

THE AIRPORT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK
AUTUMN 2025

OPERATOR

STANSTED heads towards
30m passengers

BIRMINGHAM outlines
record investment plans

ACCESSIBILITY
in aviation feature

**AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL
CONFERENCE** plans

**Stewart
Wingate**

**GOVERNMENT
APPROVES
GATWICK'S
NORTHERN
RUNWAY PLANS**



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THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK

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KAREN DEE

INTRODUCTION TO THE AIRPORT OPERATOR



Hello and welcome to the autumn edition of The Airport Operator magazine and welcome back from what everyone at AirportsUK hopes was a successful, productive, and restorative summer.

Feedback we have received so far suggests that, apart from a few isolated incidents, the peak holiday period passed smoothly and has been largely positive for UK airports. Indeed, early indications suggest that many airports will report record breaking numbers of passengers passing through terminals on their summer holidays this year. It is a testament to all the hard work, planning and anticipation from all parts of the airports' operational teams that we were able to manage the flows and numbers of the past couple of months.

The team here at AirportsUK has also been busy, preparing for the coming months, which promise to be just as busy and eventful as the earlier part of 2025 has been. A lot of work has gone into finalising the agenda for our end of year annual conference, and I can promise that you will not be disappointed in terms of the speakers we have secured, the issues it will cover, and insights it will provide.

We continue to engage with government ministers and officials on a vast array of subjects of importance to airports, including airspace modernisation, tax, regulatory and planning matters, and sustainability. This is an exciting time to be working in aviation, with continued public statements of support for the sector as a way of enabling greater economic growth through more connectivity. We are waiting on government decisions on Heathrow, but decisions on Gatwick expansion plans, increases in passenger capacity at London City and Luton, as well as support for investment plans at Stansted, have given the sector a boost this year.

Now that progress that has been made with these announcements, it is vitally important that they are not undermined as we approach the Budget. This is a key moment when the government can send a message by choosing to support, rather than burden aviation, and work with us to enable us to grow. Our sector is a highly competitive one, sensitive to uncertainty created through frequent changes to the financial and regulatory frameworks to which we are subject.

This uncertainty can throw investment plans, route expansions, supply chains, jobs and wealth creation into jeopardy, and force airlines, retailers, businesses to look elsewhere.

Our focus over the coming months will be in making this point to government, ensuring ministers understand the challenges faced by aviation and making the case for a supportive approach. The benefits that would ensue from this would accrue to all actors within the economy – from global investors to local companies, tourists to business travellers. The whole team here is looking forward to working on these challenges in the coming weeks and months, and to doing so in collaboration with you.

In this quarter's edition, we look at recent political developments and preview the rest of the year's events that will shape the landscape for aviation and wider politics. We also feature interviews with Stewart Wingate as he makes the move to overseeing all of Vinci's UK airport interests, and Nick Barton on Birmingham Airport's record investment plans. Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson talks to us about the aviation accessibility task and finish group, which she chaired, and what will happen next now that the group's report has been submitted to government. Our policy director, Christopher Snelling, also gives his thoughts on the process and what happens now.

Elsewhere, we have articles on the next steps for Heathrow's third runway plans, Stansted's passenger growth proposals, East Midlands' doubling of freight volumes, Bournemouth's terminal expansion, Newcastle's new status as a base for easyJet and Ryanair, and Dundee Airport, operated by HIAL. We also look back on the two specialist conferences that have taken place since the last issue, focussing on Operations and Security, which have proved more popular than ever. Keep an eye out as well for thought pieces from our partners Vanderlande, Wilson James, Cognizant and Capgemini, highlighting all the great work they are doing with airports around the UK.

So, I hope you will agree there is plenty to interest everyone working in airports in the autumn edition of The Airport Operator magazine. Enjoy!

Karen Dee
Chief Executive

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT OUTLINES RECORD INVESTMENT PLANS AS IT HEADS TOWARDS ITS BUSIEST EVER YEAR

Birmingham Airport's Chief Executive, Nick Barton, has told The Airport Operator that the airport has committed to its biggest ever investment plans to meet the challenge of steady growth in passenger numbers.

Last month the airport recorded the busiest month in its history with a record 1.5m passengers travelling through and Barton says it is on track to experience its busiest ever year in 2025/26.

Commenting on the airport's approach to growth, he said "the biggest challenge for us is managing growth effectively because we have every reason to believe we are going to grow strongly over the next five to ten years. HS2 will be a significant benefit to this airport and the wider region. That sort of infrastructure connectivity turbocharges our business. The challenge for us now

is to integrate the growth that we forecast into a site that has got the ability to grow from its current 14m passengers a year".

Barton said "the constraints will be the obvious ones of where do you park aeroplanes, terminal capacity and the processing of baggage, but we are already committing to the early stages of addressing those challenges by unveiling investment plans that are around £76m a year. This is record investment at levels that we have never seen before".

He said that the investment has been planned to deal with three core areas: capacity growth "to

remove the leading constraints", asset replacement and meeting the airport's carbon commitments. The capacity element will include having bigger baggage carousels and more of them, more check-in facilities, increased security and immigration capacity and more aircraft stands. Updating ageing infrastructure assets will encompass replacing air conditioning, building fabrics, decoration and floor finishes.

A major element in Birmingham Airport's drive to meet its commitment to be carbon net zero by 2033 is solar electricity, with the first phase of solar generation using



"The biggest challenge for us is managing growth effectively because we have every reason to believe we are going to grow strongly over the next five to ten years."

Nick Barton

photovoltaics already operating via the airport's onsite solar farm. During peak daytime conditions, 100% of the airport's required energy usage is sustainably supplied via solar generation. Barton described that as "a significant milestone for us" adding "we need to build on that supply and have more of it to reflect our growth. That first phase of investment is over £10m, but well worth it and we will continue to invest in this area until we are completely off-grid".

Speaking about HS2, Barton said that even though the high-speed rail link between London and Birmingham is not expected to open until 2033, "HS2 for us is very significant because it is going to be a real fillip to the region and Birmingham Airport will be directly connected with its own link into the service. We have done some simple analysis, and we know getting into London is going to be incredibly quick. Coming from the airport it will be possible to get into central London in under 40 minutes".

Trains will depart from a new Birmingham Interchange station, connected to the airport by an automatic people mover, to a completely new station at Old Oak Common in London (the biggest station ever constructed in the UK), arriving in 32 minutes. A direct connection onto the Elizabeth Line will then enable passengers to reach Bond Street in London's West End in about four minutes. Barton described that as "pretty remarkable and then, of course, if they do go on and extend it into Euston that is another fillip".

Birmingham Airport has seen its busiest ever summer this year. "The demand for air travel is at record levels here, 7% up on last year" Barton said. "Each month we have seen record passenger numbers, and we expect that to continue. It sounds like it is all roses in the garden, but at the moment the

industry, despite all the crosswinds and the buffeting that we get from a variety of sources, is in a strong position, but you have got to work hard at that to keep it there. Provided we do that, it is a good time for aviation".

Looking ahead, Barton expects strong growth across all its airline sectors – low cost carriers (with easyJet, Ryanair and Jet2 all based at the airport), classic European legacy carriers (Air France and Lufthansa), long haul carriers (Air India, Emirates, Qatar and Saudia) and Turkish Airlines, which this summer celebrated carrying over 2m passengers through the airport since it began operations there in 2008. Its twice-daily route to Istanbul

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links Birmingham to the world's best-connected airport, with direct flights from Istanbul to over 300 destinations.

Despite Barton's general optimism, one coveted long-haul destination has continued to elude Birmingham

Airport for now – New York.

American Airlines ceased to operate its direct flights to JFK early in 2017 and United Airlines dropped its route to Newark in October that year.

Passengers from Birmingham can reach New York via Dublin, where Aer Lingus offers US pre-clearance allowing travellers to complete US immigration and customs clearance before they leave Ireland. Barton describes that as "a fabulous product" but acknowledged that "people want a direct service to New York as well".

The airport is continuing to hold discussions with three airlines about a direct link, but Barton said "the key issue has been and remains aircraft availability. The type of aircraft



that is ideal for that operation is the Airbus A321XLR and the supply of those is quite constrained, but we think we will get our day in the sun, and it will fill that obvious gap in our network”.

Later this year the airport will see a significant change in its ownership structure when Macquarie Asset Management completes its acquisition of the 26.5% stake previously owned by Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan. Macquarie will sit alongside the airport’s existing shareholders, which are a consortium of international pension funds, seven West Midlands district councils and an employee share trust.

Asked about the impact of this, Barton said “I think it will be positive.

“HS2 for us is very significant because it is going to be a real fillip to the region and Birmingham Airport will be directly connected with its own link into the service. We have done some simple analysis, and we know getting into London is going to be incredibly quick. Coming from the airport it will be possible to get into central London in under 40 minutes.”

Ontario was a great partnership for us. They were very long-term investors and supported us brilliantly, especially through Covid. I think in Macquarie they have replaced themselves with another very strong blue-chip

funder who, in my early engagement with them, have given me very much the impression they are another fund with a similar mindset. They are very experienced in airport ownership worldwide and I can’t wait for them to come on board”. ■





CAPGEMINI

SUPERCHARGING HEATHROW AIRPORT'S DIGITAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EVOLUTION USING SALESFORCE

Working collaboratively with Copado, a market-leading software development and operations startup, Heathrow and Capgemini developed a new approach for Salesforce solution implementation to support the efficient delivery of a new digital customer experience.

Client Challenge: Heathrow Airport was underway in utilising its Salesforce multi-cloud solution to deliver an enhanced digital customer experience and build back better in a challenging and uncertain economic environment. Its complex digital ecosystem required unified continuous integration and deployment processes across the breadth of its delivery teams to ensure ongoing delivery success.

Solution: Working with Capgemini and Copado, Heathrow utilised a novel system integration approach to support ongoing change and drive greater passenger and business benefits from its Salesforce Service and Commerce Cloud platforms.

Benefits:

- Decreased effort required to effectively support passengers
- Greater visibility into code quality and automated testing output
- Easier onboarding for new joiners
- Expanded intra-team collaboration

- Tighter coupling with Heathrow development systems

Operating as one of the largest hubs for air travel in the world, Heathrow Airport is responsible for the journeys of over 75 million people annually. Heathrow offers a variety of passenger services, including parking, fast track, lounges, personal shopper, reserve and collect, and more, the combination of which helps ensure the greatest experience possible as passengers travel through the airport.

To achieve its vision of delivering the best airport service in the world, the Heathrow digital experience needed to evolve. Capgemini was chosen as a key strategic partner by Heathrow in 2019 to support it on this digital transformation journey.

Heathrow and Capgemini implemented a suite of Salesforce clouds and technologies to support a host of new solutions and passenger benefits. Such transformation relies on a robust, continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD)

pipeline, which enables different product teams to collaborate effectively. Delivering constant uptime, high-quality code, and scalability is critical.

A novel approach for complex Salesforce implementations

Given the complex nature of the ongoing digital transformation journey – numerous products and services, multi-cloud (Service Cloud, Commerce Cloud, Experience Cloud, Marketing

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Cloud) shared code base, and a coordinated multi-vendor release cycle – Heathrow required a robust CI/CD and automation product to support delivery. In addition, Heathrow wanted to manage its future processes through a single development pipeline and utilise a single way of working.

To address such an extensive set of objectives and the associated complications, Capgemini introduced one of its global innovation partners and a Capgemini Ventures invested portfolio company, Copado, a market-leading software development and operations (DevOps) startup that provides a platform for Salesforce solutions.

Capgemini and Copado developed new build processes and methodologies that supported Heathrow's needs. This involved introducing end-to-end tracking of every user story, bug, defect, code commitment, and low-code automated testing. Throughout this process, the partners leveraged the airport's existing Azure DevOps Application Lifecycle Management platform to reduce complexity and assure a higher degree of visibility among key stakeholders.

Integration innovation supports evolution

This holistic solution offered a single way of working throughout Heathrow Airport's various services and enabled seamless and efficient delivery of new functionalities. In addition, the partners were able to upgrade existing source code dependencies to ensure future updates could be seamlessly applied.

This decreased the amount of effort required for Heathrow teams to effectively support passengers while providing stakeholders with more visibility into code quality

"From the moment travellers think about flying from our airport, we want them to have a seamless digital experience, which means making sure that all our Digital Product teams are collaborating successfully. Our partnership with Capgemini was critical to implementing Salesforce and Copado successfully, which provided a unified platform and way of working for all our teams."

and automated testing output. A single, shared process and DevOps approach enabled team resources to more easily join the organisation or move from one team to another while following a more transparent onboarding and development journey.

Following the successful use of Copado DevOps to support the Salesforce Service Cloud and Salesforce Commerce Cloud, Heathrow Airport opted to expand the scope of this coverage. The organisation committed to applying Copado support for key Salesforce solutions utilised throughout its operations. By fully integrating the Service Cloud and Commerce Cloud with Heathrow Airport's existing Azure technology stack and Copado DevOps, the partners have ensured that future passengers will enjoy a smoother, more modern, and more intuitive digital experience that unifies their journey through the airport.

"From the moment travellers think about flying from our airport, we want them to have a seamless digital experience, which means making sure that all our Digital Product teams are collaborating successfully. Our partnership with Capgemini was critical to implementing Salesforce and Copado successfully, which provided a unified platform and

way of working for all our teams."

