

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION



UK AIRPORTS PREPARE FOR GROWTH

Features

NEW AGS AIRPORTS CEO
*says Southampton runway extension
could be completed by August*

LUTON AIRPORT CEO
says DART link is transformative

BRISTOL AIRPORT CEO
*promises more flights to more
destinations*

GATWICK AIRPORT CEO
*says Northern Runway plans
will be submitted soon*



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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



Welcome to this edition of The Airport Operator which is being published as

UK airports prepare for a bumper summer.

While industrial action affected some flights over Easter, the overall picture reported by our member airports is that they are now in a much better place in terms of resilience than was the case last summer.

Airports of all sizes have been working hard over the last few months to fill resource gaps and their experience over Easter suggests that they are now well-placed to cope with the very busy summer which most of them are now expecting. For the most part, the Easter holidays went smoothly, which is a good sign for the summer at a time when the Government is keeping a close eye on resilience issues.

The Aviation Minister, Baroness Vere, has told us that her overriding priority is to avoid a repeat of last summer's disruption, when many passengers were delayed or had flights cancelled at the last minute. We share that goal and are pleased that the Government has announced new measures looking

at ground handlers' performance. Over the coming months our airports will be working closely with everyone involved to optimise performance over the whole air travel journey.

It has been a busy time at the Department for Transport with a raft of consultations and statements. The Department is now consulting on its proposed sustainable aviation fuel mandate which would require jet fuel suppliers to blend SAF into aviation fuel from 2025. That is welcome news. We think SAF offers a huge opportunity for the UK to be a world leader and we will be working with the Government to develop the right investment framework for it.

We are also responding to the Government's call for evidence on its ambition for airport operations in England to be zero emission by 2040. The Department has listened to some of the input that we offered earlier. We think that their approach is now better than it was and more detailed, but there are still some unanswered questions on scope and reporting.

Finally we have had a noise policy statement from the Government, recommitting to an aviation noise policy in line with ICAO's balanced approach to aircraft noise management. The statement reconfirmed that the policy remains to limit, and where possible, to reduce total adverse effects on health and quality of life from aviation noise.

Meanwhile, on the Opposition side

of the House, we have been pleased to see that Labour is upping its engagement with industry. Alongside other parts of the aviation sector, we have had a good exchange of views with Shadow Business Secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, Shadow Transport Secretary, Louise Haigh, and Shadow Aviation Minister, Mike Kane. As Labour starts to plan its manifesto for the next General Election, we look forward to continuing our discussions on sustainable aviation and to discuss other key topics, including airspace modernisation.

Here at the AOA we have noticed a distinct uptick in the number of people attending our meetings and events in person, which is great. Nearly 600 guests are already registered to attend our annual dinner in June. Our working groups are an important part of the AOA offer and elsewhere in this issue you can read about how airport fire officers are already planning to meet some of the new challenges presented by decarbonisation.

This issue also includes a wide range of contributions from airport chief executives, including Stewart Wingate at Gatwick, Alberto Martin at Luton, Dave Lees at Bristol and Andy Cliffe, the new head of AGS Airports. Further afield, Terrence Lopez in Gibraltar tells us how for the first time since his airport's runway was built in 1941 it is no longer crossed by a busy main road. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive

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*Andy Cliffe, CEO,
AGS Airports*

WORK HAS STARTED ON SOUTHAMPTON AIRPORT'S RUNWAY EXTENSION AND COULD BE COMPLETED BY AUGUST

Construction of Southampton Airport's 164m extension to the northern end of its runway began on 3 April.



Taking place at night to avoid any disruption to flight operations, the works are expected to be completed around 17 August. The extension will allow the airport to attract new airlines and offer new routes and has been described by the owner, AGS Airports, as a guarantee of the airport's viability.

Speaking to The Airport Operator, Andy Cliffe, who succeeded Derek Provan as CEO of AGS Airports in January, said that the extension will enable Southampton Airport to accommodate different aircraft that could fly further. He forecast that by next year Southampton would be offering a broader range of both summer sun destinations and regional flights.

In 2019, before the pandemic, 1.8m passengers passed through the airport – 89% of them on Flybe flights. A year later, after Flybe's collapse, there were 300,000 passengers and in 2021 the total fell further to just under 270,000. Last year numbers began to recover to 640,000, though the airport was again affected by the collapse of the revived Flybe. Prospects for this summer look better with BA City flyer services to destinations in France, Spain and Portugal and a

new daily Air France service to Paris.

The post-pandemic recovery has been more robust at the other two AGS airports, Aberdeen and Glasgow. Aberdeen's passenger numbers, more than 2.9m in 2019, bounced back to over 2m last year and prospects for this summer look strong, with the UK's largest regional airline, Loganair, the single largest operator at Aberdeen, expanding to offer more flights to Newcastle, Southampton and Oslo. Glasgow's passenger numbers, 8.85m in 2019, were back to over 6.5m last year. This year Emirates added capacity on its daily Glasgow - Dubai flight, with the return to the route of its flagship A380, a move that Cliffe described as "a confidence booster and a signal of the strength of the market".

Cliffe said that when he joined AGS Airports after nearly 20 years in various roles at Manchester Airports Group he had been impressed by what he found. Like other UK airports, he said, AGS had experienced "a pretty torrid time" during the pandemic, "but the resilience of the team, of the organisation, I think is remarkable and there is a future-focussed drive now to move on out of Covid, to leave that behind and to start to

rebuild the business. As a team they had a very strong summer last year. My impression is of an organisation that is very well-run and so a great platform to build from, as we look ahead".

As examples of the Group's future focus, Cliffe referenced three innovative projects that are all making good progress. The first is the ground-breaking partnership between AGS Airports and ZeroAvia, the leader in developing zero-emission solutions for commercial aviation. The two companies are exploring the development of hydrogen fuel infrastructure, regulatory framework requirements

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A key milestone was passed in January when a 19-seat hydrogen-electric ZeroAvia prototype plane successfully completed its first 10-minute test flight.

and resourcing required for delivering zero-emission flights. As a regional group serving the Highlands and Islands of Scotland as well as the Channel Islands from Southampton, AGS is seen as a good testbed for short-haul hydrogen flights.

A key milestone was passed in January when a 19-seat hydrogen-electric ZeroAvia prototype plane successfully completed its first 10-minute test flight. Following this flight demonstration, work is intensifying on plans to achieve certification of the hydrogen-electric engine by 2025, with hopes that commercial flights from Glasgow could follow soon after.

The second project is a five-year partnership, announced in February, between Glasgow Airport and the UK's innovation accelerator, Connected Places Catapult, to create the UK's first Connected Airport Living Lab. It will produce a series of demonstrations and trials of

innovative technologies aimed at addressing challenges facing the aviation sector. Cliffe described it as "a real opportunity to showcase innovative and emerging technology solutions driving towards more sustainable operations, better customer experience and better use of digital".

The third project, due to be completed next year, is project CAELUS, where AGS Airports, in partnership with NHS Scotland is leading a 16-member consortium working to deliver the first national drone network that can transport essential medicines, bloods and other medical supplies throughout Scotland, including to remote communities. The current phase of the project involves live flight trials and removing remaining barriers to safely using drones at scale within Scotland's airspace. Cliffe said that while there is a lot of work still to be done the project is progressing very

well, with a focus on how the drone network could be safely integrated into mainstream aviation activity.

Responding to a question about the main challenges for AGS airports, Cliffe said that in the short-term a key test for the airports will be to ensure a high-quality passenger experience across all the airports this summer. He said "we remain relentlessly focussed on the resourcing and making sure it works over the summer. That is our plan. As we look forward today, then certainly levels of resourcing look to be in the right place and one of the things I think has been different this time compared to last is that we have a good level of retention of staff out of last year, so we start from a different place, which is good".

Striking a positive note on the opportunities for Aberdeen, Glasgow and Southampton airports, Cliffe is focussing on the next phase of their post-pandemic recovery in passenger numbers. "The opportunity for AGS Airports" he said "is to achieve a recovery that takes them back to their pre-Covid levels and beyond. There are definite opportunities to do that, and we have seen very strong signals that give us grounds for optimism". ■



Cohesive

HOW AIRPORTS CAN DETERMINE HOW WELL THEY ARE MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES AND DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS

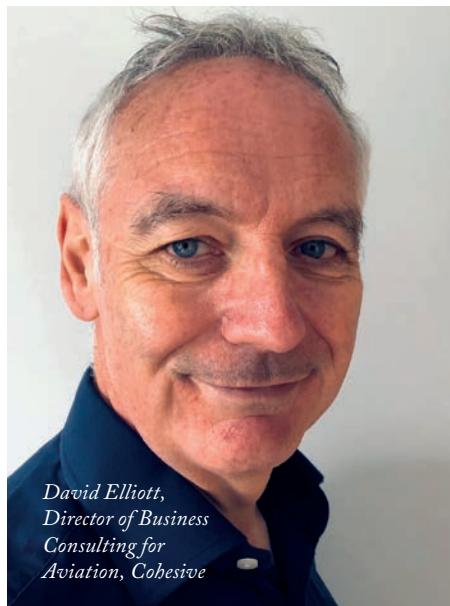
David Elliott, Director of Business Consulting for Aviation, at AOA Gold Member, Cohesive, explains how data can help your environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategy take flight, examining the opportunities to go beyond reporting with the data needed for effective ESG management.



The aviation sector plays a significant role in the UK and global economy, connecting people, goods, and ideas across borders. However, the industry, in a similar way to construction, is also responsible for a significant proportion of carbon emissions, making it a key contributor to climate change. To address this challenge, the aviation sector is adopting environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices to improve sustainability and reduce its environmental impact.

Environmental Responsibility: The aviation industry has recognised the need to reduce its carbon footprint and has set ambitious goals to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Airports have strategies and programmes in place to measure carbon and subsequently offset this amount in their drive towards net zero. What is measured, and how, is a critical factor in achieving this objective.

