

THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

HEATHROW CEO, THOMAS WOLDBYE,

*discusses the airport's
current challenges*



Features

CAA CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
ROB BISHTON *looks to the future*

LEEDS BRADFORD
AIRPORT CEO *outlines
regeneration plan*

BRISTOL AIRPORT'S
ground-breaking hydrogen trial

AIRPORTS UK
*will be the AOA's
new name*



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KAREN DEE

Introduction to The Airport Operator



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

We are fast approaching the peak period for airports and I hope your preparations are going smoothly. This summer is set to be our busiest since 2019 and many places will see passenger numbers even surpass their pre-pandemic peak. The AOA is preparing for the summer as well, working on campaigns to inform passengers about security protocols, the impact of disruptive passengers and to ensure they have thought of everything before they travel.

Like many organisations, we are also continuing to plan for the upcoming General Election. Our manifesto for whoever wins later this year is being finalised and will be published shortly. We will then focus on getting the messages out that airports and aviation need a stable, sustainable and affordable framework if they are to contribute to the economic growth the UK needs in the coming years.

At the moment, there is significant uncertainty about attitudes from politicians towards aviation. This puts investment, business development, connectivity, jobs and wealth creation

at risk. We will be spending the next few months bringing together all political parties and other stakeholders to address this uncertainty and restore confidence in the UK as an aviation-friendly market.

The team at the AOA has already begun laying the foundations for this work. We have welcomed ministers and shadow ministers, officials and stakeholders to our board and working group meetings. We have pressed them on issues, including airspace modernisation, the Next Generation Security Checkpoint programme, sustainable air travel and the tax and regulatory burdens on aviation that are undermining our competitiveness.

I am pleased that this work is paying dividends, as some recent announcements have made clear. This includes the news that the Government had granted alleviations to airports bringing in new security scanning technologies and how the SAF mandate will work alongside a consultation on possible price support mechanisms to help grow domestic production capability. Both of these followed significant and sustained representations from ourselves and the whole sector.

The response we submit to the SAF price support mechanism consultation will be coordinated with the rest of the Sustainable Aviation coalition, as well as our members. The team is also working on a response to the Government's climate change adaptation strategy consultation, which will highlight the

work already being done at airports to mitigate the impacts on critical infrastructure.

Our events programme has also been in full swing, with our Airspace and Air Traffic Services Conference bringing together officials and industry experts to discuss the next steps in developing the UK's airspace infrastructure. Our 90th anniversary gala dinner was a resounding success, where we celebrated the achievements of the AOA and looked ahead to the future with over 600 attendees, including the Transport Secretary and Aviation Minister.

We are now looking ahead to our sustainability conference, taking place next month in Newcastle, which will focus on one of the key challenges our industry faces, and how we are addressing it. Planning is also underway for our annual conference, which will take place in the second half of this year and, given its likely proximity to the General Election will look ahead to what airports and aviation can expect from the next Government.

I hope you enjoy this quarter's issue of The Airport Operator. This includes an interview with Thomas Woldbye, the new CEO of Heathrow, and an article from the CEO of the CAA, Rob Bishton. We also hear about the latest developments from airports up and down the country, including Wick John O'Groats, Aberdeen, East Midlands, Stansted and London City. ■

Karen Dee, Chief Executive

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AN AIRPORT AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Wick John O'Groats airport is located one nautical mile north of the town of Wick, in the far north-east of mainland Scotland. Owned and managed by Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL), the airport delivers air connections for the Caithness region with scheduled flights to Aberdeen provided by Eastern Airways under a Public Service Obligation (PSO).



The airport is also regularly used by helicopters servicing offshore oil and windfarm operations as well as light aircraft ferry flights between Europe and North America via Iceland.

Passenger figures have grown in the past few years, rising by over 22% in 2023/2024 from the previous year to 11,224 passengers. The airport delivers a vital service for the local community offering an out of hours call out service for the Air Ambulance Service, coastguard and police flights.

Once a Viking settlement, the area is also home to the Castle of Mey, a favourite residence of HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, now owned by King Charles III, who is a regular visitor to the Highlands. The airport has played a key role in the history of the area over the decades, specifically during wartime operations to prevent an enemy invasion at the isolated coastal location.

Originally a grass airfield, the airport was used by Captain E. E. Fresson's Highland Airways Ltd which later became Scottish Airways Ltd. from 1933 until 1939. Following requisition by the Air Ministry during World War II, it became RAF Wick with a satellite airfield at nearby Skitten, and home to No. 18 Group, RAF Coastal Command and No. 13 Group, RAF Fighter Command.

The airport can rightfully claim to having played a significant role in the fight against the German forces during the Second World War. It was from RAF Wick that a photographic reconnaissance Supermarine Spitfire piloted by Flying Officer Michael F. Suckling flew to Norway in search of the German battleship "Bismarck" on 21 May 1941.

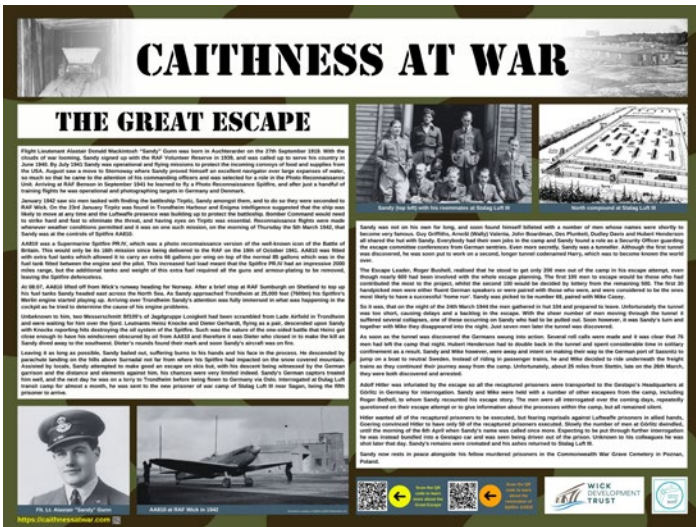
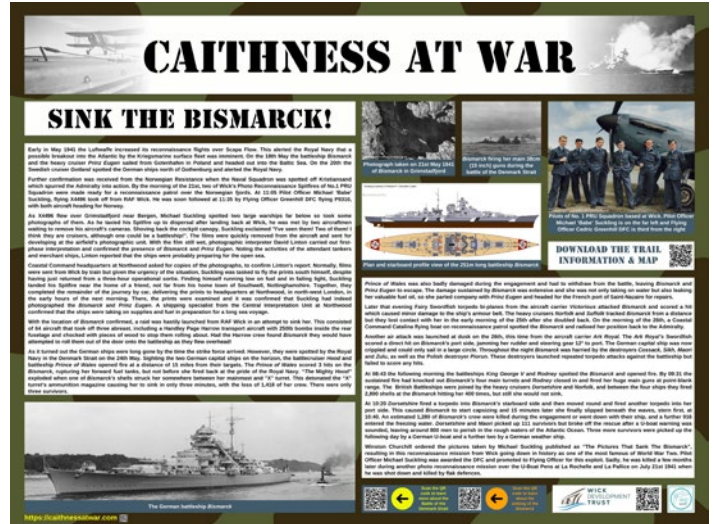
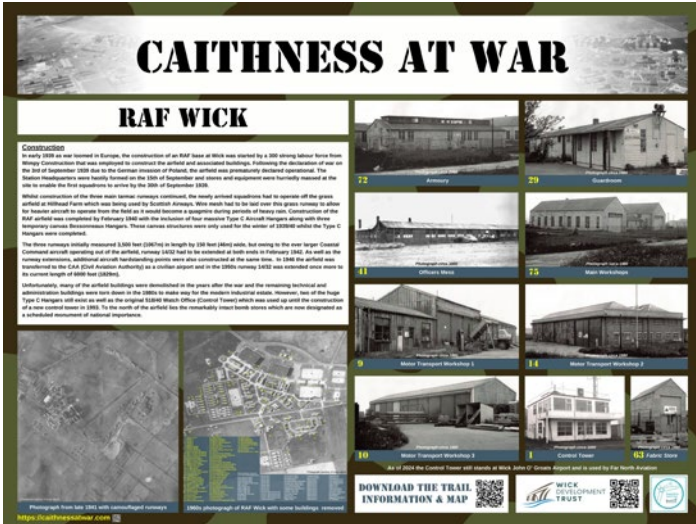
This vessel represented a massive risk to the ships supplying Britain and Suckling found and photographed her, hiding in Grimstadfjord. Having taken images of the vessel from a long-range reconnaissance Spitfire, he returned to commanders in a

daredevil night-time dash, leading to a major propaganda coup for Britain.

Another notable event during wartime was a reconnaissance sortie made from RAF Wick by pilot Sandy Gunn, who was shot down in his Spitfire over Norway. He became a prisoner of war, interrogated by the Gestapo, and sent to Stalag Luft III war camp and later participated in the "Great Escape". Unfortunately,

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RAF Wick in the Second World War, the second panel is an image of another information board about the sinking of the Bismarck and the third panel is an information board about prisoners of war.

he was recaptured and was one of the fifty prisoners executed on the orders of Adolf Hitler.

Wick John O'Groats airport recently hosted an event to launch "Caithness at War" a trail of information boards focusing on the military history across the local area. Plans are afoot to create a memorial to the aircrew who lost their lives operating from the three RAF stations at Wick, Castletown and Skitten and the potential installation of a gate guardian using a replica of Sandy Gunn's Spitfire AA810.

The boards are part of 46 installations around the area, explaining the role played in

guarding against the threat of invasion during the war.

Dougie Cook, General Manager at Wick John O'Groats airport said, "The airport has a fascinating part in the wartime heritage of the local area, and we are delighted to have some of the boards telling these stories located on-site. We hope that as many people as possible will discover the rich heritage of the airport and the local area, including some fascinating stories of heroism".

Following the war, the airfield was put under civilian control with Loganair providing scheduled services for a number of years, prior to Eastern Airways starting services in 2022.

The airport was renamed Wick John O'Groats in 2012 to mark its proximity to the UK's most northerly mainland settlement and one of the country's most famous landmarks. Each year, cyclists and walkers complete the Land's End to John O'Groats challenge, covering the distance of 874 miles, with pictures at the infamous white signposts at the start and finish points.

With far reaching views across the Pentland Firth to Orkney, the airport is certainly located in a spectacular setting with a fascinating history to match. ■

*Thomas Woldbye, CEO,
Heathrow Airport*



HEATHROW CEO, THOMAS WOLDBYE, NAMES CAPACITY AND REVENUE CONSTRAINTS AS THE AIRPORT'S MAIN CURRENT CHALLENGES

Asked by The Airport Operator what he sees as the main challenges now facing Heathrow, he said “We have a couple. One is capacity. Then the other thing is that as of 1 January our fees have been reduced by 20%, based on the CAA outcome”.

On capacity Woldbye, who became the airport's CEO last October, following more than a decade as Group CEO of Copenhagen Airports, said, "In the next few years, if things go as we expect, we will be running close to our nominal capacity". Heathrow is on track to welcome 82.4m passengers this year, compared to a 2019 total of 80.8m (representing 27.2% of all passengers at UK airports that year).

