

THE AIRPORT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK
WINTER 2025

OPERATOR

EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT
boosts freight volumes

BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT
powers ahead

KIRKWALL AIRPORT
plays a vital role

COLLABORATION
across AirportsUK

**Belfast City Airport's Chief
Executive, Matthew Hall**

BELFAST CITY AIRPORT UNVEILS £200M VISION FOR A WORLD CLASS 2040 ASSET

Full programme inside





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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 winter edition of The Airport Operator magazine. And welcome to the AirportsUK 2025 Annual Conference, Delivering Growth and Connectivity.

We have a brilliant day of discussion, insight, challenge and collaboration ahead of us as we gather to take stock of the past year in the life of the airports sector and look ahead to 2026. And we meet in the context of a sector that has posted record numbers of passengers, transported huge amounts of freight around the world, that continues to work to decarbonise and that wants to expand to rise to the government's challenge to deliver growth.

Our conference programme promises to address all of this, with a brilliant agenda featuring political speakers including the aviation minister, Keir Mather, the shadow transport secretary, Richard Holden MP and immigration minister, Mike Tapp. This will give us the chance to hear directly from government and opposition about what decisions will be taken about key issues facing the sector and how we can work with ministers and officials to develop better policy.

There will be plenty of discussion of the challenges the sector is grappling with, including growing connectivity and increasing our competitiveness, planning and regulatory changes needed to speed up infrastructure and airspace modernisation delivery, the aviation economic trends and incorporating innovative new technology in airport operations. With panels and speeches from the airports, political, economic, legal and regulatory worlds, it promises to be a great day.

Elsewhere, by the time you read this the chancellor will have delivered her Budget, and we will finally have some clarity on the issue of business rates, which has obviously been the number one issue on airports' agenda. We have been working hard over the past year to highlight the jeopardy the sector faces from the proposed increases, the negative impacts on UK connectivity and economic growth prospects. I hope

as I write this that we will be moving into a new phase following the Budget!

At AirportsUK, we have also been doing a huge amount of work on the wider competitiveness of the sector, jointly with Airlines UK. This includes economic analysis of the cumulative impact of the basket of burdens that the UK loads onto its aviation sector and the potential impact on the economics of the business, and a comparison of how the country compares with international competitors. This work clearly demonstrates the effect that fiscal, regulatory and policy decisions have, how these affect the standing of our aviation sector, and the economic effects, and will be a powerful tool in our work in the years ahead.

This issue also features great articles on the planning reforms going through Parliament and the latest on airspace modernisation, an outline of how we worked to try to influence the Budget, and pieces on East Midlands, Leeds Bradford, Cardiff, Glasgow and Kirkwall Airports. There are also updates on the work of airport partners, including ICTS, UK Power Networks Services and COMET, who support the work we do in several vital areas.

So, on behalf of everyone at AirportsUK, I hope you enjoy this latest issue of The Airport Operator magazine, and that you enjoy our annual conference. The conference will play a key role in setting the scene for the coming year, identifying the issues we will need to address, highlighting the possible solutions we can work towards, and laying the pathway towards those solutions. It illustrates the importance of the collaborative efforts of the sector through AirportsUK, and we look forward to working closely with you in 2026.

Karen Dee
Chief Executive

ARUP

FUTURE-READY AVIATION: MEETING DEMAND THROUGH SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

By Alan Newbold, Director and Aviation Leader for the UK, India, Middle East and Africa, Arup.

As global passenger numbers continue to rise, the aviation sector faces growing pressure to deliver modern, efficient, and cost effective infrastructure. From capacity constraints and ageing assets to the need for climate goals, many of these demands are shared across global markets.

At Arup, we are supporting clients globally in delivering smarter, more resilient infrastructure that meets growth targets while reducing carbon, managing costs, and improving operations. This article highlights five projects, that showcase how integrated design, digital planning, and long-term thinking can unlock more sustainable and cost-effective aviation infrastructure.

LONDON LUTON AIRPORT

At London Luton Airport, Arup has served as technical adviser to Luton Rising, the Luton



London Luton Airport

Council company that owns the airport and associated assets for community benefit, bringing together expertise in aviation, architecture, planning, environmental science, engineering, and community engagement to support every phase of the Development Consent Order application.

The London Luton Airport expansion, aiming to

accommodate 32 million passengers annually by the mid-2040s, is not only a major infrastructure project but also a catalyst for regional economic growth, with projections of up to 11,000 new jobs and an additional £1.5 billion in annual economic value.

A standout development is the Green Controlled Growth framework, which sets

Alan
Newbold

"At Arup, we are supporting clients globally in delivering smarter, more resilient infrastructure that meets growth targets while reducing carbon, managing costs, and improving operations."

environmental limits on noise, emissions, air quality, and transport. This framework, monitored independently, ensures that growth is conditional on meeting these environmental targets, helping ensure sustainability remains central to the airport's future development.

HEATHROW AIRPORT

Arup continues to support Heathrow in responding to key developments across the airport's infrastructure programme. In 2025, the focus is centred on three main priorities: reducing the cost of capital, improving productivity, and lowering carbon emissions.

With rising passenger numbers, maintaining a high-quality experience requires continuous investment in infrastructure, delivered efficiently and sustainably. Balancing this need with cost pressures and delivery complexity calls for a careful and forward-thinking approach.

Arup works with Heathrow to identify opportunities to manage complexity through modern methods of construction, such as offsite manufacture, and by selecting materials and approaches that reduce whole life carbon. These efforts support Heathrow's Sustainability 2.0 goals and its role as one of the first six UK organisations and the first airport to sign up to the UK Construction Leadership Council's five carbon commitments (procure for low carbon construction and provide incentives in our contracts, set phase out dates for fossil fuel use, eliminate the most carbon intensive concrete products, eliminate the most carbon intensive steel products, and adopt PAS 2080 – the global standard for managing carbon in buildings and infrastructure, developed by the British Standards Institution – as a common standard).



London Luton Airport

In addition to providing multidisciplinary design services, we offer advisory support that helps Heathrow plan for future trends. This includes strategic guidance on issues such as capacity growth, regulatory requirements and workforce planning. This integrated input supports better decision making across the asset lifecycle and long-term value creation.

LONDON GATWICK AIRPORT

Arup worked with London Gatwick

through all stages of its successful Development Consent Order application for its Northern Runway Project. Planning restrictions limiting the Northern Runway to emergency use and when the Main Runway is out of use expired in 2019. The DCO application, approved by the Secretary of State for Transport in September this year, supports repositioning the Northern Runway for routine dual runway operations, helping the airport meet future passenger demand up to 80m

Los Angeles Airport



passengers a year and generate significant economic benefits whilst minimising noise impacts and meeting climate change obligations.

This £2.2bn privately financed plan, largely within the existing airport boundary, unlocks new capacity and improves resilience in line with government policy, creating around 14,000 new jobs and injecting an additional £1bn into the region's economy every year.

Arup worked as a core part of a multi-disciplinary team conducting detailed assessment and helping achieve stakeholder agreement for several important considerations for the sustainability and deliverability of the proposals – including surface access commitments, highway design, air quality, greenhouse gases and climate impacts.

Building on London Gatwick's existing strategies, sustainability was key to one of the most

significant transport assessments in the UK, led by Arup. We worked with stakeholders to explore the sustainable transport strategy, improving connectivity to the airport from across the region to optimise mode choice, manage the effects of air quality on people and ecological sites, and ensure the project's design and operations are resilient to future climate challenges whilst delivering economic growth.

LAX AIRPORT

The Delta Sky Way at Los Angeles International Airport project demonstrates how strategic investment and smart design can support growth and provide much improved passenger experience. Arup led the design and engineering for the modernisation of Terminals 2 and 3, creating a streamlined, future ready terminal experience for Delta Air Lines. Central to the approach was the retention and reuse of key structural elements, reducing embodied carbon and supporting more sustainable expansion. The project also features energy efficient systems and achieved Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold certification, awarded by the US Green Building Council.

Designed to accommodate a 50% increase in capacity, the redevelopment improves passenger flow, connectivity and operational efficiency without expanding the airport's physical footprint. A phased delivery approach enabled uninterrupted airport operations and avoided the carbon impact of temporary facilities. Through digital planning, multiple disciplinary coordination and an operational readiness trial, the project supports Los Angeles' wider environmental and growth objectives.

LAGUARDIA AIRPORT

Arup also worked with Delta Air Lines to provide a new future ready consolidated Terminal C and D facility at New York's LaGuardia Airport. The design introduced a fully integrated technology infrastructure aimed at improving passenger experience, operational performance, and energy efficiency.

A centralised digital platform allows Delta to monitor and manage terminal systems, from lighting and Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) to ramp operations. This approach supports more efficient use of energy and resources, smart HVAC scheduling alone has the potential to reduce ramp service energy demand by up to 87%.

Passengers benefit from digital wayfinding, QR accessible information displays, and systems that adjust to occupancy levels in real time.

The scalable technology backbone supports future upgrades, making the terminal more resilient and adaptable to evolving operational and environmental demands.

Arup has contributed to these projects alongside experienced industry experts, gaining valuable insight through each collaboration. At a time when the aviation sector faces global skill shortages, having trusted and strategic partners is critical to delivering successful outcomes. We look forward to continuing our work with existing clients and building long-term relationships with new ones. ■

Arup is an AirportsUK Gold Member.

ARUP





PETER CAMPBELL, HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & MEDIA
CHRISTOPHER SNELLING, AIRPORTSUK POLICY DIRECTOR

COLLABORATION ACROSS AIRPORTSUK WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER, SMARTER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In an industry defined by precision, innovation, and safety, collaboration has never been more important. Across the UK, airports are coming together under AirportsUK to share knowledge, shape regulation, and embrace emerging technologies all while building a safer, smarter, and more sustainable future for aviation.

Airports across the United Kingdom are united by a shared goal: to operate safely, efficiently, and sustainably in an ever-changing world.

Through AirportsUK, a range of specialist working groups bring together professionals from diverse disciplines to collaborate, share expertise, and collectively address the technical, operational, and strategic challenges shaping modern aviation.

These groups don't just represent airports, they connect an entire network of stakeholders, from government departments and trade associations to small and medium enterprises and European counterparts. Together, they discuss evolving policies, regulatory changes, and the innovations driving the next chapter of aviation.

Regular meetings held in person, virtually, and through on-site airport visits form the backbone of this collaboration. These gatherings allow AirportsUK members to exchange technical knowledge, consult on regulatory developments, and explore emerging technologies that strengthen safety and operational resilience. AirportsUK also facilitates ad hoc meetings whenever the industry faces new or urgent issues. These might include discussions around emerging risks such as lithium batteries or new standards, or regulatory changes like the introduction of Obstacle Limitation Surfaces and Ground Handling Regulations where early engagement ensures that new rules are effective without creating unnecessary burdens.

What makes this network especially valuable is the way it encourages cross-collaboration between supplier businesses and experts from different airport departments, from operations and safety to planning, engineering, and sustainability. This multidisciplinary approach helps break down silos, allowing airports



Peter Campbell



Christopher Snelling

What makes this network especially valuable is the way it encourages cross-collaboration between supplier businesses and experts from different airport departments, from operations and safety to planning, engineering, and sustainability.

to share lessons learned, exchange technical expertise, and develop innovative, practical solutions that can be applied across the sector.

One of the most vital areas of this collaboration focuses on aerodrome safeguarding, ensuring that developments around airports do not compromise safety. Airport specialists work closely with local authorities and developers to review factors such as building heights, landscaping, wildlife management, lighting, and potential interference with navigation systems. By doing so, they help maintain the safe and unobstructed environment essential for aircraft operations.

Aerodrome Safety and compliance remain equally central to the work of AirportsUK. Operations leaders and safety professionals meet regularly to exchange best practice, discuss runway safety

and operational procedures, and prepare for seasonal challenges. These discussions help identify emerging risks and develop effective mitigation measures while promoting a shared safety culture across all UK airports.

In the area of airspace and traffic management, experts collaborate to navigate regulatory change and support the ongoing modernisation of the UK's airspace. This includes active engagement with the proposals for a UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) and the wider airspace modernisation programme, both of which aim to create a more efficient, flexible, and sustainable airspace system.

