

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

LONDON LUTON CEO ALBERTO MARTIN:

*people, partnerships and
planning have been key
to the airport's recovery.*



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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



Welcome to this edition of The Airport Operator which is being published at a time when airports across the UK are seeing a strong recovery in summer passenger numbers.

It is a recovery that we are seeing across the country and at different types of airports, with, for example, London Biggin Hill Airport CEO, David Winstanley, telling us that business aviation at his airport is booming. This strong growth is something that we should all welcome and celebrate, even as we acknowledge that the scale and pace of the recovery has presented some airports and their airline and ground-handling partners with significant challenges.

As I write, it seems that for most UK airports security staffing is now back to where we want it to be, even while there are still some issues around ground-handling and check-in. So, I want to take this opportunity to say to our airport members, we know that it has been a tough time and that your staff have been working incredibly hard. You should be proud of what you have achieved in terms of service delivery. Of course, it won't be perfect and there will be glitches as we head into the summer peak, but we can be increasingly confident that the vast majority of our passengers will have a trouble-free journey.

I also want to say thank you to our airline and ground-handling partners, who have faced serious challenges, but who have continued to work collaboratively with us to deliver the best possible service for passengers. By necessity, our industry has been pulling together and I have been greatly encouraged by reports from many of our airports about how well interaction with airlines and ground-handlers has been proceeding locally.

Elsewhere in this edition, London Luton Airport CEO, Alberto Martin, tells us that this kind of partnership

has been a key element in smoothing the recovery at his airport. Similarly, Leeds Bradford Airport's Chief Executive Officer, Vincent Hodder, says that this year's challenges have brought his airport community closer together. At the national level, we have been meeting Ministers weekly and it is fair to say that the engagement across all parties shows a real determination to get the best possible outcome.

We absolutely understand how distressing it is for passengers when they encounter cancellations, delays and lost baggage. But it is also important to stress that this has not been the experience of most people, as I explained at a recent session of the House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee. The CAA's Chief Executive, Richard Moriarty, noted at the same session that the level of UK flight cancellations, at around 3% of total flights has been only slightly up on a normal year and compares favourably with, for example, the Netherlands, where the figure has been 11%.

We will continue to work closely and constructively with Government and all our partners to achieve further improvements. That said, I agree with Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport, who, elsewhere in the magazine, describes UK Government criticism of the post-Covid recovery efforts of the aviation sector as unhelpful and unproductive.

Let us take comfort, instead, from the positive tone that the Department for Transport set earlier this summer when it published Flightpath to the Future, its ten-year strategy for UK aviation. We very much welcome that document's confirmation that the Government remains committed to sustainable expansion at UK airports and fully appreciates the key role that airports play in driving the economy. Our joint support for the sustainability agenda was on display at the Farnborough International Air Show earlier this month and we also look forward to working with the Government to deliver on our Net Zero commitments. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive

THE NEW PRIME MINISTER SHOULD GIVE AVIATION “A FLIGHTPATH BACK TO PROSPERITY”

TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIR, HUW MERRIMAN, TELLS THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

No industry was hit harder by the Covid pandemic than international travel. The decisions taken by Government in the face of an unprecedented public health crisis had far reaching consequences for aviation.

With planes grounded across the globe as borders were closed, passenger numbers fell off a cliff overnight. Output in the sector plummeted by 90%, 5,000 travel jobs were lost every month, and airports alone collectively lost £10 billion.

Much of the focus of the Transport

Select Committee's work over the past two years has been on how the aviation sector could survive and recover. Published in April, our latest aviation report put forward solutions designed to help both industry and passengers, and ensure the Government learns the lessons of the pandemic.

Whilst the steps Government has recently taken are to be welcomed, there is a real danger that a failure to act properly now will see us miss a real opportunity to reform aviation for the better.

Having only received complete clearance for travel restrictions to be dropped on 17 March, it has

been a real challenge for airports to ramp back up. Getting staff back onto the frontline is essential if we are to avoid the levels of disruption seen earlier this year. Government action here has been effective, adopting recommendations made by the Committee. Moves to streamline referencing by allowing HMRC to verify historical tax and employment status is helping to speed up the application process. Likewise, allowing workers to begin training while they are in their final vetting stage, and the ability to train more people within line of sight, are making a real difference in shortening recruitment times.

The Government's "amnesty" to the rules on slots too will have a positive impact through bringing about a more realistic summer schedule. Allowing airlines this short window to hand back slots for which they were not confident they would be able to operate without facing a potential penalty will both help to reduce pressures on airports and help avoid disappointing last-minute cancellations for passengers. We have seen flights cancelled in advance, and a more manageable schedule implemented at Gatwick.

Moves such as these are welcome and help to make a real difference. There is, however, much more that could, and should, be done.

Throughout the pandemic, the aviation sector was unequivocal that uncertainty was one of their greatest hindrances. Government decisions on restricting international travel were inconsistent, and the rationale behind allocating countries as 'red', 'amber', or 'green', was never transparent. Although the Global Travel Taskforce did seek industry views, no formal structure of consultation was ever established. This was in stark contrast to how the sector was treated in Germany.

When the Committee visited Berlin last year, we heard first-hand how the Team Take-off forum was established after the German aviation sector raised concern about how



Huw Merriman, Chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee

international travel restrictions were made. The Forum facilitated greater collaboration between Government and industry; with stakeholders having a seat at the table when restrictions were designed.

This is why we called for the Government to improve its resilience planning for aviation through an international travel toolkit. This would ensure there is a predictable, transparent system in place during future public health crises. Advice and analysis for decision-making would be made publicly available, with the Department for Transport having an equal voice with the Department for Health. Importantly, should future restrictions only apply to international travel, industry would be compensated for their economic loss.

It is difficult to expect the sector to expand and take financial risks if it has no comfort that it could be placed into restrictive measures again. The industry deserves more certainty, and it is disappointing that the Government has not followed through on this.

The industry would accept that there have been issues around passengers receiving compensation. A system which provides compensation in good time and with minimum effort would make for a more satisfied flyer. I would like to see the Civil Aviation Authority given upfront powers to

My overall summary is that the Government has made some good progress to help the sector to restart. However, for the industry to properly recover and thrive, more needs to be done.

intervene. It can currently only act via court action. It cannot be right, for industry and consumer, that the regulator is still in court four years on from a series of flight cancellations. In other countries, the compensation would have been more immediate.

So, I would like to see a move towards automated and automatic compensation here. There are data and third-party obstacles but, now we have left the EU, these could be overcome. In return for these measures, there must be a case for reform of UK261. Some of the refund entitlements are completely disproportionate to the ticket cost and financial losses incurred by the passenger. I hope this is an area where the industry would also push the Government for reform; a happy passenger is a frequent passenger.

My overall summary is that the Government has made some good progress to help the sector to restart. However, for the industry to properly recover and thrive, more needs to be done. The challenge for the new Prime Minister will be to ensure longer term reforms are implemented to provide the industry with a flightpath back to prosperity. The Transport Committee will be watching closely. ■

Huw Merriman is Chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee and Conservative MP for Bexhill and Battle.

THE RACE TO NET ZERO - WE NEED CONCRETE POLICY, NOT A WING AND A PRAYER

Shadow Aviation Minister, Mike Kane, writes for The Airport Operator

Since taking over as Shadow Aviation and Maritime Minister when Sir Keir Starmer became leader in April 2020, I can say it's been a real baptism of fire! I have spent the past couple of years learning as much as I can about the sector and would like to thank stakeholders for their support. The Labour Party wanted the aviation sector to bounce back from a position of strength, not one of weakness, after the Covid pandemic. Sadly, Government support was insufficient, and led to mass redundancies - meaning that when the skies reopened there were insufficient staff in both ground handling and on flights themselves. It is my view the chaotic scenes we have witnessed over the past few months could have been avoided or minimised were the support we long called for available to the sector - It's a real shame, and one we raised repeatedly - but here we are.

My own constituency is an airport community, and for all the economic

benefits this brings to us, my constituents (and I) live under a major global flightpath. Every day we have thousands of tonnes of CO2 pumped into the skies above us. I could not be more passionate or more committed to the decarbonisation of the sector and have been heartened when visiting airports, to hear about the steps they have taken to decarbonise their own ground operations. Of course, the huge challenge facing the sector is to decarbonise flights, and that is part of a challenge we must face and work with industry and academia to resolve.

At the Labour Party conference last Autumn, the Shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announced we would invest £28bn a year in climate measures to protect Britain from a looming environmental disaster. One might argue that the temperatures reached over the past few days and weeks suggest the disaster is not too far off.