Bob Stickland, Head of Technology, Heathrow

Ready to elevate your airport operations?

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Get in touch with Capgemini here, or come meet us at the World Aviation Festival in Lisbon: <https://www.capgemini.com/gb-en/contact-us> ■

Capgemini is an AirportsUK Gold Member.



AIRPORT SECURITY CONFERENCE



AIRPORTSUK 2025 SECURITY CONFERENCE

AIRPORTSUK 2025 SECURITY CONFERENCE BREAKS ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Rupinder Pamme, Senior Policy Manager at AirportsUK, who organised the conference, reports:

This year's AirportsUK Security Conference took place in Liverpool on 17 and 18 September, bringing together more than 100 key stakeholders from across the sector.

The event served as a platform for knowledge exchange, regulatory

updates, and collaborative dialogue, with a strong emphasis on innovation and partnership. It was the highest attended such event since we restarted after Covid, so it is great that this annual event goes from strength to strength.

Across the two days we saw many great presentations and heard excellent panel sessions.

John Irving, CEO of Liverpool John Lennon Airport, addressed the event. He gave context for how security sits within creating the right customer experience and the

commercial needs of the airport.

From the Government, Chris Selim, Department for Transport (DfT) aviation security policy and strategy lead, delivered a keynote speech on the government's current stance and future direction in aviation security, and Peter Drissell, UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Director of Aviation Security, provided insights from the regulator's perspective, reinforcing the importance of compliance and forward-thinking strategies.

Dr Aaron Edwards, Senior Lecturer at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, offered a global security overview, enriching the conference with strategic context.

In response to member interest, we had a panel with representatives from easyJet and TUI, focused on sharing knowledge about the airlines' perspective on security and strengthening partnerships between UK airlines and airports.

The two-day event also got into more detail on specific topics: Rachel Sowerby, CAA senior aviation security adviser, and Jonathan Hogben, CAA aerospace cyber security policy lead, presented updates on aviation security and cyber threats. Nina Smith, CAA head of the aviation security training and human factors team, led a session on the future of the Security Management System, followed by a panel exploring its vision for the next five years and she also presented on the UK's overt and covert testing programme, leading into discussions on the future of hold baggage screening.

Ken Mann, Chair of the European Organisation for Security Screening and Detection Working Group, provided a European perspective on screening and detection issues. Two sessions from the DfT focused on aviation security innovation and technical developments,



John Irving



showcasing the Department's commitment to future-proofing UK aviation. The sessions were expertly moderated by Chair, Caroline Vear, and Vice Chair, Joanna McMahon.

As always there was highly active networking at all breaks as members built connections and shared experiences and expertise with their peers. A very enjoyable dinner was held after the first day, with the quiz being a particular highlight. Feedback from everyone involved was very positive. The conference successfully fostered collaboration, shared expertise, and explored future challenges and solutions in aviation security. Attendees left with enhanced knowledge, new connections, and actionable insights to apply within



their organisations.

AirportsUK extends sincere thanks to its sponsors who helped make this event possible: Dallmeier; ICTS UK & Ireland; Leidos Security Enterprise Solutions; and SITA. My thanks to my AirportsUK colleague, Events & Member Relations Manager, Marko Saaret, and the rest of the AirportsUK team for their help in organising the event. ■

COGNIZANT

AUTONOMOUS AIRPORTS: FROM INFRASTRUCTURE TO INTELLIGENT AUTOMATION

By Toni Silver, Head of Travel & Hospitality UK, Cognizant and Pulin Baghela, Head of Travel & Transport Consulting EMEA, Cognizant.

Airports are rapidly evolving from infrastructure-heavy transit hubs into intelligent, data-driven ecosystems that can unlock new levels of efficiency, safety, and passenger satisfaction.

As global travel rebounds, passengers increasingly expect seamless, personalised travel experiences. For airports, this is prompting a shift from reactive operations to developing proactive, insight-led environments.

The transformation this requires is not just technological. It's strategic too. To make it happen, airports need to reimagine their role in the mobility landscape, aligning infrastructure with intelligence and embedding automation across every layer of operations.

Combined with human-centric design, technologies like agentic AI, robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) are integral to the evolution

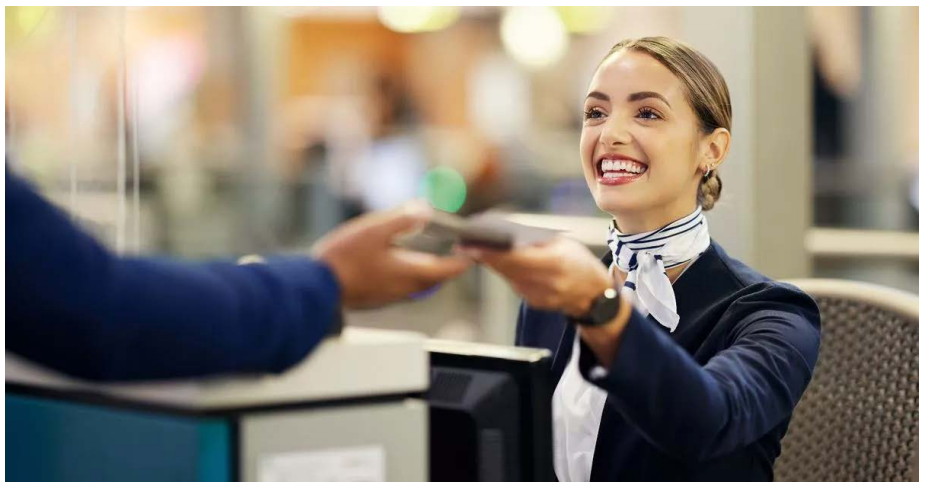
that's underway. By streamlining passenger processing, enhancing security and optimising ground operations, they have the power to unlock new levels of efficiency, safety, sustainability and user satisfaction.

Key question: how to put all this into practice so airports can

operate like micro-smart cities – agile, data-rich and customer-centric?

Overcoming challenges to implementation

Across the industry, stakeholders are pursuing many different potential solutions to help bring this vision to life.



In the near-term, these range from biometric processing to AI-enabled surveillance, cloud-native platforms and AI agents. By 2030, we'll be seeing widespread use of digital twins to optimise operations, driverless ground vehicles and integrated control centres. And still further out, say five to 10 years from now, the industry will be innovating further through urban air mobility, net-zero infrastructures and spatial decision-making.

For now, however, when it comes to implementing intelligent systems, airport operators are encountering some fundamental issues.

Uppermost among these: a lack of clarity about business benefits arising from specific technology solutions, fragmented systems and siloed data, challenges in moving from Proof of Concept to at-scale production, identifying the right partner ecosystem, and securing buy-in from all stakeholders.

So how can the industry take more decisive steps to overcome these issues and bring the intelligent, connected airport of the future to life?

IT organisations: Bringing the future of airports to life

The pace of technology innovation is accelerating so fast that it's impossible to predict precisely what the future holds for any industry. A case in point? The speed with which agentic AI has ushered in the new era of service-as-a-software.

Without question, however, tomorrow's world-leading airports will have aligned their IT and data strategy with a clear business vision. That's because successful change requires much more than technology expertise alone.

To realise the promise of digital innovation, airports' IT and data teams will have to work in lockstep with their business and operational colleagues to ensure strategy stays on course. Other vital priorities



Toni Silver

include:

- As airports develop into even more complex, interconnected ecosystems, they'll increasingly depend on the free flow of real-time data from all stakeholders. The IT and data organisation will fulfil a vital role by collaborating with its partners to gather, process and analyse this data.
- Digital innovation brings continuous change. And it's essential for the entire organisation to keep changing. The IT and data organisation can offer the stewardship and

Without question, however, tomorrow's world-leading airports will have aligned their IT and data strategy with a clear business vision. That's because successful change requires much more than technology expertise alone.

education needed to do this.

- The IT and data organisation is integral to implementing and operating the robust cybersecurity that's needed to protect systems and ensure the safety and security of passengers and operations. IT will also be responsible for compliance with fast-evolving data protection regulations.
- As AI proliferates and augments human decision-making, the IT and data organisation must put in place and maintain the processes and guardrails that make sure the use of AI remains safe, transparent and fair.
- Uniquely placed to understand the challenges facing airports and the solutions being developed to address them, the IT and data organisation will serve as a hub for innovation across the entire airport ecosystem – fostering an environment that encourages, tests and implements new ideas.

Crucially too, while intelligent technologies create enormous opportunity, human oversight will remain essential – especially for managing exceptions and ensuring empathetic services. The future for airports must therefore be built on a hybrid model – with automation driving new levels of efficiency, while humans deliver personalisation.

Propelling progress towards autonomous airports

Cognizant is playing a pivotal part in this journey to the airport of the future. By leveraging strategic partnerships and innovation frameworks, we're developing solutions with airports of all sizes – including regional and smaller hubs – through incremental innovation and scalable pilots.

The aviation industry thrives on collaboration, making innovation-sharing across airports a top



Pulin Baghela

The aviation industry thrives on collaboration, making innovation-sharing across airports a top priority. We're enabling this through frameworks like Explore & Exploit and the Bluebolt innovation model – inspiring innovation, offering pragmatic insights and fostering co-creation with industry partners.

priority. We're enabling this through frameworks like Explore & Exploit and the Bluebolt innovation model – inspiring innovation, offering pragmatic insights and fostering co-creation with industry partners.

More broadly, we're supporting airports' transformation by helping them to modernise legacy systems, adopt scalable cloud platforms and build future-ready architectures. ■

To find out more please check our dedicated Aviation page:

[Digital Solutions and Technologies for Aviation | Cognizant](#)

Cognizant is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner.



VIOLENCE IN AIRPORTS

TACKLING VIOLENCE, AGGRESSION AND ABUSE IN AIRPORTS

By Adele Gammarano, Head of Regulation and Compliance and Peter Campbell, Head of Public Affairs and Media, at AirportsUK

The AirportsUK Health and Safety Working Group has had a standing agenda item on passenger violence, aggression, and abuse since it was first raised by airport members last year. Facilitated by its co-chairs, Emma Meenan and Lee Alderson, with Adele Gammarano, the group has been facilitating ongoing discussions aimed at protecting staff and improving consistency across the sector.

Understanding the Challenge

The issue is not new, but its scale and frequency are becoming harder to ignore. Colleagues, trade unions, and managers alike report a rise in work-related aggression and abuse, particularly against operational and customer-facing staff. Employers

also face a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to protect employees from stress and harm, making this not only a moral responsibility but a statutory requirement.

Verbal abuse is among the most common challenges. Incidents often arise when passengers miss flights, are denied boarding due to intoxication, face extra charges for luggage, or are asked to follow rules around vaping, alcohol, or digital ordering. Physical abuse, though less frequent, has included intoxicated passengers lashing out at staff when challenged. Aggression between groups of passengers, particularly stag or hen parties can escalate into property damage and create unsafe conditions across retail, bar, and gate areas.

Verbal abuse is among the most common challenges. Incidents often arise when passengers miss flights, are denied boarding due to intoxication, face extra charges for luggage, or are asked to follow rules around vaping, alcohol, or digital ordering.

Barriers to Progress

The group has identified several contributing factors. Since COVID-19, many staff have noticed an increase in passenger frustration linked to wider social and economic pressures. Not all incidents are reported, either because processes are too complex or because colleagues do not feel psychologically safe to raise concerns. Some crew and ground staff describe a lack of empathy or aftercare from management, while others point to an absence of clear escalation procedures or consistent enforcement across different parts of the airport.

Support from police is sometimes viewed as limited, while zero-tolerance campaigns risk being seen as “just a slogan” without the visible signage, defined actions, or enforcement needed to make them credible.

Learning from Experience

At a recent meeting of the group, Emile Macdonald-Williams, Head of Health and Fire Safety at London Stansted Airport, shared an incident matrix outlining the scale of verbal and physical abuse. He also highlighted the importance of learning from other industries, drawing on toolkits and external data to better understand hotspots and prevention strategies.

Macdonald-Williams said that, following the endorsement of the severity and response matrix, London Stansted is reviewing its current reporting tools to make recommendations that will allow for easier and quicker incident reporting across the campus. Additionally, he said “with collaboration from colleagues and trade union representatives, the airport is developing a line managers’ tool kit to ensure standardisation of responses and to give our colleagues peace of



Adele Gammarano



Peter Campbell

“With collaboration from colleagues and trade union representatives, the airport is developing a line managers’ tool kit to ensure standardisation of responses and to give our colleagues peace of mind that each situation will be dealt with according to agreed principles and with empathy, care and support.”



Emile Macdonald-Williams

mind that each situation will be dealt with according to agreed principles and with empathy, care and support”.

He said that the airport would then be rolling out colleague and managers’ training sessions to embed and communicate the new tools as well as engaging all airport stakeholders to sign up to

the programme in a “one team” approach. Lastly, he said “we will look to update and create a new, aligned customer and colleague charter that communicates our journey to date, embodies the work achieved and demonstrates our vision to reduce all verbal and physical abuse to airport workers”.

Members also reviewed a presentation from London Luton Airport, “Disruptive Events at LLA,” delivered in June 2024. The report shone a light on alcohol-related disruption, racial abuse, disputes over baggage payments, and challenges linked to passenger mental health. Staff frequently reported feeling unsafe—particularly during late shifts—when confronted with aggressive or abusive behaviour.

