

THE AIRPORT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK
WINTER 2024

OPERATOR

BRISTOL AIRPORT
invests £400m

LONDON CITY AIRPORT
plans for growth

ONSHORE WIND
and aviation safety

AVIATION CONTRIBUTES £1BN
a week to UK economy

LONDON CITY AIRPORT CEO ALISON FITZGERALD

**"We're in a very strong
position to enter our
next phase of growth"**

Full programme inside





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WITH ITS CORPORATE PARTNERS,
GOLD AND SILVER MEMBERS**

CORPORATE PARTNERS



GOLD MEMBERS



SILVER MEMBERS



THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK

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KAREN DEE

INTRODUCTION TO THE AIRPORT OPERATOR



Hello and welcome to the winter edition of The Airport Operator magazine, accompanying the AirportsUK Annual Conference.

As we approach the end of the year, our thoughts naturally start to turn towards taking stock of everything that has happened over the previous 12 months and looking ahead to the next. 2024 has been a busy year, both in a general sense, and for airports in particular. We have obviously had a general election that saw a change of government, bringing with it the language of encouraging economic growth. This has been underpinned by a budget which has raised taxes by unprecedented amounts to try to stabilise the public finances. Only time will tell if it has the desired effect.

For airports overall, there has been good news in that passenger numbers for many are finally back to the levels we last saw in 2019, before the pandemic. There are obviously nuances in the picture, but on the whole the story is one of a good recovery.

There have been frustrations – the temporary reintroduction of the 100ml rule for liquids; the continued delay of the European Entry/Exit System; and ongoing uncertainty of planning decisions, to name a few. But there have also been positive outcomes – practical approaches to NGSC implementation; continued support for SAF and airspace modernisation through changes in government; and new private investment in airport facilities and operations.

This is the context in which we meet at the AirportsUK annual conference to discuss how UK airports can put the UK on a Flightpath to Growth. We have a stellar cast of speakers, including Aviation Minister, Mike Kane MP, former Conservative Aviation Minister, Baroness Charlotte Vere, Westminster insider and Financial Times Political Editor, George Parker, as well as a host of senior aviation sector leaders.

They will give delegates unparalleled insight into the current political environment, how the new government and opposition are likely to approach their tasks, what

opportunities exist for engagement and where we should be focussing our efforts.

Panel discussions at this agenda-setting conference will focus in on how airports can support economic growth and local prosperity, continue to improve the passenger experience, develop the future workforce and drive sustainable performance. Our annual conferences give members a platform to come together and input into ongoing conversations about vital issues to airports and set the tone for our work in the year ahead. This one will be no different.

While on the subject of our events, I am pleased that we are also able to share our calendar for 2025, including dates for our ever-popular annual dinner, airports conferences on security and operations, our various working groups and roundtables.

Other things we have been focussing on at AirportsUK in recent weeks have included ongoing engagement with various departments about airports' business rates, government consultations on the industrial strategy and airspace modernisation, early conversations about upcoming border security strategies and engagement with new ministers, MPs and their teams.

I hope you enjoy the latest issue of The Airport Operator magazine. This quarter, we feature articles giving us a fascinating insight into what it is like to operate in the Shetlands and in the heart of London, on the cutting edge of fuel, security, energy, and airspace technology, and in a growing, dynamic sector leading the way on economic opportunities. We also have roundups on some of the latest activities of AirportsUK, including the outstanding security conference that took place in September, brand new research on the economic importance of airports and the new government's first budget.

All that remains is to wish you all a productive and prosperous end to 2024 from myself and everyone at AirportsUK and we look forward to working with you in 2025.

Karen Dee
Chief Executive

DAVE LEES

BRISTOL AIRPORT INVESTS £400M AND SETS ITS SIGHTS ON ROUTES TO NORTH AMERICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Bristol Airport has begun work on a transformational project to modernise and expand its terminal in preparation for further growth.

The airport's CEO, Dave Lees, told *The Airport Operator* "it is a fundamental part of our growth plans to realise routes across the Atlantic to the eastern seaboard and also into the Middle East with new aircraft, such as the Airbus A321neo". He promised that further details of how the airport is looking to achieve the opportunity to serve these and other routes will be set out shortly in a new airport master plan for the period to 2040.

Bristol Airport's passenger numbers last year were 9.8m, compared to 8.9m before the pandemic in 2019, a recovery that was achieved faster than at any of the other major airports in the UK. Lees attributes this to the airport's focus on European destinations, which came back quicker than long-haul routes, and on low-cost leisure routes. The airport has planning permission to

increase capacity from 10m to 12m passengers a year and this year numbers are expected to rise to 10.5m, which would represent a 7% increase on last year. That would put Bristol Airport at just under 120% versus 2019.

Lees believes that the airport's success can be attributed to three factors: "firstly, we have managed to attract, retain and grow our airline customer base, so easyJet has one of their single largest bases in the whole of the UK after Gatwick at Bristol and next year will be basing 19 aircraft at Bristol, with overall 39 aircraft based here; secondly, we have continued to have very supportive shareholders, so the infrastructure has continued to modernise; and thirdly, Bristol has the highest GVA per person, second only to the South East, so it is relatively prosperous and therefore there is

a higher propensity to travel than elsewhere in the UK".

Looking to the future, Lees said "we see ourselves as the gateway to the whole of the South West and West, serving more than 115 destinations, which is more than all the other airports in our region combined. We want to build on that pre-eminence by serving more destinations in Europe with greater frequency, but also look to broader connectivity, including across the Atlantic and into the Middle East, which are the single largest unserved destinations from our region".

Meanwhile, work has started on a £400m five-year investment programme designed to transform the customer experience both outside and inside the terminal building. Already the airport is more than halfway through the construction of a new £64m public

Dave Lees



“We want to build on that pre-eminence by serving more destinations in Europe with greater frequency, but also look to broader connectivity, including across the Atlantic and into the Middle East, which are the single largest unserved destinations from our region”.

transport interchange on top of a new multi-storey car park, which is due to open in time for next year's peak summer season.

Lees said "what it will deliver is absolutely transformational for us as the first and last impression for customers arriving or departing the airport. You will drive up to the top level of the car park for both buses and private vehicles and you will then be able to walk straight across to the terminal at the same level under cover. The public transport element of that will be nearly three times bigger than what we have got at the moment and our drop and go area will likewise be three times bigger than now. So this is going to represent a real step change and transform that customer experience".

Bus services to the airport are already improving, with a new service to Swansea and a new service planned for the M5 corridor, via Gloucester and Cheltenham to Birmingham. Next year will also see increased frequencies on the bus services into Bristol and Weston-super-Mare. Meanwhile the West of England combined authority is working on an outline business case work for a proposed new regional mass transit system, including a link to the airport, with the expectation of bringing that to fruition by 2030. Lees said that initially this is likely to be a segregated bus way from Bristol to the airport but in future could be a light tram.

Enabling works have already begun on a three-year phased development to modernise and expand Bristol Airport's terminal building, increasing the size of the terminal by over 50%, with a focus on the departure lounge to increase the food and beverage and retail offers, as well as increasing the size of both the immigration and baggage reclaim halls. There will also be additional car parking capacity, as well as new gates and stands. Lees said that, taken together, the



Meanwhile, work has started on a £400m five-year investment programme designed to transform the customer experience both outside and inside the terminal building.

changes would be "transformational for the airport".

An ambitious sustainability strategy includes plans to achieve Net Zero for the airport's own operations by 2030. By the end of this year the airport will have cut its carbon emissions by over 50% compared to 2019 and it has also set an interim target to have reduced its carbon emissions by 73% by 2027. The

reductions are being achieved through electrification of vehicles and the building of a new energy centre, to be completed by 2027, which will remove gas completely from the airport and replace it with air source pumps.

Earlier this year Bristol was the first airport in the UK to use hydrogen, by trialling gaseous hydrogen in a baggage tug. The tug was used in a live environment to take baggage to and from aircraft. The airport collaborated with the CAA on a safety case to mitigate risks associated with hydrogen. Lees described the trial as “a small, but a symbolic and important first step”. Now the airport is working on developing a plan on what size of hydrogen refilling capacity would be needed to service the needs of aircraft “so we can reflect that in our future land use plans” Lees said, “and we believe we will be one of the first airports to achieve that in the UK”. ■



Now the airport is working on developing a plan on what size of hydrogen refilling capacity would be needed to service the needs of aircraft “so we can reflect that in our future land use plans”.





PETER CAMPBELL - HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & MEDIA

BUDGET LEAVES UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The first Budget of a Labour party in government for 15 years finally took place at the end of October. This followed months of speculation about its contents, hints that the UK's financial situation was worse than first reported, and a series of stories indicative of a media that has nothing else to write about.

When chancellor Rachel Reeves, the first female to hold the position and to deliver a Budget, sat down, there could be little doubt left that this government did not like what it saw when it took a look through the books. Analysis on the days following the Budget focussed on its status as the biggest tax-raising financial statement in living memory.

There was the much-trailed increase in employers' national insurance contributions, which will raise an eye-watering £25bn per year by the end of the five-year forecast period. This led to serious questions about whether Labour had breached a manifesto commitment not to raise taxes on working people, considering OBR estimates that 80% of this tax rise will feed through to workers through smaller pay increases.

Spending increases were also announced, particularly for the NHS, and funded partly by the chancellor's new spending rules around how government assets are recorded on the books. This created up to £40bn of additional fiscal headroom, which Reeves earmarked for spending on social and economic infrastructure, which this government has identified as a priority.

On aviation, the government unveiled a small increase in Air Passenger Duty (APD) for those travelling on commercial flights to take account of the effect of inflation. The big rises came for those flying on private planes, however, with further rises likely to come following a review of the levels for business aviation.

The Advanced Fuel Fund was also extended for a further year, and an additional £975m of funding was promised for aerospace, which the government said was a sign of its commitment to decarbonising air travel. Finally, there were also



Peter Campbell

several reviews and consultations on measures like business rates and corporation tax, which will be relevant to aviation.

What was missing from this Budget, however, was any further announcement on measures such as planning reform, which Labour had been promising as part of its reforms to generate economic growth. That is undoubtedly why the data for this showed growth of only around 1.5% for the second half of the period covered by this budget, following two years of more than 2% growth because of increased spending.

AirportsUK's response to the Budget focussed on the need for government to recognise and champion the role that airports play in growth and international connectivity if it is serious about realising its aim for the UK to become the fastest growing economy in the G7. This should come through minimised tax and regulatory burdens and a planning system that promotes certainty and growth.

There is now expected to be a more comprehensive spending review in the spring next year, when further decisions will be made

What was missing from this Budget, however, was any further announcement on measures such as planning reform, which Labour had been promising as part of its reforms to generate economic growth.

on departmental funding for the three years from 2026. It will give us a clearer picture of what this government is seeking to prioritise during this parliament. We should also expect more information about how the proposed reforms will benefit economic growth, and show how this administration views the levers it has to drive it. ■

WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT

AVIATION AND WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT – BALANCING GROWTH AND SAFETY

Adele Gammarano, AirportsUK Regulations, Operations and Safety Manager reports:


The UK Government has taken a significant step toward enhancing the nation's renewable energy infrastructure by lifting the effective ban on new onshore wind farms, originally set in 2015. This policy shift, announced at the State Opening of Parliament, is part of a broader initiative to double the country's onshore wind capacity by 2030. A major undertaking within this initiative is the proposed 100-megawatt Scout Moor II wind farm in Lancashire, which could become the first large-scale onshore wind project, and the first approved in over a decade if it goes ahead.

STREAMLINING APPROVALS AND UPDATING POLICY

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) is spearheading the policy revisions, aligning onshore wind farm projects with other energy developments under the National Planning Policy Framework. The aim is to streamline the approvals process, making it more efficient for stakeholders to meet the country's renewable energy goals. As part of this initiative, DESNZ has established an Onshore Wind Task Force, composed of key stakeholders from various sectors, including aviation and defence. This task force will propose comprehensive guidelines to facilitate smoother approval processes and address any potential challenges related to onshore wind farms.

The expansion of onshore wind projects presents specific challenges, particularly concerning aviation safety. Wind turbines, which can reach considerable heights, have the potential to interfere with aviation systems, especially radar functionality. Turbines may create visual clutter on radar screens, making it difficult for air traffic control to accurately track aircraft. Additionally, the height of these turbines poses risks for Instrument Flight Procedures (IFP), which are critical for guiding aircraft during take-off and landing in poor visibility. Extra care is required to avoid obstructing flight paths, particularly for turbines that exceed 250 metres but there are also other areas that need to be taken into consideration, such as cumulative impacts, lightning and more.





As the number of onshore wind applications rises, the planning and review processes must be more agile to balance the need for renewable energy with aviation safety. Each proposed wind farm requires close coordination with aviation authorities to mitigate potential safety risks. Developers must conduct thorough pre-planning assessments and engage with aviation stakeholders to address these concerns through legal agreements and technical evaluations, which cover impacts on aviation systems.

The Civil Aviation Authority and the UK's airports have strict regulations aimed at protecting air safety and preventing interference with aviation operations. In past cases where wind developers have not engaged with these stakeholders early in the

project planning phase, project timelines became prolonged. Instead of issuing outright objections, aviation stakeholders work to safeguard their systems, which can require lengthy consultations, detailed technical assessments, or requests for modifications to the proposed projects; as part of their review, aviation stakeholders assess necessary mitigations and solutions, aiming to ensure that any impact on aviation systems is minimised.

In previous developments when conflicts couldn't be resolved, judicial reviews were sometimes used as a means to address these disagreements, adding further complexity and cost to the process.

To address these complexities, DESNZ and its Onshore Wind Task Force are focusing on improved early-stage communication with aviation stakeholders. This includes creating policies that help reduce planning delays and address gaps in expertise created by years of limited onshore wind development. While some airports, particularly those in Scotland, might be well-versed in the onshore wind approval process, others may lack experience, leading to inconsistencies in their ability to handle these applications. AirportsUK, an organisation that brings together UK airports, can play a valuable role in facilitating knowledge sharing and improving expertise across airports to better support onshore wind projects. Therefore, some of the operational working groups and individuals have contributed to the discussion so far by ensuring feasibility and addressing stakeholder concerns.

The expansion of onshore wind capacity offers significant benefits, from fostering green job creation to advancing the UK's environmental objectives and securing global investments in sustainable energy. However, achieving these goals requires maintaining the aviation sector's high safety standards, which



Adele Gammarano

As the number of onshore wind applications rises, the planning and review processes must be more agile to balance the need for renewable energy with aviation safety. Each proposed wind farm requires close coordination with aviation authorities to mitigate potential safety risks.



means engaging extensively with stakeholders, performing rigorous assessments, and maintaining ongoing dialogues to address any potential challenges proactively.

Through a collaborative approach, clear planning guidelines, and an emphasis on aviation safety, the UK can balance the growth of renewable energy with the integrity of its aviation sector. This proactive stance by the government represents a decisive step in addressing the climate

crisis. By prioritising stakeholder engagement, implementing robust safety measures, and establishing a transparent regulatory framework, the UK is set to advance its renewable energy targets while ensuring a sustainable, safe future for both energy and aviation. ■

ARUP

ARUP AVIATION CHIEF SAYS BETTER USE OF DATA CAN HELP UK AIRPORTS TO MANAGE POST-COVID PASSENGER GROWTH

UK airports can reduce operating costs, increase revenue, improve the passenger experience and reach their sustainability goals by managing data more efficiently, according to Alan Newbold, Arup's UK, India, Middle East and Africa Aviation Business Leader.

Newbold, who is also the company's Global Digital Aviation Leader, told The Airport Operator that airports have made good progress since the pandemic. "What is clear" he said "is that over time – and you can point to the modernisation of airspace, to airport collaborative decision-making and to integrated operational models – we are starting to see gains happening"

He sees data and digital as "an essential component of any efficient and resilient business. Data offers us the opportunity to get better insights into the challenges we have and digital can provide the solutions that

can be implemented to solve those challenges".

"When you start to gather data across your business" he says, "it can give you operational insights so you can see how things are working. So taking asset management systems and baggage handling operations you can then look at where you are efficient and where you are inefficient and hence reduce operating costs".

"Improving security by increasing speed and efficiency as well as enhancing the ease of the check-in process leads to happier passengers. When these more

relaxed passengers make it into the retail side of the operation they tend to spend more money. So it can help to increase revenue from non-aeronautical sources. Getting more planes in and more planes out also has this impact on aeronautical revenue – if you increase your efficiency, you are getting on-time departure and efficient on-time performance and operations".

Newbold says that where airports and airlines work together to send more information to customer's mobile phones, they can improve the passenger experience. "There is a customer expectation around integrated information," he says,

“Regardless of whether you are the airline or the airport there should be one delivery agent engine, so there are ways that they can come together to deliver a better passenger experience – more real-time information, more updates to people’s phones”.