Social Responsibility: The aviation industry has also recognised its social responsibility to its employees, passengers, and the communities it serves. This includes improving labour practices, promoting diversity and inclusion, and investing in



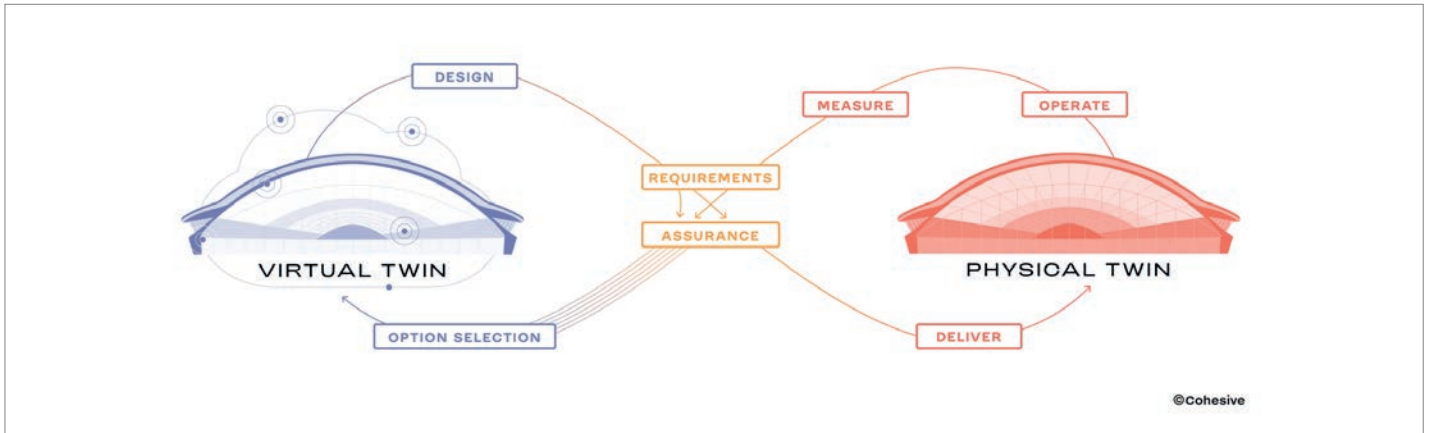
*David Elliott,
Director of Business
Consulting for
Aviation, Cohesive*

employee training and development. The industry has also been working to improve the passenger experience, with a focus on safety, comfort, and accessibility.

Governance: Strong governance is critical for the aviation industry to ensure that ESG practices are implemented effectively and transparently. This includes having a clear governance structure, a commitment to ethical behaviour, and effective risk management practices. The industry has been working to improve transparency and accountability, with a focus on stakeholder engagement and reporting on ESG performance.

While the aviation industry has made significant progress in adopting ESG practices, there is still significant work to be done. Airports are constantly evolving with the construction, implementation, optimisation and decommissioning of assets happening in parallel to their main focus of providing a seamless, efficient service for both airlines and passengers.

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Cohesive uses the concept of an infinity loop to consistently articulate a built asset lifecycle and identify touchpoints, at which ESG data can be gathered and used to realise sustainable decision making, opportunities and efficiencies. As technology advances provide the means (such as digital twinning), airports can digitally simulate the impact of their decisions in designs, through construction, and into operations, leading to outcomes that are best from an ESG perspective, whilst also providing whole-life cost savings, improved operational efficiency, and enhanced reputation and brand value.

The infinity loop approach creates a golden thread of ESG data, which can be tested progressively all the way through the lifecycle at any stage, to make sure it is aligned with any existing ESG policies and strategies.

Essentially, this creation of a pervasive ESG data layer enables airport operators to make well-informed decisions, no matter where they are in their asset lifecycle; offering progressive assurance through active measurement of design, continuously checking against any ESG criteria.

In conclusion, the adoption of a data-driven approach to ESG practices in the aviation industry, is critical for promoting sustainability and reducing the sector's environmental impact. By focusing on environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and effective governance, the aviation industry can create a more

“ESG is an opportunity to use data in a way that helps aviation collate, measure and subsequently improve both everyday airport operations and the impact on the planet. This is truly a huge opportunity to make a difference to the future of our industry”.

sustainable future whilst continually improving passenger experience and promoting economic growth. While there are challenges to overcome, the opportunities for innovation and leadership in sustainability are huge. Cohesive are uniquely placed to help the aviation sector consolidate data, technology and ESG, to drive positive outcomes.

To start the process and help airports determine how well they are currently measuring ESG, identifying where there are opportunities to learn from data and drive improvements, Cohesive has developed an innovative ESG maturity assessment model, Scan the QR code below or click the link [Cohesive Survey](#) to **take the Cohesive ESG Maturity Assessment.** ■



COHESIVE: A GLOBAL ASSET MANAGEMENT AND DATA COMPANY WITH A TRACK RECORD OF DELIVERY ACROSS LEADING UK AIRPORTS

Cohesive brings you the world's leading digital engineering, enterprise asset management, asset delivery, and asset service performance optimisation solutions.

Utilising the power of data, digital twins, artificial intelligence, and capitalising on new technology Cohesive enables clients to optimise and automate operations, developing digital talents and cultures for better, long-term sustainable results.

They provide strategic advice, integration services, systems deployment, and service operations that enable their clients to excel in achieving their business outcomes. Cohesive responds with agility to rapidly changing market conditions, preparing clients for the future whilst maximising value and resources, operating to safeguard the planet in a sustainable way.

HOW THE BUDGET MAY HELP AVIATION TO DEAL WITH ITS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

Peter Campbell, the AOA's new Head of Public Affairs and Media, analyses the Chancellor's Budget, welcomes the Government announcement on a Sustainable Aviation Fuels mandate and hopes that a calmer political environment may encourage the Government to listen to the AOA's suggestions.

Politics seems to have taken on a calmer air in recent months, compared with the last three years – Brexit, Covid-19, changes of government, have all combined to dominate the agenda. It was, therefore, with some sense of relief that when the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, stood up to deliver his first Budget in March, it was a more straightforward affair.

That is not to say that the Chancellor did not have any challenges to face up to as he unveiled the Government's upcoming financial policies. The underlying economic data showed there was still a long way to go before the UK had recovered from the impact of the pandemic and the effects of the war in Ukraine

on energy costs and inflation.

The Budget would, the Chancellor said, tackle the UK's productivity issues such as lower business investment and higher economic inactivity than other similar countries. He described it as a "Budget for growth" and focused on the four pillars of his industrial strategy: enterprise – supporting business; employment – encouraging more people into work; education – providing people with skills; and everywhere – growth across the UK.

In terms of specific measures, the Chancellor announced changes to the yearly and lifetime pension allowances, something the AOA called for in its Budget submission. While the focus of this was that it would encourage doctors to continue

The Budget would, the Chancellor said, tackle the UK's productivity issues such as lower business investment and higher economic inactivity than other similar countries.

working or come back and alleviate pressure on the NHS, it would also help relieve the recruitment and retention challenge facing the aviation sector. Those who left high-skilled, high-paid jobs in critical roles

like in the fire and rescue services, air traffic control and air traffic engineering could be encouraged back.

There was no mention of another AOA priority, however, to allow airports to establish duty-free shopping stores for arriving passengers. We will continue to make the case that UK airports and the wider economy would benefit from enabling spending on duty-free allowances when travellers have landed, rather than at foreign airports. This would bring us in line with countries like Norway and Switzerland, where arriving passengers can already take advantage of duty-free shopping on landing.

It was also disappointing that no additional support for airspace modernisation, which would enable more efficient routes to be flown, reduce stacking and lower emissions, was provided. This is something that the AOA will be prioritising in the coming months, with new proposals about how we support the reform and improvement of our highways in the sky.

Announcements on Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) were also absent from the Chancellor's Budget, although statements and policies were unveiled as part of the Government's subsequent 'Green Day' ahead of the Easter recess. This included a consultation on a SAF mandate, which would see a minimum of 10% of jet fuel to be SAF from 2030 with increasing proportions to 2050.

The next step for us will be to work with government to develop an investment framework for SAF, including a 'contracts for difference' style system to give certainty to investors and bring capital forward. We will then be able to produce SAF at scale, to increase our energy security and protect and grow our economy. Furthermore, establishing the UK as a world leader in SAF could create over 20,000 jobs and almost £3 billion in gross value



added to the economy.

So overall the Budget, and ensuing events, were a mixed bag for the aviation sector, with some progress made on recruitment and retention and a SAF mandate, while there remains work to do in other areas like airspace modernisation. The good news is that with politics, hopefully, entering a prolonged period of calm, delivery-focussed activity, we are hopeful that Government will be keen to listen to our suggestions.

ARRIVALS DUTY FREE THE FOCUS OF AN AOA PARLIAMENTARY LOBBYING EVENT

AOA Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, reports.

The AOA used the focus of MPs on tax issues in the run up to the March Budget to hold an event calling for arrivals duty free to be allowed.

The event, held in Portcullis House, was used to raise awareness of



the issue amongst MPs and Peers. It aimed to prompt them to ask questions about progressing the policy of the Treasury both formally and informally. We know that the Treasury is philosophically sceptical of such tax cuts, so we believe this is one of the areas where political attention and pressure is required to help us achieve success.

More than 15 MPs attended in person and gave the campaign their support. Others sent researchers to express their interest or gather information, and several Lords also attended. Several AOA members also participated.

The particular spark for this session was the case study document on the Norwegian and Swiss experience gathered by the UK Travel Retail Forum which supported our lines on how this change would not undermine the domestic high street. The AOA also discussed the data compiled from members about exactly how they would practically offer arrivals duty free within their buildings before the customs point.

As noted in the last edition of The Airport Operator, leaving the EU has opened up opportunity here that the Government has not taken advantage of. Arrivals duty free shops are in use in other locations - they were

first introduced in Norway in 2005 and then Switzerland in 2011. Clearly having arrivals duty free available in the UK would encourage returning UK travellers to spend some of their money here in the UK instead of at the departure airport abroad. This would create an economic benefit for the airport and for the UK generally, whilst not losing any significant Government revenue as purchases are replacing those made abroad, rather than those made on the British high street.

This drop-in is just part of what we expect to be a long running campaign to get this sensible tax adjustment adopted. ■

We will continue to make the case that UK airports and the wider economy would benefit from enabling spending on duty-free allowances when travellers have landed, rather than at foreign airports.



MENTAL WELL-BEING AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TOP THE AGENDA FOR AIRPORT HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAMS

The AOA's Health and Safety Working Group has a strong focus this year on the mental well-being of airport colleagues and on the risks associated with new technology, including electric vehicles.

The Group's Co-Chair, Katie Bale, said that mental health emerged as a strong area of interest from a recent survey of its members, alongside working at heights and emerging technologies, which are main themes for UK Airports Health and Safety Week this year, reflecting the key focus areas for the Civil Aviation Authority.