"So within the existing infrastructure" he said, "what we can do to increase that capacity is an immediate challenge that in our new strategy we will be working on". Heathrow's work on answers to the immediate capacity challenge includes an examination of whether and how it might be possible to grow passenger numbers by maximising the benefit that could be derived from making better use of the airport's existing terminal infrastructure.

Woldbye acknowledged that "also,

on capacity, long-term, of course, we need to resolve a position on the third runway". He has commissioned a review of Heathrow's 2019 masterplan which had included construction of a third runway by 2026. Asked when the review would be completed, he said "it's not an easy thing to do and it is a pretty thorough piece of work that needs to be done, considering that we are four years hence compared to when Covid hit us. So we need to make sure we update all the relevant aspects of the project. I can't commit to anything right now, because work is ongoing, but it's not going to be this side of summer, I can say that for sure".

On the CAA's ruling on landing fees, which account for 67% of Heathrow's total revenues, he said "for any business to have prices reduced by 20% is a really serious thing, also considering that we just turned a very small profit in 2023 for the first time in four years. So that is a real challenge that we need to face into and look at efficiencies. What is it

we do, what is it we can stop doing if anything, are there things we can do more efficiently in order to meet that challenge? We are trying to solve that equation, which is a big challenge".

He also emphasised the importance of sustainability for the airport. Heathrow is investing £300m in its Net Zero project to make sure that it achieves Net Zero by 2050, if not before. Also, like his predecessor as CEO, John Holland-Kaye, Woldbye said "we are trying to position ourselves in a role where we take also a wider industry responsibility in order, together with airlines, to

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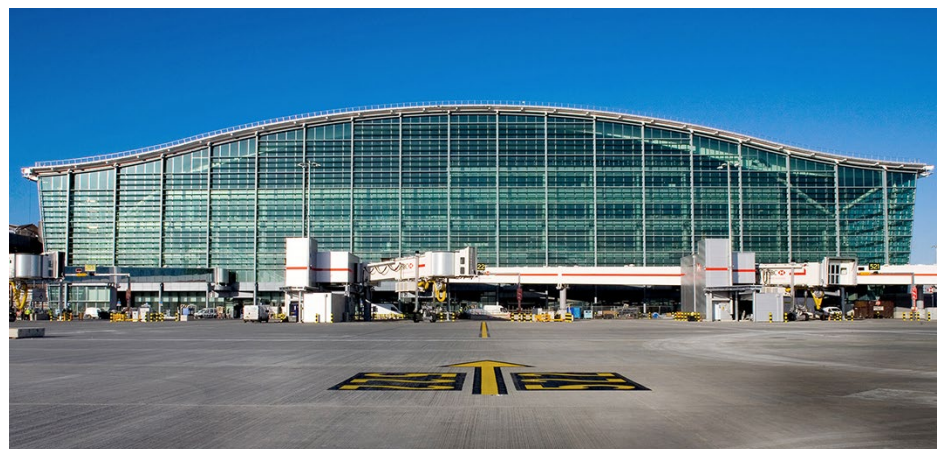
speed up the production of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) in the UK, which we think is in the short term one of the most important parts of the solution”.

Asked how he would assess the Government’s plans to scale up the UK production of SAF, he said “we are supportive of the plans that are put in place. We think that execution goes a bit slow. We would like to see five SAF plants in place. We support the mandate because we need the demand to make sure we get the investment in production, but I think, if we look at where we are today, execution is too slow to get us to where we want to be fast enough”.

Heathrow is currently engaged in a range of significant infrastructure improvements projects, including a new baggage system for Terminal 2 and additional capacity for the baggage system in Terminal 4, as well as improvements to its retail space. The highest profile of the projects is the introduction of Next Generation Security Projects across all the airport’s terminals.

For Heathrow, this is a £1bn investment, which Woldbye describes as “an enormous project, not only in terms of its technical scope, but as much in terms of all the processes and changes that have to happen to the infrastructure around the security points. So it is much more than just installing new security lanes. It is really an enormous undertaking. Then, of course, which is always a limiting factor at an airport, we can’t just close off and do it 24/7 in a few months. We have to operate all the terminals at the same time, so it is work that goes on in operation, which always makes it more complex, but regretfully also means that it takes longer”.

Asked to describe progress, he said “It is going according to plan. We have to replace about 146 lanes, which I believe is almost as much as all the other UK airports put together. Our interest is to get it done as soon as possible. It is a big physical undertaking, and it can’t be done



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much faster than it is being planned for now. We will try to compress that period as much as we can. We will learn as we go and we will work with the authorities to make sure we stay within the deadlines”.

In concluding remarks, Woldbye stressed that Heathrow’s new strategy would emphasise the importance of the customer journey, both for airlines and for passengers. “How can we continue to improve that? Can we look more at digitalisation of that journey to make it efficient? That is an important focus for the future. On

the back of Covid there are things we can look at both in terms of quality and efficiency.

We think Heathrow is an extraordinary airport. We want to make it even more extraordinary, and we want to make it fit for the future and I think that is really a key phrase when you look at coming out of Covid. There are issues we need to clarify around digitalisation, IT, capacity, and customer journey to be fully fit. As a management team our focus is to create the most attractive airport that we possibly can”. ■

Cohesive



ALL ON-BOARD FOR AIRPORT ASSET MANAGEMENT IN THE AI AGE

*Why airport asset management needs reforming
for the AI age, by David Elliott, Cohesive's
Consulting Director-Aviation, EMEA*

Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam, once noted that it had “80,000 reasons to embark on a digital transformation” – 80,000 being the number of its individual assets, from escalators to lights.

The reliability and good ‘health’ of each of these assets, the airport reasoned, was critical to smooth-running and an elevated passenger experience.

Departure from tradition

Airports are complex operations, with a vast range of airside and landside assets – as well as new assets being introduced through capital projects. Of course, they have rigorous and comprehensive asset management regimes. But today, the reality is that these regimes can be significantly enhanced through asset management which centres on the implementation of digital technology and the right processes to accompany it.

This ‘data driven’ approach is unequivocally suited to the demands placed on a 21st century airport and its 24/7, 365 days a year operation. And it is for this reason that forward-thinking airports like Schiphol, Sydney (see below) and many others around the world, are shaking-up their asset management strategies.

Flying high with a digital strategy

With this form of modern, digital asset management strategy in place – one underpinned by the relevant information standards – the benefits can be seen across every stage of the asset lifecycle.

Capital delivery:

Working within an integrated data environment, multiple designers can work independently but readily identify – and rectify – clashes. They can test construction sequences and scenarios on the screen, well ahead of any spade touching ground.

The benefits of this approach can be seen at Ezhou Huahu Airport, Asia’s first cargo-exclusive airport. Adopting solutions from Bentley



David Elliott

Systems, Cohesive’s parent company, helped the airport’s developers resolve a total of 6,000 issues prior to construction and accelerated delivery by 60 days, saving CNY 12 million.

Operations:

In the case of an asset failure, for instance a baggage handling system, after 20 minutes of the system being down, that day’s operations will be affected. After two or three hours of it being down, it could impact the entire week’s operations.

Asset management software, backed-up with the right processes, supports preventative capabilities and these, in turn, support continuous, uninterrupted operations.

The current and future, expected, states of assets can be monitored with AI-powered solutions, which bring together data from across the organisation, supporting informed decision making and a smooth-running airport. And analytical and diagnostic tools can help extend the availability and reliability of every physical asset.

Off to a flying start

So where to start? At Cohesive, we advocate a discovery process where we get to the nuts and bolts of where the real problems are, or the real opportunities lie with the airport in its current state.

Every airport will have a huge volume of data available to it but much of it will be in siloed systems, not readily trustworthy and frequently not quick

to locate. The trick is to liberate the right data to get the desired outcomes. It should be ensured that, regardless of the team or function, all authorised users can easily and quickly locate that data to support their everyday activities.

One airport which has been quick to seize on the potential of the new solutions and technologies now available is Sydney. Cohesive and Bentley have been working with it to help realise its ambition of creating a live digital simulation of its entire site to support the most efficient operation and enhanced passenger experience possible. Treating the airport as a mini-city, it has used Bentley’s Infrastructure Cloud to integrate different types of financial and asset data, metadata, models and documents. The times when operational staff worked with large paper plans are gone.

Schiphol found 80,000 reasons for its switch to digital. But if airport operators are seeking an elevated experience for passengers, operational efficiencies, and the ability to quickly adapt to changing needs, then those three reasons are all that is needed to shake-up strategies and look to digital. ■

Cohesive is a Gold Member of the AOA.

David Elliot

David’s career has centred on the delivery of IT solutions within construction environments. His expertise is in the aviation sector, having delivered IT for major projects including Heathrow Terminal 5, Terminal 3 Integrated Baggage solution and operational improvement projects. David has also been at the forefront of the development of digital strategies for large organizations in both aviation and other sectors. His passion lies in supporting asset owners to seize the huge opportunities available through harnessing digital technologies and data to unlock significant improvements in both project and operational environments, including through digital twins.

**LEEDS BRADFORD'S
£200M
REGENERATION
PROJECT SET TO
“FINALLY DELIVER
THE AIRPORT
THAT YORKSHIRE
DESERVES”**

Construction work has begun on a terminal extension at Leeds Bradford Airport that will enable the biggest transformation that the airport has seen in 20 years.



*Vincent Hodder, CEO,
Leeds Bradford Airport*

CEO, Vincent Hodder, described the mid-April ground-breaking ceremony that marked the start of construction as “a significant moment in LBA’s history”. He told The Airport Operator “We will finally deliver the airport that Yorkshire deserves. It is really exciting. As CEO, I feel that I have been able to deliver something that none of my predecessors had actually been able to get across the line”.

The LBA:REGEN project will revitalise the airport and enhance the passenger experience with a 9,500 square metre, three-storey extension to the existing terminal, alongside refurbishment of the current facilities, additional aircraft stands, 83% more seating, faster security, new shops and restaurants, brand new lounges, a larger baggage reclaim area and immigration hall, and improved access for passengers with restricted mobility. Completion of construction work is expected in 2026.

Hodder said that the project has three core components: firstly, the expansion of the terminal delivering the space needed to enable the rest of the transformation to take place; secondly, refurbishing the existing terminal space, removing infrastructure roadblocks that currently constrain the ability of passengers to use the airport in an efficient and customer-friendly way; thirdly, the broader growth of the airport, including growth in the number of stands, improving the runways and taxiways and improving air traffic control.

The airport is investing £100m in infrastructure, as well as another £100m of capital expenditure investment over the next five years, a total of £200m of investment “in the local economy and in delivering a fundamentally different experience for customers travelling through the airport”.

Hodder said that people would see “a completely different look and feel to the airport. Historically when you walked into the airport, because the corporate colours are

grey and yellow, it was a little bit like walking inside a battleship. It was dark, with low ceilings and not a particularly welcoming and friendly environment”. A pilot project in the airport’s main check-in hall has already delivered “much brighter, light colours, wood accents and greenery. That has fundamentally changed the experience that people have of the airport when they walk in to check in. That was the first glimpse that something different is happening in the airport”.