For airports to reach their sustainability goals, Newbold is clear that efficient measurement and monitoring of data is “a strategic imperative. The first bits are easy. You can make some tactical decisions without measuring too much, but it is getting to those harder decisions as to how you restructure some of the things you do, where you need data. Once you start to measure carbon, noise, air quality, fuel burn and heat you are then able to look at how you improve that and positively impact

your Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions and across your supply chain. In addition, you will also be able to influence Scope 3 emissions through multi-fuel strategies and potentially changing commercial models to incentivise airlines that are more sustainable. So there are lots of options when you start to have this data available”.

He notes that Arup has worked with many airports including both London Gatwick and London Luton airports on sustainability. One Gatwick project was around supporting the airport to achieve its heat decarbonisation targets through an efficient and effective boiler replacement programme. At Luton, Arup has been supporting the airport’s expansion enabled by the green-controlled growth framework that measures and monitors noise,

greenhouse gases, air quality and surface access impacts, which, if approved, will enable the airport to expand within legally binding environmental constraints.

Newbold said that over the last five years there has been a significant move at UK airports towards gathering and storing data as well as leveraging it to do analytics and “that is where we enter what I think is going to be a very interesting next five to ten years, which is artificial intelligence, machine learning and generative AI”.

He acknowledged that “change and progress at the pace that technology leads us through is quite nerve-racking, but what we have got to do is make sure we have got the right regulation, the right policy and the right people





Alan Newbold

When you start to gather data across your business, it can give you operational insights. Taking asset management systems and baggage handling operations you can then look at where you are efficient and where you are inefficient and hence reduce operating costs.

who are really thinking about how this technology is being deployed, where it gets deployed and that it is smartly deployed. Unchecked, artificial intelligence, machine

learning, generative AI – the next developments – could be very challenging, but checked properly and used in the right applications they can become very powerful and

complementary to human decision-making”.

Looking ahead, Newbold suggested that “the one point where aviation can do better is around collaboration. The airport business model is about getting passengers to spend on the ground, generating non-aeronautical revenue, whereas for airlines it is all about getting planes in the sky. So there is a real challenge around the business models for the two and I think what we have all got to do is step back and say, ‘we are all in service of the customer and we need to be thinking really carefully about how we optimise that so that the customer gets exceptional service and exceptional experiences throughout that process”.

He said “airports are one component in a journey, so actually integrating surface access, whether it is conventional or high-speed rail or road, or other transport modes needs to be done at origin and at destination. Data collaboration is a part of that process as well - where we start to share data to make things better and I think that is one of the key things that we need to step back and look at”. ■

ARUP

Alan Newbold is Arup's Aviation Business Leader for the UK, India, the Middle East and Africa and Global Digital Aviation Leader. He has worked at Arup, which describes itself as a global engineering and sustainable development consultancy, for 26 years. He is also a Board Member of British Aviation Group and an External Advisory Board Member at the University of Bristol. Arup is a Corporate Partner of AirportsUK.



UKAIRPORTS HEALTH & SAFETY WORKING GROUP



RENEWED FOCUS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN THE AIRPORTSUK HEALTH AND SAFETY WORKING GROUP

The new co-chairs of the AirportsUK Health and Safety Working Group have committed to ensuring a continued focus on managing psychological safety for airport employees.

Emma Meenan, Head of Health and Safety at London Luton Airport (LLA), and Lee Alderson, HSE Operations Manager at London Gatwick, said learnings from the Covid pandemic, along with this year's Royal Aeronautical Society report on the mental health challenge to civil aviation safety, had put the spotlight on the issue.

London Luton Airport has recently been announced as the first airport in the world to achieve ISO 45003 certification – the global best practice standard for psychological health and safety at work. An independent assessment was



Emma Meenan



Lee Alderson

carried out by BSI, the UK's national standards body, to ensure that the required standard had been met by the airport.

LLA achieved the certification after developing and implementing a structured and wide-ranging programme of psychological health and safety initiatives. This included the launch of a comprehensive well-being management procedure designed to raise understanding of workplace factors that can lead to psychological harm.

Other initiatives included training for managers on managing effective well-being conversations and risk assessments to identify psychosocial hazards and encourage increased communication.

Meenan described the certification as "a landmark achievement that underlines the importance we attach to the psychological health, safety and wellbeing of our colleagues across the airport. Our comprehensive programme of psychological health and safety measures and initiatives has been instrumental in embedding and raising the profile of this hugely important area across the airport".

Speaking to The Airport Operator, Meenan and Alderson confirmed that the psychological health, safety and wellbeing of airport employees will be a key focus for the working group over the coming months.

Other issues the group will consider include new and emerging risks and shared issues like: contractor management; vehicle movements on the aerodrome and airport sites; shift working and fatigue management; musculoskeletal risks; manual handling; and working at height.

"However, nothing is off the table. As we are a collective group with the knowledge and experience of many airport operators and the companies that support them, we all learn from each other and share learnings from



Heathrow, large airport winner



Cornwall Airport Newquay, small airport winner

issues we identify or experience," Alderson explained.

At the group's most recent meeting at Glasgow Airport last month, Alderson shared the findings from studies on escalator and passenger conveyor incidents and how understanding proposed changes to the environment, human behaviour, cognitive load and decision-making points can support the assessment of measures to assist in minimising risk.

The meeting also heard a presentation by David Swain, Operations Director at AirportsUK

Silver Member, Ethos Farm, on driving safety improvements and customer excellence through strategic collaboration.

Meenan has been involved in airport health and safety management for over 15 years and said: "It is an important and fascinating field to work in. At an airport there are always so many different considerations to factor, from airside and terminal operations, through to general maintenance, car park management, cargo operations, airport security operations, baggage handling, construction and

contractor management”.

Commenting on how health and safety has changed over the years, she said she felt that at airports, as in other sectors, the subject is an integral part of business activity. “Alongside a broader and deeper focus on health and safety processes and procedures, the culture has changed with organisations placing it at the heart of day-to-day operations and decisions. The health and safety role has evolved from ensuring worker and passenger safety to a multi-faceted approach that spans physical safety, security, mental health, environmental concerns and public health. Technological advances, regulatory changes and the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic have all shaped how health and safety is analysed and managed in airports, making it an integral and complex part of airport operations”.

The working group will continue to take the lead in organising UK Airports Health and Safety Week, which will take place next year from 19 to 23 May. Meenan and Alderson have said the week provides “a useful and important opportunity to engage with airport workers and the wider airport community, including airlines, concessions and third-party service providers, to raise awareness on health, safety and wellbeing topics, which not only increases engagement and collaboration, but also boosts morale”.

They described the awards associated with the week as “a good opportunity for airports to showcase progressive thinking and innovative approaches and have their hard work and achievements recognised. It also demonstrates their commitment to health and safety management”.

The winners of this year’s awards, sponsored by Leidos and supported by the UK Civil Aviation Authority and the Health and Safety



Cardiff, medium airport winner

Executive, were announced in October. Award submissions focussed on three priorities – personal protective equipment, working at height and airside environment safety for staff and passengers – and the best initiatives to improve safety in them.

Heathrow won the award for large airports, with Bristol and Birmingham highly commended. Cardiff was the winner in the medium airports category, with London City highly commended. The small airports category winner was Cornwall Newquay, with Farnborough highly commended.

Nicola Jaynes, HM Inspector of Health and Safety at the Health and Safety Executive, co-chair of the judging panel said, “it is really great to see how airports continue to support colleagues, passengers and local communities by building and maintaining a safe and healthy travel environment”.

Co-chair, Neil Gray, Principal Aerodrome Inspector at the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said “these were extremely difficult decisions this year, with amazing entries from airports all over the UK. Airports are key parts of the country’s infrastructure, helping people travel all over the world and employing

thousands of people, so keeping them all safe is the number one priority”.

Adele Gammarano, AirportsUK Regulations, Operations and Safety Manager, said: “Huge congratulations to our winners and a heartfelt thank you to all participants for the incredible enthusiasm and dedication that went into creating an impressive lineup of activities. The level of commitment behind the scenes is especially commendable in an operational airport environment”.

She added that “events like these truly showcase the power of collaboration, and it was a challenging task for both the HSE and the CAA to evaluate the entries, as many airports scored remarkably closely to one another. My deepest gratitude goes to Nicola Jaynes and Neil Gray for their dedication in guiding this year’s event, supporting members throughout, and for their invaluable role in judging the entries”. ■

MENTAL HEALTH

HEATHROW WELLBEING DIRECTOR PRAISES AIRPORTSUK LEADERSHIP ON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Amanda Owen MBE, Safety, Health and Wellbeing Director, at Heathrow Airport has welcomed a decision by AirportsUK to facilitate discussions on mental health issues at airports.

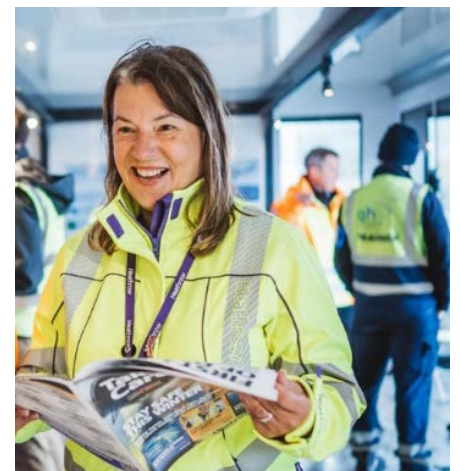
She said that the association's agreement to set up a sub-group under its Health and Safety working group to focus on psychosocial risk management and mental health gives a higher profile to the issues "and will raise awareness that we need to consider these as risks as we do other risks in the industry and have an approach that really focuses on the organisational factors".

Owen pointed to "more research coming out that says that 'yoghurt, yoga and fruit baskets' make no difference whatsoever. It truly is the organisational factors that we need to pay attention to, as well as supporting people when they need it - having a psychologically safe environment and one where there is trust between manager and line manager, which is the most crucial factor of all, so that an honest conversation can be had".

The agreement to establish the

new AirportsUK sub-group followed a report earlier this year from the Royal Aeronautical Society (RaeS) on the mental health challenge to civil aviation safety in the 21st century. While much of the report dealt with aircrews, it also identified airport operations as one of the principal safety critical stakeholder groups.

Owen said "this is a real issue for our industry and the industry needs to respond to it. It is important to raise awareness across the industry, beyond crew. Who better to respond around airports than AirportsUK in terms of bringing the community together. This needs a specific and dedicated response and so AirportsUK is establishing a separate group on psychosocial risk and mental health, partly because it is significant enough to need focus, but also because in some organisations the people working on this are not the same people as those who are working on safety".



Amanda Owen MBE

"Our aim" she said "will be to understand the risks and understand what good practice looks like already across our industry. We recognised the value of ISO45003, which focuses on psychosocial risks within organisations, and we also started to consider whether there would be value in there being specific BSI standards to guide us as an industry, and we felt that would

be a positive thing”.

Psychosocial risk management looks at the combined influence of psychological factors and the workplace environment, including aspects of the workplace that can cause psychological harm to employees. In the case of airports, Owen said that for some employees these might include shift work and sleep deprivation, noise and exposure to heat in the summer and cold in the winter.

She said that she hopes the new AirportsUK group will encourage airports across the country to seek to achieve parity between mental and physical fitness. “We need to understand” she said “that the people working at airports are human beings, coping with life’s challenges. They are not going to come into work every day with their batteries full. As organisations, we need to understand the impact of a colleague not being at their best, spot the signs and understand what the impact could be on their job, especially if it is safety critical. If people are not in a good place mentally, they are more likely to take risks and make mistakes”.

Discussing how Heathrow handles the issues, she said that she had presented the RAeS report to the airport’s Board “and they were very supportive of the work that we are doing to have an approach to well-being which combines organisational and individual factors. Heathrow’s model is healthy minds, healthy bodies, healthy work and healthy teams”.

The airport’s Chief Operating Officer, Javier Echave, is also Chair of Business in the Community’s wellbeing leadership team, a role in which he commissioned a report from the McKinsey Health Institute on the economic value of improved employee wellbeing, which showed that the economic value of improved employee wellbeing to the UK could be up to £370bn a year.



Javier Echave

Commenting on the report, Echave said “Investing in employee wellbeing is not only the right thing to do but it could also lead to a significant gain for the UK economy. We wanted to showcase the positives of businesses investing in their people to encourage more leaders to make this a boardroom priority. If business leaders invest in the right initiative and prioritise their people, they will reap the rewards”.

Heathrow’s initiatives on mental health include training over 1,600 managers in mental fitness as part of its leadership and management programme. The training helps managers to understand where they are on a mood lift chart, a mental health continuum from excelling to in crisis and, depending on their mood, how that is likely to impact on their decisions and behaviours. Heathrow also marked World Mental Health Day (10 October) by turning Terminal 3 green.

Owen said “we have helped managers understand in themselves and then in their colleagues where they are and what to do if they see people that are further down the curve – equipping managers to feel safe and confident to have the conversations about mental health. We are not counsellors, we are not there to solve, but we are there to listen and support and help

Investing in employee wellbeing is not only the right thing to do but it could also lead to a significant gain for the UK economy.

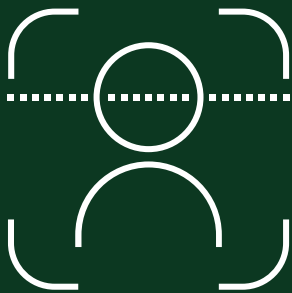
colleagues into the support that they might need at that time”.

Adele Gammarano, the airport regulation and operational safety manager at AirportsUK, expressed strong support for the proposed initiatives that prioritise psychological wellbeing in airport settings. She emphasised that airports stand to gain valuable insights from best practices on how to foster meaningful discussions around mental health and wellbeing.

During the initial forum, a majority of members showed interest in learning from airports that are leading the way in this commitment, particularly in terms of innovative policies, procedures and departmental wellbeing risk assessment processes. ■

SITA

MAKING SEAMLESS POSSIBLE



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ICTS

AI-ENHANCED AIRPORT SECURITY SCREENING SUCCESSFULLY PILOTED BY ICTS

ICTS UK, in collaboration with the Department for Transport (DfT), has conducted successful trials of a groundbreaking security screening interface that merges cutting-edge artificial intelligence with the proficiency of human screeners.

Alan Dutt, the Executive Director of Aviation at ICTS and a veteran with 35 years' experience in the aviation security industry, shared insights with The Airport Operator about the promising results of the ICTS Inner Eye technology. This innovative system, which is five times faster than traditional screening methods, allows users to screen up to three images per second. As ICTS moves forward, further tests are planned to secure regulatory approval from DfT for the technology's deployment at UK airports.

Dutt highlighted the technology's potential to enhance airport security by monitoring neural activity to detect insider threats. He explained, "The Inner Eye method picks up neural activity if something incorrect is happening. We can never rule out that someone within may want to harm us, but even with the insider threat, if someone was going to do something and they saw a device on the screen, the neural activity would still pick it up. This is a tool which, to some degree, would prevent someone allowing something in purposefully".

Additionally, Inner Eye helps identify inadvertent human errors by security screeners. "It monitors the focus of the screener on the screen," Dutt said. "If someone's attention is distracted, that may lead to missing a bag. If someone is tired and they are not paying that attention, it shows us the attention level of the screener".

Dutt also emphasised how the technology can improve compliance and efficiency, reduce costs and enhance the customer experience. "If you are processing quicker" he said "if you are more compliant than you currently are, you can focus more of your resources on that customer service side. By screening more bags, you lower costs. This is a tool that is created to make the job easier for the screener".

Beyond improving the screening



Alan Dutt

"I think that the industry as a whole has had a good year. We are getting the people through. Long delays at security seem to be behind us now. There has been a lot of investment by a number of parties to ensure that we don't go back to that, and a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes."

process, Inner Eye could revolutionise the recruitment process for screeners. "If you put someone through five minutes of this," Dutt noted, "it is almost like a psychometric test. You can see if they are good at picking up certain images, colours, focus or attention span. A five-minute Inner Eye test will basically tell us who is more suited to the job and who is less suited".

Reflecting on the post-Covid recruitment challenges for security staff, Dutt observed that the situation has significantly improved. "I think that the industry as a whole has had a good year. We are getting the people through. Long delays at security seem to be behind us now. There has been a lot of investment by a number of parties to ensure that we don't go back to that, and a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes".

Looking ahead, Dutt mentioned ICTS's focus on data credibility and the use of AI to optimise operations,

efficiencies and compliance. "There is a lot of data we can collect in partnership with the airports. There is a real drive to make it a better environment for all the employees and passengers. Once we have all the data, we can look into it, we can get information from it and extract valuable outputs from it, that places people at the right time, at the right place, for the right job". ■



ICTS UK and Ireland is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner. In the UK it currently provides security services at Aberdeen, Bristol, Edinburgh, Gatwick, Glasgow, Heathrow, Manchester and Southampton airports.