Taking Action

In response, London Luton has developed conflict management training for public facing employees aligned with its core values.

This training equips colleagues across the airport to manage passenger incidents, address mental health crises, and handle mass cancellations or delays. Staff are encouraged to spot early signs of disruption along the passenger journey – from check-in to security, retail, and boarding – and to escalate concerns through appropriate channels to help diffuse situations more quickly and effectively.

The initiative is supported by wider measures, including zero-tolerance signage, safety and disruption campaigns, staff and retailer engagement sessions, and regular multi-stakeholder meetings. Panic alarms have also been introduced to give frontline colleagues an added layer of security. Importantly, the “#sidebyside” campaign reinforces a culture of solidarity, ensuring staff do not feel isolated when incidents occur. The campaign is

complemented by promotion of the industry-wide “One Too Many” campaign approach for alcohol-related disruption.

Most importantly, supporting staff beyond the incident, post-incident care, is another critical focus. London Luton provides trauma risk Incident management and mental health first aid training, giving colleagues both preventative skills and access to counselling when needed. This dual approach recognises that preventing abuse is essential, but so too is supporting those affected by it.

Industry collaboration

Alongside these and all the other activities being undertaken by individual airports, there is also the highly regarded, industry-led campaign “One Too Many”, which aims to raise awareness among passengers of the consequences of disruptive behaviour. This can include significant fines, bans from flying and prison time for anyone found to have been abusive or to have caused a flight to reroute.

The summer season sees airports up and down the country


displaying material across multiple channels, including their social media platforms and terminal advertising boards. Content is refreshed on a regular basis to keep it relevant and hard-hitting, while it is specifically designed to be used in conjunction with the individual campaigns that airports run themselves.

Looking Ahead

The Health and Safety Working Group remains committed to strengthening reporting mechanisms, aligning processes across airports, and ensuring a genuinely zero-tolerance culture towards abuse by sharing best practices. By being proactive and collaborative, airports can both discourage disruptive behaviour and create a safer, more supportive environment for staff and passengers alike.

This work is ultimately about more than compliance: it is about protecting people, promoting wellbeing, and ensuring that UK airports are places where colleagues feel valued, supported, and safe. ■



An aerial photograph of Dundee Airport, showing a long runway on the right, taxiways, and a large green grassy field. In the background, there are airport buildings, a parking lot, and a cityscape with a bridge over a river.

DUNDEE AIRPORT

DUNDEE AIRPORT CELEBRATES POPULARITY OF LOGANAIR LINK TO HEATHROW



One of the youngest airports in the Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL) group, Dundee Airport opened in 1963. It originally had a 900m grass runway built on land reclaimed from the Firth of Tay. The airport location is sandwiched between the estuary which flows into the North Sea and the city of Dundee, which is the fourth largest city in Scotland by population, in the historic county of Angus.



Derrick Lang

Glasgow was the first destination for scheduled flights, with Edinburgh and Prestwick soon following. The grass runway was replaced in the 1970s with a 1,100m tarmac runway with a later extension to 1,400m in the 1990s. In 1997, the then EU transport commissioner, Neil Kinnock, opened the current terminal building with improved runway lighting being installed in the previous decades along with customs status being granted.

The airport is owned by Dundee City Council and since 2007 has been managed by HIAL. Over the time of its management of Dundee Airport, HIAL has invested in a programme of works to ensure its long-term sustainability including the upgrading of screening equipment as part of Next Generation Security and runway resurfacing.

The airport has served a

number of different routes since including Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Birmingham, Belfast Carlisle, Manchester, Eisbjerg and London. Loganair recently introduced a flight to connect the islands of Shetland and Orkney to Dundee and through to London Heathrow. These flights are popular with both the leisure and business markets and welcomed over 100,000 passengers in the first year of the service.

Due to its location close to championship golf courses at St Andrews, Gleneagles and Carnoustie, Dundee Airport is a popular transport hub for players. During international competitions, the airport is busy with competitors and spectators on both scheduled flights and private aircraft. The airport is regularly used by celebrities and top sportspeople to access the area and nearby shooting estates.

The airport is owned by Dundee City Council and since 2007 has been managed by HIAL.



Dundee City is well known for the three J's – jute, jam and journalism. The first is from the time of great expansion during the Industrial Revolution as a result of the growing British Empire trade in materials such as flax and jute. The jam reference is actually for marmalade which was reputed to have been invented in the city by Janet Keiller in 1797 with her surname becoming a household brand. The third reference to journalism relates to the publishing firm DC Thomson & Co Ltd which was founded in Dundee in 1905 and remains one of the leading employers in the city. Their fame came from the publication of newspapers as well as children's comics and magazines such as The Beano and The Dandy. Statues of key characters such as Desperate Dan and Minnie the Minx are immortalised in the city's streets.

Today, visitors flying into Dundee come to experience the city's history but also for the more modern developments such as the Waterfront area which houses the V&A Dundee. With a busy university population and numerous large commercial businesses, the airport is regularly used by visiting academia, businesspeople, and students from around the world.



Cameron Marshall

Cameron, a member of the Airport Fire Service was named Apprentice of the Year by the Fresson Trust in 2023 whilst undertaking his BA Hons in Business Management. This was part of the Graduate Apprenticeship programme supported by HIAL with funding from Skills Development Scotland and Robert Gordon University.

Derrick Lang is the Regional Manager South who has strategic responsibility for Dundee Airport along with the airports at Campbeltown, Islay and Tiree. Originally from Campbeltown, Derrick joined HIAL as a firefighter in 1996, then Crew Manager in 1999. He became Airport Manager at Campbeltown in 2001, progressing to Regional Manager South while based there. He then moved to Dundee to become Airport Manager in 2009 and then General Manager, covering nearby Barra, Campbeltown and Tiree in 2021. He took up the role of Regional Manager South this year, with Cameron Marshall currently in place as Interim Airport Manager at Dundee Airport. Cameron, a member of the Airport Fire Service was named Apprentice of the Year

by the Fresson Trust in 2023 whilst undertaking his BA Hons in Business Management. This was part of the Graduate Apprenticeship programme supported by HIAL with funding from Skills Development Scotland and Robert Gordon University.

The airport team regularly support local charitable events, and they volunteer to host the annual night-time Run the Runway to raise money for the charity Maggie's Dundee, which provides support to cancer sufferers and their families. This year, the event in June raised over £20,000 and it grows in popularity each year. Each year the team also acts as a collection point for local charity, Mission Christmas, with the gifts then distributed to families in the local area. ■



AIRPORTSUK OPERATIONS CONFERENCE

BUILDING RESILIENCE: REFLECTIONS FROM THE AIRPORTSUK OPERATIONS CONFERENCE 2025

By Adele Gammarano, Head of Regulation and Compliance at AirportsUK

I was delighted with the overwhelmingly positive response and strong engagement at the AirportsUK Operations Conference 2025, held on 24 and 25 June at the Radisson Blu, Manchester Airport. The two days brought together government, regulators, and industry leaders to share insights and experiences on one of the most pressing themes in aviation today: resilience.

A conference highlight was the keynote speech from Chris Woodroffe, Managing Director of Manchester Airport, who underscored the importance of strong leadership, collaboration, and investment in both people and infrastructure to meet the challenges ahead. His remarks captured the spirit of the conference: resilience is not just about systems and strategies, but about the people who keep airports running safely and efficiently every day.

Airports are living, breathing ecosystems where every decision, from the way passengers move through terminals to how aircraft are guided in the skies, creates ripples across the system. The conversations across government, regulators, and industry leaders made it clear that preparing for disruption is not a choice, but a necessity.

Key themes and insights:

- **Operational resilience:** Airports are increasingly focused on embedding resilience into daily operations, ensuring staff are equipped with the right tools and decision-making frameworks to respond quickly and effectively.
- **Human factors and workplace culture:** The conference reinforced the role of human performance and psychological safety. Empowering staff to raise



Adele Gammarano



concerns, share knowledge, and work collaboratively was seen as essential for building adaptable organisations.

- **Accessibility and inclusivity:** A strong thread throughout the conference was the commitment to "Travel for All". This means making airports more accessible, improving services for passengers with reduced mobility, and ensuring an inclusive experience from check-in to boarding.
- **Technology and innovation:** Advances in automation and systems integration were

presented as critical enablers of smoother operations. However, delegates also stressed that technology must enhance—not replace—human expertise.

- **The regulatory perspective:** Updates from the UK Civil Aviation Authority underlined the balance between safety, compliance, and innovation, encouraging airports to embrace change while keeping passengers at the heart of decision-making.

Ian Elston, Deputy Director for Airspace, Resilience and Connectivity at the Department

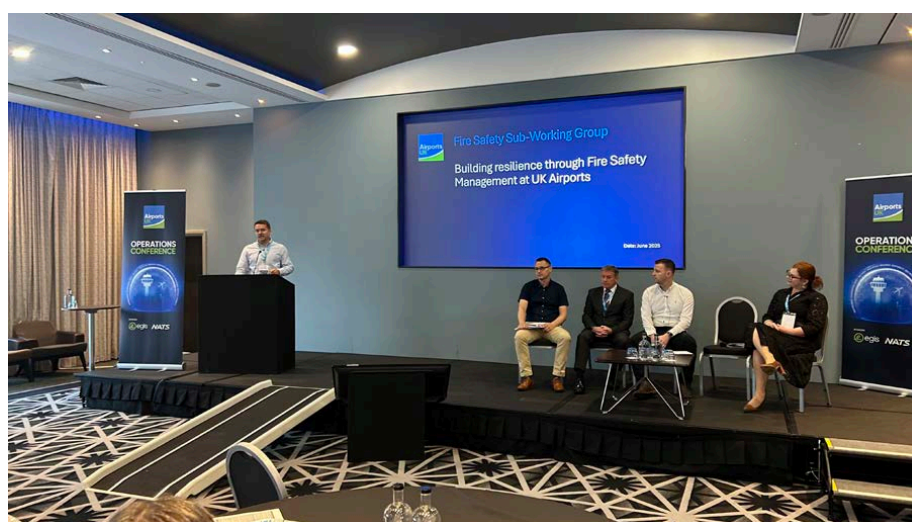
for Transport, set the tone by asking what resilience truly means in practice for UK aviation. For DfT it is not simply about recovery after disruption, but about being ready, adaptable, and people-focused. Looking back at the UK aviation resilience timeline, the sector has faced a number of challenges in recent years—from severe weather and system failures to wider global challenges—that have tested its ability to respond. Each event provided lessons that now shape the DfT's approach, which combines long-term strategic planning with the operational agility needed to deal with incidents in real time. A central responsibility of the team is to brief ministers and senior leaders during disruption, ensuring decisions can be taken quickly while keeping passengers at the heart of the response.

If resilience on the ground is critical, resilience in the skies is no less so. Kathryn Leahy, Chief Operations Officer, NATS, described how the UK's air traffic control service is evolving to meet the challenges of today's aviation landscape. For NATS, safety is always the priority, but it goes hand in hand with resilience, security, and efficiency. She spoke about the balancing act required to deliver a service that is both reliable and adaptable, where resilience is not treated as an afterthought but as a foundation of performance and emphasised that resilience is achieved through investment in systems and people, as well as through collaboration. Working together across the aviation community ensures that when disruption happens, the system can absorb the shock and keep moving, minimising the impact for airlines and passengers alike.

What came through from these contributions is that resilience is a shared responsibility. Government,



Chris Woodroofe



Fire safety

regulators, airports, air traffic control, and frontline staff all play their part. The message was consistent: disruption cannot be eliminated, but the way the industry prepares for it, manages it, and recovers from it defines passenger confidence and operational strength.

The conference also highlighted the excellent work being driven by AirportsUK's many operational and safety groups, led with energy and commitment by their chairs. These groups are not only tackling today's priorities but are also proactively shaping the future through new sub-working groups, such as those exploring the safe and effective use of drones in daily airport operations and



Ian Elston

the fire safety forum, which has already identified important gaps in industry practice. What makes

this work so powerful is that it is completely member-led, rooted in collaboration and the open sharing of information. By coming together to exchange knowledge and address challenges collectively, members are showing that communication itself is one of the strongest tools for building a more resilient aviation system.

The AirportsUK Operations Conference 2025 underlined that resilience is not about perfection; it is about preparation. It is about embedding the ability to protect, adapt, and recover into every level of aviation, from policy to control towers, from terminals to tarmacs. And most importantly, it is about ensuring that people—passengers, staff, and the wider public—remain at the centre of every decision. ■



Psychological safety



Kathryn Leahy



AIRPORTSUK PLANNERS' FORUM CHAIR SAYS GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO MORE TO SIMPLIFY THE PLANNING PROCESS

Nikki Bains, Chair of the recently revived AirportsUK Planners' Forum, has welcomed the Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill while calling for further steps to streamline the planning process.

Bains, Head of Planning, Transport and Strategy, at Birmingham Airport for the last eight years, told The Airport Operator that the Bill is "welcome" because it should make the process for large scale nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) airport planning applications simpler and faster. She also urged the Government, however, to review the way the Town and Country Planning Act applies to smaller scale airport planning applications and to help local planning authorities to augment inadequately resourced



Nikki Bains

planning departments at borough and district levels.

She said the Planning and Infrastructure Bill "will benefit airports across the UK. It aims to streamline the planning process and make it simpler and easier, with less red tape. The devil is in the detail of what the secondary legislation looks like, and we wait to see, once it is published, how it will be implemented, but overall it is a positive change".

