

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION



AIRPORT SECURITY CONFERENCE

| 27-28 SEPTEMBER 2023

AOA
THE VOICE OF UK AIRPORTS
SUMMER 2023

Features

LIVERPOOL AIRPORT
CEO *in confident mood*

BELFAST CITY AIRPORT
CEO *on two whirlwind years*

LONDON CITY AIRPORT
submits planning appeal

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT CEO
on the last piece of the jigsaw



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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



Hello, and welcome to the summer edition of Airport Operator Magazine.

At the time of writing, I know you will all be preparing for the great summer getaway, which promises to herald the return to the levels last seen before the pandemic. It is a testament to the resilience of the airport sector that we have been able to bounce back so quickly from the global shock that resulted from the unprecedented shutdown in international travel.

From the conversations that I have had over the past six months, I know that airports are in a strong position this summer and confident that the challenges faced will not be repeated. Indeed, the lessons learnt from that experience, of having to restart an entire sector with merely weeks' notice before millions of members of the public arrived at our doors, have gone a long way towards ensuring UK airports are ready this year.

Of course, there are always going to be external circumstances that force us to modify our plans, and the ongoing industrial action being taken in Europe could lead to disruption. Clearly no one hopes that this will be the case, but I am certain that the whole sector will deal with these issues quickly and

effectively when they come up.

Elsewhere, the AOA held its annual aviation dinner in central London, and it was great to be able to catch up with so many colleagues and partners from across the industry. Baroness Vere, the aviation minister, spoke about the importance that airports play in the economic and social lives of the nation, and that she will be ensuring we offer great service for all passengers, including those with accessibility needs.

Members of our Public Affairs and Communications Network and Policy Committee have been meeting to discuss an AOA manifesto ahead of a general election expected in the next year. This will form the basis of our work to influence the next government, and will focus on the wider benefits of supporting aviation through jobs, inward investment and sustainability.

More immediately, we have been working closely with our partners in the Sustainable Aviation coalition to support an amendment to the government's Energy Bill that will require ministers to come forward with plans for a SAF price support mechanism. So far, we have secured almost 70 MPs from all political parties and we are hopeful the amendment will be called when the Bill returns to the Commons after the summer recess.

We have also been working with MPs on the Future of Aviation All Party Parliamentary Group to lobby the

Prime Minister and Chancellor to allow airports to establish arrivals duty-free stores and to restore VAT free shopping for international tourists. Nearly 50 MPs and peers signed a letter calling for a shift in the government's position and follows our support for the Daily Mail campaign and our own letter, which brought together the leaders of over 20 UK airports.

Recently, we also responded to the Government's consultation on a Sustainable Aviation Fuel mandate, supporting the concept of a mandate to help drive change, but cautioned against a cliff edge cost increase. I have also attended a meeting of the ministerial Aviation Council, where we discussed the next steps for airspace modernisation and how all parties can help implement it. Finally, we are also taking bookings for our upcoming Security Conference in York.

I hope you enjoy this quarter's issue of Airport Operator. This includes pieces from Iain Stewart MP, the chair of the Commons Transport Committee on how his fellow MPs are supporting key issues for aviation, Birmingham Airport's Nick Barton on how it's recovery from the effects of the pandemic is going, Belfast City's Matthew Hall on how the airport has broadened its flight base and AOA Gold Member, UK Power Networks Services. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive

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LIVERPOOL AIRPORT CEO IN CONFIDENT MOOD AS NEW AIRLINES ARRIVE AND CONNECTIVITY GROWS

Liverpool John Lennon Airport CEO, John Irving, is celebrating the airport's post-Covid turnaround as new airlines arrive, existing carriers expand and hub connections return.

Speaking to The Airport Operator, he described the recent decision by Jet2.com and Jet2holidays to make the airport its newest UK base, with 20 sunshine destinations on sale for next year, as “a huge moment in the history of Liverpool Airport”. Similarly, he characterised Lufthansa’s new Liverpool to Frankfurt service as “a game-changer” for the airport and the region.

After 10 years without a hub connection, the airport now has increased frequency on the Frankfurt route and enhanced connectivity to North America via its Aer Lingus service to Dublin and its new PLAY service to Reykjavik in Iceland. Meanwhile, he said, the airport’s two biggest and long-established airline partners, easyJet and Ryanair, are both “in growth mode”, with each basing an additional aircraft at Liverpool this summer.

The effect of all this on passenger numbers is already visible. Between April 2022 and March this year the numbers grew to 3.8m. The airport’s

expectation for the year from this April to March next year is for further growth to 4.5m, which would represent a return to 90% of pre-pandemic numbers.

Irving said that getting Jet2.com and Jet2holidays into Liverpool had been “an ambition of the airport for many years. Having the leading tour operator in a city like Liverpool makes absolute sense and it is great that Jet2 have come in with confidence and some ambition. We have got 20 destinations next summer, seven of which are currently unserved. It is massive. It will bring a significant uplift in new passengers and is another great mark in the sand for us and for the people of the region”.

He accepted that Jet2’s arrival would “bring its own challenges. We are going to see significant growth next summer. What we will do and what we commit to is making sure that the passenger experience remains exactly as it does today, no matter how many passengers are coming through the terminal”.

Delighted as he evidently is by Jet2’s announcement, Irving is also keen to underline the significance for the airport of Lufthansa’s launch of its route from Liverpool to Frankfurt. He said “that has been another long-running objective for the airport. Lufthansa launched in May last year. We have been speaking to them since I joined in 2018 in quite a detailed way. It has been ten years since we had a connected hub service in Liverpool, so it was a long time coming. It has been really positive”.

Between April 2022 and March this year the numbers grew to 3.8m. The airport’s expectation for the year from this April to March next year is for further growth to 4.5m.



“Their ability to connect the people of Liverpool to the rest of the world and to mainland Europe has been really good” he said. “It started off four times a week. It is now up to six times a week. It has been massively important for the airport, but it is vital for the city region in terms of their ambitions to become a connected global city. The importance for us and for the city is huge. Ten years is a long time for a city of our size not to have a connected hub service, so to get one with an airline like Lufthansa has been a game-changer”.

Irving’s warmth towards the airport’s two biggest airline partners, easyJet and Ryanair also comes across strongly. Both have been flying from Liverpool for a long time – 25 years in the case of easyJet. “They are continuing to grow” he says “continuing to provide a brilliant service and network. We are in growth mode with both. They have both shown a commitment to Liverpool. They have put an extra aircraft in this summer. Hopefully the opportunities we see, they also see for the future”.

Irving, who has been Liverpool John Lennon’s CEO for over five years, said “while I don’t want to gloss over the two and a half years of struggle that we had in Covid, I think we are much stronger as a business, financially, structurally because of Covid, if I am honest. We have had a very loyal workforce, which is great. Everyone wants Liverpool to do well. Now we are in a growth mode, though it is not yet back to where we were pre-pandemic. What we have been able to do over the last few years I think really sets us up in a good place”.

He said “what we have done is really strengthen what we are good at. That is customer service, making sure that the operation is as good as it can be and investing in the right places. Pretty much everything has been about enhancing and making things better. The moves of Lufthansa, Aer Lingus, PLAY and Jet2 coming here I think are good symbols for everything everyone has done at the

John Irving, CEO, Liverpool John Lennon Airport



airport over the last five years”.

Looking ahead, Irving emphasises the airport’s commitment to sustainability. “Like every airport” he said, “we are taking our ESG and sustainability credentials very seriously”. A decarbonisation report, developed jointly with Arup, will be published shortly and will set out the airport’s targets and the plans and projects that will “get us from where we are today to a zero-carbon airport operation, how we are going to take the next stage of the journey. A lot of work has happened over the last ten years to reduce carbon and to reduce energy usage. We have an appeal in for a solar farm on site and hopefully that will succeed because that is a cornerstone of our decarbonisation plan”.

Another future focus for the airport, like many others in the UK, will be to seek to ensure that it retains and recruits the staff that it will need for key functions. Irving said “We are starting to see strains in some areas – air traffic is probably the best example. We have got to think as an industry about skills and developing people into certain parts of the industry. You start to see an experienced workforce need some

A decarbonisation report, developed jointly with Arup, will be published shortly and will set out the airport’s targets and the plans and projects that will “get us from where we are today to a zero-carbon airport operation, how we are going to take the next stage of the journey”.

refreshing”.

“The airport is a great place to work and earlier this year we were delighted to achieve the We Invest In People Gold Accreditation award, but we still need a better supply chain of people” he suggested. “We need to let people know the jobs that are in the industry, including fire, air traffic, engineers. We have got to get back out there and talk positively about the industry. We have got to encourage some support to get younger people or new people into air traffic jobs and fire, just to make sure that the demand that every airport has as we move forward can be matched. We have got to work together on this as an industry”.

For Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Irving concluded “the next four or five years are going to look very different. There is going to be a lot of infrastructure investment over the coming years. There is a lot of work to do on sustainability and obviously we are going to see some decent growth over the next 24 months, which will be coupled with investment to make sure the building copes and the experience is great. I am looking forward to it”. ■

HEATHROW EMBARKS ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE WITH CUTTING-EDGE MOBILE DISPLAY UNITS

Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) is revolutionising its passenger experience with a trailblazing digital transformation initiative.

In collaboration with AOA Gold Member, L.B. Foster, the airport embarked on a trial of ten Inform Mobile Display Units (MDUs) to replace the previous paper posters and provide comprehensive information to passengers.

Putting information where passengers need it, in a clear and concise manner, enables them to make informed decisions about their journeys, how long it may take to get through Security/Border Control and where they need to be within the airport.

Recognising the immense potential,

HAL expanded the trial to 40 MDUs and in partnership with L.B. Foster they have further augmented the solution using the state-of-the-art Inform software, across all terminals. Following the successful trial, it is hoped that HAL will expand the solution further by adding other types of digital screens and further enhancing the Inform software to meet the ever-changing needs of passengers.

Developed by L.B. Foster, these cutting-edge MDUs boast high-performance features. Equipped with high-definition video displays, they can operate for 24 hours on a

single charge, thanks to their built-in batteries. Integrated Wi-Fi and 3G/4G mobile connectivity enable seamless connection to various information systems, enabling HAL to position the MDU wherever it is needed for passengers.

L.B. Foster's commitment to aligning with Aviation Security in Airport Development (ASIAD), the Department for Transport's stringent guidelines for risk-based design at airports, meant they put one of their MDUs through what can only be described as explosive testing. It passed and was still working at the end of testing, giving L.B. Foster



the only MDUs that are fully ASIAD-compliant in the UK, if not the world.

The company's award-winning British Sign Language (BSL) software, already deployed at key UK railway stations, is being considered for integration into Heathrow's MDUs. This ground-breaking technology will greatly enhance the customer experience for the deaf community using the airport, providing them with real-time critical travel information through in-screen BSL interpreters.

Andrew Roberts, Heathrow's Service Implementation and Delivery Lead, said the team at L.B. Foster had listened to the airport's needs "and worked with us to develop the totems to work in Heathrow's vibrant environment. The totems are user-friendly, with only a short presentation needed to train staff. The simplicity of deploying them has been a great advantage when choosing where they can be best used".

He said that the flexibility and evolution of the totem's design features had allowed Heathrow to adapt it to meet the airport's requirements and to integrate it with other technologies already in use. "It is easy to move around" he said "has

The totems are user-friendly, with only a short presentation needed to train staff. The simplicity of deploying them has been a great advantage when choosing where they can be best used.

a 24-hour battery performance and only a short charging cycle. This is really important when you work in a fast-paced environment like Heathrow – and the clarity of the visual display is excellent".