As part of the Health and Safety Week event, the AOA has created an opportunity for participating airports to enter an award for the best approach to improving mental health and well-being to support their colleagues' and passengers'

mental health. This award recognises the policies and activities undertaken by airports that have had the most positive impact in improving mental health and well-being through their delivery, messages, presentation and engagement.

Bale, who is a member of the fire, health, safety and well-being team at Heathrow, said that increased interest in and engagement with mental well-being and mental health had been partly driven by talk during the Covid pandemic of an "oncoming tsunami of mental health challenges". While it was as yet unclear whether this has materialised, she said it is

clear that it is a key topic for many AOA members.

A recent meeting of the working group had explored the subject of psychological safety, drawing on Royal Aeronautical Society research relating to airline pilots, following the 2017 suicide of a Germanwings co-pilot. The group considered how far the research is relevant to the wider airport community, which includes many safety-critical roles, and whether airports "extend appropriate levels of support, care and prevention mechanisms to others in the industry as we have historically done with pilots".

Katie Bale, Co-Chair, AOA Health and Safety Working Group



The CAA has encouraged airports to consider risks associated with emerging technologies as they developed their plans for UK Health and Safety Week 2023, which runs from 15 to 21 May. Bale said “Electric vehicles are a big focus for us at the moment. We have had them for quite a long time, particularly airside, but the sheer numbers of them are presenting new risks in terms of charging, the charging infrastructure and the safe provision of that infrastructure”.

Asked about the benefits of taking part in meetings of the Health and Safety Working Group, she said “one of the big benefits of it is that you get to learn from airports that may have a lot more resource than you have. There will be people there who will have done some of the legwork for you” she said. “We are very good at sharing. Attending the working group enables you to learn lessons from people who have ‘been there and done that’, have tried various solutions and have found what works best, which may save you a whole lot of work in a smaller airport because you may well be able to take

As part of the Health and Safety Week event, the AOA has created an opportunity for participating airports to enter an award for the best approach to improving mental health and well-being to support their colleagues’ and passengers’ mental health

that baked solution and apply it to your airport and equally, the larger airports can learn from the innovation of smaller locations”.

Bale emphasised that experience drawn from other airport safety teams may be more useful than general safety experience because they understand the complex nature of airport operations, where multiple stakeholders need to work together on safety issues. Acknowledging that some of the higher risk safety issues arise in the ground handling environment, she said that Heathrow is currently working with its ground handlers to make sure that, while people are “incredibly busy, post-Covid, we can make sure that health and safety continues to be what it

should be – a genuine priority”.

Bale said that she has found the working group to be really friendly and noted that there is always an option for people to attend meetings virtually, when, for either time or budget reasons, in-person attendance may be difficult.

The Health and Safety Working Group is chaired by Graeme Robertson, who is Health and Safety Assurance Manager at Glasgow Airport. If you would like to participate in group meetings, please contact Adele Gammarano. Her e-mail address is adelegammarano@aoa.org.uk. She can also be reached on 07717 685 913. ■



AIRPORT FIRE OFFICERS CONSIDER RISKS AND CHALLENGES OF DECARBONISATION

As airports across the UK adopt increasingly ambitious net zero objectives, their fire services are acting to ensure that they are well-placed to meet a whole new set of risks and challenges.

The topic of managing risks associated with decarbonisation is high on the agenda of the AOA's Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (RFFS) Working Group, chaired by Gatwick Airport's Chief Fire Officer, Simon Petts. Working with co-chair, Bristol Airport Station Officer, Doug Pickering, Petts is encouraging airport fire officers to share best practice on this and other key subjects.

The Group will focus on the risks and challenges for airport fire safety of electric vehicles, hydrogen and Sustainable Aviation Fuel, considering in particular the best ways of assessing risks to the public and to RFFS personnel. It plans to look at risks associated with solar panels and battery storage systems and the best ways of responding to electric incidents.

Pickering gave the example of an electric vehicle fire. He said "when you look at the decarbonisation objectives of all airports, one of the main issues with electric vehicles is the risk associated with fighting those fires and the different hazards that are involved in that type of incident. If you get an electric vehicle on fire, it will burn continuously for 24 hours. The only way to extinguish a fire like that is to flood it with water and not stop or submerge the vehicle fully in water".

Another issue that airports have faced relates to training of fire fighters which would in the past have generally involved burning fossil fuels. For most fire stations across the country this has largely stopped, and at Bristol Airport, he said, "we burn liquified petroleum gas for our fires according to a very strict action plan. So we don't burn fossil fuel unless we need to for that particular training practice. Our whole processes have evolved hugely".

Alternative fuels and site fire safety are just two of a wide range of issues that the Working



The Group will focus on the risks and challenges for airport fire safety of electric vehicles, hydrogen and Sustainable Aviation Fuel, considering in particular the best ways of assessing risks to the public and to RFFS personnel.

Group plans to address. With support from the AOA's Regulation, Safety and Operations Manager, Adele Gammarano, the Group will meet four times a year. It aims to focus on a different theme at each meeting, with the declared aim of "bringing together committed industry stakeholders to join up their individual plans, manage the key technical, policy and regulatory dependencies and provide independent and transparent cross-industry knowledge by seeking innovative solutions together". Other issues that will be considered include RFFS medical responsibilities and standards, RFFS vehicles and driving standards, incident command skills, people management and task resource analysis.

One of each year's meetings will be at a member airport and earlier this month the Working Group met at Bristol Airport, where they were given a tour of the airport

fire station and an overview of the airport's operational working practices. Bristol is the first UK airport to take delivery of a state-of-the-art Oshkosh Striker 3.0 fire vehicle equipped with the latest in firefighting technology. Capable of carrying a four-person crew, the vehicle, with a top speed of 72 mph, carries 12,000 litres of water, 1,700 litres of foam and a 7,500 litre per minute water pump.

After the fire station tour, the meeting focussed on the theme of emergency planning. Gary O'Neill, Bristol Airport's Chief Fire Officer, and Matt Kilyon, the Airport's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, shared their thoughts on the subject, with insights on how emergency planning is evolving. Members also heard from Richard Welch, a veteran London fire service officer, who was incident commander and subsequently fire sector commander at Grenfell Tower in London, where 72 people died in

“The AOA would like to thank Doug Pickering and Simon Petts for facilitating this meeting and pulling together a great agenda and Gary O’Neill and Matt Kilyon for hosting us and giving us the tour. We learned a lot”.

a blaze in 2017. He told the Grenfell inquiry that fire fighters had been unable to reach the tower’s higher floors because of the intensity of the fire at the tower, which had been recently refurbished with a highly flammable cladding system. He said that restricting how far the fire fighters went for their own safety had probably been “the hardest decision of his life”.

Following the Bristol Airport meeting, Gammarano said “The AOA would like to thank Doug Pickering and Simon Petts for facilitating this meeting and pulling together a great agenda and Gary O’Neill and Matt Kilyon for hosting us and giving us the tour. We learned a lot. We are also grateful for the continuous support for the working group from Neil Grey, Principal Aerodrome Inspector at the Civil Aviation Authority. We were delighted to conclude the day with a dinner at the Bristol Harbourside, thanks to Lionel Roland, Managing Director of EFORSA, who gave a great speech together with a plaque as a sign of appreciation to mark the day of a great event”.

If you would like to participate in the Rescue and Fire Fighting Services Working Group, please contact Adele Gammarano. Her e-mail address is adelegammarano@aoa.org.uk. She can also be reached on 07717 685 913. ■



UK AIRPORTS PREPARE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK

Airports across the UK are finalising their plans for UK Airports Health and Safety Week which runs from 15 to 21 May.

The strapline for this year's event is "never give health and safety a day off". For many airports the main theme will be mental health and wellbeing at work, reflecting the fact that after the pandemic some employees were reporting reduced motivation, loss of purpose, anxiety and isolation.

Developed and co-ordinated by the AOA in collaboration with member airports and in partnership with the Civil Aviation Authority, the flagship event is designed to demonstrate the priority that UK airports attach to their continued commitment to a safety culture. It aims to create a climate for sharing and learning and to encourage participation by stakeholders and business partners, including staff, passengers and the local community.

The AOA's Airport Regulation, Safety and Operations Manager, Adele Gammarano, said "we are keen to showcase UK airports' collective commitment to a safety culture



by creating an environment where everybody can participate in sharing values, beliefs, knowledge and experience, coupled with a vision to develop understanding and learning".

Details about activities from participating members will be shared via the AOA's website and social media platforms. Members will be able to share pictures and stories on the benefits gained and on positive impacts of the events.

Dates have already been set for next year's event, which will take place

from 13 to 19 May. Planning for the 2024 Health and Safety Week will begin in November. ■

Details about activities from participating members will be shared via the AOA's website and social media platforms.



GIBRALTAR AIRPORT RUNWAY PERMANENTLY CLOSED TO CARS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE IT WAS BUILT

Cars are now banned from crossing the runway at Gibraltar International Airport in between flights after the long-delayed opening of a tunnel under the runway.

The new tunnel for cars, motorcycles, vans and trucks finally opened on 31 March. This marked the end of a construction project that took more than 14 years to complete, with building work suspended for five years by litigation between the contractor and the Government of Gibraltar.

Pedestrians, cyclists and scooter riders may still cross the Ministry of Defence-owned runway when aircraft are not taking off or landing, subject to the same security and safety measures practised previously for all the traffic that crossed. However, for the first time since 1941, when the runway was constructed across the road between Gibraltar and Spain, cars, motorcycles, vans and trucks are no longer allowed to cross. Instead the tunnel gives vehicles unhindered passage from and into Gibraltar regardless of aircraft movements.

The new tunnel route – named Kingsway in honour of King Charles III – was officially opened by Gibraltar Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo, and his predecessor, Sir Peter Caruana, who had signed the original tunnel contract in 2008. The Chief Minister said he hoped the new route would be “a tunnel from Gibraltar into Europe” – a reference to hopes that there could soon be a new agreement between the UK and the EU placing Gibraltar within Europe’s frontier-free Schengen zone while not affecting Gibraltar’s status as a British Overseas Territory.

An agreement on Schengen for travel purposes could in turn hold out the prospect of new routes from Gibraltar airport to Spain and elsewhere in Europe. At present, Gibraltar’s only scheduled flights are to the UK, with EasyJet operating routes to Bristol, Manchester and Gatwick and British Airways operating the Heathrow route.