But Hodder added that what he “really loved about what we



are building” was the removal of infrastructure obstacles which currently disrupt the way that passengers experience the airport. He gave examples of check-in being at one end of the airport and security at the other end and of arriving passengers crossing over departing passengers “What people will notice is a logical, consistent flow. In the new world the arrivals area is at one end of the airport and the check-in and departures area is at the other end, getting rid of those cross-traffic flows and avoiding the current problem of having to walk from one end of the airport to the other and back. All of that disappears, really simplifying the entire experience”.

The airport is investing £100m in infrastructure, as well as another £100m of capital expenditure investment over the next five years, a total of £200m of investment.

He stressed that the new development has been designed to fully take into account the needs of passengers with reduced mobility, creating an ability for those people to experience the airport in exactly the same way as others. The entire departures process will be on a single level, with ground level arrival into the airport from aircraft stands, enabling wheelchair passengers to enjoy the same experience as all other passengers – with Hodder describing this as “a really important improvement for LBA”.

By early summer this year the airport plans to have replaced all four of its older security scanners with Next

Generation Security Checkpoints. Two lines have been operational since the start of February and the other two should be in place by the end of May in time for what the airport anticipates could be its busiest summer ever. Leeds Bradford's best-ever passenger numbers of just over 4m were recorded in 2017. Last year's total of 3.9m matched 2019's pre-Covid total and for the year ahead the airport is forecasting over 10% growth in passenger numbers.

Hodder says he is "looking at sustained, strong growth over the next few years", noting that Leeds Bradford is unusual, and possibly unique, in now having operations from all four of the UK's fastest-growing airlines - the low-cost carriers - Jet2 and Ryanair, which together account for 80% of the airport's passenger base, as well as EasyJet and Wizz Air, with the latter having switched services to the airport when Doncaster Sheffield Airport closed at the end of 2022.

"That is why we are quite confident in the long-term growth trajectory" he said. "All of these carriers have significant growth in their fleets over the next few years and we think that stands us in really good stead to take advantage. The vast majority of the leakage from this catchment are passengers who are travelling to the same destinations on the same

airlines that operate out of LBA today. So the real opportunity for us to grow is our existing carriers flying more of the same as what they do today".

Asked about possible new destinations for the airport in the future, he said that top of the list, reflecting demand from the local east Asian community, would be restoring the service that the airport once had to Pakistan. Short of a direct link, there might be connecting flights via either Turkey or the Middle East. He said that another possibility, as longer-range, narrow-body aircraft start to be introduced, could be a direct trans-Atlantic route.

Discussing sustainability, Hodder noted that Leeds Bradford is one of only two UK airports that have committed publicly to Net Zero by 2030. Since making that commitment the airport has reduced its level of carbon emissions by over 50%. The LBA:REGEN programme will take out another 25% of the original number by removing gas for heating and hot water and replacing it with electricity. The last 25% is primarily diesel fuel used by generators and vehicles; this will be replaced by a combination of biofuel

and electrification of vehicles on the airfield. Any small remaining trace elements, which are likely to include refrigerants and fires created for fire fighter training, will be offset.

The airport has also sought to future-proof itself for evolving airspace usage over the next 20 years with the possible introduction of new eVTOL aircraft and the more immediate impact of rapidly developing drone technology. In March Leeds Bradford announced that it had selected Altitude Angel's Approval Service platform for drone operators and, future eVTOL pilots. The platform enables them to seek access to the airport's controlled airspace by digitally submitting their flight plans, simplifying the process for air traffic controllers of approving those flight plans. For now the number of movements is small, but Hodder said, "as we go forward, we can only see that is going to become a more and more significant use of the airspace, so having a platform in place that allows us to deal with that safely and efficiently is just getting ourselves prepared for the future". ■





NEXT GENERATION SECURITY – A NEW ERA FOR AIRPORT SECURITY

BY KAREN DEE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

The UK has always been a world leader in aviation security. It is, and will always be, a top priority for airports. Airports have been making excellent progress in delivering multimillion-pound investment programmes for Next Generation Security Checkpoint (NGSC), and once fully implemented this will have a significant positive impact on the passenger experience.

As with any programme of this complexity, there are significant challenges. There have been supply chain difficulties especially with manufacturers having to cope with all locations targeting a similar date. Some airports have had to make structural changes to their search areas to permit the new security scanner machines, in some cases there has been the need to strengthen the floors, completely

redesign or rebuild search facilities, and increase staffing to operate the new equipment.

This is why the AOA and airports over many months have worked very hard to inform the Department for Transport about the challenges being faced. We were pleased the Government recognised these and agreed to extend timeframes for delivery where necessary. With this announcement our quote was featured in the official DfT release, was carried in The Times, the Financial Times, and other papers, and I was interviewed by both BBC and Sky News.

By allowing this more flexible approach to the deployment date, airports can ensure that they are ready to welcome passengers over the next holiday periods. We will

continue to highlight the need for a department-led communications plan aimed at keeping passengers up to date about the latest requirements. However, we will still need to ensure the Government are kept up to date and to address any further challenges that emerge as airports look to the completion of their implementation of NGSC.

Looking ahead, as we all know, airports take a long-term approach. It is worth reflecting on how this type of technology will fit with future current advancements: how will developments in AI affect workflow processes and how will the existing machines of 2024 cope with this kind of future development, as well as open architecture. These are all questions for another day but that day, as we know, will come sooner than we think. ■

Sponsored by:  egis

26-27 June 2024

AOA
THE VOICE OF UK AIRPORTS



Airport Sustainability Conference



AOA TO HOLD MAJOR CONFERENCE ON AIRPORT SUSTAINABILITY

The AOA will hold a major Airport Sustainability Conference on 26-27 June at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Newcastle.

Topics for discussion will include decarbonisation of airports and of flight, air quality and waste, sustainable aviation fuel and hydrogen, biodiversity and carbon reporting.

The conference will provide significant networking opportunities through the breaks, lunches, drinks reception and dinner, ensuring ample socialising across two days between all the attendees.

Confirmed speakers include the Department for Transport, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Health and Safety Executive, Cranfield Aerospace, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership, experts from Ricardo, Egis and ICF, and sustainability leads from Bristol, Heathrow and Newcastle airports.

We hope you will be able to join us for this event, which will showcase

how the industry is leading the way in developing innovative solutions to the challenge of sustainability. If we want to continue to fly and enjoy the benefits of air travel, and for as many people as possible to benefit, this is a challenge we must meet. We look forward to seeing you there.

For more details and to book a place, visit the AOA website or [click here](#). ■

NEW TECHNOLOGY AND AIRSPACE MODERNISATION TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT AIRSPACE AND AIR TRAFFIC CONFERENCE

The safe introduction of new technology and Government plans to deliver airspace modernisation in the London area were among key issues highlighted at the AOA's first-ever Airspace and Air Traffic Conference in April.

Headline conference speakers were Jon Round, Head of Airspace, Air Traffic Management and Aerodromes at the UK Civil Aviation Authority and Ian Elston, Deputy Director, Aviation, at the Department for Transport.

Jon Round's speech emphasised the industry's focus on new technology, integrating it safely into the existing ecosystem, and airspace modernisation, which he described as a significant piece of work. He said that the industry should also prioritise sustainability goals, reducing emissions, tackling shortages of Air Traffic Controllers and Communication Navigation Surveillance engineers, safety regulations, and being ready for unprecedented traffic volumes. He stated that safety should remain the top priority, noting that resilience continues to be a challenge due to various external factors and some hard commercial decisions need to be made to protect the passenger experience.

Ian Elston gave a presentation on the concept of a Single Design Entity (SDE) and its role in designing airspace, where the initial focus would be on the complex London area. A consultation will follow with the aim to have the SDE functional by 2025. He said that to ensure that this model is robust it will require proportionate governance and will have to be seen as independent, fair, and impartial. He said that the Department for Transport would have the right of oversight and primary legislation would be needed to formalise the model.

The AOA's Christopher Snelling gave an AOA view on the actions on airspace modernisation by Government that would be necessary to ensure that the process keeps moving forward.

During the conversation about advancing the modernisation of airspace, Stuart Lindsey, Head of Airspace Modernisation at the CAA, discussed the upcoming release of part three of the Airspace



Modernisation Strategy, which will set out progress on deployment. He said that the roadmap for this release would be defined by chapter two, which focuses on enabling programmes, and chapter three, which outlines areas of work outside of the CAA programme. The mission of the release would be to create airspace that is safe and

Headline conference speakers were Jon Round, Head of Airspace, Air Traffic Management and Aerodromes at the UK Civil Aviation Authority and Ian Elston, Deputy Director, Aviation, at the Department for Transport.



Jon Round



Ian Elston

interoperable for all users. That would be achieved by encouraging users to be electronically conspicuous and to take advantage of enhanced flight information services, as well as simplified air traffic services.

Mark Swan, Head of the Airspace Change Organising Group, discussed the Group's benefits strategy and how it aligns with the Airspace Modernisation Strategy to deliver quicker, quieter, and cleaner journeys, as well as more capacity for the benefit of those who use and are affected by UK airspace.

Continuing the discussion on resilience, Steven Moore, Head of Air Traffic Management Network Operations at Eurocontrol, provided an overview of the European air traffic management network. He said that the summer season is posing some challenges, with 7% more aircraft in the skies, and in some places, there is an excess of 20% increase in traffic on last year's total. Additionally, external factors such as geopolitical conflicts, weather disruptions, and air traffic strikes are affecting airspace. Some key priorities had been identified, including the prioritisation of first rotation flights, monitoring of airport slot adherence, prediction and mitigation of night curfew issues, coordination with airports during adverse operating conditions or special events, and support to airports for mitigating delays, especially at smaller seasonal airports.

Richard Derrett-Smith, Director, Aviation, at Conference sponsors, Egis, provided an overview of his business. He shared with the audience information about the work of Egis supporting airports and Air Navigation Service Providers for over 50 years. This has included tackling the challenges in air traffic management systems, reducing the impact of noise on local communities and providing cost-effective and resilient air traffic services support. The company also assists airports in implementing

its next-generation air traffic management systems to improve operational efficiency, and system change programmes, and to provide the full spectrum of the life cycle of air traffic management system changes from the initial concept to design solutions.

Egis' aviation cybersecurity lead, Andy Boff, discussed the cybersecurity outlook. He emphasised the fact that a lot of fear surrounding cybersecurity comes from a lack of understanding and explained that managing cybersecurity is possible by implementing good practices and protections from the very beginning of the architecture and design process. Additionally, he noted that no field of technology is immune from the 'AI question'.

Simon Sheeran, Head of Cyber Security Oversight at the CAA, covered future work with AOA members on Air Traffic Management-specific actions, such as mapping the compliance matrix against UK Information Security Management Systems regulation requirements, including working with Air Traffic Controller entities on critical system mapping and with manufacturers to ensure cyber standards are designed and reviewing feedback received from a 2022 survey.

The conference included a discussion on building resilience, and the skills of Air Traffic Controllers, Communication Navigation Surveillance engineers and support management roles. Adele Gammarano, from the AOA, presented the results of a survey assessing the industry's operational requirements and facilitated discussions to advance ideas for finding solutions and helping the industry to become more resilient. Rebecca Christie, Head of Resilience at the Department for Transport and Jon Round supported the panel discussion. Paul Kay, Director of Training at Global ATS, joined the conversation to cover Air Traffic Controller

The conference included a discussion on building resilience, and the skills of Air Traffic Controllers, Communication Navigation Surveillance engineers and support management roles.

training and apprenticeships, highlighting current and future capacity for accommodating courses to meet demands and the importance of enhancing the use of training through simulation.