Three of L.B. Foster's management team spoke to The Airport Operator to explain how the company had come to develop the technology and adapt it for use at airports: Senior Business Development Manager, Anthony Thompson, Head of Business Development, Adam Cousins, and Head of Marketing for Europe, Phil Chester.

inform
— by **LB Foster**

Chester said L.B.Foster was founded in 1906 as a traditional engineering company in Pittsburgh, has since expanded globally, delving into supporting technologies through strategic acquisitions, including TEW Engineering in the UK. In 2012 TEW provided a solution to deliver operational information in UK rail stations. From these origins, L.B. Foster developed the Inform platform – an interactive and passive passenger information system. The company provides innovative hardware and software to drive messaging. Their display suite includes a pioneering fully wireless mobile totem display, the first of its kind in the UK, positioned wherever information is needed.

Cousins emphasised L.B. Foster's customer-centric approach, focusing on "the customer's customer" to ensure airports meet the needs of all individuals. Acknowledging that not everyone in an airport is a passenger,

Cousins emphasised the importance of catering to individuals who may be there for other purposes, such as meeting someone or picking up a child. L.B. Foster actively collaborates with user groups and customers to gather feedback on the presentation of information and to identify useful information types for the customer's customer.

The MDUs incorporate dual-mode software. In passive mode, the software enables scrolling information, such as posters, advertisements, and flight departure details. It can also encompass live information pertaining to the passenger's entire journey, as directed by the airport operator. In interactive mode, customers can access the information they require by interacting with the MDU's application, allowing them to find flight information, plan their journey, access train and bus schedules, and even receive local walking directions. Cousins likened this interactive feature to a user-friendly, large-scale iPhone experience.

The MDUs ease of relocation to different airport locations, including security, passport control halls and baggage collection areas is crucial for providing readily accessible and rapidly changing information, for example on queue times. Thompson highlighted the significant advantage of the MDUs' mobility, enabling their placement wherever needed to assist customers. In the coming months MDUs will be deployed at Paddington station allowing passengers to check their flight information before boarding the Heathrow Express.

Heathrow's digital screens will continually enhance the information available as the airport refines its precise requirements. Ongoing discussions between Heathrow and L.B. Foster are focused on further software developments to ensure that the screens display the information for customers in the future. ■



AOA LAUNCHES NEW AERODROME SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE WORKING GROUP

The new working group will meet for the first time on 11 September and will hold discussions quarterly.

AOA Airport Regulation, Safety & Operations Manager, Adele Gammarano, told The Airport Operator that the decision to create a new group with a focus on safety and compliance was based on feedback from regulators and attendees of other working groups.

The group will be co-chaired by Ben Spiers, Head of Safety and Compliance at London Biggin Hill Airport and Stephen Muir, Aviation Regulation and Compliance Manager at Edinburgh Airport. Claire Brown, Aerodrome Safeguarding and Compliance Officer at Edinburgh Airport will serve as secretary.

Gammarano said “We are thrilled to announce the launch of our new working group. We aim to address all queries, concerns and challenges related to airport management and support aerodromes in maintaining compliance”.

The forum will discuss “safety improvements, policy updates, best practices and engagement with relevant bodies, review emerging and existing safety risks and collaborate on solutions. We will



Ben Spiers, Head of Safety and Compliance at London Biggin Hill Airport

also thoroughly examine significant safety occurrences and compliance finding statistics, as well as carrying out trend analysis to identify lessons learned and best practice for the working group members to follow”.

Various aspects of the Mandatory Occurrence Report (MOR) would be covered, including ground handling/ramp occurrences, aerodrome occurrences, ground collision and runway incursions, reflecting the European Coordination Centre for Accident and Incident Reporting

Systems. The goal would be to use MOR statistics and data to reduce occurrence rates across the UK.

Gammarano is asking interested readers to use the QR code below to offer their thoughts, comments and suggestions. She concluded “We are excited to harness the power of this group to benefit our members, and your input is crucial to our success”. Those interested in participating in the group should email adelegammarano@aoa.org.uk ■

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LEADING GOVERNMENT SECURITY EXPERT TO SPEAK AT AOA CONFERENCE

Sarah Nacey, one of the UK Government's most experienced security experts, will deliver the keynote address at the AOA's Airport Security Conference in September.

Now Director, Transport Security, at the Department for Transport, she previously led the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism's Protect and Prepare project dealing with the terrorism threat. She has led teams in the Home Office and Cabinet Office working on national security issues, including aviation and border security.

The two-day Security Conference at the Radisson Hotel in York on 27 and 28 September will be opened by Caroline Vear, Head of Security at Bristol Airport, who chairs the AOA's Security Working Group. She will be supported by the Group's Deputy Chair, Ian Gregory, Security Regulation and Compliance Manager at Edinburgh Airport, who is also Vice Chair of ACI Europe's Aviation Security Committee. The event is for AOA members only and will include a closed session for airports. AOA Policy Manager and

Facilitator of the Security Working Group, Rupinder Pamme has worked to identify topics and key speakers that are relevant to the current security landscape.

Simon Sheeran, Head of Cyber Security Oversight, Aviation at the Civil Aviation Authority, will speak on cyber security threats and mitigation.

A session focused on the June 2024 deadline for the next generation security checkpoint will feature speakers from Edinburgh, Gatwick and London City airports, as well as a speaker from Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. Heathrow will contribute to a session on gender equity and inclusion for staff and passengers in aviation security and that session will also hear from Giles Carter, Head of Security at Virgin Atlantic Airways.

The conference is sponsored by two leaders in the aviation security sector,

AOA Corporate Partner, ICTS UK & Ireland, and AOA Silver Member, Dallmeier.

ICTS, the security solutions provider which aims to provide innovative and technological solutions, has seven UK airports on its client list. Dallmeier, a long-established manufacturer of video security technology, develops and manufactures all its products at its headquarters in Regensburg, Germany, and offers maximum security at minimal cost.

AOA Events and Member Relations Manager, Marko Saaret, described the conference as "an event not to be missed by anyone involved in aviation security" and said there would be ample opportunity for networking during the breaks, lunches and dinner. Delegates who register early will be able to benefit from a promotional rate for overnight stays at the Radisson Hotel. ■



BELFAST CITY AIRPORT “A VERY DIFFERENT BUSINESS” AFTER TWO “WHIRLWIND” YEARS

Matthew Hall, Chief Executive of George Best Belfast City Airport, says the Northern Ireland airport has made a “very strong recovery” after Covid and the collapse of Flybe.



He told The Airport Operator that the two years since he took the role “feels like a bit of a whirlwind”. On the day he started the airport had just 17% of pre-Covid passenger numbers. By the end of last year it had recovered to over 100% of 2019’s 2.6m total.

Then, at the end of January this year, Flybe 2, collapsed. The airline accounted for 15% of the airport’s passenger volume. “That was unwelcome” Hall said, “but eight of the ten routes they served were already being served by other carriers and the other two, Newcastle and East Midlands, were very quickly picked up by Aer Lingus Regional”. The growth trajectory of the airport’s passenger numbers in the first half of this year fell slightly, but they have picked up again in the second half.

The key point to note, Hall said, was that “it is just a very different business now, in a positive sense. Pre-pandemic we were 80%+ Flybe – all our eggs in one basket really. Now we have got a much broader portfolio of airline customers, six airlines across a far broader offering, so that is good for the consumer, less risky and I think demonstrates the demand and the resiliency of the business”.

British Airways operates up to five flights a day to Heathrow, but the broader London area market – described by Hall as “a core part of the Northern Ireland passenger demand” - has grown too, with flights also to Gatwick, London City and London Luton. At peak periods there are 13 flights a day from Belfast City to London’s airports.

Regional airports across Great Britain are well-served. Aer Lingus Regional, Belfast City’s largest airline, flies to 13 UK destinations, with the highest levels of frequencies and passenger volumes on the Manchester and Birmingham routes. The airline now has six aircraft based at the airport and, Hall said, “we hope that will continue to grow”.

Meanwhile, he notes that Belfast

City airport today is “a very fast-growing station for easyJet. We very recently celebrated half a million passengers with easyJet, and we expect that to hit the million mark by year end”. From a single route to Gatwick in 2021, the airline has

added five new destinations – Bristol, Glasgow, London Luton, Liverpool and Manchester.

Hall acknowledges that the 50% cut in Air Passenger Duty since April contributed to the strong growth in

Belfast City airport today is “a very fast-growing station for easyJet. We very recently celebrated half a million passengers with easyJet, and we expect that to hit the million mark by year end”.



domestic capacity, while pointing out that the remaining 50% still gives Dublin and other airports in the Republic of Ireland a competitive advantage. “The playing field is still uneven for us” he said “and we would encourage Government to continue to look at that. Air connectivity is critical to Northern Ireland. We are an island and there are obviously no rail or road alternatives”.

While 70% of the volume to and from Belfast is Great Britain domestic connectivity, the fastest-growing part of the market is European point-to-point traffic and leisure. A new Lufthansa route to Frankfurt offers the only direct route from Northern Ireland to Germany and, Hall says that “with the service to Heathrow and by KLM to Amsterdam, we are adding further connectivity for Northern Ireland, as we are now plugged in to three of the biggest European hubs”.

Hall is also keen to emphasise the quality of the passenger experience at the airport. CAA data for the first quarter of this year show Belfast City as the UK’s most punctual airport, “which we are very proud of”. With the airport just five minutes from Belfast city centre, passengers can also expect a quick journey through security, with 100% of passengers through in six minutes or less on average and, Hall says “we are going to continue to try and improve on that”.

The airport has invested significantly this year in reconfiguring its forecourt, helping to improve pedestrian access to Sydenham rail station, which is a kilometre away by bus or on foot. Feasibility studies are currently being conducted to consider how both the station itself and the journey to the airport could be further improved.

Sustainability is also a focus. The airport was the first in Northern Ireland to be part of ACI Europe’s accreditation programme and continues to take steps to reduce emissions. Hall said, “we are spending a lot of time continuing

Matthew Hall, Chief Executive, George Best Belfast City Airport



Sustainability is also a focus. The airport was the first in Northern Ireland to be part of ACI Europe’s accreditation programme and continues to take steps to reduce emissions.

to look at our Net Zero baseline studies and moving, as we aim to do by the end of this year, to science-based targets and to set ourselves more ambitious targets than the industry as a whole”.

“We are well aware” he said “that, as we continue to operate, we

need to operate responsibly in a sustainable manner. I think the industry overall has a bit of catching up to do because the shock of the pandemic has meant that businesses have probably had to burn through funds to survive that perhaps they would have invested earlier” ■

LONDON CITY AIRPORT SUBMITS PLANNING APPEAL FOLLOWING COUNCIL'S REFUSAL OF ITS PLANS TO EXPAND FLYING TIMES ON SATURDAYS

*Airport CEO, Robert Sinclair, answers questions
from The Airport Operator*



*Robert Sinclair, Chief
Executive Officer, London
City Airport*

How is the airport reacting to the refusal of its planning application by the London Borough of Newham?

We have just recently submitted a planning appeal to the Planning Inspectorate following Newham Council's refusal of our application. We expect our application to be determined following a public inquiry conducted by an independent Planning Inspector.

How has London City Airport been able to maintain reductions in its direct emissions in 2022 despite a big increase in passenger numbers over 2021?

The airport has made good progress in recent years reducing the carbon emissions for which it is directly responsible (Scopes 1 and 2), and continued to do so in 2022, despite a significant increase in passenger numbers, rising from 714,000 passengers in 2021 to 3 million in 2022.

Reducing our direct emissions has been achieved mostly due to procuring 100% renewable electricity across the airport, in addition to delivering a number of energy efficiency initiatives, including:

- Use of LED lighting in both internal (public and office areas) and external areas (existing runaway and apron).
- Replacement of airport owned vehicles with more energy-efficient and low to zero carbon models.
- Electrification of ground service equipment, including FEGP and EMGPU.
- Electric car scheme to encourage uptake of low carbon vehicles by staff and installation of electric vehicle charging points in staff car park.

We are continuing to reduce energy consumption as much as possible, as well as increasing on-site renewables.

Are there other points in your 2022

sustainability report that you would like to emphasise?

