

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

HEATHROW CEO JOHN HOLLAND-KAYE:

*“We will grow by
as much in the next
five years as we did
in the last 50”*

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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



*Welcome to
this edition of
The Airport
Operator
which
coincides with*

*a strong and very welcome
return of large numbers of
passengers to airports across
the UK.*

I am confident that the surge in bookings that we have just seen over Easter will be followed by a strong summer and that the quality of service that we and the airlines both seek to provide will steadily improve in the coming weeks as we overcome recent recruitment challenges.

A fortnight before the Easter weekend, we warned that a combination of factors could put some airport operations under strain and might mean longer queues at peak times and that is what we saw at some airports, even though most passenger journeys at most airports were smooth and trouble-free. Those factors included more late bookings than usual, Covid-related staff absences, a very tight labour market and delays in the necessary government security checks for new and returning staff.

At the same time, in our report Reconnecting the UK: recovering aviation connectivity, which you can read more about elsewhere in this edition, we revealed that UK airports have lost £10bn in revenue since the first lockdown in March 2020 and have taken on more than £4bn in debt. Losses and debts of that scale mean that airports will inevitably face some difficulties in making necessary investments and that these will take some time.

Meanwhile, many airports have had big recruitment drives underway for some time, but the time taken to process recruits through vetting and training can be lengthy, which has led to some successful candidates taking other offers rather than wait to start work. We have asked Government to consider what can be done to speed

up this process and, in addition, we continue to raise concerns with the Home Office and Border Force about the ability of Border Force to cope with higher passenger numbers during the summer.

Beyond these short-term challenges, we also remain engaged with Government on important longer-term issues, including the UK aviation strategy framework and new Government thinking on planning for net zero carbon emissions. We expect to learn more about these later this summer.

While my introduction has focussed on some immediate challenges, it is important to emphasise that our overall view at the AOA is one of optimism. After two very tough years we are finally beginning to see brighter days ahead. As you read this issue of the magazine, I think you will agree that this spirit of optimism is shared by airport operators across all corners of the UK and across airports of different sizes. We have a perspective from Heathrow's Chief Executive, John Holland-Kaye, as well as interviews with the men and women who run the airports at Cardiff, City of Derry, Cornwall Newquay and London Southend.

Cardiff CEO, Spencer Birns, reports "steadily rebuilding connectivity" at the national airport of Wales, but also suggests that the UK Government could do more to support smaller regional airports. The new Managing Director of Cornwall Airport Newquay, Samantha O'Dwyer, tells us of her plans to develop the airport estate and urges the Government to consider extending Public Service Obligation routes to the regions. City of Derry MD, Steve Frazer, celebrates the return of Ryanair UK and summer sun routes from his airport, while also calling on the UK Government to introduce zero domestic Air Passenger Duty in Northern Ireland. Finally, London Southend CEO, Glyn Jones, is brimming with renewed confidence, as he marks the return of easyJet to his airport after a two-year absence.

Enjoy the magazine and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AOA's Annual Dinner on 10 May. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive



**HEATHROW CEO
JOHN HOLLAND-
KAYE SAYS
“WE WILL GROW
BY AS MUCH IN THE
NEXT FIVE YEARS
AS WE DID IN THE
LAST 50”**

For our people it will be an opportunity to develop their careers. It will be a chance to rebuild the airport operating model more efficiently, with greater use of data to manage flows more efficiently.



I was recently working in Terminal 3, helping to clear trays to keep the security lane flowing, when I caught the eye of a security officer. She smiled at me and said: “I had forgotten what it was like to be so busy, it is fantastic.” Her experience of the last two years was all too familiar – furlough, moving terminals, and all against a backdrop of travel opening and closing amid myriad rules. And she was still anxious the rollercoaster might once again plunge. “Don’t worry” I told her, “Your job and pay are safe, even if we have another downturn. We are recruiting again, and you should apply for a management job. There has never been a better time to be at Heathrow.”

It is true. After surviving the worst crisis in aviation history, we will grow by as much in the next five years as we did in the last 50. That is the kind of growth you normally only see in tech companies. For our people it will be an opportunity to develop their careers. It will be a chance to rebuild the airport operating model more efficiently, with greater use of data to manage

flows more efficiently. But there will also be growing pains.

We spent two frustrating years urging the government to reopen travel and were all surprised when the UK suddenly went from having the strictest travel rules in Europe to none at all. How wonderful is it to see the surge in demand this change released? The current trend is UK outbound leisure passengers making the most of this window of freedom and cashing in vouchers for trips not taken. UK households have around £250bn of additional cash saved up during the pandemic which they are ready to spend on skiing holidays, weekend breaks and family holidays. We have not yet seen much inbound leisure (foreign tourists are still thin on the ground here) or business travel because of high covid levels in the UK and the requirement to test before returning to many major countries, such as the US.

Around a third of the 75,000 people who worked at Heathrow pre-pandemic lost their jobs as all companies across the airport did everything they could to

conserve cash and survive. Within our own team, we tried to do it in a structured way, avoiding compulsory frontline redundancies, and trying to keep as much of our talent as possible, but we still lost a lot of fantastic and experienced colleagues. We all know how long it takes to recruit and train people, and with so many changes of rules, it has been hard to know when to start investing again and what size of demand to scale for.

Starting to invest again after being so focussed on conserving cash is a big call. It can destroy your business if you get it wrong. We took the decision last autumn that we needed to start hiring again, and increased our recruitment

Peak demand in April is already up to 80% of pre-pandemic levels, but still with only 65% of the resource.



targets in November, after the US reopened, planning for peak days of 80% of pre-pandemic demand during summer 2022. We stuck with that recruitment plan through the omicron wave and shared our thinking with the whole airport community, so we are all working to the same plan. It only takes one of us to fail for hundreds of passengers' travel plans to be ruined.

The rapid reopening means that "Summer has come early". Peak demand in April is already up to 80% of pre-pandemic levels, but still with only 65% of the resource. Over the Easter holiday period we have worked hard across the whole of team Heathrow to plan resource and make sure we are able to give passengers as close to a normal experience as possible. I am very proud of the way everyone has pulled together to keep passengers moving. One journalist said that after being braced for "airport chaos" (that is a headline that always seems to sell papers) travelling through Heathrow was a doddle and the only queue was for a restaurant, along with everyone else who had got to the airport too early.

Now we are working on plans for summer. We need to be prepared for a bigger peak over the summer as this "bubble" of outbound leisure demand works its way through. Consumers (and the media) will expect the industry to have learned lessons from Easter, but it is still going to be extremely challenging - if airports and airlines haven't got people into the recruitment pipeline by now it is already too late to get them in place and trained by mid-July.