Delegates considered the opportunities and challenges ahead in the aviation industry, including the introduction of electric sub-regional aircraft, advanced air mobility vehicles and drones into the UK. Andrew Sage, Director, Safety Transformation at NATS and Gary Cutts, Future Flight Challenge Director at UK Research and Innovation, shared their perspectives on integration, the technological advances, and the challenges that come with them. Jeremy Hartley, Policy Specialist, Vertiports, at the CAA also shared a regulatory perspective on these advances. The speakers highlighted the need for collaboration among key players in the industry to optimise airspace usage, accommodate new airspace users, and ensure safety. They said it was clear that advances in the aviation industry require a collaborative approach from technology providers, regulators, and operators to optimise airspace usage and ensure safety.

Advances covered by Andrew Taylor, Chief Solution Officer at NATS, included the transformation of digital towers, the implementation of automation and digitisation of data, as well as the ability to access 70%



more data by integrating operations control and replacing out of the window data. Jonathan Twigger, Senior Consultant at Think Research, said that certain sizes of airports and traffic mixes still need to be tested to provide confidence to the industry that the use cases are viable. He said it was important to acknowledge that integrating digital towers involves a good understanding of the changes needed, not just the technology and that dependencies need to be firmly understood and led by functional requirements.

Reflecting on the conference, Matt Wilshaw Rhead, Birmingham Airport's Safety and Compliance Manager, and Nicole Park, Head of Air Traffic Services at London Southend Airport, Co-Chairs of the AOA's Airspace and Air Traffic working group said: "Collaboration and interaction are key. It's those elements that allow this industry to put aside competition and keep safety, innovation and continuous improvement at the top of the agenda – and what an agenda we had at this conference, insightful panel discussions and an opportunity to collaborate on a route forward for the Air Traffic Management and airspace industry".

Adele Gammarano, the AOA's Airport Regulation, Safety and Operations Manager, described the conference



as "a resounding success, thanks to the numerous contributions, inspiring talks, insightful conversations and unwavering engagement of all participants. I am grateful to Egis for their generous sponsorship of the conference and to Matt Wilshaw-Rhead and Nicole Park for their excellent work in planning and moderating the event".

She said that the conference had "provided a platform for attendees to share their experiences, ideas and best practices, to support the aviation industry and make it more efficient, resilient, safe and sustainable. Several speakers highlighted the importance of collaboration and innovation in achieving these goals and the role

of the AOA and its members in facilitating these conversations. We look forward to continuing to drive positive change in the industry". ■

The conference had "provided a platform for attendees to share their experiences, ideas and best practices, to support the aviation industry and make it more efficient, resilient, safe and sustainable."

Adele Gammarano

THE AOA MEMBER AIRPORT AT THE HEART OF COMBAT AIR TESTING IN THE UK

The aerodrome at Warton in Lancashire is the home of BAE Systems' flight testing and engineering teams working on military aircraft in service today and developing the future fleet of the Royal Air Force.

The site, located between Preston and Blackpool, is the UK's only military fast jet manufacturing site. Today its airfield is delivering testing to evolving radar, weapons and software updates for the RAF's Eurofighter Typhoon fast jet squadrons.

Warton is also home to BAE Systems' work developing Tempest, the RAF's next generation combat aircraft. This is the UK's future combat aircraft which will be equipped with a radar which can provide 10,000 times more data than current systems, an advanced digital cockpit using augmented reality, intelligent weapons systems and an engine equipped with the world's first electrical starter generator.

Aerodrome Manager, Kieran Merriman, told The Airport

Operator: "This is a really exciting time for us. Already the airfield at Warton is alive with flight testing on Typhoon developing capabilities including an advanced new radar for the RAF, and we are gearing up for what the Tempest programme will bring. There is already new infrastructure in place to support the programme and as our engineering and manufacturing teams work on the next generation of combat aircraft, we are preparing for a fascinating future."

Warton is currently home to more than 5,500 people and BAE Systems' Air sector recently announced plans to recruit more than 500 new apprentices and graduates in Lancashire alone this year, part of the company's biggest-ever intake.

The aerodrome is a regulated and licensed civil aerodrome from a UK

Civil Aviation Authority perspective but is also a contractor-approved flying organisation by the Military Aviation Authority, which is part of the Ministry of Defence.

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Typhoon, the RAF's Eurofighter fast jet



From a civil perspective, Warton has a fleet of aircraft including Embraer 145s which regularly ferry its people to locations across the UK and Europe. The company's UK headquarters is located in Frimley, Surrey and its Air sector is closely aligned with the Eurofighter programme, which sees BAE Systems working alongside its German and Spanish industry partners, Airbus and Leonardo in Italy.

On the military side, the MAA requires a formal role of a ground operations post holder, which is Merriman's as the responsible manager for all ground operations at the aerodrome - including air traffic control service provision, air traffic engineering, habitat and wildlife management, aircraft fuelling, fuel installation, aerodrome operations and the rescue and firefighting service.

Merriman, who became Aerodrome Manager in December 2022, said: "For the first 12 months it was a real steep learning curve, but with incredible support from within the business, and great team collaboration, it has been a really good experience and I thoroughly enjoy the role. It is a great opportunity and I still feel, although

it is challenging, very fortunate to have been given it."

For 25 years Merriman combined a part-time role with the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service with increasingly senior roles in BAE Systems' fire service, culminating in his appointment as Chief Fire Officer at Warton, where there are now 26 firefighters, in November 2020.

He has described Warton as having "an impeccable fire safety record" and attributes that in part to the

aerodrome's task and resource analysis identifying worst-case scenarios and how they are going to be resourced. "What we have done" he said "is made sure that we have provided enough resource so that we can not only respond to an undesired event, but also that we are involved in the planning processes with some of that testing activity. The fire service is engaged in the ground operations manual and then helps to author those processes so that we are controlling the risk in advance of undertaking the activity and that



is the key difference in terms of maintaining that fire safety record”.

Merriman also takes evident pride in the aerodrome’s investment in two fire training simulators, one to practise large-scale hydrocarbon fires and the other, more recently, for compartment fire behaviour training for fires within buildings or other structures. He explained that statistically firefighters are most likely to get hurt when they are working inside buildings that are on fire. “That is why” he said, “we have invested tens of thousands of pounds in the new training simulator to make sure that our fire fighters are trained to the highest level in the environment where they are most likely to come to harm”.

Asked why Warton, despite being rather unlike other members of the AOA, is an AOA member, Merriman said: “The biggest benefit of AOA is the formal and professional platform for collaboration and networking with like-minded individuals and peers and the opportunity to come together to try and drive change, but also to keep abreast and ahead of the game in relation to regulatory change”. Merriman has served on the AOA’s Rescue and Fire Fighting Services working group for several years. “It is essential” he said “and that is why we stay as members. I have a firm belief in what AOA does and it is as strong as its members, so we have to keep supporting it, and it is great that the AOA provides that platform”. ■

“We have invested tens of thousands of pounds in the new training simulator to make sure that our fire fighters are trained to the highest level in the environment where they are most likely to come to harm.”



*Kieran Merriman,
Aerodrome Manager*



CAA TRIALS NEW WAY OF WORKING WITH THE AOA ON REGULATION

The UK Civil Aviation Authority has launched a new way of engaging with AOA members on proposals for regulatory change.

The first outing for the new approach was a meeting of the AOA's Aerodrome Safety and Compliance working group held at Bristol Airport on 30 April.

Matt Roberts, the new Policy Principal Aerodromes at the CAA, told The Airport Operator that the objective is to make better use of people's time by using working group meetings for "good engagement, feedback and open, honest opinions" on proposals for regulatory change, many of them originating from the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), affecting

the UK's certificated and licensed aerodromes.

Previously some of the time would have been used to communicate details of the proposals to the working group, but that initial stage now takes place a fortnight earlier at a meeting of the CAA's new Airside Safety Operations Group (ASOG), which involves both industry and a wider group of stakeholders. The first two-hour online meeting of this new group was held in mid-April, giving AOA members two weeks to consider the detail and engage with colleagues before providing their

The CAA values informal engagement at AOA working group meetings on regulatory change both to ensure that it is on the right track, but also on occasion to pick up issues that it may have missed.

feedback to the CAA at the AOA working group meeting at the end of the month.

Matt said “it is a very new way of working. This was the first time we used this new working model. We see it as the most smooth, efficient and effective way not only for the communication but also the collaborative working and engagement with the AOA, which is key for us, because you do give very good feedback and good engagement”. He was also keen to commend Adele Gammarano, the AOA’s Airport Regulation, Safety and Operations Manager, for her encouragement of the new model. “We both feel that it is a good way to work, an efficient way to work. We just need to test it and it is something on which we encourage feedback”.

He emphasised that the CAA values informal engagement at AOA working group meetings on regulatory change both to ensure that it is on the right track, but also on occasion to pick up issues that it may have missed. “A high percentage of the time the reaction is what we anticipated, and it is validation and verification” he said, “but on the odd occasion something we were not anticipating does come to the forefront, which is absolutely fantastic”.

After informal engagement at working group meetings the CAA will follow up with a formal consultation. These consultations are published at Civil Aviation Authority - Citizen Space (caa.co.uk). On this he said “When these consultation papers go out to industry, we strongly recommend that they respond. A response is their key way of telling us if it is fit for purpose and achievable or not. That then helps us as a state to go to ICAO with the feedback to influence change at the ICAO Aerodrome Design and Operations Panel, if required. It is very important that not only we have the open, honest discussions with industry and the two-way communication, but that when these consultation papers go

out there people do respond to them. We do appreciate industry taking the time to give feedback. It is for the benefit of all of us”.

He emphasised that when airports have raised concerns it has often proved possible, working with other states, to modify ICAO’s approach. He gave the example of changes to ICAO’s original plans for obstacle evaluation surfaces, where he said ICAO had taken on board most of the UK’s feedback. Similarly the CAA itself has been willing to extend timelines in the light of industry feedback, pointing to the extension of a deadline on instrument flight procedures safeguarding from December last year to April 2025.

Matt Roberts joined the CAA as Policy Principal Aerodromes in January this year after more than 16 years at East Midlands Airport, most recently as Developments and Safeguarding Project Manager. He is a previous Chair of the AOA’s Aerodrome Safeguarding Working Group.

The main substantive item discussed at the 30 April working group meeting was ICAO’s Pavement Classification Rating (PCR), its new approach to measuring the bearing strength of airport runways, taxiways and aprons. The damage-based approach embodied in the PCR replaces methods first developed in the 1930’s and will be fully applicable at UK airports from 28

November this year.

George Carney, responsible for airside compliance at London Gatwick Airport, gave the working group a presentation on compliance aspects of the airport’s new Rapid Exit Taxiway, opened on 21 February. It is enabling arriving aircraft to leave the runway more efficiently, helping to reduce delays and go-arounds and limiting carbon and noise emissions.

The group also discussed laser attacks and had a chance to try out the driving simulator provided by aviation consultancy, AIRDAT.