A dedicated sub-working group on drones in daily airport operations plays an increasingly important role in this work. Comprising specialists from airspace, safety, compliance,

and safeguarding teams, the group explores how drones can be safely and effectively integrated into routine airport activities – from inspecting approach lights and surveying infrastructure to documenting construction projects. As the use of drones grows, the group also focuses on managing the rising number of drone permit applications from both internal and external stakeholders and developing consistent guidelines for operations within airport perimeters. This ensures that drone technology enhances airport efficiency without compromising safety or regulatory compliance.

Beyond drones, wider discussions in the airspace and traffic management group focus on the safe integration of future flight technologies, including advanced air mobility systems that will reshape how airspace is used. Members also address one of the sector's most pressing challenges – the shortage of qualified air traffic controllers. By sharing best practice, exploring new training models, and promoting workforce resilience, the group works to ensure that the UK's air traffic management system remains robust and capable of meeting future demand.

Health and safety remain a shared industry priority. Airport representatives and specialist stakeholders meet regularly to discuss workplace risks, share lessons learned from incidents, and benchmark safety performance. These meetings foster a culture of transparency and improvement, helping to raise standards across the sector. The group also organises visits to airports where members can see innovative safety practices in action. Within this network, a dedicated focus on fire safety brings together experts to collaborate on topics such as fire risk management, evacuation procedures, and the handling of emerging technologies.

Rescue and Fire Fighting professionals also play a vital role in maintaining airport resilience. Fire service leaders from across the country come together to share experiences, review new regulations, and explore innovative approaches to emergency response. Their collaboration with government bodies and industry partners helps the sector stay informed about developments such as alternative fuels, vehicle technology, and environmental considerations, all

crucial factors in shaping modern fire and rescue operations.

In the field of security, collaboration is equally essential. Airport security managers meet to discuss evolving threats, operational challenges, and the technologies being developed to address them. These discussions, supported by regular updates from government and regulatory partners, ensure that airports remain well prepared to respond to changing risks. The network also serves as a forum for sharing insights

Together, these collaborative networks form the backbone of AirportsUK's work. By pooling expertise, sharing knowledge, and working collectively on shared challenges, they ensure that the UK's aviation sector continues to evolve – safely, sustainably and successfully.



and aligning practices across the airport community.

Sustainability lies at the heart of the industry's long-term vision. Environmental and sustainability professionals from across UK airports work together to tackle issues such as climate change, waste management, noise reduction, and adaptation. By sharing data, ideas, and solutions, members support each other in delivering their airports' sustainability commitments while contributing to national and global environmental goals.

Airport planning specialists also collaborate closely to share expertise on land use, access, and infrastructure development. These discussions help ensure that airport growth aligns with sustainability priorities and long-term strategic needs, balancing operational

efficiency with environmental responsibility.

To guide the wider engagement of AirportsUK, the Public Affairs and Communications Network (PACN) brings together representatives from member airports to consider the organisation's engagement priorities and how best to influence government on key public policy issues. PACN helps shape collective positions on topics such as regulation, taxation, sustainability, and aviation policy, ensuring that the airport industry's voice is clearly represented in national discussions.

Supporting all this work is a network of communication professionals who help coordinate the sector's engagement with policymakers, media and the public. By aligning messaging and sharing best practice, they help strengthen public

understanding of aviation's role in the UK economy and ensure that airports communicate with a united, informed voice.

Together, these collaborative networks form the backbone of AirportsUK's work. By pooling expertise, sharing knowledge, and working collectively on shared challenges, they ensure that the UK's aviation sector continues to evolve – safely, sustainably and successfully. Through open dialogue, innovation, and a shared commitment to excellence, AirportsUK and its members are building a stronger and more connected future for aviation.

This spirit of knowledge sharing and continuous improvement sits at the heart of AirportsUK's mission: to build a safer, smarter, and more sustainable future for aviation. ■



EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT

EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT WELCOMES SEVEN NEW CARGO AIRLINES AND BOOSTS FREIGHT VOLUMES BY NEARLY 12%





Seven new cargo airlines have begun flights from East Midlands Airport since it announced ambitious plans this summer for an estimated 54% growth in cargo operations over the next two decades.

The new carriers are Atlas Air, Central Airlines, Ethiopian Cargo, Etihad Cargo, Hong Kong Air Cargo, Saudia Cargo and SF Express. Ground handling firm, Swissport, and logistics giant, FedEx, have both moved into larger premises at the airport to meet rising demand. Cargo volumes between May and October this year reached almost 240,000 tonnes, close to 25,000 tonnes more than during the same six-month period last year.

The airport's new Commercial Director, Adam Andrews, appointed in September, said "This isn't just growth – it's transformation. This incredible momentum highlights the airport's growing global reputation and strategic importance in international logistics. Every new airline means more trade, more jobs, and more opportunity for the Midlands and beyond".

Steve Griffiths, East Midlands Airport's Managing Director, told The Airport Operator "We have the only Airport Master Plan in the UK that is specifically geared towards growing cargo. We needed to be big, and we needed to be bold. There is capacity to grow within the infrastructure we have at the moment, but also, we launched four development sites close to the runway which offer new opportunities for cargo operators to base themselves at East Midlands and which could support more than 21,000 jobs and boost the economy by almost £4bn".

"Two of those sites are also designated as part of the Freeport and that brings capital allowances for investment and brings both business rates and HMRC tax benefits for any partner that develops and operates on those sites. The airport is very much seen as an engine for growth. Both the Freeport and the airport are part of the regional growth strategy of East Midlands Mayor, Claire Ward, so that adds additional weight to



Adam Andrews

interest and inward investment and opening the doors for that".

He said "we have capacity during the day to grow and we also have some capacity in the night-time, although a lot of our peak is taken up by DHL, UPS and FedEx with

"This isn't just growth – it's transformation. This incredible momentum highlights the airport's growing global reputation and strategic importance in international logistics. Every new airline means more trade, more jobs, and more opportunity for the Midlands and beyond."

time-critical express freight, both high value goods and e-commerce goods. We connect over 185 countries through one stop at East Midlands. From runway to parking up on stand you are two or three minutes, and you are offloaded and on the road in less than two hours.

Hong Kong Air Cargo



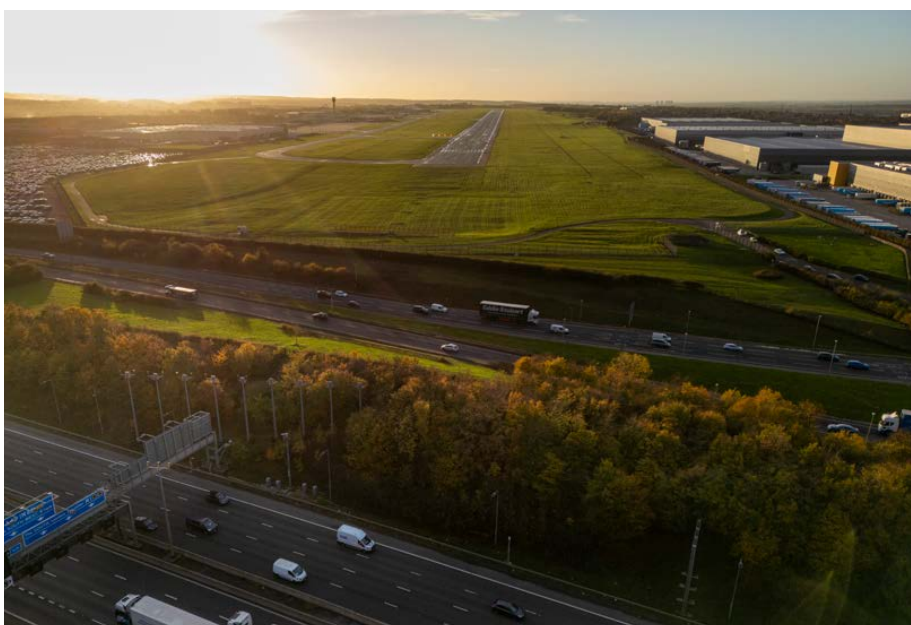
We are the number one airport for freighter only operations”.

Griffiths emphasised that “we have 24/7 operations at East Midlands. At night the airport comes alive for all the international cargo. We are not regulated by the Department for Transport on time restrictions and night-time operations, but we control the operations through our five-year noise action plan. One of the things that we did in the last version (in 2024) was to ban four-engine 747s at night, which are generally the noisiest aircraft, and therefore what we see operating at night are the quieter aircraft”.

On the passenger side, Griffiths anticipates that passenger numbers this year and next will be around 4.1m, comparable to last year, though next year there will be new routes. Jet2 has announced seven new routes for summer 2026, including Morocco, Croatia and Greece. TUI has announced that they will serve Sharm El Sheikh next



Etihad Cargo



M1 & Runway



summer, while Sun Express will fly to Antalya in Turkey. Griffiths said, “We do see an opportunity to continue growth in routes, particularly with Jet2, TUI and Ryanair. Over the next five years we are looking to grow to 5m passengers by having more based aircraft, but we also see a connection to a major European hub”.

Asked whether more based aircraft would be from existing or new carriers, he replied “Potentially both. We have long term contracts with Jet2, TUI and Ryanair and they have growth commitments in them, but we see opportunity with

some other UK airlines as well”. On which hub airport tops his list, he said “Amsterdam is top of our list to connect through Schiphol and we see great opportunity with KLM, but also it wouldn't stop us having discussions with Lufthansa or Air France. It is one of those things where there is a build over time. The key thing for us is using data and analytics to convince the fleet planners of the opportunity, and that it is additive to what they do in the UK at the moment, rather than diluting. We are going through discussions, and we are now getting the meetings that we need in order to show the opportunity”. ■

COMET

INSIDE COMET: A CONVERSATION WITH COO, STEVE HOLMES, ON WHY FINDING THE ROOT CAUSE IS KEY FOR AVIATION SAFETY

Airports operate in one of the most complex environments imaginable. Every process, from baggage handling to ground operations, relies on people, systems, and equipment working in harmony. Yet, when something goes wrong, identifying the true reason behind it can make all the difference between prevention and recurrence.

We spoke with Steve Holmes, Chief Operating Officer at COMET, to explore how structured root cause analysis helps airports improve safety, reliability, and performance across their operations.

HOW IMPORTANT IS FINDING THE REAL ROOT CAUSE WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG IN AN AIRPORT ENVIRONMENT?

It is absolutely critical. In aviation and airport operations, there is always pressure to fix problems fast and get things running again. But if you focus only on quick fixes, you risk treating symptoms rather than causes. Without understanding why something happened, you leave the door open for it to happen again.

COMET HAS ITS ORIGINS IN AEROSPACE. HOW DID THE PLATFORM COME TO LIFE, AND WHAT PROBLEMS WAS IT DESIGNED TO SOLVE?

COMET actually started at a precision manufacturing company in Seattle that supplied parts to the aerospace industry. They were dealing with repeated non-conformances and could not find a system that helped them understand why the same issues kept coming back.

Our team saw an opportunity to create something better. We wanted a structured, scalable way to understand performance and underperformance across operations. COMET was built to connect the dots between individual

incidents, so organisations could see the full picture and act before issues escalated. That foundation still defines COMET today. We have refined it into a modular software suite that combines investigation structure, human factors analysis, and cumulative data intelligence.

WHAT MAKES COMET ESPECIALLY RELEVANT TO AIRPORTS AND AVIATION SAFETY?

Airports are a perfect example of complex systems. You have multiple contractors, operators, airlines, and service providers working side by side, often with different reporting tools and standards. COMET brings consistency to that mix.

It allows all events, from minor slips and near misses, to major

operational disruptions, to be captured, analysed, and compared in one structured framework. The result is a reliable picture of where risks are forming, what patterns are emerging, and where preventive attention should go next.

Root causes do not change by industry. Whether it is an oil platform, a rail depot, or an airport apron, the same underlying factors often drive failure. COMET helps organisations address those systematically, so learning can spread across departments and partner networks.

HOW DOES COMET'S APPROACH DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS TOOLS OR COMMON METHODS LIKE 5 WHYS?

This is a field where earlier generation tools, including 5-whys, have generally been adopted to try to prevent repeat failures, all usually on a case-by-case basis. Being frank, they all have limitations, and this has allowed COMET to flourish.

COMET offers a new standard, with technology and learning from cumulative data at its heart. Whilst numbers and standalone outcomes have some value, illuminating the systemic detail that brings the real contributors to organisation-wide failure offers much more. All of this is presented by next generation dashboards designed by investigation domain experts and populating actionable data from day 1. We call this moving 'from counting to colour'. Data is only data when you can use it to inform better decisions. COMET makes that easy. Actionable intelligence should be a given in today's tech-smart environments.

