a
bright future*



Features

BELFAST CITY AIRPORT

London route fuels pandemic comeback

COP 26 CONFERENCE

Glasgow and Edinburgh airports' sustainability plans

GATWICK AIRPORT CEO STEWART WINGATE

sees reasons for optimism

UK AIRSPACE CHANGE

NATS implements the biggest ever change in Scotland



THE VOICE OF UK AIRPORTS

WINTER 2022



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

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Gold Members



Silver Members



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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



Welcome to this edition of The Airport Operator, which was originally timed to coincide with the annual aviation reception in the House of Commons.

Omicron has meant that we have had to postpone that reception, but I look forward to the day when we can reinstate it and to the return of AOA in-person events with our members. Although we are still far from normality, we have started the year encouraged by the Government's decision to do away with pre-departure tests and expensive PCR tests for vaccinated travellers after arrival, which we believe will play an important part in helping to restore passenger confidence.

That is a view which is shared by Gatwick's CEO, Stewart Wingate, who has written a thoughtful article for this issue of our magazine on "living with the virus". He describes the removal of restrictions as providing a welcome boost that will make international travel easier, simpler and cheaper and credits the Government with going further than he had been expecting.

Now we all need to look forward to the wider Global Travel Taskforce review which should map out how we will plan the recovery going forward and find a better way of living with the virus in the future - because we can't keep starting and stopping, with ever-changing red lists. We also need a proper plan for recovery, and for the Government to start detailing how it will support and work with the aviation industry to help drive that.

Elsewhere in this issue you can read the view from Aviation Minister, Robert Courts, that, despite the challenges of the pandemic, the aviation sector has a bright future ahead of it. He says the Government is committed to working closely with industry to deliver a sustainable recovery of international travel that is future-proof and shock-resistant. As I write, we are expecting two

documents from the Department of Transport that we hope will help with those goals - an aviation strategic framework and a plan for aviation decarbonisation.

Meanwhile, the AOA has been asked by the National Audit Office to help them with a review that they are undertaking to examine the effectiveness of border measures throughout Covid. This should provide an opportunity to consider lessons learned and how we can be better prepared for next time. I hope that the NAO have picked up on industry's view that, compared to others, we have taken an overly cautious approach to Covid restrictions.

Looking ahead, we will continue to encourage the Government to lift all remaining travel restrictions as soon as possible and to plan for a more coherent, consistent and transparent approach to any variants that may emerge in the future. We will also be reminding politicians and officials that the aviation sector will need continued support as it seeks to recover from the enormous losses that it has sustained over the last two years.

There is no doubt that Covid has presented UK airports with completely unprecedented challenges, but as you read this issue, I hope you will be encouraged by some cautiously optimistic reports from some of our member airports. In different ways Belfast City Airport, Farnborough Airport and Goodwood Aerodrome all have positive things to tell us about how they are recovering from the pandemic.

Finally, I would encourage you to read insights from the Airspace Change Organising Group and NATS on the most ambitious programme of airspace change that the UK has ever seen. It is a story of remarkable progress that should help us to achieve early and significant reductions in carbon emissions, though the Head of ACOG also warns that airports will only be able to shoulder the cost of taking forward later stages of the programme if they have the money to do so. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive

LONDON ROUTE FUELS PANDEMIC COMEBACK AT BELFAST CITY AIRPORT

*Twelve flights a day to London airports
have enabled George Best Belfast City
Airport to stage a rebound from the
coronavirus pandemic.*



IKEA

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Aer Lingus

Regional

Loganair

MAJZ



*Matthew Hall, Chief Executive of
George Best Belfast City Airport*

The airport, which describes itself as “Northern Ireland’s gateway to London”, has seen a more robust return of passenger traffic since 2020 than some other UK airports thanks to the strength of its domestic route network – an outcome that is even more striking considering that when Flybe collapsed it was operating 80% of flights at Belfast City.

Belfast City’s new Chief Executive, Matthew Hall, who took over last August following the retirement of Brian Ambrose, attributes the airport’s relative success to the attractiveness of its domestic route network, his team’s hard work in finding airlines to take over most of Flybe’s old routes and the airport’s convenient location just five minutes from Belfast city centre. Hall was formerly Chief Commercial Officer at London City Airport and sees many parallels between his former and current employers, including the short journey times to their city centres and what he describes as “a nimble response to the market” that is assisted by the fact that both airports are small

businesses.

The Belfast City – London Heathrow route was the UK’s fourth busiest domestic passenger air route in 2019 and is still the Belfast airport’s single most important route, with seven flights a day. There are also three flights a day to London City Airport and twice-daily flights to London Gatwick.

Before the pandemic Belfast City Airport was handling two and a half million passengers a year. That total slumped to just 500,000 in 2020 but rebounded to over 800,000 in 2021. Hall accepts that, as a result of the spread of the Omicrom variant, there is currently a high margin of uncertainty around any forecasts, with “airlines not surprisingly quite reticent to make announcements and commitments”. Nevertheless, his expectation is that passenger numbers will have recovered to 90% of 2019 levels by the end of this year.

Asked how he expects passenger growth to be maintained, Hall is clear that the airport’s principal

short-term focus will be on seeking greater frequencies on some of its principal non-London domestic routes. Belfast City currently serves a dozen regional UK destinations, including Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester. Hall is hopeful that next year’s cut in domestic Air Passenger Duty will assist the Northern Ireland airports in regaining some market share from Dublin. Looking further ahead, Belfast City would like to build on the popularity of its Amsterdam route by adding other European cities and sunshine destinations.

Hall is keen to emphasise that he expects carbon emission reductions and sustainability issues in general to become an increasingly central part of the airport’s proposition. Noting that Belfast City was the first airport in Northern Ireland to participate in ACI Europe’s airport carbon accreditation programme, he said that Level 2 accreditation had already been achieved and “we have further aspirations to reduce our carbon emissions by 2.5% each year”. Identifying renewable energy opportunities was likely to be an important element in achieving that.

He said that a focus on sustainability was “the right thing to do”, but he believed that it would also enable the airport to achieve its commercial objectives. He forecasts that people will pay increasing attention to whether they need to travel or not and the choices they have if they decide to travel. If Belfast City did as good

The Belfast City – London Heathrow route was the UK’s fourth busiest domestic passenger air route in 2019 and is still the Belfast airport’s single most important route, with seven flights a day.

If Belfast City did as good a job as possible on sustainability “then I would hope that we can be the preferred choice for sustainability reasons in addition to our traditional proposition claims”.

a job as possible on sustainability “then I would hope that we can be the preferred choice for sustainability reasons in addition to our traditional proposition claims”.

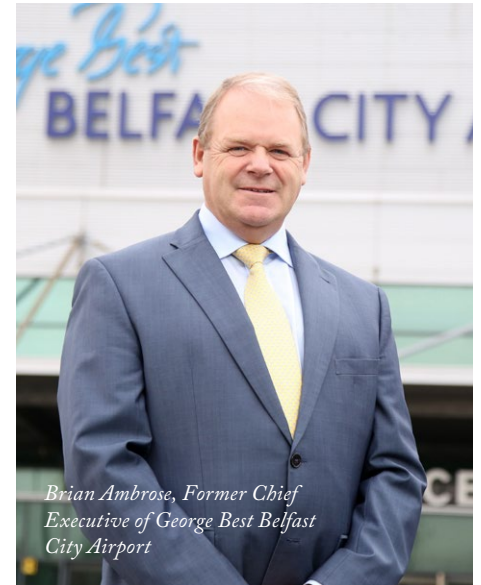
An important element in the quest for enhanced sustainability will be surface access improvements based on improvements to Belfast City Airport’s public transport links. The airport’s long-held aspiration for a direct rail link to the city centre recently moved two tantalising steps forward with the publication by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government of the All Ireland Strategic Rail Review as well as the publication of Sir Peter Hendy’s final report to the UK Government on Union Connectivity.