Last year, we were proud to become one of only two UK airports to achieve Level 4+ in the Airport Carbon Accreditation programme, placing London City Airport at the forefront of positive climate adaptation in the aviation sector.

In addition, new data found that 68% of passengers accessed the airport by public and sustainable transport – the highest percentage of any UK airport.

When do you think that the Embraer E195-E2 will start to operate from London City Airport and what would be the main benefits of that?

The new generation Embraer E195-E2 offers improved fuel, noise and emissions performance, and is the largest aircraft in the E2 family, seating up to 146 passengers.

In terms of noise reduction, the E2 has a departure noise footprint that is around 60% smaller than the current generation Embraer E1 aircraft that operate from the airport.

This aircraft has undertaken trial flights at the airport and is expected to enter commercial operations later this year.

Furthermore, our current planning application proposes a commitment that only cleaner, quieter, new generation aircraft, such as the E2, would be allowed to fly in the new operating periods. This would bring forward the delivery of more of these aircraft to the airport sooner and an additional benefit of these aircraft being based here and used throughout the week, not just Saturdays.

When do you expect to see new rolling stock on the Docklands Light Railway?

We understand from Transport for London that they are aiming to start introducing the new DLR trains in 2024, with the whole fleet in place

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expected by 2026. This will be a huge improvement for passengers travelling to-and-from London City Airport.

Is there any prospect of a link to the Elizabeth Line?

Absolutely. We've had that discussion with Transport for London, and they agree it is a very sensible improvement to the Elizabeth Line, particularly when you can see just how close it is to our terminal and how important public transport connectivity is from a sustainability perspective. However, we understand it's not something that will be developed in the short term, but it is in our long-term objectives.

In the meantime, London City Airport is still the easiest airport to get to-and-through, particularly with our new security scanners where passengers can leave everything in their bags. We know our speed and convenience is highly coveted by our passengers with journeys from Central London to our terminal doors possible in under 30 minutes.

What would you like to say about the Committee on Climate Change's suggestion of a ban on airport expansion?

The aviation industry has a clear roadmap to decarbonise, and we are seeing multiple initiatives and huge investment going in to achieve that objective.

At London City, sustainability is hugely important to us, which is why last year we outlined in our Sustainability Roadmap that we are aiming to become the first net zero airport in London by the end of the decade. We have also carefully thought through these issues in our current planning application, which seeks to increase our passenger cap but without increasing the number of flights above those already permitted.

The journey to achieve net zero emissions will take time and we face similar complex challenges as other industries around the world, including developing our future energy strategy to power our buildings and how we provide infrastructure to support our airlines with the right fuels they will need over the next decade.

Within the next 20 years, passengers could be flying between all regions of the UK on planes which emit no carbon emissions. In 2022, a UK aviation consortium consisting of UK airports (Heathrow, London City, HIAL), manufacturers (GKN Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, Cranfield Aerospace), academic institutions (UCL, Cranfield and Southampton) supported by Deloitte and airlines (easyJet, British Airways and Loganair) published the most comprehensive study to date on the potential of a carbon free future for UK domestic aviation by 2040.

What has been the impact on the passenger experience of having a full CT security scanner offering?

The full rollout of CT security scanners at LCY has seen a significant improvement for our passenger experience, as up to 30% more passengers can be processed an hour due to the reduction in trays used.

We've also seen security queue times reduce on average by 25%.

Separately, the CAA's latest data showed that for 2022 and, so far this year, London City has been ranked as the most punctual airport in the London (for the second in year row). In addition, for the first half of this year, we also have the best Net Promoter Score of any London airport (based on pax feedback).

When will your departures area upgrade be completed?

The bulk of the refurbishment is set to be completed around the end of summer and is being carried out in phases with new food, beverage and retail units opening before old ones close, which has created a smoother transition for passengers using our airport.

The upgrades to our departure lounge will see more seating, two

new stylish dining experiences, duty free expansion, new retail space, more washrooms and a brand-new look and feel throughout.

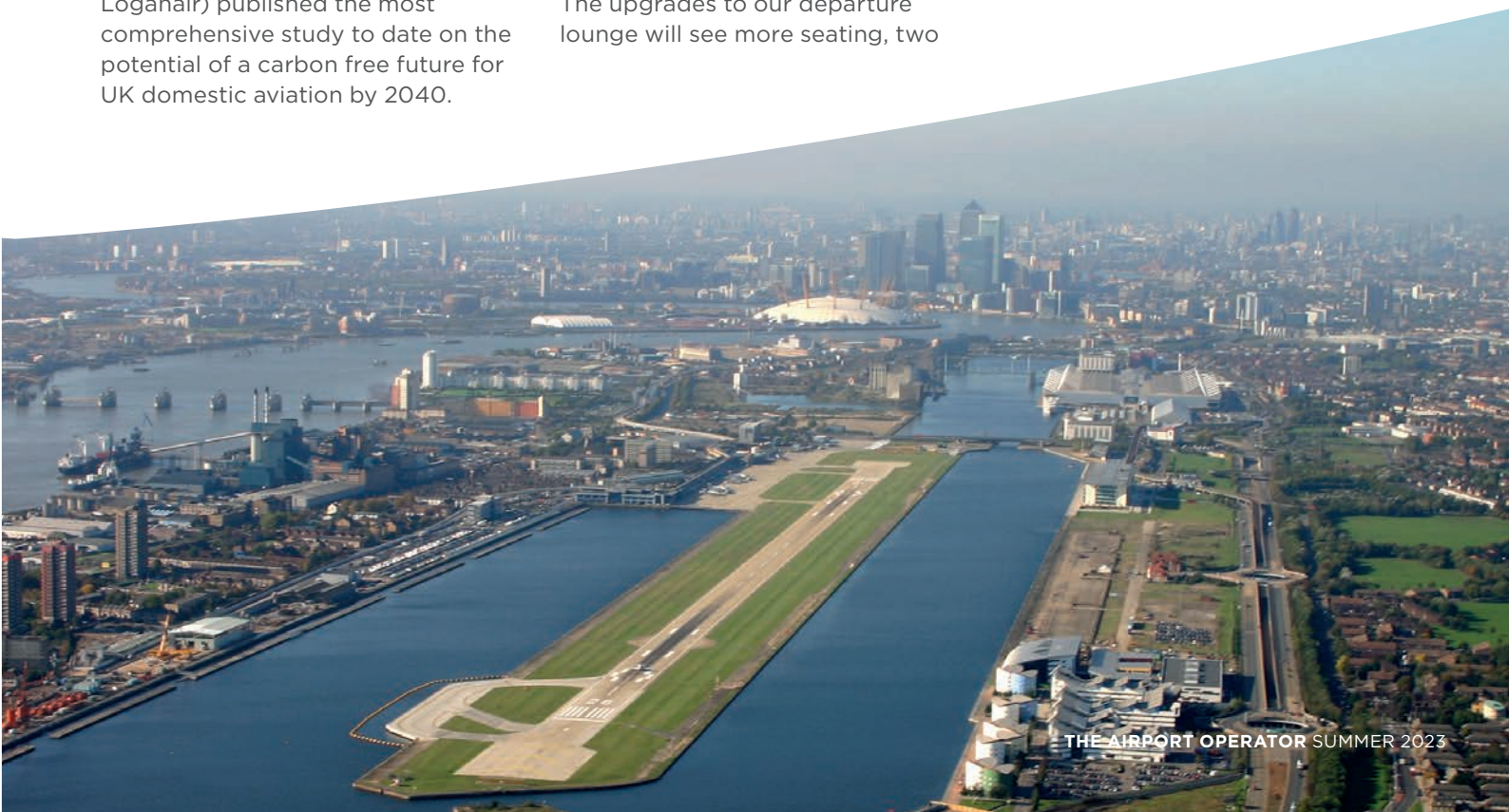
What are your expectations for passenger numbers in 2023 and when do you think that they might return to 2019 levels?

Our passenger numbers are continuing to move in the right direction, and we are seeing a steady rise in numbers with the summer holidays. On some of our peak days, we are near or at 2019 levels. We're expecting to be close to 4 million pax by the end of the year.

Where do you hope to see either new routes or improved frequencies?

This summer, we resumed services to a number of exciting destinations, including popular Greek islands Mykonos and Skiathos, as well as Thessaloniki, Bergerac, Split and San Sebastian.

We are constantly in conversations with our airlines to explore opportunities for new routes and improved frequencies to ensure we continue to offer our passengers a wide range of choices. ■



BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT'S NETWORK BACK AS MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES COMPLETE THE LAST PIECE OF THE JIGSAW

Birmingham Airport is celebrating the complete recreation of its pre-Covid network this summer, as Qatar Airways returned following a three-year absence.



In the space of a week in July, Qatar Airways resumed daily services to Doha, Saudia – the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia – began flying three times a week to Jeddah and Emirates brought back its iconic A380 superjumbo, adding capacity on its popular twice-daily service to Dubai.

Nick Barton, the airport's CEO, described it as “a wow moment for the people of our region”. He told *The Airport Operator* “with the return of Qatar Airways, the last piece of the jigsaw has clicked into place. It was quite an emotional moment for us as an airport. We went through that utterly hideous period of Covid, but we have dusted ourselves down and got back to where we started from. So we are back and what we have seen is a glimpse into our future”.

Barton said “the significance is obvious. You have got three of the best airlines in the world making a serious commitment to the future of Birmingham as a key gateway into the UK through its second city. Each of these premium brands – the giants of Emirates and Qatar and the rapidly growing Saudia – has its own motives and its own success drivers, but for us to have all three in one week is brilliant”.

His upbeat comments were echoed by Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, who said, “we all know how important global connections are to the West Midlands economy, and so I am delighted. These new services and investment are not only a big economic boost to the region as our global ties grow, but they are also a significant vote of confidence in the future of the West Midlands from three of the world's biggest airlines”.

The moves by the Middle East airlines come on top of growth decisions announced by Birmingham Airport's leading existing carriers, with easyJet for the first time confirming



Nick Barton, Chief Executive Officer, Birmingham Airport

“With the return of Qatar Airways, the last piece of the jigsaw has clicked into place. It was quite an emotional moment for us as an airport. We are back and what we have seen is a glimpse into our future”.

Birmingham as one its UK bases, with three based aircraft initially and capacity to grow. Barton said “having a based operation is always good news for an airport and it is good news for our customers. We are absolutely thrilled”.

Meanwhile Ryanair has increased to six the number of its Birmingham-based aircraft and Barton said, “together they have broadened the choice of our low-cost carrier offer here to a level that we have never seen before, which will be of the utmost benefit to our passenger”. With Jet2 and TUI also in growth mode at Birmingham, he added “the key thing is we have capacity to grow. We are not constrained as other airports in the South East are. We have that capacity, which will be able to support all and any of them as they choose to expand, which all are”.

The reference to “other airports in

the South East” perhaps reflects changing perceptions of Birmingham Airport as it contemplates continuing building work on the HS2 rail link between London and Birmingham, with plans for trains to take only 32 minutes to make the rail journey from the airport station to Old Oak Common in west London. Elizabeth line connections from there will carry passengers on to Bond Street in London's West End in just five minutes.

Barton acknowledges that he was initially concerned when the Government announced a delay in the construction of HS2's link to London's Euston station, but he added “when we looked at the detail of how it will work, we are not complaining at all. When you look at what we are going to be getting in the first phase of the work, it is incredible. Old Oak Common is the biggest train station ever to be built in the UK and it connects with the



Elizabeth Line, which is probably one of the best new connections installed in London for a century. In terms of what it connects and how it connects, it is extraordinary”.

In the short term, the building work on which Barton is most focussed is the construction of a new state-of-the-art £40m security hall, due to be completed in June 2024. With large areas of walking space inside the terminal currently off limits, the airport has set up a marquee to give customers a covered walking route, particularly on the busiest days of the summer holidays.