Tools include human factors analysis (which aids the all-important just and fair culture), AI-assisted on-demand help, and in-built guidance on creating the right preventive actions. Common pitfalls are all addressed and there is no double handling or duplication of data as



Steve Holmes

Aviation has always led the way in safety culture. What is changing now is the technology that supports it. The future is about proactive insight, not just reactive compliance. By combining human expertise with intelligent data, airports can identify risks before they turn into incidents.

reports are automated from the COMET platform.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF SAFETY IMPROVEMENT HEADING FOR AIRPORTS AND AVIATION MORE BROADLY?

Aviation has always led the way in safety culture. What is changing now is the technology that supports it. The future is about proactive insight, not just reactive compliance.

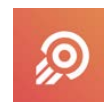
By combining human expertise with intelligent data, airports can identify

risks before they turn into incidents. Small, incremental improvements add up, and those who invest in understanding their data and processes deeply will continue to lead the industry.

Zero harm may always be an aspiration, but progress comes from using every event as an opportunity to learn. That is what COMET is built for. ■

Steve Holmes is COMET's Chief Operating Officer, bringing over 17 years of senior health and safety experience across oil and gas, rail, utilities, and waste. He plays a key role in developing and scaling COMET's software and service lines. With a background in environment, health and safety, and risk management, Steve helps shape COMET's approach to tackling safety challenges and improving operational performance for clients in high-risk industries.

COMET is an AirportsUK Associate Member.



AIRPORTSUK HEALTH & SAFETY WORKING GROUP

NATS HEAD OF SAFETY CULTURE EXCHANGES VIEWS WITH AIRPORT SAFETY LEADERS MEETING AT BRISTOL AIRPORT

Safety culture can be described as “the way we do things around here, even when nobody is looking” – one of the insights that Jo Jepson, NATS Head of Safety Culture, shared with members of AirportsUK’s Health and Safety Working Group during a recent meeting at Bristol Airport.

She led a three-hour safety culture training workshop talking to airport safety leaders about how they can best help their airports to move beyond talking about safety as a top priority to actually embedding a safety culture into the daily routines of all those who work at an airport.

The NATS safety culture head stressed the importance of leadership from airport CEOs and their executive teams to support a culture where all airport employees feel responsible for safety and one where employees feel safe in raising



Jo Jepson



Sarah Kerr

concerns and confident that they will be heard. Addressing airport safety specialists about their own roles, she emphasised the importance of talking about safety using simple and relatable language and doing so on a consistent and regular basis. "It is not about attending a course every couple of years" she said. "It is making the message simple, relatable, consistent and regular – that regular drumbeat".

"It is easy for airports to say that 'we all have safety as our number one priority because we work in a safety-critical industry' but much harder to create and maintain a safety culture where all those who work at an airport, from cleaners to check-in staff, understand that we are all safety leaders and we should all care".

"I think everybody has a responsibility to raise issues and talk about things they see or concerns they have. Now that is not always easy and that is why it is important from a leadership point of view to create a psychologically safe environment where they are encouraging people to speak up without fear of the consequences and where they are listened to and responded to as well".

In that context she also focussed on the key role of communications. "People raise things. Something may or may not happen for whatever reason, but nobody really finds out and that is part of why people give up speaking about safety. We should all have a personal commitment to making sure that we are being supportive, communicating and reporting back. All those things are key to what we do".

The safety culture workshop concluded with a discussion led by Graeme Gamble, now Chief Operating Officer at Bristol Airport, but formerly himself at NATS, where he was responsible for air traffic control services at seven



Dave Lees



Health and Safety Working Group

"It is easy for airports to say that 'we all have safety as our number one priority because we work in a safety-critical industry' but much harder to create and maintain a safety culture where all those who work at an airport, from cleaners to check-in staff, understand that we are all safety leaders and we should all care".

UK airports. He talked about the importance of safety culture to him and encouraged questions and discussion on "what is working well and what can we improve or do better?"

The 12 November meeting was co-ordinated by AirportsUK's Head of Regulation and Compliance, Adele Gammarano, and Bristol Airport's Head of Health and Safety, Sarah Kerr. She joined Bristol Airport eight

months ago, bringing 14 years of experience to her new aviation role. Reflecting on her time so far, she said "I'm loving it. Being part of the airport is exciting, especially at a time of growth and change. Bristol is evolving as passenger numbers increase, and I've been focused on embedding a strong safety culture to support the growth. The support that safety and wellbeing receive from our CEO is fantastic".

The day began with a welcome from Bristol Airport CEO, Dave Lees, setting the tone for a day focused on transformation and safety. Kerr said the agenda was designed to give attendees a clear view of the changes underway at the airport. "Bristol is in the midst of a significant transformation programme" she said. "We wanted to showcase the improvements already delivered and, more importantly, highlight what's about to begin. Live construction will soon take place alongside passengers, and it's vital that we manage their safety while maintaining a positive customer experience".

That part of the agenda was jointly led by Carly Willis, the airport's Senior Development Project Manager, and Victoria MacRae, Health and Safety Business Partner. MacRae outlined how the safety team had supported the £400m transformation programme from a safety point of view. Then committee members were taken to the airport's new £60m public transport interchange, where Scott Deacon-Church, Head of Terminal Operations, and Kriss Nash, Health and Safety Business Partner, talked about the challenges around that; Kerr said "The fact that they collaborated and integrated safety really early on in the project was one of the key successes".

Reflecting on the meeting, Gammarano said, "The workshop led by NATS was exceptionally insightful and Bristol Airport



NATS Safety Culture presentation



Visiting the transport interchange

did impressive work in securing strong senior engagement and creating a dynamic environment for open discussion. The depth of engagement and the quality of dialogue reflected challenges we all face across the sector: doing more with less under commercial and financial pressures, while maintaining the highest standards of safety and resilience".

"As a trade association, we see our role as bringing airports together to share knowledge, strengthen

collaboration, and embed best practice across the network. The conversations on leadership, communication and psychological safety offered valuable parallels for all our organisations, underlining the importance of having the right culture and frameworks in place to prevent incidents before they occur. This kind of collective learning is exactly what helps the entire airport community to continue to improve and evolve". ■

UKAIRPORTS HEALTH & SAFETY AWARDS

CORNWALL AIRPORT NEWQUAY, BELFAST CITY AIRPORT AND MANCHESTER AIRPORT WIN 2025 HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARDS

The three winning airports were judged to have taken “the most innovative, effective and meaningful initiatives” during this year’s UK Airports Health and Safety Week.

Awarding the prizes at an October ceremony held at the AirportsUK offices in Westminster, AirportsUK’s chair, Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, said “these awards demonstrate all the activities airports take part in and are part of a bigger story that shows the passion and pride that comes with ensuring they are as safe and healthy as possible. It shows that we are a sector that knows that safety is a value that runs through every shift, every role, every airport, and lives that notion every day”.

She added that “the culture all airports have built is one where wellbeing matters as much as efficiency, where vigilance is part of the daily routine, and where colleagues look out for one another like family. We are delighted to be able to continue to recognise the brilliant work of all our airports and

to work with them and our partners to showcase their efforts”.

The awards were held with the support of the UK Civil Aviation Authority, the Health and Safety Executive and the sponsor of the 2025 Health and Safety Week, AIRDAT, the airport systems, training and consultancy services provider.

In the small airport category, Cornwall Airport Newquay was praised by the judges for “putting on an ambitious programme of 39 sessions with over 200 bookings across three core themes”. Events included kit checks, wellbeing training and problem-solving activities, such as a safety escape room and shoreline Foreign Object Debris walk.

The airport’s Managing Director, Amy Smith, said “I’m so proud of our team for defending this title. Delivering 39 sessions with 208



Lynne Cleworth



Andrew Boomer



Fiona McCurdy

bookings, all in-house, shows what can be achieved when safety is part of your culture, not just a checklist. Cornwall Airport Newquay may be small, but we're leading the way".

Operations Director, Andrew Boomer, said "Winning this award two years running is a real testament to our people. From ground movements to wellbeing, the creativity and ownership shown by #TeamNQY prove that safety isn't a side task; it's the way we work, every day".

Boomer said the airport had looked at "inventive ways" of addressing the week's key topics, including, on mental wellbeing, a well-attended space yoga session at Spaceport Cornwall, and an escape room based on an aviation safety theme. Describing that as "a standout moment", he said the room had been created by one of the airport's despatchers and "it brought teams from all different disciplines within the airport to problem-solve and work things out together. It underlined what a good team it is – whether it is security, air traffic control, airfield engineering, fire – everybody participated".

Highlands and Islands Airports were highly commended in this category.

In the medium airport category, the judges noted that Belfast City Airport had "delivered 27 events in collaboration with 17 organisations". Each day had been structured around a key theme: health, safety and emergency planning; aviation safety; airport security; supporting passengers with reduced mobility; and staff and passenger wellbeing.

Fiona McCurdy, Safety and Compliance Manager at Belfast City Airport for the last 13 years, said "the entire team at Belfast City is absolutely delighted with this win again. It's a fantastic recognition of the dedication, planning and hard work that goes on behind the scenes to get the event up



Belfast City Airport winning award

"These awards demonstrate all the activities airports take part in and are part of a bigger story that shows the passion and pride that comes with ensuring they are as safe and healthy as possible. It shows that we are a sector that knows that safety is a value that runs through every shift, every role, every airport, and lives that notion every day"

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith

and running and a true testament to the commitment and passion of everyone who works here. We couldn't be prouder; it's a powerful encouragement for all the effort invested by everyone".

"This year we had 27 events in partnership with 17 organisations, the product of a shared vision for excellence, with individuals going above and beyond throughout the week. Structuring it in the way that we did, with days set aside for specific aspects of safety, really worked well for us because it gave people the opportunity to champion those days and take the lead".

Describing herself as "an organiser, not a talker", she said she

was grateful to her colleagues each playing to their strengths, communicating about health and safety and getting others involved. "Health and Safety Week gives us the opportunity to step back from our daily routines, connect with colleagues, and gain fresh perspectives" she said. "Together we showcased Belfast City Airport's commitment to health, safety, security, wellbeing and community engagement. It was a true team effort".

London City Airport was highly commended in this category.

In the large airport category, the judges praised Manchester Airport for being "an outstanding

example of leadership, innovation and engagement". The airport had combined training, interactive pop-up events and wellbeing initiatives. Its programme had raised awareness of hazards, reduced risks, and strengthened the safety culture across every department.

Lynne Cleworth, Head of Health, Safety and Fire Safety at the airport since February, said that Manchester Airport had marked the week "with a dynamic video showcasing the wide array of initiatives rolled out across the site". Highlights included the distribution of 'Safe Hands' branded merchandise, immersive Virtual Reality experiences focused on fire safety and working at height, mock aircraft turnarounds, chemical eye wash and rescue demonstrations, and a dedicated 'Wellbeing Wednesday' aimed at supporting mental health and stress reduction.

The week also saw the launch of a new campaign encouraging staff to proactively identify and report hazards. The video featured a message from the airport's Managing Director, Chris Woodroffe, who urged all 3,000 employees to lead by example and stop to think: 'how do I make Manchester Airport safer'?

Cleworth described the week as "a fantastic opportunity to bring our safety vision to life, raise the

profile of safety, collaborate with key stakeholders, and secure widespread engagement. It marked the beginning of many new initiatives that reflect strong leadership commitment and have been well received. Winning the award was a proud moment that brought national recognition. It's a clear signal that Manchester takes safety seriously".

The week's activities had "boosted awareness, encouraged safe behaviours, and helped nurture a culture of care throughout the airport. The results were tangible: a drop in slip, trip and fall incidents, record days without reportable passenger incidents or employee lost time injuries, and a noticeable

increase in safety ownership across departments".

She added that "building on this momentum, Manchester Airport introduced the MAG Safety Code in August. With six core principles, four 'always' and two 'never' statements, the code is clear, practical and inclusive of all roles. It represents a significant step forward in embedding a unified safety culture, now being adopted across MAG airports".

Birmingham Airport and Edinburgh Airport were highly commended in this category.

Planning has now begun for the next UK Airports Health and Safety Week, which will take place from 11 to 15 May 2026. ■

Cornwall Airport Newquay winning award



Manchester Airport winning award



Rachel Reeves

PETER CAMPBELL

AIRPORTSUK BUDGET SUBMISSION CALLS FOR COMPETITIVE APPROACH

AirportsUK Head of Public Affairs and Media, Peter Campbell, summarises the approach to the Budget

Ahead of this year's Budget, AirportsUK drafted a submission calling on the Chancellor to back her rhetoric in support of aviation with action to reduce the fiscal burden on airports through a number of measures. By the time of publication, it will be clear what decisions she has taken, and no doubt analysis of the impacts of these will continue, but here it is worth recapping what AirportsUK called for.