Air Terminal Director, Terence Lopez, told The Airport Operator that a new border agreement with the EU “would add another dimension to



Vijay Daryanani



Terence Lopez

Gibraltar Airport, creating value and removing cost, and we are hopeful of positive news in this respect”. He said that an agreement which effectively removed border controls could allow Gibraltar Airport to become an alternative to Malaga and Jerez, the nearby airports in southern Spain. He said that people in the region will continue to use the high-speed train from Malaga to reach Madrid but suggested that new air routes from Gibraltar to areas of northern Spain such as Galicia and the Basque Country could become attractive propositions for airlines.

Lopez said that the airport has made a strong recovery from the

pandemic, noting that “passenger figures are back to 2018/2019 levels, and we are showing growth. Our traditional market has come back, and the summer season gives us the opportunity of consolidating on our existing routes, with 42 flights a week at the peak. Considering how early it is in the season, the initial loads are looking promising, and we are confident that these will continue to improve”.

Passenger numbers in 2023 are expected to be close to Gibraltar’s 2019 figure of just under 500,000. EasyJet now operate daily flights to Manchester and British Airways have increased their Heathrow services from two to three daily flights on 22 Saturdays this summer, which Lopez said is “a first for Gibraltar Airport and a welcome increase in capacity”. Emphasising that tourism is only one part of the passenger mix, Lopez noted that visiting friends and relatives, business and students are also significant contributors.

Lopez highlighted that Gibraltar’s Minister for Business and Tourism, Vijay Daryanani, continues to play an important role for the airport, encouraging airlines to consider other UK destinations, liaising closely with British Airways and EasyJet on improvements to current services and keeping an eye on the potential business that could come from a treaty with the EU. ■

NEWLY OPENED LUTON AIRPORT DART LINK IS 'TRANSFORMATIVE' SAYS AIRPORT CEO, ALBERTO MARTIN

London Luton Airport Chief Executive Officer, Alberto Martin, has described the new passenger transit system linking Luton Airport Parkway station and London Luton Airport as “simply transformative for the airport”.



*Alberto Martin, Chief
Executive Officer, London
Luton Airport*



He told The Airport Operator that the new Direct Air-Rail Transit (DART) system, which opened on 27 March, alongside East Midlands Railway's newly launched non-stop Luton Airport Express service, provides passengers with "a faster, more frequent, and more accessible service to the airport with an overall journey time from London St Pancras of just 30 minutes".

Martin said that the feedback from passengers so far had been "fantastic", and it was clear that the DART would make rail travel to the airport more attractive for many who had been put off by the old shuttle bus. "Our airport can now boast of a rail connection as good as, if not better, than many other airports" he said. "We enjoy a strong partnership with the airport owners, Luton Rising, and their investment in the DART provides another clear example of the benefits of this collaborative approach for our passengers and the local community".

Martin said the DART would play an instrumental part in supporting the airport's plans for future sustainable growth, encouraging passengers from their cars and onto public transport. Its launch would support the airport's objective to increase

public transport modal share from 29% in 2014 to 40% in the longer term.

London Luton Airport finished 2022 with passenger numbers at 13.3m. Martin said, "our operational performance was consistently strong, with our teams delivering an excellent passenger experience, security waiting times averaging nine minutes or less, and four in five passengers rating their experience at the airport as very good or excellent". Looking ahead to this year he said there were still some uncertainties ahead, but the airport was seeing passenger numbers edge closer to 2019 levels month on month. In the first three months of 2023 3.3m passengers used the airport, reaching between 90 and 95% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of the quarter.

Martin said that the airport had been "delighted" to add several new routes over recent months, including Dubrovnik, Kefalonia and Skiathos and, most recently, Amman and Istanbul. For the future he said the airport saw opportunities to extend its European network by opening routes to key leisure and business destinations. He also saw significant demand for North America, as well as mid-haul opportunities to tap into

"Our operational performance was consistently strong, with our teams delivering an excellent passenger experience, security waiting times averaging nine minutes or less, and four in five passengers rating their experience at the airport as very good or excellent".

the Asia/Australia market.

Celebrating its 85th birthday this year, London Luton Airport was last year ranked as the best performing company by GRESB, an internationally recognised framework that benchmarks Environmental, Social and Governance management and performance, with the airport achieving a maximum score of 100 and a 5-star rating.

Commenting on that, Martin said "The recognition from GRESB was very pleasing and provided a strong

indication of the progress we are making against our sustainability commitments, as well as the advances we have made with our ESG approach. Decarbonising our operation remains a priority and we are continually looking to implement innovative ways to reduce our carbon emissions and promote sustainable practices to deliver on our pledge to achieve Net Zero by 2040”.

Planning for the future, the airport’s owners, Luton Rising, have applied for a Development Consent Order to increase the airport’s permitted cap of 18m passengers per annum to 32m. On 27 March the application was accepted for detailed examination by the Planning Inspectorate. Examination of the proposals is likely to take around 18 months.

Consent is being sought for additional terminal capacity, new airside and landside facilities, enhancement of the surface access network, extension of the DART, landscaping and ecological enhancements and initiatives to support the target of achieving zero-emission ground operations by 2040. Should consent be granted, construction works could start in

2025.

Graham Olver, Chief Executive Officer for Luton Rising, said “We are delighted that our application for the expansion of London Luton Airport has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate and look forward to progressing with the next stage. We now move forward into the pre-examination phase which triggers the opportunity for interested parties to submit their comments about the proposed development to the Planning Inspectorate”.

Public examination of the development proposals may begin in the late summer. Once started the Planning Inspectorate has six months to complete the examination. The Planning Inspectorate must prepare a report on the application to the Secretary of State within three months of the close of the six-month examination stage.

Commenting on Luton Rising’s application, Martin said “London Luton Airport is one of the region’s biggest employers so the importance to the airport to the regional

economy is clear. The airport currently supports around 27,000 jobs and contributes £3,500 to the UK economy every minute of every day. 53% of our supply chain spend is with suppliers based within a 25-mile radius of the airport. The proposed development would deliver substantial economic benefits including an additional £1.5bn of economic activity across the UK, with around £0.9bn of this in Luton and the surrounding region. It would also create more than 10,000 new jobs across the UK, including 4,400 more jobs in Luton”. ■

Planning for the future, the airport’s owners, Luton Rising, have applied for a Development Consent Order to increase the airport’s permitted cap of 18m passengers per annum to 32m.





*Transport Secretary,
Mark Harper*

TRANSPORT SECRETARY, MARK HARPER, SAYS THE GOVERNMENT IS “A DETERMINED PARTNER” TO AVIATION

The Transport Secretary has promised to work with the aviation industry to “ensure it remains a core part of the UK’s sustainable economic future”.

Delivering the keynote speech at the Sustainable Skies World Summit at Farnborough Airport on 17 April, Mark Harper highlighted ongoing work to produce new technology and cleaner fuels.

He said “This government is a determined partner to the aviation industry – helping accelerate new technology and fuels, modernise their operations, and work internationally to remove barriers to progress. Together, we can set aviation up for success, continue harnessing its huge social and economic benefits, and ensure it remains a core part of the UK’s sustainable economic future”.

The Transport Secretary was speaking as the Jet Zero Council published its 2023-2024 plan to support the target of decarbonising

the aviation sector by 2050. The plan sets out in detail how the council will work to speed up the design, manufacture, and rollout of zero emission aircraft and infrastructure at UK airports.

Emma Gilthorpe, Jet Zero Council CEO, said “The 2-year plan published today, building on recent government commitments to secure demand for sustainable aviation fuels in the UK, will ensure we continue to accelerate progress and achieve the Jet Zero Council’s objectives delivering 10% SAF in the UK fuel mix by 2030 and zero emission transatlantic flight within a generation”.

The government also welcomed an expert report by Philip New, commissioned by the Department for Transport, setting out recommendations to help stimulate

SAF production in the UK. The government response details work that is already underway to meet many of the recommendations, while also highlighting what additional action could be taken to drive further investment in UK SAF production. It recognises that many investors are looking for longer-term revenue certainty and commits to working with the aviation industry on options to achieve this. ■



AOA FLIES BACK TO A FULL EVENTS SCHEDULE FOR 2023

After being on pause during the Covid pandemic, the Airport Operators Association has returned to a full schedule of events in 2023.

The annual conference at the end of January attracted nearly 250 attendees, discussed a wide range of topics including post-pandemic recovery, the contribution of airports to regional growth, sustainable aviation and airspace modernisation. Speakers at the conference included Mark Harper MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, Mike Kane MP, Shadow Aviation Minister, Phil Douglas, Director General, Border Force and John Holland-Kaye, CEO, Heathrow Airport.

Next up is the **Annual Dinner on 5 June**. To be held at the **Grosvenor House Hotel, London**, this is the UK's largest aviation networking event and has been a magnet for members and their guests over many years. Nearly 600 members and guests have already registered to attend.

The AOA's Events and Member Relations Manager, Marko Saaret, said "There are many reasons why the annual dinner is always in such demand – extended networking over seven hours, broad representation of the whole aviation industry and all that in a stylish and memorable

atmosphere, to name a few".

After the summer break, the AOA will be hosting the **Airport Conference on Security**. The agenda is currently being finalised, but is expected to include next generation security challenges, emerging threats in aviation security and cyber. The conference will be held in the autumn, with the dates and location being announced shortly.

Also in the autumn, the AOA will host another **Airport Conference on Operations and Safety** on **8 and 9 November**. The conference location will be announced shortly, agenda subjects are being selected and registration will be launched in June.