The Strategic Rail Review noted that better connecting major cities and airports could facilitate new economic opportunities. None of the three Northern Ireland airports have their own railway stations, though all are adjacent to a rail line. In Belfast City’s case the closest station is just over half a mile away on the other side of a dual

carriageway. One of the goals set out in the review is “to enhance the integration of rail with other transport modes”. A consultation on the review has just closed.

The Hendy report also noted that surface access options to Northern Ireland’s airports “are limited, with no convenient railway stations at any of Northern Ireland’s airports, even though each has a railway station in close proximity”. Access by car and taxi accounts for 90% of all surface access mode share at both Belfast airports, with a rail mode share of just 0.5%.

Sir Peter’s report emphasised that Northern Ireland is particularly dependent on air travel and listed Belfast City as one of the UK’s “strategic” airports. It welcomed the inclusion of direct rail connections to Northern Ireland’s airports within the remit of the Strategic Rail Review. Hendy recommended that the UK Government should agree with the Northern Ireland Executive a plan



Brian Ambrose, Former Chief Executive of George Best Belfast City Airport

and funding to upgrade the railway, including better connectivity to the three airports. It should also offer major project expertise to the Executive.

Hall said he accepted that the direct rail link “certainly isn’t going to happen tomorrow” but saw “a lot of logic” in aligning the airport’s plans with the Northern Ireland Executive’s infrastructure plans and Sir Peter’s recommendations. He said that joining up all of these now “presents a great opportunity for our business, but also for Northern Ireland’s connectivity and to further the sustainability agenda”. ■



AVIATION MINISTER, ROBERT COURTS, PREDICTS “A BRIGHT FUTURE”

Last year was extremely challenging for everyone – for the thousands of frontline air transport workers, airline staff, and the thousands of workers across the sector. I want to reiterate my thanks to everyone for all they have done and will do in 2022 to keep our airports running and keep our skies and airports safe.

At the Department for Transport, we have returned refreshed and ready to greet 2022. We are looking forward to this year as one which will see important milestones for the aviation sector as we work towards a sustainable, green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Crucially, this will be a recovery that will be supported by the biggest drive yet to support skills development in the aviation industry.

This year, the Department expects to launch a number of key forward-looking visions that will set the direction of travel for the aviation industry. We will soon publish the Aviation Strategic Framework,

outlining how we will ensure the UK’s aviation sector continues to remain successful and competitive as part of Global Britain for the next decade and beyond.

It will explore critical issues like our pathway to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, boosting regional connectivity in all parts of the UK, new technologies and measures that will help us to reduce emissions from aviation, and crucially, how to support the next generation of professionals into our aviation sector. We will take forward the framework through key focused strategies such as the Jet Zero Strategy that will be published early

in the new year.

The fight against climate change is one of the greatest and most pressing challenges facing the modern world, and the aviation sector must play its part in delivering the UK’s net zero commitment. That is why we launched a public consultation last year on how aviation can meet “Jet Zero”.

Our proposed approach would support the rapid development of technologies that will help us to maintain the benefits of air travel whilst maximising the opportunities that decarbonisation can bring to the UK. Our Jet Zero Strategy will outline

a concrete pathway for the aviation sector to reach net zero by 2050.

On the topic of skills, I recently appointed 12 inspiring individuals as 'Aviation Ambassadors' to act as role models and educate young people about the huge benefits of choosing a career in aviation. We'll work with the Ambassadors to champion inclusion, diversity, and the accessibility of the aviation industry. We'll be able to provide an update on their work shortly but in the meantime – do take a look at some of their work online.

Of course, it goes without saying that a huge amount of work is underway to support the recovery of the international travel sector. In December, we opened up the third iteration of the Airport and Ground Operators Support Scheme, which will provide up to £44m over the winter months to support eligible airports and ground operators in England who are experiencing the impacts of Covid-19. It will be particularly beneficial for regional airports which provide huge connectivity benefits to local communities throughout the country.

We want to provide more certainty to passengers and the aviation industry and will do a full review of England's international travel measures for 2022 by the end of January. Linked to that, a priority for this Government in 2022 continues to be protecting passengers who are travelling by air. We're committed to rebuilding consumer confidence to travel, which is why we plan to consult on additional, flexible and modern tools to ensure air passenger rights are enforced.

Let's also reflect on the successes we secured together last year. At the COP26 climate conference we used our global influence to drive progress, launching the International Aviation Climate Ambition Coalition with countries around the world. We also launched the Green Fuels, Green Skies competition to support cutting-edge producers of sustainable aviation fuel. We will be bringing



*Robert Courts,
Aviation Minister*

forward another competition in 2022 with £180m in funding to support the development of UK sustainable aviation fuel plants.

We continue to work closely with stakeholders through the Jet Zero Council to drive forward progress towards a greener future for aviation and I look forward to even closer collaboration in 2022.

Internationally, the 41st International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Assembly in Autumn 2022 will take centre stage in the sector's global effort to recover sustainably from the pandemic and build a more resilient future for international aviation. We will continue to work closely with our international partners throughout 2022, to help pave the way for ambitious and effective outcomes in ICAO.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, what is clear is that the

The fight against climate change is one of the greatest and most pressing challenges facing the modern world, and the aviation sector must play its part in delivering the UK's net zero commitment.

aviation sector has a bright future ahead of it. We remain committed to working closely with industry, across government and internationally, to help deliver a sustainable recovery of international travel to pre-pandemic levels, in a way that is future-proof and shock resistant. ■



MORE UK AIRSPACE CHANGE ON THE WAY AFTER NATS IMPLEMENTS THE BIGGEST EVER CHANGE IN SCOTLAND

Fresh from introducing Free Route Airspace in Scotland – the biggest ever geographical airspace change in the UK – NATS is working with London Luton Airport on new arrivals routes to be introduced next month.



The UK's principal air navigation services provider will also be working this year with Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter airports on airspace changes that could start to be introduced as early as March next year. Changes affecting the Midlands, London and the South East are likely to follow from 2026.

NATS Operations Director, Juliet Kennedy, told The Airport Operator that environmental efficiency is a key driver of the airspace modernisation programme. She said that people often assume that airspace change "is so that we can deliver more and more capacity. It is actually at least as much for us about environmental efficiency and fuel burn. Modernising the airspace in the UK will make it more environmentally efficient. I think that is a really key point".

Describing last month's introduction of Free Route Airspace over Scotland as "a big deal", she said it affects up to 2,000 flights a day and 80% of transatlantic traffic, saving 12,000 tonnes of CO2 every year, the equivalent of the power used by 3,500 homes. Together the airspace changes in Scotland and those planned for England and

Wales will play an important part in helping the UK to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The changes in Scotland and surrounding areas, which came into effect on 2 December, are the culmination of five years of work by NATS. They have removed long-established air routes over Scotland and freed aircraft to choose their most direct and fuel-efficient flight path, taking account of such variables as weather and wind speed and helping to reduce cost, fuel burn, flight time and CO2 emissions. The new Free Route Airspace for aircraft above 25,000ft. covers 150,000 nautical square miles of airspace over the North Sea, Scotland, the North Atlantic, Northern Ireland and a small part of northern England – a footprint over twice the size of the UK.

Kennedy said that apart from a couple of minor flight planning issues on the actual night of transition the introduction of Free Route airspace over Scotland had gone very smoothly, encouraging NATS to continue work this year on a comparable plan for the West of England and Wales. This will be

carried forward at alongside plans for changes in lower-level airspace led by Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter

"People often assume that airspace change is so that we can deliver more and more capacity. It is actually at least as much for us about environmental efficiency and fuel burn. Modernising the airspace in the UK will make it more environmentally efficient. I think that is a really key point".

*Juliet Kennedy,
Operations
Director,
NATS*



airports.

In the short term the immediate priority for Kennedy and her colleagues at NATS is work on arrivals changes at the UK's fifth busiest airport, London Luton, that will come into effect on 24 February. Until now the airport has shared arrival routes with neighbouring London Stansted Airport, but from next month for the first time it will have its own. In the weeks leading up to the changes, 170 air traffic controllers based at NATS in Swanwick Air Traffic Control Centre are being trained on the new routes and procedures.