SUMBURGH AIRPORT

FROM PIONEERS TO PASSENGERS: SUMBURGH AIRPORT'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME



Airport operation teams are used to dealing with a range of tasks, but for the team at Sumburgh Airport, managing road traffic is an everyday job which puts them in an unusual position. Located on the southern tip of the Shetland mainland, the airport is one of the northernmost sites owned by Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL).

Sumburgh Airport is the only airport in the world to have a runway with a road crossing it, managed by a barrier control. This title used to be shared with Gibraltar airport, but thanks to a new road tunnel built to divert traffic there, this has left the Scottish airport with this unique challenge.

The original airfield opened in 1936 with an inaugural flight from Aberdeen, piloted by the aviation pioneer, Captain EE Fresson, who was instrumental in developing the airfield in the years that followed. The new flights that arrived brought about great changes in communication for islanders, enabling them to receive mail and newspapers on the same day, which was previously unheard of.

The early airfield was also one of the first to utilise Radio Direction Finder (RDF) to deal with the low cloud and fog issues which plagued the location, along with its proximity to Sumburgh Head, which is now a bird reserve. Capt. Fresson was a strong advocate for providing all-year round landing facilities at Sumburgh to the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force and by 1941 there were three operational runways.

During the Second World War, the airfield was taken over by the Air Ministry and became the base for a number of air squadrons including half of 404 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force. It played a key role in providing support for coastal raids to protect shipping off the coast of Norway and the North Sea.

Scheduled flights continued during the war and in 1946 these increased to include British European Airways with the main runway lengthened in the 1960s. Expansion of the site continued and in the early 1970s, scheduled services from Aberdeen were introduced to connect with helicopter operations to service the oil and gas industry, which evolved out of North Sea hydrocarbon exploration.



Today the airport operates three runways with one, Runway 06/24, dedicated to the busy helicopter traffic. Sumburgh is also used as an operational base by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, providing a maritime and coastal search and rescue emergency coordination and response service.

“The airport balances its role to support air connectivity for the local community with services to the oil and gas industry, as well as providing logistical support for the growing renewable sector,” explains General Manager at the airport Andrew Farquhar, the born and bred Shetlander who takes immense



briefings.

Improvements were also made to the check-in facilities, creating a larger baggage search area and to the airport's fire station and air traffic control tower.

In 2022 a £2.9 million runway rehabilitation project to resurface Runway 06/24 took place, which Andrew described as "protecting future connectivity for Shetland and cementing the airport's role as a strategic hub for the oil and gas industry."

The airport has recently welcomed a new café concessionaire, who has also opened a shop offering local gifts, which is proving popular. The 'West Voe' Quiet Room, named after a beautiful beach, located close to the airport, is another new addition to the airport's facilities. It provides space for passengers wanting to escape the noise and bustle of the departure lounge and was developed by the airport

team in partnership with the Airport Accessibility Users Group. ■

For more information visit www.hial.co.uk/sumburgh-airport

Members of the Airport Accessibility Users Group pictured Left to Right: - Stephanie Bain, Team Leader of Ability Shetland, Susan Mail, Airport Services Manager at Sumburgh Airport and Marie Pottinger, Chair of Shetland SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity).

pride in the work of his team.

He added that "Scheduled flights are provided by Loganair to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Kirkwall plus seasonal flights to Bergen with a flight time just one hour. Passengers can also take advantage of flights to Heathrow via Dundee with the return of this route connecting Shetland and Orkney in summer 2023. Passenger levels are strong with over 300,000 people travelling through the airport each year."

In 2017, Humza Yousaf MSP, the then Scottish Transport Minister, visited to mark a three-year £7million investment in the airport which included: the introduction of larger security screening areas; upgrades to the main departure lounge; improvements to the hangars used by the energy sector; refurbishment of the dedicated lounge for offshore workers; and the development of a dedicated arrivals hall offering space for suit issue and safety



"Accessibility for all passengers is a key part of what we offer at Sumburgh Airport. Providing an area for anyone travelling to or from medical appointments or for anyone requiring a peaceful space, is something we are delighted to offer, and a great example of how the airport fulfils its role as part of the community both now and in the future."



LEIDOS

TRANSFORMING SECURITY: UK AIRPORTS EMBRACE NEXT-GEN CHECKPOINTS FOR SEAMLESS TRAVEL

By Nick Tremlett, Checkpoint Sales Manager, Leidos

In 2024 UK airports faced significant challenges as they worked to meet the UK Government's mandate for Next Generation Security Checkpoints (NGSC).

Leidos stepped up to support this initiative, installing advanced security lanes in six UK airports over the past year. The partnership and collaboration with these airports have helped them achieve

compliance efficiently, while providing a better experience for staff and passengers.

A cornerstone of these NGSCs is computed tomography (CT) cabin baggage scanners. When the 100ml limit on liquids, aerosols and gels was reinstated it posed an operational challenge for airports already equipped with CT technology. Unlike traditional methods, CT scanners allow

passengers to leave electronics and approved liquids in their bags, streamlining the screening process. Airports equipped with CT technology had to adapt quickly, while those still operating under the 100ml rule experienced minimal disruption during this transitional phase.

The Leidos ClearScan CT scanner exemplifies advanced technology within the Leidos lane, delivering

high levels of explosive detection with dual-energy CT technology and Trusted Mission AI detection algorithms. This system is designed to identify threats, including solid, liquid and sheet explosives and smaller emerging threats such as homemade explosives. Additionally, the Leidos lane integrates millimetre wave people screening and the ProPassage Automated Tray Return System (ATRS), both of which aim to expedite the passenger screening process. Throughput rates of up to 500 passengers per hour can be achieved when using a Leidos lane.

Modern airport checkpoints also benefit significantly from the use of an ATRS integrated with their baggage scanner. Unlike traditional setups, where trays are manually pushed onto conveyors and often require staff to return empty trays, an ATRS automates the entire tray circulation process. After passengers retrieve their belongings, empty trays are automatically routed back to the front of the line, ready for the next passenger.

Traditional ATRS functionality include parallel divestment lanes, where passengers line up at multiple stations to divest their belongings into trays. In this setup passengers often remove electronics and liquids from their bags and are responsible for manually pushing trays onto the conveyor belt or waiting for assistance. This process, while significantly more efficient than non-automated lanes, can lead to inefficiencies due to varying divestment speeds among passengers and often requires staff intervention to keep trays moving.

The innovative ProPassage SmartPAD system renders these divestment practices obsolete with its unique, three-stage divestment management solution. The SmartPAD mitigates the varying speeds of passenger divestment, sequencing trays into scanners as they become available and



Nick Tremlett

eliminating the need for security officers to handle trays manually. As one airport reported, SmartPAD enabled it to reduce its divestment staff from six to three, allowing redeployment to other essential passenger screening roles.

Airport operators enjoy many benefits from NGSCs. The scanning capabilities, powered by AI-based algorithms, support enhanced threat detection while minimising unnecessary secondary screenings. The automation keeps the flow of passengers moving while enabling personnel to be redirected to other security tasks and functions,

including remote screening. Another benefit is the improved user experience for personnel as these technologies aid in their effectiveness.

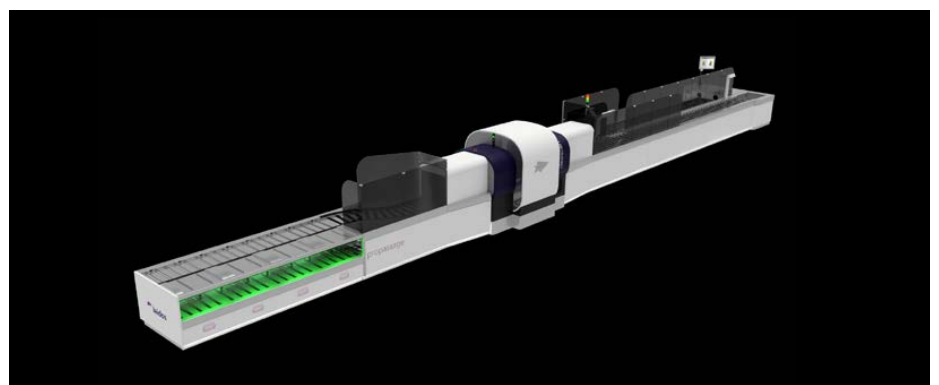
Passengers also benefit from NGSCs. The advanced technologies result in lower false alarm rates reducing the need for secondary screening, which can make passengers uncomfortable. The divest requirements are lessened, reducing the time and stress preparing belongings for screening. Also, airports can use fewer lanes and achieve the same level of throughput, providing more room to navigate the checkpoint area.

As a global provider of security solutions, Leidos is committed to high-quality innovation to enhance safety and security while helping operational efficiency. The ProPassage ATRS systems are manufactured at the Leidos facility in Bedford in the UK, while the ClearScan ECAC Standard 3 (C3) systems are produced at Leidos' facility in South Carolina in the United States. ■



Leidos is an AirportsUK Gold Member.

The innovative ProPassage SmartPAD system renders these divestment practices obsolete with its unique, three-stage divestment management solution.





THALES

HOW DIGITAL INNOVATION IS REVOLUTIONISING THE PASSENGER JOURNEY FROM HOME TO PLANE

by Sébastien Guérémy, Vice-President Digital Identity and Verification Solutions at Thales

In the fast-evolving landscape of air travel, the integration of new technologies such as digital IDs and biometrics, together with appropriate cybersecurity measures, is set to transform the passenger journey from start to end. These advancements promise to improve the efficiency, security, and overall travel experience, from remote check-in to arrival at the destination. As airports and airlines

embrace these advancements, the future of air travel appears more frictionless and safer than ever.

DIGITAL IDs: THE FOUNDATION OF SEAMLESS TRAVEL

Digital advances began to improve the passenger experience years ago. More and more people are checking in online and remotely, minimising their time spent at the airport. With the advent of digital

IDs in the world, the whole process will be made easier because passengers will be able to prove their identity straight from their safe Digital Wallet.

Not only will ID Verification be easier, but it will also be more effective: these digital credentials, safeguarded in a passenger's secure digital wallet, will replace traditional physical IDs and travel documents, eliminating the need

for passengers to carry numerous kinds of identification. This is why ICAO has started to standardise the Digital Travel Credential, a digital version of the passport.

By reducing the necessity for physical interactions which became more important in the post-pandemic age, digital IDs considerably increase airport operational efficiency. According to IATA, it can for instance shorten check-in times by up to 40%.

BIOMETRICS: ENHANCING SECURITY AND CONVENIENCE

Modern air travel is increasingly relying on biometric technology such as face recognition, fingerprint scanning, and iris recognition. These technologies give a high degree of security, which is why they have long been utilised at border control checkpoints. In addition, biometrics provide a huge advantage: they are readily digitised and coupled with a digital ID, allowing passengers to establish their identification at every airport checkpoint without having to submit physical or even digital papers again. Your face simultaneously serves as both a boarding permit and a travel document.

The use of biometric boarding, for example, allows customers to board their plane using facial recognition technology. The passenger is recognised via face capture and recognition, and both the boarding pass and the ID document are automatically reviewed, allowing for a quick and secure boarding process. According to IATA, 73% of passengers are willing to use biometrics to improve the passenger experience.

CYBERSECURITY: PROTECTING PASSENGER DATA

As air travel becomes more digitised, the security of passenger data is critical. Cybersecurity measures must be powerful to secure sensitive information held in digital IDs and



Sébastien Guérémy



biometric systems. Airports and airlines must invest in cutting-edge cybersecurity solutions to protect against potential threats including data breaches, identity theft, and cyberattacks.

Advanced encryption technologies are required to safeguard digital identities and biometric data against illegal access. Indeed, comprehensive techniques may be used to securely transmit and store sensitive passenger information, ensuring that it stays secret and tamper-proof.

THE PATH TO A FULLY INTEGRATED PASSENGER JOURNEY

To create the fully integrated end-to-end passenger journey, all stakeholders in the air travel ecosystem must work together and implement these new technologies.

The advantages of an end-to-end digital passenger journey go beyond convenience and efficiency. By minimising the need for physical interactions and paperwork, these technologies can improve air travel safety and security.

Airports, airlines, government agencies, and technology suppliers must collaborate to develop seamless and interoperable systems that ensure the smooth flow of passengers at each stage of their journey.

The creation of a single, unified digital identity that can be utilised across several platforms and jurisdictions is an important step in achieving this goal. This will allow travellers to use the same digital ID to purchase tickets, check in, go through security, and board their flights, regardless of airline or location. Governments play an important role in this shift by establishing standards and legislation to assure the interoperability and security of digital IDs and biometric technologies.

The advantages of an end-to-end digital passenger journey go beyond convenience and efficiency. By minimising the need for physical interactions and paperwork, these technologies can improve air travel safety and security. Passengers can have a more tailored and stress-free travel experience, while airports and airlines may improve their operations. ■

SITA

TECH INNOVATION WILL TRANSFORM THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND AIRPORT BUSINESS MODELS OVER THE NEXT DECADE

SITA, the world's leading specialist in air transport technology, is forecasting a revolution in how airports operate over the next 10 to 15 years.

Drew Wilby, the company's Business Development Manager for Passengers and Baggage in Europe, told The Airport Operator that greater use of smart phones by passengers will lead to a gradual decline of conventional check in desks, while the use of 3D imaging could unlock the possibility of a future without the need for baggage tags.

His colleague, Kevin O'Sullivan, Lead Engineer at SITA Lab, added that generative AI will provide passengers with personalised digital assistants and guide decision-making in airport operations control rooms.

CHECK-IN DESKS

Ryanair boss, Michael O'Leary,

announced in October that his airline aims to eliminate paper boarding passes and remove airport check-in desks by next May. Passengers will need to check in online or on the Ryanair app before arriving at the airport. Currently 60% of passengers are using the app and O'Leary expects this to rise to 80% by the end of this year.

Wilby said that a combination of various factors is driving a change in the common use model for passenger processing, creating differing challenges for airlines and airports. These factors include the drive by most airlines for passenger adoption of mobile boarding passes, dependence on airport self-service technology and the increased expectation by travellers

and airports' workers to use mobile devices in their day-day lives both in and outside of work.

At the moment, Wilby said, "to process passengers manually via an agent behind a desk in an airport bears a human resource cost, a desk hire cost from the airport, rental of the infrastructure behind the check-in desk from the technology provider, certification of the application on the workstation behind the desk and the expense of legacy network connectivity to the airline back-office check-in system. Whereas moving everything onto mobile for both passenger and agent reduces all of those and could eradicate some".

"We have been challenged by our customers" he said, "bringing

Indleveret bagage Checked-in baggage	Årsårske stoffer Fire 	Corrosives Acid
	Andre farlige genstande og stoffer I alle magtens materialer, miljøskadelige stoffer 	Other dangerous articles or substances i g. miljøfarlige materialer or environmentally hazardous substances.
Vi kan modtage i indleveret bagage	Vi kan modtage i indleveret bagage	May be carried in checked baggage only
Spandene til brug i kassen i køkkenet med sportstødder m.v. og bare indstillet i udløb og ikke brandfarligt	Spandene til brug i kassen i køkkenet med sportstødder m.v. og bare indstillet i udløb og ikke brandfarligt	Non-flammable and non-toxic aerosols for sport or home use max 7 kg and max 300 ml in each container
Vi modtager i håndbagagen	Vi modtager i håndbagagen	May be carried in other baggage
Trykflasker til medicinsk brug eller affald med lufttryksmiddel	Trykflasker til medicinsk brug eller affald med lufttryksmiddel	Pressurized cylinders for medical use airline approval required
	Lithium-batterier - i størrelse svarende til købt og sælgt - må kun modtages i håndbagagen. Store lithium-batterier kan efter afstemning modtages i håndbagagen	Lithium batteries - in sizes corresponding to tablets and tablets - may only be packed in carry-on baggage. Larger lithium batteries can only be carried subject to approval by your airline
Sikkerhedspersonalet kan afvise enhver genstand eller stoffer, der vurderes som farlig	Sikkerhedspersonalet kan afvise enhver genstand eller stoffer, der vurderes som farlig	Security staff may refuse any article or substances which are assessed as dangerous
Dette bote er vejledende og ikke bindende	Dette bote er vejledende og ikke bindende	These are guidelines, not a complete list



At SITA we have looked at how we can provide our customers with a bigger bang for their buck and make our entire global infrastructure much more flexible to be used to meet the customers' requirement at the time.

more equipment into the airport to support self-service processing whilst still supporting the same level of legacy brings about higher support and maintenance costs. This also goes against the collective sustainability goals that the aviation industry has. Airlines are increasingly wanting to take more processing out of airports, empowering both the agent and passenger, whilst making their journey through their airport or their job supporting the customer better. At SITA we have looked at how we can provide our customers with a bigger bang for their buck and make our entire global infrastructure much more flexible to be used to meet the customers' requirement at the time. We have had to look at this flexibility of our solutions completely from a mobile angle whilst thinking outside the box on how existing hardware in airports can be used differently without

continuously needing to deploy more devices to increase capacity and to reduce transaction times".