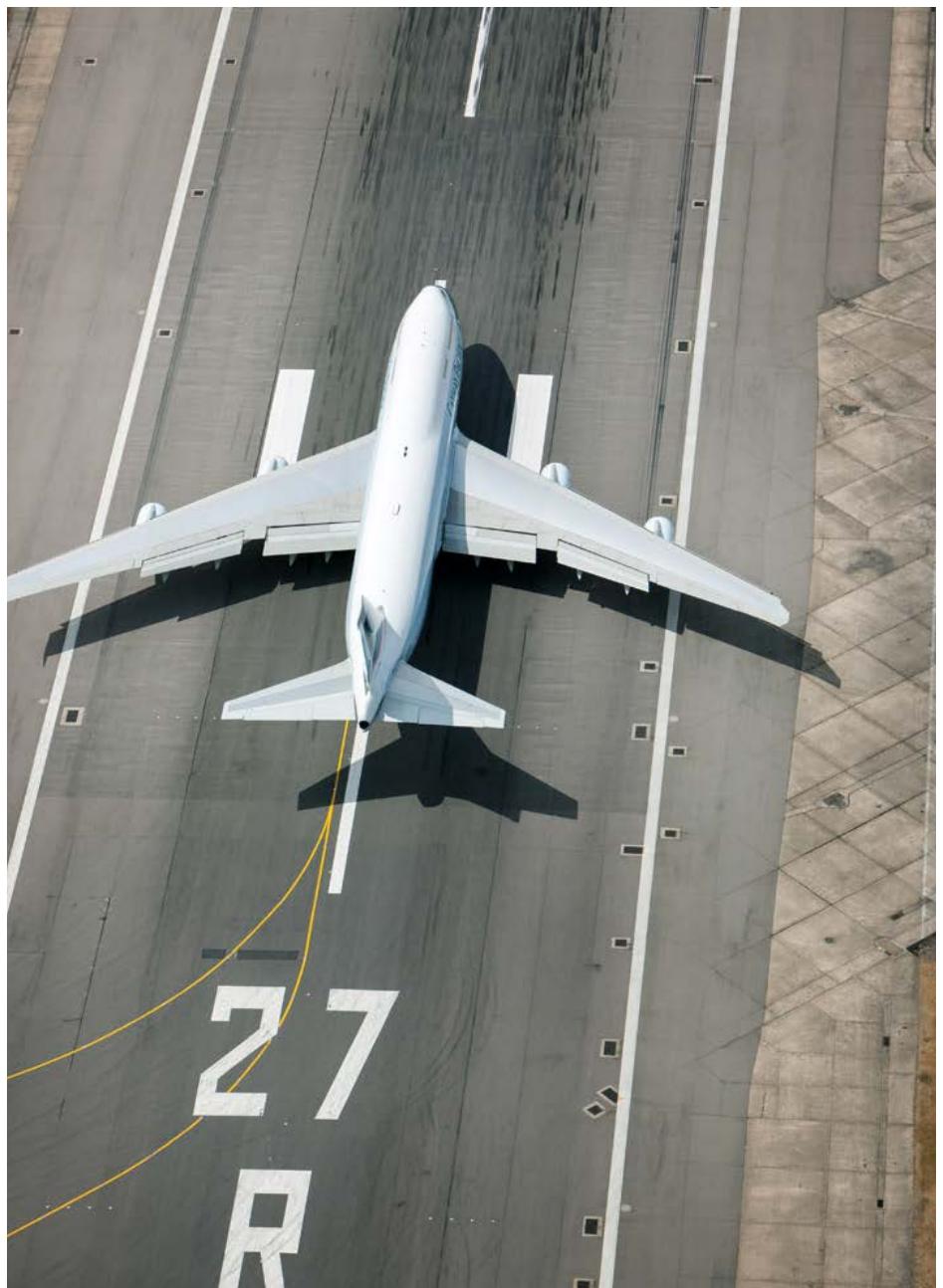
So, are we now headed quickly back to full recovery? We don't think so, not quite yet. We are still in a pandemic and cannot ignore the threats that remain: many markets are still closed or have restrictions and we are overdue another variant of concern. Our view is that by the end of the summer the UK outbound leisure bubble will have burst and we will head into a colder winter season

For now, let us make the most of the demand that we do have. Let us embrace the challenges and, like the colleague I met in Terminal 3, let us enjoy the fantastic return of busier days.

where the realities of high fuel costs, war in Ukraine, lower GDP growth, and the pandemic start to bite. This isn't to be pessimistic; it is taking a realistic view of just how long our journey is, and how fragile the wins will be. While we remain several years away from where we want to be, we will get there. For now,

let us make the most of the demand that we do have. Let us embrace the challenges and, like the colleague I met in Terminal 3, let us enjoy the fantastic return of busier days. ■

John Holland-Kaye is Chief Executive Officer of London Heathrow Airport.



“WE NEED A FULL AVIATION RECOVERY PLAN – AND WE NEED IT NOW” HENRY SMITH MP, CHAIR OF THE APPG FOR THE FUTURE OF AVIATION

The reopening of Gatwick Airport’s South Terminal at the end of March was a welcome and overdue sign that we can start to look towards the sector’s recovery from Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

However, challenges over the Easter period have reinforced that recovery is far from guaranteed and that it is essential Government work with industry on a full aviation recovery plan.

As we continue to move beyond the rules and restrictions that have dominated the last two years, it is crucial for the Government to recognise and address the significant obstacles and disadvantages that UK aviation and travel industries continue to face, especially when compared with competitors abroad, despite being one of the first

jurisdictions to re-open and remove pandemic measures.

It is naïve, dangerous and reckless to expect that you can simply switch the aviation, travel and tourism industries straight back on after two years of record low passenger numbers, ever changing public health measures and travel advice. But it is also clear that without a full recovery for our airports, airlines, and travel bodies we will not have a full recovery from the pandemic.

The scale of the financial consequences of the last two years

The Government needs to go further in its support for UK aviation and travel industries.

should leave the Government in no doubt that the opportunities and connectivity provided by aviation and travel are paramount not only to the UK’s trade and development, but also the Government’s Global Britain agenda. Without a fully

recovered and vibrant aviation and travel industry, the ambitions of Global Britain, namely championing our values, reinvesting our global relationships, and maximising trade opportunities on the world stage, will all remain effectively grounded.

Any further delay to the aviation and travel sector's recovery will also be felt across the UK and has the potential to significantly disrupt the Government's proposals for Levelling Up. In the years before the pandemic, airlines and regional airports formed the backbone of regional connectivity across regions throughout the UK. Whilst we have seen some promising progress in restoring regional connectivity in recent months, it is clear that there is still more to be done to safeguard the long-term future of domestic routes and returning short haul and long-haul routes to our regional airports.

With our departure from the EU there is scope for the Government to go even further in support for regional route developments, through reforming the Public Service Obligation programme and funding a fully comprehensive regional air connectivity fund. Without effective Government action in the form of bespoke domestic Route Retention and Route Development Funds, residents across the UK could be left behind in our nation's recovery and development, a situation that nobody wants or benefits from.

Faced with these challenges, it is unacceptable that currently we have the highest passenger taxes in the world. It is clear that the sector's recovery is being burdened by an exceptionally high rate of Air Passenger Duty (APD). I know from engaging with stakeholders from across the industry, especially those based at Gatwick Airport in my constituency that a suspension or reduction in APD would be significantly welcomed across the industry and go a long way in making UK aviation and travel competitive again.

As I wrote in my letter to the Home



*Henry Smith MP, Chair
of the APPG for the
Future of Aviation*

Secretary earlier this month, the Easter holidays represented a vital opportunity to finally kickstart the sector's recovery. Instead, passengers were met with the real-life legacy of the pandemic, a shortage of staff and a continuing under resourcing of our Border Force. It is essential that the Home Secretary takes real, concrete, and collaborative action to ensure that all of our airports are properly resourced without any further delay to avoid our border being a brake on our recovery.