Kennedy said that the existing arrangement of shared airspace between Luton and Stansted airports had become increasingly untenable as both airports had experienced strong growth. "Trying to manage the traffic as a single flow into two airports has become inefficient" she said. "The growth that both those airports have seen has meant that there are occasions where they create delay for each other. Their traffic is all joined up at the moment so separating it out means that one airport won't have an impact on the other anymore. That will have a positive effect on delays at both airports".

The process of arriving at the Luton arrivals airspace decision during the pandemic was an eye-opener for Kennedy and the NATS consultation team. The change was approved by the Civil Aviation Authority last November following an extensive online public consultation, co-sponsored by the airport and NATS, which received feedback from more than 2,400 respondents. Kennedy said: "Previously we used to go round all the local villages that were likely to be impacted by airspace change. This time we ran a virtual consultation for the Luton airspace change, which we have never done before, and it was hugely successful. We got more people responding than have ever responded to any other public airspace consultation".



The process of arriving at the Luton arrivals airspace decision during the pandemic was an eye-opener for Kennedy and the NATS consultation team.

The change was approved by the Civil Aviation Authority last November following an extensive online public consultation, co-sponsored by the airport and NATS, which received feedback from more than 2,400 respondents.

She said that NATS had reflected on this and had decided that future consultations will be carried out in the same way. "Doing it virtually means that people can access the website whenever they like. They can submit questions. It is a much more streamlined way of doing it and we do plan to continue to use that. It has been a real step forward, I think, in enabling the public to be engaged in something that was previously quite difficult to engage in".

Meanwhile NATS has itself responded to the recent CAA survey on possible changes to CAP1616, the regulatory process for airspace change which was introduced in January 2018. Kennedy said this process had been designed for an individual airspace change and not for

multiple interdependent airspace changes happening together.

The NATS response had focussed on this point and on the need to ensure that if there are changes to the existing process "it is really important that they don't have an adverse impact on airspace changes which are already under way". Kennedy said: "Because the process is long what would be bad from our point of view would be if the process were to be changed and then everybody had to start on the new one, as there will be people who are part way through the old one". She pointed out that when CAP1616 was introduced in 2018 one airport that was a long way through the previous process had had to go right back to the beginning and start again. ■

GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH AIRPORTS HIGHLIGHTED NEW SUSTAINABILITY PLANS AS THEY WELCOMED DELEGATES TO THE COP26 CONFERENCE

Glasgow, Glasgow Prestwick and Edinburgh Airports were at the heart of the UK's largest ever diplomatic security operation as they welcomed hundreds of international delegates to the COP26 conference in Glasgow.

The event saw Glasgow Prestwick hosting its biggest ever selection of international aircraft as heads of government and other ministers flew in from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Former US President, Barack Obama, joined large numbers of other delegates arriving at Glasgow Airport. Edinburgh Airport saw 30 world leaders arrive, with US President, Joe Biden, touching down in Air Force One.

The presence of Air Force One at Edinburgh was a memorable highlight for staff, passengers,

spotters and the public. Many staff had their pictures taken in front of the US Presidential aircraft; passengers went to the roof of the multi-storey car park for the best view; spotters shared many pictures on websites and some members of the public came to the airport for the few days Air Force One was parked there just to take pictures.

During the COP26 meeting Air bp supplied Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) to Glasgow, Glasgow Prestwick and Edinburgh airports. It also collaborated with British Airways to source SAF for all its

As a group, we are committed to building on our carbon neutrality status by achieving net zero by the mid-2030s.

flights between London, Glasgow and Edinburgh during the summit. SAF was also used for all EasyJet flights from Gatwick to Glasgow during the meeting.

AGS Airports CEO, Derek Provan, was centre stage at the COP26 Climate Action Hub when he announced plans for a solar farm at Glasgow Airport. The initiative will give the airport the capability to generate enough power for the entire airport campus and neighbouring businesses – equivalent to powering 20% of homes in the city of Glasgow.

Speaking to the theme of “Delivering the Net Zero Airport of the Future”, Provan said: “Aviation is a force for good and through our sustainability strategy we have set out how AGS will balance the undoubted economic and social benefits of aviation with our climate change responsibilities. As a group, we are committed to building on our carbon neutrality status by achieving net zero by the mid-2030s and like the wider industry, we have set out a clear plan on how we will meet that goal”.

A week after COP26, AGS Airports (encompassing Glasgow, Aberdeen and Southampton airports) announced that it has joined a new consortium to support the development and deployment of a new type of wind technology. Dual-purpose wind panels and sound barriers will produce carbon-neutral energy from ground and low-level wind. Unlike traditional wind turbines they can capture wind power without needing significant height or scale.

Provan said: “In addition to supporting our transition to net zero, these wind panels also have the potential to help us manage the impact of airport-related noise, which we know is an important issue for the communities we serve. Managing this is an integral part of how we grow our airports responsibly and these panels could also act as noise barriers on our airfields”.

Edinburgh Airport announced last June that it would construct a solar farm on its airfield. Detailed design for the eleven-acre site is due to be



We are confident this exciting partnership will help us on our way to a sustainable travel future and see Edinburgh Airport helping to develop and support sustainable fuels and their use.

completed by the end of March, with on-site works beginning in May. Part-funded by the Scottish Government, the solar farm will be constructed at the end of the airport’s runway and will generate more than a quarter of the airport’s energy needs upon completion.

A week before COP26 Edinburgh Airport signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Danish renewable energy company, Ørsted, agreeing to work together to map

out steps to reduce emissions at the airport and meet its net zero by 2040 vision. Airport Chief Executive, Gordon Dewar, said: “Although aviation emissions derive in the main from aircraft in flight, we can play our part within our estate and fuel for aircraft at Edinburgh. We are confident this exciting partnership will help us on our way to a sustainable travel future and see Edinburgh Airport helping to develop and support sustainable fuels and their use”. ■

UK AIRPORTS MAY STRUGGLE TO RECRUIT SECURITY STAFF FOR THE SUMMER PEAK

Airports across the UK are facing a major challenge as they seek to rebuild their security teams in time for what they hope will be a busy summer period.

AOA Security Group Chair, Caroline Vear, who is Security Standards Manager at Bristol Airport, said that airports across the country were finding it harder than expected to replace security agents who had been made redundant or decided to leave during the pandemic.

She said that many skilled staff had been lost and aviation was now seeking recruits in competition with both the hospitality and retail sectors.

Vear said that airport security teams play a vital role at airports in ensuring passenger safety, but they often must work unsociable hours and are not particularly well-paid. To illustrate the scale of the challenge she referred to an airport that had recently held a jobs fair where the security contractors were looking to recruit security staff but had found

only limited interest.

The recruitment challenge is only one of many issues relating to people, equipment and regulation that are discussed at the monthly online meetings of the AOA Security Group. The group gathers security compliance managers and airport heads of security to discuss aviation security regulation, changing threats to aviation and the technology to respond to those threats. It is joined on a quarterly basis by representatives from the AOA's non-airport members who contribute a suppliers' perspective to discussions.

Representatives from the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of Transport also join the Group regularly to update attendees on the latest thinking on aviation security from the regulator and the UK Government. The Chair, the Deputy Chair and the AOA's

Airports across the country were finding it harder than expected to replace security agents who had been made redundant or decided to leave during the pandemic.

Caroline Vear, AOA Security Group Chair





Policy Manager, Rupinder Pamme, act as the Group's main link with both, raising any industry concerns in relation to costs or any new regulation or technology or deadlines that have been set.

This month has marked a significant step forward for the work of airports and law enforcement agencies to combat security threats from "insiders" (holders of airside security passes), with the launch of the Access Passholder Information Distribution System. The system is a new centralised data base of all airport passholders across the country which will make it easier for law enforcement to monitor "subjects of interest" from an insider threat perspective.

Another ongoing and central topic of discussion at Security Group meetings is the Next Generation Security Checkpoint, the new technology currently being trialled at larger UK airports to end the need for passengers to take both laptops and liquids out of their hand baggage when they reach security. A combination of state-of-the-art body scanners and hospital-style CT technology is set to transform the passenger experience from June 2024 when the new technology will be mandatory at all UK airports with over a million customers a year.