We also hope to attract matching

sums of private investment - committing £224bn on climate change measures over an eight-year period. I am not suggesting all that money would be invested in aviation and maritime decarbonisation by the way! However, it would be remiss of us, when in Government, to not use some of this to 'fix' the issue - and you have my word, that me and my colleagues on the Shadow Transport team are making the case strongly to treasury for a share of this funding.

The Labour party has a strategy for a new Industrial Britain, where cooperation across public and private sectors and Government is the norm. Where we unlock the brilliance within R&D which leads the way to a truly green transition. We have advantages already in tidal and wind energy as well as the technology required for carbon capture. We will build upon the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre, scaling up their operations which could then be used on domestic and short haul flights.

The Government has complete regulatory control of domestic aviation, free from differing regulatory landscapes. Were we in power we would exploit this position and use the domestic aviation sector as a pioneer of sustainable development. Well-funded research and government sponsored (but industry-led) solutions are required to modernise and decarbonise our domestic sector.

To achieve net zero, we must move to Sustainable Aviation Fuel, but this is an industry still in its infancy. We currently have capacity for millions of tonnes of SAF. However, the industry needs billions of tonnes – and when production is scaled up there is naturally an impact upon food production. To illustrate the sheer scale of the problem and how slowly progress has been made under this administration, in 2010 the aviation industry pledged to source 10% of its fuels from sustainable sources by 2020. In 2018, it had managed to source 0.002%. Pandemic notwithstanding, Sustainable aviation fuel production today still makes up less than 1% of overall jet fuel supply, despite accepted industry wisdom stating it as the route to decarbonisation.

The UK is well-placed to seize the opportunities and benefit from the economic, environmental, fuel and food security benefits that the increased use of sustainable aviation fuels could bring, and we cannot afford to be left behind. There's no silver bullet here though.

In addition to development in SAF we also have the opportunity to develop new aviation platforms with the potential to become world leaders – in turn creating jobs and generating wealth to make our aviation sector, once again, the envy of the world. With the right investment we could become world leaders in the technologies to enable battery or hydro short haul flights. Government must show their confidence in the sector

*Mike Kane, Shadow
Aviation Minister*



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fiscally in order to encourage long term significant external investment.

Just last month the climate change committee put aviation on red alert, and the long-awaited Jet Zero strategy falls short of meeting the challenges we face. I had hoped for so much more than was contained within the Jet Zero Strategy. I feel it rests on extremely optimistic assumptions and speculative technological breakthroughs, which are either in their infancy or don't exist yet. There is very little policy basis. I noticed just one year of commitment to Air Space modernisation – something I have raised repeatedly which, for a relatively small sum of money

(circa £30m) would considerably cut aviation emissions. How can this have slipped off Government's radar? It is also incumbent on Government to address runway capacity once and for all.

Chronic delays to airspace modernisation, the risk of relying on emerging technologies, and the cut to domestic Air Passenger Duty have all hampered the race to Jet Zero. Our focus will be on delivering what is actually possible. We need concrete policy, not a wing and a prayer. ■

Mike Kane is Shadow Aviation and Maritime Minister and Labour MP for Wythenshawe and Sale East.



*Alberto Martin,
CEO, London Luton
Airport*

LONDON LUTON AIRPORT CEO SAYS PEOPLE, PARTNERSHIPS AND PLANNING HAVE BEEN KEY TO THE AIRPORT'S “NO CHAOS” RECOVERY

London Luton Airport CEO, Alberto Martin, says that his airport's smooth recovery from the Covid pandemic has been achieved thanks to “the will of its teams, the support of its partners, including its shareholders and the airport freeholder, and a healthy dose of pre-planning”.

Martin told The Airport Operator that a new partnership agreement signed at the start of the pandemic with Luton Rising, the company that owns the UK's fifth-largest airport and is itself owned by the council, had been a key element in enabling the airport to plan for recovery early.

The agreement included £45m

in funds to stabilise the airport's revenue. Martin said that had allowed the airport to keep nearly all its directly employed staff, with fewer compulsory redundancies, and to offer improved pay and conditions to the lowest paid, including security staff. He said the airport also “got ahead of the pack” with a recruitment drive for a variety of posts such as security officers last autumn. By

the end of this year more than 200 vacancies will have been filled.

So far this year average waiting times at Luton have been 7 minutes for security, 11 minutes for passport control and 15 minutes for check-in. Martin noted that feedback from passengers had been “better than ever” and says he has “every confidence” that good levels



of passenger service will be maintained through the summer peak period.

Reflecting on how a “no chaos” recovery had been achieved at Luton, Martin said “The support of our shareholders and the airport owners enabled us to focus on the recovery and to adopt a ‘people first’ approach. That was key. Making maximum use of the furlough scheme and minimising redundancies were very important for skills retention. We started recruitment with a job fair last autumn and improved pay, especially for the lowest paid. All that in combination has enabled us to get our job done”.

Martin also emphasised the importance of a collaborative approach between the operator and other key stakeholders, including Border Force, the airlines and the ground handlers. He

pointed in particular to the recent implementation of “an idea that is quite innovative”, the creation of a trial third party resourcing pool, which helps other stakeholders to find and recruit non-skilled staff.

Focussing on the ground handlers, Martin said “What we are doing differently in Luton is that we have adopted an approach of us supporting the handlers. We have implemented a scheme through which we can provide direct support in terms of resources to the handling agent. We can step in, if needed, to ensure that operations are as planned. It is quite exceptional in the circumstances. We have yet to see the true impact, but definitely it will be positive”.

The two airlines which serve the largest number of routes from Luton are EasyJet and Wizz Air. Both have their UK headquarters at the airport. Martin said it was possible

The support of our shareholders and the airport owners enabled us to focus on the recovery and to adopt a ‘people first’ approach.

that they might announce some cancellations, “but we are confident that the majority of flights will still be operating and, if there are any cancellations those won’t be as a result of any limitation introduced by us as an operator”. He also expressed confidence that any cancellations would be announced in plenty of time to avoid any disruption at the airport.

Describing Wizz Air as “a very important partner for us”, Martin

said that the airport and the airline had been “working very closely throughout the crisis”. He said that Wizz Air had bought new slots every time they could and were continuing “to explore new opportunities for any possible growth in line with our capacity expansion plans”.

In 2019, pre-pandemic, the airport reported record passenger numbers of just below 18m. At the start of the pandemic numbers plummeted by 90%. The 2020 total was just below 5m and in 2021 only 4.6m, but this year the recovery has been swift. In the first week of this month passenger numbers were over 80% of pre-pandemic numbers. Martin believes that for this year as a whole passenger levels will be more than 70% of pre-pandemic levels.

This year’s overall recovery has been achieved in the face of headwinds generated by the conflict in Ukraine, which, Martin says, was “a strong market for us that had been gathering strength over recent years”. Plans for a new local airline that had been due to start operations this summer have been suspended. The Ukraine crisis also initially saw the cancellation of all flights to neighbouring Moldova, though these have now been resumed. Leisure flights to some Eastern European destinations, such as Krakow, had also been impacted at the outset, though these too have largely recovered.

If the general recovery continues it may not be long before Luton Airport is again close to its 18m passenger cap. The airport’s application to increase this ceiling to 19m passengers was approved by the local council, but subsequently called in by the Secretary of State. A public inquiry will be held in September. Martin emphasises that the application is only about the level of the cap, doesn’t involve any changes to infrastructure and is simply about “making best use of our existing facilities and preparing for the long-term recovery”.

This autumn will also be the moment when the airport expects to be celebrating the opening of its Direct Air-Rail Transit system (DART), which will link the airport’s terminal building to Luton Parkway station, with a journey time of less than 4 minutes. Combined with recently introduced fast trains to London St Pancras, which have a journey time of 22 minutes, the result will be to cut the overall journey time from the airport terminal to London to an impressive 30 minutes.

The DART has been created and built by Luton Rising and Martin said it was “another good example of partnership between the airport owner and the operator. We both believe that the DART will be transformational, enabling sustainable journeys – that is key – but also in terms of shortening the journey and, reputationally, the proximity of London Luton Airport to the centre of London. In terms of time and ease of journey, it will be a massive improvement. It is going to be great”. ■

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LEEDS BRADFORD CEO SAYS THIS YEAR'S CHALLENGES HAVE BROUGHT THE AIRPORT COMMUNITY CLOSER TOGETHER

Leeds Bradford Airport's Chief Executive Officer, Vincent Hodder, readily acknowledges that the last few months have been challenging for the airport's customers, with security queues of up to 90 minutes at peak times.

But, he says, the airport reacted very quickly to alleviate the worst of the difficulties and to ensure that the long queues did not result in delays or missed flights. "As much as I look at the last three months of challenges and see how difficult it has been" he told The Airport Operator "at the same time it has allowed us to come together as an airport community in a way that we perhaps wouldn't have done

without the crisis".