Reviewing this year's events programme, Saaret said "Finally, Covid-19 and its restrictions seem to be well behind us which means that we can return to a programme

of events designed to support our members' businesses. After being on pause for several years, we are excited to have a full schedule of events planned for this year and delighted that we can once again offer members the level of networking that they expect. We look forward to welcoming you to one or more of these events". ■

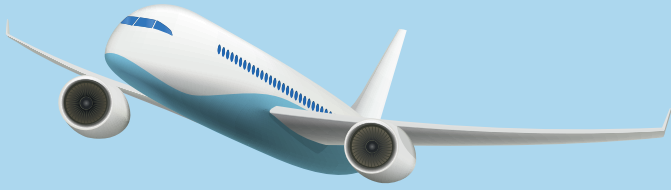
Save these 2023 dates:

Annual Dinner
5 June

Airport Conference on Operations and Safety
8 and 9 November

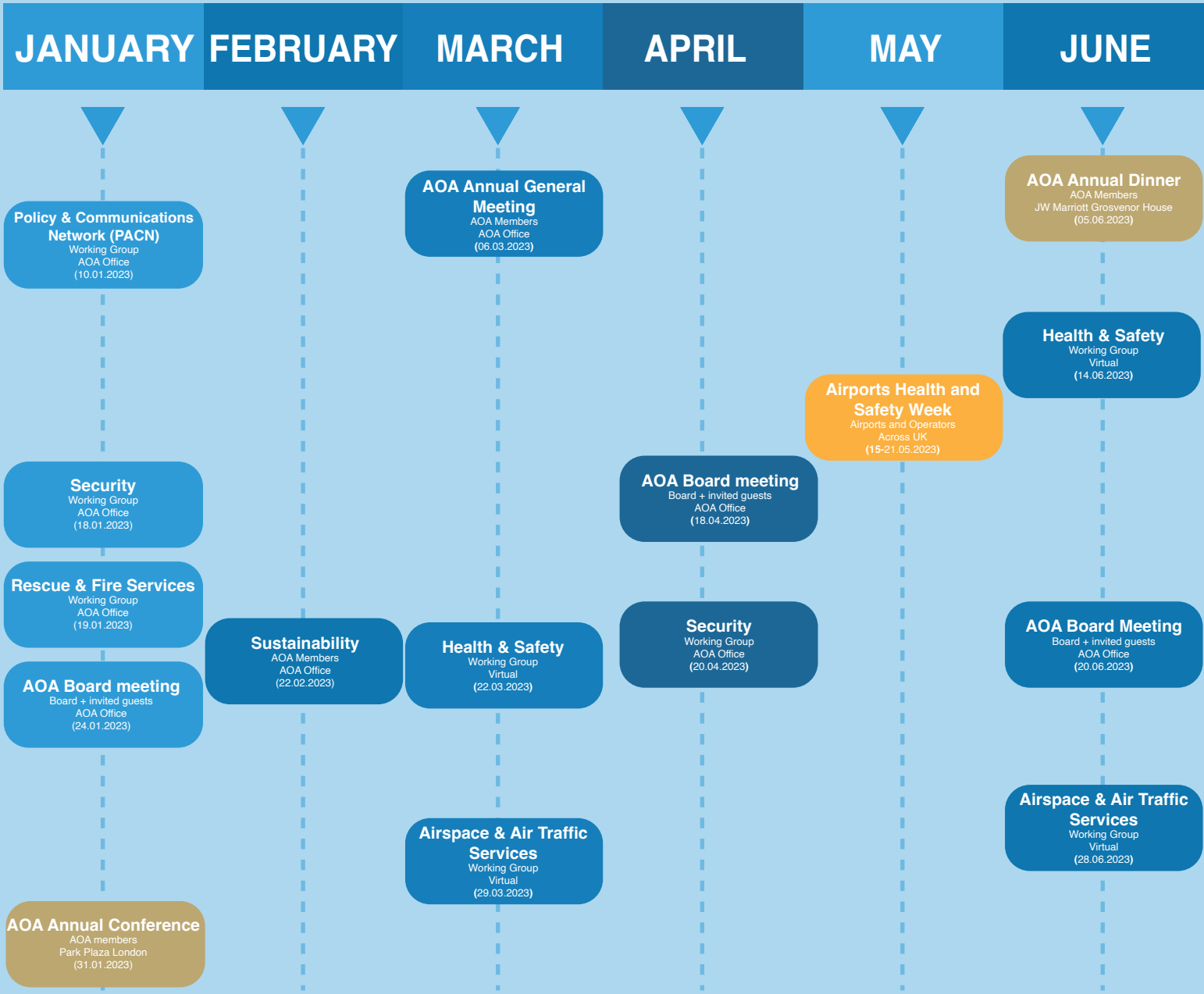
AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL DINNER
MONDAY 5 JUNE 2023 / 7.00PM

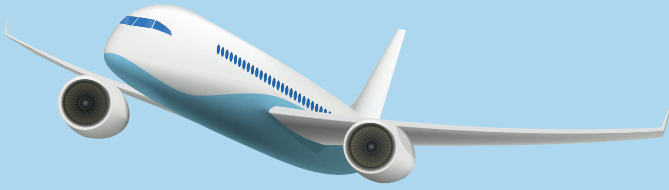
2023



EVENTS CALENDAR

2023





EVENTS CALENDAR

2023

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Security Working Group
AOA Airport Members
AOA Office
(13.07.2023)

RFFS
Working Group
AOA Office
(20.07.2023)

Health & Safety
Working Group
Virtual
(13.09.2023)

Aerodrome Safeguarding Services
Working Group
LHR airport
(19.09.2023)

Airspace & Air Traffic Services
Working Group
AOA Office
(21.09.2023)

AOA Board Meeting
Board + invited guests
AOA Office
(26.09.2023)

Airport Conference / Security
AOA Members
Date and location TBC

Houses of Parliament Reception
AOA Members
London
(07.11.2023)

Airport Conference / Operations
AOA Members
London(TBC)
(08-09.11.2023)

AOA Board Meeting
Board + invited guests
AOA Office
(28.11.2023)

Drink Reception
AOA Board + Corporate Partners and Gold Members
TBC
(28.11.2023)

Airspace & Air Traffic Services
Working Group
AOA Office
(05.12.2023)

Health & Safety
Working Group
AOA Office
(06.12.2023)

Security
Working Group
AOA Office
(07.12.2023)

AOA APPOINTS NEW HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & MEDIA

Peter Campbell, formerly Public Affairs Manager at Surrey County Council, has joined the AOA as Head of Public Affairs and Media.

Having started in his new role on 1 March, he said it was already clear to him that the AOA has a strong focus on the priorities of its member airports, which he welcomed. “In the various member organisations that I have worked with” he said “I have always worked closely with members. They are the real experts. Coming here to the AOA I am really pleased that we work as closely with them as we do to inform the debate”.

He also said that he had sensed “a very nice buzz around the office. The people here are great. I really get the sense that everybody here enjoys working with the airports on the issues which are important to them. It just makes for a great place to come into every day”.

Campbell will work particularly closely with the AOA’s Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, and Policy Managers, Rupinder Pamme and Adele Gammarano, who have responsibility for the development of AOA policy. His role has a strong focus on external engagement with politicians, officials and other stakeholders. He is keen to emphasise that while much of this will relate to Westminster and Whitehall it will also encompass Edinburgh,



Cardiff and Belfast. He will also keep an eye on developments coming out of Brussels and other international aviation regulatory organisations.

Noting that airports are still in a post-pandemic recovery phase, he said he expects to work across a wide range of issues, mentioning the reputation of airports in relation to sustainability, the planning framework around airport expansion, the passenger experience and airspace modernisation.

Airspace is an area where Peter Campbell has detailed knowledge, thanks to a previous role as External Affairs Manager at the Airspace

Change Organising Group. He said he took the lead there on external affairs engagement and outreach to political stakeholders, but also “exploring the opportunities for airports to get out and ‘bang the drum’ around airspace modernisation, highlighting the benefits for passengers and for UK infrastructure and the economy”. Pushing ahead with modernisation now would ensure, he said, that the infrastructure would be in place as airports start to return to 2019 passenger levels and then look to grow further.

Campbell brings to the AOA almost 15 years of corporate communications and public affairs experience in local government, infrastructure and business, including at the British Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Association for Consultancy and Engineering, the Local Government Association and Westbourne Communications, where he was Head of Transport and Infrastructure.

As he settles in at the AOA, he emphasises that he is “keen to hear” from all the AOA’s airport members and its partner organisations. **His e-mail address is petercampbell@aoa.org.uk. He can also be reached on 020 7799 3171. ■**

BRISTOL AIRPORT CEO PROMISES A TRANSFORMED AIRPORT WITH MORE FLIGHTS TO MORE DESTINATIONS

A High Court decision this year confirming an increase in Bristol Airport's cap on passenger numbers will result in an improved airport offering more flights to a wider range of destinations, according to the airport's CEO, Dave Lees.

He told The Airport Operator that the High Court go-ahead for an increase in Bristol's annual ceiling on passenger numbers from 10m to 12m will lead to a much-improved customer experience, including a "transformational" new public transport interchange, and encourage airlines to introduce new destinations and increased frequencies.

Lees said that lifting the cap "unlocks

at long last what our customers quite rightly want in terms of an improved experience. It enables us to now start building the right facilities to give passengers a much-improved customer experience, including security, immigration and commercial offerings". He said that construction would start this year on "our flagship project", a new public transport interchange directly opposite the terminal building and linked to arrivals and departures by a covered

plaza area. The project is due to be completed in 2025.

Describing destinations as "the biggest customer service offering that we can actually deliver", he said that lifting the cap would enable the airport to increase the number of destinations, frequencies and airlines. In Europe that could mean new flights to Scandinavia, while further afield there is the prospect of new routes to the Middle East and to the



east coast of the United States.

Lees pointed out that currently over eight million people drive from the South West of England to airports in the London area, about half of them going on short-haul European trips. He described that as a “huge opportunity for us to service a local demand by creating greater density on some of the existing destinations and filling in some of the gaps within Europe”. The goal would be “to provide local choice for our key markets, which are predominantly European”.

Lifting the cap would also have a positive effect on employment at Bristol Airport and in the region, Lees said. The airport has estimated that growing passenger numbers to 12m would create 800 new jobs at the airport and a total of 5,000 new jobs across the region, including in the supply chain and inbound tourism.

Bristol Airport, the eighth largest in the UK, has seen a faster recovery of passenger numbers post-pandemic than any other top 15 UK airport. Lees described passenger numbers last year as “incredibly strong” at just above 7.8m passengers, representing a recovery of just under 90% compared to 2019. This year the airport is expecting well above 9m passengers (compared to 8.9m in 2019) so, Lees said, “we will be comfortably above pre-pandemic levels of traffic this year”.