Vear noted that, with security being the single biggest budget item for many airports, all security managers are constantly looking for efficiency improvements that

will cut costs and improve the experience for passengers and staff, while maintaining high standards. The development of online security management systems was enabling many airports to improve efficiency, assure quality and reduce the need for on-site audit visits.

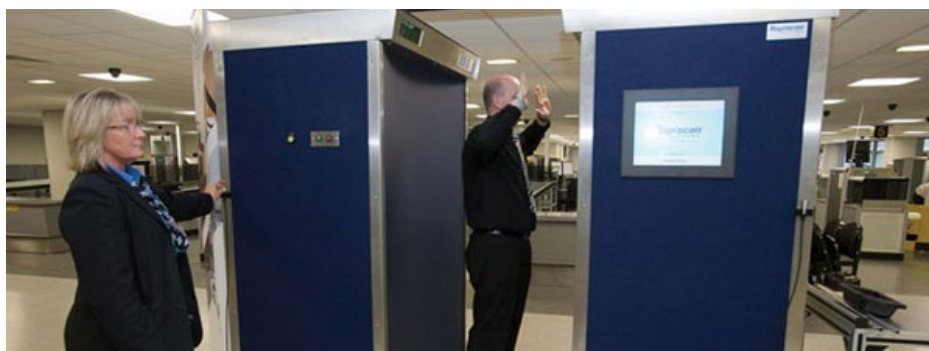
The Group's Chair came to her current role from a very different background. Vear was a qualified solicitor who practised law in London for ten years before working in environmental compliance in New Zealand. After returning to the UK, she became an aviation security inspector at the Department of Transport, where she was Lead Inspector at Aberdeen and Bristol airports as well as Heathrow's terminals 4 and 5. Joining Bristol Airport in 2015 was a huge but enjoyable challenge as one of her first projects was to oversee all the security aspects of the airport's £25 million terminal expansion programme.

Vear emphasised the role of the Security Group in giving airport

security managers a unique opportunity to share experiences and to learn lessons from each other about the full range of security issues including regulation, people, equipment and budgets.

She is keen to encourage more airport security managers to join the monthly meetings of the Security Group, emphasising her commitment to ensuring that every attendee has an opportunity to participate and to share problems and ideas with others; the Group is seen as a safe place to share problems and find solutions from like-minded, similarly challenged colleagues. Vear stresses that "there is no such thing as a stupid question" at the Group's meetings and that she values contributions from all airports. ■

AOA members interested in joining the Security Group can learn more by contacting AOA Policy Manager, Rupinder Pamme (rupinderpamme@aoa.org.uk).



*Mark Swan, Head of
the Airspace Change
Organising Group
(ACOG)*



UK AIRSPACE HEAD SAYS MODERNISATION IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE CARBON EMISSION REDUCTIONS AND TO FUTURE-PROOF AIRSPACE

Mark Swan, Head of the Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG), has told The Airport Operator that the UK must press ahead with airspace modernisation to achieve early and significant reductions in carbon emissions.

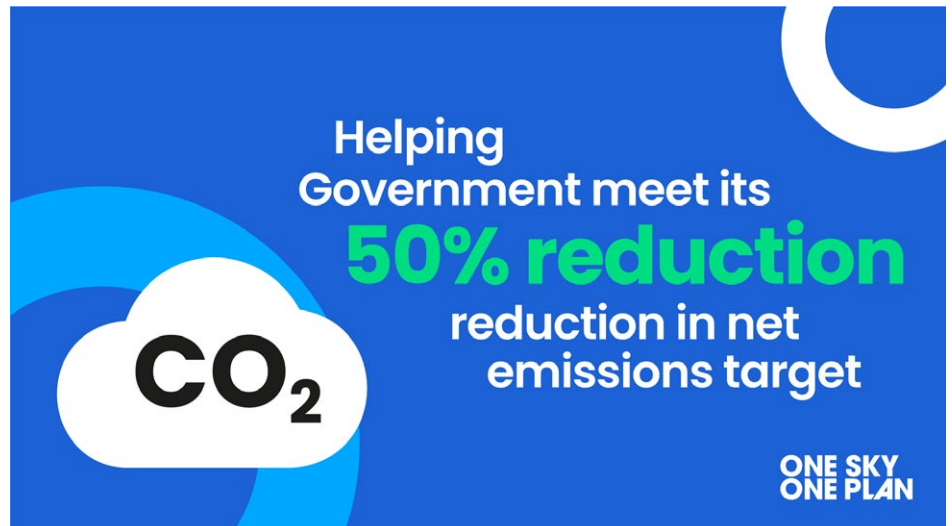
He also emphasised the importance of future-proofing UK airspace to allow for new entrants, including drones, electrical vertical take-off and landing aircraft and space travel.

Swan warned that the airspace modernisation programme “could falter in some areas” if Government funding for the early stages of the programme ends before airports have the financial resources to pay for the later stages of modernisation, including public consultations.

ACOG was established by the Government and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in 2019 and tasked with identifying where airspace changes are needed in the lower airspace and developing a single co-ordinated plan to support the delivery of key elements of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy. It works closely with NATS, which has responsibility for airspace change above 7,000 ft., and with 21 UK airports who are responsible for their local airspace below 7,000 ft.

Setting out the timetable for the most ambitious programme of airspace change around airports that the UK has ever seen, Swan said that airports in the Wales and the West of England cluster could achieve full deployment by the spring of 2025, quickly followed by Scottish airports in the same year, North of England airports in 2026 and London area airports between 2027 and the end of 2029.

Swan said that the “valuable prize” of achieving modernisation to this timetable would be that it could secure between 10% and 20% of the aviation industry’s Net Zero target by 2050 within the next decade. ACOG’s recently published One Sky One Plan document set out “the need and the compelling case” for airspace modernisation, explaining how it would increase resilience and capacity, reduce delays and “harvest the benefits” of emissions reductions and overall noise reduction. “We think 10 to 20% of the Net Zero target can be achieved by airspace



We think 10 to 20% of the Net Zero target can be achieved by airspace modernisation alone. So that is a big prize.

modernisation alone. So that is a big prize. It is the one tangible outcome (on emissions) we can achieve right now, within the next few years before electric engines come on board and sustainable fuels. So, it is quite a valuable prize to aim for”.

The other potential prize that Swan was keen to emphasise is the unique opportunity that the airspace modernisation programme offers to “future-proof the controlled airspace elements of the UK’s airspace so that commercial drones and space launches can be seamlessly integrated into the airspace structure. I think over the coming year or so this aspect will become clearer to everybody and what we don’t want is to miss the boat. With the fundamental reorganisation of airspace structure across the whole of the country, let us not miss the opportunity to future-proof for new entrants”.

Reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on airspace modernisation, Swan said that for

a few months the programme had “literally ground to a halt” as airspace teams were laid off or furloughed, “airports went into survival mode and airspace change was pretty much parked”. ACOG developed a plan to remobilise airspace change and published a document which “set out quite starkly why we needed to get this programme going even though it was in the middle of one of the worst national disasters ever to hit us in the last hundred years”.

With airports struggling to deal with unprecedented liquidity problems, the Government had stepped in and provided £5.5 million to enable airports to restart work on their designs for local airspace change. Swan said that had been “a tremendous incentive to restart the programme and get it moving”. As a result, ACOG had been able to “work at full speed over the whole of 2021 and into this year to keep the momentum going”. The programme is fully funded to the end of March and on 20 January the Government announced further funding of £3.7 million.

Asked about continuing risks to the programme, Swan said that Omicron-related staff shortages could be a risk, but “the bigger issue is a mismatch between recovery to full operational capability, such that the programme is affordable, and the Government’s support funding. This is the key risk and an issue we still wrestle with and one that we will

have to start dealing with as we move into this year. If airports haven't got the money to take over the reins because they simply don't have the liquidity or the investors don't have the cash, then the programme could falter in some areas".