Asked how this will affect the customer experience, Barton said “we have significant upheaval and building site conditions in the busiest part of the year. My experience is that, provided you communicate it well, passengers’ acceptance levels are extremely high, with the feedback in the main being ‘well, I am happy to tolerate this because you are investing in my airport’.

He added, “we are expecting to maintain a pretty good flow through the airport. It is the environment that is the primary issue – noise, smell, all those sorts of things. You need to

be very sensitive about when you use heavy concussion equipment. You do it on an infrequent basis, so you rotate the duration and the time that you do it. The same with any piling. It is something that is very challenging, but ‘so far, so good’ and with a great degree of passenger acceptance”.

Looking to the future, Barton’s expectation is that by March next year the airport will have returned to, indeed slightly exceeded its pre-Covid passenger numbers. In 2019/2020 12.1m passengers passed through the airport and the expectation is that in 2023/2024 the total will reach 12.3m.

Reflecting on how Birmingham Airport has changed in the nearly five years since he became CEO, Barton said, “what we have seen is a natural evolution of the effects of competition and the effects of different business models on aviation. You have seen the very strong newer airlines winning out, where you have had Ryanair, Jet2, easyJet, with a very simple and consistent business model. For me the big change at the airport is that pivot towards those particular industry leaders”.

Like other UK airports, Birmingham is continuing to work hard on its plans to decarbonise airport operations, which it aims to achieve by 2033. While that target was set in 2019, pre-Covid, the airport remains confident that it can still be achieved, committing this year to a major investment in self-generating photovoltaic cells around the airport to generate at least 5MW by March next year. Barton is candid that he is still unsure how the airport will “solve the problem of gas, because there is no solution on the horizon yet, but we look at technology and innovation being our saviours in the coming ten years. We don’t know how we will finish this thing off, but we are still sticking to the target because we think we will do it”. ■

*In 2019/2020
12.1m passengers
passed through the
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in 2023/2024 the
total will reach
12.3m.*



AOA TO HOST WORKSHOP FOR NEW STARTERS ON AIRPORT SAFEGUARDING ROLES

The AOA is to host a full day workshop in September to educate new starters on airport safeguarding roles.

The workshop will be held at the Heathrow Aviation Academy in London on 19 September and has been designed to help new starters to learn about airport safeguarding roles and to benefit from expert guidance on best practices and real-life case studies that could help them to take the next step in their career.

Adele Gammarano, the AOA's Airport Regulation, Safety & Operations Manager, said that "With the industry facing a shortage of safeguarding training, the AOA is committed to fostering learning and safety development. During the workshop you will have the chance to meet safeguarding members and gain valuable insights into planning

processes and responses. It is an opportunity to take your career to the next level".

To secure a place and register for the workshop, please contact adelegammarano@aoa.org.uk ■

UK AIRPORTS HEALTH & SAFETY WEEK HELPS TO CREATE “ENVIABLE SAFETY TRACK RECORD” – CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

UK Airports Health and Safety Week, developed and coordinated by the AOA, in partnership with the UK Civil Aviation Authority, has helped to create the “enviable safety track record” of UK airports, according to Neil Gray, the CAA’s Principal Aerodromes Inspector.

He told The Airport Operator “I consider the UK to be a global leader when it comes to the safe operation of aerodromes and the people that work there are directly responsible for that enviable safety record. It is events like the UK Airports Health and Safety Week that help to create that”.

Gray said that the CAA was supportive of the decision to add a health dimension to the week. “If you go to some of the events that take place in the week” he said, “they focus on the welfare of staff who work in the airside environment and I think that when those staff

can see the level of investment and commitment that goes into looking after their health, safety and welfare, it means that they are a more content workforce, and a content workforce is a safer workforce”.

Asked what he has learned from the week, Gray said that he had been pleasantly surprised and learnt from the amount of support that airports get from the emergency services. “You often see fire, police and ambulance supporting airports by doing demonstrations” he said.

“A good example” he said was, “I was at Heathrow once when they

had a market stall event where they focussed on road safety. Now, you might ask yourself ‘what has road safety got to do with airside operations at an airport? Well, there are vehicles moving around in the airside environment and interacting with aircraft and that can create risk, and there have in the past been a number of collisions in the airside environment at airports. So, to get the interaction with the emergency services, where they are able to talk about driver behaviours, was really useful”.

Another example, from this year’s event, had to do with the manual

handling involved in loading cargo and baggage onto a plane. “They were making a point” he said “about how your eyes can deceive you when you look at a package and make a judgement about how heavy that package is going to be to lift. So they had a little competition going on at one of the airports that I went to, where they had different sized packages and they asked you to pick it up, have a feel and then estimate which was the heaviest and which was the lightest”.

“People had different opinions” he said “In fact, they all weighed exactly the same. Just using little tactics like that pull people in and get them engaged. When they see things like that, they go away from that Health and Safety Week event feeling slightly differently about things, more positive, motivated and engaged”.

The focus for this year’s event was mental health and wellbeing. In Gray’s words “there have been some events in aviation that have been really challenging from a mental health perspective. If you think about the Germanwings incident (where a fatal crash was deliberately caused by a co-pilot, who had previously been treated for suicidal tendencies), people’s mental health is taken very seriously. We recognise human factors and human performance to be safety factors in the aviation system and recognising that people’s mental health can change and what can impact people’s mental health is so important”.

Awards for “best approach to improving mental health and wellbeing” will be presented at the AOA’s Operations and Safety Conference in November, with separate awards for large, medium and small airports. The AOA said “we want to hear about all the things you are doing, both during the health and safety week, and more widely, to support your staff and passengers’ mental health. You should review your objectives and goals and be able to demonstrate how your



The focus for this year’s event was mental health and wellbeing. “There have been some events in aviation that have been really challenging from a mental health perspective”.

activities accomplish or go beyond these”.

A total of 22 AOA member airports took part in this year’s UK Airports Health and Safety Week, whose strapline was ‘never give health and safety a day off’, from 15 to 21 May.

The event, sponsored by Leidos Security Detection and Automation, sought to involve not just airport employees, but all those who work at or supply products and services to airports.

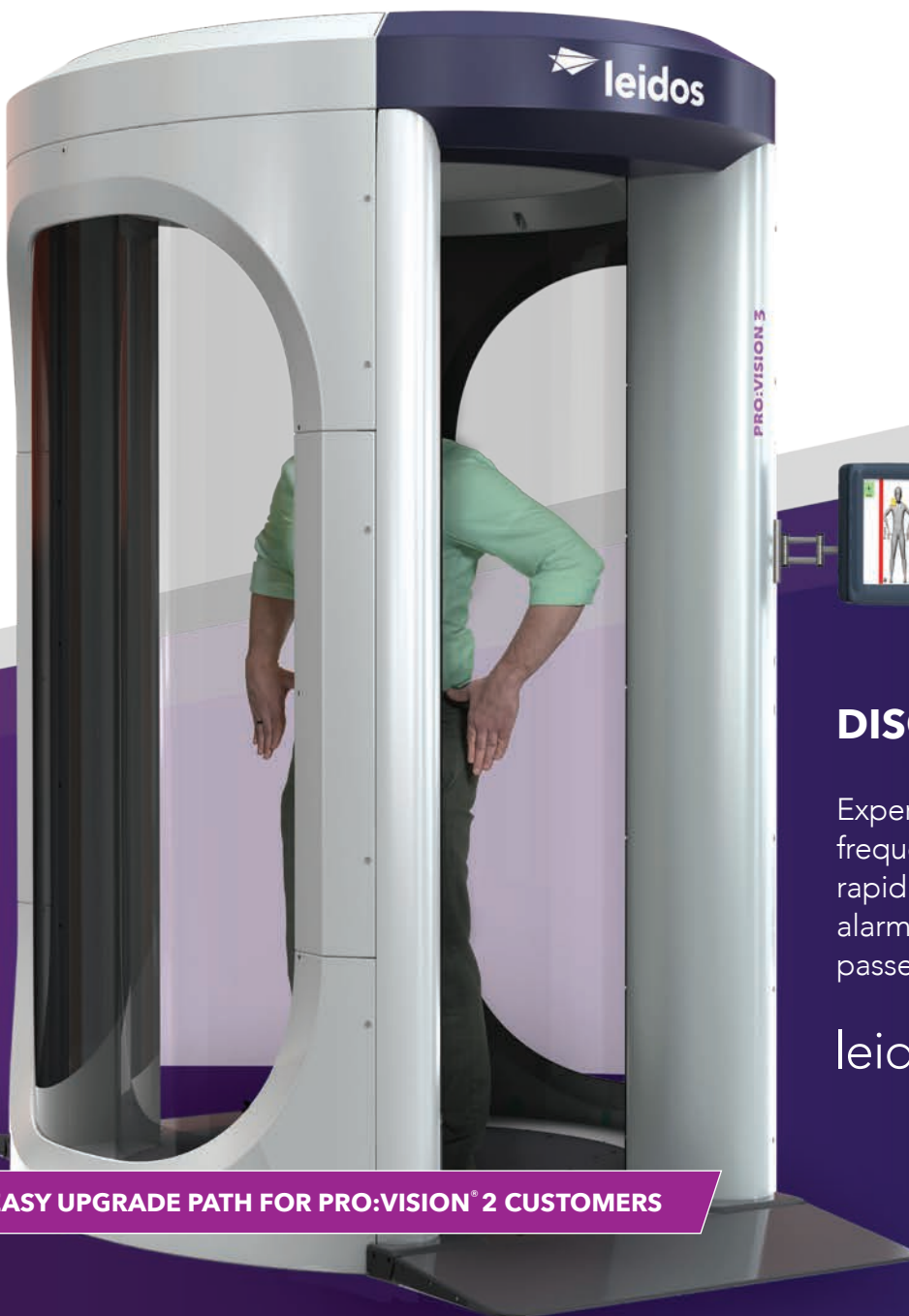
Alan Dutt, Executive Director Aviation Security Services – ICTS UK and Ireland (an AOA Corporate Partner), commented that “our

teams have had a highly productive week, focusing on the development of a safety culture and fostering an environment of sharing and learning. The event was incredibly inclusive, with active participation from numerous stakeholders representing the aviation sector”.

Those taking part shared their experiences in a series of blogs. Typical comments included: “a really positive and well-planned week”, “a good mix of information and events for everyone to enjoy”, “educational, fun and relevant”, “the birds of prey (used for wildlife control) were a popular attraction” and “my personal favourite was the cuddles from the therapy dogs”. ■



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NEW AOA CORPORATE PARTNER PROVIDES AN EXPANDING RANGE OF SECURITY SERVICES TO UK AIRPORTS

SES Aviation, whose motto is “You’re in Safe Hands”, a new AOA Corporate Partner, is supporting UK airports with a fast-expanding range of services to meet ever-changing security needs.

The company offers both traditional and flexible tailored, security solutions to every element of UK aviation security - airports, their suppliers, Fixed-Base Operators (FBOs), airlines, regulated suppliers and regulated agents.

SES Aviation is part of the long-established SES Group, which has been supplying security services to other sectors for more than 20

years. The Group has, for example, been the preferred supplier for Network Rail since 2016, providing a steadily expanding portfolio of security services to the national rail infrastructure company. It also provided security for the late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, and her funeral, along with the King’s coronation.

The Airport Operator, spoke to one of the key members of the

SES Aviation management team, Professional Services Director, Ross Williams, who highlighted the security services that are likely to be of greatest interest to AOA members.

Williams spent 22 years in the Royal Air Force Police, specialising in counterintelligence and aviation security, before moving into the private sector in 2008, and joining SES Aviation in October last year.

He says the company has given him autonomy to bring his security knowledge to bear on its aviation portfolio, developing products and services that draw on the specialist knowledge that he has built up over a lengthy period.

SES Aviation supplies a multitude of services including aircraft search and guarding, specialist detection dogs, meet and assist, customer response officers, cargo screening, consultancy/audits, security training and vetting services. Williams is keen to focus on those that are most relevant to airports, their suppliers, and to General Aviation.