Competitiveness was the golden thread running through our submission, with a focus on calling for a fiscal environment that delivers a supportive tax environment to underpin aviation and ensure air travel remains affordable. Aviation is already responsible for creating almost a million jobs, contributes £1bn per week to UK gross value added (GVA), and supports almost £100bn in UK GVA through air freight.

These benefits are spread over multiple sectors, with the largest elements being transport equipment, pharmaceuticals, machinery and equipment and "other manufacturing". At a regional level, we see just how important air connectivity is, for example, in the North East, where £5.3 billion GVA is currently dependent on air freight, representing 8.4% of the whole economy of the region, 7.1% in Wales, 6.5% in the West Midlands, 6.4% in the East Midlands, 6.3% in the North West and 5.5% in the South West.

So, if the government is to be true to its word and it wants to see aviation drive economic growth, airports need to be supported to do more of the same, and not be subject to fiscal uncertainty, tax grabs and uncompetitive policies. Without this, we said, airports would be less able to commit the funds to investments that will drive expansion, growth, route development, connectivity and consumer choice.

As a start, we urged ministers to act on business rates, which were



Peter Campbell

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set to increase four-fold from 2026 following the latest revaluation, but would prove catastrophic if implemented. We said there was also a need for a long-term review into how the process and methodology of revaluation applied to airports, as much of the existing process is based on spurious assumptions and subjective application that misunderstand airports' business models.

More widely, we also called on the government to institute an Air

Passenger Duty holiday for new and expanded routes to help UK airports be more competitive in comparison to their global counterparts. And to ensure regional connectivity between the constituent parts of the UK, we were keen to see the government make more use of Public Service Obligations in support of regional economic development.

On retail matters, our submission recommended that the government enable airports to establish arrivals duty-free outlets to support the visitor economy and provide airports with further revenue options that will drive economic growth. Additionally, amendments to the terms of the Windsor Framework should be sought that would ensure airports in Northern Ireland can sell goods duty-free. Finally, we called on the Treasury to re-examine the case for reintroducing VAT-free shopping for international visitors.

The work did not end with the submission, however, as we sought to get these messages out to sympathetic MPs and Whitehall officials, giving them material in support of their own agendas. We encouraged them to get in contact with Treasury ministers and officials in support of our measures which will cost little to no money, provide more tax revenues, and increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the UK.

If government chooses to support UK aviation in this way as it seeks to compete for investment, economic growth and productivity, the UK will thrive. Connectivity that links our people and businesses with global markets and investors will help power the country, drive up demand and draw in prosperity for communities throughout the UK. An attractive tax and regulatory framework that supports aviation growth can spread the economic and social benefits of improved connectivity via an airport to a wider area and to all parts of the UK. ■

KIRKWALL AIRPORT

KIRKWALL AIRPORT AN AIRPORT IN AN ANCIENT LANDSCAPE WITH A VERY MODERN OUTLOOK

Kirkwall Airport serves the Orkney islands, which is an archipelago to the north of mainland Scotland. Kirkwall itself is the most populous island settlement in Scotland, and its name comes from the Norse name Kirkjuvagr, meaning 'church bay'. The strong links to Norse heritage are marked on the current airport terminal building, where runic symbols spell the word 'Krimsitir' or 'Grimsetter', which is the name of the bay close to the airfield.



The airfield at Kirkwall was originally built on farmland and commissioned as RAF Grimsetter in 1940. It formed part of defences for the Scapa Flow naval base, which was best known as a base for the Royal Navy during both the First and Second World Wars.

Ownership passed to the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in July 1943 when it became Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Grimsetter. In August that year it was commissioned as HMS Robin, as a satellite to nearby RNAS Hatston (HMS Sparrowhawk). In 1948 the Ministry of Civil Aviation took control with ownership passing to Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL) in 1986.

"Kirkwall Airport plays a vital role for the local community, supporting access to the mainland for medical appointments, visiting friends and family and for business" says Jamie Conley, Airport Manager for Kirkwall. Having joined the Airport Fire Service at HIAL in 2014 at Dundee Airport, he has progressed through the ranks as Airport Fire & Operations Manager at Sumburgh and then to his current role, which he took up in November 2024. At present, he is also acting as Interim Airport Manager of Wick John O'Groats using the experience he has gained through his eleven-year career with the organisation.

Loganair operates scheduled flights to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness as well as inter-island flights to the neighbouring islands of Eday, North Ronaldsay, Sanday and Stronsay along with the world's shortest scheduled passenger flight between Westray and Papa Westray, north of Kirkwall. The flight covers 1.7 miles and is scheduled to take one and a half minutes.

Flights connecting Sumburgh on Shetland to London Heathrow via Kirkwall and Dundee connect the islands to world-wide destinations. Passenger flights for 2024-25 were just under 138,000 and in the current



Mags MacRae - Fire & Operations Manager, Kirkwall Airport



Jamie Conley

"Kirkwall Airport is a key base for the oil and gas industry, providing a vital refuelling point for aircraft transporting crews to offshore rigs. The airport also supports the Scottish Ambulance Service's air ambulance operations and HM Coastguard's Search and Rescue Activities".

year passenger figures are showing strong growth.

Conley said "Kirkwall Airport is a key base for the oil and gas industry, providing a vital refuelling point for aircraft transporting crews to offshore rigs. The airport also supports the Scottish Ambulance Service's air ambulance operations and HM Coastguard's Search and Rescue Activities".

In 2024, a £5m project replaced the aeronautical ground lighting with more energy efficient LED lights on both runways at Kirkwall. Work also included the introduction of a ring of red lighting for Runway 09/27 to help prevent runway incursions. As well as ensuring continued compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority, the project is contributing to a reduction in energy consumption of up to 80%.

Kirkwall Airport has been used as a location as part of the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) including the first hybrid electric flights by Ampaire, crossing the Pentland Firth from Kirkwall Airport to Wick John O'Groats Airport in August 2021. Trials have also included autonomous flights between Kirkwall and North Ronaldsay in collaboration with Royal Mail and Windracers Ltd.

HiAL's aim is to decarbonise its airport operations, and the airport worked with the European Marine Energy Centre who led a trial to introduce hydrogen to meet the power and heat demands of the airport.

The system was the first 100% hydrogen combined heat and power unit of its kind to be installed in the UK. It was positioned airside at Kirkwall Airport and subsequently coupled with the airport's existing heating system to supply heat to the main terminal building and power across the entire site. The completion of this trial marks a step towards assessing the real-

world feasibility of integrating hydrogen technologies with airport infrastructure. The insights gained will contribute to wider efforts to explore low-carbon solutions across aviation and other sectors.

Kirkwall Airport also played a key role in the Orkney 2025 International Island Games (www.orkney2025.com) this summer, with over 1,500 passengers travelling through the airport during the weekend at the end of the sporting event in

July. The games brought together athletes from 24 island groups from across the world to compete in 12 different sports including swimming, squash, triathlon and sailing. Conley praised his airport colleagues saying "The games were a fantastic example of the team really pulling together to make sure that the competitors, coaches, supporters and volunteers could get to and from the island. We were proud to play our role in making the event such a success". ■



In 2024, a £5m project replaced the aeronautical ground lighting with more energy efficient LED lights on both runways at Kirkwall. Work also included the introduction of a ring of red lighting for Runway 09/27 to help prevent runway incursions. As well as ensuring continued compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority, the project is contributing to a reduction in energy consumption of up to 80%.

CHRISTOPHER SNELLING

AIRPORTSUK TO FOCUS ON THE PROMPT DELIVERY OF AIRSPACE CHANGE

By Christopher Snelling, AirportsUK Policy Director

Government efforts to improve the delivery of major airspace change are progressing, principally by delivering the new Airspace Design Service (UKADS) to assume responsibility for London airspace design and facilitate funding for projects across the UK.

A significant milestone was reached on 13 November when the guidance for the funding scheme under UKADS was issued. This marked the date at which relevant spending would become eligible for UKADS funding. Whilst the final set up, and so the actual flow of funds, will take a little longer, expenses from this point should be reclaimable in due course.

This should help support the work around the country to move over the next few years to finalise and then deploy upgrades and is good news. The Scottish cluster progressed to the consultation phase in October. Ensuring that the CAA provides a supportive environment for the clusters in Scotland, the north, and west of England to move to deployment as swiftly as possible will be a continuing focus of AirportsUK work in this area.

Further work has also progressed on the actual design service side of UKADS work, much of which is focused on London. On this front, in November Government issued multiple documents setting out changes to the NATS (En Route) (NERL) licence, strategic objectives and guidance for how UKADS will work as an organisation (e.g. the function of the advisory board) and the revised role of what was the Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG) – now the UK Airspace Coordination Service (ACS). Some of these publications are for consultation and AirportsUK will work with members to respond.

Still awaited, but imminent at the time of writing, is the revised Airspace Navigation Guidance for consultation. Government's aim is to have this finalised in time to be enacted before Parliament's summer recess next year.

Revisions to the CAA's guidance for airspace change, CAP1616, have already been issued for consultation to work with the new system, and again AirportsUK will respond.

The Transport Secretary publicly recommitted in November to UKADS

as a service being up and running by the end of this year. AirportsUK's view is that this seems unrealistic, but we see it as a useful statement that should help to ensure that all parts of Government are working as fast as they can.

And that brings out the central issue on which we are now focused. Whilst we will engage with our member experts on all the papers, the broad picture seems to be that both the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority are doing the right things. The need for us as the airport sector is to ensure that pace of delivery is maintained. Government may be moving in the right direction, but political pressure will need to be kept up to ensure that delivery of change does not get stuck in the civil service machine, ministers' in-trays or parliamentary procedure. ■



Christopher Snelling

UK AIRPORT INVESTMENT IN NEW GENERATION CT SCANNERS "AN AMAZING JOB" – AND THERE IS MORE INNOVATION TO COME

ICTS, the airport security specialists, have praised UK airports for their "amazing job" investing in new X-ray scanning equipment – and held out the prospect of further changes ahead to enhance both airport security and the passenger experience.

Speaking to The Airport Operator, Andy Kynoch (ICTS UK MD) and Alan Dutt (ICTS UK Executive Director Operations – Aviation and Corporate Services) shared their insights on ICTS innovations that will support aviation security in the future.

Highlighting how new generation CT scanners are already speeding up passengers' progress through airport security, they revealed that ICTS is about to re-engage with the Department for Transport (DfT) on the company's updated plans to introduce its cutting edge InnerEye technology to UK airports. They also spelled out how highly trained dog teams are already contributing to



Andy Kynoch

airport security and described the role that a bio sensor could play to

enhance fire safety by detecting lithium-ion batteries.

Dutt was keen to spotlight the scale of investment by UK airports in the new generation scanners that allow passengers to leave both liquids and laptops in their cabin baggage. "I think it is a huge investment, both in time and money" he said "and I think it has gone a little bit unnoticed. It is an immense transition, and the airports have done an amazing job. For the manufacturers to supply the number of machines that they have managed to supply to all these different airports throughout the country is an astonishing feat. It is quite an achievement that the

industry has made in the UK and the investment that the airports have put in is great”.

For ICTS the transition has required a huge amount of training for its 3,000 UK airport staff and Dutt said, “we have done it successfully throughout all the airports that we operate at, and they have adapted very quickly”. Kynoch added that “working in partnership with the airports, the change has been superb”.

The introduction of the new generation scanners has also required ICTS to take a fresh look at the InnerEye technology which was originally developed for old-style 2D airport security screening. ICTS has now invested in new generation 3D screening for InnerEye. Dutt said “We needed to do some work of our own to get to 3D, to use a 3D simulator and images within InnerEye, which has been done now. We have made that transition to 3D and now we will start engaging with DfT on InnerEye again, following up on our collaborative process related to 2D”.

Dutt said he still believes that InnerEye has the potential to enhance both the quality and the speed of the security process at UK airports, thanks to its revolutionary technology combining the latest in Artificial Intelligence with the efficacy of human screeners. The technology uses a headset with electrodes to process visual data, enabling rapid real-time threat analysis. InnerEye users can screen up to three images per second, which is five times faster than traditional screening methods. ICTS emphasises that the technology could be integrated into the existing airport environment without changing the current infrastructure.