Hodder, who took on the CEO role in January 2021, said that the amount of time that he and his management colleagues had spent with front-line staff, helping to ensure that passengers got onto their flights, had given the executive team "a much greater appreciation of what their front-line staff have to go through" and given front line staff

"a much deeper level of respect for management than they would have had previously".

It wasn't just about the airport's direct staff, but also about the relationships with the airport's main airlines – Jet2, Ryanair and KLM – and Swissport's ground-handling team. "Everybody is working closer together" he said, "because we have to, to deliver outcomes for

customers and I really want to make sure that we maintain some of those benefits as we come out of the crisis and continue to work together collaboratively to deliver a fantastic outcome to our customers”.

The recruitment, vetting and training of security staff has been the airport’s main challenge this year, with two periods – early to mid-March and late April/early May – where Hodder accepts that “a boost in the number of passengers exceeded our ability to cope”. Now the airport has recruited all the staff that it needs, and all should be operational by the end of this month.

Looking back on what went wrong, Hodder said that the Government could have acted much more quickly earlier this year to reduce the amount of time that it takes to get new security staff through the vetting and training process. However, he also points to another factor at Leeds Bradford: the loss of experienced management staff over the two years of Covid.

“We probably lost some of our recruiting muscles” Hodder suggests “and so our skills and capability of recruiting were probably a lot less than we thought they were at the time. If there is one management error in this entire process, I think that is where our management error was. It was not ensuring that we had the recruiting process and capabilities properly fired up early enough to be able to address this. We just didn’t realise we had lost that capability over Covid”.

More positively, Leeds Bradford Airport has not experienced the flight cancellations that some other UK airports have experienced. Hodder notes that both Jet2 and Ryanair prepared well for the recovery and are “fully staffed and able to deliver their entire operations, so we haven’t been impacted by the cancellations that a lot of other airports have seen”.

Leeds Bradford has been one of the fastest recovering airports in the UK,



Vincent Hodder, Chief Executive Officer, Leeds Bradford Airport

Leeds Bradford has been one of the fastest recovering airports in the UK, reflecting its heavy reliance on leisure and visiting friends and relatives travel and relatively low exposure to the slower recovering business travel market.

reflecting its heavy reliance on leisure and visiting friends and relatives travel and relatively low exposure to the slower recovering business travel market. Pre-Covid the airport had around 4m passengers a year. That plummeted to just 400,000 in the first year of the pandemic,

with a recovery to just over 1m last year. This year 1m passengers in the first quarter alone is putting Leeds Bradford on track to deliver 3.7 to 3.8m this year, 95% of the pre-Covid total.

Looking further ahead, Hodder

and his team are hopeful that the airport's principal airlines will look to increase frequencies and improve their schedules on existing routes. He says that currently significant numbers of passengers in the Leeds Bradford catchment area travel to other airports in the North, but then fly with the same airlines to the same destinations. The airport is also exploring the possibility of reinstating a route to Pakistan, for which there is a strong level of demand from Bradford in particular. Hodder also notes that additional European hub capability would be popular with the Leeds business community.

As Hodder looks forward to a brighter future, he also points to the airport's plans for an improved terminal and its hopes for the opening of a first ever direct rail link.

In March this year the airport withdrew its application for a new terminal after the proposal had been called in by the Secretary of State. Instead, it now aims to proceed with terminal enhancements that Hodder says will result in an "incomparable" improvement in the passenger experience, compared to the present. These will encompass the construction of a new building to house arrival facilities, including a brand-new international baggage claim area, and a dramatic

Looking further ahead, Hodder and his team are hopeful that the airport's principal airlines will look to increase frequencies and improve their schedules on existing routes.

reconfiguration of the existing building to create a more logical and smoother journey for departing passengers. If all goes according to plan, both should be complete by mid-2025.

Hodder says that "surface access is probably the one area that has historically been the biggest weight on the growth potential of Leeds Bradford Airport". However, he says the airport is "working with

the Council on plans for a Parkway station, one mile away from the airport, which will be linked to the airport with a direct shuttle. So that will give us our first rail access for York, Harrogate and Leeds on a direct basis. That is very exciting. That is still targeted for about 2025/2026, so at about the same time as our expanded facility will be fully finished and delivering the maximum benefit to customers". ■





*David Winstanley, Chief
Executive Officer, London
Biggin Hill Airport*

BOOM IN BUSINESS AVIATION AT LONDON BIGGIN HILL

London Biggin Hill Airport is seeing “tremendous growth” in business aviation and significant investments by businesses based at the airport, including the opening this month of Bombardier’s new European service centre.

With the airport recording its best-ever week for aircraft movements in June, the executive team has decided to press ahead with plans for a new terminal building. Meanwhile, builders are working to complete a new 56-bed, four-star hotel, which is expected to open in January next year.

David Winstanley, who became the airport’s CEO in 2019, told The Airport Operator that the growth in business flights began during the Covid pandemic, but has been sustained even as scheduled flights elsewhere have resumed. He said that many individuals who had previously flown first or business class on scheduled airlines had come to appreciate the choice of time, the freedom and the discretion that London Biggin Hill offers. While he expects the rate of growth to slow, he is confident that growth will continue.

The numbers speak for themselves. In the first quarter of this year, aircraft movements were up 41%

compared to the first quarter of 2019. By June, numbers were up 63% compared to June 2019 and the airport recorded its best ever week in business jet movements. Two thirds of these flights are chartered flights, rather than flights on planes owned by individuals.

The scale and pace of the growth in London Biggin Hill’s business aviation market has brought its own challenges, with Winstanley describing staff retention and recruitment as (safety apart) his number one priority. As he puts it,

“We made no redundancies. We furloughed people on full pay. But, to a certain extent, the growth we are experiencing now was not reasonably foreseeable”.

“We made no redundancies. We furloughed people on full pay. But, to a certain extent, the growth we are experiencing now was not reasonably foreseeable. We are recruiting now and fishing in the same pool as the larger airports”. Looking ahead, he believes that aviation will need to make sure that it remains an attractive industry to work in “and that means basic level entry salaries and additional benefits will need to reflect modern society and what it requires from an employer”.

Last year the airport completed a £4m investment programme in airside infrastructure improvements. This year will see the completion of work on The Landing, London Biggin Hill’s new 56-bed four-star hotel, which is being built primarily to provide high-quality convenient accommodation for aircraft crew and engineers. They are expected to account for about three quarters of the room occupancy. Other guests will include employees of Formula One (Winstanley says F1 has “exciting plans to expand here at London



Biggin Hill”) and people booking Spitfire heritage flights, who “may want to make a weekend of it with their families”. The Landing will be owned and operated by the airport and Winstanley says that, although it has yet to open, he is already considering how another 25 rooms might be added to it.

The size and speed of the growth of business aviation at London Biggin Hill has also encouraged the airport to bring forward its plans for a new private jet terminal for those customers (about 40% of the market) who use the airport’s facilities before they fly. The executive team will seek Board approval for the new building this autumn and it could be open within two years. Winstanley stresses that “What we will not be doing is building a palace. What we won’t be doing is building iconic structures. It will be a functional

The size and speed of the growth of business aviation at London Biggin Hill has also encouraged the airport to bring forward its plans for a new private jet terminal.

piece of airport infrastructure that will do the job it is designed to do”.

Meanwhile, Bombardier, the Canadian business jet manufacturer celebrating its 80th birthday this year, has replaced its existing hangars at London Biggin Hill, in use since 2017, with a new 250,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art facility, doubling its footprint and capable of accommodating 14 Global 7500 aircraft at the same time. The expanded facility opened for business on 1 July and is expected to be fully operational by mid-

August, as work is transferred from other European locations. Over time its London Biggin Hill workforce is forecast to grow to over 250 employees.

Commenting on Bombardier’s decision to invest at Biggin Hill, Winstanley said “That has significantly changed the way the airport can look at funding and attracting further investment. It is the springboard on which a lot of our activity over the next five years will hang. That level of inward investment has driven the airport

to improve other elements of our infrastructure and that again has attracted further investment". As examples, he cited last month's announcement of further expansion at London Biggin Hill by maintenance and repair company, Oriens Aviation, and helicopter charter business, Castle Air, doubling its Biggin Hill footprint.

One area where Winstanley acknowledges that "many other airports are ahead of us" is sustainability. He says, "We are playing catch-up, and we are moving very rapidly". London Biggin Hill has reduced its carbon emissions by 55% since 2019 and, Winstanley says, "that is everything from looking at green tariffs on our energy, increasing solar energy use, converting our vehicles to electric power to looking at the introduction of hydro-treated vegetable oil as a replacement for diesel".