BAGGAGE TAGS

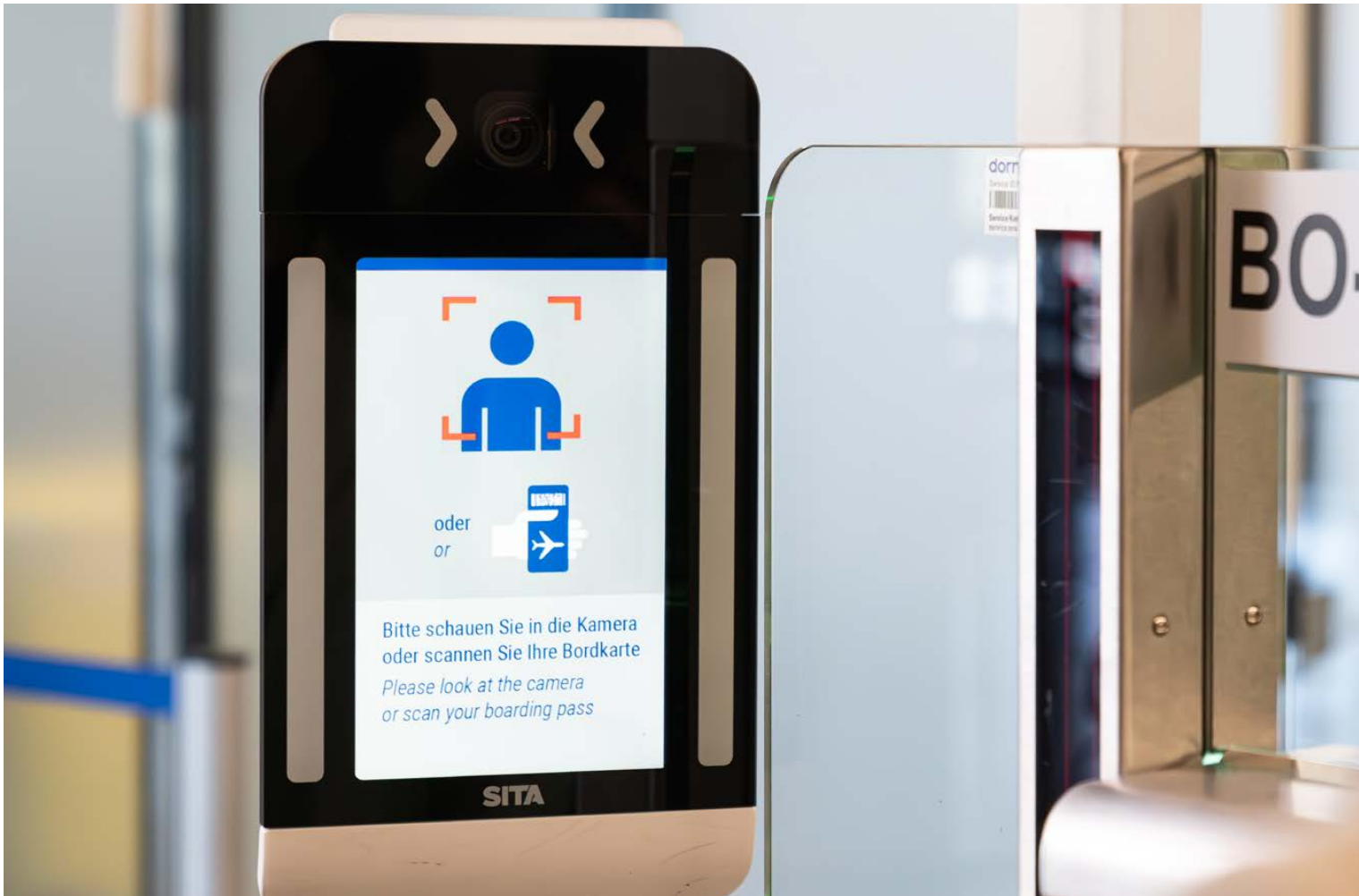
On bag drops, Wilby said "we have airports asking us ultimately to find a way to meet a straightforward goal - how passengers can walk into an airport, throw their bag into a hole in the wall, with no bag tag attached and no need to scan any boarding pass or interact with any devices. You can now place your bag on a belt, not touch it, stand back and the tech does everything

else. We are at a point where the industry is testing the ability to dynamically track bags through 3D imaging via their shape, size, contents (and positioning of them) and weight".

BIOMETRICS

Wilby added that the use of biometrics at airports is currently being held back not by technology, but by regulatory concerns. "Biometrics has been around for ten years. We can easily put in a solution at an airport that allows you as a travelling customer to

By sharing data, we can have better operational outcomes and uplift non-aeronautical revenue. About 60 or 70% of the industry's data flows through our networks and it is our responsibility to deliver that data.



check in at home, enrol into a biometric system, go through an airport and board an aircraft without ever taking your boarding pass or passport out. The problem is on arrival, as the other airport often doesn't support that. Through a mix of technology and government legislation, when you get there, you still need to have the documentation available to present". A recent opinion from the European Data Protection Board is halting a lot of biometric deployments in Europe; the opinion ruled out verification of passenger identity with biometrics on the grounds that "this would result in an excessive processing of data".

GENERATIVE AI

O'Sullivan said that he expects generative AI to become a significant support tool for both passengers and airport staff. He

forecast that "passengers will have a digital assistant that they can interact with in any language via text or voice. This will be deeply personalised so it will understand where you are on your journey, and what you need to know next. Passengers will interact with the assistant in a natural language exchange, with a very conversational response to questions".

On the staff side, he expects that AI will become a big benefit for newly recruited staff. "If you look at people in an airport ops control room" he said "a huge number of experienced people will be exiting the industry in the next decade. The younger generation coming in will need to be ready to make complex decisions. That is where these AI tools come in. They can read, digest and understand the standard operating procedure and be a decision support tool for the operations team. This technology is brand new, so you will need to take careful steps to ensure you have things in place to manage those risks. It will be a person making the final decision, but AI will make it easier for that person to make the right decision".

DATA SHARING

Looking ahead, O'Sullivan emphasised the role that SITA could play in promoting data sharing between airports and airlines. He said "data is the life blood of the industry. Historically airports and airlines never wanted to share data, but there has been a shift over the last five to ten years. By sharing data, we can have better operational outcomes and uplift non-aeronautical revenue. About 60 or 70% of the industry's data flows through our networks and it is our responsibility to deliver that data. Is there a way that we can, on behalf of the industry, provide a different approach to data-sharing, so airlines and airports can share it with us and then we will take the

responsibility of aggregating that data to produce a more complete data set, and extract intelligence about it? Technologically this can be done. It is more a question of a mind shift. As an industry, are we open to sharing our data this way to improve overall operations?"

SITA AS A CONSULTANT ON FUTURE TRENDS

In conclusion, Wilby said that airlines and airports want to see "what SITA is working on that is five or ten years down the line. Our customers are expecting more of us as an adviser and consultant so that they can put the right investments in the right areas to remain competitive in the market, meet their sustainability goals and create a great customer experience for passengers travelling through their airport, all in a cost-effective manner, of course". O'Sullivan said "We know where the trends are going in terms of increasing pressure on resources and increasing number of elderly passengers travelling through the airport. There are sustainability issues. We need to advise on how technology can assist us with those and other challenges over the next five to ten years". ■



Kevin O'Sullivan



Drew Wilby



SITA is an AirportsUK Gold Member.





STEER

AVIATION CONTRIBUTES £1BN A WEEK TO ECONOMY ACCORDING TO NEW ANALYSIS

Peter Campbell, AirportsUK Head of Public Affairs and Media, summarises new analysis on aviation's contribution to the UK economy:

A new piece of economic analysis for AirportsUK by the consultancy Steer has found that aviation contributes over £1bn per week to the UK economy. This is through the activities at UK airports, the jobs created, the money spent by those travelling through, and economic activity stimulated in the areas surrounding airports.

It also showed that almost £100bn of gross value added (GVA) is currently dependent on air freight exports from our airports, covering all sectors of the economy. This represents 4.3% of the total GVA measures of national output and is particularly important to the transport, pharmaceuticals and machinery and equipment sectors of the economy.

The report also demonstrates the regional impact of airports, highlighting the role they play in local economies and spreading wealth and investment across all areas of the UK. For example, 8.4% or £5.3bn of the North East's GVA is currently dependent on air freight, while the figure for Wales is 7.1%, the West Midlands 6.5% and the South West 5.5%.

Just how important airports are to tourism, international students and foreign direct investment (FDI) is also made clear in the analysis. Those visiting the UK are estimated to spend £27bn during their stay, supporting 285,000 jobs and generating £8.2bn of GVA for the economy. Students arriving by air, meanwhile, spend an estimated £11bn and support almost 40,000 jobs in the UK, with a large majority (74%) based outside London.

As for investment, as an island nation airports play a key role in attracting it through connectivity and access, particularly for companies dealing in tangible assets. For this analysis, Steer estimated that airports underpin around 2.5% of incoming FDI for



Peter Campbell

The report demonstrates the regional impact of airports, highlighting the role they play in local economies and spreading wealth and investment across all areas of the UK. For example, 8.4% or £5.3bn of the North East's GVA is currently dependent on air freight, while the figure for Wales is 7.1%, the West Midlands 6.5% and the South West 5.5%.

the ten years between 2012–2021, amounting to at least £12bn of net inward FDI. In addition, Steer admits this is a conservative assumption, and the true figure could be many times higher.

The report goes into much more detail in all these areas and provides significant and robust

data and analysis on the scale of the contribution that airports make to the economy. This will provide AirportsUK with an essential tool in discussions with decision-makers from all levels of government about a policy framework that promotes aviation.

The next step for this piece of work is to develop a set of briefing materials that we can use as we meet with ministers, officials, MPs and others. These materials will have a set of messages designed to raise the awareness of the opportunity that exists to support the work of airports and aviation more broadly, in terms of promoting economic growth.

We will also be seeking to highlight the findings of the analysis through coverage in the press, both national and trade, through reports, interviews and op-eds. The aim here will be to raise the profile of airports among the public and emphasise the good work that they do in generating economic activity that benefits everyone up and down the country.

As we continue engaging with the new government and new ministers, it is the perfect time to publish new sets of data around the vital economic role airports play in the UK. With this government committing to approaches that will make the UK the fastest growing economy in the G7, we believe this will demonstrate exactly why aviation should be uppermost in their thinking on how to achieve this. ■



AIRPORTSUK SECURITY CONFERENCE

FRANK DISCUSSIONS ON NEXT GENERATION SECURITY AT AIRPORTSUK SECURITY CONFERENCE

Dr Rupinder Pamme, AirportsUK Policy Manager reports:

This year's AirportsUK Security Conference was the best attended in its history reaching full capacity of over 100 participants at the event in York. It was great to see so many airports from across the UK, as well as representatives from the supply chain, industry experts, regulators, government officials and a 10-strong delegation from Brazil. Over the two days we covered a wide range of topics.

The event kicked off with a fireside chat with the Chief Executive Officer of Leeds Bradford Airport, Vincent Hodder. It was a considered and honest discussion about his views on the implementation of the Next Generation Security Checkpoint (NGSC) and how both industry and government can work together to achieve their shared goals. He also gave context on the role of aviation security teams within the whole airport commercial setting from the point of view of a CEO.

This set the tone for the panel discussions on NGSC. Airports highlighted how over summer the reintroduction of the 100ml liquids rule affected airport operations and on consumers. It was great to have views from security personnel



Dr Rupinder Pamme

of airports, ACI Europe and a representative from an airport as Head of Customer Experience. It was a frank and interesting exchange of views and what lessons industry, and government can learn from this process. This was then neatly followed by a perspective from the manufacturer and the emerging issues it is facing.

A large part of the success of the conference on the day was due to the hard work of the Security Group Chair and Vice Chair, Caroline Vear from Bristol Airport and Ian Gregory from Edinburgh Airport, and we would like to thank them for their continuing efforts.

Another issue that has affected airports was the possibility of summer disruption from protest groups. A panel discussion with a presentation from the police, a legal representative from a member airport and the European perspective was provided. The widespread use by airports of injunctions rather than relying upon airport byelaws was particularly noted.

The conference benefited from in-person perspective from the DfT of the view from the government with ACI Europe and ACI World discussing the EU view and international context regarding the security landscape. ACI World's Senior Manager, Security, Safety and Operations, Nicholas Ratledge, also outlined LGBTQ+ security guidelines, where they are undertaking a global study to assess the state of diversity and social inclusion at airports worldwide.

The conference looked at human factors and a presentation from ARUP on understanding human behaviour and performance from staff and passengers; the CAA also presented about incident reporting and how it should be reported. Accountancy firm, BDO provided its views on the risk landscape and how airports can map this.

There was also a look at future technologies with presentations from DfT and biometrics from SITA, and a panel discussion with the Information Commissioner's Office.

A large part of the success of the conference on the day was due to the hard work of the Security Group Chair and Vice Chair, Caroline Vear from Bristol Airport and Ian Gregory from Edinburgh Airport, and we would like to thank them for their continuing efforts. The event was only possible with the generous sponsorship of Dallemier, ICTS UK & Ireland, Leidos Security Enterprise Solutions and Rapiscan Systems, and we also thank them for that. ■



BDO presentation



Digital identity and biometrics discussion



Vincent Hodder, CEO, Leeds Bradford Airport

UK POWER NETWORKS SERVICES

UK POWER NETWORKS SERVICES OFFERS ROADMAP FOR AIRPORTS TO REDUCE THEIR CARBON EMISSIONS

AirportsUK Gold Member, UK Power Networks Services, has proposed nine ways in which airports can cut their carbon emissions between now and 2050.



The company, which has 30 years of experience in aviation and maintains critical electricity infrastructure at Gatwick, Heathrow, London City and Stansted airports, set out its airport carbon reduction roadmap at the AirportsUK Sustainability Conference earlier this year.

Rahul Desai, Principal Consultant Technology and Innovation at UK Power Networks Services, told The Airport Operator that UK airport electricity consumption is increasing as passenger demand grows strongly and airports move to decarbonise heat and support Electric Vehicles (EVs).

His colleague, Rosie Watts, Associate Consultant in the UK Power Networks Services Energy and Technology Consulting team, said that airports need to innovate as they take steps to carefully manage their demand and supply and to consider how their future electrical infrastructure will need to change to accommodate the new airport demand.

They suggested that a key first step for airports is to prioritise their energy initiatives, beginning with action to reduce demand and conserve energy and moving on to action to ensure that energy is supplied efficiently by using local, renewable and sustainable energy sources and waste heat.

Considering the key emissions sources at UK airports, Watts said that direct emissions from fuel combusted in company-owned or controlled facilities and vehicles (Scope 1 emissions) are where airports can initially make a significant impact for the lowest amount of effort. She acknowledged that reducing indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling (Scope 2 emissions) is possible with the right interventions. Reducing all other upstream and downstream



Rahul Desai



Rosie Watts

A key first step for airports is to prioritise their energy initiatives, beginning with action to reduce demand and conserve energy and moving on to action to ensure that energy is supplied efficiently by using local, renewable and sustainable energy sources and waste heat.

emissions in the airport's value chain (Scope 3 emissions), she said, could be more challenging, since it involves many different stakeholders coming together to find solutions, but it will also eventually make the biggest impact, as Scope 3 makes up the majority of airport emissions.

Desai said that several UK airports have already taken notable initiatives to reduce their Scope 1 emissions. He pointed to hydrogen refuelling of ground support equipment trialled at Bristol Airport, the switch from diesel vehicles to hydrotreated vegetable oil vehicles at Edinburgh Airport and the

introduction of biomass heating at Heathrow Airport. Looking ahead, he highlighted a plan by East Midlands Airport to pilot driverless electric ground support equipment.

His three-point plan for airports to reduce their Scope 1 emissions starts with developing an energy transition strategy for the next 10 years, identifying options to meet future energy requirements, especially for heating (typically 30% of airport energy usage), cooling (20%), lighting (10%) and ventilation (8%). Secondly, they should replace gas and diesel with electricity, developing scenarios for introducing heat pumps and identifying the electrical infrastructure required, as well as considering the use of batteries to replace existing diesel generators. Thirdly, they should introduce airside electric vehicle charging, developing scenarios for their airside vehicles to transition to EVs and identifying locations and costs for EV charging infrastructure.

Desai told the conference that UK airports have also taken a number of notable initiatives to cut Scope 2 emissions, citing the 20MW solar farm being built for Glasgow Airport, the power purchase agreement which supplies Belfast International Airport from a 4.8MW solar farm, the multiple energy efficiency interventions actioned by Birmingham Airport saving 364,000kWh of energy and investments in energy efficient runway lighting at Kirkwall and Inverness airports. Liverpool John Lennon Airport also has plans to install a 13-acre solar farm, which is expected to generate up to one-quarter of the airport's annual energy demand.