Adele Gammarano said she was pleased by the great attendance at the meeting (59 attendees in person and online) and the productive discussions. She thanked Chris Wilde, Bristol Airport’s Head of Airfield Operations and Jack Keegan, the airport’s Airside Safety & Compliance Manager, for hosting and planning the meeting and for providing a great opportunity for members to network and engage. ■

*Matt Roberts, Policy Principal
Aerodromes, CAA*





THE FUTURE OF THE UK CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ROB BISHTON

It has been more than a year since I started my post as the Chief Executive of the UK Civil Aviation Authority, initially as interim joint-CEO and then from October 2023 as CEO.

In that time, we've played a pivotal role in enabling the industry to develop and grow, with a Permit to Fly granted for the historic 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel Virgin Atlantic transatlantic flight, the launch of our Hydrogen Challenge to enable companies to safely explore the potential of hydrogen aviation fuel, and the launch of our new strategy to help us fulfil our mission: protecting people, enabling aerospace.

Our new strategy

Our new strategy puts a measurable, transparent, and defined delivery plan in place so that we can both be held to account and be well-prepared for the challenges ahead.

It also puts a focus on our priorities: developing global relationships and standards, protecting the public, enabling innovation and sustainability in the sector, and making sure we continue to improve ourselves to deliver for such a vital industry as post-pandemic recovery continues.

The aviation landscape

Over the last five years, UK aviation has remained competitive, but has also faced some challenges from emerging markets.

In 2023, global aviation was valued at \$ 814.5 billion (around £652.9 billion), with the Asian-Pacific Market as the largest, followed closely by Europe.

Broken down by passenger numbers, China, as the market with currently the largest passenger volumes, is expected to serve 1.6 billion per annum by 2037, and the US, as the second largest market by passenger volumes, is expected to serve 1.3 billion. In 2019, the UK was third largest market by passenger volumes, expecting to serve circa 300 million passengers, but India was already forecast to exceed these numbers, largely due to the development of their internal



market, with a 2037 forecast being in excess of 510 million passengers.

Whilst at a more macro level it is encouraging to see the return of passenger demand in the UK, there are other indicators which we must pay attention to when it comes to the competitive landscape of the UK airline sector, profitability of airlines and airports, and consumer pricing. Post-COVID 19, some analysis of profitability of airlines points to the apparent strength of US, Chinese and Gulf carriers.

The UK sector represents over a million jobs, which is why the competitive nature of the industry is key to continued economic growth.

This is why we need to increase resilience in the sector and continue to ensure a strong customer experience.

Our engagement with industry

Since becoming Chief Executive, it has been a great privilege to visit a variety of stakeholders all over



Rob Bishton, Chief Executive,
UK Civil Aviation Authority

the UK alongside the Civil Aviation Authority's Board.

It is and will continue to be important for us as a regulator to physically visit the places which are the lynchpins of the aviation industry all over the country.

For example, we have visited stakeholders in Wales, including GE Aerospace, British Airways Maintenance, Wales Air Ambulance, and ecube. It was great to see how GE Aerospace has been maintaining

In 2023, global aviation was valued at \$814.5 billion (around £652.9 billion), with the Asian-Pacific Market as the largest, followed closely by Europe.

and overhauling Boeing and Airbus aircraft engines for more than 80 years.

Similarly, just last month I visited Stansted to hear about Manchester Airport Group and the industry's commitment to working together to minimise passenger disruption. As part of the visit, I met with Manchester Airport Group's Chief Executive, Ken O'Toole, who set out the ways the airport is investing in improving passenger experience in the short, medium, and long term.

The visit also served as an opportunity to tour the airport terminal and hear about London Stansted's plans to grow in the years ahead, continuing to provide better choice and value to passengers.

These places across the UK are where aviation can be most tangibly and clearly felt, emphasising the collaboration and complexity of the industry we regulate.

New collaboration

But we will continue to find new ways to reach out to those we regulate. This month, for instance, we delivered our inaugural Annual Address at the Royal Aeronautical Society alongside the Civil Aviation Authority's Chair, Sir Stephen Hillier.

More than 100 aviation and aerospace leaders attended – from space rocket firms to global aircraft manufacturers, from airlines and airports of varying sizes to spaceport builders and ATOL protected package holiday companies.

The event provided us with an opportunity to update the industry on our priorities, progress, and new strategy, as well as how we are going to meet modern challenges, regulate for and support innovation, and continue to protect people and enable aerospace.

Our engagement with the AOA's



members will be key to this. At our address, it was especially clear that we must continue to engage on airspace modernisation so that the industry and the Civil Aviation Authority can together contribute to a more modern airspace system.

New opportunities

However, I know that the most pressing issue, even since I held the position in an interim capacity, remains the anticipated recommendations from the independent review into NATS' system failure in August 2023.

Although we appreciate that many airports and airlines have delivered

a good service even during busy periods and disruption outside of their control, it is paramount that we all continue to collaborate during future possible stress points to protect and empower consumers.

It is my aspiration to ensure we are an enabling organisation when it comes to continuing to build resilience, especially as airports are undeniably a key function in the UK aviation ecosystem.

My hope is that our relationship with industry continues to develop in a strong vein, with planned future development and improvements for the passenger experience at the forefront. ■

AIRPORTS TO LOSE OUT FROM NEW APPROACH ON BUSINESS RATES

AOA POLICY DIRECTOR, CHRISTOPHER SNELLING, EXPLAINS

Many English and Welsh airports stand to incur significantly increased taxation from 2026, when a new method for calculating business rates comes into full effect for the first time. Some airports will see more than a quadrupling of their rates burden – representing a substantial share of current operational expenditure budgets. It is perhaps the chief corporate issue of concern for many airports right now.

What is happening is the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is switching to a new method of assessment for airports – from the old Contractor’s basis to the Receipts and Expenditure method. Essentially, Contractor’s is used for non-commercial premises such as schools and hospitals. Clearly airports have been in the private sector (with a couple of exceptions) for many years now so there is a logic in switching to the method used for profitmaking commercial sites.

However, applying this now to airports involves many assumptions and value judgments about what an airport should be charged. As airports are often owned and operated by the same company, it means that, in these cases, the VOA has to work up a theoretical model of what would an airport as landlord be responsible for if the airport itself was then operated by a different company

(as this is a building-based tax). As this is entirely notional, it leaves much room for confusion and potential mistakes.

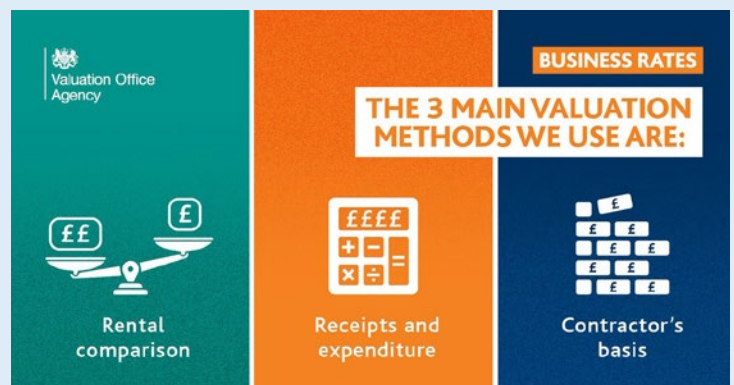
We know that the VOA’s current approach will mean very substantially increased bills for many (though not all) airports. This is based on their 2023 conclusions, which were then mitigated by Covid-era discounts. These discounts will no longer apply, so the full force of increases could be brought to bear.

The AOA recently held discussions with airports’ CFOs regarding their concerns. We then held a round table with the VOA’s Chief Valuation Officer and colleagues. It is safe to say that the VOA takes a bullish attitude to the general accuracy of their assessments and has a clear view of their role – which is to collect the tax that is properly due, not to assess if such a level of taxation is a bad idea – those are issues for the Government itself.

Consequently, AOA is now gathering data from members regarding the scale of impact and

its potential commercial effects. We will then use this data (on an anonymised basis) to enter into dialogue with the Treasury, the Department for Transport and other Government departments regarding the wider consequences for local economies, regional development, UK connectivity and other Government priorities.

In the meantime, AOA will arrange regular further sessions for airports with the VOA to closely monitor the process they are following and to enable them to develop their understanding of the sector and to come to sensible conclusions regarding how rates should be calculated for airports. ■



AOA ELECTION MANIFESTO TO STRESS STABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Peter Campbell, the AOA's head of public affairs and media, gives an update on the Association's upcoming General Election manifesto

Whatever the result of the upcoming General Election, the next government will find its financial freedom of movement restricted. Economic growth will have to be prioritised if money is to be made available for investment in public services, if jobs are to be created and if the UK is to be felt to be growing richer again.

Aviation, and airports in particular, can play a pivotal role in this through new routes to the rest of the world, opening up new investment opportunities, encouraging new business development and global trading prospects. This is what aviation has been doing since its earliest days, and we are calling on those vying to form the next government to implement the right policies to help drive this.

To demonstrate this value, we are working with the transport

consultancy, Steer, whose analysts are looking into the economics around airports for us. Taking data provided by airports of all sizes and in every region and nation of the UK, Steer is calculating new data on the direct, indirect and induced gross value added, the jobs created and the value of airlines' activities and air cargo. This brand-new data will also be broken down by region and sector, to give a full picture of the economic impact of airports.

This data will inform our upcoming manifesto, which will call on all political parties to commit to three guiding principles in its approach to aviation:

- 1. Stability** – provide stable tax, economic, political and regulatory environments to ensure the UK is a great place to invest and do business;
- 2. Sustainability** – build on the UK's position as a leader in greener

Peter Campbell, Head of public affairs and media, AOA



aviation to support the industry's net zero plans delivering more investment, highly skilled jobs, energy security and cleaner flights;