But it is not all about technology. Kynoch and Dutt were also keen to highlight how ICTS explosive detection dog teams are helping to enhance airport security and



Alan Dutt

“The introduction of the new generation scanners has also required ICTS to take a fresh look at the InnerEye technology which was originally developed for old-style 2D airport security screening. ICTS has now invested in new generation 3D screening for InnerEye.”



InnerEye image

the potential role that a bio sensor could play in the future to detect undisclosed lithium-ion batteries that could cause fires.

The company's latest aviation security initiatives include the introduction of canine security

services for terminal, checkpoint and cargo security screening. This year's AirportsUK Security Conference included a live demonstration of an ICTS explosives detection dog team at work and Dutt said that airport executives could visit the

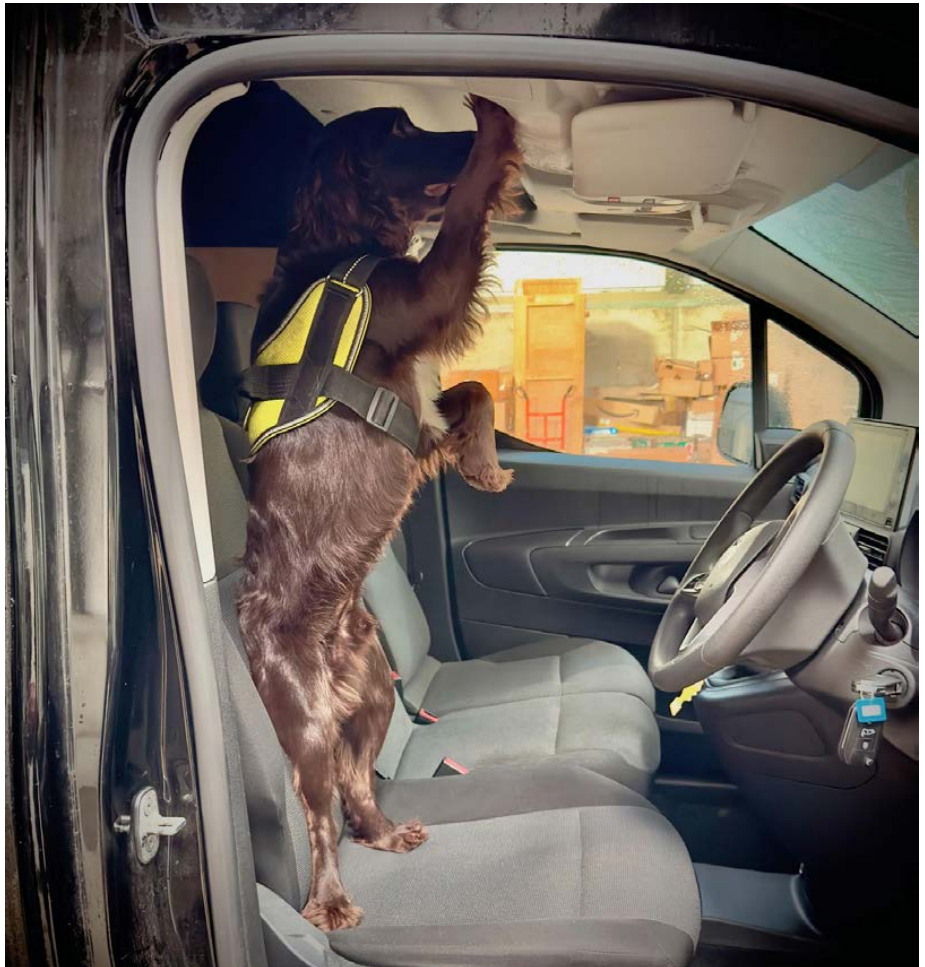
ICTS canine operations and training centre at Farndish on the border of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. "We would welcome anyone to come and visit the kennels to watch the training. It takes six months to fully train the dogs for airport security, and we have invested a lot in our training for them in partnership with the police" he said.

Meanwhile ICTS has also been trialling the deployment of a data driven bio sensor to detect potentially dangerous lithium-ion batteries in cargo. This ICTS solution has been named 'Scentsor'. In October an Air China flight made an emergency landing after a fire broke out mid-air sparked by a lithium-ion battery in a passenger's overhead bag. Fires caused by lithium-ion batteries in the UK have soared by 93% in the last two years.

Kynoch said that ICTS has concluded a trial in Paris training a bio sensor to check for undisclosed lithium-ion batteries in aviation cargo. He said the bio sensor could clear several cargo containers within a few minutes, successfully detecting lithium 98% of the time. Dutt said "There are so many incidents where these batteries are catching fire. We have got a proven solution, Scentsor, where the bio sensor can detect lithium. It is amazing to see. Again, ICTS I think is at the forefront of this innovation to help and support the aviation industry".

ICTS currently provides security services to Aberdeen, Bristol, Edinburgh, Gatwick, Glasgow, Heathrow, Manchester and Southampton airports. Asked why ICTS has been successful in providing security solutions for UK airports for more than three decades, Kynoch emphasised the company's experience and Dutt its partnership approach.

Alan and I have been in the business for 35-plus years" Kynoch said. "I have been with ICTS now for about



Canine security inside vehicle search

"We would welcome anyone to come and visit the kennels to watch the training. It takes six months to fully train the dogs for airport security, and we have invested a lot in our training for them in partnership with the police".

eight years, but prior to that I was Operations Director for Europe for three key US airlines (Northwest Airlines, US Airways and American Airlines). So we have both got a great background in aviation and security which I honestly think can't be matched anywhere else in the UK. We understand the aviation scene very well and the language that is spoken around airports. We have aviation ingrained in our DNA and so we are all on the same page when we come to speak to

airports". In Dutt's words, "We have the experience. We understand the industry and the threats around the world, and we have a true, open, honest and transparent partnership with our airport customers". ■

ICTS UK & IRELAND is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner.



GATWICK AIRPORT

GATWICK BRIEFS AIRPORT FIRE SERVICE LEADERS ON NORTHERN RUNWAY PLANS

London Gatwick Airport's Chief Operating Officer, Mark Johnston, updated UK airport fire service leaders on the airport's performance and progress when Gatwick hosted the latest meeting of AirportsUK's Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (RFFS) Working Group.

Opening the meeting, he outlined Gatwick's current performance and progress on the Development Consent Order decision on its Northern Runway Project. Adele Gammarano, Head of Regulation and Compliance at AirportsUK, said that his remarks "offered valuable insight into the airport's future growth and the associated implications for emergency preparedness".

Simon Petts, Gatwick's Chief Fire Officer, presented updates from the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)'s hydrogen in aviation working group, highlighting ongoing research into hydrogen as a sustainable aviation fuel and its impact on safety management, emergency response and training requirements for airport fire services.

A regulatory update from the CAA provided the latest information on emerging standards and guidance relevant to airport fire and rescue operations. The update emphasised the importance of proactive collaboration between airports and



Mark Johnston

the regulator to address evolving risks and maintain compliance.

Steven Bartlett, Station Manager, Gatwick Airport Fire & Rescue Service, will take over as a co-chair of the RFFS Working Group for 2026, joining Daniel Cartwright (London Luton) and Doug Pickering (Bristol) in leading the group. Gammarano said that his appointment would “further strengthen and enrich the group’s leadership and discussions, bringing valuable perspectives that will benefit colleagues across the UK network”. After the meeting, delegates joined an airside tour led by Petts and Bartlett, visiting Gatwick’s fire station, fire training facilities, and the Pier 6 extension construction site.

Petts said “It was great to be able to host the Working Group at Gatwick. We were extremely proud to be able to show off our airport and talk through some of our recent success stories and future plans. The group always provides an opportunity to discuss the challenges we face, both in the delivery of our fire service operations and in the airport emergency planning field. I’d strongly encourage RFFS leaders to engage”.

Bartlett added “It was a pleasure to host the Working Group and great to facilitate a productive day of collaboration, shared learning, and forward-thinking discussion among the UK’s airport rescue and firefighting service community”.

Gammarano said that the meeting had “once again highlighted the strength of collaboration across the UK’s airport fire and rescue community. Gatwick’s engagement and leadership in hosting this session provided a valuable opportunity to share learning and explore new approaches



RFFS working group meeting at Gatwick



Visiting Gatwick’s fire station



Simon Petts



Steven Bartlett

to safety and resilience. The discussions reflected the collective commitment of our members to continuous improvement – ensuring that, despite commercial and operational pressures, safety remains at the heart of everything we do”. ■

“The meeting had once again highlighted the strength of collaboration across the UK’s airport fire and rescue community. Gatwick’s engagement and leadership in hosting this session provided a valuable opportunity to share learning and explore new approaches to safety and resilience”.

Adele Gammarano

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored jacket and dark skirt, is walking away from the camera through a modern airport terminal. She is pulling a large, light-colored rolling suitcase and carrying a brown shoulder bag. The terminal has a high ceiling with circular lights and a polished floor that reflects the lights. Other people are visible in the background, blurred.

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BELFAST CITY AIRPORT

BELFAST CITY AIRPORT SETS OUT AN AMBITIOUS VISION TO CREATE A "WORLD CLASS ASSET" BY 2040

Belfast City Airport is finalising the details of a potential £200m investment plan to transform its terminal and airfield to be ready for 2040 when aviation analysts predict demand for air travel across the island of Ireland will double to 90m passengers.





Matthew Hall

To meet this demand, all airports in Ireland will have a role to play, and Belfast City Airport is preparing to grow to 7m passengers within this period.

The airport is also working with Northern Ireland's transport operator, Translink, on a feasibility study that could lead to the opening of the island of Ireland's first rail halt with a direct connection to an airport.

Belfast City Airport's Chief Executive, Matthew Hall, told The Airport Operator that, if the airport's investment plan is given the green light, "we will end up with a world class asset which then becomes a fundamental growth driver and enabler for the economy, providing both vital connectivity and a great first impression for visitors".

Hall said "we have taken an all-Ireland view of the connectivity need. Obviously, in Northern Ireland there is no rail or road alternative for travel to Great Britain and beyond, so the dependency on air connectivity is absolutely key. There is a demand for more capacity to be delivered by all airports across Ireland, and we want to continue to play the significant part we play today, but in a market that is going to be that much bigger".

In 2025 Belfast City Airport expects to have around 2.5m passengers, comparable to pre-pandemic levels, with early forecasts for next year suggesting a 10% increase on that. Looking at projections to 2040, the airport expects that its airlines will be carrying up to around 7m passengers to destinations across Great Britain and Europe. Current core destinations from Belfast City are London, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Glasgow, with Great Britain accounting for 95% of total passenger volume at present. It is expected that by 2040

60-65% of Northern Ireland's total air traffic will be to or from Great Britain, compared to 70% today.

Hall said that the airport's Master Plan - currently in draft form - to meet the growth in demand expected across the island of Ireland would support thousands of new jobs and deliver a £1.7bn injection into the Northern Ireland economy annually. The plan would double the airport's workforce to over 2,200 and facilitate the growth of its apprenticeship academy and long-standing community engagement programme, while also accelerating the airport's journey to net zero.

Northern Ireland's First Minister, Michelle O'Neill, said recently "Belfast City Airport is more than just a gateway - it is a major part of our economy. This Master Plan shows great ambition and a really bold vision for the future. I look forward to seeing how this next chapter unfolds and the positive

impact it will have on our people, visitors and generations to come".

A consultation on the airport's draft Master Plan, published in September, included three local community engagement events in October, online feedback forms and in-terminal passenger surveys. This consultation closed in November and a final version of the plan, taking feedback into account, will be published either later this year or early next year.

The draft plan sets out the airport's vision for £200m of private investment in its airfield and terminal. Hall emphasised that the airport sees no need for a runway extension. The key airfield investment will be more aircraft parking stands and the associated apron and taxiways needed to accommodate increased demand. There will also be a significant terminal capacity expansion and upgrade, both landside and airside, and a new multi-modal forecourt

In 2025 Belfast City Airport expects to have around 2.5m passengers, comparable to pre-pandemic levels, with early forecasts for next year suggesting a 10% increase on that. Looking at projections to 2040, the airport expects that its airlines will be carrying up to around 7m passengers to destinations across Great Britain and Europe.



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If the airport's investment plan is given the green light, "we will end up with a world class asset which then becomes a fundamental growth driver and enabler for the economy, providing both vital connectivity and a great first impression for visitors".

prioritising public transport. Anticipating the proposed new rail station, there will be a new covered walkway connecting the station directly to the front of the terminal.