Swan said that one of the reasons for dividing up the programme into four regional clusters was so that it could be de-risked to some extent. Had there been one national programme and one of the 21 airports had suddenly decided not to progress "then that could hold up the entire programme, but by clustering it up into chunks across the whole country it allows us to de-risk the programme and focus on those that could continue".

Another area where change could be proposed later this year relates to the CAA's review of the UK's airspace process, known as CAP1616. Some critics have suggested that the process, originally designed for airspace change on an airport-by-airport basis is no longer fit for purpose at a time when airspace change across multiple airports is being progressed at the same time.

Swan is less critical. He said "The airspace change process in the UK is very thorough and has been copied by other countries around the

world. ACOG has been set up to help coordinate multiple airspace change programmes and is in regular discussion with the CAA and the Department for Transport to ensure the process works for single or multiple changes".

ACOG has worked on a detailed CAP1616 "lessons learned" document over the last 18 months which it has submitted to the CAA. Swan said "all of the work that we have done over the last year and a half does not point to a fundamental reset of the process. What it needs is some enhancements, which don't alter

the different stages and content of the current process but would help assist airports when resolving conflicts and making decisions around trade-offs and consulting on their proposals".

The 21 UK airports whose local airspace change programmes are co-ordinated by ACOG are Aberdeen, Biggin Hill, Bristol, Bournemouth, Cardiff, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Exeter, Gatwick, Glasgow, Heathrow, Leeds-Bradford, Liverpool, London City, Luton, Manchester, Manston, RAF Northolt, Southampton, Southend and Stansted. ■

Omicrom-related staff shortages could be a risk, but the bigger issue is a mismatch between recovery to full operational capability, such that the programme is affordable, and the Government's support funding.





GATWICK AIRPORT CEO, STEWART WINGATE SEES “REASONS FOR OPTIMISM”

Living with the virus.

‘Cautious optimism’ has been a well-used phrase in recent months, but it is one that does, I think, summarise how many in the industry feel as we start the New Year.



We are all now experienced in the way pandemics work and we know they tend to surprise, so caution is only natural. But we can increasingly be optimistic. We're learning to live with COVID-19 and hope to see better, improved processes put in place by Government to manage it, as our experience and knowledge develops. In terms of aviation, the measures imposed over the last 20 months severely restricted our freedom to travel and had major impacts – not only on consumer confidence and bookings - but also on our teams and local economies.

As we get better at living with COVID-19, it is vital we do not panic and resort to draconian travel restrictions each and every time a new variant takes hold. That would simply not be sustainable. We must prepare more measured,

proportionate responses. They should of course protect public health, but also balance and have more concern for their impact on the economy, jobs and people's livelihoods.

The recent removal of pre-departure and Day 2 PCR tests, and relaxation of isolation rules, reflected, in my view, more progressive thinking on living with the virus. The restrictions were removed at a time COVID-19 cases were at or near record levels in the UK and across much of Europe. While the science was strong – this was not a decision that would have been made a year ago when, in January, we also experienced record case numbers – so Government has chosen the correct course of action. We need this sort of thinking and decision making followed up by the removal of all testing at the earliest possible opportunity.

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

Of course, the removal of these restrictions provides a welcome boost and makes international travel easier, simpler, and cheaper. The Government certainly went further than I was expecting and hopefully this translates into improved consumer confidence in the months ahead. Removing testing, and relaxing other travel restrictions further, would also support the UK's vast, but beleaguered hospitality sector including our fantastic hotels,

restaurants, pubs, theatres and other world-beating attractions.

There are also other reasons for optimism that, together, are helping build genuine momentum and confidence that, this time, we are starting a recovery proper. At Gatwick, some major airline announcements have been extremely welcome. BA will restart their short haul operation in March, which is when Wizz Air – one of Europe’s largest airlines – will significantly increase its operation from the airport with many new routes. easyJet, our biggest airline, has also taken up more slots at Gatwick with others, including airlines such as Emirates, TUI, Turkish and Westjet also increasing their schedules toward pre-covid levels. Christmas bookings were also at comparatively good levels, and early indications are that recent changes to UK travel restrictions are starting to drive bookings for Easter and Summer.

We are not, however, anywhere near out of the woods. The pandemic has been prolonged and the damage to our sector has been significant. Despite the expected pent-up demand for travel, full recovery will take considerable time and more support from Government is needed. The constantly changing travel rules have been difficult for passengers to understand, so accelerated engagement with other countries to coordinate more consistent, uniform international entry requirements would bolster consumer confidence. So too would the streamlining and the eventual removal of the cumbersome Passenger Locator Form.

By the time this article is published, the Government may also have announced the outcome from its consultation on airport slots. Slot rules ensure that UK consumers benefit from effective choice and fair pricing by ensuring the market is competitive. They encourage new market entrants by incentivising airlines to use, trade or hand back unused slots. The regulations were rightly suspended during the

pandemic, but passenger numbers are likely to rise significantly this summer, so more discipline and competition needs returned into the system.

We know the pandemic is not over, but we must learn to live with it and slot safeguarding regulations provide enough proportionate protection – under ‘Force Majeure’ (justified non-use) – for airlines should borders become more restricted again. Returning slot discipline would also send a clear signal that the Government is getting fully behind the recovery of the aviation sector. It would also reassure consumers at the very time their confidence needs improving as they look forward to that well-earned summer break or visiting family and friends that they may have only seen on Zoom over the past two years.

A further reason for optimism as we start the New Year is the progress toward our environmental commitments. Reaching net zero will be an extremely difficult challenge that will take considerable time, support from Government, agreement at an international level and investment in new technology. But slowly and steadily, I am confident that achieving net zero emissions is within our reach.

These are just small steps, but in just the last few weeks, Gatwick announced it will open the UK’s first airport Electric Forecourt – an electric charging, net zero equivalent to a petrol station – while a fleet of 20 hydrogen fuelled

buses will start operating to and from the airport later this year.

Our airline partners are also starting to use Sustainable Aviation Fuels on flights from the airport. There is still a long way to go, but I am confident that together we will recover from the pandemic. In doing so, Gatwick will continue to be a passenger-orientated, efficient airport with a strong focus on contributing positively to the community, the economy and the environment. ■

Stewart Wingate is Chief Executive Officer of London Gatwick Airport.

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



FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT



Bay
N°3



FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT TARGETS PREMIUM TRAVEL CONSUMER MARKET

Following a strong recovery from the pandemic lockdowns, Farnborough Airport has described ambitious plans to win a larger share of the premium travel market.

CEO Simon Geere, who joined the airport in July 2020, told The Airport Operator that Farnborough will “double-down” on its unique focus on business aviation by seeking to attract new customers who have until now occupied first and business class seats on commercial airlines.

Building on Farnborough’s status as Europe’s leading business aviation airport, Geere said: “We are going to focus on the strategy to date. We will provide an ever-improving customer experience and invest further in the facilities and infrastructure. We have huge ambitions for Farnborough. I want to position the airport increasingly as a viable proposition for the premium travel consumer market. We know that only a very small percentage of people that could use business aviation, actually do. It is about awareness and making yourself more easily accessible to the market, which is something we are looking to do”.

The airport has consistently been voted the best Fixed-Base Operator in Europe. Unlike some of its competitors, its sole focus is business aviation. There are no scheduled airlines, cargo flights or General Aviation activities. Farnborough is in complete control of the user experience from customer services to airfield operations. As Geere puts it, “We strive to deliver a customer service experience that is synonymous with the sort of service you would expect from the very best hotels around the world”.

Farnborough reported a record 32,366 aircraft movements in 2019 and has rebounded from the pandemic more quickly than most commercial passenger airports. During 2020 it achieved about 60% of 2019 traffic levels and the final figure for last year is expected to be around 80% of pre-pandemic levels. Navigating the pandemic without making any redundancies, it has taken the opportunity to hire and recruit new talent and now has over

Farnborough reported a record 32,366 aircraft movements in 2019 and has rebounded from the pandemic more quickly than most commercial passenger airports.

300 employees within the group.