The airport’s top four airlines – low-cost carriers, EasyJet and Ryanair, and tour operators, TUI and Jet2 – account for over 90% of traffic and Lees said, “they have really powered our recovery”. EasyJet, the airport’s single largest operator, has 17 aircraft based at Bristol and accounts for 55% of its passengers. Jet2 has announced that it will fly to its largest ever number of destinations from Bristol this summer – 32, with up to

The airport has estimated that growing passenger numbers to 12m would create 800 new jobs at the airport and a total of 5,000 new jobs across the region, including in the supply chain and inbound tourism.

100 weekly flights during the peak summer season.

Asked about the likelihood of delays and queues this summer, Lees expressed optimism. He said the airport had decided last November to ramp up the resources for operations significantly over

the winter in anticipation of the summer season. He said that capability across the airport had very substantially increased compared to last year, adding “I feel positive about the outcome for this summer, and that it will be substantially improved compared to last year”.

This year will also see the publication of Bristol’s carbon action plan, with the airport already committed to an ambitious target to be net zero for its own operations by 2030. The principal elements of the plan are electrification of the vehicle fleet, already under way, the introduction of air source heating in the terminal building to replace gas-fired boilers and increasing self-generation by constructing a 1.6 MW solar array on the airport to deliver just under 25% on-site solar generation by 2025.

Lees acknowledged that the bigger challenge for aviation will be to decarbonise flights. Seeking to make a contribution to that broader objective, Bristol Airport has entered a unique UK partnership with Airbus to explore hydrogen technology. Working with EasyJet and EDF’s Hynamics, the partnership will scope out the infrastructure requirements for the hydrogen-powered aircraft of the future. It will look at how to handle and refuel the aircraft safely, where production can come from, how it will be transported to the airport and then stored and distributed to the aircraft.

The project is at a very early stage, but he said it was “important that we embark on this journey now, rather than wait. It is around how we accelerate and get ourselves ready for the decarbonisation of flight, in addition to adopting Sustainable Aviation Fuels”. He highlighted that Bristol Airport is fortunate to be situated in the middle of a significant aerospace and aviation cluster. In addition to Airbus, the airport is also working with GKN and Rolls Royce amongst other partners to consider “what hydrogen could deliver for the future in the journey towards net zero by 2050”. ■

This year will also see the publication of Bristol’s carbon action plan, with the airport already committed to an ambitious target to be net zero for its own operations by 2030.





*Stewart Wingate,
CEO, London
Gatwick Airport*

PLANS TO BRING GATWICK'S NORTHERN RUNWAY INTO REGULAR USE LIKELY TO BE SUBMITTED WITHIN WEEKS

London Gatwick Airport CEO, Stewart Wingate, has told The Airport Operator that the airport expects to submit a Development Consent Order for the Northern Runway “in the early summer”.

Wingate said that the application to bring the existing Northern Runway into regular use is being finalised now. If approved, the runway could be operational by 2030, helping the airport to meet future demand as it seeks to grow to around 75m passengers a year by the late 2030s. He said the plans, which he described as fully in line with Government policy to make best use of existing runways, would help unlock new capacity, improve resilience and deliver new global connections.

He pledged that any construction required would be “low impact”, with most work taking place within the airport boundary. No flight

path changes will be needed. The expansion plans would “help stimulate economic growth by creating new jobs, and supporting businesses, tourism and trade across the region”.

Meanwhile, redevelopment work is close to completion at Gatwick Airport station, which is the country’s busiest airport station. The project includes a brand-new station concourse, a fully refurbished existing concourse, new lifts and escalators and wider platforms – all designed to help create a seamless transition from station to airport. Wingate said that the station is currently the gateway to the airport “for almost half of our passengers and we are planning to increase the

proportion of passengers using this sustainable form of transport in the years ahead”.

The airport recently announced that it is investing £250m and accelerating its own commitment to be net zero for Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2030, replacing gasoline vehicles with electric vehicles and gas boilers and refrigerants with zero and low carbon alternatives. It will also continue to reduce overall energy use, invest in on-site renewable energy, including solar power, and continue to source 100% renewable electricity.

Asked about passenger numbers, Wingate said that Gatwick’s forecast for this year is just over 40m

passengers, around 87% of 2019 levels, with a full recovery expected by 2025. He noted that short haul, with flights to over 150 destinations, has recovered from the pandemic more quickly than long-haul. “Our long-haul network did take longer to recover” he said, “but has since caught up and recent growth has been very strong”.

Gatwick’s long-haul network now serves around 50 global destinations, with several new operators, including JetBlue, Norse Atlantic and Bamboo. Air India has just launched 12 weekly flights to four destinations and Delta Airways has returned to the airport with daily flights to New York. Wingate said “I expect this strong long-haul growth to continue. We have a strong focus on building the Asian and US markets”.

The new long-haul low-cost carrier, Norse Atlantic, plans to fly more flights to the US than any other airline, with seven destinations, including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC and Florida. Wingate said that the low-cost long-haul model had proved successful at Gatwick, and he was “delighted to see it return in strength with Norse Atlantic”. He said the airline had “an extremely competitive, high-quality offer. Passengers benefit from great value long-haul air fares, combined with a fantastic experience on board modern, efficient aircraft”.

Wingate said that long-haul routes, particularly in North America and Asia, are “an important aspect of our strategy, especially as we look to return to pre-Covid levels of passengers and destinations. For Norse to demonstrate such commitment to Gatwick highlights the incredible demand for our slots”.

Slots are a long-time focus of the Gatwick CEO. He said “as I always say, efficient slot regulations are good for competition. They encourage new airlines into the market, and they give consumers a choice of airline and of air fare to suit their needs”. Wingate said that



“returning UK slot regulation back to full strength would help our industry fully recover. A thorough review of the current slot regime would be another positive step and would give confidence of a system that is fit for purpose. I know the EU Commission are looking at this, and the UK Government should do the same”.

Like other UK airports, Gatwick has been on a recruitment drive to ensure that it will cope well with increased passenger numbers this summer. Wingate said that the airport had been recruiting since the beginning of last year and is well resourced. Airlines and their baggage handlers had also “made great efforts in recruiting and so we are planning to provide the good quality service levels that our passengers expect”.

The Gatwick CEO described ensuring a smooth operation over the summer as one of the airport’s main challenges over the coming months. He said “while I’m looking forward

to a busy summer period, I’m also conscious that it is our front-line colleagues that have to overcome difficult challenges every day to support our passengers. They did this incredibly well last year during difficult circumstances and I’m sure they will do so again, this time under better circumstances”.

Wingate said another important challenge for the airport and the sector would be making progress on the agreed priorities of the UK Aviation Council, which he co-chairs with Aviation Minister, Baroness Vere. He said “when I first discussed this role with Baroness Vere, I said it is vital that the council does not just become another talking shop. So I’m pleased that we’ve already made progress by agreeing delivery priorities for the year, establishing a working group on airspace modernisation governance, as well as reassuring Ministers on summer readiness”. ■



AOA GOLD MEMBER CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF WORKING WITH UK AIRPORTS

UK Power Networks Services, an AOA Gold member, is this year celebrating three decades of partnership with Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted airports.

In 1993 the company acquired the contract to own, operate and maintain critical electricity infrastructure at the three airports. With expert engineers based in each airport, the portfolio of assets that it manages across the three sites includes more than 500 substations, 600 electrical transformers and a vast amount of high and low voltage cabling.

David Mitchell, director of UK Power Network Services, said "It means a lot to us that we have served the airport industry for this significant

period, and I am proud to see the breadth of works that have been undertaken. The partnership with our airport clients has allowed us to jointly develop and manage a world class range of aviation support services".

Now the company is working with the airports to achieve net zero, including supporting Heathrow in achieving the Carbon Trust Level 3 award. It is delivering a wide range of net zero projects and assisting airports in electrifying transport and equipment airside.

UK Power Networks Services describes its 30-year anniversary as "hugely momentous to us", but it acknowledges that its critical work behind the scenes is largely invisible. As Philip Heathcote, head of markets, put it, "what we do is unseen by the passengers. People only notice what we do if it stops working and we fix it".

To mark the company's 30 years of delivery in the airport sector, the summer issue of The Airport Operator will include an in-depth interview with David Mitchell. ■



THALES

HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP TO CREATE A WORLD- CLASS PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

Julia Jiggins, Head of Strategic Marketing – Aviation and Space at Thales in the UK explores the benefits for airports of digital data platforms, biometric technology and wired and wireless communication.

The experience of many passengers of late has been one where processes, control, regulation, and protection have combined to make their journey through the airport far from smooth. Passengers want to feel confident when travelling by air, while airports are having to deal with, among other things, revised passenger flows, social distancing protocols where necessary, and contactless operations where possible. Collectively, this is putting even more pressure on travel infrastructure and negatively affecting the passenger experience.

Digital technology to the rescue?

Whether we're talking about resilient communications, data analytics, edge computing, integrated applications, AI algorithms, or biometric authentication, we're seeing more and more digital technology being introduced across the sector. This is shaping every aspect of airport operations – from airport security management, airport duty management, and border management to private networks and data protection. All need to keep the whole airport ecosystem – and everyone in it – safe and secure and, at the same, ensure the airport is operating efficiently and the passenger experience is as good as possible. In my view, the three big

Whether we're talking about resilient communications, data analytics, edge computing, integrated applications, AI algorithms, or biometric authentication, we're seeing more and more digital technology being introduced across the sector.

areas where technology can make the impact are the following:

Digital data platform for airport security and operational management

Preventing, detecting and eliminating any kind of security threat, while reducing inspections and audits by Government offices is, to say the least, a major challenge for airport security management. As is improving responsiveness during Standard Operating Procedures and ensuring passengers and airport staff are safe and protected.

Meeting these challenges requires Airport Security Managers to move away from the all-too-often passive 'wait-and-see' posture, to a near-immediate or real-time response to countering security breaches. One that can anticipate and prevent different types of security threats. This means acting rather than reacting and preventing rather than repairing.

At Thales, we understand current devices in control centres are overwhelming for operators. Research shows that, on average, heterogeneous data reduces attention spans by 70% after 10 minutes and delays interventions by 10 minutes. Also, that on average it takes an extra 20 minutes to coordinate effective interventions.

Adopting digital platforms such as Thales' Smart Digital Platform, which incorporates computing, AI, big data analytics and a Facial Recognition Platform, not only allows real-time analysis of huge volumes of multi-source data, but they also enable follow-up and traceability of current and future risks.