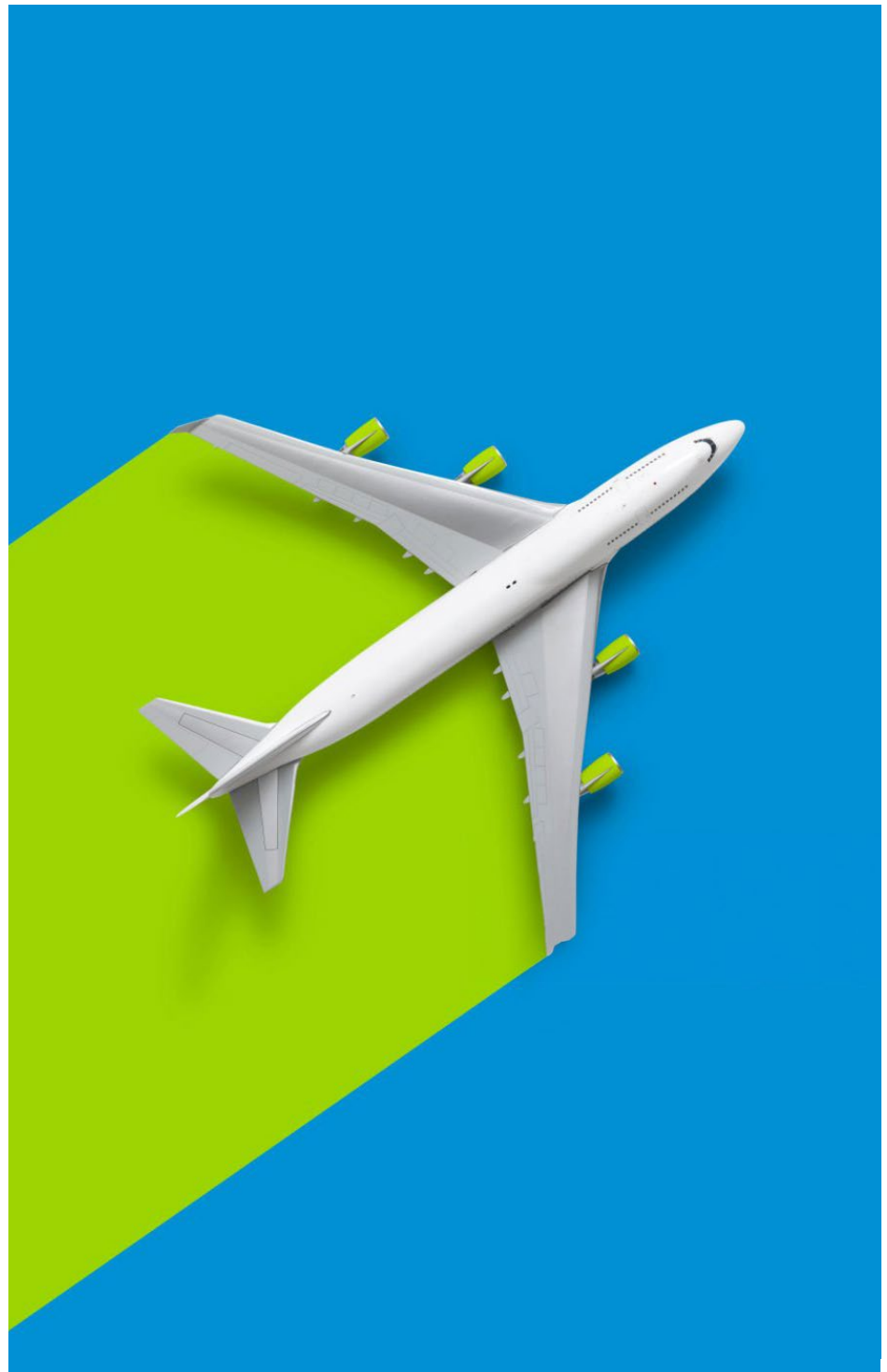
3. Affordability – ensure that the benefits of aviation can be enjoyed by as many people as possible; and promote the UK as great place to visit with targeted support through the tax and borders systems to give tourists a warm welcome.

We already know that for every 10% increase in connectivity, 0.5% is added to a country's GDP through growth in business, tourism, freight and other reasons for air travel. The next government can provide the best possible environment to encourage growth in connectivity and therefore contributions to GDP by signing up to the AOA's three principles.

Our manifesto will also make specific policy recommendations that sit under these three principles. For **stability**, these include policies that commit to making best use of existing capacity, support for improvements in surface access, and changes to skills funding to train the next generation of aviation and airport employees.

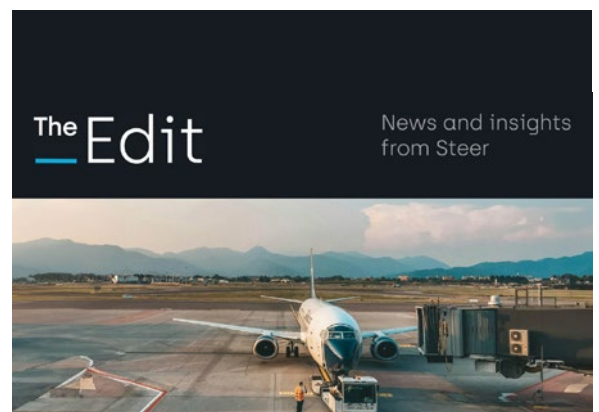
On **sustainability**, we will be calling on the next government to accelerate its work to deliver the UK's airspace modernisation programme, develop new Sustainable Aviation Fuel plants, and begin consideration of the future needs of aviation in terms of hydrogen and battery electric technology. These taken together will ensure that aviation meets its carbon commitments and enable sustainable growth that will boost the economy.

Finally, on **affordability**, the goal is to ensure that air travel does not become the sole preserve of the wealthy and that everyone gets to enjoy the benefits of access to foreign travel. The next government should pledge not to raise aviation taxes and burdens that add costs, while also allowing air travel to make itself more attractive through measures such as arrivals duty-



free stores and tax-free shopping.

The finishing touches are being put to both the new economic data and our manifesto, and we aim to publish at the end of this month or early in June. Do keep your eyes open for this exciting new programme for the next government. ■





AIRPORTS URGED TO PLAN FOR THE GROWING RISK OF LITHIUM-ION BATTERY FIRES

Fire and safety experts at the AOA have come together to share best practice for dealing with lithium-ion battery fires.

In a first-of-a-kind joint meeting of the two Association working groups, fire fighting professionals and health and safety officers pooled their knowledge of the risk and encouraged airports across the UK to develop new battery fire risk management plans.

Martin Lown, Lead Tutor at the FireWise UK Learning Academy, told the meeting that the risk of lithium-ion battery fires at airports is growing both from the increasing automation of services, including cleaning and escorting passengers with reduced mobility, and the growing number of personal electronic devices. Typically a fire could result from a passenger dropping their laptop as they go through security, or it might be the result of batteries being over-charged or over-heated.

Participants at the meeting agreed that airports need to develop risk management plans which take account of the special characteristics of lithium-ion battery fires which need to be dealt with differently to conventional fires. Familiar smoke and fire risks are replaced by chemical vapour risks and the fast and high heat generation process known as thermal runaway, a self-perpetuating fire that moves from cell to cell within the battery until all are burnt out.

Lown suggested that the airport plans should cover five key factors: raising awareness of the risks and signs of a lithium-ion battery fire, preparation to ensure that the right tools, equipment and extinguishing media are available to deal with a fire, safety for passengers and staff in relation to cordons and evacuation strategies, a response model for what to do if a fire occurs and waste management after an incident.

Daniel Cartwright, co-chair of the AOA's Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (RFFS) working group and Fire Service Manager at Bristol Airport, chaired the joint forum with the AOA Health and Safety working group.



Daniel Cartwright

He told The Airport Operator that the meeting had been fortunate to benefit from the expert knowledge of Lown. His role had been fundamental in delivering a successful meeting. Lown had been both an excellent speaker and "a superb subject matter expert". Cartwright also praised Chris Knowles, Station Manager at Gatwick Fire and Rescue Service, and his colleague, Watch Manager, Ryan Eggleden. "They were brilliant" he said, "because they had some examples which they brought to the group and gave a presentation of what response models they have put in place and lessons they have learned".

Cartwright was also keen to emphasise "the benefits of having a blended working group. This is the first one I have been part of where we worked with another group and I think, having health and safety and fire safety professionals in the room, we ended up with more diverse thinking and questions that came from different perspectives. People went away with more than had we worked in isolation. So, really good collaborative working, and I think we have all agreed to try and look



Martin Lown

for other opportunities to do more collaborations together".

Adele Gammarano, the AOA's Airport Regulation, Safety and Operations Manager, said she was grateful both to Daniel Cartwright for chairing the forum and to Martin Lown for his "insightful information and knowledge shared and his great support in addressing the many questions raised". She described the joint forum as "an eye-opener that helped us all to increase our awareness of this critical topic" and she noted that, as a result, "some airports have taken new actions to protect their business continuity".

Gammarano said she was delighted to see cross-collaboration between working groups and, following the success of this joint forum, there would be a further opportunity for the two groups and the Sustainability working group to discuss new technologies to meet carbon footprint targets. "I strongly believe" she said, "that these collaborative efforts will help us achieve our goals more efficiently and effectively". ■

The risk of lithium-ion battery fires at airports is growing both from the increasing automation of services, including cleaning and escorting passengers with reduced mobility, and the growing number of personal electronic devices.



ANNUAL DINNER CELEBRATES 90 YEARS OF THE AOA

**PETER CAMPBELL, AOA HEAD OF PUBLIC
AFFAIRS AND MEDIA, REPORTS**

On 19 March 2024 over 600 representatives from the aviation, political and media worlds gathered at the Grosvenor House Hotel on London's Park Lane to celebrate the AOA's 90th anniversary at its Annual Dinner.

Joining the Association to mark this occasion were the Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper MP, the Aviation Minister, Anthony Browne MP, and numerous past holders of these two offices.

In his remarks to the audience, Mark Harper paid tribute to the sector and praised it for overcoming the numerous challenges it has faced down the years. He also recognised the role that aviation plays in the social and economic lives of the

country, creating jobs, wealth and opportunities for travel and connecting with friends and family. Finally, he restated the Government's commitment to working with the sector to ensure it can succeed and contribute further to the UK's growth.

The other big news from the night was delivered by the AOA Chair, Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, who used the occasion to announce that the AOA will shortly be changing its name to Airports UK. This will be an exciting rebrand, complete

with a new logo, which will see the AOA begin its next 90 years in the best possible way to continue representing members.

Baroness McGregor-Smith said: "The change will help us to communicate and navigate the challenges we face: decarbonising the sector; helping the UK maintain its place as a global trading nation; and growing the opportunities for all the UK population."

The AOA's Chief Executive, Karen

Dee, used her remarks to call on the current and future Government, whatever shape it takes, to remember the three key priorities of the aviation sector: stability, sustainability and affordability. She said that consistent policy, planning, and fiscal frameworks are vital if the UK is to continue enjoying its position as a leading aviation player.

She also pointed to some of the challenges facing aviation and how they would benefit from a stable, sustainable and affordable approach. These include airspace modernisation, the decarbonisation of airports and air travel, and reducing regulatory and cost burdens that could prevent people and businesses from enjoying the benefits of flying.

After dinner, the room was treated to the amazing mentalist talents of David Meade, who blew everyone away with his ability to notice the subtlest of cues of various volunteers to 'read minds'. David used his talents to highlight and stress the importance of understanding people, of knowing how to use this knowledge to build the best teams that utilise all the skills on offer and to tailor our approaches to management and customer service.

The evening also provided the opportunity for members of the aviation industry to look back on a legacy of innovation and growth. Through the course of the past 90 years and the AOA's existence we have seen air travel become an everyday experience, enjoyed by millions of people every year, taking them on holiday, visiting new places, opening up new markets and reconnecting with family and friends.

This was the positive message on the role air travel plays in the UK that attendees were left with. As passenger numbers rise, new routes open and airports throughout the country look to the future, aviation will continue to lead the way and Airports UK will be right alongside the industry to champion its work. ■



AOA will shortly be changing its name to Airports UK. This will be an exciting rebrand, complete with a new logo, which will see the AOA begin its next 90 years in the best possible way to continue representing members.





NEW POLLUTION MONITORING REQUIREMENTS FOR AIRPORTS

AOA POLICY DIRECTOR,
CHRISTOPHER SNELLING, REPORTS

An additional element has been added to many airports' environmental management issues this year – PFAS, the 'forever chemical' pollutant.

As background, the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist, amongst other things, heat. Some PFAS have been associated with adverse health effects in animal and human studies at sufficient levels of exposure. Where PFAS are concentrated in the ground they continue to enter into water supplies for a very long period of time, potentially therefore causing pollution.

The Issue for airports stems from the firefighting foam which was in use at UK airports, and across the world in many firefighting situations. It is now known that the material that was usually used in the past contained PFAS and so when used could contaminate a site.