Geere explained that this relative success was attributable to factors unique to business aviation on both the demand and supply sides. From a demand perspective many of the airport’s users have business and personal interests overseas and most were keen to resume international travel when that became possible. On the supply side, Farnborough’s flights are not

typically constrained by the same factors that can limit traditional airline seat capacity, including yield, profitability and frequency. The summer months saw an increase in leisure charters to the Mediterranean and elsewhere, which Geere believes reflected a mixture of pent-up demand and limited flight availability from commercial passenger airports.

The Farnborough CEO joined the airport from Macquarie Asset Management (MAM), having spent 18 years in MAM's European transport team. A Director of AGS Airports, he has previously been a Director of Birmingham, Bristol and Newcastle airports and was Business Development Director at Luton Airport. Macquarie acquired

Farnborough Airport in September 2019.

Geere said that he was learning new things about the business aviation sector every day, not least the value that its customers place on time, ease and certainty, compared to the experience of using traditional scheduled flights on fixed timetables often to destinations requiring transfers. As an illustration of convenience, he pointed to the fact that in 2019 Farnborough served more than 800 international connections compared to around 200 at Heathrow.

Only charter flights or aircraft of a certain size need to be security screened, so most of Farnborough's passengers don't enter the terminal

building, instead driving straight to the aircraft steps – an experience seen by many as a real advantage during the pandemic. As a result, in contrast to commercial passenger airports, there are no shops or food and beverage outlets at Farnborough.

What there is, however, is an airport-owned 169-room on-site luxury hotel, the Aviator Hampshire, with a significant percentage of the hotel's room sales bookings belonging to crew. Geere said: "I very much see this as an integral part of our product proposition. It is important that pilots and cabin crew enjoy coming to Farnborough Airport. Over the years we have invested heavily in the facilities for flight crew, including an on-site gym, dedicated lounge facilities and state-of-the-art snooze rooms".

Farnborough is also home to the Farnborough International exhibition centre, Gulfstream's new European Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility, Dassault Aviation's MRO, Flight Safety International

The airport has consistently been voted the best Fixed-Base Operator in Europe. Unlike some of its competitors, its sole focus is business aviation.



*Simon Geere, CEO of
Farnborough Airport*



and the largest NetJets operation in Europe.

Looking ahead, Geere foresees an increasing focus on sustainability. In 2018 Farnborough was the first business aviation airport to achieve carbon neutrality and last year it made Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) available to its users. Geere said he fully expects SAF to replace Jet A1 over time.

Responding to critics who say that the increasing use of private jets is bad for the environment, Geere pointed to the important role that business aviation plays in new technology investment and development. He said: “Break-through technologies for aviation, whether that is fuel or aircraft design advancements, are very likely to come from the business aviation sector, or at the very least this sector is likely to be an early adopter. Early demand and investment in SAF, in terms of refineries and production plants, is most likely to be underpinned by demand from business aviation”.

Geere said: “We want to be a global sustainability showcase for airports,

this is our vision. Farnborough Airport was the site of the first UK powered flight in 1908 and was also the first business aviation airport

in the world to achieve carbon neutrality. We want to build upon that pioneering legacy”. ■

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HENK VAN KLAVEREN, AOA HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND PR, EXPLAINS HOW THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION MAKES THE SECTOR'S VOICE HEARD IN GOVERNMENT

When planning this edition of the Airport Operator, I had hoped to write about the AOA's plans for the coming year.

How we had expected to be able to focus on other issues than getting through the latest restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and look ahead to building a successful and sustainable recovery. However, despite the latest additional temporary restrictions having been removed in early January, airports will continue to face a difficult period and there continues to be a heavy focus on the case for support

for airports as well as managing the risk of further restrictions.

I think it is worth highlighting how the AOA uses a range of channels to make the case for the sector. First and foremost, of course, is working directly with officials in government. AOA Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, and AOA Policy Manager Rupinder Pamme lead on this side of our work. This involves gathering the evidence

I think it is worth highlighting how the AOA uses a range of channels to make the case for the sector.

of the impact of the pandemic, working with airports and others in our industry on submissions to UK and devolved Ministers and officials on our proposals for a way out of restrictions while at the same time trying to keep an eye on other issues that remain important.

On the public affairs side, the AOA works with Parliamentarians in the four UK nations informing them of our views. This is both through direct communication, including many Teams and Zoom calls, as well as by being an active member of various Parliamentary groups. In Westminster that's the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Future of Aviation, chaired by Henry Smith MP, and in Holyrood that's the Cross-Party Group on Aviation, Co-Convened by Paul McLennan MSP and Graeme Simpson MSP.

This helps elected representatives ask the right questions and challenge ministers on what they have put in place. A good example of that was the Transport Select Committee hearing with the Aviation Minister shortly before Christmas. MPs really challenged him on the rationale and evidence behind the renewed testing requirements and red list, which helps to show the UK Government that they cannot take Parliamentary support for continued restrictions on travel for granted.

Another way of reaching both Government and Parliamentarians, is through the media. Politicians naturally care about public opinion and the media can be a good way to reach people regularly, without necessarily having to meet with them. A number of newspapers are very supportive of aviation and regular discussions with them ensures that they know what industry is thinking.

With the right facts and figures to hand, the media is also an excellent way to get across the scale of the impact of measures. Not just the sheer numbers, but what journalists

are very good at is bringing out those individual stories of people impacted by the measures. This includes, for example, people unable to see friends and family over Christmas. This reinforces what MPs, MSPs, MSs and MLAs are all seeing in their constituency correspondence and shows that those individual cases are part of a wider trend and is aimed at spurring them into action.

And so, instead of preparing our proactive plans for 2022, the last few weeks of 2021 were spent much the same as last year: briefing people, AOA Chief Executive Karen Dee doing media interviews and preparing our evidence base and solutions.

The challenge this time around was that the political and media background was very different. Over much of the last year, particularly ahead of the summer, there was a ready appetite to hear more about travel in the media and among politicians on what the next steps should be. On this occasion, however, the ongoing political scandals as well as the unclear nature of the omicron threat and how government should respond to it, meant that travel was largely crowded out. That makes our job more difficult, and sometimes requires a period of strategic quiet before ramping up again ahead of a key moment, like the January review of travel measures system. The hope is, of course, that the omicron-wave was the last time we see these types of blanket restrictions in place.

There is a lot that needs our attention: airports need a genuine recovery strategy led by the UK and devolved governments to re-establish lost connectivity. This requires funding as well, as we are already significantly behind the support some of our airport competitors in Europe and the US have received.

At least as important – if not more so – is the need for that recovery to be a sustainable recovery. The



There is a lot that needs our attention: airports need a genuine recovery strategy led by the UK and devolved governments to re-establish lost connectivity.

AOA Decarbonisation Report was intended as a first step in increasing our voice in the sustainability debate and demonstrate the role airports are playing in achieving aviation's Net Zero targets. This work must go on: as we say to politicians, the coming years cannot be lost years for our race to zero.

So, there is a lot of work for the AOA ahead to represent our members, not just through the latest restrictions but beyond and into a future that sees better connectivity than in 2019 with lower environmental impacts. Let's hope 2022 offers us the opportunity to make some great strides forward. ■

Henk van Klaveren is Head of Public Affairs and PR at the Airport Operators Association

AOA TELLS THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE FOUR UK NATIONS NEED DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

AOA Policy Manager, Rupinder Pamme, analyses the Union Connectivity Review

In November Sir Peter Hendy published his final report of the Union Connectivity Review. The 98-page report assessed transport connections and networks in, and between the four nations. As expected, there was a heavy focus on surface transport. However, there were some positive comments and positions taken in the report concerning aviation, as well as some that are more problematic.

The review highlighted that aviation provides essential connectivity within the UK that even improvements to other modes cannot replace. It encouraged the “UK Government to fully consider the need to vary Air Passenger Duty (APD) for routes where there are no reasonable road or rail alternatives”. The Chancellor announced in his Budget in Autumn 2021 a 50% cut to the rate of APD for domestic

flights which we anticipate being interpreted by Government as addressing this issue, but it gives us useful additional avenues to pursue.