He says that the company's management team "holds a unique array of knowledge and experience gained from working within the aviation industry over countless years, covering UK international airport operations, overseas international airport security, FBOs, regulated agents, regulated suppliers, aviation security, general security, compliance, governance, training, retail, security and safety risk/threat assessments – not many companies can say that about their leadership team".

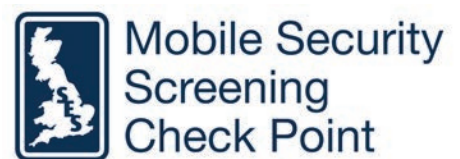
In July, the logistics and security screening operation of SES gained the status of known supplier of in-flight supplies to a global leader in airline catering and provisioning services. Williams stresses that the security regime in that arena equally applies to food and beverages services, duty-free commodities, and airport lounge providers.

He explained how his experience working in the regulated supplier regime conducting audits and inspections had helped him to understand exactly what aviation customers need from a security screening and logistics service. Williams said, "along with the costs to ensure compliance, training staff, purchasing of security screening equipment, combined with the lack of space for equipment and storage of supplies, we also identified several supply chain and security



Ross Williams,
Professional Services
Director, SES Aviation

SES Aviation supplies a multitude of services including aircraft search and guarding, specialist detection dogs, meet and assist, customer response officers, cargo screening, consultancy/audits, security training and vetting services.



issues that individually, may not be big enough for a single entity to address. We have worked hard to solve these problems and to reduce costs to customers. As a result, we are now able to provide a first of its kind, a 'pick and mix' service, where customers can choose what they need from our collection, screening, delivery and secure storage services".

The SES logistics and security screening operation achieved a key milestone in July, when it also obtained the status of known



supplier of airport supplies to Heathrow Airport. This enables it to store, screen and deliver goods across the airport estate from its logistics and security screening operation adjacent to the airport. The operation is also in the process of becoming a regulated supplier to enable it to provide logistical and security screening support, at reduced costs, to the wider in-flight support industry. Meanwhile, SES Aviation is also in discussions with another London airport about a specialist air cargo project.

While emphasising that SES Aviation offers “the full gamut of security services to the aviation industry”, Williams also wants to stress that the company can offer security solutions to airports and FBOs, whose security needs may be intermittent. It offers a rapid deployment resilience service of trained security staff who can help airports to deal with unplanned contingencies and emergencies. In their armoury is their new mobile security screening check point service which can be deployed at 24 hours’ notice. It is equipped with Department for Transport approved security screening equipment, and if required, trained staff to operate

Another important element in the SES portfolio is security training, which can be delivered at customers’ premises, at the SES Academy in Harlow or via eLearning.

equipment.

SES Aviation is in discussion with several of the UK’s leading FBOs about how it could provide them with cost-effective temporary security screening services for private jet operations. He says they have shown huge interest in how the company could help them to screen private jet passengers.

Another important element in the SES portfolio is security training, which can be delivered at customers’ premises, at the SES Academy in Harlow or via eLearning. Williams makes the point that, as a private company, SES Aviation is well-placed to ensure that all its services and training

courses are always competitively priced.

There are other points about how SES collaborates with its clients that Williams wants to highlight. Describing the SES culture as “friendly, honest and transparent”, he says “we are open to listening to all organisations in the sector on how we could improve and create new services to support them. Listening to our customers, teamwork and flexibility are key to our success. We often receive short notice requests and deployments change on a regular basis, but we constantly deliver”.

Emphasising that the company is well-aware of the pressures that Covid-19 created for the aviation sector, he says that SES works hard to deliver specialist excellence and value for money, concluding “we listen to customers about their problems, their needs, their wants, their restrictions and their budgets – and we will do whatever we can to help them”. ■

[SES Aviation](#)
[SES Screening & Logistics](#)
[SES Aviation LinkedIn](#)

NOVEMBER DATE SET FOR AOA OPERATIONS AND SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Airports Operators Association's highly anticipated Airport Operations and Safety Conference will take place on Thursday 9 November at one of the prestigious hotels near Heathrow Airport.

This will be a 'must-attend' event for all those interested in hearing how the aviation industry has adapted to the changes caused by the global pandemic while maintaining a positive outlook and supporting growth and development plans.

Topics up for discussion will include resilience in times of disruption, improvements in operational safety performance, compliance, emergency technologies, and airport accessibility standards and best practice. There will also be a drinks reception, which will give colleagues the chance to reconnect and discuss issues further. AOA will also be announcing the winners of the Health and Safety Awards, recognising the best approaches being taken to support mental health and wellbeing.

AOA has worked closely with its member working groups and forums to develop the agenda and identify speakers as part of its commitment to promoting cooperation and sharing best practice. This will help the industry by enabling airport

operators to adapt to new situations, take advantage of emerging opportunities and develop expertise beyond their usual skillset.

AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, commented: "I am delighted that we are able to re-introduce AOA's Airport Operations and Safety Conference for the first time since the pandemic, offering members a great opportunity to link up

with colleagues to identify new synergies, implement appropriate safety measures and promote collaboration between airports, regulators, government bodies, and other service providers. Empowering colleagues in aviation, growing the skills of the industry, and embracing a cooperative, safe, and environmentally responsible approach will benefit everyone." ■





*Iain Stewart MP,
Chair of the Transport
Select Committee*

WE WILL MAKE SURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT “PUTS THEIR MONEY WHERE THEIR MOUTH IS” ON STIMULATING SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUELS INVESTMENT IN THE UK

Iain Stewart MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee, writes for The Airport Operator

As the industry hits its peak season, understandably passengers and staff will be thinking of the environmental impact of their journeys. Even with the Government’s 2050 net zero target decades away, there’s no denying it’ll be difficult to decarbonise the sector given the challenges of fitting commercial aircraft with electric batteries due to their sheer size and weight, and limits to how much power they can contain.

Whilst it will be difficult, it’s not impossible.

In our recent Fuelling the Future inquiry into transport decarbonisation, my colleagues and I on the Transport Committee concluded that Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) have the most potential to reduce emissions. In our report we urged the Government to invest in low-carbon SAF and encourage private investors to follow suit.

I’m really pleased that the Government has agreed with the Committee’s recommendations and has agreed to consider further how to stimulate SAF investment in the UK, including looking at our recommendation of a ‘Contracts for Difference’ model that would give confidence to investors. This is where the Government provides companies with capital for upfront costs of developing a technology, while guaranteeing the price it will pay for the SAF when it comes

on stream. We'll be following the Department for Transport's actions closely to make sure they put their money where their mouth is. Not only will investing in cleaner fuels be good for the environment and help the UK become a world leader in developing these technologies, it will also let passengers relax and enjoy going abroad relatively guilt-free.

The Committee is also getting ready to explore the aviation industry from a completely different angle. Earlier this year we launched an inquiry looking at how to make transport more accessible to people with disabilities. We'll be looking at how effective legislation like the Equality Act is in requiring every part of the passenger transport sector to make services accessible. There's been no shortage of stories in the media of disabled people being abandoned on planes for hours after landing, having to find alternate modes of travel or cancelling plans altogether due to accessibility issues. I'm keen to get to the bottom of it and make sure planes and airports give disabled people a stress-free experience.

Additionally, we just launched an inquiry looking at the nation's strategic transport objectives. We'll ask how these objectives are set and how they do – or should – influence decisions on investment and planning. We welcome evidence from the aviation industry about how air travel fits into this big picture.

Elsewhere, my Committee has been keeping an eye on new Government proposals to better protect airline passengers when journeys go wrong. These include expanding enforcement powers of the Civil Aviation Authority through the ability to issue fines and making sure all airlines are a member of an Alternative Dispute Resolution body. Measures to improve passenger confidence have been a long time coming, especially considering last summer's airport disruptions, and I hope these will improve passenger confidence when they come forward.

Except for arming the CAA with



We just launched an inquiry looking at the nation's strategic transport objectives. We'll ask how these objectives are set and how they do – or should – influence decisions on investment and planning.

new enforcement powers, the Government disappointingly rejected many of the proposals in the Committee's 2022 report on aviation reform. In the wake of the chaos created by coronavirus restrictions, it was clear that the Government needed to improve its resilience planning for aviation in case of health crises.

In our 2022 report, we argued there needed to be changes to international travel restrictions, consumer rights, domestic air connectivity, sustainable aviation, airplane slots, Heathrow

price controls and action to combat summer disruptions. The Government acted on few of our recommendations - a missed opportunity for the Department for Transport to protect passengers and the industry. The problems we identified still loom large throughout the industry.

Aside from cracking on with our inquiries and continuing to press ministers on areas like decarbonising aviation, we'll be looking out for any potential disruption over the summer that may need our attention. ■

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS AS THE INVISIBLE POWER BEHIND LEADING UK AIRPORTS

The energy infrastructure specialist, UK Power Networks Services, is celebrating three decades of owning, operating and maintaining critical infrastructure for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports.





Director, David Mitchell, marked the occasion with anniversary events at each of the three airports and he and the company's Head of Markets, Philip Heathcote, gave a special interview to The Airport Operator.

Their moment in the limelight was in sharp contrast to the company's traditional behind the scenes low profile. Mitchell said, "we like to be the invisible power behind the airport, because that means we are doing our job". In Heathcote's words, "this anniversary is hugely momentous to us. What we do is unseen by the passenger. People only notice what we do if it stops working".

The scale of the company's contribution to keeping the three airports running smoothly 24/7, 365 days a year is evidenced by its portfolio of assets across the three sites: more than 500 substations, 600 electrical transformers, a vast amount of high and low voltage cabling and expert engineers based at each airport.

Mitchell has worked for UK Power



I think it has been a successful 30 years working in partnership with the airports. Yes, 30 successful years. Things have changed significantly over that period".

Networks Services in its various forms since joining as an apprentice in 1980, taking advantage of its long-standing and continuing commitment to providing training programmes and academic opportunities for its staff. He was promoted to the top job a year ago after six years as Head of Client Delivery. Heathcote joined the company in 2019 from the rail sector, where he was Sales Director for Siemens Rail and a Bid Director in Arriva's rail franchising team.

Reflecting on the company's three decades supporting UK airports – current clients also include Bristol and London City airports – Mitchell said, "I think it has been a successful 30 years working in partnership with the airports. Yes, 30 successful years. Things have changed significantly over that period".

Pointing in particular to major changes in health and safety, he said, "That is the foundation of our organisation. The power sector has always had very robust procedures and policies, but we have changed, and society has changed in that area. Lifting, handling, managing

noise, working at heights, the chemicals we use, the equipment we provide our staff. All of that has changed through those 30 years. I have been around a few years, so I have seen those changes and they are changes for the better”.

Mitchell highlighted that the company is proud of its safety record – now over seven years without a lost time injury – but he is not complacent. “We work closely with our clients on health and safety” he said, “sharing experiences and lessons that we learned from our wider business and our other clients. Our drive now is to get to a position where we don’t have any medical treatment injuries either”.

Heathcote added “We have got all the safety procedures, processes, practices, but for me the cultural dimension is crucial. We have got a few mantras. We believe all accidents are preventable. The other thing that we absolutely believe, and we live by this, is if someone thinks the job is not safe, anyone can stop the job, wherever it is, whatever it is, no matter how time critical it is. If it is unsafe every person in the business is empowered to stop the job and we as a leadership team would absolutely support that”.

Beyond health and safety, Mitchell said another area that had changed over the decades was that “the level of coordination and collaboration has significantly improved and that has been necessary to deliver projects at an airport because no one part is an island. We work very closely with numerous organisations at the various airports and obviously work hand in hand with our client. Effectively, power is at the core of just about everything and is becoming more and more important for the energy transition, with everything being electrified”.