Hall described the current rail offering as "not fit for purpose". The nearest station is over a kilometre

away from the airport, is uncovered and for passengers with reduced mobility there is no easy way to get over the footbridge. In contrast, a new halt could be located much closer, significantly reducing the distance and walking time between the terminal and the rail halt,

allowing passengers to enjoy a seamless journey to Belfast's new Grand Central Station.

"We think it would make for a great proposition and first impression of Northern Ireland" Hall said. "Our vision is not only sensible, but also the right thing to do from an environmental point of view. The rail halt presents a significant opportunity, and we are partnering with Translink on the feasibility study on this whilst working closely with the Northern Ireland Department of Infrastructure. It is an idea that has been welcomed broadly – people like it in terms of what it would do for Northern Ireland PLC, the proposition generally and from a sustainability point of view. It has been very well and enthusiastically received and would be very complementary to the investment we propose".

Physical infrastructure aside, the draft Master Plan also focuses on the political and regulatory approvals that would be required to permit changes that the airport says will be needed to accommodate increased demand. These would include increasing the existing cap on aircraft movements from the current 48,000 movements a year to around 60,000 movements. In



addition, the airport is suggesting a review of operating hours, currently 06.30 to 21.30 and then, for exceptional circumstances, up to 23.59. Hall said, "we are not going to be flying through the night, but we have said that we will need to explore having some greater flexibility schedule-wise post 21.30 and pre-midnight".

On noise, importantly, the draft plan includes a commitment to accommodate all growth within the airport's current noise contour limit. Hall said that it would be possible to continue to operate within current noise controls, despite the expected increase in aircraft movements, because of the transition to next generation aircraft, which are both cleaner and quieter than the aircraft that they replace. Today new generation aircraft represent less than 10% of the airport's fleet mix but that proportion is expected to increase to over 60% by 2040. Also taking into account the

continuing use of quieter turbo-prop aircraft by Aer Lingus Regional, Hall predicted, "our noise footprint will actually reduce over time".

Asked how the airport's community events in South Belfast, East Belfast and North Down had turned out, Hall said "The sentiment and feedback on our draft Master Plan have been very positive. This is across the board – from community engagement events and online feedback forms to in-terminal surveys, to support from the business community. Amongst these audiences there is recognition of the need for Belfast City Airport to cater to future demand, safeguarding connectivity while maintaining our existing noise controls and advancing our net zero ambitions. Our consultation period closed in November, and our attentions are now focused on reviewing and taking all feedback into account before finalising our plans".

"The sentiment and feedback on our draft Master Plan have been very positive. This is across the board – from community engagement events and online feedback forms to in-terminal surveys, to support from the business community."

Hall concluded "Northern Ireland is an island – connectivity is not a given and cannot be taken for granted. At Belfast City Airport we're ready to play our part in ensuring Northern Ireland remains well connected to the UK and beyond, now and into the future". ■

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POWERING THE FUTURE OF AVIATION: WHY RESILIENCE IS THE NEW STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

For three decades, UK Power Networks Services has quietly powered the UK's leading airports – Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted – ensuring that millions of passengers pass through safely and efficiently every year. While the company's work often goes unnoticed by the public, its impact is anything but invisible.

“ We like to be the invisible power behind the airport,” says David Mitchell, Director of UK Power Networks Services. “That means we’re doing our job. People only notice what we do if it stops working.”

With over 500 substations, 600 electrical transformers, and a vast network of high and low voltage cabling across the three airports, the scale of the company's infrastructure is immense. But as Mitchell explains, the real story lies in how resilience has evolved from a technical necessity to a strategic imperative.

RESILIENCE: FROM RELIABILITY TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

In today's fast-paced, electrified economy, uninterrupted access to power is essential—not just for operational continuity, but for safety, reputation and customer



David Mitchell

confidence. Airports operate in high-stakes environments where even brief disruptions can have cascading effects.

“Power resilience is no longer just about keeping the lights on,” Mitchell says. “It’s about enabling

growth, protecting reputation, and ensuring continuity in a changing energy landscape.”

The aviation sector faces unique challenges. From air traffic control systems and runway lighting to baggage handling and terminal operations, every aspect of airport functionality depends on reliable electricity. As Mitchell puts it, “Effectively, power is at the core of just about everything – and is becoming increasingly important as we electrify more systems.”

A CHANGING ENERGY LANDSCAPE

The energy transition is reshaping how airports think about power. As electricity generation becomes more decentralised and reliant on renewables like wind and solar, variability in supply is increasing. This presents new challenges for grid operators and energy users alike.

"Wind and solar are fantastic technologies," Mitchell says, "but they introduce new challenges in balancing supply and demand. Businesses need to be ready for that."

UK Power Networks Services works closely with airport clients to anticipate and manage these changes. "We engage early in the delivery process to ensure our clients' objectives are fully understood and supported," Mitchell explains. "That allows us to offer sound advice from our experienced staff and help them build resilience into their long-term strategies."

TECHNOLOGY AS A RESILIENCE ENABLER

One of the most significant shifts in recent years has been the adoption of advanced technologies to enhance resilience. UK Power Networks Services uses predictive analytics to monitor infrastructure and prevent faults before they occur.

"With computer based systems used to monitor and control processes in real-time, we can identify issues early and respond quickly," Mitchell says. "Automated restoration takes it a step further—detecting faults, isolating them, and restoring service rapidly. That minimises disruption and protects operations."

The company also supports investment in decentralised energy solutions, including battery storage, uninterruptible power supplies, and behind-the-meter generation. These technologies provide critical backup and reduce dependence on the public grid.

"When paired with private wire microgrids and off-site generation, these solutions offer flexibility and continuity during outages," Mitchell explains. "They're essential for maintaining resilience in high-demand environments like airports."



"We engage early in the delivery process to ensure our clients' objectives are fully understood and supported. That allows us to offer sound advice from our experienced staff and help them build resilience into their long-term strategies."

SAFETY AND COLLABORATION AT THE CORE

Resilience isn't just about infrastructure – it's about people and culture. UK Power Networks Services has maintained a strong safety record, with over ten years without a lost time injury. But Mitchell is quick to point out that the company is not complacent.

"Safety is at the heart of our organisation," he says. "We work closely with our clients, sharing lessons learned and best practices. Our drive now is to get to a position where we don't have any medical treatment injuries either."

Collaboration is also key. "The level of coordination has significantly improved over the years," Mitchell notes. "No one part of an airport is an island. We work hand in hand with our clients and with numerous organisations across the airport ecosystem."

This collaborative approach extends to emergency planning and workforce preparedness. "Leadership plays a vital role in embedding proactive risk



management into company culture," Mitchell says. "Well-designed and tested emergency response plans are essential. They define how to deploy teams, prioritise power loads, and communicate effectively during incidents."

LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF AIRPORT RESILIENCE

As airports prepare for the next 30 years, Mitchell sees major changes on the horizon. "We'll see more frictionless travel and fixed zero-carbon targets that will rapidly change airport estates," he predicts. "Smart charging will arrive, and the next challenge will be aircraft fuel. I expect hydrogen to be the preferred source, with smaller aircraft possibly using battery electric."

He also anticipates a shift toward local energy generation. "Airports will look to generate what they can locally to save costs, reduce demand, and improve flexibility. While going completely off-grid may not be feasible, partial self-sufficiency is achievable – and valuable."

UK Power Networks Services is already helping airports embed these principles into their strategies. "We help clients assess risks, design resilient systems, and manage critical infrastructure," Mitchell says. "Our goal is to turn reliability into a competitive advantage."

A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR THE AVIATION SECTOR

Ultimately, resilience is about more

"Smart charging will arrive, and the next challenge will be aircraft fuel. I expect hydrogen to be the preferred source, with smaller aircraft possibly using battery electric. Airports will look to generate what they can locally to save costs, reduce demand, and improve flexibility. While going completely off-grid may not be feasible, partial self-sufficiency is achievable – and valuable."

than surviving disruption – it's about thriving through it. As Mitchell puts it, "The organisations that embrace resilience as a strategic opportunity will be the ones that lead in the future."

With the aviation sector facing increasing pressure to decarbonise, improve efficiency, and enhance passenger experience, power resilience will be central to achieving those goals. UK Power Networks Services stands ready to support that journey—quietly, reliably, and with the invisible power that keeps the UK's airports moving. ■

Let's start a conversation

Contact UK Power Networks Services

Telephone: 0207 397 7845

Email: enquiries@ukpowernetworks.co.uk

Website: ukpowernetworksservices.co.uk

UK Power Networks Services is an AirportsUK Gold Member.





AIRBUS PROTECT

UK AIRPORTS FACE CYBERSECURITY THREATS FROM ACTORS SEEKING TO SABOTAGE CRITICAL NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Leading cybersecurity expert, Airbus Protect, sees a higher cybersecurity risk level for airports.

This assessment reflects an escalated threat matrix driven by the destructive potential of ransomware groups combined with the strategic sabotage efforts of highly organised state-sponsored entities.

Nicolas Audiot, Airbus Protect's Security Operations Centres (SOC) leader, provided an expert analysis to The Airport Operator, detailing the complex threats facing the aviation sector. While acknowledging common vulnerabilities such as internal threats from employees (the human factor) and digital activists, Audiot emphasised that airport operations are disproportionately affected by two specific, high-impact adversaries: those driven by financial motives and those operating on behalf of a nation state.

Regarding the first group motivated by financial benefits, he says that for airports "Usually these guys try to breach systems to ask for a ransom, either because they have stolen information or because they have tried to sabotage the information system and they are asking for a payment in exchange for providing an information system that works again. Since around 2020 these kinds of threats have gained a lot of visibility".

"The second would be what are called state-sponsored threats – threat actors, adversary groups, that are sponsored by a nation state. Usually these threat actors aim at stealing information, so they deliver on an intelligence mission, or they try and disrupt and sabotage, usually for influence. That would be one of the worries for an airport: being a critical national infrastructure that these actors aim to disrupt".

Asked how he would assess this cyber threat to UK airports, Audiot said "The UK is a prominent NATO member and has played a key



Nicolas Audiot

While acknowledging common vulnerabilities such as internal threats from employees (the human factor) and digital activists, Audiot emphasised that airport operations are disproportionately affected by two specific, high-impact adversaries: those driven by financial motives and those operating on behalf of a nation state.

role in Ukraine. Right now Russia is putting a lot of pressure around support for Ukraine, and they are trying to disrupt any support as best as they can. Examples have been cited by France, Germany and the UK". He said, "This active, state

level disruption represents one of the principal dangers that Airbus Protect is uniquely positioned to manage".

To counter this sophisticated, evolving risk, Airbus Protect advocates for a comprehensive

risk management capability, with a robust defence strategy structured around three foundational areas:

Threat management: “this is really about anticipation, intelligence, understanding what adversaries are doing and what the vulnerabilities in the system are”.

24/7 defence: “it is about ensuring a 24/7 defence posture for the environment that we have to protect”.

Incident response: Recognising that zero risk is improbable even with proactive measures, robust incident response is the final defence: “that is when really you need to call in the firefighters. You have a breach, and you need help to deal with it”. This is a service that Airbus Protect says that it delivers with industry-leading speed.

He emphasised that the key to superior defence lies in an established partnership. “Building a relationship helps with anticipation, understanding what adversaries are doing, knowing the airport environment and architecture, generating a 24/7 defence posture for your perimeter and it helps quicken the response time. It also helps with preparing stakeholders for a time of crisis”.

Airbus Protect’s authority is built on decades of experience safeguarding critical services, including the delivery of protective monitoring for the UK Ministry of Defence since 2005. This heritage underpins the company’s focus on early detection, aiming to keep adversaries detected and expelled before they can cause significant harm. This capability has evolved into the company’s proprietary Managed Detection and Response service. “The point of these is not just to detect very early on” he said, “it is also about trying to tackle the issue as fast as possible to minimise the impact it can have on the systems that are targeted”.



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Audiot emphasised the operational stakes for an airport in the event of a compromise to critical systems, such as luggage handling belts or even runway safety controls. He said that “if the luggage system is impacted, in a matter of minutes it can create a situation of chaos for an airport. So being able to detect very quickly, very efficiently and then after that being able to react to neutralise the adversary within the system is what we aim to deliver”. He added that “even a simple information system can be crucial. For instance, for planes to depart from a runway, you have to be able to scare off birds. If this system is controlled by a single tablet, then if the tablet goes down obviously the system doesn’t work anymore. So having this kind of understanding of the architecture of airport information systems is vital to better defend an airport”.