Whilst I welcome the Aviation Minister's recent announcement that the Government will be speeding up recruitment across the aviation industry, I believe there is still room for further support to prevent a return to delays and queues across the summer period. These could include, but are no way limited to action to improve and bolster eGate software to ensure their use is as

smooth as possible for passengers, whilst ensuring airports always have a minimum protected number of Border Force Officers.

Above all else the Government needs to go further in its support for UK aviation and travel industries. Only through engaging with industry stakeholders and businesses can we work to remove the competitive disadvantage and give our airlines and airports the tools they need to thrive post-Pandemic.

The removal of the final travel restrictions was a powerful symbol that the UK is open for business. But to make this a reality we need a full aviation recovery plan, a plan that includes both industry and Government. And we need it now. ■

Henry Smith is Conservative MP for Crawley and Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Future of Aviation.

SOUTHEND AIRPORT BOSS CONFIDENT ABOUT THE FUTURE AS EASYJET RETURNS

London Southend Airport will re-open to commercial passengers at the beginning of May when easyJet will resume flights to Palma de Mallorca, Malaga and Faro.

The resumption of summer sun leisure flights comes nearly two years after the airline decided to close its Southend base, blaming Covid. Its decision to start flying from Southend again has delighted the airport's CEO, Glyn Jones.

He is confident that it will mark the beginning of a bright new era for the airport, predicting that it will see more flights and more airlines by next summer and that by 2024 the airport will start to benefit from the return of a capacity crunch in the London area airport leisure market.

In 2019 Southend served 2.15 million passengers. That slumped to just 147,000 in 2020 and fell further to 95,000 last year. Jones now believes that this year's figures will begin to show improvement on last year.

Pointing to forecasts from Eurocontrol that passenger numbers in Europe should return to 2019 levels by the end of 2023, Jones

says he expects Southend to be "ahead of the curve" because of its focus on leisure travel. The leisure sector looks likely to return before business travel and probably before visiting friends and relatives travel as well. He notes that in 2019 the airport was growing fast and serving 40 routes and says there is "a compelling argument" that by 2024 it will be benefiting from London area capacity tightness.

Jones says that airlines who are expressing an interest in launching new routes from Southend focus on three of the airport's key strengths, its "extremely low-cost base", its proximity and access to the London area's 8.2 million passenger market and the quality of the airport passenger experience.

Southend's "extremely competitive operating cost base" reflects short turnaround times, with no holding delays and short taxi times, and its proximity to Western Europe,

In 2019 Southend served 2.15 million passengers. That slumped to just 147,000 in 2020 and fell further to 95,000 last year.

*Glyn Jones,
Chief Executive
Officer, London
Southend Airport*





with the airport being physically closer to the Continent than any other UK airport. Pre-Covid, 61% of the airport's passengers came from London rather than South Essex, most of them travelling to the airport's on-campus railway station, with six trains an hour at peak times. The rail link will benefit from totally new rolling stock by the end of this year.

The quality of the airport passenger experience before Covid, which Jones is determined to maintain, was reflected in five-minute security queues, "the joint lowest queuing times in Britain" (a subject that he admits is "a bit of an obsession"). Shareholder confidence in the airport's future growth is reflected in their decision last year to invest in the new security machines which will enable passengers to leave laptops and liquids in their bags, so that, as Jones puts it, "when we go forward, we can continue to provide that great level of service to passengers all the time".

As his team prepares to reopen the terminal building to easyJet passengers, Jones is keen to pay tribute to the part that both freight and General Aviation played in enabling Southend Airport to continue to operate through Covid. Continuing freight services had been "hyper-important" and "without it the commercial circumstances for the airport would have been a lot more challenging". He acknowledges

that night-time freight flights are unpopular with a very small minority of the airport's neighbours but insists that the airport has done everything it can to listen to their concerns and to make operational changes to reduce noise disturbance. Jones also points to the key role that General Aviation activity played in helping Southend to ensure that the skills of its Air Traffic Controllers were refreshed and current. He says, "I would like to say thank you to the General Aviation community because they have supported us".

Support has also come from local residents. A survey carried out in November last year generated 7,000 responses and "the enormous majority (90% plus) were hugely in favour of the airport". Jones attributes that to a mixture of "the personal benefit" of living close to an airport that is "super-easy to use", the socio-economic benefits that the airport provides to the area in terms of driving growth and jobs and awareness of the airport's multiple contributions to the community, showcased in a recently launched "connecting communities commitment".

Brimming with confidence about the future of Southend Airport, Jones now has a focus on two areas where he sees challenge and room for improvement. The challenging area relates to people issues as traffic

picks up following a period when many employees left the industry. As a result, he says, "there are some areas of tightness, air traffic control being one of them and engineering another". He suggests that a return to growth will underline the UK's need to produce more engineers of all kinds and says that part of the answer may lie in attracting more young women to become engineers, as well as continuing investment in training and development, which has been a major focus for London Southend over the past two years.

His other area of focus is on the necessity for the aviation sector to develop new ways of helping to meet the country's Net Zero commitment. He describes Southend Airport's own sustainability record as "improving". Today it provides 20% of its electricity from the airport's own solar farm but he wants to see that percentage grow and is currently working on a new Net Zero strategy. More broadly he asks "how do we accelerate the use of sustainable fuels for aircraft? How fast can we get to the point where you have got competitively priced sustainable aviation fuels and the technology to take them? We want to be part of a revolution in the sense of effectively getting to Jet Zero as fast as we possibly can. We are very keen to be part of that discussion and debate".





NORTHERN IRELAND AIRPORT MANAGING DIRECTOR CALLS FOR ZERO DOMESTIC AIR PASSENGER DUTY AND SUPPORT FOR ROUTE DEVELOPMENT

City of Derry Airport Managing Director, Steve Frazer, is urging the UK Government to axe domestic Air Passenger Duty for Northern Ireland airports and offer support for route development.

He told The Airport Operator that without those two changes Northern Ireland's airports would struggle to regain traffic. He said that APD in Northern Ireland had been "hugely detrimental" to achieving any significant growth in traffic since 2014, when the Republic of Ireland abolished APD. Since that time Dublin Airport's passenger numbers have grown by more than 12m. At the same time regional airports in the Republic have received funding to help with safety and security costs.

Now Frazer is hoping that the UK Government's response to Sir Peter Hendy's Union Connectivity Review might include some positive news. He said that when meeting Baroness Vere, the Department of Transport Minister with responsibility for union connectivity, he had been impressed by her depth of knowledge, though he acknowledged that the Treasury might have other priorities. Route development support could also come from Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy.

Frazer is keen to emphasise the contribution that City of Derry Airport makes to the local economy, estimated by York Economics to be £26m a year. He says that contribution could be even greater if a rail link is provided to the airport. A feasibility study for such a link has been announced, but ideas for rail links to Belfast airports appear to be further advanced, leaving Frazer with the impression that the North West of Ireland is being treated as "the poorer cousin". He said that failure to move ahead with a rail link for Derry would "put us further behind achieving the needs of this fantastic region and decrease the chance of true levelling up".