The Bill's provisions will apply to airports proposing to increase passenger numbers over the

10 million threshold. Planning applications for these projects fall under the six-stage Development Consent Order (DCO) route, where larger airports submit applications to the Planning Inspectorate and the final decision rests with the Secretary of State for Transport. Bains suggested that some of the improvements in the Bill should be replicated in the Town and Country Planning Act process, which applies mostly to planning applications submitted by regional airports across the UK.

Gatwick Airport's application, following the DCO route, for alterations that will allow it to bring its Northern Runway into routine use was given the green light by Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, on 21 September. The airport's Chief Planning Officer, Tim Norwood, described the process that Gatwick has gone through at a meeting of the Planners' Forum in June. Baines said "That was really interesting. Inevitably whatever happens at Gatwick will act as a precedent for growth at other UK airports. What we found from Tim's presentation was that the DCO process is very long-winded, often more so than planning applications determined by the Town and Country Planning Act".

Asked to describe the benefits of the Planners' Forum for AirportsUK members, she recalled that the forum had disappeared during Covid and had subsequently been subsumed into the Sustainability Forum. "I said 'the planning process is very different to sustainability policy and having the Planners' Forum for me is very important'. There are not that many qualified town planners working in airports, so when we get together what we can do is share knowledge of legislation and how we interpret it in our individual roles. We talk about emerging aviation policy, emerging planning policy and legislation

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and how it might impact our roles, and we discuss best practice techniques for submitting planning applications and dealing with stakeholder consultation".

"You always find going to these meetings that you get some really good professional advice from other airports. Everyone has a different take on planning policy interpretation, the planning process itself and how they are dealing with certain tricky issues, be that stakeholder engagement or interpretation of legislation. Also it is a great sounding board. We all understand the frustration sometimes of dealing with complicated planning applications that only a planner can truly fully understand. It is quite therapeutic". ■

If you would like to know more about the Planners' Forum, please contact AirportsUK Senior Policy Manager, Rupinder Pamme, rupinderpamme@airportsuk.org

LONDON STANSTED AIRPORT

STANSTED HEADS TOWARDS 30 MILLION PASSENGERS A YEAR AS IT AWAITS COUNCIL DECISION ON FURTHER GROWTH

Gareth Powell, Managing Director of London Stansted Airport, has told The Airport Operator that he expects the fast-growing airport to top 30m passengers this year, which he described as “a huge milestone for Stansted”.

Meanwhile, Uttlesford District Council is expected to respond shortly to the airport’s planning application to increase its annual passenger cap from the current 43m to 51m over the next 20 years.

Powell stressed that the application is for “permission to make best use of our existing runway. The key thing about that is we haven’t asked for an increase in the maximum number

of flights that the airport is already permitted to operate, nor to extend our boundary, but it recognises that over time aircraft are getting slightly bigger and therefore each aircraft can carry more passengers. We can handle up to 51m passengers in the future without any increase in our flight cap or increase in the overall noise footprint of the airport because aircraft are getting more efficient and less noisy over time”.

As part of its application Stansted has committed to improving the local infrastructure on the junction with the M11 and to providing more funding for local bus services. He said the application had “gone down really well with local people”.

In the three years since Powell became MD, London Stansted has staged the fastest post-Covid recovery in terms of passenger numbers of any major UK airport and, since then, has seen further



Gareth Powell

strong and significant growth, which, he said, “has taken Stansted to a level of passenger volume and aircraft movements that we have never seen before. We have had record month after record month, record year after record year”.

Looking ahead, Powell said the airport is “excited to welcome Turkish Airlines to Stansted next year, with 14 weekly flights to Istanbul, one of the world’s major hub airports, with access to over 300 onward destinations”. A top priority for the airport in the coming years will be to respond to strong demand from businesses in Cambridge and the wider technology corridor for direct connections to cities in the United States and Asia.

Powell outlined progress this year on Stansted’s five-year £1.1bn

investment programme, which had been welcomed by the Government as “a clear signal that Britain is open for business”. At the heart of the programme will be a £600m extension of the airport’s iconic terminal building, designed by Norman Foster and opened in 1991. Overall the size of the terminal will increase by a third, with the size of the departure lounge increasing by over 40%. There will be a larger check-in area, more baggage capacity and a new immigration hall.

As part of the first phase of the investment programme, a new domestic arrivals building was officially opened by local MP, Kemi Badenoch, in July this year. Powell explained that “previously domestic customers would arrive into a separate area within our existing terminal. We needed that

Powell outlined progress this year on Stansted’s five-year £1.1bn investment programme, which had been welcomed by the Government as “a clear signal that Britain is open for business”. At the heart of the programme will be a £600m extension of the airport’s iconic terminal building, designed by Norman Foster and opened in 1991.

area to be able to expand our security hall, so we have created a new arrivals building to the side of our terminal. What that gives the domestic passengers is a dedicated facility with a new baggage reclaim belt and then they can exit directly into the train station or up to the coach or car parking areas”.

He said that this year “our focus has been on all the design and enabling work that is going to be necessary to extend a live operating terminal over the next few years. The first step of that is all about replacing the transit system that connects two of our gate satellites to the terminal with walkways and then we will be able to extend the terminal where the system is at the moment. It is quite a complicated, involved operational process both to build on the live airfield, but also to be able to continue to run an ever-growing airport through the phases of construction that we see ahead”.

Preliminary work has also been completed on Stansted’s new 14.3MW solar farm, which should provide enough energy on a sunny day to power the entire airport campus.

Powell said, “all of the complex enabling works necessary to connect the site up to the existing high voltage network have now been completed and the first solar panels have also arrived”.

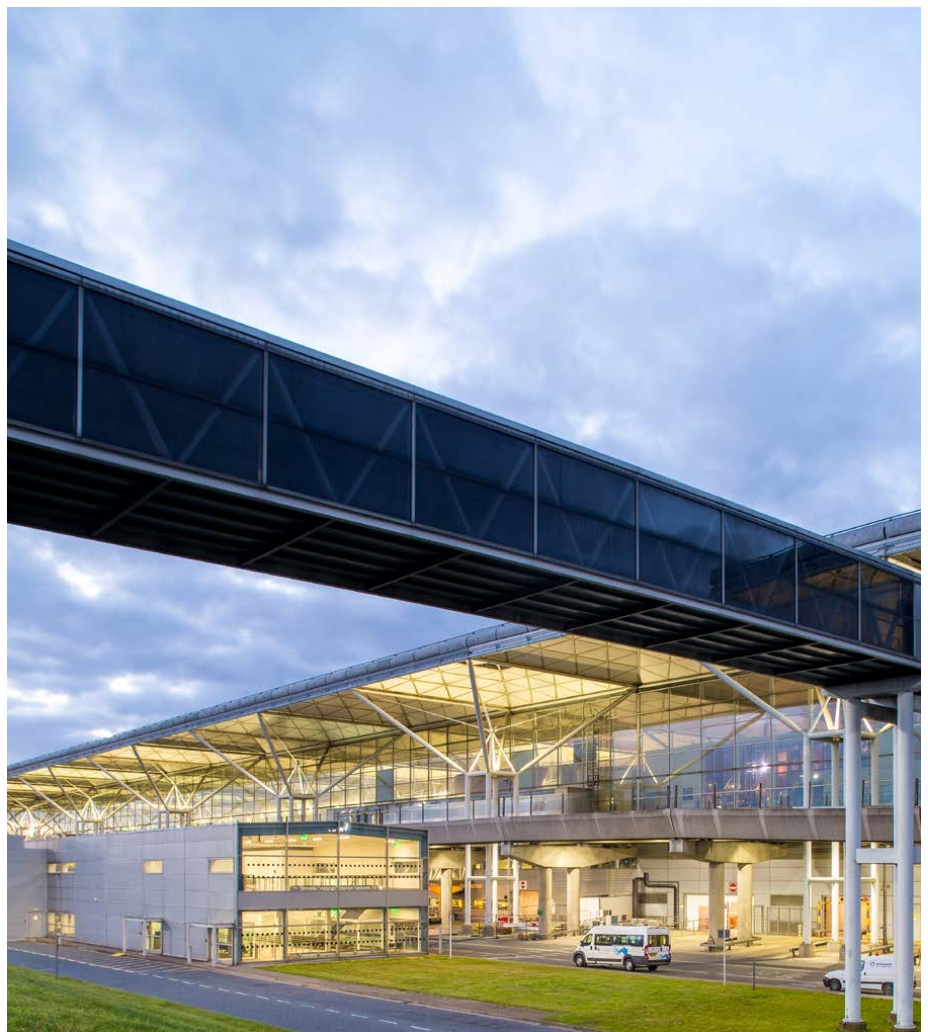
Reflecting on future growth at London Stansted and at other UK airports, Powell said “The aviation sector is clearly both a success story for the UK but also a fundamental part of an engine room for the growth of the UK economy. To maintain that success not only do we need to continue to have an attractive environment for airlines to come, and invest in our infrastructure and capacity as airports, but we also

“The aviation sector is clearly both a success story for the UK but also a fundamental part of an engine room for the growth of the UK economy. To maintain that success not only do we need to continue to have an attractive environment for airlines to come, and invest in our infrastructure and capacity as airports, but we also must have skills and talent coming into the industry to be able to sustain our growth into the future”.

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He said it was “a great privilege here at Stansted to have our own dedicated aviation college. It is important from my perspective that the industry continues to do more to attract and train the

talent for the future. We hope to expand the college as part of our overall expansion here and we hope to engage with the industry more broadly about how we create that strong pipeline of future talent to continue to drive our growth”. ■



PETER CAMPBELL

KEY DECISIONS LOOM FOR AVIATION AS AUTUMN GETS UNDERWAY

AirportsUK's head of public affairs and media, Peter Campbell, looks ahead to what could be a defining few months for aviation.

It could be argued that up until now 2025 has delivered several positive steps forward for aviation. The government has indicated its support for aviation expansion recognising the economic impact it will have, and greenlit passenger growth plans at London City, Gatwick and Luton, as well as celebrating plans to expand Stansted.

Several industry-supported initiatives have also come to fruition. The sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) mandate has come into force with a bill enacting a SAF revenue certainty mechanism making its way through parliament, and the process of modernising UK airspace is getting a shot in the arm with the creation of the UK Airspace Design Service.

The decisions that are due to be taken in the next few months, however, will put much of this into stark relief and set the direction



Peter Campbell

of aviation policy under this government for years to come. Get them right and aviation can play a central role in driving economic growth through greater connectivity, while a misstep could mean that we risk falling behind our competitors.

Obviously, we have now had a positive decision on Gatwick's northern runway plans, but there is still a decision over which of the proposals for a third runway at Heathrow to support, due imminently at the time of writing. Aviation and a host of other sectors are looking to these decisions as indications of how serious government is about growth.

Then we have the Budget at the end of November, which is largely expected to see the Chancellor announce a series of tax increases to offset a shortfall in the public sector finances. Rises to discretionary taxes like Air Passenger Duty and non-personal taxes like business rates, while easy levers to pull, will have outsized impacts that, again, put us at a disadvantage and these do not sit in isolation. Aviation, and airports in particular,

continue to be loaded down with significant costs and burdens, including the need to invest in decarbonisation and new security technology, policing and other rescue service costs, e-gates, airspace modernisation, planning fees and charges, electronic travel authorisation (ETAs), and a host of others.

Meanwhile, the UK government also does itself no favours by refusing to implement tourist and traveller friendly policies such as VAT-free shopping and arrivals duty-free. Since Brexit, the UK has not been able to offer visitors from the US, the EU, the Middle East and China the chance to buy premium goods and claim a refund on the VAT. Similarly, we also have the chance to onshore much of the spend already taking place at foreign airports by allowing returning travellers to buy goods duty-free when they arrive

at UK airports. Countries around the world are already doing this and their airports are reaping the benefits in the form of new revenue streams that are supporting their business models.

Enacting these policies will support UK businesses, create jobs, generate tax revenues for Government, and send a message to investors that we are an open, outward-looking global trading nation. It will align neatly with the government's stated ambition in its upcoming tourism strategy to increase the number of foreign visitors to 50 million per annum.

These arguments around the attractiveness and competitiveness of the UK compared to our global rivals will form the golden thread that runs through all our work at the party conferences and ahead of the Budget. These are key moments

in which we can make the case and build support for our positions that will benefit the whole of the UK, and the time is right for us to be putting renewed energy into making these arguments. Demand for foreign travel continues to rise, government has made economic growth its priority and global investment is there for the taking. There are also a set of new ministers following a reshuffle who can be convinced of the value of our proposals.

We will be reaching out to all our members in the coming weeks to input into our plans for the Budget, including our response and accompanying influencing strategy. This is how we can ensure that, no matter how positive the start of 2025 was for aviation, the final months prove that we were only just getting started. ■





ACCESSIBILITY

UNLOCKING THE SKIES: WHY ACCESSIBILITY MUST BE AT THE HEART OF AVIATION

By Nicola Tibbles, Assistance Transformation Director, Wilson James

Accessibility is no longer a “nice to have” in aviation. We believe it is a critical measure of our effectiveness in an industry for which our entire purpose is just that – to provide access to the world.