This new-generation hypervisor also improves airport security, airport management, and passenger experience. The platform can host various application modules, enabling an augmented situation awareness via a tactical map, real-time key performance indicators,

Preventing, detecting and eliminating any kind of security threat, while reducing inspections and audits by Government offices is, to say the least, a major challenge for airport security management.

and dashboards for operations, flows, and resources supervision.

Biometric technology for border management

Of course, passengers are the real end-users, and their needs and preferences constantly evolve. A seamless experience is a 'must have' for airports if they want to meet the changing demands of passengers. Looking forward, the ambition is to create a contactless journey through the airport – from check-in to boarding – using biometrics to authenticate a traveller at each passenger touch point. By assigning each passenger a unique ID token, solutions like Thales' Fly2Gate can process and manage passengers end-to-end based on edge face-recognition algorithms. This technology may seem scary to many and a challenge for regulators, but it's already being implemented today, and passengers are becoming ever more used to biometric authentication through their smart phone applications.

To offer the experience passengers expect, efficiency, social distancing, and a perfect – yet invisible – organisation are key objectives for any modern airport operator. Border kiosks, ABC (Automated Border Control) gates, digital platform, and seamless communication are great ways to achieve all this. Planning capabilities also help airport operators manage staff based on passenger demand and capacity analysis. With border kiosks and ABC gates, travellers will be able to use self-service solutions using only their passport and themselves. This contactless, secure user journey will save a lot of time compared to traditional manual departure and arrival controls.

Wired and wireless communication for integrated operations

All airport operations rely on multiple wireless and wired communication technologies, including public mobile networks, Terrestrial Trunked Radio, and Wi-Fi, to reach different people and enable various use-cases across multiple applications. So the availability of resilient and secure communications to provide the service levels required to operate these integrated digital solutions, is paramount to success. Today's passengers expect to be connected at all times, but they're also used to receiving continuous updates on their journey's progress. This communication and capacity for both passenger and operations to work together seamlessly, continues to evolve with the addition of 5G, access to Internet of Things applications, and the ability to move data in real-time to improve decision making.

Last word

The major challenges airport operators face are highlighting how important technology will be to solving them. Operators are continually striving to improve the passenger experience, so a traveller's journey through the airport – whether for business or pleasure – should be anything but an ordeal. That's why making the end-to-end airport experience a positive and pleasant one has to be a key priority for the whole sector. ■

Julia Jiggins is Head of Strategic Marketing – Aviation & Space, at Thales in the UK.

ENGLISH AIRPORTS SEE “SOME PROGRESS” ON THE GOVERNMENT’S ZERO EMISSION BY 2040 PLAN

AOA Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, reports on a Department for Transport presentation to the AOA’s Sustainability Working Group.

In February members participated in the first post-Covid in-person meeting of the Sustainability Working Group. Held at AOA’s central London office, over 20 members attended in person (with more online). The meeting was an opportunity for members to generally share activities and discuss best practice, as well as having a major focus on key topics.

As part of this DfT joined the meeting to discuss their Call for Evidence on their plan to require English airports to be absolute zero emission for greenhouse gases by 2040. They set out their definition of airport operations for the purposes of the target, and the potential options for exemptions.

Also discussed and presented on at the meeting were practicalities and knowledge around hydrogen at airports, and issues with waste



*Christopher Snelling
Policy Director, AOA*

since Brexit. Members talked about current operations, plans and concerns, and discussed barriers to overcome to make success on the issues.

The meeting got a very positive response from members, and it was agreed to meet at least twice a year to keep the knowledge sharing going. The next step is to meet at an airport in the autumn to focus on electricity issues – onsite generation and supply issues. This would include a site visit to a solar farm.

Feedback from the meeting was that the DfT carbon paper was a step forward in policy development – with airport operations more clearly defined and exemptions mooted. There is still some confusion introduced when DfT talk about Scope 3 emissions, but it represents some progress.

After the call for evidence responses are assessed, DfT will produce a further consultation paper with more detail on the shape of the proposed scheme or regulation that they intend to utilise. ■

GENERAL AVIATION AIRFIELD MANAGER CALLS FOR PARTNERSHIP WITH AIRPORTS AND AIRLINES TO TACKLE SKILL SHORTAGES

The Manager of one of the South East's leading General Aviation airfields is urging airports, maintenance organisations and airlines to work with GA to rebuild aviation's skill base after the Covid pandemic.

Alex Anderson-Brown, who runs Wycombe Air Park, said that UK aviation is facing “a severe shortage of engineers, as severe, if not worse than the pilot shortage”. He said he believed that the best solution would be for the sector's bigger players to work with General Aviation to help it to resume its traditional role of providing initial training for new entrants across all the main skill categories in aviation.

He told The Airport Operator “the biggest thing I want to get across to other readers of the AOA magazine, which I know are bigger players in the industry than we are, is trust

us in General Aviation and come and work with us to help us build the industry. We know that we are a springboard into bigger and better things, so let us be that springboard again and everyone would be better off. We are a resource that is under-used”.

He said that if the bigger airlines and maintenance facilities invested in GA “it would genuinely be cheaper for them and less hassle. They could still be tightly controlling the quality and it would mean that as a GA industry we could be steadily supplying a good amount of experience into aviation”.

While there is a lot of talk about pilot shortages, he said, “I don't see a lot of noise about the genuine bottleneck that is coming with the lack of maintenance trainees, particularly in the UK after Brexit. Now that we are out of the EU, we have this challenge that we need to get young UK-born people into the industry. I don't see a drive for that in engineering and I think it needs to be done by supporting GA. It is the easiest way to train people. It would take some investment but once the conveyor belt was happening everyone would be happy”.

Alex Anderson-Brown joined the

family business that now runs Wycombe Air Park while still at university. In 2020 he was promoted to the role of airfield General Manager with responsibility for the day-to-day running of Wycombe Air Park, including a flying school and a maintenance facility. Previously owned by British Airways, the Buckinghamshire airfield has a 730-metre tarmac runway, tarmac taxiways and apron and lighting for night operations. It is used by fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter, microlights and gliders.

One of the challenges he has faced has been dealing with complaints from residents about circuit training noise, particularly from helicopters. Complaints hit a record high when the airfield re-opened after Covid, but he said that an effective programme of community engagement had turned the issue into “a good news story”. When it became clear that many of the complaints were not about permitted air movements but about pilots who were “cutting corners” and breaking the rules, the airfield acted to ensure that flight paths were properly published and respected.

The airfield’s community engagement now includes a partnership with a local charity raising funds for Wycombe Hospital who will be offering residents a 700-seat open air cinema performance on the airfield in May. He said “we are really engaging with the community, and it has been a success story for us. It has been a lot of work and a lot of management time, but I would say it has really been worth it. It has turned a lot of people that were quite strong complainers into advocates of the airfield”.

Wycombe Air Park is increasingly looking at non-aviation sources of revenue. On 19 and 20 May it will again host ‘The Elite London’, an event that describes itself as ‘London’s combined Lifestyle Showcase’ that not only encompasses every aspect of private flying, but also includes the British Golf Show and a luxury car show. He



“The biggest thing I want to get across to other readers of the AOA magazine, which I know are bigger players in the industry than we are, is trust us in General Aviation and come and work with us to help us build the industry”.

says the event benefits both from the airfield’s good transport links to London and the high net worth of many of the individuals who live in the neighbourhood.

Looking ahead to the airfield’s future, he has an ambition to secure CAA approval for the airfield to adopt a Global Navigations Satellite Systems (GNSS) instrument approach to benefit flyers who use GPS satellite-based radio navigation systems. He also hopes that Buckinghamshire County Council, who are the airfield’s landlords, will agree to plans for greater use of buildings and land by non-aviation businesses to generate additional revenue that will support the Air Park’s General Aviation

activity.

Concluding, Alex Anderson-Brown said “We have a very constructive relationship with the Council and we very much hope to start developing our airfield more and more and continue to invest in the infrastructure with more hangars and more facilities, but also, we have to diversify and start creating buildings and areas that are let out to non-aviation businesses to sustain the rest of what we do as aviation. I love aviation to my core, but the margins are small. Diversifying will help us to keep GA alive, because that is what we know. That is what we do. We are in it because we love it”. ■

AOA'S LONGEST SERVING TEAM MEMBER CELEBRATES A DECADE AT THE ASSOCIATION

“A fantastic job”, exclaims AOA’s Executive Assistant and Office Manager, Patricia Page.

Reflecting on her ten years at the AOA, she highlighted how her role has developed and matured into building and maintaining strong connections between the AOA, its airport members and non-airport members. Page says, “I have learned so much about aviation its operations and challenges and how it is a vast and varying ecosystem”. She goes on to say that “even ten years later I still love what I am doing and would not want to be doing anything else!”

Patricia Page joined the AOA in 2013 after a long and distinguished career in the Civil Service. Page has worked for two Chief Executives, two Chairs and has very much enjoyed learning and working with them all. Page has been the lynchpin that has trained and overseen the onboarding of new staff, who can all say they have found their first week as a new starter made easier and seamless by her.

Page’s role is rich and varied and cannot be pigeon-holed as a typical EA. She navigates not only being an Office Manager, helping new staff settle in their roles, but also the management of the AOA website, some branding for marketing

material, member relations, IT support and assisting the Chief Executive, Karen Dee to ensure deadlines are met by the team. Page, along with the Chief Executive, was a key component in terms of logistics in the AOA’s move to its new office in Smith Square, Westminster. Now in the new office for one and a half years, Page commented how wonderful it is to have an open plan office and to have all the AOA team in one room! She states, “I work with a great bunch of enthusiastic and hard-working people - there is always a good vibe in the office”.

On her 10th anniversary Page said she was “delighted” to have been taken out by the team for a wonderful celebratory meal. She recounts how she was touched by the gifts she received, a lovely bottle of wine and afternoon tea for two at the Ritz, to which she intends to take her husband this summer.

The final words go to AOA Chief Executive Karen Dee who says she is grateful that “Patricia is always the

first to put her hand up to volunteer to assist. Nothing is too much for her. She goes out of her way to ensure that the members get all the information and the service they need, and they really do value that. She is now our longest-serving team member and that also provides real value in terms of our corporate history. She is very supportive to me personally and to the AOA Board, which I think is much appreciated by Board members”. ■



AOA WELCOMES THREE NEW MEMBERS



Air traffic management company, **Aquila**, has joined the AOA as a Gold Member.