Earlier this year the Environment Agency (EA) issued notices to 20 English and Welsh airports instructing them to carry out extensive monitoring work on their sites with a view to potentially carrying out remedial work. A further six airports have since had requirements issued to them too.

The EA has a strict timetable they wish airports to work to. For the most part airports' teams are new to the world of PFAS issues, and so this is incurring a lot of difficulty in getting up to speed on the necessary actions and sourcing outside expertise to carry out this difficult monitoring.

AOA has worked to clarify some of the issues around the EA's requirements and held a member session to share knowledge between airports. We have concerns still about what the EA is asking, the speed at which they require it and how they are taking account of background levels of emissions. We are making further representations to the EA on these issues.

But in the meantime many airports face a whole new set of

environmental issues to deal with which will take up internal resource as well as outside expense over the next two years at least. And this is just the monitoring stage – where problems are found the debate will move on to the expensive issue of remediation.

The EA only covers England and Wales, and is currently only working with the airports who have water discharge permits. However, airports in other territories and those without discharge permits should expect to potentially face examination on this issue in future. Anywhere where firefighting foam may have been used in the past may have a problem, so maybe liable for the same attention in future. ■

AOA has worked to clarify some of the issues around the EA's requirements and held a member session to share knowledge between airports. We have concerns still about what the EA is asking, the speed at which they require it and how they are taking account of background levels of emissions.



*Christopher Snelling,
Policy Director, AOA*

‘SAVE TOMORROW WITH SAFETY TODAY’ - UK AIRPORTS HEALTH & SAFETY WEEK 2024

Airports across the UK have been taking part in this year’s Health & Safety Week, with events scheduled from 13 to 19 May.

Using the slogan ‘save tomorrow with safety today’, airports have organised activities around the key themes of working at height, a safe airside environment and personal protective equipment.

UK Airports Health & Safety Week is a national event coordinated by the AOA, supported by the UK Civil Aviation Authority and the Health and Safety Executive with sponsorship from aviation services provider, Leidos.

AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, emphasised that “the health and safety of passengers, staff and local communities is the number one priority of airports, screening travellers, providing a healthy, safe workplace, and ensuring residents are protected”. She said that Airports Health and Safety Week was “a chance to showcase everything airports and their partners do every day of the year to make sure this is the case, and that UK aviation is the safest in the world”.

Jon Round, Head of Airspace, Aerodromes and Air Traffic

Management at the CAA, said “Aviation remains one of the safest sectors, but by fostering a culture of safety awareness and continuous improvement, we can ensure the wellbeing of passengers, staff and the entire aviation community. UK Airports Health & Safety Week always serves as a crucial reminder of the importance of maintaining rigorous safety standards at our airports, and we’re pleased to be supporting the week and the various events taking place at UK airports”.

Adele Gammarano, the AOA’s Airport Regulation, Safety and Operations

Manager, said “we work closely with every airport around the country to understand what their priorities are, and help develop a range of events that are interesting, informative and relevant. This year promises to be the best one yet with more activities than ever designed to reach as many passengers, team members and local residents as possible”.

A full report on UK Airports Health & Safety Week 2024 will appear in the next issue of The Airport Operator. ■



AIRPORT FIRE OFFICERS BRIEFED ON GROUND-BREAKING BRISTOL AIRPORT HYDROGEN TRIAL

Bristol Airport's Chief Fire Officer, Matt Kilyon, has told colleagues that the first UK airside hydrogen refuelling trial has shown that the gas can be safely and reliably used to refuel ground equipment in a busy, live airport environment.

Speaking at Edinburgh Airport to members of the AOA's Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (RFFS) working group, he emphasised the importance of airport fire services working closely with other airport teams to understand the risks involved when novel fuels are deployed for the first time.

"The main thing I wanted to convey" he told The Airport Operator, "was the importance of being involved in these projects from the start. Aviation at the moment is starting to change at quite a pace with the introduction alternative fuel technology. A real positive from this project was the partners that were involved in it throughout - airside safety, fire, environmental, ground handling agents, airlines and manufacturers. That was a key factor to get across to the group - the



Jack Keegan, Airside Safety and Compliance Manager, Bristol Airport

importance of ensuring that you are involved in these projects so that you can understand what the risks are and how we can prepare for them”.

Kilyon said that Bristol Airport had worked closely with its local authority and internal Airside Safety on the project. “The risk with hydrogen” he said “is you are introducing compressed gas into the airside environment. It is very safe, but, if it goes wrong, then you have larger evacuation zones because of the explosive risk, as with other compressed gas. Risks were discussed and mitigation put in place through review with the Airside Safety and Compliance Manager to ensure safety of operations”.

“When hydrogen burns, it burns so pure it burns with an invisible flame, so you can’t see it, which is something for fire services to understand so that we can start to build processes and response procedures into what we already do. If it goes wrong, it is a different incident for us to respond to. That was a safety area to talk about with the ground handlers” he said “ensuring it is safe and that if the vehicle or fuelling area was involved in fire, for them not to try and tackle it with extinguishers themselves because of the risk of invisible flame and let us attend and assess it.

Industry is learning the best way to identify and respond to risks like this”.

The Bristol Airport trial involved the use of hydrogen to refuel and power a baggage tractor servicing EasyJet’s passenger aircraft and was conducted as part of the airline’s daily operations. The trial was designed to be the first step to develop the ground infrastructure, safety standards (including how to use, control and transport hydrogen) and operational procedures needed to make the aviation sector’s operations hydrogen-ready.

Jack Keegan, the airport’s Airside Safety and Compliance Manager, developed the safety case to have the trial enabled airside and prepared risk assessments in partnership with EasyJet and the ground handler, DHL. Acknowledging that nothing like it had ever been done before at a UK airport, he told The Airport Operator that he had drawn on the experience of other industries and the knowledge of project partners, including the airport fire service, equipment providers and Cranfield Aerospace Solutions and Cranfield University.

He said that the UK Civil Aviation Authority had independently reviewed the safety case. Keegan said that the main things he had

considered had been keeping the hydrogen in a safe and secure environment, the risks if it were involved in an incident and making sure that the vehicle was used only by a limited number of trained personnel.

In conclusion, he described the trial as “a good collaborative effort both within the airport and externally as well. The CAA were engaged and that was a good platform to enable this trial to happen. Collaboration with EasyJet, DHL and other partners such as the hydrogen supplier and Cranfield worked well”. Overall, by the end of the trial he had felt “pleased that it went successfully. I think it was an achievement and it was satisfying to prove that something like this could be done”.

Bristol Airport’s presentation to the RFFS meeting at Edinburgh Airport was followed by a presentation from Edinburgh’s Airport Operations Manager, Alex Eccles, on the airport’s new solar farm. The 11-acre 9.7MW farm, with 1.5MW battery storage, is expected to provide 27% of the airport’s energy needs. After the meeting participants were given a tour of the solar farm and of the airport’s fire station. ■



AOA WELCOMES EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY AND AIRSPACE CHANGE SPECIALISTS AS NEW MEMBERS



Ethos Farm has joined the Airport Operators Association as a Silver Member.

The award-winning company specialises in employee experience and customer experience, working with leading brands globally to nurture thriving cultures on the basis that brilliant employee experiences deliver exceptional customer experiences.

The company says that it delivers a comprehensive end-to-end approach, starting by defining a service vision, then recruiting, motivating and leading ambassadors that reflect a client's brand and connecting them with learning solutions to bring a service vision to life. Ethos Farm describes the outcome as thriving teams, smiling customers and flourishing business.

Its UK airport clients have included Edinburgh, London Heathrow, London Luton and London Stansted.



RSK Group has joined the Airport Operators Association as an Associate Member.

The company has more than 30 years' experience of supporting the development needs of the aviation industry. Since the 1980s, RSK has worked with airports to deliver solutions to meet their needs, from designing and installing solar farms at Edinburgh Airport to long-term carbon forecasting at Gatwick Airport.

The company's teams have first-hand experience of master plan delivery, public engagement, consultation, communications, pre-sale airport due diligence and airspace change. In terms of airspace change, RSK offers a one-stop shop for delivery, including fully integrated design solutions to complement the project life cycle with support from specialist multidisciplinary and advisory design teams, working together to foster a collaborative environment.

AOA 2024 EVENT CALENDAR



26-27 JUNE

Airport Conference:
Sustainability

18-19 SEPTEMBER

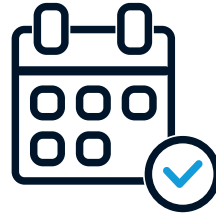
Airport Conference:
Security

05 DECEMBER

Annual Conference



MEETINGS CALENDAR



- **Public Affairs & Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AOA Office
4 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Health & Safety Working Group**
Virtual meeting
4 June @ 1:00pm – 3:00pm
- **Security Group**
AOA Office
13 June @ 11:00am – 12:30pm
- **Security Group(Airports only)**
AOA Office
13 June @ 1:30pm – 3:00pm
- **Board Meeting**
AOA Office
18 June @ 10:00am – 12:30pm
- **Rescue & Fire Fighters Services Working Group (RFFS)**
Virtual meeting
27 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance Working Group (ASC)**
Virtual meeting
9 July @ 2:00pm – 4:30pm
- **Aerodrome Safeguarding Seminar**
Southampton Airport
3 September @ 9:00am – 4:00pm
- **Public Affairs & Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AOA Office
10 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Health & Safety Working Group**
AOA Office
17 September @ 12:00am – 3:00pm
- **Board Meeting**
AOA Office
24 September @ 10:30am – 1:00pm
- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services Working Group (AATS)**
AOA Office
25 September @ 11:00am – 3:00pm
- **Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance Working Group (ASC)**
AOA Office
1 October @ 1:00pm – 4:00pm
- **Rescue & Fire Fighters Services Working Group (RFFS)**
Virtual meeting
23 October @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Health & Safety Working Group**
In-person (Airport to be confirmed)
11 November @ 12:00pm – 4:00pm
- **Public Affairs & Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee**
AOA Office
13 November @ 11:00am – 1:00pm
- **Board Meeting**
AOA Office
26 November @ 10:30am – 5:00pm
- **Airspace & Air Traffic Services Working Group (AATS)**
Virtual meeting
2 December @ 11:00am – 1:30pm
- **General Counsels Forum**
AOA Office
2 December @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

ABERDEEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CELEBRATES 90TH ANNIVERSARY

Aberdeen International Airport will celebrate its 90th anniversary in July this summer.

A 90th anniversary is commonly known as a Granite Anniversary, particularly appropriate for the airport serving The Granite City, named after the stone quarried around it.

The airport was officially opened on 28 July 1934 by Lord Arbuthnott, Lord Lieutenant of Kincardineshire. It was initially promoted and established by Scottish businessman, Eric Gandar Dower, for his

enterprises, including Aberdeen's Flying School and Flying Club and his airline, Aberdeen Airways.

During the Second World War the airfield became an RAF station, not reopening for unrestricted civil flying until 1 January 1946. Work was undertaken to extend the runway in 1952. With the discovery of North Sea oil, helicopter operations began in 1967 linking oil platforms to the mainland. Helicopters today account for almost half of all aircraft movements at the airport.