For passengers with reduced mobility (PRM) and those living with hidden or visible disabilities, we all know that the journey through an airport can be daunting and disjointed if not well understood and planned for from sofa to sun-lounger. From navigating complex and sometimes ageing terminals, understanding the services available to you and from whom, to boarding an aircraft with dignity, the experience is shaped by infrastructure, design, service and alignment between all parties and data in the airport ecosystem.

At Wilson James, accessibility is not only part of our service expertise, it is central to our culture. As the leading UK provider of airport passenger assistance services, supporting millions of passengers annually at airports including Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, and Birmingham, we understand firsthand the challenges and opportunities relating to equitable travel and are working hard internally and with stakeholders to create choice, confidence and control for customers.

No two journeys are the same, and no two customers will experience disability in the same way, making informed dialogue essential. Our Disability Stakeholder Forum, launched in partnership with customers, advocacy groups, and airport colleagues, provides a structured way of listening to the lived experiences of customers and testing new ideas to deliver real change. Through this forum we have changed our training design,



Nicola Tibbles

deployed new technologies and improved wayfinding with our airport partners. Importantly, it ensures accountability, creating a feedback loop that allows us to measure both in terms of compliance and quality of experience.

With over 6,500 colleagues across the Wilson James organisation, inclusion has become a key performance indicator. In our most recent colleague engagement survey, inclusion ranked as the number one positive measure across all sectors of the business, reflecting the effort we have put into making our services and workplaces welcoming to all in aviation, security, construction and nuclear. This result also signals a broader truth; when you design with accessibility at the centre, everyone benefits.

Accessible design, whether a kerb-free route, clear signage, or intuitive digital tools, removes friction for all customers, not only those with additional needs. In a sector where seamless journeys are the goal, accessibility and operational excellence are inseparable.

Beyond the terminal and airfield, our partnerships with specialist charities shape how we learn, innovate and give back. With Treloar's, one of the UK's leading centres for young disabled

people, we support accessibility assessments that help students build independence and gain workplace skills, and in return we're fortunate to gain invaluable firsthand insights on how we deliver our services. Through our backing of Regain, the UK charity dedicated to improving the lives of tetraplegics, we seek to support people living with spinal cord injuries and engage their membership in delivering our mystery shopper programme to constantly improve our service. In addition, by supporting the Alzheimer's Society, we contribute to awareness campaigns that make invisible conditions more widely understood in aviation settings. These partnerships are just a few of the ways we work hand in hand with the wider aviation community, feeding directly into how we upskill colleagues, build empathy and deliver services.

We're excited to influence the future of accessible travel through the innovative use of technology and demand-led services, including our world-first PRM machine learning forecast launched in 2023 and a pilot



for WJ's assistance on demand services which enable passengers to request tailored support at any stage of their journey from their mobile device. Combining intelligent digital tools with human interaction, we deliver flexible and responsive assistance that adapts to an individual's pace and preference. This approach empowers passengers with greater equity of choice and delivers a seamless service that is fully integrated into the wider airport environment. Crucially, it lays the groundwork for the next generation of accessibility solutions, where personalised journey mapping and technological advancements will transform passenger experience.

Air travel represents freedom, mobility, and possibility; opportunities that should be open to all. We know progress is possible. The UK government's accessibility agenda is creating consistent national standards. Disability stakeholders are shaping solutions directly. PRM service providers are raising the bar of professionalism and empathy. Airports are embedding accessibility into the very fabric of

their operations, not as an add-on but as a marker of excellence.

The next phase must be about weaving accessibility into every decision, from design to technology adoption, from training to strategy.

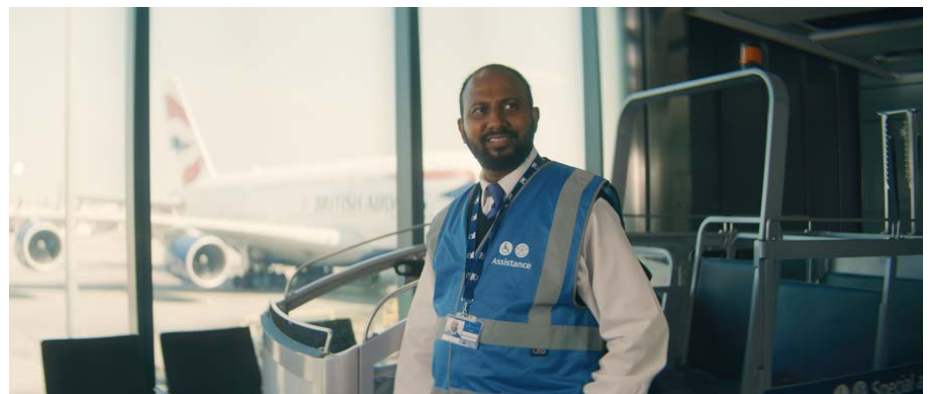
Looking to the future, Wilson James remains committed to championing accessibility as

a core pillar of the aviation ecosystem's future. Through partnerships, innovative service standards and the voices of the passengers, our goal is simple – to ensure that the skies truly are open to everyone. ■

**Wilson James is an
AirportsUK Gold Member.**



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Baroness Grey-Thompson

ACCESSIBILITY

BARONESS GREY-THOMPSON REFLECTS ON AVIATION ACCESSIBILITY

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson chaired the Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group. Here she gives The Airport Operator her personal reflections on the work of the group:

My heart sinks every time I see a headline when a disabled person is either stuck on a plane, or an important piece of mobility equipment goes missing or is damaged. While some cases make the headlines, many do not.

I was delighted to be asked to chair the Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group (AATFG) because disabled people deserve to have a positive experience. This piece of work was done within the context of there being no new money and no current plans for any legislation. Added to this is the international jurisdictional nature of the industry that I had little direct influence over. As the chair I had no power to enforce any recommendations, so it is

based on the goodwill of the industry. However bearing all this in mind it did not stop me from leaving behind some ideas if the government were 'so minded' to legislate in the future or there was another attempt at this piece of work. What was a long list of 168 suggestions in total was whittled down to a more manageable list.

I have taken a lot of flights and experienced lots of challenges. Probably the worst was when my day chair went missing. Something not easy or cheap to replace. Landing back in the UK I was asked whether I really needed a wheelchair and had I ever tried to walk. My chair was found three months later in an airport that I hadn't visited and when it was returned it was in two pieces.

Any passenger just wants to book a ticket and get on and off a plane. They are not necessarily interested in who is responsible for segments of the journey and it can be hard to know who to complain to. We heard of many journeys that were 'OK' but often not enough of an inconvenience to bother complaining about, so this is frustrating for the passenger but also stops the industry from learning which is essential. At the end of the day they are customers who spend money. What became clear was that there was no firm pattern of good and poor performances, but we know one poor experience can create obstacles for future travel or stop someone flying altogether.

There are approximately two

million flights per year that arrive or depart the UK. It is hard to establish accurate data on how many disabled people fly, but it could be around 1.5% of all passengers. There has been a rise in requests for assistance which can be a quite wide-ranging term which mean that not one solution fits all. Unsurprisingly there have been many calls for a more tailored improved service, through training that puts the voices of lived experiences at the heart of it.

A number of disabled people got in touch directly and offered positive solutions about changes that could be made. There were things that we were not able to take forward at this time. Some solutions suggested were reliant on international jurisdictions, such as for those who have allergies or for the use of batteries. There has been an evolution of the use of batteries in mobility equipment, and both the industry and passenger must understand what the rules are. There was no firm view on the continuing use of either a badge or lanyard being used to identify people who may need some extra support. There was a very wide range of opinions of how and why individuals used them and the perceived level of misuse.

There were some suggestions made which were for very specific products or services which were not within scope. Several people requested access to a free carer ticket or being able to change the name on tickets at late notice. There were also suggestions for adaptable tray tables and footstools. It was also not possible to include recommendations for passengers who want to remain in their chairs while flying. There is ongoing work in this area which cuts across jurisdictions.

There was a healthy debate on



Baroness Grey-Thompson outside the House of Lords

whether there should be fines for failures in assistance, but this was also not within the gift of the group and there was push back on whether it would improve any service.

This report did not seek to look at experiences that would impact all passengers such as flight delays. It is purely about improving the experiences that have an impact on an individual because they are disabled.

What became clear and was endorsed by all was that everyone deserves to be treated with respect through the process and should be able to fly without worry. I would like to thank the wider industry for having positive and

"What became clear and was endorsed by all was that everyone deserves to be treated with respect through the process and should be able to fly without worry."

constructive conversations, their commitment and their willingness to keep seeking improvements beyond the life of this project and do better for disabled people. ■

ACCESSIBILITY

ACCESSIBILITY REPORT CAN HELP DRIVE UK AIRPORTS' PERFORMANCE – THOUGH CAA ALREADY RATES MOST AS 'GOOD' OR 'VERY GOOD'

By Christopher Snelling, Policy Director, AirportsUK

AirportsUK participated in the Task and Finish Group and welcomed the report when it was issued. Its contents can help drive performance and improve service, especially in co-ordination between the different parts of the aviation industry. Better information flow to and from passengers prior to travel will also aid all sides in the future.

We do believe, however, that the context in which airports provide accessibility services needs to be understood. Airports are having to adapt to rising demand – in 2024, a record 5.5 million passengers requested assistance at UK airports, representing 1.9% of all travellers, up from 1.69% in 2023 and just 0.94% in 2010. This trend reflects changes in demographics



Christopher Snelling

and expectations. To some extent this is good news as it reflects more people feeling willing to make use of aviation (instead of avoiding it as too difficult for them) and being comfortable

reaching out for help they need. Unfortunately, a small part of this increase may also reflect some people using services in bad faith, seeking to avoid perceived queues.

Whatever the cause, this change has meant services have had to change and scale up rapidly which has been a significant challenge for airports to manage over the last decade. It has also increased the cost of providing accessibility services – some airports report to us that this is now the single most expensive service they provide, more than security or air traffic control.

Despite this, airports continue to improve their service. UK airports have invested heavily in infrastructure, training, and

technology to ensure that passengers with reduced mobility, sensory impairments, and hidden disabilities can travel with dignity and independence. Step-free access, accessible toilets, induction loops, and quiet spaces are now standard across most major terminals. Many airports have adopted the Sunflower Lanyard scheme, allowing passengers with hidden disabilities to discreetly signal their need for additional support—an initiative praised by disability advocacy groups.

This continuing work is reflected in the UK Civil Aviation Authority's annual reporting on airports' accessibility performance. The CAA's framework evaluates airports on waiting times, passenger satisfaction, and consultation with disabled groups. The 2025 report shows 82% of disabled passengers reported satisfaction with their most recent flight—comparable to the general passenger population and a marked improvement from previous years. Of the 28 airports assessed, 25 were rated either

"good" or "very good" for their accessibility services.

AirportsUK will utilise the AATFG's report in our work with operational colleagues and believe its suggestions will help improve service further. But a key focus will remain on the outcome-focused engagement with the CAA, ensuring regulations support and enable improved services across the aviation system. ■



Airports are having to adapt to rising demand – in 2024, a record 5.5 million passengers requested assistance at UK airports, representing 1.9% of all travellers, up from 1.69% in 2023 and just 0.94% in 2010. This trend reflects changes in demographics and expectations.

ACCESSIBILITY

LONDON LUTON AIRPORT OPENS NEW ASSISTED TRAVEL LOUNGE

London Luton Airport has opened a new Assisted Travel lounge designed to provide a comfortable, relaxing and dedicated space for passengers with assisted travel needs.

Accommodating up to 50 passengers, the lounge includes a sensory space, adult changing facilities, flight information screens, charging points for wheelchairs and electronic devices, drinking water facilities and specialised seating for passengers with mobility challenges.

The airport's CEO, Alberto Martin, said "We are delighted to offer this wonderful new space for passengers with assisted travel needs. This is a hugely important investment that underlines our ongoing commitment to deliver a simple and friendly passenger experience that is safe, accessible and inclusive for all. Throughout the design process we consulted regularly with the passengers, charities and support groups that make up the membership of the London Luton Airport Accessibility Forum (LLAAF), and we are thrilled with the outcome – a welcoming and accessible space for assisted travel passengers to enjoy ahead



of their flights".

LLAF Chair, Andrew Wright, said "The Assisted Travel Lounge provides those passengers who use LLA's Assisted Travel services with a spacious, bright and purpose-built space which is also ideally positioned for the airport's broader amenities. The design and development of this impressive new facility have been largely shaped by a wish-list based on the insight, experiences and needs of LLAAF members and

this project provides a perfect example of the airport's continued collaboration with the Forum and its growing network of disability group stakeholders".

The airport currently fulfils more than 700 pre-booked requests for its assisted travel service each day and in June this year received the highest rating of 'Very Good' from the CAA for its service to passengers with reduced mobility and those who require assisted travel. ■

VANDERLANDE

FUTURE-READY BAGGAGE TECHNOLOGIES: ENABLING SUSTAINABLE AIRPORT GROWTH

By Wouter Berben, Commercial and Accounts Airports, Vanderlande UK

As passenger numbers continue to rise, airports are facing a familiar challenge: how to prepare for future growth in a sustainable and effective way. While there's no single solution, we see a growing number of airports exploring how baggage technologies and smarter processes can unlock capacity, improve efficiency and build resilience – without necessarily expanding the physical infrastructure.

Today and tomorrow's solutions can help airports make the most of what they already have, while laying the groundwork for long-term success.