For the future, Winstanley says it is "an absolute certainty" that London Biggin Hill will be "at the leading edge of electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft development in the London area". The airport is partnering with an eVTOL manufacturer to carry out test flights, possibly as early as next year and has designated a 60-acre parcel of land for future innovation. It is also working with Air BP to consider how it might build a solar farm to support higher demand and potentially become self-sufficient in energy use.

For all its focus on innovation, Biggin Hill remains best-known for its role during the Battle of Britain in the Second World War, when it served as one of the principal fighter bases protecting London and the South East from attack by German bombers. Over the course of the war, the RAF fighter base at Biggin Hill claimed 1,400 enemy aircraft at the cost of the lives of 453 Biggin Hill-based air crew.

As Winstanley puts it, "Everybody working at London Biggin Hill, certainly if you are the CEO, has got

to balance delivering the future and honouring the past". This September, London Biggin Hill's fabled past will once again be centre stage when the airport will become the permanent home of the RAF Benevolent Fund's RHS Chelsea Flower Show memorial garden.

Winston Churchill described Biggin Hill as "the strongest link" in the Battle of Britain. Echoing that description, the memorial garden, renamed The Strongest Link Garden, will be recreated at the airport, complete with its four-metre-high sculpture of a young RAF pilot looking up to the sky in lasting tribute to all those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Open to the public and free of charge,

the garden and sculpture will provide, in Winstanley's words, "a good focal point to facilitate people remembering the past. It is going to be extremely poignant and very powerful". ■

For the future, Winstanley says it is "an absolute certainty" that London Biggin Hill will be "at the leading edge of electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft development in the London area".



AOA CHIEF SAYS AIRPORT RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS FOR SECURITY STAFF ARE “PROGRESSING WELL”

AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, has said that the vast majority of passengers at UK airports are “getting away on their travels with minimal disruption”.

Dee was responding to the Department for Transport’s publication on 30 June of a 22-point plan to support the aviation industry on summer resilience, including help with staff recruitment and training.

She said: “Airports recognise the impact any delay or disruption can have on passengers. That is why we share government’s ambitions to ensure passengers can enjoy smooth and safe journeys through the summer. Airports are working hard to prepare for this: recruitment campaigns for security staff are ongoing and progressing well, with more staff being deployed as they finish their training and security vetting”.

Dee said that airports are also “working closely with airlines, the companies managing check-in and baggage on behalf of airlines as well as the government and Civil Aviation Authority to alleviate any

delays where they do occur and to support others in the industry who are coping with staff shortages. By working closely together in this way we aim to deliver the service that passengers have rightly come to expect of UK aviation”.

Earlier last month, Dee gave evidence to the House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee as part of a session on flight cancellations.

She told MPs that last year “the lack of certainty about where the industry was going to go and when has been a huge barrier to our recruitment. Many airports tried to start recruiting in the autumn, and then we found that Omicron hit, and we were shut down again. Recruitment has improved a lot since March, because that is when restrictions were lifted, and people could see a future”.

Dee told the committee that the

pandemic had “decimated the industry, with two years of virtual non-operation”, which meant there was no role for security staff. “We could not keep them on” she said “Re-recruiting with what I would describe as very short notice is difficult, because they are very skilled. As you would appreciate in our industry, where safety and security are our top priority, there is increased vetting for these sorts of staff”.

She said that the system was speeding up a little, but there were still several hundred people awaiting final clearance. Asked by the Committee chair, Darren Jones, if this would be “fixed in time for the summer”, Dee said “I hope it will be better, but it will not be totally fixed”. ■



AIRPORT PLANNING HEADS DISCUSS PLANNING PERMISSION FOR SOLAR FARMS

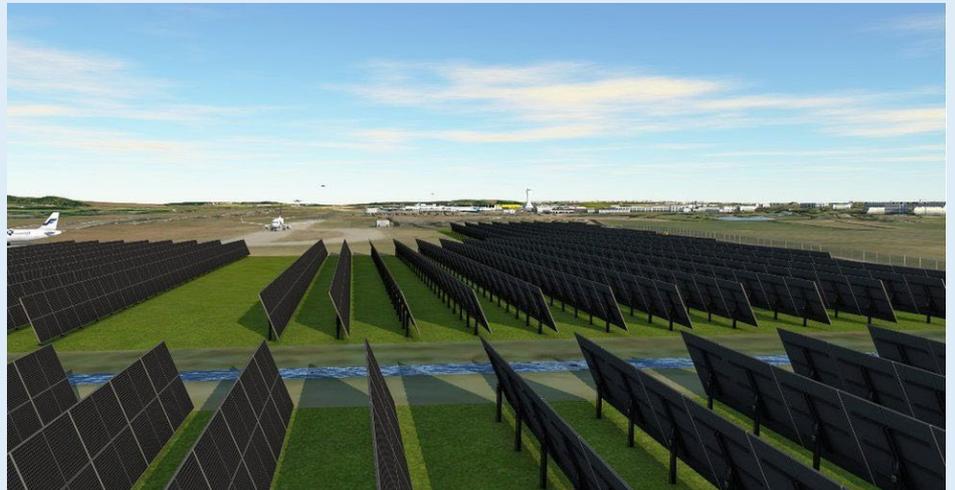
UK airport planning heads met at Birmingham Airport earlier this summer to discuss a range of issues, including recent successes in securing planning permission for airport solar farms.

It was the first time that the AOA's Planners Forum has met in person for nearly two years.

The Forum is a dedicated platform for airport planners to meet and exchange best practice on issues including Permitted Development Rights, Compulsory Purchase Orders, surface access and Master Plans.

This summer's meeting discussed planning permission to build solar farms and noted that there had been some success. The overall feeling of optimism on that was tempered by a recognition that airports can expect to face challenges to their planning proposals, even on an issue like solar energy regeneration.

Other subjects discussed at the meeting included the recovery from Covid and the publication of the Government's aviation strategic framework, Flightpath to the Future, which, it was noted, contained some helpful elements, not least some positive words about growing airport capacity.



Nikki Bains, Head of Planning, Transport and Strategy at Birmingham Airport, said "It was great to see familiar faces from other airports across the UK here at Birmingham Airport during the Planners Forum. The forum allows us to share airport knowledge related to policy, planning and development, but also to network and build important long-lasting professional relationships".

Newcomer, Adam Ewart, Airport Planner at Newcastle Airport, said "It was great to be involved in my first Airport Planners Forum meeting and to finally meet face-to-face with likeminded professionals in the field. I enjoyed sharing details of projects I have been working on with the group and hearing about personal experiences from interesting case studies across the country. I am looking forward to meeting up again in the near future". ■

GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR AIRPORT EXPANSION

The UK Government has recommitted itself to airport expansion, provided it meets strict environmental criteria.



Support for growth in airport capacity was one of ten key points in the Department for Transport's Flightpath to the Future, a strategic framework for UK aviation, published in May, which, the Department says, "establishes our ambitions and commitments for aviation over the next ten years".

The 75-page document says that "airports are part of the UK's thriving and competitive aviation sector and play a critical role in boosting both global and domestic connectivity and levelling up the UK. Airport expansion also plays a key role in this, and the Government remains supportive of airport expansion where it can be delivered within our environmental obligations".

It declares that "The Government is supportive of airports bringing forward expansion plans by way of our existing policy frameworks for airport planning: Beyond the Horizon – The future of UK aviation: Making best use of existing runways (2018) and the Airports National Policy Statement: new runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the South East of England (also 2018)".

The document says that "these policy frameworks continue to have full effect, for example, as a material consideration in decision-taking on applications for planning permission". It notes that "The Government is clear that expansion of any airport must be deliverable within the UK's climate change obligations to be able to proceed".

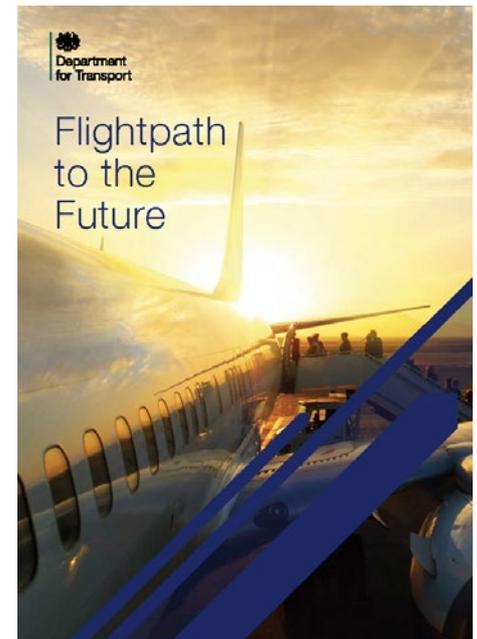
In a foreword to the document, Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, and Minister for Aviation, Robert Courts, said "Having endured the worst crisis in its history, now is the right time for UK aviation to look to the future. We will work hand-in-hand with the industry to help it grow and return to pre-pandemic levels of demand and profitability. That means supporting airport expansion where it's justified, to boost our global connectivity and level up the UK. But it also means committing to a much greener future. UK

aviation can play a pioneering role in decarbonising air travel, and hence earn the right to grow".

