

AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

DELIVERING CONNECTIVITY & GROWTH AGENDA

09:00 Registration & Breakfast

09:30 | Welcome & opening remarks

Dharshini David, Deputy Economics Editor – BBC
Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE, Chair – AirportsUK
Karen Dee, Chief Executive – AirportsUK

A warm welcome to everyone attending the annual conference and opening remarks which will set the stage and provide an outline of the day before the AirportsUK chair and chief executive are introduced for their opening remarks.

09:40 | Keynote Speech

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport – Department for Transport

This year the government has signaled strong support for the role aviation can play in driving economic growth, but there remain challenges that must be addressed. We are looking forward to hearing from the Secretary of State as she highlights the work government has done, and how it will be continuing to champion UK aviation in the year ahead.

10:00 | Industry response and outlook

Ken O'Toole, Chief Executive – Manchester Airports Group
Dave Lees, Chief Executive – Bristol Airport
Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive – Edinburgh Airport

Chair – Dharshini David

Responding to the Secretary of State, this panel will explore how the government has settled in and what the sector feels has been the impact of the policy changes and proposals already outlined. It will provide expert commentary on further measures that can be taken to address the challenges airports face, as well as what opportunities there are for airports to drive economic growth.

10:30 | Networking coffee break

11:10 | Political & Economic outlook – what do businesses need to know and consider?

Rt Hon Lord Michael Gove, Editor – Spectator & Former Cabinet Minister

Arguably one of parliament's best performers in recent years, and now editing the Spectator magazine, Lord Gove will cast his wry eye over the Westminster and UK landscape and provide his insight into what we can expect. Expect this to be a witty and perceptive tour de force that will give delegates plenty to think about – is the economy set to return to growth; what else can Labour in government do; what next for the Conservatives; will Reform UK continue its rise?

11:30 | Competitiveness & connectivity

Kam Jandu, Chief Executive – AGS Airports
Holly Boyd-Boland, VP Corporate Development – Virgin Atlantic
Peter Glade, Chief Commercial Officer – TUI Airline
Nick Faith, Co-founder & Director – WPI Strategy
Nick Barton, Chief Executive – Birmingham Airport

Chair – Karen Dee

Aviation is one of the most competitive industries, operating in a global context with investors and airlines always looking for the best value for money for their assets. The UK is, however, at risk of making itself uncompetitive compared to its international rivals, with high taxes, burdensome regulation, an unsupportive planning system all putting our future connectivity at risk. This panel will explore what the sector needs to ensure this does not happen and the UK remains at the centre of the world's air travel network.

12:00 | Border and immigration keynote

Mike Tapp MP, Minister for Migration and Citizenship

As the minister with the responsibility for border security, he will be able to give delegates his views on how the government will support airports in their role as the guardians of the UK's front door and for members to provide feedback on what they need from the Home Office and Border Force to keep the country safe.

12:30 | Networking lunch

13:45 | Government & regulator approaches to new technology
Rob Bishton, Chief Executive – UK Civil Aviation Authority

Chair – Dharshini David

The head of the UK's border security services and the UK aviation regulator will give us their thoughts on the security and regulatory challenges that must be overcome to ensure safe deployment of new technologies. Ensuring the continued safety and security of UK aviation is paramount and aligning innovations through close collaboration between airports and regulators is vital if we are to succeed.

14:15 | Managing opportunities & risks of future technology
Alison FitzGerald, Chief Executive – London City Airport
Federico Bonaudi, Director of Facilitation, Parliamentary Affairs & Regional Airports – ACI Europe
Simon Bond, Senior Director of Border Strategy and Transformation – Home Office

Chair – Dharshini David

New technologies such as biometrics, autonomous drones, and artificial intelligence can transform airport operations, the passenger experience in the years ahead, and how we make use of our airports. This presents significant opportunities and challenges for airports, with questions around the infrastructure, regulatory, security and interconnectivity considerations and requirements. The panel will explore the opportunities and challenges for airports from these emerging technologies, and how airports can get ready for their deployment.

14:45 | Key trends driving aviation
Steve Saxon, Partner and Transport Lead, McKinsey

Global consultant McKinsey provides its insight into the big themes in aviation. What are the trends that we can see emerging in the coming years and how can we take advantage of the opportunities they present to improve the passenger experience and ensure UK airports continue to be the best in the world.

15:00 | Networking coffee break

15:30 | The view from Opposition
Rt Hon Richard Holden MP – Shadow Secretary of State for Transport

The Conservative party is in the process of developing the policy platform it hopes will lead them to victory at the next general election. As part of this, we will be joined by the shadow transport secretary, who will lay out his views on the role airports can play now, and as part of the UK under a future Conservative administration.

15:50 | Speeding up planning & delivery of infrastructure
Kathryn Leahy, Chief Operations Officer – NATS
Robbie Owen, Head of Infrastructure Planning – Pinsent Masons

Chair – Dharshini David

The UK has developed an unwanted reputation as a somewhere that cannot deliver large-scale infrastructure projects. This government has made it a core mission to change this, proposing reforms to the planning system as well as publicly supporting large scale infrastructure projects and industries that are deemed 'high growth'. The question for this panel is whether this will be enough and what more can be done to drive delivery of large capital projects designed to improve productivity, create jobs and economic growth, and make the UK an attractive place to invest.

16:15 | Big interview – delivering runway capacity
Thomas Woldbye, Chief Executive – Heathrow Airport
Stewart Wingate, Managing Director – UK airports for VINCI and GIP

Chair – Dharshini David

In our final session of the day, these two senior leaders with almost 40 years' experience in aviation will come together to discuss how they see the challenges and opportunities associated with delivering new runway capacity. Topics such as the connectivity benefits, business and supply chain opportunities, regional opportunities, and the balance between sustainability and expansion, will all be discussed.

16:45 | Closing remarks
Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE, Chair – AirportsUK
Karen Dee, Chief Executive – AirportsUK

Wrapping up the conference and closing remarks from the chair and chief executive of AirportsUK.

17:00 – 19:00 | Networking drinks reception

Speakers & timings may be subject to change