Aquila is a joint venture between NATS and Thales. It takes care of air traffic management needs, from radar solutions to airfield operations and describes itself as the trusted partner of the Ministry of Defence for air traffic management worldwide. The company says that it provides the aviation sector with air traffic management and safety critical infrastructure services to ensure safe operations in the skies, providing safe and enduring technical solutions, reliable and cost-effective systems and skilled operators. Its engineers are experts in designing safe air traffic management solutions. Aquila says that, from digital air traffic control towers to communications and network technology, its solutions meet evolving operational needs. With a head office near Fareham in Hampshire, the company says that it has some of the most experienced engineers and experts in the world. Its seven engineering hubs across the UK offer support 24/7.



Infrastructure solutions provider, **L.B. Foster**, has also joined the AOA as a Gold Member.

The technology-focussed company has more than 1,000 employees worldwide and delivers engineering and digital solutions for aviation, rail, energy and built infrastructure. Its INFORM Media software and INFORM display hardware delivers content to airport passengers. Forty Aviation Security in Airport Development – compliant INFORM mobile, rechargeable digital totems provide passenger information at Heathrow Airport. Both Gatwick Airport and Bristol Airport have piloted L.B. Foster's INFORM totem. These totems display passenger notices/posters and emergency messaging, plus passenger security messages and warnings, passport control notices/posters and emergency messaging and terminal wayfinding. L.B. Foster's British Sign Language library of generic video content is available for call-off using the INFORM media content management system. Unique video content can be made live within an hour of an event. The company's 'Lift and Learn' point of sale podium features wrap-around placeholder video that changes to a sales call-to-action when a customer picks up the product. It is an immersive point of sale experience that combines a visual experience with the chance to touch and feel the product prior to purchase.



Fire safety training company, **Flaim**, has joined the AOA as an Associate Member.

Flaim developed the world's first multi-sensory immersive learning solution for fire fighters to safely and cost-effectively replicate the stress and uncertainty of real-world emergency situations. The company says that it has pioneered solutions to improve the safety and performance of all those who respond to fire, rescue and emergency situations.

NEW RYANAIR BASE AT BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT WILL SUPPORT OVER 140 FLIGHTS PER WEEK

Ryanair has returned to Belfast International Airport with two based aircraft flying to 16 new routes across Great Britain and Europe.

The new destinations for 2023 include six favourite sun spots (Alicante, Barcelona, Faro, Malaga, Palma and Valencia), five European cities (Budapest, Gdansk, Krakow, Milan and Paris) and five locations in Great Britain (Cardiff, East Midlands, Edinburgh, London Stansted and Manchester).

The five Great Britain destinations

are some of the first to benefit from the 50% cut in UK Domestic Air Passenger Duty that has applied since 1 April. Ryanair's Director of Digital and Marketing, Dara Brady, said the \$200m investment at Belfast International had been encouraged by the APD reduction, but she said the UK Government should immediately scrap APD for all flights.

The airport's Business Development Director, Uel Hoey, said "To be able to welcome Ryanair back on such a significant scale is testament to the hard work that the team in Belfast

has invested in securing this new base. Ryanair is bringing low fares, high frequency and great choice to the local market and this significant investment and job creation is positive news for Northern Ireland". ■



BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT WORKS TOWARDS HYDROGEN-POWERED DOMESTIC FLIGHTS BY 2025

Birmingham Airport has announced a partnership with ZeroAvia to develop plans for hydrogen-powered air travel.

The partnership opens up the possibility of green air travel from Birmingham to destinations such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Belfast, the Isle of Man and Dublin by the middle of this decade. The airport plans to use an area on its airfield for hydrogen refuelling infrastructure, testing and operations.

ZeroAvia is a leader in zero emission technologies including hydrogen-electric engines for aircraft, with a prototype successfully test-flown at its base in Kemble, Gloucestershire, in January. Hydrogen-electric engines use hydrogen in fuel cells to

generate electricity, which is then used to power electric motors to turn the aircraft's propellers. The company is currently working on bringing to market a zero-emission system capable of flying 20-seat aircraft 300 nautical miles by 2025.

Arnab Chatterjee, Vice President, Infrastructure at ZeroAvia said "Birmingham Airport can be a central hub in a green flight network in the UK, given that any domestic mainland destination will be reachable from the airport using our first systems in 2025".

Simon Richards, Chief Finance and Sustainability Officer at Birmingham



Airport, said "We are thrilled to partner with ZeroAvia creating solutions to the main challenge of our generation. We could, quite conceivably, see the first hydrogen-powered domestic passenger flight taking off from Birmingham Airport in the next few years. That is mind-blowing". ■

CARDIFF AIRPORT STRENGTHENS BOARD TO BOOST GROWTH

Cardiff Airport has appointed two new Board members to support the delivery of its post-Covid growth strategy.

Jonathan Stott is the airport's new Finance Director and company secretary. A former Financial Controller at Arriva Trains Group, Stott has worked across a range of sectors, including corporate finance, banking and insurance, audit and property development.

Andy Jones is a new Non-Executive Director and Chair of the airport's Audit and Risk Committee. He was most recently the CEO of the Port of Milford Haven, which he joined in 2011 as Finance Director, before becoming CEO in 2018.

The airport's Chair, Wayne Harvey, said "I am delighted that both Jonathan and Andy joined the Board.



Jonathan Stott



Andy Jones

We are working with them and the wider airport team to meet the strong demand for air travel together with the development of our non-passenger related business activities. We have a strong and dynamic board with the right skills to address the challenges of operating a complex business while taking advantage of the opportunities available

to develop and enhance airport activities. Our strategy for growth is focused on building our airline relationships, adding more choice for our passengers and developing on the potential that exists within the airport campus to diversify our business". ■

NEWCASTLE AIRPORT PUBLISHES ITS FIRST CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT

Newcastle International Airport has published its first ever report on all aspects of its Corporate Social Responsibility performance.

The report, covering 2022, highlights the airport's role in the North East region and as a place to work, its community engagement and progress on sustainability, including its Net Zero Carbon 2035 plan.

During the year the airport secured its first ever sustainable finance package, including a £15m green

loan to progress the delivery of key infrastructure projects that are required to decarbonise its operations. As part of the financing, the airport agreed four key performance indicators for the year, all of which were achieved, including a target-exceeding reduction in carbon emissions of 29.5% compared to 2019. 2022 also saw the securing of planning permission for a solar farm and the start of construction work. The project is now complete and is generating electricity for the airport.

Nick Jones, the airport's Chief Executive, said "The airport is part of a community, and we are committed to doing what we can to benefit all our stakeholders. We want to ensure that the airport will continue to support economic growth in the region, be a great place to work, be a responsible neighbour and reduce our environmental impact. We believe that the sustainability of the airport is the key to unlocking a better future for the North East and achieving our vision". ■

LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT OPENS NEW-LOOK LOUNGES

Leeds Bradford Airport has opened two newly refurbished lounges.

The Yorkshire Lounge and the 1432 Runway Club lounges have been reconfigured and expanded to include extra seating, with new menus showcasing locally sourced food and drink. They are operating longer hours from 04.00 to 20.00 daily and year-round. The 1432 Runway Club has been relocated to feature the best possible views of the runway and redecorated with a

Scandinavian-style interior.

John Cunliffe, the airport's Commercial and Strategy Director, said "We are delighted to see work completed on our new and improved lounges. A lot of thought and care has gone into their design to make them enjoyable and relaxing for all our passengers, whether they are flying for business or pleasure. Our new 4am opening times are good news for passengers on early morning flights". ■



SUSTAINABLE AVIATION CALLS FOR URGENT GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AVOID LOSING THE SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL INDUSTRY

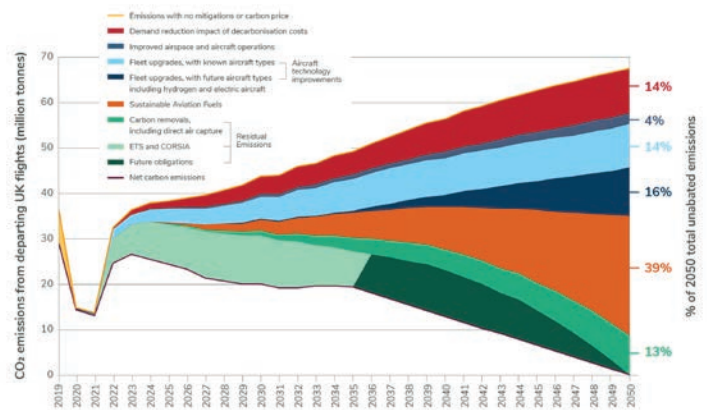
The Sustainable Aviation coalition, whose members include the AOA, has published its updated Net Zero Carbon Road-Map.

The new document, published on 17 April, confirms that UK aviation can continue to grow while meeting its commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It says that advances in sustainable aviation technology have made the UK a global leader, creating an opportunity to establish Britain as the home of a low carbon aviation industry that could create thousands of jobs and attract billions in inward investment.

However, Sustainable Aviation said that "this opportunity is at risk without Government support. Without urgent Government action the UK risks losing an industry

estimated to support 60,000 jobs and be worth around £10bn in GVA benefits by 2050". It called for an industry funded price support mechanism to help secure private investment in UK sustainable aviation fuel plants.

The updated road-map notes that advances in sustainable aviation technology already delivered in the UK will accelerate the industry's transition to net zero around the world. Those advances included the



production of sustainable aviation fuel on the Humber, its use in the world's first sustainable aviation fuel flight and the world's first run of a modern engine on hydrogen. This year will see the world's first net zero transatlantic flight take off from London to New York using solely sustainable aviation fuel. ■



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Richard Atkin
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Peter Campbell
Head of Public Affairs & Media

Adele Gammarano
Airport Regulation, Safety &
Operations Manager

Patricia Page
Executive Assistant
& Office Manager

Rupinder Pamme
Policy Manager

Marko Saaret
Events & Member Relations Manager

Christopher Snelling
Policy Director

AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

Kings Buildings, 16 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HQ
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 7799 3171

E: info@aoa.org.uk

W: www.aoa.org.uk

Michael Burrell
Editor

**THE AIRPORT OPERATOR
MAGAZINE IS PRODUCED BY**

genium

Shimon Speigel
Creative Director

Natalia Lacerda
Graphic Designer

GENIUM
114 Cricklewood Lane
London, NW2 2DP

T: +44 (0)20 7089 2622
E: hello@geniumcreative.com
W: www.geniumcreative.com

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