Identifying three activities that will promote Scope 2 emission reduction, Desai said that measuring consumption and emissions by metering is essential to make strategic energy investments, to meet accreditation and regulation



Developing and maintaining an electrical network model is key to understanding where new assets can be integrated. Renewables will continue to play an important role in both reducing the costs of energy and helping meet decarbonisation targets.

requirements, to identify demand that can be served by renewables and to improve power quality and reduce losses. Developing and maintaining an electrical network model is key to understanding where new assets can be integrated. Renewables will continue to play an important role in both reducing the costs of energy and helping meet decarbonisation targets.

Airport initiatives to reduce Scope 3 emissions that he identified include the hydrogen hub for zero-emission flight at Glasgow Airport, the planned hydrogen pipeline at Manchester Airport, work by Regional and City Airports to investigate ways to decarbonise aircraft turnarounds and the electric vehicle charging station at Gatwick Airport for passengers, commuters and business fleets.

Desai's three areas of focus for Scope 3 emission reductions are zero emission aviation, where airports need to identify what

new resources they will require, noting that hydrogen production on-site will need significant power infrastructure; decarbonising ground handling through innovative projects to support zero-carbon taxiing of aircraft and feasibility studies to provide fixed electrical ground power and pre-conditioned air units; and decarbonising airport surface access by providing EV charging points for local buses, airport employees and passengers and developing innovative projects such as vehicle-to-grid solutions which can incentivise the use of electric vehicles.

Summarising the role of UK Power Networks Services, Desai concluded "Our role is to make sure that the electricity available at an airport is greener, comes from sustainable sources and comes at a reasonable price. Most of the electricity that we supply will be used for ground operations and we think that electricity is going to play a major role in decarbonising airports".

AIRPORTS UK ANNUAL DINNER

AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL DINNER SET FOR 18 MARCH

**Marko Saaret,
AirportsUK's Events
and Member Relations
Manager outlines
highlights of the
Association's 2025
calendar:**

AirportsUK has run a busy events calendar in 2024 with its Annual Dinner, three airports conferences and its flagship Annual Conference. We are very grateful to all the event sponsors who have provided us with the support that has enabled us to deliver high-calibre gatherings in prestige locations during 2024.

AirportsUK's events calendar will continue to deliver in similar fashion during 2025. As you might be already aware, we have scheduled the Annual Dinner for

18 March. There will be two airport conferences for Operations and Security in June and September respectively, whilst our Annual Conference will return in November/December.

The airport operations conference, which will take place in Manchester, will gather managers and specialists from various fields within airport operations, including airspace and air traffic management, aerodrome safeguarding, compliance, health and safety, and rescue and firefighting services.

The AirportsUK security conference traditionally brings together airport security professionals as well as companies providing security solutions, services and equipment.

By providing the dates and locations of events well in advance, we hope you will be better able to factor them into your internal planning, and, as a result, join us to make our 2025 events as impactful

and as beneficial for everyone as possible. We will also continue to provide excellent event sponsorship packages, which previous sponsors have welcomed as comprehensive and ensuring them good exposure.

We are looking forward to the next year with great optimism and to welcoming many of you to the events during 2025. ■

AirportsUK would like to thank the following for their support during 2024:



THALES

ENABLING BEYOND VISUAL LINE OF SITE OPERATIONS IN A FUTURE AIRSPACE

By Neil Watson, Business Development Manager, Airspace Mobility Solutions, Thales

It is abundantly clear that the appetite for widespread drone operations remains unwavering, increasingly so as the challenges of Beyond Visual Line Of Sight (BVLOS) operations are understood, and the solution space clarifies.

However, it is easy to get preoccupied with the undeniable fact that ubiquitous BVLOS flights remain elusive in today's airspace environment, with operations largely restricted to segregated, remote or benign airspace. Further work is required to introduce streamlined BVLOS operations that will deliver the double-digit growth projections that prevail across the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) sector.

The challenges of aligning emergent regulatory frameworks with a staggering volume of disruptive technical innovations are noteworthy, though recent progress is evident. The CAA Airspace Modernisation Strategy provides a future airspace vision extending to 2040. A key component of the strategy is the application of new technologies and innovations that will expedite the safe and sustainable introduction of new



Neil Watson

airspace users such as drones and aerial taxis and spacecraft.

Other regulatory achievements include the introduction of the CAA Specific Operations Risk Assessment UK (SORA) policy that will come into force in 2025. SORA provides a set of recommendations and methodologies for conducting risk assessments required to help prove compliance with target safety levels. The CAA team strength has grown in the past few years enabled by additional funding, both organically and through large-scale projects such as the Innovate UK backed Future Flight Challenge.

Of course, it is not all about regulations. Barriers to growth exist in areas such as the public acceptance of drones especially as operational footprints become more entwined with our day-to-day existence. Indeed, our coexistence with drones may become increasingly contentious as their presence becomes apparent in roles such as logistics, security and surveillance. Recent events highlight the importance of safeguarding our UAS digital future and in particular identifying, detecting and responding to a growing number of sophisticated cyber threats.

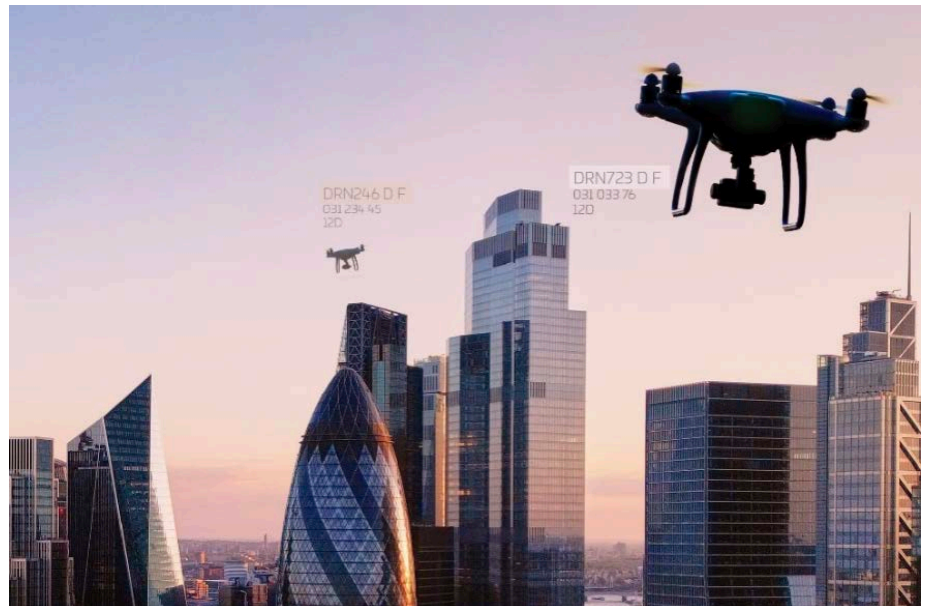
Encouragingly, increasing levels of drone acceptance are evident. The potential for drones to deliver societal benefits is acknowledged in areas such as healthcare, assisted living, emergency operations and security. There is slightly less enthusiasm for high-volume logistics operations and air taxis at this point though today's market forecasts universally recognise the enormous future economic benefits of such operations. Scholarly articles and studies into the environmental impact of drones agree that,

whilst delicate ecosystems need protecting, there is compelling evidence to support applications in areas such as environmental monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by alleviating congestion on our road and rail networks.

In anticipation of the 'BVLOS enabled' commercial drones market, Thales is working globally to provide a suite of enabling technologies necessary for safe, scalable and secure BVLOS drone operations. The drone technology 'ecosystem' is complex and covers aspects including air traffic management, connectivity (terrestrial and space), cyber and physical security, platform and avionics equipment as well as safety and certification. Thales has launched strategic research programmes across disruptive technologies that will increase safety levels and support enduring drone operations; some key topics include verifiable autonomy, Global Navigation Satellite System denied navigation, highly resilient communication networks and the progressive introduction of Artificial Intelligence.

Uncrewed traffic management (UTM) is a critical component that will play an important role in introduction and sustainment of safe, scalable and sustainable BVLOS operations. The majority of today's UTM systems comprise a suite of digital air traffic services that provide a comprehensive and assured situational awareness picture of current and planned aircraft movements within a defined airspace volume. Thales, as a global provider of ATM solutions and as part of its ongoing digital transformation programme, recognises the importance of UTM within a future integrated airspace that is able to support today's crewed aviation as well as new airspace users such as drones and electrical take-off and landing platforms.

Encouragingly, increasing levels of drone acceptance are evident. The potential for drones to deliver societal benefits is acknowledged in areas such as healthcare, assisted living, emergency operations and security.



In cognisance of the need for trusted, scalable, open, and integrated traffic management solutions Thales completed a full acquisition of AstraUTM in early 2024. AstraUTM is an advanced full stack UTM system that caters to local authorities, Air Navigation Service Providers, regulatory bodies and drone operators, with tools and applications encompassing the various UTM workflows. This fully functional UTM is built on a cloud-based architecture that is far ahead of its competitors. This, coupled with containerised micro-services, provides a coherent solution that enables functionality to be rapidly extended without the need for burdensome re-architecting and integration testing. AstraUTM has successfully facilitated over 50,000 drone flights globally and this number is set to increase exponentially to over 2 million flights a year by 2027.

This new approach to provision of UTM services has already achieved some notable successes. Most recently, in November 2024 AVINOR, the airport operator and Air Navigation Service Provider of Norway awarded Thales a contract for provision of a nationwide UTM platform. This will ensure the lawful operations of drones whilst also ensuring safe, efficient, fair and competitive access to the airspace.

In short, the drones sector is rapidly approaching a watershed whereby enabling technologies, progressive regulatory frameworks, societal acceptance and viable business cases are coming together to create real world benefits in a modernised and increasing integrated airspace. ■

THALES

Thales is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner



Alison FitzGerald

LONDON CITY AIRPORT

LONDON CITY AIRPORT IN TALKS WITH NEW AIRLINES ON "NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH"

London City Airport CEO, Alison FitzGerald, has told The Airport Operator that "we're in a very strong position to enter our next phase of growth and I'm particularly excited about the number of active discussions we are having with new airlines and what that might bring to our passengers in the near future".

FitzGerald, who became CEO in May this year, said the airport was delighted by the Government's decision in August to approve its plans to increase its annual passenger cap from 6.5m passengers to 9m and to fly three extra flights in the first half hour of operations during the week.

At the same time the Government rejected London City's plans for Saturday afternoon flights and the airport subsequently decided not to appeal on that. FitzGerald explained that "while we were very

disappointed with the Government's decision to not allow us to operate extra hours on Saturday afternoons, now is the time to focus on the job in hand: working with new and existing airlines to bolster our route network and attract more passengers to London City".

Asked if there are currently unserved destinations that she would like to see served by the airport, she responded "I would love to see the return of a transatlantic service at London City, which was incredibly popular before the pandemic and



I'm also focussed on growing the number of leisure routes we offer to our passengers".

Since the pandemic London City Airport has seen year-on-year growth, which it expects to continue this year and in the years ahead, but FitzGerald acknowledged that business travel has been slower to recover following the pandemic than other types of travel. She pointed to a prediction by the Global Business Travel Association that spending on inflation-adjusted global corporate travel will return to pre-pandemic levels by 2027, adding that "while we no longer see as many executives hopping over from Europe for meetings in the City and heading back in the evening, we are seeing longer and perhaps more meaningful trips – a trend that's been coined 'bleisure' (which is admittedly not my favourite term!) – and this appears to be the future".

She said that while the business travel proposition remains a strong part of London City's business model, 60% of the airport's passengers are now travelling for leisure. Asked to name the airport's

Since the pandemic London City Airport has seen year-on-year growth, which it expects to continue this year and in the years ahead, but FitzGerald acknowledged that business travel has been slower to recover following the pandemic than other types of travel.

main challenges and opportunities, she replied "we're London's best-kept secret for leisure travel, but we no longer want that to be the case. While we do face the challenge of having more restrictions than any other London airport, London City is not just for short-haul domestic and European trips, we also offer global connectivity via European hubs – including Amsterdam, Rome and Frankfurt – with very competitive prices. We are also London's most centrally located airport and the closest for over half of all Londoners (over four million), making us the quickest, easiest and most affordable airport to travel to and from.

On top of this, we have the highest

Net Promoter Score (NPS) of any London airport (74% year-to-date), which represents excellent customer service. Our passengers tell us directly that they love London City, and just want us to fly to more destinations, which is our key focus moving forward".

Looking ahead, FitzGerald suggested that the next generation of aircraft might unlock more leisure routes and longer-range destinations. She said "we encourage our airlines to update their fleets to include more next generation, cleaner, quieter aircraft. These aircraft are more fuel-efficient so, as well as reducing noise and carbon impact, they open up a wider range of potential

destinations for the airport”.

She said that the first new generation aircraft, the Airbus A220-100, began operating from London City with Swiss Airlines in 2017. Since then the Embraer E190-E2 and E195-E2 had also been certified to operate at the airport and, FitzGerald said “we hope to further expand the types of next generation aircraft that can operate at London City”.

Focussing on the steps that the airport has taken to improve the passenger experience, she said “I was proud in my former role as COO to lead London City in becoming the first major UK airport to roll out CT security scanners for our passengers, which has reduced security queue times on average by 50% since we introduced them. Unveiling our upgraded departure lounge in August was a fantastic milestone. Over the last couple of years, we have taken the opportunity to redevelop our entire proposition, and this now includes the offer of new restaurants and shopping experiences that celebrate some of the leading brands in our

I am hugely proud to have taken on the role. Having joined the airport over a decade ago, I've been fortunate to have been part of the airport's expansion journey, and I'm committed to building on its success even further.

neighbourhood of East London”.

Asked how she had found her first few months as CEO, FitzGerald said “I am hugely proud to have taken on the role. Having joined the airport over a decade ago, I've been fortunate to have been part of the airport's expansion journey, and I'm committed to building on its success even further. I've had the unique opportunity to transition from CIO to COO and now CEO, which has enabled me to hit the ground running. We have a fantastic team of people at the airport and an unrivalled customer experience. As CEO I am focussed on growing our route network and our passenger numbers, but doing so in the most sustainable way possible by encouraging our airlines to introduce

quieter, cleaner next generation aircraft. My challenge is to lead the business to deliver on these aspirations as soon as we possibly can”. ■





VANDERLANDE

HIGHLY AUTOMATED, PREDICTABLE AND SUSTAINABLE BAGGAGE OPERATIONS -WELCOME TO VANDERLANDE'S BAGGAGE 4.0

Labour shortages, environmental issues, health and safety considerations, and the need to reduce operational costs – these are some of the challenges facing airports and airlines as demand for their services return to pre-pandemic levels.

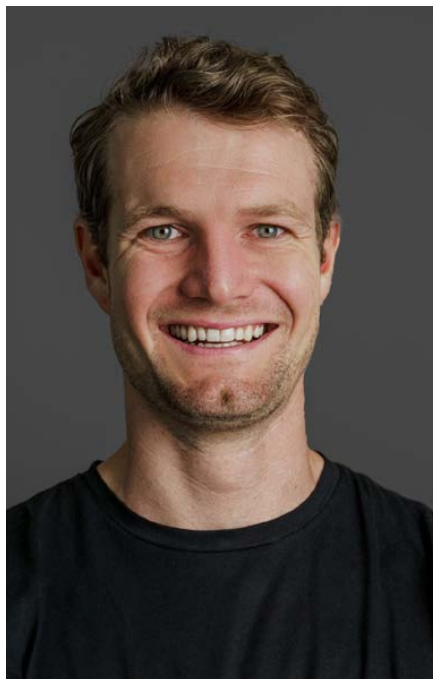


Moving forward, Vanderlande believes harnessing the power of data-driven solutions is the best way to get the most out of the industry's assets and people. That's why it is focused on creating an advanced, highly automated system for baggage flow based on what it calls Baggage 4.0.

Vanderlande coined the term by taking inspiration from the fourth industrial revolution – or Industry 4.0. Here, the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) come together to create automation that can carry out increasingly complex, interconnected tasks.

Such "smart" automation can also be applied to baggage handling systems, and Baggage 4.0 is Vanderlande's vision for a sustainable, scalable operation that can ensure all bags are delivered on time with little human intervention. Digital solutions and services combine with advanced automation to improve the baggage flow by allowing systems and processes to work together in a seamless fashion.

The company is keen to emphasise



Wouter Berben

that, while the full scope of its vision will be suitable for highly automated airports, airports of all sizes can benefit from the integrated application of such advanced technologies.

"Our goal is to establish predictive, and eventually prescriptive technology," says Wouter Berben, Commercial & Accounts

Airports, Vanderlande UK. "By doing so, anomalies can be identified in advance and dealt with automatically, so that baggage flows are not disrupted."