A new terminal was opened in 1977



and a further extension to the main runway was completed in 2011. Today the airport is owned and operated by AGS Airports and last year more than 2.3m passengers passed through the airport, with Amsterdam the most popular destination, followed by Stavanger in Norway. Next Generation Security Checkpoint screening went live at the airport in April this year. ■

AIR CARGO GROWTH AT EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT COULD LEAD TO MORE THAN 12,000 JOBS

A new study by York Aviation says that air cargo growth at East Midlands Airport will support up to £1.8bn in additional Gross Value Added and up to 12,600 extra jobs by 2030.

The study points to a combination of strengths that make the airport well-placed to support increased demand for air freight. These include its central location and proximity to major road and rail networks and the fact that 80% of all large-scale warehouse sites are within 25 miles.

It also specialises in the handling of express air freight, carried in dedicated aircraft, not in the belly of passenger planes, and it is this

type of air cargo that is forecast to account for an increasing share of goods shipped around the world. It also has the capacity to accommodate an increase in flights as the economy grows.

York Aviation says that these factors combine to place the airport in a strong position to build on its status as the UK's most important express air freight hub. The three major cargo integrators (DHL, UPS and FedEx), who own and operate their own fleets, have their main UK hubs at East Midlands Airport.

The airport's Managing Director, Steve Griffiths, said "This report confirms East Midlands Airport's

status as the UK's most important express air freight hub, powering seamless trade for the whole of the country. It highlights how some of our unique attributes, including our central location and ability to offer a 24-hour service, allow us to punch well above our weight". ■



NEW RAPID EXIT TAXIWAY AT GATWICK CUTS DELAYS AND AIRCRAFT EMISSIONS

A new Rapid Exit Taxiway at London Gatwick Airport enabling arriving aircraft to leave the runway more efficiently is helping to reduce delays and go-arounds and limit carbon and noise emissions.

The new taxiway, enabling aircraft to leave the runway at a more optimal location after landing, was used by more than half of all arrivals in its first four days of operation.

By achieving a more efficient exit, the airport's runway will perform more consistently, supporting all pilots but particularly those who are less familiar with Gatwick. More pilots are now able to take the first exit, and if they miss it then the time to the second is much lower, meaning they are less likely to impact other aircraft. The new taxiway helps to limit emissions and noise by reducing delays, the likelihood of go-arounds and holding times for aircraft waiting



to depart.

Gavin Sillito, Transformation Project lead at the airport, said "For aircraft exiting the runway, it is like the speed of turning onto a motorway slip road rather than a suburban street. We have put an exit in place that is natural for how pilots normally brake that can handle aircraft exiting safely at higher speeds".

Construction initially began in 2020 but was paused during

Covid, providing an opportunity to rationalise and optimise the design, reducing construction carbon emissions from the original plan by more than 10%.

A meeting of the AOA's Aerodrome Safety and Compliance working group at Bristol Airport on 30 April was given a presentation on compliance aspects of the taxiway by George Carney, responsible for airside compliance at Gatwick. ■

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS AIRPORTS APPOINT NEW CEO

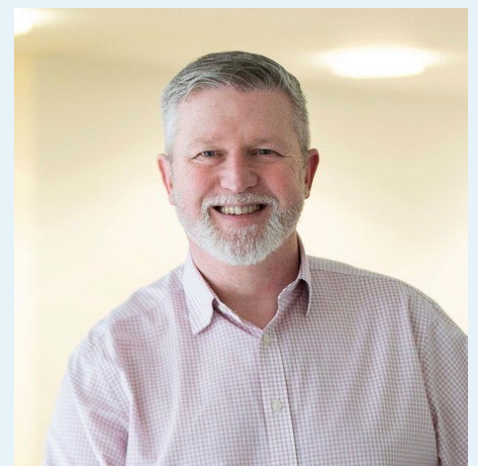
The Board of Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd has announced the appointment of Paul Kelsall as CEO.

Kelsall, who joins HIAL this month, was recently Managing Director of Offshore Helicopter Services UK, having worked in the sector since 2015 following a 22-year career in the Royal Navy.

Lorna Jack, Chair of the HIAL Board, said "We are delighted to have secured someone of Paul's calibre and experience to lead the

organisation and deliver our strategic priorities". She thanked Interim CEO, Stewart Adams, for his significant contribution to the business.

Kelsall said he is "thrilled to be joining HIAL as CEO and hugely excited to lead an organisation that has played a large part in my working career. During my flying career I have visited almost all HIAL airports and HIAL is renowned for the professional, friendly and high-quality services it provides". ■



LONDON CITY AIRPORT REPORTS 50% REDUCTION IN QUEUE TIMES A YEAR AFTER ROLLOUT OF NEXT GENERATION SECURITY SCANNERS

Next generation CT security scanners have reduced queue times for passengers at London City Airport by 50% on average since they were introduced a year ago.

In April 2023 London City was the first major airport in the UK to deploy next generation security checkpoints for passengers' hand luggage, enabling them to pass through security without removing laptops and liquids from their hand baggage. The new technology, provided by AOA Silver Member, Leidos, detects prohibited items with greater accuracy.

Alison FitzGerald, CEO at the airport, said "We are committed to delivering the quickest, easiest and most efficient airport experience in the UK, so we're delighted with the results of our CT scanners rollout".

While notices at the airport ask passengers to leave everything in their bags, the UK Government continues to advise travellers to remember that 100ml liquid containers and 1 litre transparent bags may still be required at destination airports. ■



NEW OWNERS OF SOUTHEND AIRPORT COMMIT TO ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Private equity group, Carlyle, and hedge fund, Cyrus Capital, have agreed to provide up to £32m of investment funding to London Southend Airport.

A restructuring plan agreed with former airport owner, Esken, gives Carlyle an 82.5% stake in the business, while Cyrus Capital picks up Esken's remaining 17.5% stake. The two companies said, "This transaction combines our financial strength and expertise with new funding to secure the airport's long-term future and ensures the airport is well-positioned to thrive".

The airport's CEO, John Upton, said

"This is great news for everyone connected with the airport. Carlyle and Cyrus both have extensive experience across the aviation industry and deep knowledge of our airport. Their commitment to our future delivers both certainty and stability and will enable us to accelerate our growth plans with their considerable investment capability and operational expertise".

He added "We are already seeing our passenger volumes double year-on-year as we bring on new destinations with easyJet, Aeroitalia and other airlines. Following this transaction, we expect to further increase the pace of our growth".

Shortly after the announcement, EasyJet announced that it was putting thousands of extra seats on sale this summer to Paris and Palma de Mallorca from Southend. The airline will operate an extra Sunday service to Paris Charles de Gaulle and an extra weekly flight to Palma de Mallorca. ■



NEW MULTI-MILLION POUND BAGGAGE SYSTEM INSTALLED AT MANCHESTER'S TERMINAL 2

Manchester Airport has installed a new baggage system in Terminal 2 that includes over two miles of conveyor belts and can process 3,000 bags per hour.

The new system, built by AOA Corporate Partner, Vanderlande, went live at the end of March. The maximum distance a bag could travel from check-in to being taken onto an aircraft is 582 metres, equivalent to almost six football pitches. On average a bag takes ten minutes to get through the system before being picked up by ground handling agents and put onto an aircraft.

Manchester's new baggage system, part of its £1.3bn transformation programme, is designed to ensure that the airport can continue to offer a seamless service. From next year Terminal 2 will serve around 70% of the airport's passengers.

The airport's Managing Director, Chris Woodroffe, said "We are proud to serve the people of the North. On the surface that means offering an unrivalled range of more than 200 destinations, great service so that passengers never wait more than a few minutes to get to security and world class facilities. But beneath the surface there is a



huge amount of work that goes into making that happen. We're in the middle of a £1.3bn programme that is completely transforming the airport. A key component of that is this new baggage system that will help make sure things continue to run smoothly behind the scenes". ■

BUSIEST EVER 12-MONTH PERIOD AT LONDON STANSTED

London Stansted Airport has recorded its busiest ever 12-month period, with 28.5m passengers in the year to March – an increase of 11.8% on the last year.

The early Easter helped boost the March numbers, with more than 2.18m passengers passing through the terminal, beating the previous high set in 2019 by almost 80,000.

Top destinations in the year to March were Dublin, Istanbul and Edinburgh, with the most popular countries being Spain, Italy and Poland. Destinations showing the biggest year-on-year growth included Dubai, Switzerland, Iceland and Moldova.

Gareth Powell, London Stansted's Managing Director, said "Our passengers enjoy the fantastic range



of destinations we are able to offer, plus the reliable, smooth and efficient airport operation. Supported by the hard work and dedication of colleagues, these key drivers are allowing us to continue delivering record passenger numbers. In preparation for the summer we are

recruiting more colleagues to join our teams and upgrading many facilities and services to enhance the passenger experience as demand to fly from London Stansted continues to grow". ■

GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS 10% SAF TARGET FOR 2030

The Department for Transport has confirmed new targets to ensure 10% of all jet fuel in flights taking off from the UK comes from sustainable sources by 2030.

The UK's Sustainable Aviation Fuel mandate will, subject to parliamentary approval, come into force in January next year, making the UK one of the first countries in the world to put such a mandate into law. Ministers estimate that the SAF industry will add £1.8bn to the economy and create over 10,000 jobs.

The Government has also launched a consultation into a range of

options for a SAF revenue certainty scheme, which aims to guarantee revenue from SAF and provide new and existing producers and investors with the confidence to continue investing in the industry. The consultation includes a preferred option of a guaranteed strike price, which guarantees a pre-agreed price of SAF supplied to the UK market and gives producers confidence they will receive a certain price for the SAF they make.

AOA Chief Executive, Karen Dee, said "Sustainable aviation fuel is a key part of the decarbonisation of air travel and a domestic SAF industry will create jobs, wealth and help the



UK secure its energy independence. We are pleased that the Government has brought forward proposals for a mandate and revenue certainty scheme, that will send the message to investors that the UK is serious about developing its own production facilities. Government and industry must now work together to keep this momentum towards delivery going so that we can grow sustainably and meet our carbon targets". ■

TEESSIDE AIRPORT SECURES FEDEX FOR FREIGHT FLIGHTS

FedEx, the world's largest transportation company, has signed a five-year deal for an airfreight handling facility at Teesside International Airport.

The new cargo operation, scheduled to begin next month, will bring eight additional inbound and outbound flights a week, providing weekly capacity for 196,000 lbs of cargo, to meet growing import and export demand.

Alun Cornish, Managing Director of Ramp and Gateway Operations for Northern Europe for FedEx, said "Teesside Airport has excellent connections and transport links to the North of England, making it the

perfect location for us to better serve our customers in the Northeast and Yorkshire regions. We are seeing increasing import and export demand to and from the region, so our presence here will enable us to get goods to our customers faster".

Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen, said "This is an incredible development for the airport and one that shows to the world of cargo, the opportunity and possibilities of being located here. We have always said that our cargo operation is key to the long-term success of our airport and this show of confidence from FedEx shows what we are

doing is working".

The airport's Managing Director, Phil Forster, said "This new partnership is a brilliant and significant step into the cargo market and is a sign of things to come at Teesside Airport. We are working tirelessly to make sure our business is sustainable for the long-term and this is another big leap forward". ■





THE AIRPORT
OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AIRPORT OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

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