Underscoring this commitment to operational security, Airbus Protect recently signed a strategic

cybersecurity contract with its home airport, Aeroport Toulouse Blagnac in France. The partnership involves enhancing the airport’s digital architecture with real-time monitoring, threat detection, and response capabilities.

Speaking about Toulouse Blagnac, Audiot said “This is a partnership that we wanted to showcase, as it is highly important for us and a testament to the service we want to deliver. An airport must rely on a stable, long-term partner like Airbus Protect which we see as being uniquely capable of not only ensuring safe operation for years to come but also continually adapting to the unforgiving evolution of the cyber world”. ■

Airbus Protect is an AirportsUK Gold Member.



PLANNING REFORM

AIRPORTSUK TO ENGAGE WITH MEMBER AIRPORTS ON FUTURE PLANNING POLICY

By Dr Rupinder Pamme, Senior Policy Manager, Airports UK

Planning reform is the most significant non-funding measure the Government can take to secure inward investment and economic growth. It remains a priority of airports and AirportsUK to work to make the process quicker, less costly and more certain.

Since the publication of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB) in March the Government has been trying to show how it will boost the economy and drive growth in England and Wales. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that ministers are “serious about cutting red tape to get Britain building again... and show investors that we are a country that gets spades in the ground and our economy growing”.

The PIB is designed to speed up the process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), to streamline the consenting process and reduce the time taken by judicial review. There have been amendments to the Bill regarding streamlining development, Natural England’s role and environmental delivery plans. The PIB has been completing its Parliamentary stages this autumn.



Dr Rupinder Pamme

In October the Government launched a review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS). This review has been set up to take account of the new environmental and climate obligations that have emerged since the ANPS was

last reviewed in 2018. The revised draft ANPS will be published for consultation in summer 2026. The review will look at four core tests: climate change, noise, air quality and contribution to national economic growth. The Government will also seek advice from the Climate Change Committee and seek to ensure that the ANPS is aligned with the UK’s net-zero commitments. Heathrow’s plans for a third runway are a focal point of the review.

Moving beyond the PIB, AirportsUK are now liaising with the Department for Transport and the AirportsUK Planners Forum on what we would like to see from future planning policy for all airports, not just NSIP-level projects, as most of our members don’t use that route. We will look to engage with members over the coming months to continue the long-term work of improving the whole system. ■

A portrait of a middle-aged man with short, light brown hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark blue blazer over a light blue and white checkered button-down shirt. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage.

"Over more than a decade the Rigby Group built Regional & City Airports from a group of individual airport assets and did a fantastic job of stewarding those airports, investing in them and helping them move towards achieving their potential".

BORNEMOUTH AIRPORT

BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT POWERS AHEAD AS REGIONAL & CITY AIRPORTS WELCOMES ITS NEW OWNER

Bournemouth Airport has become one of the fastest growing medium size airports in Europe following Jet2's decision to open a new base there.

Andrew Bell, Chief Executive of Regional & City Airports (which also includes Exeter and Norwich airports) told The Airport Operator that he expects the group's passenger numbers this year to be up by 23% compared to 2024.

Speaking three months after Regional & City was acquired by the FTSE 100 fund manager, ICG, which has \$123bn of assets under management and an active infrastructure strategy within that, Bell said "they are a new owner with some significant substance and experience of asset management and infrastructure particularly".

Thanking Regional & City's previous owners, Rigby Group, he said "over more than a decade the Rigby Group

built Regional & City Airports from a group of individual airport assets and did a fantastic job of stewarding those airports, investing in them and helping them move towards achieving their potential".

Asked about his experience of ICG so far, Bell said "Since acquisition we have been accelerating all the workstreams that we were focussed on already. The underlying business plan for the group remains the same, focussing on maximising our passenger activity, our cargo activity and our real estate businesses. In that sense it is business as usual. It is the same leadership team, the same approach to operating the business, but essentially with



refreshed, renewed momentum and a particular increase in focus on ESG and sustainability. We have the opportunity now to do more in those areas with the backing of ICG and their experience in ESG and sustainability initiatives”.

Reflecting on the 2025 performance of each of Regional & City’s three airports, he said “We have got a very strong growth story in Bournemouth, which we expect to get to 1.4m passengers this year, which is 26% growth, and that is driven primarily by Jet2 opening their 12th base in Bournemouth this summer”.

Passenger traffic at Bournemouth in August this year was up 32% compared to a year earlier, making Bournemouth the second fastest growing medium size airport in Europe. Asked to account for the airport’s success, Bell said “the first element of it is that Bournemouth has a really impressive catchment area and the airport’s infrastructure is ideally suited to what has been driving the growth – Bournemouth is perfect for leisure and low-cost operators. That is what has been driving the growth and is going to continue to do so next year. Looking slightly further ahead our focus is also on making sure that Bournemouth is potentially offering connections into hub airports as well as point-to-point demand”.

“We have got a very strong growth story in Bournemouth, which we expect to get to 1.4m passengers this year, which is 26% growth, and that is driven primarily by Jet2 opening their 12th base in Bournemouth this summer”.



The airport now has planning approval for an extended terminal and a reconfigured transport interchange. Asked when work would start on these, Bell said “we will be delivering it in phases in the coming years to try to match the capacity that will be created with the demand as it comes online. The whole expansion programme at Bournemouth, which encompasses the terminal and the passenger transport interchange, but also the airside and landside cargo facilities

and other airfield infrastructure is around £50m, so it is a very substantial investment, and we are probably about halfway through that already”.

Bournemouth’s current cargo operation began during the pandemic. “Working with European Cargo, our largest cargo airline customer, we then took the opportunity to build a non-Covid-related cargo operation that offers a new entry and exit point into the UK that hadn’t existed before and that

has gone from strength to strength in the last four years. We did around 30,000 tonnes of air cargo last year and this year it will be about 35,000, which puts us in the top ten UK cargo airports. To support that we have just opened a new £10m cargo complex on the north side of the airfield”.

In Exeter, he said “we expect to be at about 0.6m passengers this year. The airport is still recovering from the impact of the loss of Exeter-based Flybe during the pandemic. Before the pandemic the airport was at about a million passengers, so we are making good progress back towards that level. We have just opened a new route from Exeter to Manchester, which was an incredibly successful route when Flybe operated it. It was Exeter’s biggest route before Flybe’s collapse, and it is really good to get that re-established”.

Bell said that this year’s growth at Exeter was driven by TUI basing a second aircraft at the airport and KLM starting a new daily service into Amsterdam, providing hub connectivity. He described KLM’s decision to fly from Exeter as “probably one of the biggest route development wins we have had as a business over the years. It was a big win for us and so far, performance is good. It is being really well used by the region, as we were confident it would be”.

Growth at Norwich was “more modest this year, 7% growth to just under half a million passengers, primarily driven by leisure and low-cost activity. We see clear opportunity for network growth to a number of European destinations where we don’t currently have connections and frequency growth on existing network connections. We have a good portfolio of airlines in Norwich – KLM, Ryanair and TUI are the three main carriers – but there are others who may be well-suited to other opportunities that

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we see for Norwich, so I think we have a confident view of the future in terms of both frequency and network growth”.

Looking ahead across the group, Bell said “I would say the outlook for next year is one of cautious optimism. The growth rates that we have seen over the last three summers have been very strong. We are cautiously optimistic that we will deliver meaningful growth next year, but I think it is reasonable to say that there is likely to be a flattening of the growth curve, and we think the rate of growth is likely to slow down as we go into next year”.

Against a background of economic headwinds and uncertainty he has urged the Government to take action to support UK aviation. One area where he says change is needed is in the design of the apprenticeship levy. Bell said “The current rules are very rigid and only

allow training to be delivered under approved apprenticeship pathways, which don’t always exist for the type of training we require as an airport operator. Our call to Ministers is to say ‘we want to use this money to train people to give them aviation-related skills. You should change the levy framework to make that possible”.

A second area where he has called on the Government to step in is airport business rates. Noting that UK airports are privately funded infrastructure providing a public service, he said “As we speak, we are facing a potentially material increase in our business rates in 2026 and beyond, which will result in us having less money to invest in infrastructure and the jobs that operate it. We are asking for a measured approach to the 2026 business rates revaluation and then a recalibration of the approach to rates in future”. ■

NEW MEMBERS

AIRPORTSUK WELCOMES FIVE NEW MEMBERS

Fujitsu, the global information and communications technology company, has joined AirportsUK as a Gold Member.



Fujitsu

Fujitsu has been working with partners in the aviation sector for over 40 years.

It works with some of the largest airports in the UK, helping them to reshape their infrastructure and digitally transform to "a more sustainable, cost-efficient, quieter, cleaner and smarter future". Fujitsu partners with specialist aviation technology suppliers "to offer a broad range of solutions that can deliver digital transformation at airports, improving passenger experience, minimising delays and simplifying the journey of arriving at an airport through to boarding a flight".

The company says that through developing technologies such as automation, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, 5G and Social Digital Twin it is helping airports to become more efficient, drive sustainability, add business value and create new services.

Fujitsu emphasises that "the answer to every problem doesn't automatically need to be technology", stressing that its "expertise in designing human centric solutions ensures the solutions deployed at airports are focussed on enabling employees to deliver services efficiently and providing services that are simple for passengers to use. That means effective use of technology and ensuring it is easy to adopt its use".



Ostrum Tech

The company says that it has a deep understanding of the unique challenges in airport assistance and is committed to transforming airport assistance for passengers with reduced mobility (PRMs), using technology-driven innovation.

Designed exclusively for airport PRM operations, Ostrum, it says, is the world's most sophisticated and modern PRM software, which addresses long-standing challenges in the industry, moving beyond legacy procedures that have remained largely unchanged for 30 years.

By bridging critical communication gaps in assisted travel, the company says that its software facilitates seamless communication and coordination between passengers, assistance staff, cabin crew and boarding agents ensuring a smoother, more reliable experience for all parties.



IMAT

Established in 1974, IMAT is a Spanish company specialised in the design and manufacture of seating systems for airport waiting areas.

The company says that over the last 50 years it has worked to create new designs, using advanced finishes, state of the art materials and modern technology, growing in product range, market presence, premises, technical and human resources. Since 2014 its UK airport clients have included Barra, Benbecula, Dundee, Heathrow bus station, Inverness, Islay, Newcastle, Stornoway and Sumburgh.

OZION

OZION AIRPORT SOFTWARE

Founded in 2004, Ozion is a science-based company that specialises in enhancing customer experiences and optimising operations. The company says that it strives to establish new benchmarks in efficiency while advocating for sustainable innovation, with the goal of transforming service sectors by harnessing collective human intelligence, fostering a culture of continuous evolution in service delivery.

Ozion specialises in airport checkpoint management, management of passengers with reduced mobility and airport handling management. It says that as a technological leader, it excels in building and executing virtual digital twin operations, harnessing the potential of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and machine learning to develop and deliver impactful solutions to its clients. Airport clients around the world have included Bucharest, Calgary, Edmonton, Heathrow, Lyon, Montpellier and Oslo.



R&F Travel Retail

Established in 1979, with a mission to make duty-free shopping as memorable as the journey itself, R&F Travel Retail is a leading Swedish travel retailer with offices and warehouses in both Sweden and the UK.

Describing itself as a travel retailer with a passion for tax-free products, every year R&F Travel Retail distributes more than 50 million duty-free products (including beauty, confectionery, beverages, tobacco, food and lifestyle products) to airports, ferries and seaports. The company says that it understands the unique demands of operating in airports, which are buzzing hubs of activity, and knows how to maximise their retail potential, boosting passenger satisfaction while optimising sales per square metre.

The company says that, with decades of industry expertise, it is a trusted partner for businesses seeking strong brand portfolios, smooth operations, and effective retail solutions. R&F Travel Retail says that its services go far beyond product supply and include providing valuable market insights, streamlined logistics management, and innovative shop-optimisation strategies. From impactful visual merchandising to engaging in-store promotions, it says that it creates retail concepts that attract travellers and drive sales.