EMBRACING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

According to Vanderlande, Baggage 4.0 will become a reality by bringing together robotics, autonomous vehicle (AV) technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to carry out tasks such as: loading and unloading; self-driving transport; and prescriptive operations. However, the company's existing digital solutions will be essential to develop a completely predictive way of working.

Vanderlande already possesses the software that guarantees the smooth running of processes and operations across the entire baggage handling system. In addition, it has the digital analytics required to conduct predictive operations.

Data about passenger flows is also used to predict the demands on a baggage handling system and to ensure a comprehensive picture,

information and data from other stakeholders are collected and shared to gauge service demand and flight status.

BECOMING MORE PREDICTABLE

Baggage 4.0 will create an optimised workflow, helping airports to understand what's coming next and to use their time effectively. For example, maintenance teams will be able to improve the way they schedule inspections.

Airports will be able to reduce the number of physical inspections they make – and the number of parts they use – by being able to predict when a piece of equipment requires maintenance. This will also ensure that their assets perform optimally. “We should not forget the human element in this process,” adds Berben. “Reducing regular and time-consuming inspections will free up maintenance engineers to focus on essential work, such as keeping equipment in good order and making repairs.”

FROM CHECK-IN TO LOADING

By helping airports predict the baggage flow, Baggage 4.0 will bring greater efficiencies to their operations – and guarantee a dramatic reduction in mishandled bags. Furthermore, robot technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated and will be used in areas that are currently dominated by manual handling – from check-in through to loading.

Meanwhile, AVs can be used to transport unit loading devices (ULDs) and carts between the baggage hall and the aircraft. Thanks to their scalability and flexibility, AVs can also help airports manage baggage at peak times.

SUSTAINABILITY IS A PRIORITY

Sustainability is a guiding principle of Vanderlande's Baggage 4.0 concept. In the first instance, using parts and labour more efficiently – as well as reducing the consumption



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of energy and materials – contributes to the sustainability of airport operations.

Moreover, the company follows circular design principles by using recycled materials as much as possible and exploiting energy efficient technologies. It is also committed to the remanufacturing of spare parts to reduce its carbon footprint and minimise waste. In addition, it is developing equipment to eliminate heavy lifting in the baggage hall, which will make workplaces safer and more attractive.

“Our vision for Baggage 4.0 is applicable to the entire market,” adds Berben. “This is also true of our concerted effort to provide sustainable solutions and innovative technologies that can be exploited by every airport in the country.”

VANDERLANDE

a TOYOTA AUTOMATED LOGISTICS company

Vanderlande has produced a webinar – “Sustainable Baggage Operations: Turning Vision into Practice” – which provides practical steps for achieving more sustainable operations. The webinar highlights the importance of setting measurable targets, involving stakeholders effectively and initiating actions that have real impact. [Watch the on-demand webinar](#)

To find out more about Vanderlande's Baggage 4.0, read this [whitepaper](#).

Vanderlande is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner.

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CHRISTOPHER SNELLING

AIRSPACE MODERNISATION – TWO STEPS FORWARD, BUT DELAY IN THE MEANTIME?

By Christopher Snelling, AirportsUK Policy Director

In October the CAA launched their consultation on new measures to enable the delivery of major airspace modernisation in the UK. These are proposals we as industry have been pushing for, given the difficulties in making progress in recent years, so in general are welcome, but as always come with many details to sort and some negative effects that might be created.

CAA's consultation on a UK Airspace Design Service sets out a plan for a UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS), working in London to start with but also its later application to other parts of the UK, and a financing mechanism which will apply outside of London.

DESIGN SERVICE

UKADS will (initially) take on the design work for London-area FAS modernisation (Future Airspace Strategy Implementation –



Christopher Snelling

essentially major strategic reform as opposed to small incremental changes). This is being referred to as ADS1. It is important for airports outside of this area to note that this will be set up in such a way that it could deal with design in other areas of the country in future. This is envisaged for the future when airspace re-design needs to incorporate hydrogen/electric aircraft, air mobility operations, drones etc. This is referred to as ADS2.

CAA's Consultation on a UK Airspace Design Service sets out a plan for a UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS), working in London to start with but also its later application to other parts of the UK, and a financing mechanism which will apply outside of London.

Amongst the issues to resolve will be what constitutes 'design' work and so how far UKADS' work/remit will go. For example, it could replace ACOG's co-ordination role in London, it could also take on the consultation role with the public – something airports have to date been keen to keep hold of. UKADS will need to be funded, and the NATS En Route Ltd (NERL) charge will be used as a mechanism to do this.

FINANCING OUTSIDE LONDON

Government has also proposed to provide a finance stream for FASI airspace modernisation work outside of the London area.

This will also utilise NERL as a vehicle for funds. Airports would be able to claim funding from the mechanism for 'eligible activities' as they go, possibly similarly as with the funding during Covid.

'Eligible activities' are expected to cover a wide range of types of expenditure for FASI work – including staff costs as well as out-of-pocket expenses. The limitation would be that costs that would be expected to be incurred anyway would not be eligible (eg staff who whilst focused on airspace would be employed at the airport even if FASI work was not being done). It could also be limited in terms of the work done, with some elements still expected to be funded directly by the airport, but this is unclear at this point.

This mechanism will result in a small increase in the NERL charge, but crucially this means that the plan is not calling on the public purse, so this does not involve any Government funding.

THERE ARE TWO DIFFICULTIES WE CAN SEE AT THIS STAGE.

It could be seen to be creating a competitive disadvantage for those who have made the most progress in FASI modernisation on their own, as other competitor



Department
for Transport



Airspace modernisation: consultation on a
UK Airspace Design Service
CAP 3029



airports will now get more work financed. Secondly, the prospect of a financing mechanism gives a perverse incentive to airports to stop work until some point in 2025 or beyond when the funding becomes available.

DfT is highly concerned about this latter issue, and will be pushing airports hard to continue work in the interim. This remains a significant area of uncertainty.

NEXT STEPS

It is hoped (though not committed) that the launch of the design service would take place for the financial year 2025/6. It is possible that the

financing mechanism could also start in 2025, but this is uncertain. Further detail on the financing mechanism should be issued in a technical consultation from CAA.

The UKADS consultation runs until 17 December 2024. AirportsUK's members' groups are inputting now to our response. ■

SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL

UK AIRPORTS URGE GOVERNMENT TO PRESS AHEAD WITH LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT BRITISH PRODUCTION OF SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL



The UK's largest airports have joined forces to call on the Government to bring forward a bill to provide revenue support for domestic investment in sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) before it is too late.

AGS Airports, Edinburgh, Gatwick, Heathrow, MAG and AirportsUK are all supporting the 'Back British SAF' campaign which is urging the Government to introduce the SAF (Revenue Support Mechanism) Bill, promised in the King's Speech, at the earliest opportunity.

The campaign acknowledges that urgent action is needed to cut aviation's carbon emissions to maintain the sector's licence to operate and avoid calls for demand management and flight reductions. It says that a British SAF industry would support the sector's work to reach Net Zero and ensure that millions of people can continue to enjoy the freedom to fly. It also warns that without a homegrown SAF sector the UK would have to import 9m tonnes of SAF each year at an annual cost of £3bn, pushing up prices and putting the country's energy security at risk.

AirportsUK Chief Executive, Karen Dee, said that all the association's members are acting to reduce their own carbon emissions, but many are also supporting the wider aviation sector's work to cut carbon by reducing the use of conventional jet fuel. "Looking to the future" she said "we can anticipate that electricity and hydrogen will play key roles, but for now SAF offers a huge opportunity to cut aviation carbon emissions quickly and to create new green jobs here in the UK. That is why I am encouraging airports of all sizes to sign the pledge to back a British SAF industry".

Over the next year the 'Back British SAF' campaign will be lobbying at Westminster and in Whitehall as well

as organising round table events in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Humberside, the North West of England and Teesside. It is keen to work with more airports to host local events to promote the need for SAF and to highlight local investment and job opportunities.

Ten sites have been identified as places that could benefit from a UK SAF industry, creating over 10,000 jobs by 2030. They are Cleethorpes, Ellesmere Port (where a planned £1bn investment would benefit from a direct pipeline to Manchester Airport to transport the SAF to aircraft), Fawley (near Southampton), Grangemouth, Harwich, North Lincolnshire, Port Talbot, St Fergus and two proposed sites in Teesside.

Scottish First Minister, John Swinney, has told Holyrood that the Scottish and UK Governments have jointly financed a study which has identified a shortlist of credible options to begin the building of a new long-term industry at the redundant Grangemouth oil refinery site, including sustainable aviation fuels.

Supporting the 'Back British SAF' campaign, Heathrow CEO, Thomas Woldbye, urged the Government to bring forward its SAF bill quickly "before it is too late for the UK to benefit from the jobs, growth and energy security a homegrown SAF industry would bring". MAG CEO, Ken O'Toole, agreed, saying that making the proposed revenue support mechanism law "at the earliest opportunity would give investors the confidence they need to create a thriving, home grown SAF industry here in the UK that will create thousands of jobs and secure

an affordable future of flying for passengers".

Scottish airport leaders emphasised the opportunities for SAF production in Scotland. Edinburgh Airport CEO, Gordon Dewar, said that converting the Grangemouth oil refinery, due to close by next summer, into a SAF manufacturing plant will be "imperative" for Scotland's industrial future. "We can create hundreds of skilled long-term jobs all whilst providing Britain's booming aviation industry with a clearer flightpath to meeting its net zero commitments" he said.

AGS CEO, Andy Cliffe, focussed on the opportunities to produce SAF both at Grangemouth and at St Fergus in Aberdeenshire. He said "We need to ensure we realise this opportunity and that Scotland benefits from these jobs. If we don't, we will be reliant on an import-led strategy which will see jobs and investment in SAF production flow into Europe and the US, both of which are already stealing a march due to incentive schemes".

The 'Back British SAF' campaign is also supported by Airlines UK, as well as Boeing, IAG, fuel producers and engineers. The campaign emphasises that SAF, which can be made from household waste, used cooking oil, agricultural and forestry waste, can be used in planes now without any major change to aircraft engines or airport infrastructure. As an alternative to ordinary jet fuel it cuts lifecycle carbon emissions by up to 70% and is currently the only low carbon solution for medium and long-haul flights. ■

For further information go to <https://www.backbritishsaf.com>

Looking to the future, we can anticipate that electricity and hydrogen will play key roles, but for now SAF offers a huge opportunity to cut aviation carbon emissions quickly and to create new green jobs here in the UK.



NEW MEMBERS

AIRPORTSUK WELCOMES FOUR NEW MEMBERS

Four new members have joined AirportsUK – BDO UK, Totalmobile and Dextra Lighting as Silver Members and Enhancing Excellence as an Associate Member.



BDO UK

BDO UK provides tax, audit, assurance, advisory and business outsourcing services to companies across all sectors of the economy. The company says that its people are specialists in their respective fields and have a proactive, flexible approach to helping businesses overcome the challenges they face. It says it aims to be as innovative and entrepreneurial as the companies with whom it works.

BDO's Risk Advisory Services team offers global assurance and advisory services focused on internal control, risk, and governance frameworks. BDO says that its specialists work collaboratively to help clients understand their business and the challenges they face. It supports clients to improve governance, risk, and control structures across all areas of their businesses. BDO says that its expertise

helps clients to become stronger, more risk-aware, and better equipped to protect their people and their businesses.

Operating out of 18 locations across the UK, BDO says that it covers all the major business centres while offering local expertise to local firms.



Totalmobile

Totalmobile is a Field Service Management software company and says it is passionate about making work and the lives of mobile workers better.

The company says it has a strong track record working with enterprise organisations across the public and private sectors, including local and national government, health and social care, housing and property, utilities and infrastructure, transport and logistics and facilities management.

Totalmobile says that with its deep vertical expertise it offers a complete automated field-service platform allowing airports across the globe to transform workflow and ensure labour supply is optimised and service levels maintained across both passenger processes and supply chain.

It says that its diverse range of software solutions, combined with extensive market

expertise, empowers organisations to better manage:

- People – ensuring the right people with the right skills are available at the right time.
- Demand – enhancing control and visibility over upcoming required work.
- Planning – bringing demand and people together to plan service delivery in a way that maximises resource.
- Delivery – empowering field workers with everything they need to deliver safe and effective services.
- Understanding – providing real-time intelligence of all aspects of field services to the people that matter when it matters most.



Dextra Lighting

Dextra Lighting Ltd is a subsidiary company of Dextra Group plc – a leading UK manufacturer of energy efficient lighting. Dextra Lighting says that it offers a diverse range using the latest LED technology for standard, bespoke and retrofit products.

It describes airports as high activity, 24-hour operations that demand specialist product and lighting control knowledge and says that it is ideally placed to accommodate

the needs of airports both for refurbishment and new build.

The company says that the total Dextra service combines to offer an ideal solution for airport applications.



Enhancing Excellence

Enhancing Excellence says that it offers a wide variety of aviation-specific human factors training and consultancy services.

It says that its flagship airport resource management course brings flight crew style crew resource management to the airport operating environment. The company encourages participation of both airport operations and ground handling teams

to ensure enhanced cooperation.

Enhancing Excellence offers bespoke human factors modules including threat and error management, situational awareness and decision making to improve ramp safety and operational efficiency. Its workload management modules focus on awareness of stress, fatigue, and mental health as a way of quickly building better teams, especially in roles with a high staff turnover.

Trusted, world leading airport systems,
training & consultancy services.

airdat.org

AIRPORTSUK MEETINGS



2024

- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)**
Virtual Meeting
9 December @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **Security Group**
AirportsUK Office
10 December @ 11:00am – 12:30pm
- **Security Group (Airports only)**
AirportsUK Office
10 December @ 1.30pm – 3:00pm

2025

- **Sustainability Working Group**
AirportsUK Office
9 January @ 11:00am – 4:00pm
- **Rescue & Fire Fighting Services (RFFS)**
AirportsUK Office
23 January @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **AirportsUK Board Meeting**
AirportsUK Office
28 January @ 10:30am – 1:00pm
- **Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance (ASC)**
Virtual Meeting
29 January @ 2:00pm – 4:30pm
- **Aerodrome Safeguarding**
AirportsUK Office
20 February @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)**
AirportsUK Office
26 February @ 11:00am – 2:00pm
- **Health & Safety**
Virtual Meeting
20 March @ 1:00pm – 3:00pm
- **Security Group**
AirportsUK Office
20 March @ 11:00am – 12:30pm
- **Security Group (Airports only)**
AirportsUK Office
20 March @ 1.30pm – 3:00pm
- **Rescue & Fire Fighting Services (RFFS)**
Virtual Meeting
3 April @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Public Affairs Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AirportsUK Office
8 April @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **AirportsUK Board Meeting**
AirportsUK Office
29 April @ 10:30am – 1:00pm
- **Aerodrome Safety & Compliance (ASC)**
In-person & Teams, Farnborough Airport/AAIB
30 April @ 2:00pm – 4:30pm
- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)**
In-person & Teams, AAIB
1 May @ 11:00am – 1.30pm
- **UK Airports Health & Safety Week**
Various Airports
19 May – 23 May
- **Health & Safety**
AirportsUK Office
4 June @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **Public Affairs Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AirportsUK Office
10 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

- **Security Group**
AirportsUK Office
12 June @ 11:00am – 12:30pm
- **Security Group (Airports only)**
AirportsUK Office
12 June @ 1.30pm – 3:00pm
- **AirportsUK Board Meeting**
AirportsUK Office
23 June @ 10:30am – 1:00pm
- **Rescue & Fire Fighting Services (RFFS)**
Virtual Meeting
26 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance (ASC)**
Virtual Meeting
9 July @ 2:00pm – 4:30pm
- **Aerodrome Safeguarding**
Virtual Meeting
3 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Health & Safety**
Virtual Meeting
9 September @ 1:00pm – 3:00pm
- **Public Affairs Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AirportsUK Office
16 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)**
Virtual Meeting
29 September @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **AirportsUK Board Meeting**
AirportsUK Office
30 September @ 10:30am – 1:00pm
- **Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance (ASC)**
AirportsUK Office
1 October @ 1:00pm – 4:30pm
- **Rescue & Fire Fighting (RFFS)**
In-person & Teams, Airport tbc
23 October @ 11:30am – 4:00pm
- **Public Affairs Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AirportsUK Office
4 November @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Health & Safety**
In-person & Teams, Airport tbc
12 November @ 12:00 noon – 4:00pm
- **AirportsUK Board Meeting**
AirportsUK Office
18 November @ 10:30am – 1:00pm
- **Aerodrome Safeguarding Seminar**
In-person & Teams, Airport tbc
26 November @ 12:00 noon – 4:00pm
- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)**
Virtual Meeting
3 December @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **Security Group**
AirportsUK Office
4 December @ 11:00am – 12:30pm
- **Security Group (Airports only)**
AirportsUK Office
4 December @ 1.30pm – 3:00pm





From around the sector

DONCASTER SHEFFIELD AIRPORT COULD REOPEN BY SPRING 2026

The first passenger flights could take off from a newly reopened Doncaster Sheffield Airport by spring 2026 after a preferred bidder was identified.