In other measures announced for aviation the review called for revision of existing subsidy rules for domestic aviation to allow “support for routes between different regions of the UK (rather than just to and from London) and to allow multiple airlines to serve a single route”. This is potentially good news, but it should not be implemented to the detriment of London routes, especially as airports try to recover from this pandemic with further restrictions being placed on international travel towards the end of 2021.

The review also outlines that there should be Government intervention “in the assignment of slots at London

The review also outlines that there should be Government intervention in the assignment of slots at London airports to provide more slots for domestic routes.

Rupinder Pamme, AOA Policy Manager



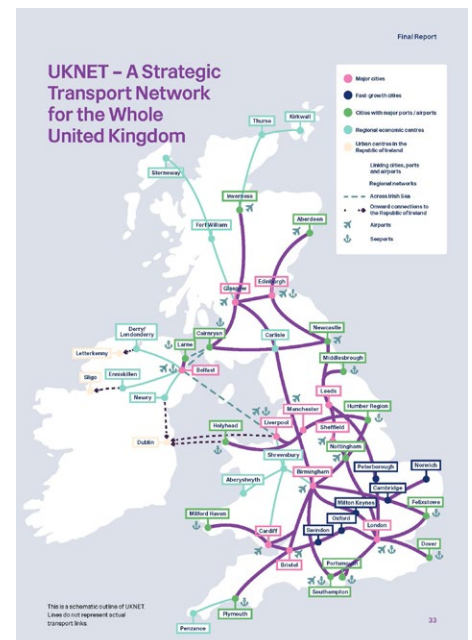
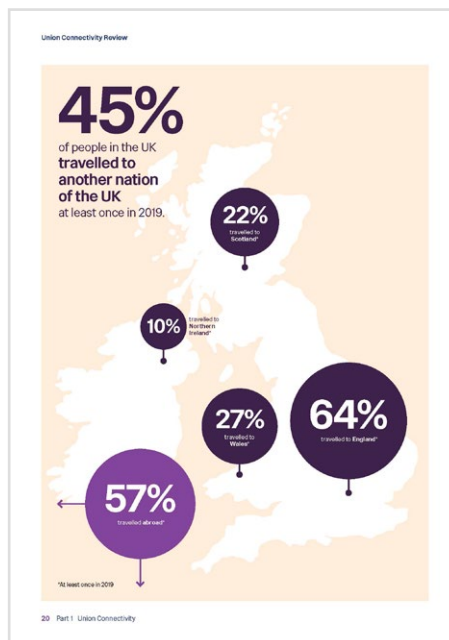
airports to provide more slots for domestic routes.” We are highly concerned about this development, as it could hinder the commercial position of some airports especially at this difficult time for the UK aviation industry.

Significantly the report reflected on an issue that will dominate the industry in the years ahead - sustainability. It cites the development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and zero emission technologies on domestic aviation, and calls for “a combination of incentives, tax benefits and subsidies to make the UK a world leader in developing these fuels and technologies.” The review advocates the development of SAF fuel plants in parts of the “United Kingdom that are particularly reliant on aviation for domestic connectivity.” This is welcomed but we believe it should not be just for domestic aviation, but the goal is very much to maximise carbon reduction across the piste.

Sir Peter Hendy’s central recommendation is the establishment of a multi modal transport network known as UKNET – “a strategic transport network for the whole United Kingdom which would connect all the nations of the UK, with appropriate funding and coordination with the devolved administrations to deliver it.” This will incorporate road, rail and air. This is something that the Prime Minister has warmly welcomed in his response to the publication of the review. It remains to be seen if this is a real driver of policy development.

There is much to take away from this review especially with the impact of the pandemic on the UK’s connectivity and this review is a welcome step towards recovering and expanding some of our domestic connectivity.

However, as we have continually said to Government, domestic routes are only one part of the post-



There is much to take away from this review especially with the impact of the pandemic on the UK’s connectivity and this review is a welcome step towards recovering and expanding some of our domestic connectivity.

pandemic connectivity recovery. The four UK nations do not only rely on connectivity to other parts of the UK to thrive but also internationally. This connectivity is expected to recover more slowly, and the UK and devolved administrations need to set out ambitious proposals to ensure all

parts of the UK have the connectivity they need.

Without good air links, the UK Government’s Global Britain ambitions and levelling up plans will be difficult, if not impossible, to deliver.

GOODWOOD AERODROME HOSTS DRONE SAFETY TRIALS

Goodwood Aerodrome, once a Battle of Britain station, has hosted early safety trials for Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight drones.

The West Sussex airfield, which operated Hurricanes and Spitfires during World War Two, was the base for seven months of drone trials last year designed to ensure that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) can safely occupy the same airspace as conventional aircraft.

Goodwood's Aviation Innovation Centre, launched in 2018, aspires to be the UK's best location for the development and demonstration of manned and unmanned aviation technology. The aerodrome's Head of Aviation Operations and Goodwood Aero Club, Mark Gibb, said the aim is for Goodwood to be Europe's leading UAV technology centre.

He said: "I see the UAV activity as a necessary area of diversity for the aviation business at Goodwood and we have chosen to encourage this type of activity. We were really keen to embrace drone technology rather than resist it because it is here, and it is going to stay, and we felt we would rather be leading than lagging".

The 2021 trials involved the creation of a temporary piece of airspace around Goodwood, described in the jargon as "a temporary danger area". Gibb said that although this is a standard phrase for such airspace it had alarmed some residents at first. "There were a couple of local newspaper headlines that picked up on the danger area aspect and amplified that in a very uninformed way, but we worked with those newspapers to brief them. They very quickly saw that it was a terminology issue, rather than us doing something unsafe".

Similarly, there had been some initial scepticism among Goodwood's flying community until they were assured that the early morning timing of the trials would ensure that there would be no disruption for the airfield's long-term customers. He said that once they understood the aims of the trials many of them had felt "a little bit of pride that we were doing something here that no one else was doing".

Gibb emphasised that the

Goodwood's Aviation Innovation Centre, launched in 2018, aspires to be the UK's best location for the development and demonstration of manned and unmanned aviation technology.

aerodrome does a lot of work with drones outside of the trials as the Goodwood Estate's headline events, such as horse racing (Qatar Goodwood Festival), motor sport (the Festival of Speed) and historic motor racing (Goodwood Revival), all come with media rights. "They all have drone activity associated with them" he said, "so we are quite well practised at integrating drone



technology with the other things that we do”.

The aerodrome’s status as a key asset of and gateway to the Goodwood Estate has enabled it to secure levels of investment that would not have been possible for many stand-alone grass airfields with an average of 33,000 movements a year. Over the last five years the investment has included new fire vehicles, a new aerodrome building and an ambitious programme to regrade the runways and install a completely new drainage system. The aerodrome is the last remaining all-grass Battle of Britain airfield still in operational use.

Goodwood’s recovery from the pandemic lockdowns has been swift. By mid-summer last year movement numbers were exceeding busy day averages for a normal year and the aerodrome had to put some restrictions in place to keep the numbers at a safe and manageable level. The whole year figures for 2021 are showing a remarkable 20% traffic increase compared to 2019.

Gibb speculates that the explanation for the higher traffic numbers could be that customers who were prevented from taking foreign holidays had more disposable income. In addition, customers were spending more time at home and for those who live close to the airfield their aeroplane was more readily

accessible. Unable to spend money elsewhere, a lot of customers were flying more often. The aerodrome has seen a big upturn in people wanting to secure their private pilot licences, perhaps because people had brought forward plans they had to do this later in life.

With traffic numbers growing, Goodwood has continued to focus on residents’ concerns about noise and their properties being overflowed. Gibb, who previously headed up the Airside operations team at Southampton Airport, said that noise would always be an issue for people living near an aerodrome and he was very conscious that “it doesn’t take much for a moan to turn into a movement”.

He said that the aerodrome had noticed a real spike in noise complaints in the periods when it had come out of lockdown. Gibb said that some of that was because people had got used to a much lower level of background noise, but he also thought it could be because with more people working from home, they were experiencing aircraft noise for the first time. This was particularly the case if their working routine previously involved them leaving home before the aerodrome opened in the morning and not returning until after it had closed.