City of Derry's PSO route to London Stansted Airport is at the heart of its operations, with Loganair operating up to three return services a day. Frazer says the airport has also shared with the



Steve Frazer, Managing Director,
City of Derry Airport

The contribution that City of Derry Airport makes to the local economy is estimated by York Economics to be £26m a year. This contribution could be even greater if a rail link is provided to the airport.

Irish Government a strong case for re-establishing the Derry to Dublin route as a PSO. Up to 40% of the airport's passengers are from Donegal in the Irish Republic and when Derry previously had a Dublin service more than two thirds of the people using it were from the Republic. A Derry route to Dublin's hub airport would be "a no-brainer to benefit our regional economy and onward connectivity", Frazer said, adding that he felt positive that "at some point this year" there could be good news on this subject.

In addition to Stansted, Loganair also operates routes from Derry to Glasgow and Liverpool and will start flying from Derry to Edinburgh next month. Frazer said that Loganair "stepping in at speed on Liverpool was critical to ensure that we didn't lose that market altogether" and said the route had "huge potential". Meanwhile, Glasgow is currently the best performing Loganair route from

Derry in terms of load factor.

Ryanair UK is now back at Derry, operating a route to Manchester that proved so popular that within weeks the frequency had been increased to four times a week. Frazer said that "with the fantastic price point and well-known brand power that only Ryanair deliver, we are certain this route will go from strength to strength".

For the first time in quite a few years, there will also be summer sun routes this year from Derry. Northern Ireland's largest tour operator, Travel Solutions, will be flying to Palma de Mallorca and Faro through the summer. Frazer anticipates that bookings will take off after Easter as Portugal and Spain lift Covid travel restrictions.

Commenting on Derry's aspirations for further route development, Frazer emphasised the importance of re-establishing UK domestic connectivity. He said it was "a

huge frustration” that no airline had yet stepped in to offer a route to Birmingham. He attributes this to unfamiliarity with the Derry market, fear of cannibalising capital city routes and limited capacity post-Covid. Frazer also said he sees “clear opportunities” for routes from Derry to Bristol and Newcastle.

Frazer joined City of Derry Airport in February 2020 after nearly 20 years as a manager at Heathrow, two at Stansted and eight in Doha. The opportunity arose when the airport’s owners, Derry City and Strabane District Council, decided that they wanted a locally based Managing Director, following a 10-year management contract with Regional & City Airports. Within weeks of joining, he was grappling with the outbreak of Covid, prioritising the maintenance of limited services to Great Britain for medical staff and key workers and the protection of all the jobs at the airport with the help of furlough funding.

The airport also secured crisis funding from the Northern Ireland Executive, which Frazer said was “absolutely vital”. Without it, he said, the Council had stated that “they would have been unable to continue funding the additional losses”, as many of their income streams had been cut off, and “without the additional support the airport would have been unable to continue”.



The airport had been able to protect every single job at the airport, which was “fantastic and absolutely key so we had an airport to go back to when the point of recovery came”.

Frazer said that the airport had been able to protect every single job at the airport, which was “fantastic and absolutely key so we had an airport to go back to when the point of recovery came”. With all the airport and handling jobs in-house and protected, Derry has been well-placed to maintain high levels of service as flights resume. Average queue times, covering both check-in and security, are less than 10 minutes and Derry has suffered none of the problems associated with staff shortages that some other airports have recently faced. ■



AOA SETS OUT PLAN FOR RECOVERY AFTER REVEALING THAT UK AIRPORTS LOST MORE THAN £10BN DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Airport Operators Association has called for urgent Government action to help UK airports to recover “after two devastating years”.

The call for action comes in a new AOA report, Reconnecting the UK: recovering aviation connectivity, published this spring. The report revealed for the first time that over the course of the pandemic UK airports suffered a total revenue loss of £10bn, with revenues falling by nearly 65%, while costs fell only marginally. At the same time, UK airports have taken on more than £4bn of additional debt.

The report also highlighted that UK passenger numbers last year were even worse than in 2020, down 12.7%

and warned that UK airports will have to fight hard to secure routes in the coming years.

AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, said “The promise of recovery comes after two devastating years. We saw our international competitors benefit from significant grant-based financial support, while the financial support from the four UK governments remained limited. It is imperative that the UK and devolved governments outline a serious, far-reaching recovery plan for aviation”.

UK passenger numbers last year were even worse than in 2020, down 12.7% and the report warned that UK airports will have to fight hard to secure routes in the coming years.

The report said that UK airports and the UK as a whole need an immediate UK Connectivity Recovery Plan, which should include:

- **changes in Air Passenger Duty (APD): a 12-month APD holiday, bringing forward the reduction in domestic APD and discounted APD for flights using sustainable aviation fuels.**
- **airside VAT-free shopping and arrivals duty-free shopping (which Norway and Switzerland already have and the EU is considering).**
- **action to boost regional connectivity, including Public Service Obligation routes for important routes that are not returning and expanding criteria to include airport to airport routes, as well as an Aviation Restart Fund to pay for airport charges on certain routes.**
- **an increase in the UK's tourism marketing budgets to at least match our competitors' spending.**

Beyond an immediate recovery plan, the report said that the UK Government's planned Aviation Strategic Framework and the Scottish Government's Aviation Strategy should set out a clear ambition for the role of aviation in the coming decades. They should outline how we will build back better post-pandemic to ensure a sustainable future that creates green skills and export opportunities and ensure all regions of the UK benefit from good connectivity to boost inclusive growth and level up places that have fallen behind.

The report offers a detailed prospectus for action to support a world-leading and competitive airports sector, decarbonising aviation, skills for the future, a vibrant General Aviation ecosystem, world-leading safety and security and future resilience.

To promote a world-leading and competitive airports sector, it

suggests that Government should ensure planning policy encourages the sustainable development of airports and routes and adequately fund Border Force to match demand. It should also increase funding for research for trialling and implementation of current and future seamless journey technology.

On policies to decarbonise aviation it says Government should continue to fund first stages of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, set up a Green Airports Fund and encourage carbon reduction measures through supportive regulatory, taxation and planning policies.

To build a world-class skills base, the report suggests transitioning the Apprenticeship Levy to a skills levy so that it can be more widely used to train the next generation of airport and aviation employees.

The report says that Government policy should encourage a vibrant General Aviation ecosystem, recognising the important and distinct roles of business aviation and general aviation. It should aim to improve connectivity to remote communities by pursuing a replacement for the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) to ensure quality and resilience of operations, while opting into EGNOS for the time being until a replacement is in place. It should also support the UK's world leading flight schools.

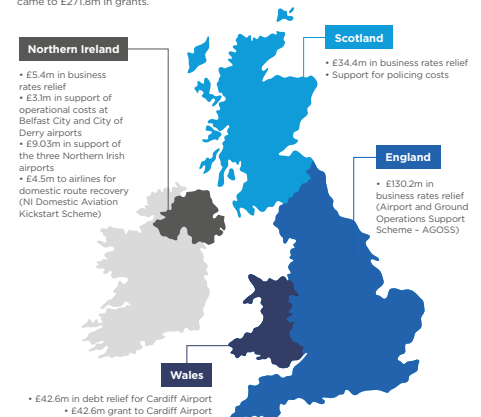
On safety and security, the report says Government should ensure delivery of world-leading safety and security that is compatible with airport post-pandemic finances, for example through extending deadlines or providing finance where appropriate. It should also aim for proportionate regulation, by ensuring that regulation is only what is needed and current,



FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND THE UK CONNECTIVITY RECOVERY

Financial support for airports: The four UK nations provided a range of financial support measures. All UK airports benefited from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which was worth around £200m to UK airports.