They concluded "We have a real chance now to build back better, and make UK aviation cleaner, greener, and more competitive than ever before. Flightpath to the Future explains how we can achieve these goals. A future where aviation remains of huge strategic importance to the country post-Brexit, allowing tourism, business and trade to thrive. A future where UK aviation becomes synonymous with sustainability, and part of the solution to climate change. And a future where the UK consolidates its position as one of the world's most important aviation hubs".

Responding to the publication of Flightpath to the Future, AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee said "It is vital that the UK Government not only provide policy certainty to achieve a UK-wide recovery, but also back their ambitions with funding. UK airports come out of the pandemic in a worse financial position than many of their international competitors, who received significantly more generous funds from their governments to weather the pandemic". She noted that the AOA had set

"Having endured the worst crisis in its history, now is the right time for UK aviation to look to the future. We will work hand-in-hand with the industry to help it grow and return to pre-pandemic levels of demand and profitability".



out a recovery plan, including funds for route recovery, a green airport fund and arrivals duty-free shopping.

Dee said, "Airports look forward to working with Government through the new Aviation Council to ensure effective delivery of our shared ambitions, from supporting levelling-up to enabling people to take well-earned breaks abroad and reconnect with family and friends in other countries". ■



Grant Shapps,
Transport
Secretary

WE HAVE TO BE SCALING UP SOLUTIONS AND CUTTING CARBON NOW

By Matt Gorman, Chair of Sustainable Aviation

My starting point is that flying is a force for good in the world. Aviation underpins the global economy by connecting businesses and their products to customers around the world, keeping people in touch with friends and families across the globe, and letting us take well-earned breaks to explore new cultures. It is central to any notion of Global Britain. Aviation was one of the worst hit sectors in the pandemic but is thankfully now in full recovery mode. However, we know as an industry that rather than this being something to be celebrated, some fear more flying cannot be reconciled with our climate goals.

We disagree. I am immensely proud that UK aviation was the first national aviation industry in the world to commit to achieving net zero by 2050. Climate is an existential risk for our sector – to thrive and grow in future, we must decarbonise. The good news is that we can take out the carbon. In February 2020 Sustainable Aviation (SA) – a UK-based coalition of airlines, aerospace manufactures, airports and other

aviation related companies – published a Decarbonisation Road-Map setting out a credible pathway to achieving ‘Jet Zero’ by 2050. And in 2021, we released interim decarbonisation targets to further map-out how industry will reach net zero. A 2050 goal is vital, but to meet investor, consumer and public expectations, we have to be scaling up solutions and cutting carbon now. As the new Chair of Sustainable Aviation, I want 2022 to be a year in which progress is accelerated.

We recognise there is no silver bullet to decarbonising the sector and SA is

“Climate is an existential risk for our sector – to thrive and grow in future, we must decarbonise. The good news is that we can take out the carbon”.

focused on four main areas.

The first, and the foundation for our net zero transition is using less fuel by operating as efficiently as possible. That includes modernising airspace – critical national infrastructure that hasn’t been fundamentally upgraded since the 1950s – and continuing to roll-out the latest generation of lightweight, fuel-efficient airliners, which UK carriers are at the forefront of investing in. However, at a global level, efficiency will keep emissions about where they are as traffic increases. That represents some huge efficiency gains but is not enough to get to net zero.

Our second focus is sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), and lots of it, right through to 2050 and beyond. Here in the UK, there is an historic opportunity to create a world-leading UK SAF industry, creating jobs and skills in a sunrise industry. SAF is a drop-in fuel produced from sustainable feedstocks which can cut lifecycle emissions by 70% or more compared to fossil jet fuel. They also



Matt Gorman, Chair of Sustainable Aviation

do not require new engines or airport infrastructure to work, meaning they can be used in the jets being purchased by airlines today, each with twenty-year service lives. SAF is also the only proven net zero solution for the flights longer than a couple of hours or so that account for up to three-quarters of global aviation emissions.

Our third focus is developing zero-emission flight powered by electric and hydrogen propulsion. The Government's recent funding decision on the Aerospace Technology Institute will enable industry to continue the vital work to make zero emissions flight a reality. And it's not just about the aircraft – if hydrogen technology is to take off, we need enough green hydrogen being produced, and the infrastructure to move it to and around airports. So, we will need to integrate national energy policies with Jet Zero policies.

The steps above could let us get to close to zero by 2050, but most projections show that aviation will still be emitting some CO₂ by then. If we're to be net zero, we'll need to be removing anything we emit. Which

means scaling up carbon removals and particularly "direct air capture" where we suck carbon from the atmosphere. Indeed, Airbus have partnered with 1PointFive (Carbon Engineering's licensed US partner) to bring carbon removals from direct air capture to the aviation industry – a partnership several airlines have already shown interest in joining.

And of course, our sector needs a global plan and UK leadership is vital to achieving that. We need UK leadership in pursuit of a clear, long term CO₂ target for global aviation, to be agreed at the 2022 ICAO Aviation General Assembly, and compatible with existing commitments.

Sustainable Aviation members across industry are making strides towards decarbonisation including UK airports. They have halved their greenhouse gas emissions since 2010 even though passenger numbers have increased by over forty percent. Across the UK, airports are taking steps to reduce their energy use, investing in renewable and sustainable energy, and working to reduce emissions

across all parts of airport operations. I am proud of our airport members for making these important steps to decarbonise the industry.

We are planning to provide an updated Road-Map later this year which will reflect the impact of Covid-19. Yet we cannot make progress alone and support from Government is needed to reach net zero by 2050 with each part of our net zero journey requiring specific policy support. We warmly welcomed the launch of the Government's Jet Zero Strategy in July. The strategy is a landmark moment and the first time a Government has set out a detailed plan for its aviation sector to reach net zero. It represents real global leadership and is a moment to celebrate. We look forward to continuing to work with the Government to further develop and operationalise the strategy, and particularly to helping finalise the plans for a mandate and price support mechanism for SAF. Industry is committed to working with Government in partnership to deliver Jet Zero and make aviation sustainable while keeping the benefits that aviation gives us. ■

**EDINBURGH AIRPORT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SAYS GOVERNMENT
CRITICISM OF UK
AVIATION'S RECOVERY
EFFORTS HAS BEEN
“UNHELPFUL AND
UNPRODUCTIVE”.**

Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport, has told The Airport Operator that UK Government criticism of the post-Covid recovery efforts of the aviation sector has been “unhelpful and unproductive”.



*Gordon Dewar, Chief
Executive of Edinburgh
Airport*

Dewar said his preference was for a dialogue between the Government and aviation, with all parties working constructively together to deal with recovery challenges and to ensure the best possible service for passengers during the peak summer months. He praised Aviation Minister, Robert Courts, for his efforts to promote regular discussion with airports and airlines on the best way forward.

At a local level the Edinburgh Airport Chief Executive has also been encouraging conversations between the airport, its airlines and its ground handlers to try to ensure that there is a common understanding of this summer's recruitment challenges and an agreed approach to delivering services to passengers, both in 2022 as a year of recovery and then 2023 and beyond, when he thinks that the aviation sector's future make-up and outlook will be clearer.

Dewar said that the airport was seeing the benefits of the decision it took in October last year to begin an aggressive recruitment process for security staff in the expectation of a strong recovery by this summer. The result was that, in general, the airport's security queues had been kept below 30 minutes and he was confident that these times could be further improved by September.

Beyond the airport's own recruitment, Dewar said the bigger challenge is that currently facing the airport's ground handling companies. He said he had huge sympathy for them, since they had even later certainty than the airport about what the airlines would expect from them and had also been seeking to recruit in a very difficult labour market. As a result, he said, "until we are through the peak, I am not going to be confident that we won't see some challenges".

Looking back on the pandemic period, Dewar described it as "pretty miserable". From a record of 14.7m passengers in 2019, Edinburgh's passenger numbers dropped to just 3.5m in 2020 and then 3m in 2021.

Over the period of the pandemic the airport had lost £100m in cash. In October 2020 it had concluded that the only way to protect its long-term viability would be to cut a third of its staff. Dewar said the day that was announced had been "the worst day in my professional career by some margin".