“Collaboration and coordination mean things can be delivered effectively” said Mitchell “and

Airports will look to be able to generate what they can in a sustainable way locally as much as possible to save costs, reduce demand, give them greater flexibility and even some local resilience, with some level of storage.

cost is always very key. The airports are very conscious of their end clients and the need to provide value. There have been some major changes across the airports through the years, including the construction of Terminal 5 at Heathrow and that was an exemplary way of working together as a T5 team. We have seen technology change quite significantly.

At London City, they are looking to bring in a micro grid, which we are building for them, to improve the efficiency and the carbon footprint of that airport”.

UK Power Networks Services says that “maintaining resilience, managing energy costs and reducing the carbon footprint is a delicate and complex balance that all airports are currently facing”. Asked how the company helps airports to achieve that balance, Mitchell said “there is always a balance to keep the CEO, the CFO and the Operations Manager happy at the same time. We work very much in partnership with our clients. We get involved as early as possible with them in what they are looking to achieve to be able to provide them sound advice from our experienced staff”.

Heathcote added that with “active management of the asset base together you can reduce cost without jeopardising resilience and introduce a more sustainable asset base. That dynamic relationship I think is key to it. The silver bullet is talking to each other in partnership, working together”.

Asked how they expect the airports market to change over the next

30 years, Heathcote suggested that a key change would be “more frictionless travel, so that you don’t go through check-in. You will just walk straight through to the aircraft using AI, remote sensing and your telephone. All those systems require power in the background. So I think as a passenger it will be a much easier transition from entering the airport to boarding the aircraft”.

For Mitchell, “the major change is there are now very clear targets on zero carbon. I think the estate will change rapidly. Smart charging will all be in place and then the major challenge is the fuel source for aircraft. In 30 years, I would have thought that hydrogen will be the preferred source of fuel and maybe the smaller aircraft will be battery operated. Post-Covid we have seen the recovery of the airport and people still thirst to travel so I think everyone will be putting pressure on to make that carbon-free travel. We have accepted that challenge. The various airports have got their own carbon reduction plans. We have signed up to those plans and are working with them in areas where we can add value.”

He forecast that “airports will look to be able to generate what they can in a sustainable way locally as much as possible to save costs, reduce demand, give them greater flexibility and even some local resilience, with some level of storage. I don’t think they will ever achieve being off grid, but the concept is to be a little bit more self-sufficient. These all need to be embedded in the strategies of the airports, so that they can see where they are going and ensure that their investments are timely and wise”. ■

JOIN AOA'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK AND SHAPE OUR FUTURE WORK

As we approach the next General Election, the AOA's Public Affairs and Communication Network (PACN) will play a more important role than ever in deciding the direction of the organisation.

Bringing together those within airports dealing with communications and government affairs, the PACN provides an opportunity to ensure the AOA team's work reflects the priorities of the UK airport sector.

At its most recent meeting, for instance, AOA presented a paper on how the organisation will seek to influence the political parties in the final year of the current parliament. Members were able to provide feedback on policy proposals focussing on economic, sustainability and consumer aspects related to airports, how the AOA should tailor the messaging for each political party, and advising on how individual airports can support our work.

Additionally, the PACN is a chance to hear from important and relevant

speakers from Government, wider politics, the media, and other areas, and gain insight into how to increase our effectiveness. For instance, earlier this year the group met with Wendy Fielder, the Department for Transport's Head of Strategic Communications. She provided insight into the Department's main priorities, including the passenger experience. The upcoming agenda for the PACN is currently being worked out, as well as the ongoing development of the AOA's manifesto for the next General Election.

Do please email petercampbell@aoa.org.uk if you have suggestions for what the group should consider at upcoming meetings, who you might like to hear from, and if you would like to feed into the manifesto drafting process. ■





ACCELERATING DELIVERY TO NET ZERO CARBON AVIATION - A JOB FOR US ALL!

BY DR ANDY JEFFERSON SUSTAINABLE
AVIATION PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

Since 2005 Sustainable Aviation has brought the UK aviation industry together to collaborate on ways to respond to the climate emergency and tackle wider sustainability challenges.

In April the sixth iteration of our carbon work, called the Net Zero Carbon Road-Map was published.

The chart confirms the solutions to cutting emissions remain the same. This Road-Map accepts that delivering these solutions will add costs to flying and this is forecast to have a 14% reduction on demand by 2050. The focus is now on accelerating delivery of the opportunities.

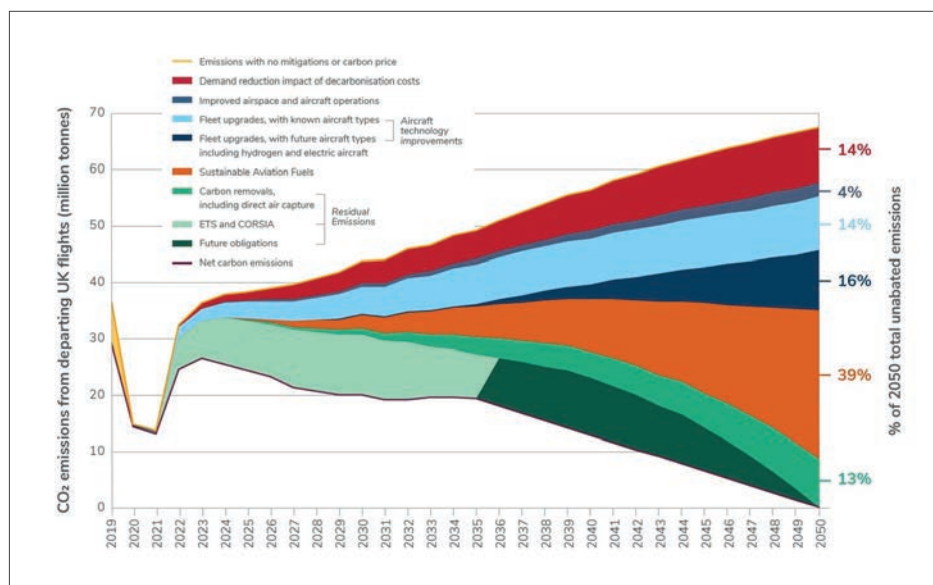
Given the UK has the right conditions to lead the world in developing sustainable aviation technologies like SAF and zero carbon emission hydrogen-powered aircraft. Plus, it has the third-largest global aviation network, a world-leading aerospace and aviation sector, and geographical advantages in both renewable energy generation and carbon capture capacity, what is the problem?

There are three key hurdles to overcome:

1. Proving the sceptics wrong,
2. Solving policy barriers,
3. Improving how we solve problems.

1. Proving the sceptics wrong

We must overcome the 'glass half empty' perceptions from NGO's and other third parties. Too often I see academics or advisors to Government say, they are unconvinced that the 'aspirations' of the industry can be realised, and therefore the Government must restrict growth. This is based on how they judge our current performance without acknowledging the 'enabling' work we are doing now, to accelerate progress in future years, or the responsibilities that lie beyond the aviation sector in enabling our plan. We have seen this in the NGO comments that 'it just won't be possible to deliver sufficient quantities of SAF in the required timescale.' This view is based on negative assumptions



about access to waste feedstock or the acceptability of using waste at all, to make SAF. They ignore globally agreed standards for making SAF from waste as well as the independent assessment from ICF of UK SAF feedstock availability. Yes, there are UK policy and financial incentive issues to overcome, but these are relatively easy to fix with the right attitude.

As for our industry, we have much to be proud of!

- Since 2021, NATS has implemented nine airspace modernisation changes including the first UK implementations of Free Route Airspace and systemisation, saving more than 60,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year; and made changes to the North Atlantic track structure saving almost 1m tonnes of CO₂ per year.
- UK SAF production started last year on the Humber by Philipps 66 Ltd, with at least eight more producers planning plants in the UK, with the right Government incentive policies.
- Last November Rolls-Royce and easyJet achieved the world's first run of a modern aircraft engine on hydrogen. In January 2023, ZeroAvia conducted the successful first UK flight of a

19-seater Dornier 228 with one of the two engines running on hydrogen fuel cells. By July, 9 successful test flights have taken place.

Later in 2023, the world's first net zero transatlantic flight is scheduled to take off from London to New York - using solely sustainable aviation fuel.

So, we must get smarter at demonstrating and communicating this delivery.

As airport operators you play a critical role in developing the ground infrastructure for net zero aviation. This includes scaling SAF and hydrogen supplies to and across the airport, facilitating the switch to zero emissions aircraft and ground service equipment plus your core work on energy use across the airport. Reporting progress on this is part of demonstrating delivery of the wider net zero aviation strategy.

We also need to challenge other third parties' involvement in achieving this - be that Government or other sectors such as energy or finance. In doing so we can create stronger partnerships to deliver and gather the evidence to prove the sceptics wrong.

2. Solving Policy Barriers

There are many policy barriers that exist for delivering net zero carbon aviation. Today, the UK is competing in a global race to attract private investment that will drive development of the technologies to power net zero and create the jobs of the future. The US has passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes hundreds of billions of dollars in incentives for low-carbon technologies, including SAF and hydrogen production. The EU is also distributing billions of euros in carbon allowances to help subsidise the higher cost of SAF for its airlines. The UK Government is currently debating how best to respond?!

Sustainable Aviation has asked the UK Government to support us in the following ways:

- Maximising short-term efficiencies by accelerating airspace modernisation with completion by the end of the decade.
- Delivering commercial UK SAF production at scale this decade by providing a price stability mechanism, alongside a SAF mandate whilst prioritising access to UK sustainable feedstocks.
- Investing in zero-emission flight technology by uplifting matched funding levels to the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) programme through to 2031
- Accelerating the rollout of carbon removals, including them in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and ensuring aviation's fair share.

3. Improving How we Solve Problems

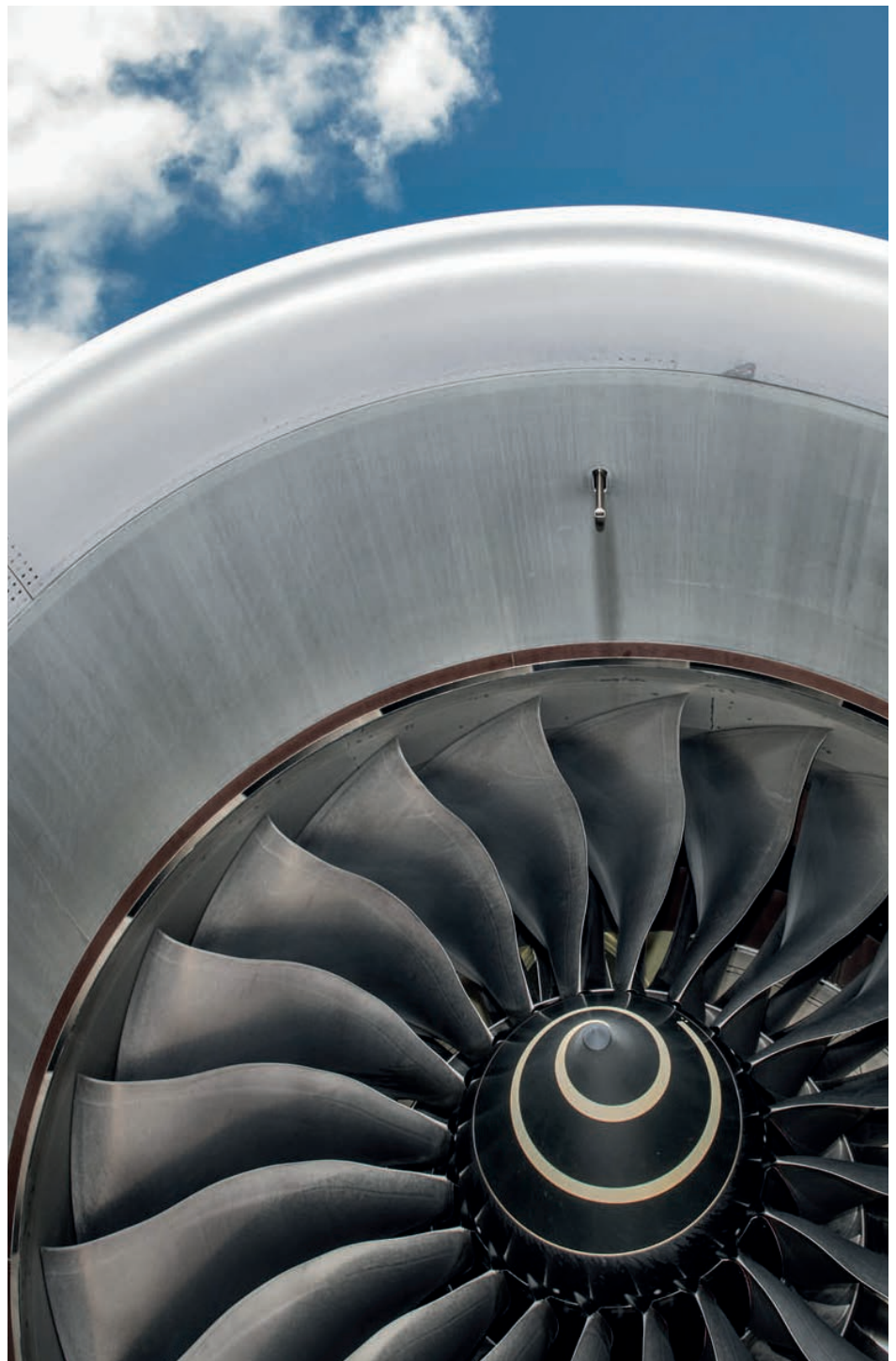
Net zero carbon aviation can't be achieved by just an airport, an airline, air traffic and aircraft manufacturers. It won't be delivered by another sector either, be that energy, hydrogen, finance, or carbon removal. It requires us all working together, sharing ideas, and learning together. From experience, success