Gibb said that Goodwood also had

a particular challenge: “We are a country estate on the edge of a city (Chichester). We have lots of open ground around us, which means that there are lots of areas that are ripe for housing development. We are seeing more and more homes going up, homes that are getting very close to historic noise routings which previously, and very deliberately, were over open fields. Now we find ourselves with people living right on the cusp of those noise routings”. Currently the aerodrome is awaiting the outcome of an appeal on a proposed housing development in a noise-sensitive area to which it has objected.

Despite these and other challenges, Gibb said that he had greatly enjoyed his decade at Goodwood following an earlier career in both ports and commercial aviation. He said that it was very much the diversity of the Goodwood operation that kept it interesting along with an exceptional aviation team that was very professional, and customer focused. Gibb said that the customer experience was “incredibly important”, which was why people were recruited more based on their mind-set rather than their previous job history. “Experience can’t compete with inspiration” he said, “so employing the right sort of people keeps our business here necessarily agile in a very competitive General Aviation operating environment”. ■

AIRPORTS ARE BETTING ON TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT THEIR RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS, ACCORDING TO A NEW SITA SURVEY

Airports are planning significant increases in spending on digitalization and sustainability between now and 2024 as they seek to recover from the Covid-19 crisis

The plans by airport Chief Information Officers are revealed in the 2021 Air Transport IT Insights, a new survey by SITA, the world's leading IT provider for the air transport industry.

SITA asked more than 180 IT decision makers from leading airports and airlines around the world to describe their plans for technology investment over the next three years. The survey confirmed that automation of passenger processing

to streamline passenger flow and enhance convenience will be a priority.

According to the survey 74% of airports are investing in biometric identity management solutions for passengers. They are prioritizing automated border gates at departure using either a combination of biometrics and travel documents (27% implemented last year, planned to rise to 64% by 2024) or self-boarding gates using biometrics only (24% implemented, rising to 62% by

2024.

At the cutting edge of technological innovation, 38% of all the world's leading airports plan to implement a secure, single biometric token for all touchpoints, even though this is almost non-existent (3% implemented) in airports today.

In particular, automation of passenger health certificate verification will be an area of urgent attention and sustainability is a key concern. SITA has seen that in the

At the cutting edge of technological innovation, 38% of all the world's leading airports plan to implement a secure, single biometric token for all touchpoints, even though this is almost non-existent (3% implemented) in airports today.

past two years many airports have reverted to manual checks for health documentation, unwinding the benefits of a more digital passenger journey established over the past decade.

Highlighting the urgency of automating these checks, 32% plan to invest in mobile app-enabled verification and 26% are looking to implement verification through kiosks by 2024. Expecting to face greater levels of passenger traffic and congestion as the recovery of air travel takes hold, 47% of Tier 1 airports plan to implement mobile app-enabled verification, and 29% have plans for verification through kiosks by 2024.

With sustainability a key concern, most airports have implemented sustainability initiatives including building airport infrastructure (with a focus on green spaces, use of natural light, and renewable energy) (57%), widely available recycling points (57%), and smart building technology and automation (55%).

European airports are prioritizing automation of passenger processing and sustainability.

Among Europe's leading airports,



*Sergio Colella, SITA
President for Europe*

41% expect absolute IT spend to grow this year compared to last year. Their priorities for IT services and technologies are similar to their global counterparts, but an additional priority in Europe is offering staff services via smartphone or tablet, with major investment in research and development.

Two other striking differences between European and global airports emerge in the survey. For European airports, implementation of corporate social responsibility programmes (such as carbon offsets or supporting communities) is significantly more widespread (63% implemented, compared to 42% globally). In addition, European airports are further advanced in the implementation of sustainability initiatives than the global average.

Looking ahead, ACI Europe have confirmed the support of 235 airports across Europe that have committed to net zero by 2050, and

more than 90 airports are now set to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

To help airports in their journey to carbon net zero, SITA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Envision Digital, a Singapore-headquartered global net zero partner and Artificial Intelligence of Things technology leader with the aim of creating the world's first integrated net zero carbon airport offering. The collaboration will harness Envision Digital's strengths in digitalization, data management and artificial intelligence and SITA's strengths in air transport technology and operations.

Sergio Colella, SITA President for Europe, said: "With Envision Data and SITA working together, we can help Europe's airports in their journey towards meeting their sustainability commitments, combining solutions that optimize airport operations to reduce local emissions while also optimizing infrastructure-related energy consumption". ■



AOA TEAM LOOKS FORWARD TO WELCOMING MEMBERS TO NEW OFFICE

The AOA team, led by Karen Dee, is looking forward to welcoming members to its new office in Smith Square, Westminster.

The move to Kings Buildings, a short walk from the Department for Transport, was organised by AOA Office Manager, Patricia Page. As Covid restrictions start to ease and Government guidance changes, Page and her colleagues are looking forward to welcoming members back to in-

person meetings at the modern and well-equipped offices.

A big screen in the building's second floor meeting room will facilitate hybrid meetings enabling participation both by those in the room and others joining from other locations. The team are

keen to ensure that the increased participation by airports in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that Teams technology has enabled is not lost when in-person meetings return.

As the longest serving AOA team member, Page, who joined from the Cabinet Office in 2012, said she had

felt sad to leave the former AOA office in Birdcage Walk, but as soon as she arrived at the Smith Square office, she realised that the amenities were better, the location was brilliant, and the space was great for effective team working. Now she is looking forward to resuming face-to-face interaction with AOA members as in-person meetings return.

Regulation and Partnerships Director, Tania Roca, is a strong supporter of hybrid meetings to help geographically distant airports as well as some slimmed-down airport teams who are now too thinly stretched to justify travelling to London for short meetings. She points out that meeting via Teams had enabled AOA specialist groups to meet more frequently (monthly), and had also helped the Civil Aviation Authority to attend more meetings too. Roca is also keen to encourage her colleagues to visit airport members as much as possible.

Finance Manager, Richard Atkin, had always enjoyed regular interaction with members prior to the pandemic and had initially found working from home difficult. He said that Karen Dee's introduction of daily team meetings during the pandemic had been crucial in ensuring that people didn't feel isolated. Now he is looking forward to returning to the new office, enthusiastically describing it as "a vast improvement on the old one - much, much better".

Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, joined the AOA during lockdown in May 2020, spending six months on Teams calls before meeting his AOA colleagues in person. By his account it was "very strange" working with people every day for months and then meeting them in person for the first time. To date almost all his conversations with Government officials have been virtual and, although they have been frequent, he suspects that it has been more difficult to build relationships of trust "to the point where they tell you things in confidence knowing that it won't be used inappropriately". Sharing Roca's enthusiasm for



As Covid restrictions start to ease and Government guidance changes, Page and her colleagues are looking forward to welcoming members back to in-person meetings at the modern and well-equipped offices.



visiting airports, he says that will help him to better understand the different operational and commercial challenges faced by both large and smaller airports.

Snelling's policy colleague, Policy Manager, Rupinder Pamme, joined the AOA four months before him, which meant that she had two months to get to know her colleagues before lockdown started. Since then, her work has been almost entirely Covid-related, which she credits with teaching her a lot about crisis management. Now she is looking forward to having the bandwidth to take on other issues, such as sustainability and airspace modernisation. Looking back on all the Teams calls, she said they had the advantage that issues were dealt with more quickly, but the disadvantage that it took more time to build relationships.

The AOA's head of Public Affairs and

Public Relations, Henk van Klaveren, is looking forward to meeting airport members face-to-face and to dealing more with non-Covid-related issues but says the pandemic has led to the AOA team updating members more regularly. The daily (now weekly) updates had been valued by members as an effective way of keeping them abreast of developments. Van Klaveren shares Snelling's view that Teams calls have made it harder to build close relationships with officials but has seen a different dynamic with elected politicians. In his words, "MPs are quite happy to share their opinions. They have never been shy of voicing their views". He also noted that AOA meetings with MPs had been better attended than pre-pandemic, reflecting both the fact that it had been easier to join meetings and that aviation and travel issues had more prominence because of their impact on jobs in many MPs' constituencies.





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