Asked for his views on government support for aviation during the pandemic, he said that he had been "hugely appreciative" of the Scottish Government's help with the airport's police bills and business rates. The airport had also been a major beneficiary of the UK Government's furlough scheme, though the "constant uncertainty" about what the Government would do next on international travel and the Treasury's decision to end the furlough scheme at a time when travel restrictions were still in place had been "deeply unhelpful". Dewar also described the failure of government to offer any direct sectoral support for aviation as "really short-sighted". He said that it stood in sharp contrast to the approach that had been adopted by the Government in Ireland, which had helped the aviation sector both by paying half of airlines' airport charges and by investing €40m in marketing support for tourism.

Looking ahead, Dewar said he is hopeful that Edinburgh's 2022 passenger numbers will be around 11m and that by the end of this year numbers could be close to 90% of

From a record of 14.7m passengers in 2019, Edinburgh's passenger numbers dropped to just 3.5m in 2020 and then 3m in 2021. Over the period of the pandemic the airport had lost £100m in cash.

the numbers recorded in December 2019. He sees this year as one of recovery and has described 2023 as "the year of reckoning", when it should be possible to see what the long-term trends are likely to be. He stressed that a crucial part of the recovery will be stimulating next year's market now. To aid that, he is advocating a more flexible and targeted approach to airlines from the Scottish Government and its tourism body, VisitScotland, and suggesting a temporary reduction in Air Passenger Duty for 2023 to reinvigorate the clear interest in Scotland as a destination.

For this year, continuing restrictions on travel to China mean that the Asian market remains weak. By contrast, this summer has seen a boom in trans-Atlantic traffic to and





from Edinburgh, with seat numbers already higher than in 2019. Dewar said that Edinburgh is “hoovering up market share of trans-Atlantic traffic”, reflecting the strength of its inbound tourism and education markets and the fact that it is in the wealthiest part of the country, with a growing population. Airlines were focusing on where they could make the best returns and Edinburgh had been proven to be “a stand-out market” for them.

With the US market re-opening, United Airlines are now operating daily flights to New York, as well as flights to Chicago and Washington DC. Delta Airlines flies to New York JFK daily, with another route to Boston also in operation. Virgin Atlantic has made Edinburgh its home in Scotland, operating a route to Orlando. Air Canada flies six times a week to Toronto and, since June, Canadian airline, WestJet, is also serving the popular Toronto – Edinburgh route.

Dewar is keen to emphasise that sustainability remains a key focus for Edinburgh Airport. Its latest sustainability report, published on 30 June, notes that during the past year the airport has become carbon neutral for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, begun the process of switching airside vehicle fuel from diesel to hydrogen-treated vegetable oil, continued to buy 100% of its electricity from renewable sources and made progress on an 11-acre solar farm on the airfield.

Dewar said the report “demonstrates the improvements we have made and will continue to make in the years ahead thanks to decisions we are making now. There’s still a lot of work to do, but the challenge to meet our targets and play our part in wider targets is one we welcome”. He said that he has “never been more optimistic” that aviation will achieve its goal of decarbonising the sector. ■

During the past year the airport has become carbon neutral for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, begun the process of switching airside vehicle fuel from diesel to hydrogen-treated vegetable oil and continued to buy 100% of its electricity from renewable sources.

I AM CONFIDENT WE CAN COLLECTIVELY SUPPORT A SMOOTH RECOVERY

PHIL DOUGLAS, DIRECTOR GENERAL, BORDER FORCE

I am delighted to be able to write in this edition of the Airport Operator Association magazine and tell you about the work Border Force has done – alongside industry partners – to prepare for the busy summer period now upon us and update you on some exciting longer-term initiatives that will change the way we work at the UK border.

I want to start by paying tribute to the excellent joint-working between Government and industry in planning and preparing for the return of international travel. This summer will be challenging for all of us. We will still face pressures during peak periods where some passengers will experience an increase in the time taken to cross the border. However, I am confident we can collectively support a smooth

recovery to ensure that passenger flows are as smooth as possible, and queues are kept to a minimum.

From a Border Force perspective, I am overseeing a real step-change in the way we plan for these peak periods at the border, including with the sector. There are many excellent examples of joint operational planning, with Border Force and industry teams working side-by-

side at ports, sharing real-time data to ensure we can anticipate and respond to passenger demand and any unforeseen issues. I have been seeing the results of some of this joint planning myself by visiting ports across the UK, which I will continue to do throughout the summer.

The way in which we have managed this has been through a sophisticated planning programme covering

several areas, including:

- **Demand forecasting and modelling:** We are becoming a more data-rich organisation and getting better at how we use available data. We are building a forward-look of seasonal demand pressures and the associated resource we think we need (and where) to effectively deal with peak periods. Our local teams do this to good effect over the short-term, however we have developed an analytical model to enable us to forecast further out (e.g., 4-6 months) and have a holistic view of operational requirements, so we can take swift mitigating action across the organisation.
- **Recruitment:** Irrespective of policy changes and technology initiatives, we need a healthy workforce to manage the security of the UK border. That is why I have secured agreement to proceed with several national recruitment campaigns to increase the number of frontline Border Force officers. Since I started as interim Director General in November last year, we have launched two campaigns and a third will launch later this year. I hope that we will have an additional 1,000 frontline officers by the end of 2022.
- **Resource optimisation:** In addition to new recruits, we are ensuring we have existing colleagues in roles where they can deliver the biggest operational impact. For instance, we have looked at where we can temporarily pause some back-office functions and move colleagues to critical frontline roles. We have offered six-day working and overtime to bolster resilience. And we are taking a national approach to deployment, maximising the use of available resource pools to support workforce flexibility.



Phil Douglas, Director General, Border Force (interim)

“From a Border Force perspective, I am overseeing a real step-change in the way we plan for these peak periods at the border, including with the sector”.

- **Policy and process improvements:** The final strand of our planning work has looked at policy levers and where we can make operational improvements to aid smooth passenger flow. In the short-term (i.e., this year), we are streamlining border processes and supporting Border Force officers so that we can keep them on desks for as long as possible. Some of these initiatives may seem modest in isolation, but cumulatively they are having a positive impact, including:
 - Introducing new ways of dealing with border casework (e.g., asylum claims) away from the border;
 - Using arrival hall co-ordinators to direct passengers to the right queue;
 - A comms and signage refresh to encourage eligible passengers to use eGates (for available ports).
- We have already improved flow at the border in recent years by expanding the use of eGates to passengers from countries such as USA, Australia, Canada, Japan and others. We are looking to expand further to include additional cohorts. Focusing on trusted groups initially, such as those who already have a permission to be here in the UK, we
- Increasing the number of ‘floorwalker’ managers to help with troubleshooting;
 - Increasing available translator services for specific flights;

will also conduct a proof-of-concept trial to see if eGates can be used by children younger than the current age limit of twelve years old.

Further, just in the last few days, the Home Secretary has announced our ambitious plans for a 'contactless' digital border over the coming years. The announcement sets out plans to begin testing technologies that would allow some passengers to enter the UK and undergo border screening without ever meeting a Border Force officer or using an

eGate, helping to speed up legitimate journeys to the UK. Passengers would instead undergo pre-screening and be identified at the border using the latest technology – ensuring the security of the border and the UK public. We aim to begin pilot testing in 2024.

As we continue to work together through shared challenges, using the vast skills and expertise at our disposal, I am confident that collectively we can deliver on our ambitious plans of having the world's most effective border, creating prosperity and enhancing security for a global United Kingdom. ■

“As we continue to work together through shared challenges, using the vast skills and expertise at our disposal, I am confident that collectively we can deliver on our ambitious plans of having the world's most effective border”.



AVIATION PARLIAMENTARY RECEPTION RETURNS AFTER TWO-YEAR GAP

The Aviation Parliamentary Reception was held on 5 July after a two-year gap due to Covid-19.

AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, said “It was great to welcome members of the AOA, ABTA, Airlines UK, BAR-UK, IATA and Sustainable Aviation back to Parliament for the cross-industry Aviation Reception”. MPs and Peers with an interest in aviation joined industry representatives in the Terrace Pavilion of the House of Commons.

AOA Chair, Ruby McGregor-Smith and Airlines UK Chair, Patrick McLoughlin, spoke, highlighting the challenges aviation is facing as it comes out of the pandemic, but also the importance of aviation for the UK’s economic success, as well as for people to go abroad for business or leisure. Aviation Minister, Robert Courts, spoke about his support for the industry and the Government’s ambitions, including through the Jet Zero Strategy. ■





AIRPORT DECARBONISATION A CHANGED CHALLENGE

The UK's airports are well on the way to reducing carbon emissions and then achieving net zero. But now the focus and challenge are being changed. The UK Government confirmed in this month's Jet Zero plan that it will seek to require English airports to be absolute zero emission by 2040. A call for evidence due to be issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) in the autumn will be a major piece of work for the AOA.