comes from incentives and win-win solutions rather than restrictive and penalty policy solutions such as imposing extra fees or operating restrictions. Periodically I see airports taking the latter approach to try and secure planning permissions. Whilst this might be necessary to pass regulatory hurdles, it is unlikely to be the best long-term strategy to accelerate investment in solutions for net zero. I strongly encourage airports to plan, and local authorities

to accept, smarter solutions with a broader mix of business partners to secure the industry's future.

In summary, there is lots to do, but so much to gain. Let's keep up the great work and accelerate delivery of Net Zero Carbon Aviation! ■

For more information about the work of Sustainable Aviation please visit the website or email us directly at info@sustainableaviation.co.uk.



IS CHANGE IN THE AIR? THE PROSPECTS FOR AIRSPACE MODERNISATION

BY CHRISTOPHER SNELLING,
AOA POLICY DIRECTOR

The biggest immediate collective project facing UK aviation is the modernisation of our airspace. The benefits are significant, the need pressing and yet the path to quick progress is not certain.



Since this critical part of UK transport infrastructure was last significantly updated, the UK has, in other modes, built the whole of the motorway network and moved out of the world of the steam train. Airports themselves have changed beyond recognition, as have our planes. But the airspace has only ever been incrementally adjusted.

As DfT themselves know, modernisation will add capacity to the system through more efficient airspace, address ‘hotspots’ of congestion and improve choice and value for passengers and shippers of freight. Fewer flight delays and service disruptions at short notice would save time and improve the passenger experience through shorter journeys with a more reliable service. It could allow many airports to manage noise effects on local communities better. Perhaps above all, Sustainable Aviation estimates the modernisation of our airspace could reduce aviation greenhouse gas emissions by 4%, a key part of the road map to net-zero 2050.

Of course, airspace modernisation projects do progress, making minor improvements in places across the country. The issue is with the major collective changes – known as Future Airspace Strategy Implementation (FASI). There appear to be two separate issues here – one affecting the whole UK, another just the extended London area.

The Issue

The UK-wide issue is financing. Currently airports have to pay upfront for the development of modernised airspace. However, the direct commercial benefits accrue to airlines, possibly even airlines flying out of a different airport. Given this, and the constrained financial situation airports and the whole economy are in, there is a high likelihood that some airports will not wish to proceed – certainly not at the pace of others. It is in the nature of FASI that progress has to be collective with all airports in an area moving forward together.



*Christopher Snelling
Policy Director, AOA*

The London issue is that the overlapping complexity of the many airports’ needs are difficult to address. Using just individual applications to create a workable London airspace design under the CAA’s CAP 1616 process is proving highly difficult. This throws speed of progress with London modernisation into doubt.

Progression with Government?

Earlier this year the Government’s Aviation Council tasked industry with developing proposals to unlock progress. The DfT asked AOA’s Karen Dee to chair an industry discussion involving airports and airlines and then to draw together an industry position paper. This was done and proposed solutions were put to the next meeting in May.

These were, essentially: to resolve the London impasse by creating a single design entity to create a plan which each airport would then work to in their application; and to resolve the UK wide issue by creating an upfront financing mechanism (albeit industry-funded overall).

The ideas were accepted and DfT officials were tasked with working on them further.

At the subsequent meeting in July good progress with the ideas behind the London design entity seemed to have been made. However, the debate on a financing mechanism for projects around the UK has not. It seems DfT has been focussed on the issues and opportunities in London but has not progressed other elements to the degree that the industry has requested.

At that meeting, and following it, AOA and industry partners have pushed the Government to recognise the scale of the UK-wide issue and agree action quickly, as now we risk delaying some FASI projects as the prospect of a financing mechanism to come may encourage people to put off action today. The next meeting of the Aviation Council will be held in the autumn.

Delivery of FASI airspace modernisation by the end of the decade is vital to our carbon and economic performance. AOA sees this as the most important project facing airports collectively at the moment and it will feature in all our policy and political activity until a path to progression is secured. ■

As DfT themselves know, modernisation will add capacity to the system through more efficient airspace, address ‘hotspots’ of congestion and improve choice and value for passengers and shippers of freight.

CHANGING SLOTS – FOR GOOD?

AOA Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, analyses the Government's plans for slots reform.

Through the Covid period the DfT has granted several rounds of slot alleviations. As we come towards an end for that necessity DfT is moving forward on possible permanent changes to the regime. Some of this could have wider impacts than previously thought.

The AOA hosted a session with members in July with DfT and ACI Europe to discuss where the Government is going on slots reform.

There are two separate processes working through Government. First some specific suggestions for powers to be given to Ministers under the Retained EU Law (REUL) Act. Second a general policy paper the Government has been working on for some time, which is now to be issued in the Autumn.

The REUL items concern potential permanent changes to Justified Non-Use of slots (JNUS). One part of this is making pandemic/health restrictions by countries a standing ground for JNU. A second part is potentially more troubling. It asks if the coordinator should be given greater flexibility to consider applications for JNUS where an airport has temporarily reduced its capacity below the level set at the start of the season.

The REUL Act will be used to give the Secretary of State power to set a new regulation here, so this is not directly a proposal to be implemented but

creating a mechanism to implement a new policy in this area.

If done correctly this could be a sensible reform to allow industry to adjust more flexibly and collaboratively. However this is light on detail, and clearly anything badly worded from this that increases airlines' ability to influence/call for decisions on JNUS could cause problems.

The DfT seem to be set to go ahead with creating these powers. They will consult in September with more detail on what reform they might actually introduce under this heading.

Separate to the REUL Act work is the slots reform paper, which builds on the work of 2018's 'Aviation 2050' document.

Proposals here also come in two parts. The first consist of what DfT describe as system refining options. They claim these will be 'not surprising' and aimed at improving transparency and efficiency. Areas it might touch on include barriers to entry, justified non-use, governance, and role of slot co-ordination committees.

The second part concerns 'what would you do if you had a large amount of new capacity?'. Previously we had understood this to mean significant infrastructure enhancements. However, in the

session with members DfT also talked about this applying in the event of a large number of slot handbacks – for example in the event of an airline going out of business or being sanctioned such as Russia.

In this section the ideas will, according to DfT, be more radical. They will explore ideas such as ringfencing 'new' capacity for certain types of flights (domestic connectivity, freight flights, 'green' flights). They will seek options to deal with what they see as a lack of churn at airports. Issues being considered also include market based mechanisms and auctions, use of historic rights and secondary trading.

Much of this may result in sensible improvements/adjustments, but there are obvious potential difficulties. Giving Government power to ringfence use of 'new'

The AOA hosted a session with members in July with DfT and ACI Europe to discuss where the Government is going on slots reform.

slots is a particular cause for concern, as this may work against the commercial grain in terms of what route would be most viable in that slot. Whilst initial suggestions of how it would be used might be restrained, once Government have this power, we could see political considerations play more of a role.

This paper will be issued for consultation in the Autumn. This will be a full three month consultation. Factoring in time to analyse responses, and the need for primary legislation to implement any changes, DfT already believes that enactment would be after the next General Election.

This change is some way off but there will be a need for all airports who are slot regulated, or believe they might become so in the future, to engage with this debate actively to ensure the system is still fit for purpose – and indeed to secure improvements where we can. ■



AVIATION MINISTER DELIVERS POSITIVE MESSAGES AT THE AOA'S ANNUAL DINNER

Aviation Minister, Baroness Charlotte Vere, predicted one of the best summers ever for UK aviation, as she delivered the keynote speech at the AOA's Annual Dinner in June.

Speaking to almost 700 guests from airports, airlines, the Civil Aviation Authority, aviation partners and the media at London's Grosvenor House Hotel, she also emphasised the opportunities that the sector has to play a significant role in the economic growth of the UK.

Guests were welcomed to the dinner by AOA Chair, Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, and CEO, Karen Dee. Both reflected on the successes that UK airports have had since pandemic restrictions were lifted, while also highlighting challenges that the aviation sector faces. ■



CAA REPORTS THAT “THE VAST MAJORITY OF UK AIRPORTS ARE NOW PERFORMING WELL” ON ACCESSIBILITY

The UK Civil Aviation Authority has published a new report on airport accessibility which says that many are excelling in the provision of assistance to those with special needs.

In its first report on airport accessibility covering a full year since 2020, the CAA said that eighteen airports had consistently achieved a very good or good rating, while seven had improved from a poor rating to a good or very good rating over the four quarters.

Commenting on the data, the CAA said “We are pleased to report that the vast majority of UK airports are now performing well, with many excelling in the provision of assistance to the majority of

individuals who request it. There has been marked performance improvements from last summer and early autumn. We have also been heartened by the conversations we have had with airports about investments made in staffing and equipment ready for this summer and, in particular, the peak travel months for disabled and less mobile passengers of September and October”.

The CAA said it was “grateful to the efforts of senior management and the teams responsible for the provision of the assistance service at UK airports for the efforts they have made to improve the service against a challenging backdrop of increased demand for the assistance services”.



CAA data shows that in 2022 3.45 million passengers received assistance at UK airports, which was 1.56% of all passengers. That compares to less than 1% of all passengers in 2010 and 1.35% of passengers in 2019. The CAA said that “whatever the reasons, the data from 2023 so far continues this trend of increasing demand and airports and airlines must continue to adapt, ensuring adequate resources are available to meet the demand”. ■

LONDON SOUTHEND AIRPORT REBUILDS NETWORK WITH ROUTES TO PARIS, AMSTERDAM AND GENEVA

London Southend Airport’s departure board will be busier from this autumn as easyJet launches routes to Paris, Amsterdam and Geneva.

The new route to Paris Charles de Gaulle will operate all year round up to four times a week from 29 October. From November winter flights to Amsterdam will operate twice a week. Flights to Geneva will take off from 16 December and will also operate twice a week throughout the winter. Alongside

Malaga, Majorca and Faro, easyJet will be serving six destinations from the airport.

Ali Gayward, easyJet’s UK Country Manager, said “We now offer more choice and great value for customers travelling with us by further expanding our services at Southend. We are delighted to be serving our customers a wider range of destinations this winter, all with low fares and the warm welcome our crew are famous for”.