Smart and automated resource allocation

One of the most immediate ways to manage rising demand is through AI-driven planning tools that optimise the use of existing infrastructure. By dynamically allocating resources based on real-time data and predictive modelling, software like this can

increase capacity by up to 30%.

This allows airports to accurately forecast asset usage and enable smarter scheduling, for example, of arrival carousels. The result is fewer manual tasks, greater flexibility and the ability to handle more flights using the same infrastructure. The tool for arrival carousels is already in use, with a version for departure planning on the way.

Improved baggage alignment and orientation

Baggage hygiene is essential to

maintain operational stability and throughput, especially at curves and inclines – as well as before security screening. Emerging technologies use smart vision systems, intelligent algorithms and gentle spinning mechanisms to automatically centre bags. Ensuring the right orientation and alignment throughout the journey reduces jams and manual interventions, while enhancing screening accuracy. Though still in development, these innovations promise to improve system performance and

support smoother, more reliable operations.

Shift to data-driven maintenance

We see a shift from calendar-based maintenance schedules to a smart combination of strategies: usage-based, condition-based and predictive. By using real-time data, predictive maintenance helps teams monitor asset health and detect anomalies early, before they lead to issues. Meanwhile usage-based and condition-based strategies support more targeted checks by responding to actual runtime and asset condition.

This smart combination enables more efficient use of resources, improves availability and helps airports stay resilient as operational demands grow.

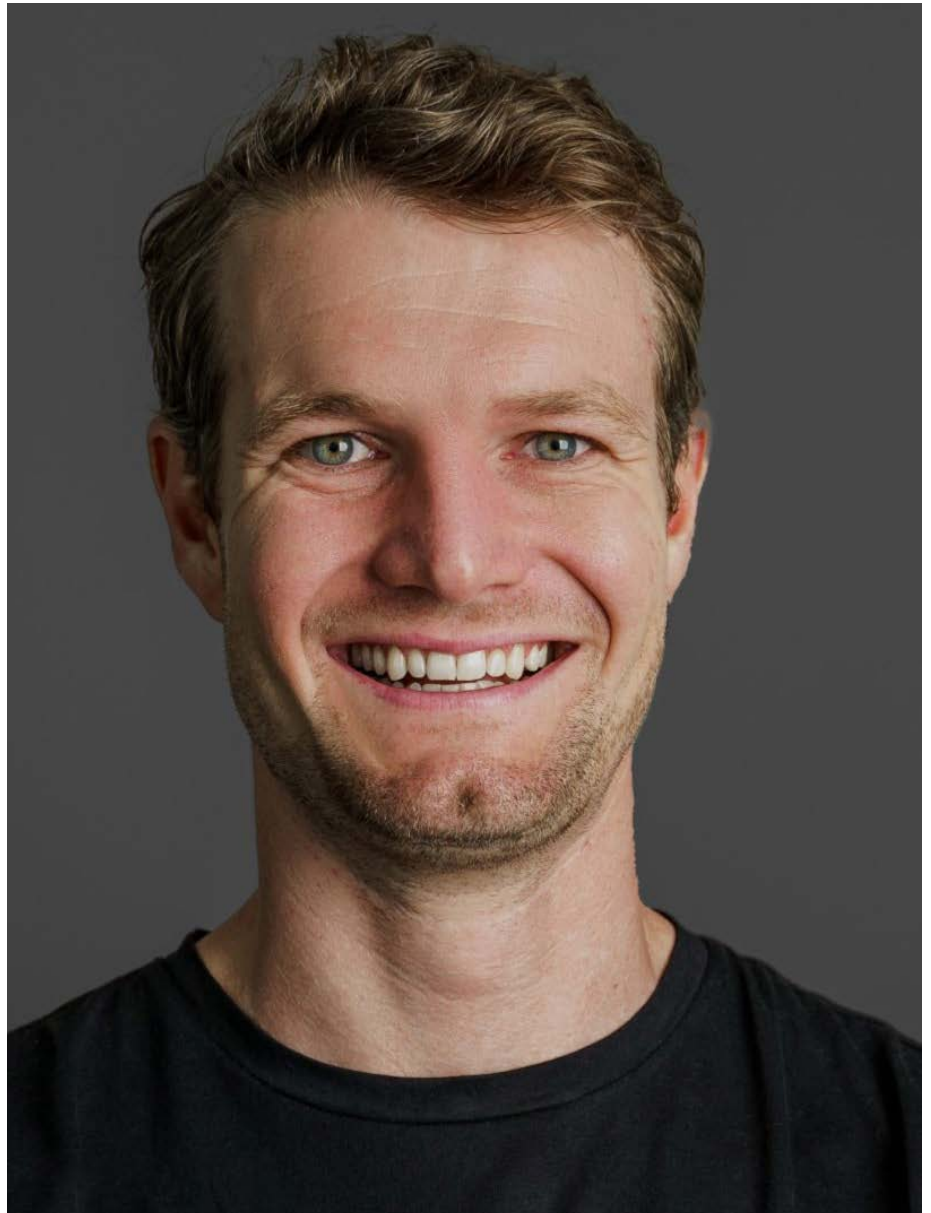
Future-proof performance with ICS

Individual Carrier Systems (ICS), with each bag travelling in its own carrier, are becoming a cornerstone of future-proof baggage handling – even in smaller spaces. Compared to traditional conveyors, an ICS offers higher throughput, full traceability and a modular design that supports phased growth.

An ICS can also handle out-of-gauge (OOG) baggage within the same flow, adding flexibility and reducing the need for separate infrastructure. It is energy-efficient, integrates easily with digital tools, and supports advanced automation and predictive maintenance. Many innovations in baggage technology are now designed to integrate seamlessly with an ICS, further enhancing its adaptability, and making it a strong fit for airports aiming to grow sustainably and efficiently.

Early bag storage and batching

While early bag stores (EBS) are not new, they do play a key role in



Wouter Berben

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increasing efficiency in the make-up area. By temporarily storing bags that arrive early, airports can shorten the make-up window and free up space to handle more flights – an approach known as compressed build.

High-performance bag stores – with individual bag retrieval – enable more flexible and space-efficient operations. They also allow for more advanced batch building, a process that shifts baggage handling to a controlled



and predictable flow.

Traditionally, bags move directly from check-in to the make-up area, often occupying make-up positions for hours and requiring constant staffing. With batching, bags are grouped, for example by flight number or class, and released at optimal times.

This approach improves the use of space and labour, enables peak shaving by loading containers in advance, and creates stable baggage flows that support automation, smarter planning and future growth.

Technology supporting sustainability

As airports evolve, technology plays a key role in supporting sustainable growth. Energy optimisation is becoming a core part of baggage operations. For example, replacing older motors with high-efficiency IE5 models has delivered energy savings of over 50% on individual conveyors. Alongside other system-level improvements, these technologies reduce environmental impact and operational costs, making baggage handling systems ready for sustainable growth.

Planning for the future: one size doesn't fit all

While these technologies offer clear benefits, every airport is



As airports evolve, technology plays a key role in supporting sustainable growth. Energy optimisation is becoming a core part of baggage operations.

unique. That's why it's essential to assess what works best for each facility.

Through consultancy studies and master planning exercises, in which future flight schedules are used to evaluate baggage handling requirements, airports can identify bottlenecks with existing infrastructure and explore solutions. Looking ahead – ten years or more – helps airports make informed investment decisions and supports intelligent long-term capital planning.

Early expert involvement ensures today's needs are met, while laying the groundwork for future

growth. With the right insights and collaboration, baggage handling becomes a strategic enabler of future-ready airport operations.

If you're curious about what this could mean for your airport, feel free to contact me – I'd be happy to help. ■

Wouter Berben
Commercial & Accounts Airports,
Vanderlande UK

**VANDERLANDE is an AirportsUK
Corporate Partner.**

VANDERLANDE
a TOYOTA AUTOMATED LOGISTICS company



Stewart Wingate

LONDON GATWICK AIRPORT

GATWICK, EDINBURGH AND BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS SET FOR INVESTMENT-FUELLED GROWTH AFTER GOVERNMENT APPROVES GATWICK'S NORTHERN RUNWAY PLANS

Stewart Wingate, the new Managing Director overseeing London Gatwick, Edinburgh and Belfast International airports, has outlined growth plans for all three, backed by the unrivalled financial firepower of the airports' owners.



Speaking to The Airport Operator at Gatwick Airport, just days into his newly created role of UK Managing Director for VINCI and Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), Wingate, who was Chief Executive at Gatwick for over 15 years, underlined "the credibility of our investors". He noted that the airports' investors "certainly have the appetite to fund the Gatwick project that we as the management have taken forward to bring our Northern Runway into routine use. Our investors fully support the management plans, and they have encouraged us every step of the way to bring these plans forward".

The Northern Runway plans were given the green light by Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, on 21 September. Wingate said her announcement was "another important gateway in the planning process for this £2.2bn

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investment".

London Gatwick Airport and Edinburgh Airport are majority-owned by VINCI Airports, which holds a 50.01% stake in both, with the remaining 49.99% owned by Global Infrastructure Partners, itself now owned by BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager. Belfast International Airport is wholly owned by VINCI, which is the largest company in France by revenue and the world's leading private airport operator, with over 70 airports in 14 countries.

Setting out his new role as UK

Managing Director, Wingate said "essentially my role will be to work with the CEOs and to have a particular focus on the strategic development of each of the airports. The CEOs, who will report into me, will be the people who are leading their airports. I will be there to be, on the one hand, a sounding board, but, on the other hand, to be involved in the strategic direction that the airports will take and I am really looking forward to doing that".

Gatwick Airport, the UK's second busiest, whose new Chief Executive is Pierre-Hugues

Schmit, formerly Chief Commercial and Operational Officer at VINCI Airports, welcomed Heidi Alexander's decision on its Northern Runway proposal.

Wingate said "After a lengthy and rigorous planning process, we welcome the Government's approval on plans to bring our Northern Runway into routine use. This is another important gateway in the planning process for this £2.2bn investment, which is fully funded by our investors and will unlock significant growth, tourism and trade benefits for London Gatwick and the UK and unlock thousands of jobs".

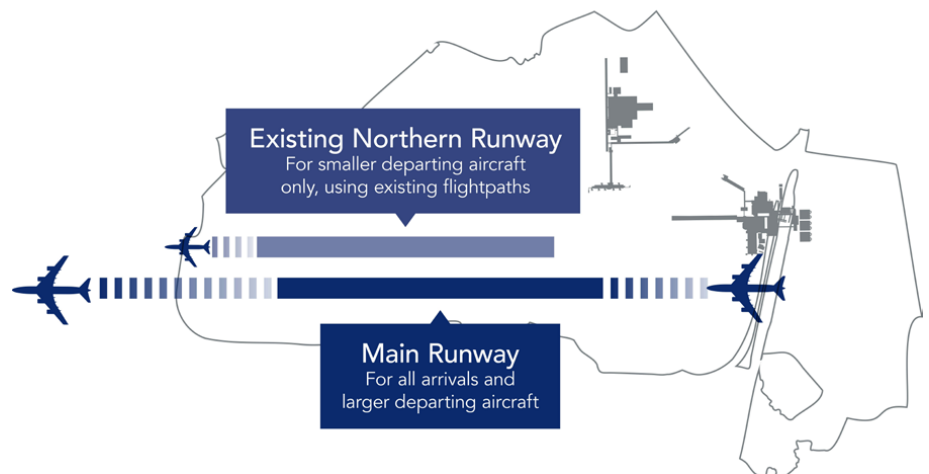
Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said the plans would create "thousands of jobs and billions in investment" and were part of the Government's plan to "get Britain building again".

In April Gatwick said it would: accept stricter controls on aircraft noise, improve its noise insulation scheme, commit to working with partners to seek to achieve a target of 54% of passengers using public transport to get to and from the airport and, if necessary, accept that it would not start to use the Northern Runway until its £350m of local road improvements had been completed.

Wingate said "We have worked on this for seven years. Covid forced many businesses to put their investment plans on hold, but at Gatwick when the chips were down our shareholders backed the management team to keep going even during the pandemic. That meant that we could prepare our Development Consent Order proposals for the Planning Inspectorate. Now the Government has backed us".

"For us" he said "it is all about the release of additional peak hour slots and we are very confident, based on the conversations

Gatwick Airport, the UK's second busiest, whose new Chief Executive is Pierre-Hugues Schmit, formerly Chief Commercial and Operational Officer at VINCI Airports, welcomed Heidi Alexander's decision on its Northern Runway proposal.





that I have had and our route development team have had with airlines around the globe, that getting access to those very lucrative and sought-after peak hour slots will lead to even more competition and choice at this airport. Gatwick will grow from around 43m passengers a year now to about 80m passengers by the late 2030s. The other thing to say is it is fully privately financed. It is a £2.2bn scheme and it doesn't require any money from the public purse".

Asked when the first commercial flights could be expected to take off from the Northern Runway, he said "it is going to happen quite quickly. We think that is going to be around about the turn of the decade. All landings will continue to come in on the main runway. All the larger aircraft, the long-haul aircraft, will take off from the main runway and on the Northern Runway it will be aircraft that are flying the European services.

I thoroughly enjoyed 15 years at Gatwick working with a group of really talented people. The success of the airport is all based on the talent of the people who dedicate themselves to their work within the airport.