Whereas many airports have net-zero plans, and many in advance of 2040, this new requirement would remove the ability to offset remaining hardest-to-eliminate emissions by carbon avoidance or removal elsewhere.

This poses new problems and costs. Many pieces of long-running equipment will have to be replaced before their normal end of life and some mobile equipment does not yet have a zero-emission alternative in existence, making investment planning difficult. But above all it means airports would be moving first out of all of the buildings and infrastructure in the UK – potentially out of step on issues such as decarbonising the electricity grid and the collective solving of the gas-for-heating problem the UK has.

This is why the AOA opposes the whole approach in principle – policy should be to achieve zero-emissions as quickly as possible at the lowest cost to society. We do not believe this new policy is compatible with that ideal.

Nevertheless, the current Government (and we do not expect the change in Prime Minister to affect this) wishes to push all parts of the aviation industry hard. It sees airport absolute decarbonisation by 2040 as do-able, so we expect it to proceed with the policy. They have commissioned a report by Mott MacDonald that broadly confirms the feasibility of most aspects of the policy.

There are some possible flexibilities that might make this a more sensible policy (if still not ideal). The first is the idea of a small ‘de minimis’ amount of emissions to be allowed – this might cover an emergency backup diesel generator for use once or twice a year. Another is that it might not be applied to the smallest airports – GA aerodromes might be excluded, though it is unclear where the line would be drawn. But above all is the question of scope.

The DfT policy actually states that



*Christopher Snelling,
Policy Director, AOA*

they want ‘airport operations’ to be zero emissions. This is both narrower and wider than how the word ‘airport’ could be interpreted. The most important restriction is that it definitely does not mean aeronautical emissions (not even those included in an airport’s Scope 3 emissions under the standard GHG protocol) or surface transport to and from the airport. It could be narrower still in that it does not have to mean every activity within an airport’s boundary fence. Some members have activities from convention centres through training colleges to farming – we could be confident these are not meant. Would it cover hotels, parking, administrative offices, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) sites, cargo handling if not directly connected to loading/unloading planes? All of these are less clear.

The way that ‘airport operations’ will be significantly wider (and more difficult to achieve) is that it is not intended to be just the airport operating companies’ own emissions (known as Scope 1&2) – but the emissions of everybody on the site that is related to the operation of the airport. So this would mean ground handlers, air cargo ground operations, catering, retail, etc.

Not only does this increase the scope and incorporate a lot more mobile equipment, but it also makes it far more difficult to see how it would be driven and, in the end, enforced. Government sets regulatory rules

for airport operating companies but the relationship with other users is less direct. Similarly the operating company has no role in demanding/reviewing/checking/enforcing carbon performance of those on the site.

There are other major issues to resolve – including what is the status of supporting future zero-emission flights (i.e., if an airport’s electricity needs increase exponentially due to hosting electric aircraft) and also certificates for green fuel use (i.e., if you purchase equivalent amounts to your use of green gas, but technically this goes into the national system and the gas burned on site still has a carbon footprint).

Resolving these issues in a way that enables airports to continue to move to zero emissions whilst avoiding unnecessary costs and bureaucracy will be the objective for the AOA on this issue.

For operators, aside from engaging with the AOA, and the DfT policy process directly, the best advice is to revisit net-zero-emission plans to see what the residual carbon emission points by 2040 are and how they could be addressed – and to start discussing that same issue with the wider airport community on site. Even airports outside England should consider this as, if adopted in England, devolved governments may well feel inclined to move in this direction.

For suppliers this offers a further chance to see how they can support airports in their need to more aggressively manage carbon emissions than before.

Whatever form the final requirement takes and whatever new elements come into play with a revised Government in the autumn, the reality is that the carbon challenge for airports has stepped up a gear and it is unlikely to step down again. ■

Christopher Snelling is Policy Director of the Airport Operators Association

ARUP BECOMES AOA CORPORATE PARTNER

Arup, the global engineering, planning and design services firm, has become the AOA's seventh Corporate Partner.

ARUP

Previously a Silver Member, **Arup** is now a Corporate Partner, alongside Intel, Leonardo, Thales, UK Power Networks Services, Vanderlande and WTW.

Describing itself as “a trusted partner in investment and planning, design and implementation, as well as operations and efficiency improvements”, Arup says that its “expertise in negotiating the complex relationships between demand, capacity, connect time, passenger flow, regulation and investment has shaped the passenger experience at many of the world’s largest and busiest hubs”.



Associated Asphalt Contracting Ltd has re-joined the AOA as an Associate Member. It delivers airfield surfacing schemes both in the UK and internationally.

AGS AIRPORTS AND NHS SCOTLAND WIN £10M FUNDING FOR MEDICAL DRONE PROJECT

A consortium led by AGS Airports, in partnership with NHS Scotland, has secured £10.1m in funding to deliver what will be the UK's first medical distribution network using drones.

The funding from the Future Flight Challenge at UK Research and Innovation will allow the consortium to undertake live flights and begin to deploy the physical infrastructure needed to support the drones across Scotland, including prototype landing bases and digital and communication infrastructure.

Working with NATS, the University of Strathclyde and 12 other partners, the consortium is working to deliver

a drone network that can transport essential medicines, bloods and other medical supplies throughout Scotland, including to remote communities. It has already designed drone landing stations for NHS sites across Scotland and developed a virtual model of the proposed delivery network, which connects hospitals, pathology laboratories, distribution centres and GP surgeries.

Fiona Smith, AGS Airports Group head of Aerodrome Strategy and Director of the drone project said "This project is set to revolutionise the way in which healthcare services are delivered in Scotland. A drones' network can ensure critical medical

supplies can be delivered more efficiently, it can reduce waiting times for test results and provide equity of care between urban and remote rural communities".

Scottish Public Health Minister, Maree Todd, said "This innovative project will help position Scotland at the forefront of drone technologies to deliver essential healthcare supplies. It demonstrates an effective industry partnership showing that when businesses, universities and public sector work together they can deliver for Scotland and outperform the competition, attracting welcome funding at this challenging time". ■

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT AIMS FOR "A SIMPLER, SPEEDIER SECURITY SCREENING PROCESS" FROM JUNE 2024

Birmingham Airport has submitted a planning application to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for a new security screening system.

The airport's investment in a Next Generation Security system will enable greater numbers of passengers to be processed more quickly at peak times and achieve compliance with new Government standards. As well as a new security hall, delivering the new system will also enable better use of existing space, including an enlarged departures area and additional retail and customer seating areas.

In its Master Plan, published in 2018, the airport outlined its aspiration to grow passenger numbers from 13m a year (pre-pandemic) to 18m by 2033. The new security hall is designed to support that expansion, which the airport says will in turn help to drive economic growth in the region.

Airport chief executive, Nick Barton, said he was "excited" about the security investment, which would "pave the way for a better customer experience and economic growth in the West Midlands". ■



DONCASTER SHEFFIELD AIRPORT CONSIDERING ITS FUTURE, AS BOARD REVIEWS STRATEGIC OPTIONS



The Board of Doncaster Sheffield Airport has begun a review of strategic options after it “reluctantly concluded that aviation activity on the site may no longer be commercially viable”.

The airport and its owner, The Peel Group, have also started a six-week consultation and engagement programme with stakeholders on the future of the site. A final decision on the airport’s future is expected in the autumn.

On 10 June Wizz Air announced that it was closing its base at the airport and cutting many of its routes from Doncaster Sheffield, leaving TUI as the airport’s only remaining base carrier.

On 13 July, Robert Hough, Chairman of Peel Airports Group, said “It is a critical time for aviation globally. Despite pandemic related restrictions slowly drawing to a close, we are still facing ongoing obstacles and

dynamic long-term threats to the future of the aviation industry. The actions by Wizz to sacrifice its base at Doncaster to shore up its business opportunities in the South of England are a significant blow for the airport”.

Hough said “Now is the right time to review how best Doncaster Sheffield Airport can best create future growth opportunities for Doncaster and for South Yorkshire. The Peel Group remains committed to delivering economic growth, job opportunities and prosperity for Doncaster and the wider region”.

The Peel Group has committed to develop the Gateway East development, adjacent to the airport, which includes over 400,00 sq ft of logistics and advanced manufacturing development, which, it says, will deliver hundreds of new jobs and further economic investment in the region.



Following the Board’s announcement, more than 70,000 people signed petitions calling for the airport to be saved. Shadow Transport Secretary, Louise Haigh, called on Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, “to do everything in his power to save the airport”. A Government spokesperson said “While this will be a commercial decision for the airport, we hope they conclude, after consultation with stakeholders, that there is a viable future for the airport”. ■

HEATHROW IMPLEMENTS CAPACITY CAP



Heathrow Airport has introduced a capacity cap on passengers from 12 July to 11 September and asked airlines to stop selling summer tickets.