A new holiday route from London Southend Airport to the coastal city of Bourgas in Bulgaria, operated by Balkan Holidays, will run for 13 weeks from June to September next summer. Commenting on the Bourgas announcement, the airport’s CEO, John Upton, said “This is further assurance of our commitment to rebuilding London Southend Airport and a great example of our growth opportunity. We are confident that there is more to come for summer 2024”. ■

AVIATION MINISTER PRAISES THE AVIATION INDUSTRY IN NORWICH AS “A HUB OF GREATNESS”



Aviation Minister, Baroness Vere, has praised the aviation industry in Norwich for its commitment to skills development and sustainability.

During her July visit to Norwich Airport the Minister was briefed on the recent introduction of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) at the airport and its use by SaxonAir, which uses the fuel in its helicopters. The SAF is supplied by Air bp, whose UK General Aviation Account Manager, Martin Lane, said “Air bp is pleased to be supplying SAF to Norwich Airport. It demonstrates their willingness to invest in SAF and collaborate to help drive demand”.

Speaking at the end of her visit to the airport and the neighbouring international aviation academy,

Baroness Vere said “I have been hugely impressed by the collaboration between industry, Norwich Airport, local authorities and training providers in fostering a sustainable aviation sector in Norwich. Not only are opportunities being created for young people of all backgrounds, but local businesses are working together to drive innovation across the industry and reduce carbon emissions. As I said while at the academy, it really is a hub of greatness”.

Richard Pace, Managing Director of Norwich Airport said “It really was a pleasure to host the Minister during her visit and sustainability was the common theme of our discussions – from making the best use of the apprenticeship levy to deliver the

future skills the industry needs, to accelerating the decarbonisation of airport operations through sustainable fuels and electrification. We look forward to updating the Minister on future progress”.

Alex Durand, Chief Executive of SaxonAir, said “We were delighted to show the Aviation Minister the high level of innovation aimed at decarbonising aviation that is happening on a daily basis in our region. Our industry talks a lot about the future and what they will achieve, but I think the key message for the day was that meaningful work is already being done in and around Norwich Airport”. ■

COPENHAGEN AIRPORT CEO APPOINTED TO LEAD HEATHROW

Thomas Woldbye, who has served as the CEO of Copenhagen Airport since 2011, will take over from John Holland-Kaye as the next Heathrow CEO on 1 October.

He was appointed by the Board of Heathrow Airport following an extensive recruitment process, emerging as “the standout candidate among a pool of exceptional contenders both internally and from across the world”.

The Board said that, during his tenure at Copenhagen, Woldbye had turned it into “the powerhouse transport hub of northern Europe with an award-winning passenger service ranking”. A key factor in his success, the Board said, had been his ability to navigate complex stakeholder relationships. In particular, he had “forged strong links with the Danish Government and



fostered partnerships with airlines to drive investment and development, including significant recent expansions in terminal capacity at the airport”.

Heathrow Chairman, Lord Paul Deighton, said “Leading Britain’s hub airport is one of the most important jobs in global aviation and the vacancy attracted the best calibre talent from across the world. Thomas’s achievements

at Copenhagen not only mirror Heathrow’s long-term strategy, but his track record in successfully running a major airport and working closely with stakeholders to secure consensus and deliver positive results stood out in the selection process”.

Paying tribute to John Holland-Kaye, Deighton said “He set a strong example in his unyielding dedication to his colleagues and will leave behind a legacy of having transformed Heathrow into a premier global hub, developed the plan for Heathrow expansion that secured overwhelming Parliamentary approval, navigated the business through the extremely challenging times during the Covid 19 pandemic, overcame the unprecedented challenges of the post-pandemic recovery in demand and led the industry towards a net zero future”. ■

FIRST STEEL ERECTED AT £220M TEESSIDE AIRPORT BUSINESS PARK

The first steel on Business Park South at Teesside International Airport is now in place, as construction of a new link road to the site also nears completion.

When fully operational, the business park – made up of 1.9 million sq ft of logistics, distribution and industrial buildings – will create up to 4,400 jobs.

Progress has now been made on the first unit of the development, with more than 80 tonnes of UK steel

brought onto site, sourced from the British Steel plant near Redcar. Four units covering 130,000 sq ft will be created in the first phase of the development. Work on a new 2km link road to provide access to the business park, part of the Teesside Freeport site, began earlier this year. Both the link road and the first unit are scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen, said “the first steel on the business park and the construction of the link road

are further visible evidence of the excellent progress we are making to transform Teesside Airport from not just a great place for passengers but also as a superb location for business. The business park is essential in our plan to return the airport to profit by helping drive investment and deliver good quality, well-paid jobs for the people of Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool and it is fantastic to see it taking shape”. ■

EDINBURGH AND SOUTHAMPTON AIRPORTS TO PIONEER ELECTRIC AIRLINE FLIGHTS

Ecojet, which describes itself as the world's first electric airline, powered by renewable energy, is to launch its maiden flights on the Edinburgh to Southampton route early next year.

The airline's founder, Dale Vince, said that its launch "marks the beginning of an aviation revolution by making net-zero, emission-free air travel possible for the first time. The question of how to create sustainable air travel has plagued the green movement for decades. Ecojet is by far the most significant step towards a solution to date".

Short term, to secure routes and a licence from the Civil Aviation Authority, Ecojet will initially launch using conventionally fuelled planes – two different sizes of turboprop aircraft, a 19-seater and a 70-seater.

The aircraft will be retrofitted with hydrogen-electric power trains as they become approved for service by the CAA, with the first retrofits taking place in 2025. Once converted, the aircraft will operate with the same power output as before, but with a 100% reduction in CO2 emissions.

Ecojet said that the decision to repurpose old planes rather than build new models from scratch would save 90,000 tonnes of carbon per year.

Vince hopes that the airline will be able to expand to mainland Europe



shortly after the initial launch, "with long-haul flights planned for the future". He says that when Ecojet launches passenger-carrying planes powered by electricity it will be "ten years ahead of the rest of the industry in the development of the biggest revolution in the aviation industry since the invention of the jet engine". ■

INDEPENDENT REVIEW CONFIRMS UK CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY IS A "HIGHLY EFFECTIVE REGULATOR"

An independent review into UK aviation's regulatory body has reaffirmed its status as a "highly effective" industry regulator.

A report of the review of the UK's Civil Aviation Authority, published in July, noted that the CAA "continues to be held by its international contemporaries in the highest regard".

The report also set out a series of recommendations to maintain its high level of service, partly designed to enable the CAA to "better meet the challenges of the future, including helping the aviation sector

to introduce new technology safely and quickly".

Aviation Minister, Baroness Vere, said "The CAA is an effective and well-respected regulator for the UK aviation industry, balancing the interests of industry and consumers. I am pleased that this independent review recognises the CAA's status as a world-leading regulator, and it is only right that it strives to be even better to deliver for all its users in the future".

Sir Stephen Hillier, Chair of the UK CAA said "I very much welcome the review's confirmation that we are a

highly capable and internationally well-regarded aviation safety regulator. The review has helpfully also identified areas where we can improve. We welcome those recommendations: we are a learning organisation and always looking continuously to improve. I am confident that the implementation of the recommendations will help ensure that we are an ever-more forward-looking, efficient, effective and well-governed organisation constantly looking after aviation consumers' interests and constantly improving the service we provide to our regulated customers". ■

FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT LAUNCHES NEW LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE FOR ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY



Farnborough Airport, the UK's largest business aviation airport, has launched the Nexus, a new high-tech centre to host community and educational events.

Conceived by airport CEO, Simon Geere, as an inspirational focal point to bring local people into the airport, the Nexus offers state-of-the-art facilities for engagement, collaboration and learning, deploying the latest conferencing and events technology, including simultaneous in-room and virtual live-stream presentation capabilities. As well as hosting community and educational events, the Nexus will also be used as a learning and development centre for airport employees.

A local student from the University of the Creative Arts in Farnham

was commissioned to create a full-scale wall mural for the centre, paying homage to the success of the airport and the town of Farnborough, entitled 'One Airport. One Town. One Legacy'.

Geere said "Together with our community, we have a unique place in aviation history. We are proud of our pioneering legacy and the role that we have played in both our local community and wider economy over the years. It is difficult to think of another location where the airport and its local area are so inextricably linked".

"It is with this in mind" he said "that we are committed to further strengthening the bond between Farnborough Airport and the local community by making the airport more open and available for the benefit of the local area. We are



immensely proud to open the Nexus, a versatile space to bring people together and create a sense of belonging within the community. We want people to share in our story and our history as the home of British aviation, where innovation, education and community thrive together, ensuring a brighter and more prosperous tomorrow for all" ■

GATWICK SUBMITS PLANNING APPLICATION FOR ROUTINE USE OF ITS NORTHERN RUNWAY

London Gatwick Airport has submitted a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate outlining its ambition to bring the airport's existing Northern Runway into routine use alongside its Main Runway.

The Northern Runway is currently limited to acting as a taxiway, only available when the Main Runway is out of use. The application proposes repositioning the centre line of the Northern Runway 12 metres north to allow dual runway operations, aligning with international safety standards. The Northern Runway would be used for departing flights only.

Construction could start in 2025 and be completed and ready for operational use by the end of the decade. If approved, the plan

would help the airport meet future passenger demand by serving around 75 million passengers a year by the late 2030s. Gatwick said that its plan would leverage the airport's existing infrastructure to unlock new capacity and improve resilience, in line with government policy.

As part of the submission to the Planning Inspectorate, Gatwick offered legally binding commitments to ensure it controls noise levels and reduces carbon emissions under the airport's direct control.

The airport said that the plan could boost the region's economy by £1 billion every year and generate 14,000 new jobs. It noted that in a recent survey 78% of residents who expressed an opinion supported Gatwick's plan.

Stewart Wingate, the airport's CEO, said "The Northern Runway Plan will help secure the long-term future of the airport and economic prosperity for thousands of families, businesses, and future generations across the region. If approved, our plan will also improve airport resilience, meet future passenger demand, and increase competition in the London airport market, by providing new international connections to support 'Global Britain'".

He added that "the consultation and engagement activity over the past two years has been hugely valuable in shaping our plans to ensure they best meet the needs and requirements of local people, as well as our airlines, passengers and other stakeholders. We are confident that our plans are both economically and environmentally robust". ■



NEWCASTLE AIRPORT SOLAR FARM OFFICIALLY OPENED

Newcastle International Airport's solar farm has been officially opened by the Minister for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance, Lord Callanan.

The project marks a major milestone in the airport's strategy to become Net Zero Carbon by the year 2035.

Located on airport-owned land to the south eastern end of the runway, on a sunny day between mid-morning and late afternoon phase 1 of the scheme is able to supply all of the airport's electricity requirements. Further phases, currently being planned, will provide battery storage facilities to allow the solar farm to continue to provide renewable energy to the airport during cloudy days and throughout the night.

The scheme includes several areas of tree planting to screen the view of the solar farm from the surrounding roads and public rights of way. A wildflower meadow has been planted beneath the panels.

The airport's Chief Executive, Nick Jones, said "I am delighted to see the official opening of the site and to welcome Lord Callanan to the airport. We are committed to being a responsible organisation and alongside the significant investment in the new solar farm, the airport is investing in many other initiatives to help us reach our Net Zero target. One of these initiatives is the replacement of all vehicles on site with electric versions, which we can now charge with our own renewable energy source".

Lord Callanan said "It is great to see Newcastle International Airport launch its solar farm, helping to cut emissions and save on bills, while



showing others how solar power could power their business too. Solar is a key part of our plans to power up Britain, helping us to deliver cheaper, cleaner and more secure homegrown energy. I want to see more fantastic

projects, just like this one in my home town, being developed across the country as we drive Britain towards our goal of net zero by 2050". ■



THE AIRPORT
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