What we expect with the new configuration is that we will have significantly more resilience on our airfield, and we will see the opportunity to have additional capacity and more opportunities for airlines to fly".

Edinburgh Airport, whose Chief Executive is Gordon Dewar, has what Wingate described as "very exciting development plans to

increase the size of the terminal facilities and to also put in place additional stand capacity out on the airfield and to grow the passenger volumes. Today there are around 16m passengers going through Edinburgh and I think the prospects for Edinburgh to grow in future years, with the attractiveness particularly of the city, make that a really good airport to be associated with". Edinburgh's passenger growth in July, compared to July last year, was 9.5%, putting it in the top five large European airports with the most dynamic growth in passenger traffic.

Earlier this year Belfast International Airport, whose CEO is Dan Owens, officially opened its £25m extended airport terminal. Wingate said that was "the first step" in a £100m five-year redevelopment programme "and during the next 12 months what you will start to see is some of the transformation particularly

in the departure lounge and the retail areas, which will make a real difference for passengers travelling through the airport. You will see a real drive to modernise the passenger experience”.

Looking back on his more than 15 years as Chief Executive of London Gatwick Airport, the UK’s second busiest, Wingate said “I thoroughly enjoyed 15 years at Gatwick working with a group of really talented people. The success of the airport is all based on the talent of the people who dedicate themselves to their work within the airport. The ‘magic dust’ at Gatwick will always be, in my opinion, the people and the colleagues that I had here and the tremendous support that they offered to me in my time as the Chief Executive”.

Reflecting on the airport’s achievements since he joined in December 2009, he highlighted the growth in passenger numbers (32m in 2009 to over 43m last year) and the development of the long-haul network. Today Gatwick has nearly 60 airlines flying to over 220 destinations “and we have demonstrated that not only can we support flights across to North America and the Caribbean, but also, down into the Indian sub-continent and across into Asia. The growth of the long-haul flights and the fact that we now have more airlines today than we have ever had in the history of the airport is a real win for this airport and for the region”.

He also said that Gatwick had taken the lead on improving access to the airport by rail, citing “the work that we have done in our station, where we have partnered with the Government and Network Rail to invest in an additional platform. We worked with the Department for Transport and Transport for London to get ourselves into the Oyster zone, so

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that passengers could tap in and tap out, and we managed to get the timetable up so that we have a train in the direction of London once every four minutes. Today we have services by rail that go right the way through to the northern Home Counties, so you can get to Peterborough and Stevenage as well as Cambridge. Then last year we completed the rail station upgrade, where we doubled the size of the concourse”.

Turning to the passenger journey at the airport itself, Wingate said Gatwick had transformed its check-in areas, with auto bag drop, and its security areas. “When I first got here, we had a poor reputation for processing passengers through security” he said “but then I think we went to the status of having security areas which were the envy of airports across Europe, and we put all the

automation in for the border control. We invested in the retail outlets and then out on the airfield we built out the pier-served stands and we boosted the efficiency of the single runway, so that in peak hours we now routinely see 55 movements per hour, which puts us in a league of our own compared to single runway airports around the world”.

Finally, he said “We have taken a very responsible position from a sustainability point of view. One of the key areas following the pandemic that we decided to take a leadership position in, and I am proud of this, is our quest to get to Net Zero on the airport’s Scope 1 and 2 emissions by the end of 2030, which still today, I think, is by far a leadership position versus any of the major UK airports. That is a considerable investment for the airport of about £250m”. ■

AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

HISTORICAL LONDON VENUE WILL HOST OUR FLAGSHIP EVENT ON 9 DECEMBER

By Marko Saaret, Event and Member Relations Manager, AirportsUK

AirportUK's Annual Conference, its flagship event, will take place this year on 9 December at the Church House Conference Centre, a Westminster hidden gem, the history of which dates back to 1887.

Founded to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, Church House went through a major modernisation, before being officially reopened by George VI in June 1940. Just months later, during The Blitz in the early part of the Second World War, Church House was bombed, leading Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to order its refurbishment and repurposing to accommodate the two Houses of Parliament for the remainder of the war. Many historic speeches and events took place at Church House during this time, including Churchill's announcement of the sinking of the battleship Bismarck.

AirportsUK is proud to take its most important annual event to



Heidi Alexander



Michael Gove

this remarkable venue in Dean's Yard, close to Westminster Abbey and its choir school and to Westminster School.

Over decades our Annual Conference has been held in different formats and in different places, but it undoubtedly remains one of the most prominent gatherings in the aviation industry calendar.

Dave Lees, CEO of Bristol Airport, notes that "The annual AirportsUK

conference is the only event which brings together industry leaders from the airports sector to share current trends, challenges and opportunities. Given the convening power that airports have to bring together the wider network of other businesses and organisations this annual event is a key opportunity to both meet and hear from the breadth of airport, government and other key players in the sector."

No other event brings together as many senior leaders from UK airports and suppliers with high-level representatives of government and regulators. This year's conference theme is 'UK Airports: Delivering Connectivity and Growth' and the **Transport**

Secretary, Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, will kick things off with her thoughts on the place of airports in the Government's growth agenda. Later in the day former Cabinet Minister and current **editor of The Spectator, Lord Michael Gove**, will cast his incisive eye across the current political landscape and give us his thoughts on where things are heading.

Steve Clark, from AirportsUK Silver Member, Develop Consulting has attended every annual conference since his company joined us. He said "The AirportsUK Annual Conference is an essential event for Develop Consulting. It provides a fantastic opportunity to hear from key industry figures, reconnect with colleagues, and forge new connections. We find that this event is one of the best opportunities of the year to hear from a range of airport operators about how they've overcome current challenges, and where they foresee issues going forward. This intelligence helps us to position our service offering and have informed conversations with our clients on what best in class looks like."

The headline sponsors for this year's conference are facilities management and service provider, Mitie, and air transport communications and IT company, SITA.

SITA's Vice President Sales, Northern Europe, Cristian Argentin, sees our events programme as a cornerstone of industry engagement. He said "I think that AirportsUK events provide a unique platform to stay closely connected with our airport partners, understand their evolving challenges, and share ideas that shape the future of air travel. These gatherings allow us to keep our finger on the pulse of the industry and ensure our



solutions are aligned with real-world needs. The open dialogue and collaborative spirit fostered at these events are invaluable, not just for strengthening relationships, but for driving innovation that truly matters to our customers."

As usual, the AirportsUK Annual Conference will provide multiple networking opportunities, including an evening drinks reception, and opportunities for companies to exhibit, promoting their products, services and solutions directly to conference delegates.

For **Nigel Milton, Heathrow Airport's Chief Communications**

& Sustainability Officer, and a longstanding AirportsUK board member, the reason to be at the conference is clear: "AirportsUK's Annual Conference is a must attend event for all those interested in the latest updates and insights from UK aviation's opinion makers and decision takers. For those who work, or want to work, in UK aviation; for those who supply, or want to supply to UK airports; and for those who write, or want to write, about UK aviation – do yourself a favour and clear your diary for 9 December and make a click to book your ticket." ■

NEW MEMBERS

AIRPORTSUK WELCOMES AIRBUS PROTECT AS A GOLD MEMBER AND FIVE OTHER NEW MEMBERS

Cyber resilience provider and Airbus subsidiary, Airbus Protect, has joined AirportsUK as a Gold Member.

AIRBUS PROTECT

Airbus

Cyber resilience provider and Airbus subsidiary, Airbus Protect, has joined AirportsUK as a Gold Member.

The company describes itself as “a leader in end-to-end risk management for over four decades providing a unique service portfolio spanning safety, cybersecurity and sustainability”.

Today Airbus Protect says that aviation is entering a transformative period with the integration of IT systems that manage data with operational technology systems that monitor and control physical processes. This is providing “greater connectivity, increased visibility

into systems and enhanced operational performance” at the same time as “the industry is making enormous progress towards reaching sustainable aviation goals, but these exciting developments are also creating new safety, security and sustainability challenges. Solving them requires tailored technical solutions, combined with an approach that considers present and future regulation”.

The company’s 1,800 experts across Europe collaborate with partners and institutions across the continent. Airbus Protect says “We offer a holistic approach, ensuring all systems from simple employee endpoints to

industrial machines and mobile platforms are safe and trusted. We are committed to maintaining cyber resilience for clients in the face of evolving threats and helping them achieve their sustainability goals”.

It says “Our deep expertise makes us an ideal partner for safeguarding your business. We understand your challenges, the importance of reducing incidents and downtime as much as possible, and, when facing headwinds, why every minute counts to get critical assets up and running again”.



Churchill Services

Churchill Services has joined as a Silver Member.

Churchill describes itself as a specialist soft services facilities management business, soft services being the non-technical tasks, such as cleaning, security and maintenance, that keep a place running smoothly. Serving both public and private sector customers, Churchill says that it keeps spaces clean, safe and well managed to create positive impacts for clients and the public, helping people to love the inside and outside spaces they are in.

Whether you are seeking expert facilities management, bespoke cleaning services or cutting-edge security measures, Churchill says that it is a trusted partner for reliable and scalable solutions. The company is the second largest Employee Ownership Trust in the UK, with over 10,000 employee owners. A majority of the company’s shares have been transferred to the trust, and those shares are held by the trust for the benefit of the employees of the business.



DHL Supply Chain

DHL Supply Chain has also joined as a Silver Member.

The company describes itself as the world's leading contract logistics provider, dedicated to redefining the aviation experience with seamless, efficient and sustainable solutions. DHL Supply Chain says that with its certified aviation logistics expertise, and with safety, innovation and efficiency at its core, clients can implement a unified, dynamic supply chain, enabled by technology and data, and consistently deliver high performance, an enhanced passenger experience and reduced costs, while ensuring an engaged workforce.

The company partners with easyJet at Bristol, Liverpool John Lennon, London Gatwick and Manchester airports. Its airport logistics services include transfer baggage, baggage repatriation, catering logistics and waste and recycling.



OneReg

OneReg is a third new Silver Member.

The company says that it is the only compliance platform built for purpose for the aviation industry, with a vision to reimagine aviation compliance not as a regulatory burden, but as an embedded part of everyday operations. By seamlessly integrating aviation compliance into operations, OneReg says that it empowers aviation companies to achieve safety, integrity and efficiency. The company describes its mission as being to maximise compliance efficiency, saving time and driving growth in the aviation industry.

For airports, OneReg says that it streamlines airport safety and compliance by digitising every process, procedure and document in one central platform which can encompass any Safety Management System, wildlife hazard management and monitoring, runway condition management and risk and hazard management.



Analogic

Analogic has joined as an Associate Member.

It describes itself as a leading provider of advanced aviation security solutions to airports worldwide, providing the highest level of threat detection available for both cabin and hold baggage.

Analogic describes its ConneCT as the flexible, future-proof checkpoint screening solution airports need, handling growing passenger volumes while responding to new and emerging security threats. For airports that process high volumes of passengers, eXpress is an automated baggage handling solution that efficiently and reliably processes carry-on items and automatically returns trays to the divest position. For hold baggage screening, SeleCT is an advanced hold baggage explosive detection system designed to deliver superior threat detection and low total cost of ownership.



SwabTek

SwabTek has also joined as an Associate Member.

The company says that its novel test kits are the perfect tools for use in counter-terrorism efforts, setting a new standard for liquid explosives testing, with technology that is simple, safe, effective and low-cost and delivers accurate results in seconds.

Certified by the UK Department for Transport and already deployed by more than a hundred airports across Europe, SwabTek explosives detection tests can act as standalone tests or an effective augmentation to any screening regime by providing support as a back-up technology or for redundancy in case of primary detection system downtime or a gap in detection protocol. The tests are self-contained and require no electricity, ensuring that testing can be conducted anywhere and anytime, even in case of a power outage.



From around the sector

BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT WINS PLANNING APPROVAL FOR TERMINAL EXPANSION

Bournemouth Airport has been given the go-ahead for an extended terminal and a new transport interchange.

The plans were approved by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council's eastern planning committee following a recommendation to grant permission by planning officers. They will see the existing arrivals and departures buildings extended and

joined together into a single, modernised terminal, with enhanced baggage, security and passenger facilities delivered in phases. Also included is a new, reconfigured transport interchange with improved access for buses, taxis, cyclists and pedestrians. The airport will also provide £500,000 towards a new regular local bus service.

Steve Gill, the airport's Managing Director, told the committee the expansion would be of "vital regional

importance", adding that "aviation is a very competitive industry and unless we are able to provide the right level of choice and associated service, we risk losing the benefits we've achieved over recent years and opportunities associated with this project".

Welcoming the planning approval, he said "This decision ensures Bournemouth Airport can continue to serve as a vital regional asset, creating jobs, supporting businesses, and delivering connectivity

for the future. It allows us to invest in the facilities, services and infrastructure needed to support growth sustainably, while providing a first-class experience for passengers".

Bournemouth Airport scored a "stand out performance" among medium airports (one to ten million passengers) in Europe with a 31.9% increase in passenger numbers in July (vs. July 2024) according to the most recent data from ACI Europe. ■

NEW BIRMINGHAM ROUTE MAKES EASYJET THE LARGEST CARRIER AT CITY OF DERRY AIRPORT

easyJet has launched a new twice-weekly route from City of Derry to Birmingham, making it the largest carrier at the Northern Ireland airport less than a year since their inaugural Edinburgh and Liverpool flights.