The four nations then provided separate support to airports in their area, which in total came to £271.8m in grants.



avoiding regulations staying longer than needed. It should also avoid unnecessary divergence from the major international rule-makers, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Finally, the report calls on Government to establish a framework for future pandemic management to be in place if and when Covid-19 it managed to the point that health restrictions are no longer required. ■



*Samantha O'Dwyer, Managing Director,
Cornwall Airport Newquay*

NEW CORNWALL AIRPORT NEWQUAY MANAGING DIRECTOR AIMS TO DEVELOP THE AIRPORT ESTATE AND GROW THE ROUTE NETWORK

Samantha O'Dwyer, the newly appointed Managing Director of Cornwall Airport Newquay, aims to make the airport commercially sustainable by 2030.

She told The Airport Operator that when she joined the airport in January “what really stood out for me was the potential. We have got a 650-acre estate. We have got one of the longest regional runways in the country. That just has so much potential, and it just begs to be developed. I see that as a very important part of my role”.

O'Dwyer explained that the airport currently benefits from a subsidy from its shareholder, Cornwall Council, “so it is really important to the shareholder and the business and residential community to reduce that subsidy and really

utilise the wonderful estate that we have got to provide value”.

Already Cornwall Airport Newquay hosts RAF St Mawgan and several search and rescue operations, but the new jewel in the crown is Spaceport Cornwall, the UK's first horizontal spaceport. Its inaugural launch is expected in July, with hopes of rapid growth after that once the operations have been proven. The spaceport is foreseen to create 150 direct jobs for the region and to deliver £200m of Gross Value Added to the economy.

O'Dwyer described Spaceport Cornwall as “a really great

We have got one of the longest regional runways in the country. That just has so much potential, and it just begs to be developed.

opportunity to put Cornwall and the airport on the world stage in the same way that the successful G7

summit did. I predict Spaceport will be similar”.

She said that Spaceport Cornwall, which depends on Cornwall Airport Newquay’s aerodrome licence, is one of the first and very important elements of the shareholder’s master plan to develop an aviation cluster at the airport. “What is really exciting for me” she said, “is I have now got an opportunity to lead that investment and to really develop that very significantly sized estate and ensure that the airport can become both commercially and environmentally sustainable by 2030”.

Several aviation cluster ideas are now being investigated, including increased maintenance, repair and operations activity and other aviation businesses. Additionally, the airport is investigating its ability to become self-sustaining by delivering its own solar farm. The hope is to attract companies that can bring economic investment and sustained employment to

The airport’s pre-pandemic passenger numbers, in 2019, were 461,478. In 2020 they fell to 67,877, before rebounding to 105,554 last year.

the region. O’Dwyer said she was “very optimistic” about bringing in businesses that would also help with the development of the airport’s route network. “For me” she said, “the exciting part of the role is about developing the estate in parallel with the route network and understanding how those two different elements both de-risk the business but also stimulate growth of the other”.

The anchor of Cornwall Airport Newquay’s current route network is the year-round Eastern Airways PSO

route to Gatwick, with the London PSO route historically delivering about 35% of the airport’s passenger traffic. Eastern currently deliver two services a day and this will increase to three. O’Dwyer described the route as “critically important to Cornwall because it increases connectivity by significantly reducing journey time into the South East. It provides reliability for the people that live and work in Cornwall and is about delivering the Government’s levelling-up agenda”.

Ideally, she said that she would like to see additional PSO routes to connect Cornwall with other commercially important parts of the country. The Government is currently reviewing the rules which currently make this impossible, but O’Dwyer acknowledged that even if a decision to allow such routes were taken in principle it could take some time to deliver. She said, “it really is needed sooner rather than later if the Government is going to achieve its stated objectives”.





Before the pandemic seven airlines were operating out of Cornwall Airport Newquay and that is now increasing to nine. For the inbound tourist market these include a Eurowings route from Dusseldorf and there will also be an Edelweiss route from Zurich. The outbound tourist market is served by Ryanair flights to Alicante and Faro.

The airport's pre-pandemic passenger numbers, in 2019, were 461,478. In 2020 they fell to 67,877, before rebounding to 105,554 last year. After undertaking what O'Dwyer describes as "a realistic budget exercise", the airport is now looking at in excess of 300,000 passengers for this financial year, based primarily on a stable staycation market and inbound and outbound tourism.

Cornwall Airport Newquay's primary focus for route development is on building back the frequency and the capacity that it had pre-Covid, which has yet to be completely achieved. At present the airport's routes are largely seasonal and based mainly on the staycation and inbound markets. In O' Dwyer's words, "what we really need is to build back and build on what were previously seen as business routes. A lot of people

moved into Cornwall as part of their relocation during the pandemic and those people are still working remotely. I predict that we will see an increase in demand for people travelling to their places of work, whether that is London, Manchester or Edinburgh and that is what we really need to build on year-round".

Beyond that, O'Dwyer sees international winter sun routes to places like Palma de Mallorca, Malaga and Tenerife as the airport's biggest unserved market. She said that is because of the seasonal economy in Cornwall - "inbound tourism ties people up in the summer and then the winter is the only opportunity those people have to get away".

Developing the airport estate and route development apart, O'Dwyer is keen to emphasise the professionalism and quality of the Cornwall Airport Newquay team. When she first arrived at the airport, she said that she wasn't sure what to expect, but she had been "absolutely bowled over" by the experience of the team, their quality and their motivation to make the airport a success - "Everybody I met did a fantastic job".

Commenting on the fact that there are still only a handful of women in senior leadership positions at UK airports, O'Dwyer said she didn't think this was because airports are "inherently sexist", but rather that it was taking time for societal changes in the approach to working women to be fully reflected. She expects the shift to become more obvious over the next ten years.

In her view, businesses will benefit from a mix of female and male traits. She thought that "women often display a nurturing side. So as a leader and manager I am very aware of people's needs to be understood, consulted and treated as human beings, rather than just as cogs in the organisational wheel. Equally, men are extremely good in a situation where they need to be task-related and driving for performance. So it is good, in many ways, when you are looking at an issue to have both approaches in order to make a balanced decision and to come out with the right decision for all of the workforce, whether they are men or women". ■

CARDIFF AIRPORT CEO URGES UK GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT SMALLER REGIONAL AIRPORTS TO MEET REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE COSTS

Spencer Birns, CEO of Cardiff Airport since 2020, is calling on the Government to consider helping airports with their Border Force, airspace change and security costs.

He told The Airport Operator that the per-passenger costs of meeting regulatory and legislative obligations are much higher for smaller airports than for large airports because their cash generation is much smaller. Acknowledging that the Government's approach is based on a "user pays" principle, he said he believes that there is still ground for a support mechanism that could be based on a mixture of grants, delays and structural changes. Such support would demonstrate that the Government is "serious about

helping business recover post-Covid".