Procurement processes led by Doncaster Council have identified an international airport operator as a preferred bidder to reopen the airport, which closed in 2022. The council said negotiations are ongoing but are expected to be concluded by this Christmas, adding that

thousands of jobs could be created directly by the reopening of the airport and the development of neighbouring business parks. The negotiations will focus on the level of public control and investment needed for the project.

Doncaster Mayor, Ros Jones, spoke of "a major step forward", adding that the airport has "incredible potential to bring jobs and prosperity to Doncaster and the wider South Yorkshire region". She said she would name the operator "when I can" but that "at this time we

must continue to have discussions with them on a strictly confidential basis. Rest assured we are working as hard as possible to get the airport reopened with the aim of being operational by spring 2026".

South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard, said "I remain fully committed to reopening the airport. That's why I and the Mayoral Combined Authority Board have authorised the release of up to £138m in support of that plan, subject to the right deal being struck with the right operator.

We will give Doncaster Council the financial firepower they need at the same time as making sure we do everything we can to protect taxpayers' money and giving the new operator every chance to establish a leading regional airport here in Doncaster".

The Combined Authority has been asked to release £3m to go towards preparing the airport, while the Civil Aviation Authority is reviewing an application for the reinstatement of airspace around the site. ■

LONDON LUTON AIRPORT INVESTS IN LOW-CARBON VEHICLE TRANSITION

London Luton Airport has taken a key step towards its ambition to achieve Net Zero for its airport emissions by 2040, following a multi-million-pound investment in a fleet of sustainable car park transfer buses and operational vehicles used across the airport.

The new buses are powered by internationally certified hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), a lower-carbon alternative

to diesel that can save up to 90% of carbon emissions across the fuel's lifecycle. The investment in the buses, alongside the transition of all airside operations vehicles to HVO and an increase in the number of electric vehicles means that almost two thirds of the airport's operational fleet will be electric or running on low-carbon fuel by the end of this year.

Other decarbonisation initiatives that London Luton Airport is working on include developing on-site renewables,

phasing out natural gas and improving energy efficiency.

David Vazquez, the airport's Head of Sustainability, said "as part of our commitment to Net Zero, we have set targets to implement a 100% low carbon fleet by 2030. From the end of this year this latest transition will reduce our airport's emissions by nearly 15%, playing an important role in our plans for responsible growth".

He added "all aspects of our sustainability strategy are underpinned by collaboration and I'm grateful to teams across the business who work so hard to embed better environmental and social practices into their daily roles and responsibilities". ■



AVIATION MINISTER VISITS BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT AS IT SWITCHES ON MULTI-MILLION POUND SOLAR INVESTMENT

Aviation Minister, Mike Kane, has visited Birmingham Airport's new 6.8MW solar farm, now responsible for providing at least 20% of the airport's electrical power.

Kane said "it's fantastic to see Birmingham Airport embrace our 2033 net zero mission. Their new solar farm, built with millions of pounds of investment, will produce almost a quarter of the electricity the airport needs over the coming years. It's this sort of innovation and drive that will help the UK

become a Clean Energy Superpower, and we will continue to support industry to achieve that goal".

The airport said that the new solar farm, made up of 12,000 panels, represented "a major leap forward" in its commitment to sustainability. Evo Energy worked closely with the airport on the design and build plans, with works commencing on the solar panel site last year at a cost of £9.7m. With full plant usage today, these panels at peak will supply 6.8MW of power back to



the airport, saving 1,285 tonnes of CO2 per year.

Nick Barton, Birmingham Airport's CEO, said "we were delighted to be the first airport the Aviation Minister visited since his appointment. He saw first-hand the significant investments we are

making at the airport and the progress we are making in sustainability. Our solar panels will ensure that at certain times of the year, during sunnier and warmer days, we will have no reliance on incoming power sources, key to our net zero target". ■

MANCHESTER AIRPORT BREAKS THROUGH 30M BARRIER

Manchester Airport has reached a major milestone by recording over 30m passengers in a year.

In the 12 months to September 30.1m passengers passed through the airport, helped by another record-breaking month in September with 3.05m passengers, the 12th in a row, up 8% on September last year. The airport noted that 93% of those

passengers waited less than 10 minutes to get through security.

Manchester has the most extensive route network of any UK airport outside of London, with more than 200 destinations served, including several added in the last year, like Shanghai with Juneyao Air, Las Vegas with Virgin Atlantic and Casablanca with Royal Air Maroc.

The airport's Managing Director, Chris Woodroofe,

said "We're proud to connect the North to the world – whether that's for holidays, to see family and friends or for business – and breaking through the 30m passenger barrier tells us we are giving people across the region great access to the places they want to travel to. It cements our position as the UK's global gateway in the North, the biggest airport outside London, and means we are rubbing shoulders with

some of the best-known airports across Europe and the world".

He added "hitting this milestone comes at a really exciting time, with our transformation programme sets to be fully complete next year. It means we'll be welcoming passengers to an airport that rivals any in major capitals around Europe in its all-around look and feel, service, facilities and the destinations it serves". ■



From around the sector

EUROPEAN CARGO OPENS NEW BASE AT CARDIFF AIRPORT

European Cargo has started a new regular air freight service between China and Wales after opening its second UK base at Cardiff Airport.

For now there are three weekly flights from Cardiff by the British air freight carrier, with plans to increase this to four and an ambition to increase the frequency of flights further in the future. Recruitment at the new base, which operates with dedicated large Airbus aircraft, is underway.

Cardiff Airport, which continues to diversify the use of the airport estate, said that a number of advantages had helped European Cargo to select Cardiff. These included airport facilities that regularly handle large aircraft movements, operating 24/7, zero slot constraints, 230 acres of land for development and easy access to the motorway network.

Airport CEO, Spencer Birns, said "this is a fantastic and exciting opportunity for the airport and European Cargo. There is a huge

demand for air freighters in the marketplace and this investment in Wales is primarily down to the excellent facilities and teams we have at the airport. We're committed to diversifying our business for the benefit of Wales and we look forward to working with European Cargo to help make their new base a success".

Jason Holt, European Cargo's CEO, said "We're delighted to announce this exciting

development at Cardiff Airport. As we continue to grow our business, we see Wales as a fantastic place to invest in. Cardiff Airport has many advantages, including 24-hour operational facilities and easy road access to the motorway network. We look forward to working with the airport team". ■



NEWCASTLE AIRPORT STARTS WORK ON £17M RUNWAY RESURFACING PROJECT

Newcastle Airport has begun work on a five-month nighttime runway resurfacing scheme described by Chief Executive, Nick Jones, as "a significant milestone in the airport's history".

Over the course of the work, 32,750 tonnes of new materials will be laid over an area the size of 22 football pitches. A total of 1,267 runway lights will be replaced with energy-

efficient LEDs, reducing the airport's carbon emissions by 87 tonnes per year in another step towards Newcastle Airport achieving its 2035 Net Zero goal.

A team of 120 people will carry out the work between 11pm and 6am five nights a week, from Sunday to Thursday, with a two-week break over Christmas. There will be no planned disruption to the airport's flight schedule.

Jones said "this investment will not only

extend the overall lifespan of the runway and ensure we continue to provide vital connectivity for the North East region, but it will also support the airport's future growth and our long-term sustainability goals. The project has been carefully planned and we have worked closely with our airlines, local councils and business partners to ensure the airport will continue to operate as normal".

The runway resurfacing is the biggest infrastructure

project in the North East this winter. Chris Wright, Contracting Director for construction company Tarmac, who is leading the project, said "having worked in partnership with the airport's teams for many years, we recognise the importance of this significant investment programme and are fully committed to working collaboratively to achieve the programme's goals". ■



FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT COMPLETES ONE OF THE LARGEST LIGHT-WEIGHT SOLAR INSTALLATIONS IN THE SOUTH EAST

Farnborough Airport has completed an innovative solar power project that will enable it to generate 25% of its own power.

Over an eight-month period over 4,000 solar panels were mounted on the airport's curved hangar roofs, terminal building, control tower and hotel. In total the installation will deliver over 1,700 kWp of capacity annually, generating over 1.2GWh of clean energy every year. It is expected to generate over 36KWh of energy in its lifetime and offset more than 5,000 tonnes of CO2 in that time.

The installation was

carried out by solar power generation provider, Solivus. With 40% of large buildings, such as aircraft hangars, unable to take the weight of conventional solar panels, the airport partnered with the company to install a lightweight solution to harness solar energy while minimising structural concerns and installation complexities.

Farnborough Airport CEO, Simon Geere, said "in line with our ambition to become a sustainability showcase for airports around the world, we're proud to have partnered with solar technology pioneers, Solivus, to install one of the largest solar projects in the region. The solar installation

is a significant step towards achieving our sustainability objectives, significantly reducing our controllable emissions, as set out in our Net Zero Roadmap, in which we have committed to be Net Zero by 2030 or sooner".

Solivus CEO, Jo Parker-Swift, said "rooftop solar is crucial for decarbonising the built environment, but its application has

often been constrained by the structural limitations of many commercial buildings. Put simply, traditional solar panels are too heavy for many rooftops. Our lightweight solar innovation addresses this issue, enabling large-scale, cost-effective solar development across nearly all large commercial buildings and sites". ■





From around the sector



HEATHROW INCREASES 2024 FORECAST AFTER RECORD SUMMER

Heathrow has increased its 2024 forecast for passenger numbers to 83.8m after a record-breaking summer.

From June to September 30.7m passengers passed through the airport, bringing the total for the first nine months to 63.1m. Heathrow recorded both the busiest departures and busiest arrival days in its history on 24 July and 2 September.

The airport credited the record-breaking summer weeks on a variety of factors, including Olympic travellers taking

advantage of European city breaks, iconic music stars passing through the UK and a late summer spike in departures.

Heathrow's CEO, Thomas Woldbye said "this summer has tested our colleagues, infrastructure and airlines to cooperate harder than ever before, with record numbers of passengers travelling through the busiest two-runway airport in the world. We have risen to this challenge, delivering excellent service with over 91% of passengers waiting at security for less than 5 minutes".

In the first nine months of the year the airport made

a £350m adjusted profit before tax, compared to a loss of £19m in the same period last year. The airport said that its continually growing passenger base, high passenger satisfaction scores, strong credit ratings and robust liquidity put it on a sure footing for the future and deliver confidence to investors. It expects to invest over £1bn in 2024.

Looking ahead, Woldbye called for coordinated Government policymaking on the financial policies affecting aviation to help maximise the country's growth ambitions, building on the 100,000s of jobs

and £186bn of trade already supported by Heathrow exports.

He said that continuing to back British SAF through a revenue certainty mechanism and reforming the regulatory system to promote investment would keep passengers at the heart of decisions and help deliver on the Government's economic growth and clean energy superpower missions.

Woldbye said that "committing to joined up policy making that makes sense for aviation will supercharge Heathrow's potential to deliver growth and investment for the whole of the country". ■

TRANSPORT SECRETARY WELCOMES £1.1BN STANSTED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The then Transport Secretary, Louise Haigh, welcomed London Stansted's five-year investment programme as "a clear signal that Britain is open for business".

The programme, whose centrepiece is a £600m extension to the airport's existing terminal, was revealed at the Government's international investment summit in October. Haigh said "transport is central to this government's core mission of growing the economy. This is about giving companies like Manchester Airports Group (MAG) the confidence to invest, boosting regional and national economic

growth and supporting the aviation sector, while also meeting our existing environmental obligations".

Ken O'Toole, CEO of MAG, which owns London Stansted, Manchester and East Midlands airports, said "By investing more than £1bn in Stansted over the next five years, we will be able to connect people and businesses in London and the east of England to even more global destinations, while welcoming millions more visitors to the UK. We are proud to be investing in our infrastructure in a way that will create jobs and stimulate trade, investment and tourism".

The terminal development will help enable the airport serve up to 43m

passengers a year, creating up to 5,000 new on-site jobs and seeing the airport's economic contribution double to £2bn annually. Also included in the programme are enlarged security and immigration halls, installation of next generation security equipment, a bigger departure lounge, a 14.3MW on-site solar farm to supply current and future energy needs and an airfield taxiway upgrade.

Gareth Powell, the airport's Managing Director, said "Stansted is embarking on an exciting new chapter. We aim to add even more choice of airlines to continue growing our extensive route network. Our aim is

to be the airport of choice for even more passengers and we're confident our investment plans will boost our competitiveness within the London aviation market, as well as supporting economic growth, jobs and vital international connectivity for London and the east of England".

Stansted served a record 29.3m passengers in the year to September, the busiest 12-month period in the airport's history. British Airways has returned and new airlines flying from Stansted for the first time included Royal Jordanian and Sun Express, boosting the number of destinations on the departure board in the summer to more than 200. ■





From around the sector



EMIRATES RETURNS TO EDINBURGH WITH A DAILY SERVICE TO DUBAI

Emirates landed in the Scottish capital in November for the first time since 2020, as the airline resumed its direct service to Dubai.

The resumed service, which will run throughout the year, was welcomed to Edinburgh Airport with a performance from members of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, piping the flight onto stand.

The route will be served initially by a Boeing 777 before the airline introduces its first A350 onto the route, complete with Emirates' Premium Economy product and its

new Business Class cabin.

Scottish Minister for Connectivity, Jim Fairlie, said "I welcome the return of Emirates' service between Dubai and Edinburgh, further strengthening Scotland's connectivity with the United Arab Emirates and the huge range of connecting destinations that Emirates serve from Dubai. This service will help grow the economic benefits of tourism and will be important for business connectivity, trade and investment".

Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport, said "We are thrilled to be welcoming

Emirates back to Edinburgh to resume that direct connection between Scotland's capital and one of the world's most sought out destinations in Dubai. Direct connectivity to Dubai will be welcomed by both business and leisure passengers, while the onward connections through the vast Emirates network also opens up a plethora of opportunities".

Adnan Kazim, Emirates' Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer, said "We're proud to reinstate our footprint in Scotland. Scottish customers can look forward to an elevated

travel experience onboard, initially with our Boeing 777 ahead of our highly anticipated A350 arrival. The ample cargo capacity will also help support more industries across Scotland, offering more efficient and reliable transport solutions for businesses across the region to access international markets more quickly". ■



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ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024

Flightpath To Growth



WELCOME TO THE AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Karen Dee
Chief Executive
AirportsUK

Welcome to the AirportsUK 2024 Annual Conference, where the theme is "Flightpath to Growth".

This year's conference rounds out our 90th anniversary year, one that has been eventful on several fronts, and gives us the chance to look ahead to the next 90. Our Chair, Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith and I are greatly looking forward to welcoming you all and to celebrating your successes, your contributions to the life of the country and to playing your part in our story.

We are delighted to be able to welcome Aviation Minister, Mike Kane MP, to deliver this year's Ministerial keynote address and we will hear an Opposition perspective from former Aviation Minister, Baroness Charlotte Vere. Their contributions will be complemented by the keen insight of the Political Editor of the Financial Times, George Parker, who will help us all make sense of the Westminster landscape and the year ahead.

From an industry perspective, we have again assembled a series of fascinating panels with leading aviation spokespeople. You will hear from the chief executives of three of our largest airports on the outlook for the industry, representatives from the business investment community on how airports drive growth and investment, and officials and regulators on improvements to the passenger experience.

Once again, we will have our traditional 'big interviews', with John Dickie, chief executive of BusinessLDN giving us his perspective on how airports support regional business activities, how these can be built on. There will also be other panel sessions that will focus on specific issues regarding the future of the workforce and the environmental and sustainable performance of the sector.

It promises to be a very informative and interesting day, and I hope that

you will both profit from, and enjoy it. Equally, I hope that as many of you as possible will stay to enjoy our networking drinks reception at the end of the day, where you will have the opportunity to meet the whole AirportsUK team and discuss the further the events of the day.

As I have already said, the theme for this year's conference is Flightpath to Growth, and it comes at a time when we have a new government that has promised to position growth at the forefront of all its ambitions. Only with airports as a senior partner will this effort succeed, bringing in the foreign we need investment, creating the import and export opportunities for business, and helping people travel to and from the UK for their holidays.

There are opportunities on the horizon to support this: a place at the heart of the new industrial and trade strategies; reforms to the planning system that prioritise speed and certainty; support for new, sustainable industries that will underpin aviation's decarbonisation; and new ways of engaging with local leaders to ensure the benefits we bring are spread across the country.

Today's conference marks a new chance for us to consider all of this, where airports fit into the conversation, what our priorities should be and how we should make our case. With the continued support of all of you, of your teams, of everyone working in airports and aviation more widely, I am sure we can take face up to the future with confidence.

Once again, I hope you enjoy today's conference and look forward to working with you all in the year ahead.

AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPONSORS



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To Growth

SITA

SITA is the air transport industry's IT provider, delivering solutions for airlines, airports, aircraft and governments. Our technology powers more seamless, safe, secure and sustainable air travel.

With around 2,500 customers, SITA's solutions drive operational efficiencies at more than 1,000 airports while delivering the promise of the connected aircraft to customers of over 18,000 aircraft globally. SITA also provides technology solutions that help more than 70 governments strike the balance of secure borders and seamless travel. Its communications network connects every corner of the globe, and SITA bridges 45% of the air transport community's data exchange.

In 2023, the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) approved SITA's near-term and long-term emission reduction targets. These science-based targets are pivotal in guiding the company's climate actions to curtail greenhouse gas emissions effectively. SITA is also developing solutions to help the aviation industry meet its carbon reduction objectives, including reduced fuel burn and greater operational efficiencies.

In 2024, SITA acquired Materna IPS, leader in passenger handling, to create the world's most powerful passenger portfolio for airports and digital travel. SITA then acquired ASISTIM, to offer a fully-fledged airline flight Operations Control Center managed service. The company also launched SmartSea to give the maritime industry access to the same advanced technology that is transforming air travel. The launch comes as part of SITA's growth into cruise and rail, as well as Urban Air Mobility, such as Vertiports.

SITA is 100% owned by the industry and driven by its needs. It is one of the most internationally diverse companies, providing services in over 200 countries and territories.

THALES

Thales is a global technology leader in the Defence & Security, Aeronautics & Space, and Cybersecurity & Digital identity domains. It develops products and solutions that help make the world safer, greener and more inclusive.

The Group invests close to €4 billion a year in Research & Development, particularly in key innovation areas such as AI, cybersecurity, quantum technologies, cloud technologies and 6G.

Thales has an exceptional international footprint, working with customers and local partners around the world. Thales in the UK is a team of over 7,000 experts, including 4,500 highly skilled engineers, located across 16 sites.

SPEAKERS & PANELLISTS



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Wilma Allan | Chief Financial Officer – London City Airport

Wilma joined London City Airport as Chief Financial Officer in January 2018 following 19 years as a Finance Director/CFO in the rail industry. In her role she works closely with the CEO and the Board of Directors and has helped steer the business through the challenges experienced during and following the Covid pandemic. This has included a number of financing activities.

Her early career was spent primarily in oil exploration and production and the car industry with a short while in the nuclear industry.

Throughout her career Wilma has focussed on people development, continuous improvement, through processes and systems, and complex contractual negotiations. She has also been responsible for legal, procurement, finance systems and IT management in addition to the traditional finance functions.



Nick Barton | Chief Executive Officer – Birmingham Airport

Nick took up the appointment of Chief Executive Officer at Birmingham Airport in January 2019, having joined the airport at an exciting time in its history following the announcement of the ambitious draft Master Plan. Although it was on hold due to the impact of COVID-19 on air travel, the airport's long-term plans include upgrading and expanding capacity of the terminal operations, aircraft stands and support facilities, combined with achieving net zero by 2033.

Nick has a long track-record as a successful leader, with extensive experience in the airports sector. He was previously Chief Executive at London Luton Airport, Managing Director of London Stansted and CEO of Aberdeen International Airport and is also Deputy Chair of the AirportsUK.



Selina Chadha | Group Director for Consumers & Markets – Civil Aviation Authority

Selina Chadha was appointed to her current position on 27 August 2024.

Selina's role includes overseeing the Civil Aviation Authority's economic regulation, competition, consumer protection, consumer enforcement activity and the ATOL financial protection scheme.

Prior to joining the Civil Aviation Authority, Selina served as Director of Policy (Competition and Consumer) at Ofcom. Her time at Ofcom was marked by strategic leadership, and a strong commitment to promoting investment and competitions, and protecting consumers in the communications sector.



Jennifer Coupland | Chief Executive – Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

Jennifer took up post as Chief Executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in November 2019. Her previous role was Director of Professional and Technical Education in DfE for three years, where she was responsible for T Level development and delivery, the L3 and below qualifications review and the Higher Technical Reforms.

Prior to that, Jennifer was Acting Chief Executive of the Standards and Testing Agency, where she oversaw the Agency's work on primary school assessment policy and operational delivery. Before that, she spent three years as the Deputy Director of the joint DfE/BIS Apprenticeships Unit. Previously Jennifer was the Deputy Director in the Department for Education responsible for the early stages of Traineeships development as well as Raising the Participation Age, careers and NEET policy.

Jennifer began her career in the Employment Service where she ran a benefit section in a local office and delivered a range of programmes to support long term unemployed people into work. Since moving to central Government Jennifer has worked on a number of policy areas including: benefits, schools and post-16 education. Jennifer is also trustee for WorldSkills UK, member of the University of Roehampton Council and is a fellow of both CMI and Windsor Leadership Trust.



Jordan Cummins | Director, UK Competitiveness – CBI

Jordan heads the CBI UK Competitiveness department, working with political and industry leaders to tackle the economic challenges facing business and society, such as industrial strategy, global trade, regulation and infrastructure. He sits on the CBI's management board and previously led its Health & Life Sciences department, Purpose Review, and General Election Programme. He also serves as a Non-Executive Director at UK Active.

Jordan previously worked overseas in education and in the UK public sector. He holds an undergraduate degree in Law, with a specialism in corporate law and a postgraduate degree in Public Policy & Management, with a specialism in public service delivery. Jordan lives in South East London and campaigns locally.



Karen Dee | Chief Executive – AirportsUK

Karen Dee joined AirportsUK, formerly the Airport Operators Association, as Chief Executive on 1 March 2017.

She has more than 20 years' experience in policy development, communications and representation activities within the transport sector. Her career has incorporated roles in government, consultancy and trade associations including: the Department for Transport, Market Access, the Road Haulage Association, CBI, Policy Solutions and more recently, LogisticsUK, then the Freight Transport Association, where she worked as Director of Policy for six years.



Gordon Dewar | Chief Executive – Edinburgh Airport

Gordon took up the post of Chief Executive in July 2012, with the airport experiencing 63% growth in passengers from 9m to 14.7m passengers in 2019 – a record for any Scottish airport. Rebranding the airport as the place where ‘Scotland meets the world’, Gordon has overseen significant capital investment in capacity, productivity improvements and customer service enhancements that have been recognised through airport and wider business awards in Scotland, the UK and internationally.

Gordon spent 4 years with BAA running Glasgow and Edinburgh airports through periods of extensive investments in terminal capacity and passenger growth from 2007 to 2010. He then spent 2 years as Chief Executive at Bahrain International Airport creating a independent and profitable business for the first time after a carve out from Government. Gordon has held a number of senior positions with leading transport operators, including commercial, general management and business development roles in bus and rail operations. Prior to this he spent 10 years in Transport Consultancy.

Gordon is a Board member of the AirportsUK.



Javier Echave | Chief Operating Officer – Heathrow Airport

Javier joined Heathrow in 2008 and has served as Chief Operating Officer since 2024. He is accountable for delivering Heathrow’s end-to-end operation at unprecedented record levels of traffic, including airfield, engineering and baggage, security, terminal services, business resilience and operational planning.

Prior to this role, Javier served as Chief Financial Officer since 2016, being responsible to lead the investment of Heathrow’s £35bn masterplan and operating its capital structure, including more than £17bn of fundraising. Javier led Heathrow’s financial response to the COVID-19 global pandemic creating an unprecedented 97% decline in revenue by securing business continuity and accelerating Heathrow’s recovery, while enabling new technology and ways of working to transform productivity and foster growth.

Outside Heathrow, Javier chairs the Wellbeing Leadership Team of Business In the Community, under the patronage of HM King Charles III. He is an executive mentor and teaches on strategy and change management at the CFO programme of London Business School (UK) and at the MBA programme of UNIR Business School (Spain). Prior to joining Heathrow, Javier led across different financial roles within Ferrovial, a Spanish-based global operator of sustainable infrastructure.



Paul Everitt | Chair, Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI)

Paul Everitt is the Board Chair of the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI). The ATI coordinates public and private funding into aerospace technology to drive UK economic growth and support the delivery of net zero aviation. Paul has been chief executive of two major UK trade associations (ADS, SMMT) and played a leading role in promoting industrial partnership between business and Government.



Vincent Hodder | Chief Executive Officer – Leeds Bradford Airport

Vincent is a global aviation professional with more than 20 years of executive experience airlines all over the world and was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Leeds Bradford Airport in February 2021. Taking over the leadership of the airport in the middle of the pandemic Vincent has stabilised the foundations of the business and put in place an exciting growth strategy and compelling future vision for Leeds Bradford Airport.

With a background in strategy consulting with Bain & Company, Vincent is a strategic thinker and a specialist in business transformation and startups. Having lived and worked in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, USA, Bahrain, South Korea, Mexico, El Salvador, Chile and the UK, Vincent brings a true global perspective, experience working with diverse cultures and highly developed capabilities at bringing people together.

Innovative, passionate and determined, Vincent is driven by team success and is committed to developing the next generation of aviation leaders. He thrives in high challenge environments dealing with intractable business problems.

Vincent is married with 4 children, each of whom was born in a different country and is proud to be an adopted son of Yorkshire.



Dr Andy Jefferson | Programme Director – Sustainable Aviation

Andy co-founded A&G Jefferson in 2012 with his wife and business partner Gillian. He is passionate about promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration to secure a sustainable future.

A doctoral graduate from Cranfield University, he has over 30 years' experience in tackling strategic and operational challenges across the UK aviation industry. An independent consultant for over a decade, he supports companies within and beyond aviation, including the UK Sustainable Aviation coalition, which includes the likes of British Airways, easyJet, Virgin Atlantic, Airbus, Rolls-Royce and all the major UK airports. During this time: he has directed their work programme, including making the first global aviation coalition 2050 net zero emission commitment; represented them at a range of events and meetings with stakeholders; helped deepen its reach and impact as a trusted industry wide source of expertise; and trebled its membership. The most recent work was the publication of UK Aviation's Net Zero Carbon Road-Map in April 2023.

Prior to establishing A&G Jefferson in 2012, Andy worked for the BAA at Stansted Airport resulting in him heading up their sustainability and planning work. Before this, Andy spent time working in the airline business for a range of companies including buzz and KLMuk covering a variety of roles from operations, commercial development, and fleet planning.



Mike Kane MP | Aviation Minister

Mike Kane, Labour MP for Wythenshawe and Sale East, was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, on 9 July 2024. A former Manchester City councillor, he was first elected as an MP in 2014, having previously worked for both Jonathan Reynolds MP and James Purnell MP. Formerly a Shadow Minister for Education, with responsibility for schools, he was appointed Shadow Minister for Aviation in 2020.



Kerissa Khan | Immediate Past President – Royal Aeronautical Society

Kerissa Khan DSc FRAeS is the 2023-2024 President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, the world's oldest and only professional body dedicated to the global aerospace, aviation and space sectors. She is an international thought-leader spearheading transformational multi-disciplinary research and innovation in future air transport. A World Economic Forum Global Future Council member, she is shaping effective solutions and influencing global decisionmaking for a more sustainable, resilient and equitable future. She holds a Master of Aeronautical Engineering degree from the University of Glasgow and an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Cranfield University for outstanding contributions to Leadership, Science and Technology.



Dave Lees | Chief Executive Officer – Bristol Airport

Dave Lees has worked in aviation for over 30 years working at 8 UK Airports including Heathrow, Stansted and Southampton amongst others before joining Bristol as CEO in 2018. Dave has led the business to deliver a successful planning application for 12mppa, commenced an extensive £400m development programme and has recently announced plans to expand Bristol Airport to 15mppa by 2040, while also taking a leading position on targeting net zero by 2030. Bristol Airport was the first UK Airport to trial the use of hydrogen for airside activities earlier in 2024.



Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE | Chair – AirportsUK

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE is an established Chair, former FTSE Chief Executive and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). She currently heads the boards of AirportsUK and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, as well as acting as Deputy Chair for the Tideway Tunnel and non-Executive Director for AtkinsRealis Inc, Thales SA and Everyman Media Group plc. Formerly President of the British Chambers of Commerce, she is also currently President of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Ruby's business background included time as Chief Executive of Mitie Group plc between 2007 and 2016, making her one of a small number of women who have been Chief Executive in the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250, and the first Asian woman to be appointed these roles within that group of companies. She was recognised as a top 50 female world business leader by the FT in 2013.

Since 2015 Ruby has sat in the House of Lords, having been granted a Life Peerage and was responsible for the Independent Report to the UK Government on Race in the Workplace, published in February 2017. She chaired the UK Government's Women's Business Council between 2012 and 2016 and was a Business Trade Ambassador for the UK from 2012 to 2019. Additionally, the UK Government made her the In-Work Progression Commissioner in 2020 and she now sits as a Member of the Labour Market Advisory Board. Ruby was awarded the ICAEW and the accounting profession's most prestigious award, the Outstanding Achievement Award, in 2015. She has received honorary doctorates from Cranfield University, Kingston University and the University of the West of England.



Ken O'Toole | Group Chief Executive Officer – Manchester Airports Group

Ken O'Toole was appointed MAG's Chief Executive in October 2023. He previously served as Deputy Chief Executive, and prior to that was the Group's Chief Development Officer. During his time at MAG, Ken has also held the role of Chief Executive of London Stansted Airport and Chief Executive of Manchester Airport.

He spent six years with Ryanair Holdings plc, joining initially as Head of Revenue Management and latterly as Director of New Route Development. A qualified Chartered Accountant, his previous experience includes Musgrave Group, a leading Irish and UK based retailer and Credit Suisse First Boston.



Katie Prescott | Technology Business Editor – The Times

Katie Prescott is one of the UK's best-known technology and business journalists - a familiar writer and voice to millions as The Times Technology Business Editor and, before that, the Senior Lead Business Presenter for Radio 4's Today Programme and a Business Correspondent across BBC News.

She's a weekly columnist for The Times' award-winning business section, reporting on the dynamic changes across the tech, media and telecoms sectors and their impact on business and our everyday lives. While at the BBC, Katie covered the tumultuous changes wrought by COVID-19, the European debt crisis and new technology.



Martin Rolfe | Chief Executive Officer – NATS

Martin was appointed Chief Executive Officer of NATS, the UK's leading provider of Air Traffic Management services in May 2015. NATS employs around 4500 staff and provides air traffic control services 24 hours day, 7 days a week in UK and North Atlantic airspace for over 2 million flights per year. NATS also provides air traffic services and expertise to countries and airports around the world. Previously, Martin was the Managing Director of Operations at NATS responsible for delivering NATS' regulated UK air traffic business.

Prior to joining NATS Martin worked for the Lockheed Martin Corporation where he was Managing Director of its £350M UK Civil business. In this role Martin was responsible for Lockheed Martin business with UK government across a wide range of critical national services, as well as being responsible for Lockheed Martin's global air traffic business. Martin's career started with the European Space Agency working in orbital mechanics. Since then, Martin has worked in the aviation domain for more than 20 years across a number of companies leading large multinational teams across Europe, the US, and Asia with customers that include central government departments, military organisations and air navigation service providers.

Martin holds a master's degree in aerospace systems engineering from the University of Southampton.



David Silk | Director, Aviation – Department for Transport

David Silk is the Director, Aviation in the Department for Transport, having previously been the department's Director for Airports, Infrastructure and Commercial Interventions. He is responsible for all aspects of aviation policy. Prior to joining DfT, David's career was in HM Treasury, where he had a number of senior roles, including on welfare, housing, local growth and education spending as well as Private Secretary to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He has significant experience in policy, strategy and commercial roles.



Baroness Charlotte Vere of Norbiton | Opposition Frontbench Spokesperson – HM Treasury (Former Aviation Minister)

Charlotte, Baroness Vere, was a Minister in the Department for Transport from 2019 and 2023, which included two separate stints as Aviation Minister. She also covered roads, local transport and maritime during her time in the Department. Following DfT, Charlotte took up the role as Parliamentary Secretary at HM Treasury.

Since leaving Government, Charlotte has continued her involvement in Transport and Sustainability. She is an active member of the House of Lords.



Stewart Wingate | Chief Executive Officer – London Gatwick Airport

Stewart Wingate joined Gatwick Airport as Chief Executive Officer in December 2009. Stewart joined Gatwick Airport from BAA Airports Limited where he spent five years in senior management roles at several airports. He was Managing Director of London's Stansted Airport (2007–2009), Chief Executive Officer of Budapest Airport (2005–2007) and Customer Services Director of Glasgow Airport (2004–2005).

Previously, Stewart spent more than 15 years at Black & Decker where he had responsibility for a wide range of functions. He was General Manager of a start-up manufacturing plant in the Czech Republic, Operations Director at the company's manufacturing facility at Spennymoor, County Durham, and European Marketing Manager based in Germany. Stewart holds a masters degree in business administration with distinction and a first-class honours degree in electrical and electronic engineering. He is a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of the Institute of Engineering and Technology.

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