The new service operates every Monday and Friday, with easyJet the only carrier offering a direct connection between the two cities. Steve Frazer, Managing Director at City of

Derry Airport, said that the Birmingham route is in high demand for travellers in the north-west of Ireland, adding "we are thrilled to strengthen our partnership with easyJet and grow their operations across the north-west".

Meanwhile, the Derry City and Strabane District Council area has seen the highest percentage growth in visitor spend among all council areas in Northern Ireland, up 29% in the last year, with overnight trips also up by over 10%.

The council's tourism manager, Jennifer O'Donnell, said that improved air access routes through City of Derry Airport had made the area more accessible.

Earlier this year the Northern Ireland Executive confirmed that it will cover the airport's multi-million-pound annual running costs, which had previously been covered by local ratepayers, until 2029. Economy Minister, Caoimhe Archibold, said her department's funding would "enable

the airport, with plays a vital part in the economic development of the entire north-west to plan for future growth in the years ahead".

The Mayor of Derry and Strabane, Lilian Seenoi Barr, said that the airport is "a critical infrastructure asset that provides connectivity and is fundamental to business and tourism in the area". The funding deal meant that the council and the airport could now "strategically plan for the airport's development and growth". ■

COUNCIL LEADERS APPROVE £160M TO REOPEN DONCASTER SHEFFIELD AIRPORT



Political leaders in South Yorkshire have approved £160m of public money to support the reopening of Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard, and the leaders of Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham councils all voted in favour of the funding at a meeting held at a hangar at the site.

Coppard described it as a "historic decision". He said "We are cleared for take-off. It is a great day, but it is the end of

the beginning. We have a load of work to do now to get the airport back up and running and to build that sustainable aviation and advanced manufacturing hub".

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said "This is a huge milestone for businesses and communities across South Yorkshire delivering better connections, jobs and economic growth".

Doncaster Mayor, Ros Jones, said "This is an important day in our airport's story. Today we have taken

a huge step forward to fully reopening our airport. This project is not simply to reopen it for passenger flights, it's about the wider economic impacts, creating a hub for aviation related industry, delivering jobs and opportunities for our residents and putting Doncaster back on the map".

Following the decision, FlyDoncaster, a company set up by Doncaster Council to run the airport, announced that recruitment has started for three "pivotal" roles, a head

of general aviation and cargo, a head of fire rescue and emergency planning, and a head of assets. The closing date for applications was the end of September, and recruitment will take place immediately after where possible. Freight operations are expected to start in 2027, with a fully operational airport planned for summer 2028. ■



From around the sector



FREIGHT HANDLING FIRM DOUBLES VOLUMES AT EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT AFTER OPENING EXPANDED FACILITY

Swissport's new facility at East Midlands Airport is handling double the volumes served a year ago and the company is forecasting further growth next year..

Opened in April just ahead of new airlines beginning to operate frequent China-UK routes via East Midlands, the facility is currently handling 37,000 tonnes of cargo from 21 flights a week, with Swissport estimating that it will be handling 50,000 tonnes next year. It provides

cargo handling services for Atlas Air, Ethiopian Cargo and Saudia Cargo, along with One Air, which moved its operations to East Midlands last year.

The new Swissport building, close to one of the airport's cargo aprons, has allowed the company to treble its capacity. It has been fitted out with a new truck dock, a deck system that can store up to 60 aircraft positions of cargo and a front-to-back automated speed lane to enable unitised cargo (individual pieces of cargo grouped

together into larger units) to travel through the facility quickly.

East Midlands Airport's Head of Aviation, David Craig, said "We're delighted that one of our key airport partners is playing an integral role in the development, growth and success of our cargo operation, and we are keen to continue our dialogue with them as we prepare for longer term growth".

Swissport UK & Ireland Chief Commercial Officer, Luke Hayhoe, said "The growth we have seen at East Midlands is a testament to the power

of strong partnership and shared ambition. Our collaboration with the team has enabled us to scale up quickly, respond to evolving customer needs, and deliver real value to the cargo community. With increasing volumes, new carrier relationships, and ongoing infrastructure investment, together we're building a sustainable, high-performance cargo gateway that's not only meeting today's demand but shaping the future of freight in the region and beyond". ■

HEATHROW AWAITS GOVERNMENT FEEDBACK ON ITS £21BN PLAN FOR A THIRD RUNWAY TO OPEN WITHIN A DECADE

Heathrow Airport is looking for Government feedback shortly on its third runway plans submitted in August.

The airport says that its 100% privately financed proposal would unlock at least 30 destinations, serving up to 150m passengers on up to 756,000 flights each year and has suggested that jobs and supply chain spending could take off this year, with planning permission granted by 2029.

Its blueprint includes a north-western runway up to 3,500m, a brand-new terminal and stand capacity, expanding Terminal 2 and opening three new satellite terminals. The new terminal would be similar in size to the existing T5, with a large shared public transport interchange between the two. The new runway and airfield infrastructure is estimated to cost £21bn, the new terminal £12bn and modernising the current airport, through expanding Terminal 2 and ultimately

closing Terminal 3, £15bn.

Heathrow's CEO, Thomas Woldbye, said "It has never been more important or urgent to expand Heathrow. We are effectively operating at capacity. With a green light from Government and the correct policy support underpinned by a fit for purpose regulatory model, we are ready to mobilise and start investing this year in our supply chain across the country. We are uniquely placed to do this for the country; it is time to clear

the way for take-off".

Meanwhile, Heathrow made history in August by becoming the first European hub airport to surpass 8m passengers in a single month. Woldbye said "August is set to go down in the history books. We became the first European airport to handle over 8m passengers in a single month, and we achieved that whilst maintaining industry-leading punctuality and service levels". ■

WORK BEGINS ON PROJECT TO EXPAND MANCHESTER AIRPORT'S TERMINAL

Work has begun on a multi-million-pound project to modernise and expand Terminal 3 at Manchester Airport.

The new-look terminal will be bigger, with 40% more seating, a new entrance with more space and facilities, brand new security equipment and new shops and places to eat and drink. The first parts of it, including a new 469-seat sports bar, will

be open to the public early next year.

Manchester Airport's Managing Director, Chris Woodrooffe said "Our 10 year, £1.3bn project to completely transform Terminal 2 is nearly finished and now we can shift our focus to Terminal 3 where work has already begun. Our plan is to take advantage of the extra space that will be afforded by the closure of Terminal 1 later this year to really improve

the experience for passengers who fly from there".

Terminal 2, which has more than doubled in size, will be fully open later this year and will be the airport's main terminal, catering to more than 70% of its passengers. New check-in desks, a new security hall and a new section of the departure lounge have already opened, with further shops and restaurants opening later this year.

The finalised terminal will also include 13 new aircraft stands and boarding gates.

Almost 7m people flew through the airport over the school summer holidays, making it Manchester Airport's busiest summer yet. The airport also saw its busiest single month ever, as 3.5m flew in or out during August, with Amsterdam, Antalya, Dubai, Dublin and Palma the most popular destinations. ■



From around the sector

NEWCASTLE AIRPORT BOOSTED BY EASYJET AND RYANAIR BASES

easyJet is to open its new three-aircraft Newcastle base on 22 March next year, while Ryanair has announced a third aircraft and five new routes at Newcastle this winter.

easyJet's base will enable the airline to expand its Newcastle network with 11 new routes. Brand new services are set to take off to Antalya and Dalaman in Turkey, the Greek islands, Rhodes and Corfu, the Algarve in Portugal as well as Malta, Prague, the Spanish city of Reus and an exclusive route connecting

Newcastle to Nice in the south of France.

Leon McQuaid, the airport's Director of Aviation Development, said "It's fantastic that easyJet will open its base ahead of schedule, with flights to 11 new destinations taking off earlier than planned. We look forward to celebrating with easyJet when the new routes take off and to announcing even more exciting destinations soon".

Ryanair's announcement that it will base a third aircraft at Newcastle this winter will deliver a 36% increase in seats and new routes to Brussels,



Budapest, Gdansk, Malta and Wroclaw.

Richard Knight, the airport's Chief Operating Officer, said "It's fantastic news that Ryanair have committed to further investment in the region. This expansion will

deliver over a million passengers for Ryanair over the next 12 months, reflecting the strength of our partnership and the growing demand for connectivity from the North East to key European destinations". ■

CAA REPORTS RECORD PASSENGER NUMBERS AT UK AIRPORTS – ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

A record 81m passengers passed through UK airports between April and June this year, with the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) reporting that "airports across the north of England saw especially high growth".

Nearly three-quarters of a million additional passengers passed through Leeds Bradford,

Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle airports. The most popular international destinations were Alicante, Amsterdam, Dublin and Palma de Mallorca. All four airports have since reported that passenger numbers continued at record breaking levels in July and August.

The CAA said aviation had shown significant growth in the second quarter of 2025, reaching

the highest ever number of passengers between April and June this year. In the first half of the year 141m passengers travelled through UK airports ahead of what is expected to have been a record-breaking summer.

Its report also showed a strong punctuality performance, with 75% of flights operating on time, 8 percentage points up on 2024. The average delay was 13 minutes,

down 5 minutes on the same quarter last year. Selina Chadha, the CAA's Group Director for Consumers and Markets, said "reliable, on-time flights remain a priority, and it's encouraging that delays are falling year-on-year. These numbers are a great achievement and we continue to work across the sector to drive ever higher standards". ■

REGIONAL & CITY AIRPORTS "POISED TO ENTER AN AMBITIOUS NEW PHASE", PARTNERING WITH UK ASSET MANAGER, ICG

The operator of Bournemouth, Exeter and Norwich Airports has announced a new partnership with FTSE100 asset manager, ICG, ending 12 years of ownership by Rigby Group.

Regional & City Airports (RCA), which also owns and operates four luxury private jet centres at Birmingham, Liverpool, Bournemouth and Exeter airports, has entered an agreement to partner with ICG's European Infrastructure team. The team will support RCA's continued growth,

with the company set to expand its airports, cargo and executive aviation operations.

Ludovic Laforge, Managing Director at ICG European Infrastructure, said "We're proud to be partnering with one of the UK's most dynamic regional airport groups in a transaction that underscores our commitment to supporting high-potential infrastructure assets. RCA enjoys very robust fundamentals with high-quality leadership, a successful regional focus, and strong revenue diversification. A

key part of our plan will be to work with the team to further accelerate the transition towards sustainable operations while delivering on the attractive growth potential the platform offers".

RCA Chief Executive, Andrew Bell, said the company had become one of the leading UK airport groups, adding "We are now ready to accelerate further with the help of our new partner. Across our network it will be business as usual, with the same outstanding team and vision, boosted

by renewed momentum to drive our continued growth, innovation and sustainability in regional aviation. I'm proud of our team and everything we've achieved and look keenly ahead to what's next". ■



Andrew Bell



Ludovic Laforge

TEESSIDE AIRPORT LAUNCHES WORLD FIRST DRIVERLESS PASSENGER AND BAGGAGE AIRPORT VEHICLE TRIALS

An autonomous passenger and baggage transport system will begin a pilot at Teesside Airport this autumn after the Tees Valley Combined Authority signed a £1m deal with aviation firm, Aurrigo International plc.

The company's eight-seater auto shuttle passenger vehicle is primed to begin trial activities in October, while an auto dolly

tug, a driverless way of moving cargo and bags around airports, is set for operation in January. Teesside will be the only airport in the world where both autonomous cargo and passenger vehicles will be operating.

It will mean that flights to Alicante, Amsterdam and Malaga could feature passengers and bags being ferried around the airport from as early as January next year.

The airport's Managing Director, Phil Forster, said "It's an absolute pleasure to see Teesside Airport hosting more world-leading technology and chalking up another UK and global first. To have this technology in place early next year will mean bags will travel from check-in to plane even more seamlessly, and in an even greener way. It will also help us shape how we move passengers around

Teesside in the future and will likely have an impact on the whole aviation industry".

Aurrigo's CEO, David Keene MBE, said "we are excited to bring our autonomous technology to the North East. Our auto-shuttle and auto-dolly tugs are being deployed all across the world, but this will be the first time we have integrated them together at a live airport". ■



AIRPORTSUK MEETINGS & EVENTS 2025

Fire Safety Forum

Virtual meeting

29 September @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance (ASC)

AirportsUK Office

1 October @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

AirportsUK Board Meeting

AirportsUK Office

2 October @ 10:30am – 1:00pm

Health & Safety Week Awards

AirportsUK Office

2 October @ 1:00pm – 2:30pm

Planners Forum (Airports only)

Virtual meeting

7 October @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Rescue & Fire Fighting (RFFS)

London Gatwick Airport

23 October @ 11:00am – 4:00pm

Public Affairs Communications Network (PACN) & Policy Committee (Airports only)

AirportsUK Office

4 November @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Health & Safety

Bristol Airport

12 November @ 10:00am – 3:00pm

AirportsUK Board Meeting

AirportsUK Office

18 November @ 10:30am – 3:30pm

General Counsels Forum (Airports only)

Virtual meeting

28 November @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)

Virtual Meeting

3 December @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Security Group

AirportsUK Office

4 December @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Security Group (Airports only)

AirportsUK Office

4 December @ 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Fire Safety Forum

Virtual meeting

8 December @ 10:00 – 12:00 midday

Annual Conference

Church House Westminster

9 December @ 9:00am – 5:00pm
(& networking reception)





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