Birns said the Government should look at how it could help smaller airports to meet costs related to the Border Force, the airspace change programme and next generation security obligations. He pointed out that airports must pay maintenance costs for Border Force eGates, even though they have no role in operating them. He said that obliging airports to pay for the national airspace change programme was like telling motorway service

stations that they should pay for additional motorway lanes. Next-generation security obligations would "cost millions at a time where we are in a recovery phase, and we just don't have the cash to invest in it. That is, I think an area where the UK Government could be much more supportive".

The Cardiff CEO struck a more positive tone when talking about the Welsh Government, noting that its £42m five-year support package covers just under half of the airport's operating costs. Cardiff Airport is

owned by the Welsh Government, though operated on a commercial basis at arm's length. Birns said it was very helpful to have a long-term shareholder that sees the bigger picture of the airport's economic value to Wales, providing not just financial support but also more intangible support. For example, he said it was "really helpful" to go in to talk to potential new airport partners with someone from the Government.

However, differences between the Welsh and Westminster governments on their approach to travel during the pandemic will result in a later recovery for Cardiff Airport than for many English airports, with Welsh Government advice not to fly, except for essential purposes, remaining in place until February this year.

Prior to the pandemic, 1.65m passengers were using Cardiff Airport. That number fell to just 48,000 in February 2021, before recovering to 180,000 a year later. Birns now expects that passenger numbers will reach just over 800,000 by the end of this year, representing a 50% recovery on the pre-pandemic period.

Looking at the same picture in terms of routes, before Covid passengers could fly from Cardiff to 52 destinations. Now the airport is steadily rebuilding connectivity, with 17 destinations currently served, a number that Birns hopes will rise to 25 by the end of this year. Destinations already reinstated that are important for Wales from a trade and tourism perspective include Paris, Edinburgh, Amsterdam and Dublin. Belfast heads the list of previous destinations that are not currently served from Cardiff, though Birns sounds optimistic that this challenge could be solved soon.

KLM, Ryanair, TUI and Vueling have all re-established routes from Cardiff and Wizz Air opened a new base at the airport earlier this month. Birns stresses that his focus for now is on helping long-term partners to build back their businesses, rather than on seeking new airlines, which he

describes as "a farming rather than a hunting approach. That for us is the priority, to get their business back up and running and stable, to help them develop and grow, because ultimately that helps both parties".

His optimism for the longer term is also based partly on the prospects for economic growth in the airport's South Wales catchment area. A total of 110,000 new homes are currently being built within a 60-minute drive of the airport and a population of 2.5m people in the area is expected to grow 14% by 2025, giving, Birns says, "good prospects for investment into the area, for deploying capacity".

He sees road access to the airport as a major strength, pointing out that it "has improved massively since 2018/2019. We have had a significant improvement through investment by the Welsh Government in road access to the airport, which dramatically improved journey times". With reduced congestion, the 12-mile journey from Cardiff City centre now takes just 20 minutes. By contrast, Birns says that bus and train journeys are slower and service frequency post-Covid isn't yet good enough to deliver what his customers need.

Looking beyond cost challenges and route development aspirations, Birns stresses two key areas of focus for him and his colleagues. One is staff welfare, which he says has become a much more acute issue since the Covid crisis. Saving as many jobs as possible had been a priority during the pandemic and redundancies were kept to very low numbers. Even so, a third of the staff left.

Now, as it seeks to rebuild staff numbers, recruitment has been a challenge and recruiting security staff a particular struggle, with security clearance sometimes taking up to three months. Also, many younger people are now looking for more flexible ways of working, which is a challenge for airports where 80% of the staff need to be onsite. In the face of these and other

By February 2020 the airport had managed to reduce its own CO2 emissions by 53% over an eight-year period.

people-related challenges, such as mental health, Birns estimates that HR-related topics now take 25 to 30% of airport managers' time. He says that these issues are "putting a tremendous amount of pressure on HR departments and on managers. It can be quite draining and that is something that we as an industry need to be aware of".

A second key area of focus is improving the airport's environmental credentials. By February 2020 the airport had managed to reduce its own CO2 emissions by 53% over an eight-year period. It will take a big further step forward this spring, with "spades in the ground" expected to create an on-site solar farm that should be operating by the end of the summer, providing the airport with its own electricity. Meanwhile, Cardiff Airport is reviewing its overall net-zero programme and plans to publish an update this summer. ■



Spencer Birns, Chief Executive Officer, Cardiff Airport

AOA ELECTS THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The AOA has elected the Chief Executives of Edinburgh Airport, Farnborough Airport and Leeds Bradford Airport to its Board.

Gordon Dewar, Simon Geere and Vincent Hodder will each serve on the Board for a three-year term.

Edinburgh Airport Chief Executive, Gordon Dewar, said that, having already served as a Board director in the past, he understood the importance of the AOA in gaining industry consensus and coordination with government policy and communication.

Dewar said that the pandemic “has been the greatest-ever challenge to our industry and has amplified the need for an industry-wide approach to deliver a strong recovery. The heightened focus to delivering recovery and our sustainable net-zero future through innovation will

be driven by showing the value we add to the UK economy and creating the legislative and policy conditions to optimise that for all”.

“I hope to play a part in making the case for our industry and being able to represent Scotland’s capital airport and our views on innovation and achieving our shared bright future”.

Gordon Dewar



Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive Officer, Edinburgh Airport

“Every airport, large or small, has a significant economic, social and environmental impact in the community and region they serve”.

Simon Geere

He said he hopes to “play a part in making the case for our industry and being able to represent Scotland’s capital airport and our views on innovation and achieving our shared bright future”.

Farnborough Airport CEO, Simon Geere, said that he had been delighted to be nominated and that representing airports below 100,000 passengers would be hugely rewarding. He added that “having held board positions across a number of UK regional airports over the years, I hope to draw upon that experience and contribute positively to the AOA’s important and invaluable mandate”.

Geere noted that “airports come in all different shapes and sizes. However, they all serve that common purpose, to connect people. Every airport, large or small, has a significant economic, social and environmental impact in the community and region they serve”.

Leeds Bradford Airport Chief Executive Officer, Vincent Hodder, said he believes that the AOA is critical, both as a forum for airports to share views on issues affecting the industry and as a unified voice to government. In relation to the second, he said he believed that “the Government is abjectly failing



*Simon Geere,
Chief Executive Officer,
Farnborough Airport*

to support the aviation industry appropriately and airports in particular”.

Noting that there are several areas where he would like to contribute to the AOA position and “work to overcome some of the obstacles we face as industry”, he said “I believe that airports, communities and local planning authorities all need clarity on the Government’s position regarding the expansion of airports in light of climate change. I believe we need to be pressurising the Government to provide clarity so that our investors can have comfort in making large infrastructure commitments and to lower the costs of planning applications, which are inflated by needing to fund public inquiries, on top of the costs of lodging the initial applications”.

Hodder also said “We are slowly progressing a once-in-a-generation airspace change programme that has major implications for the environment and efficiency of our industry. It is important that Government provides the necessary framework and financial support for this process”. Finally, he said “I believe that the industry needs to take more of a leadership role in terms of the aviation impact on the environment or risk losing our social licence to operate”. ■



*Vincent Hodder,
Chief Executive Officer,
Leeds Bradford Airport*

“We are slowly progressing a once-in-a-generation airspace change programme that has major implications for the environment and efficiency of our industry”.