The airport's CEO, John Holland-Kaye, said on 12 July "The global aviation industry is recovering from the pandemic, but the legacy of Covid continues to pose challenges for the entire sector as it rebuilds capacity. At Heathrow, we have seen 40 years of passenger growth in just four months. We started recruiting back in November last year in anticipation of capacity recovering this summer, and by the end of July we will have as many people working in security as we had pre-pandemic".

Holland-Kaye said that "new colleagues are learning fast but are

not yet up to full speed. However, there are some critical functions in the airport which are still significantly under-resourced, in particular ground handlers, who are contracted by airlines to provide check-in staff, load and unload bags and turnaround aircraft. This is a significant constraint to the airport's overall capacity. Over the past few weeks, as departing passenger numbers have regularly exceeded 100,000 a day, we have started to see periods when service drops to a level that is not acceptable: long queues times, delays for passengers requiring assistance, bags not travelling with passengers or arriving late, low punctuality and last-minute cancellations".

As a result, he said, "We have therefore made the difficult decision

to introduce a capacity cap with effect from 12 July to 11 September. Our assessment is that the maximum number of daily departing passengers that airlines, airline ground handlers and the airport can collectively serve over the summer is no more than 100,000. The latest forecasts indicate that daily departing seats over the summer will average 104,000 and so we are asking our airline partners to stop selling summer tickets to limit the impact on passengers".

Holland-Kaye said "By making this intervention now, our objective is to protect flights for the vast majority of passengers at Heathrow this summer and to give confidence that everyone who does travel through the airport will have a safe and reliable journey". ■

FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT COMMITS TO NET ZERO BY 2030 AND AXES PRICE OF SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL THIS MONTH

Farnborough, the UK's largest business aviation airport, has published a Net Zero Roadmap committing to be Net Zero across its controllable emissions by 2030 or sooner.

It also became the first airport in the world to offer Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), which can reduce life cycle carbon emissions by up to 80%, at the same price as Jet A1 fuel for a trial period from 1 July to the beginning of the Farnborough International Airshow on 18 July. The airport first introduced SAF a year ago.

Having become the first business

aviation airport in the world to achieve carbon neutrality in 2018, it is now aiming for a 91% reduction in its controllable emissions by 2030 at the latest, focussing on the reduction of emissions from buildings, the airfield and on-site operational vehicles.

By 2035 it has also committed to targeting a reduction of its controllable emissions and those it has partial influence over by over 40%. These include emissions from the landing and take-off cycle of aircraft up to 3,000 feet and surface access emissions generated by passenger journeys to and from the airport.

Farnborough Airport CEO, Simon Geere, said "We want to set the benchmark for environmental performance within our sector. When it comes to supporting the decarbonisation of the aviation industry, we want to lead the way, which is why we have set ourselves one of the most ambitious targets in the industry by committing to be Net Zero across our controllable emissions by 2030 or sooner. We want our customers to increasingly choose Farnborough because of our sustainability credentials". ■

DEREK PROVAN TO STEP DOWN AS CEO OF AGS AIRPORTS

Derek Provan, Chief Executive of AGS Airports – which owns Aberdeen, Glasgow and Southampton airports – is to step down from his position on 31 March next year.

After 25 years in the aviation industry, Provan, who joined AGS in 2018, has decided to step away from his executive role to pursue non-executive opportunities. He will assist the AGS Board with the transition as it starts the process of appointing a successor.

Provan joined AGS from Heathrow, where he was Chief Operating Officer. Before that he spent three years as Managing Director of Aberdeen Airport, having started his aviation career in 1998 at Glasgow Airport,

where he held a series of senior leadership roles.

Reflecting on his time at AGS, Provan said "Our airports are more than important pieces of infrastructure and throughout my time at AGS I have always been very conscious of the important role they play in driving prosperity for the communities we serve. We have built a highly capable team at AGS and my focus over the coming nine months will be to support them in restoring the vital connectivity that will allow our regions to thrive".

Thanking Provan for his leadership and commitment, AGS chair, Lena Wilson said "Not only has he navigated AGS through the recent



downturn which brought much of our industry to a standstill, he has fostered extremely positive relationships with local and national government, and perhaps more importantly with all our employees. Derek is one of the most talented leaders I have had the privilege to work with". ■

LONDON CITY AIRPORT CONSULTS ON PLANS TO INCREASE PASSENGER CAP AND ALLOW EXTENDED SATURDAY OPENING

London City Airport has begun a ten-week consultation on proposed changes to its existing planning permission, including an increase to its existing planning cap from 6.5m passengers a year to 9m and permission to operate throughout Saturdays.

The airport expects to welcome 3m passengers this year and is predicting a return to pre-pandemic passenger numbers of 5m, potentially as soon as 2024. It believes that it is likely to surpass its current planning cap of 6.5m passengers a year by the middle of this decade.

Its consultation outlines how it could meet future demand of up to 9m passengers by 2031 by making best use of its existing runway and infrastructure, in line with its 2020 master plan and the UK Government's aviation policy. The airport says that the additional

passenger numbers can be delivered with no additional flights, no changes to the current 8hr night-time curfew and no additional infrastructure.

The airport is inviting views on its proposals to allow flights on Saturday afternoons and evenings, as well as additional flexibility in the first and last half hour of daily operations, 06.30 to 07.00 hours and 22.00 to 22.30 hours. The plans come with a commitment to become the first UK airport to mandate the use of cleaner, quieter, new generation aircraft, such as the Airbus A220 and Embraer E2, at specific times of the day, namely in the new operating periods.

The airport's CEO, Robert Sinclair, said "London City Airport plays an incredibly important role in quickly and easily connecting London to the rest of the UK and the world for both business and leisure travel. The strength of our rebound

demonstrates the huge pent-up demand for air travel and the need to plan responsibly for the future".

He said, "We are looking at options to make some adjustments to our existing planning permission, designed to give passengers more choice to travel at weekends, to provide more global connections through European hub airports and to accommodate the long-term demand we expect to see".

Sinclair said "Most importantly, following our commitment to be the first net zero airport in London by 2030, these proposals set out how London City and its airlines can meet future demand in a sustainable way. In particular, they will accelerate investment in cleaner, quieter, new generation aircraft, for use in the extended periods, delivering the benefit of quieter aircraft to our local community throughout the whole week". ■



GATWICK LIMITS FLIGHTS IN JULY AND AUGUST

Gatwick Airport has announced limits on its summer flight capacity, starting at 825 flights a day this month and then increasing to 850 flights a day in August.

The airport said that its action would align its growth trajectory with airlines and ground handlers' resource capabilities, allowing airlines to fly and manage more predictable and reliable flight programmes for the peak school summer holiday period. As a result, passengers would experience a more reliable and better standard of service.

An airport review found that some Gatwick-based companies would "continue to operate with a severe

lack of staff resources over the summer holiday period. If not addressed, this issue would see airport passengers continuing to experience an unreliable and potentially poor standard of service, including more queues, delays and last-minute cancellations".

Gatwick Airport CEO, Stewart Wingate, said "Gatwick prepared well for the restart of international travel by reopening our South Terminal and we have now recruited 400 new colleagues to help us process passengers quickly through security this summer. By taking decisive action now, we aim to help the ground handlers and also our airlines to better match their flying programmes with their available



resources".

Wingate said that the vast majority of flights over the summer would operate as normal and "the steps taken mean that our passengers can expect a more reliable and better standard of service, while also improving conditions for staff working at the airport". ■

BRISTOL AIRPORT JOINS CONSORTIUM TO DRIVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HYDROGEN INFRASTRUCTURE ECOSYSTEM

Bristol Airport has joined a consortium with eight other companies in the South West to enable cross-sector partnerships to make, move and use hydrogen.

Working with easyJet, which aims to begin flying hydrogen aircraft as soon as they are commercially viable, the airport will examine how it could introduce hydrogen-powered Ground Support Equipment.

The Hydrogen South West consortium aims to decarbonise transport, commerce and power, while driving sustainable growth, upskilling the region and delivering new job opportunities. It will focus on aviation, as well as shipping and

housing, and seek to support the Government's drive to generate 10GW of low-carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. Its other members are Airbus, EDF, GKN Aerospace, Costain, Wood, Bristol Port and Wales and West Utilities.

Bristol Airport's Director of Sustainability, Simon Earles, chairs the consortium. He said "The South West has a rich engineering and energy history and is home to a powerful cluster of leading aerospace, transport and logistics businesses. This combination of industrial experience, delivery expertise and regional knowledge presents a formidable opportunity

to accelerate the UK's transition to alternative power at scale". ■





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