Vincent Hodder

AIRPORTS URGED TO FOCUS ON MAKING THE MOST OF THEIR PROPERTY AS THEY SEEK TO RECOVER FROM THE PANDEMIC

UK airports face major challenges as they work to bounce back from two years of pandemic-related financial losses but making the most of their property portfolio could be the key to recovery for some.

That is the view from leading airport property expert, John Arbuckle. Formerly Head of Property at Heathrow, he is now a Partner and Head of Aviation at property consultants and AOA associate member, Gerald Eve LLP, whose current airport clients include Bristol, Farnborough, Highlands & Islands Airports and Heathrow.

He is keen to encourage airports to think about property-related risks and opportunities “that may not have been a priority during the last two years of the pandemic, which saw a loss of experienced personnel and resources being focussed on the core business. The property portfolio merits a greater focus now that we are getting into recovery”



John Arbuckle, leading airport property expert

Arbuckle says that he has spent much of his 20-year career in aviation looking at how airports can make the most of their estate and minimise

business rates liability and how to create value and generate revenue that is not directly linked to the number of passengers flying.

Acknowledging that UK airports have had “a really tough time through Covid, with collapsing passenger numbers and profitability”, Arbuckle says that now is the right time to look at optimising their estate. That includes taking a fresh look at their property portfolio, understanding who is in occupation and ensuring rent and rechargeable costs are being paid. “Once you have a clear occupancy picture” he says, “you can then look to optimise the use of land, buildings and terminal space, first ensuring the operation has sufficient space and then prioritising

commercial uses”.

Arbuckle says that the final stage of optimising the portfolio depend on an airport’s desire to be involved in property development and the need to release value from the portfolio. Options include the development of new assets to meet demand and generate incremental revenue or divestment of surplus assets and land to help fund existing debt or future investment in airport operations. He cites as examples, developing and leasing land and property to create lounges, hotels, cargo sheds, industrial space or offices, which increase revenue and value for the balance sheet.

While some airports are very well-funded or “owned by backers who have very deep pockets” he notes that “others are not in such a fortunate situation and so the opportunity to release value from the development of assets or land that are surplus to the core business is a way of providing funding for that core operation or easing the debt burden built up during the pandemic”. He suggests that “as we get into a recovery phase, there is going to be a need for investment in the core business, where funding may not be available or may be expensive, so this is an alternative way of providing it”. There are different divestment models with different control and return profiles to meet a particular airport’s requirements.

Now is an important time for airports to take stock, plan, gather information and start to understand the impacts of the different basis of valuation.

Arbuckle also emphasises that this year is a crucial one for UK airports as they enter discussions with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) in England and its devolved nation equivalents on the revaluation of their business rates, which will settle their rates liability for the period from 2023 to 2026. He predicts that the planned switch to a new valuation method more closely linked to airport profitability will lead to winners and losers. He says that the effect needs to be carefully modelled to understand the impact, with the risk of substantial increases for the most profitable airports and savings for the least profitable.

Arbuckle says that now is an important time for airports to take stock, plan, gather information and start to understand the impacts of the different basis of valuation. He points out that “from now until late this year there is going to be engagement with the VOA, or equivalents in the devolved regions, and so airports will need to have facts at their fingertips and will need to understand what the potential impacts would be”.

Key information which airports will need to gather relates to April 2021, the date, set by Parliament, on which all valuations will be based, chosen to take into account the impact of the Covid pandemic. The valuation dates in Scotland and Northern Ireland are 1 April 2022 and 1 October 2021 respectively. Arbuckle points out that one of the challenges is that the approach agreed for 2023 will also inform the approach in 2026, by which time airports are likely to have substantially recovered. So, they will need to recognise the implications for future years of what is being agreed now.

He stresses that, where possible, the VOA will be keen to reach consensus with airports on rateable values to avoid appeals which create a lot of additional work for the VOA. Against that background, he says, “there are a number of arguments which can be deployed

to help to support a lower outcome for the airport”.

Summarising how Gerald Eve can help airports with the revaluation, Arbuckle says “We can guide them through the process, we can help identify the information airports need to collect, we can model the outcome, develop and execute a negotiating strategy and advise on the most likely outcome of the revaluation for 2023 and 2026. The objective is to minimise future cost liability – and we can help airports to negotiate the best possible outcome”.

Finally, Arbuckle is urging airports to consider some of the implications of the Government’s consultation on the business rates system in England, with similar changes likely in the devolved regions. He says the review’s proposals would place more of an administrative burden on airports, putting a lot of the onus on them to provide updates – giving the example of a 30-day time limit to make the VOA aware of changes in property occupation by third parties. The proposals would also limit the ability to make rating appeals and put an obligation on airports to use a Government IT system to upload information.

More positively, airports will need to understand how they could take advantage of a proposed relief on property improvements. There is also an exemption which has been brought forward to April 2022 to incentivise on-site renewables (such as battery storage and solar panels, like the projects recently announced by Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Teesside airports), with a rates exemption up to 2035.

Once finalised, the Government’s proposals for the business rates system are expected to be implemented from April 2023. ■

John Arbuckle can be contacted at jarbuckle@geraldeve.com.

AOA WELCOMES FOUR NEW MEMBERS

The AOA has welcomed four new organisations into membership – an innovation accelerator, a leading provider of COVID-19 testing solutions, a payment system platform and a global business consultancy.

Its three new Silver Members are:



Connected Places Catapult, which describes itself as the UK's innovation accelerator for cities, transport and place leadership. The organisation says that it provides impartial "innovation as a service" for public bodies, businesses and infrastructure providers to catalyse step-change improvements in the way people live, work and travel. It connects businesses and public sector leaders to "cutting-edge research to spark innovation and grow new markets". Connected Places Catapult runs technology demonstrators and SME accelerators "to scale new solutions that drive growth, spread prosperity and eliminate carbon".



DAM Health describes itself as one of the leading providers in the UK for COVID-19 testing solutions, including Fit to Fly PCR tests. The Liverpool-based company operates professional clinics across the UK and is the only British partner of the new global health passport app, Health Passport Worldwide. Its PCR and lateral flow test results are uploaded onto the app, "providing greater reassurance and confidence for travel plus a smoother process at airports around the world". DAM Health is the selected testing partner for Scottish Rugby, Glasgow Rangers FC and Crystal Palace FC.



Perfectpays is a start-up that says it has created "an all-encompassing payment system platform, designed to be using advanced technology" and "working with partners who are global leaders in their own sector". Its Ecosystem platform, designed to make organisations more efficient and future proof, offer benefits including customers having greater spending power in store due to acceptance of multi-currencies at the point of sale, loyalty schemes allowing organisations to benefit from revenues generated both internally and offsite and instant payments, assisting cashflow.

The AOA's newest Associate Member is:

steer

Steer, the global business consultancy, which works across transport, infrastructure and cities. Its UK-based aviation team advises airport operators around the world. Steer says that it has “a deep understanding of the issues influencing the aviation sector today and likely to shape it tomorrow, focusing on the interconnected areas of aviation policy and regulation, airport strategy and development and airport transactions”. Steer says that it has recently extended its service to include sustainability and decarbonisation, advanced air mobility and the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses across the aviation supply chain.



FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY AND DECARBONISATION OF AVIATION

A total of 13 AOA member airports have endorsed the Toulouse Declaration on future sustainability and decarbonisation of aviation. Launched by the French Presidency of the EU, the declaration is the first ever public-private initiative supporting European aviation's goal

to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest. Across Europe 89 airport operators of 311 airports came out in support of the declaration. Across the British Isles it has been endorsed by AGS Airports, Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport, Birmingham

Airport, Doncaster Sheffield Airport, Edinburgh Airport, London City Airport, London Gatwick Airport, London Heathrow Airport, London Luton Airport, Newcastle Airport, Ports of Jersey and Teesside International Airport. ■

BELFAST CITY AIRPORT AND FLYBE

Belfast City Airport has been announced as the new Flybe's second main base of operations, following last November's announcement that Birmingham Airport is the home of its new headquarters and first crew base. The new airline has put 23 routes

on sale and operated its first flight earlier this month. Flybe will initially serve 16 airports in the UK, France and the Netherlands, including 12 from Belfast City, seven from Birmingham and three from London Heathrow. ■



DIESEL-POWERED CARS ON SITE TO CHANGE AT FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT

Farnborough Airport has announced that all diesel-powered cars on site will change to using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, (HVO), reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90%. HVO is produced from 100% sustainable renewable feedstocks waste, including used cooking oil,

plant, food and animal waste. It can directly replace standard diesel with no retrofitting required. The airport's CEO, Simon Geere, said "The Farnborough Airport team recognise that climate change is a clear and pressing issue and is committed to minimising its

environmental impact and improving environmental performance through its operations. The introduction of HVO is another milestone in our sustainability programme and an integral part in delivering against the Government's targets for net zero carbon emissions". ■

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT HAS PUBLISHED ITS ROADMAP TO BECOME NET ZERO CARBON BY 2033

Birmingham Airport has published its roadmap to become net zero carbon by 2033, prioritising zero-carbon airport operations and minimising the use of carbon offsets. The roadmap includes a multi-million-pound commitment over the next four years to reduce emissions that the airport controls by 60% by investing in on-site renewable energy generation, energy-efficient lighting and energy management technology. Up to 40% of electricity used at the airport will be sourced through solar power. The airport's Chief Executive, Nick Barton, said "Our investment to become net zero will escalate immediately with a multi-million-pound outlay up to 2025, focusing on renewables and energy efficiencies. The second phase of investment will be developed to complete our net zero transition by 2033, with a focus on emerging technologies to create a low-carbon environment". ■



Up to 40% of electricity used at the airport will be sourced through solar power.

BRISTOL AIRPORT EXPANSION PLANS

The Planning Inspectorate has given the go-ahead for expanded capacity to proceed at Bristol Airport, lifting the cap on the airport's capacity from 10 million passengers a year to 12 million and enabling investment, including new upgrades to the terminal building, parking facilities and public transport links. It will add 800 jobs at the airport and up to a further 5,000 regionally. It will also allow the airport to explore new direct links to Europe and further afield, including the Middle East and North America. Airport CEO, Dave

Lees, said "The decision is excellent news for our region's economy, allowing us to create thousands of new jobs in the years ahead and provide more choice for our customers, supporting inbound tourism, and reducing the millions of road journeys made to London airports each year. We will now push ahead with our multi-million-pound plans for net zero operations by 2030 and look forward to working with stakeholders and the community to deliver sustainable growth". ■



TEESSIDE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT HAS APPOINTED A NEW CHAIR

Teesside International Airport has appointed a new Chair of its Board. Kate Willard OBE, who has played an ongoing role in the development of the airport since it was taken into public ownership, was appointed by Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen, and the Teesside Combined Authority. Houchen said “Kate is passionate

about seeing our airport succeed and she’s no stranger to our airport’s operations or Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool as a whole. Her experience and drive will make her a brilliant fit as we enter the next phase of transformation and redevelopment”. Willard said “I’m really delighted to be appointed

chair at an absolutely critical time in our airport’s story. With global pandemic restrictions all but gone and commercial projects on the site well under way, we’re now in a position to get our airport flying like never before. It’s brilliant to be playing a small part in driving this forward”. ■



LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT TERMINAL BUILDING REPLACEMENT

Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA) has withdrawn its planning application for a replacement terminal building, blaming excessive delays and the decision to call in the plans by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The airport said it wasn’t prepared to commit a further uncapped sum over an indefinite timeframe into

a public inquiry process when its focus needed to be on modernising the airport for the future. It will instead turn its attention to developing the extension to the existing terminal to enable it to meet increasing passenger demand. Airport CEO, Vincent Hodder, said “It is with regret that we have made the decision to withdraw LBA’s

application for the development of a new replacement terminal. Whilst this is a setback for our airport and region, we remain committed to investing in LBA to be an outstanding, decarbonised, modern airport for the future. My team and I are optimistic about the recovery from the pandemic and about the future of Leeds Bradford Airport”. ■

LONDON GATWICK AIRPORT REOPENED ITS SOUTH TERMINAL

London Gatwick Airport reopened its South Terminal on 27 March, describing it as “the equivalent of opening a medium-sized airport overnight”, as daily flights increased from 300 to 570. The airport and its partners spent months refurbishing, cleaning, updating and testing facilities and equipment that had not been in use since the terminal

closed during the pandemic on 15 June 2020. British Airways, Wizz Air, Vueling, Ryanair, Aer Lingus and Norwegian have all switched to the South Terminal. easyJet, which will fly 120 routes from Gatwick, the most ever, will operate from both the North and South Terminals. Gatwick CEO, Stewart Wingate, said “After a difficult two years, we know

there is significant pent-up demand for international travel. Reopening our South Terminal and the increase in the choice of flights our airlines are offering is also great news for our local communities, particularly people and their families who rely on the airport for their livelihood”. ■

RYANAIR HAS OPENED A NEW BASE AT NEWCASTLE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Ryanair has opened a new base at Newcastle International Airport, representing an investment of \$200m and 60 new direct jobs, alongside the launch of its biggest ever Newcastle schedule, 19 routes in total, including ten new summer sun routes. Ryanair will operate over 130 weekly flights this summer, over 40 more than in the summer of 2019. Ryanair’s Director of Marketing, Dara Brady, said “We are delighted to open this new base

and strengthen our relationship with Newcastle Airport, which will now host a fleet of two Ryanair aircraft. The opening of this base and introduction of new routes from Newcastle reinforces our commitment to increasing connectivity, travel options and inbound tourism to the area as Ryanair will now offer 40% more capacity than it did pre-pandemic”. ■



LONDON LUTON AIRPORT HAS SET UP A HUMANITARIAN HUB

London Luton Airport has set up a humanitarian hub to provide practical support for air passengers arriving from war-torn Ukraine. Arrivals are greeted by volunteers from the Bedfordshire and Luton Emergency Volunteers Executive Committee, British Red Cross and

the airport chaplaincy. Paramedics from the Hearts First Ambulance Service are also on hand to provide mental and physical health support information. Airport CEO, Alberto Martin, said “As an international airport we help to connect, cultures, places and people, so it has been

heart breaking to witness events unfold in Ukraine. We are proud of the support we provide to our communities and are glad we can play a small part in ensuring a warm welcome to Ukrainian families as they arrive in the UK”. ■



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