EVENTS & MEETINGS 2026

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

13 January @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Planners Forum (Airports only)
Virtual Meeting

20 January @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Sustainability Working Group
AirportsUK Office

21 January @ 11:00am – 4:00pm

Rescue & Fire Fighting Services
AirportsUK Office

22 January @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

AirportsUK Board Meeting
AirportsUK Office

27 January @ 10:30am – 1:00pm

Aerodrome, Safety & Compliance
Virtual Meeting

29 January @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Fire Safety Forum
Virtual Meeting

4 February @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Airspace & Air Traffic Services
AirportsUK Office

24 February @ 11:00am – 1:30pm

General Counsels Forum (Airports only)

TLT, London

25 February @ 12:00 midday – 6:00pm

Aerodrome Safeguarding
AirportsUK Office

26 February @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Smaller Airports Roundtable
AirportsUK Office

11 March @ 11:00am – 2:30pm

Annual Dinner

Grosvenor House Hotel, London

11 March @ 7:00pm – 11:00pm

Security Group

AirportsUK Office

19 March @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Security Group (Airports only)

AirportsUK Office

19 March @ 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Health & Safety

Virtual Meeting

20 March @ 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Sustainability Working Group

Virtual Meeting

26 March @ 10:00am – 11:00am

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

14 April @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Rescue & Fire Fighting Services
Virtual Meeting

15 April @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Aerodrome Safety & Compliance

Airport Visit

23 April @ 11:00am – 4:00pm (time tbc)

AirportsUK Board Meeting

AirportsUK Office

28 April @ 10:30am – 1:00pm

Airports Conference: Sustainability

Radisson Blu Hotel, Glasgow
6 – 7 May

Fire Safety Forum

Virtual Meeting

7 May @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm

UK Airports Health & Safety Week

Various Airports

11–15 May

Airspace & Air Traffic Services
Virtual Meeting

18 May @ 11:00am – 1:30pm

Health & Safety

AirportsUK Office

4 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

General Counsels Forum (Airports only)

Virtual Meeting

12 June @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

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

16 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Planners Forum (Airports only)
Manchester Airport

17 June @ 11:00am – 4:00pm

Rescue & Fire Fighting Services
Virtual Meeting

18 June @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Security Group

AirportsUK Office

18 June @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Security Group (Airports only)
AirportsUK Office

18 June @ 1:30pm – 3:00pm

AirportsUK Board Meeting
AirportsUK Office

30 June @ 10:30am – 1:00pm

Airport Conference: Operations
Hilton Hotel, Bournemouth

1 – 2 July

Sustainability Working Group
Virtual Meeting

9 July @ 10:00am – 11:00am

**Aerodrome Safety & Compliance****Virtual Meeting**

9 July @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

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

8 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Health & Safety**Virtual Meeting**

9 September @ 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Airport Conference: Security**Radisson Blu, Manchester Airport**

16 – 17 September

AirportsUK Board Meeting**AirportsUK Office**

22 September @ 10:30am – 1:00pm

Sustainability Working Group**Virtual Meeting**

24 September @ 10:00am – 12:00 midday

Aerodrome Safeguarding**Virtual Meeting**

24 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Fire Safety Forum**Virtual Meeting**

28 September @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Airspace & Air Traffic Services**Virtual Meeting**

29 September @ 11:00am – 1:30pm

Aerodrome Safety & Compliance**AirportsUK Office**

1 October @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Planners Forum (Airports only)**Virtual Meeting**

6 October @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Rescue & Fire Fighting Services**Airport Visit**

21 October @ 11:00am – 4:00pm
(time tbc)

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

3 November @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Health & Safety**Birmingham Airport**

12 November @ 11:00am – 4:00pm (time tbc)

General Counsels Forum (Airports only)**Virtual Meeting**

13 November @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

AirportsUK Board Meeting**AirportsUK Office**

17 November @ 10:30am – 3:00pm

Airspace & Air Traffic Services**Virtual Meeting**

3 December @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Security Group**AirportsUK Office**

3 December @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Security Group (Airports only)**AirportsUK Office**

3 December @ 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Fire Safety Forum**Virtual Meeting**

8 December @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm



From around the sector

WESTJET LAUNCHES NEW DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM CARDIFF TO TORONTO

The Canadian low-cost airline, WestJet, will launch non-stop flights from Cardiff to Toronto in May next year, marking the first direct air link between Wales and Canada in nearly two decades.

WestJet has chosen Cardiff as its exclusive airport in England and Wales for 2026. From 23 May it will operate four transatlantic flights a week from Cardiff to Toronto Pearson International Airport,

marking Cardiff's first Canadian connection since 2008.

Eluned Morgan, First Minister of Wales, said "This is welcome news for passengers, businesses and our tourism industries, both in Wales and Canada. With good connections to other Canadian cities, the new Toronto route will open up new economic opportunities for Wales in North America".

Jon Bridge, who joined Cardiff Airport as its new CEO on 3 November, described the new

Toronto route as "an exciting milestone in our growth and a major step forward in reconnecting Wales with North America. It will strengthen tourism, create new opportunities for trade and investment, and showcase Wales on the global stage. We look forward to building a long-term partnership that delivers lasting benefits for both nations".

Bridge, a former Chief Executive of the iconic Welsh brewer, SA Brain & Co, said he had been "honoured to be joining Cardiff Airport

at such a pivotal time. The national airport of Wales is a vital asset for our country, providing economic benefits and jobs and ensuring global connectivity. We are striving to be the first choice for airline passengers and the centre of Wales' aviation-related industry. I'll be working hard with our team and partners to continue the process of diversifying the business, driving growth, developing our people and ensuring we continue to provide an excellent experience for our customers". ■

LONDON STANSTED UNVEILS NEW SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL STRATEGIES

Gareth Powell, Managing Director of London Stansted, has set out three new sustainable travel strategies focused on bus, coach and rail services, walking and cycling and employee travel.

Speaking to a forum of transport professionals, local authority representatives, and community partners, he said that the plans are designed to make it "easier, greener and

more convenient to get to and from the airport". He said "We're making real progress in improving how people travel to and from London Stansted. From smarter ticketing and better cycling routes to working closely with local councils, we're committed to making journeys easier, greener and more reliable and we know we can only achieve this through strong partnerships".

Powell also shared updates on improvements already underway, including barrierless technology on the

terminal forecourt to ease congestion during busy drop-off times, and the rollout of contactless payment on the Stansted Express by Christmas. Work is also progressing on a new shared cycle and footpath along the road linking Bishop's Stortford to the terminal to give staff and residents a safer, greener commuting option.

He highlighted the airport's ongoing partnership with Essex County Council to tackle fly-parking in nearby Takeley, which includes

new red lines on key routes and further consultation with residents on stronger parking controls.

London Stansted also announced that it recorded its busiest ever October, with 2.68m passengers. In the 12 months to the end of October 29.9m passengers passed through the airport (up 1.9% on the previous year). ■



AIRPORTSUK AIRPORT CONFERENCES 2026



**6-7
May**

**Airport Sustainability
Conference
Glasgow**



**1-2
July**

**Airport Operations
Conference
Bournemouth**



**16-17
September**

**Airport Security
Conference
Manchester Airport**

Dates and locations are subject to change





From around the sector

LOGANAIR STEPS IN AFTER BLUE ISLANDS COLLAPSE

Loganair has taken over from Blue Islands to operate regional routes between the Channel Islands and the UK following the collapse of the Channel Islands headquartered airline on 14 November.

The Scottish airline stepped in immediately to operate 'rescue' flights and Chief Executive, Luke

Farajallah, pledged that Loganair would establish a new permanent operating base in Jersey.

A spokesperson for Ports of Jersey said "We thank Loganair for their swift response and commitment to supporting Jersey's connectivity at this critical moment. We look forward to collaborating with them in the weeks and months ahead as we build a strong and sustainable aviation partnership for the island".

Before its collapse and suspension of trading, after 22 years, Blue Islands had operated flights from Jersey to Bristol, East Midlands, Exeter, Newcastle, Norwich and Southampton airports.

The Blue Islands news came a little more than two weeks after the 27 October collapse of Humberside headquartered Eastern Airways, which had operated regional services from Aberdeen, Cornwall Airport

Newquay, Humberside, Southampton, Teesside and Wick John O'Groats airports. Eastern, established in 1997, went into administration on 6 November after the majority of its 330 staff were made redundant. ■



LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT IN STUDY OF NEXT GENERATION SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL

Leeds Bradford Airport is at the heart of a new £1.5m feasibility study exploring prospects for power-to-liquid Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) made using renewable electricity and captured carbon.

The study, led by the University of Sheffield in partnership with the airport and support from the University of Leeds, will examine how this fuel could possibly be produced and deployed at scale from a Yorkshire base, with a final report due next year.

Unlike biofuels, power-to-liquid SAF doesn't rely on crops or waste. Instead it uses renewable electricity to convert water and recycled carbon into a synthetic jet fuel with a much lower carbon footprint, a technology widely seen as key to decarbonising long-haul flights.

Professor Piers Forster, a former Chair of the Climate Change Committee, said "Aviation is one of the most difficult sectors to decarbonise. Current sustainable aviation fuels are made from waste fat or energy crops. They are not considered a long-term

solution, as making our own would use more than 50% of UK farmland. Instead, we could make a technological leap forward, generating fuels directly from renewable electricity".

Leeds Bradford Airport's CEO, Vincent Hodder, said "We're incredibly proud that LBA will be working in partnership with the team at the University of Sheffield on this groundbreaking project. Investment in decarbonising aviation will benefit not only our local community but also contribute to the broader national effort towards sustainable air travel and

a greener future. We can't wait to get started".

Katie White OBE, MP for Leeds North West, said "Leeds is built for this kind of innovation. We have the talent, the ambition, and a track record of turning green innovation into real-world impact. This funding is a crucial step towards making sustainable jet fuel a reality at Leeds Bradford. It's about cutting emissions in one of the hardest sectors to decarbonise and creating the skilled jobs and investment that come with it. I'm proud to see our region leading the way". ■

CONSULTATION LAUNCHED ON REDESIGNING THE AIRSPACE SERVING EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW AIRPORTS

Edinburgh and Glasgow airports and NATS are consulting on a new plan designed to enable smarter, more direct flight paths – reducing journey times and minimising environmental impact.

Aviation Minister, Keir Mather, described the consultation, which will run to 25 January, as an “important milestone”. He said “We are fast-tracking airspace modernisation to deliver

more reliable, efficient and greener flights, while giving passengers greater choice and a better experience. It is fantastic to see Scottish airports and NATS reach this important milestone. Airports across the UK will be following in Scotland’s footsteps as we drive forward our plans for a modern aviation sector to support jobs, grow the economy and improve passenger experiences”.

The Scottish airspace modernisation proposal would save 18,000 tonnes of CO2 every year and 30 minutes of flying time per

day. It would also lead to 6% fewer aircraft needing to hold at the two airports and reducing average holding time by more than 7% and the overall noise impact on surrounding communities.

Edinburgh Airport’s Chief Executive, Gordon Dewar, said the proposals had been shaped through engagement and discussion with local communities and partners.

“We know this is a complex topic” he said, “and the consultation period will allow us to continue that

engagement and explain the potential benefits for communities, the airport and the environment”.

Mark Beveridge, Managing Director of Glasgow Airport, said “We’ve collaborated with a range of stakeholders to shape these proposals which aim to reduce the total adverse effects of noise from aircraft, improve capacity, minimise delays and lower emissions. We look forward to engaging in detailed discussions at our upcoming events and webinars over the coming weeks and months”. ■

JET2 WILL OPEN BASE AT GATWICK AIRPORT IN MARCH NEXT YEAR

The UK’s third largest airline, Jet2, will fly to 29 sunshine destinations from London Gatwick, beginning with a flight to Tenerife on 26 March 2026.

Jet2 will have six aircraft operating to and from Gatwick, with five brand-new Airbus A321neo aircraft permanently based at the airport, creating more than 300 local jobs including pilots, engineers and cabin crew. The aircraft will fly to a wide choice

of holiday destinations across mainland Spain, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Greece, Turkey, Portugal, Malta, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria and Cyprus.

The airline’s announcement expands its footprint to 14 UK airport bases and marks a major milestone for Gatwick, as Jet2 is the airport’s largest new based airline this century.

Steve Heapy, Jet2’s Chief Executive, said “We are incredibly excited to be announcing our arrival at London Gatwick. We know all too well how

much demand there is amongst customers and independent travel agents for us to operate our flights and holidays from the UK’s second largest airport, so it is fantastic to be able to tell them that we are here and ready to meet that demand. Time and again, we have proven that when we bring the Jet2 product to new customers, we delight them and we subsequently expand our operations. We know that bringing the Jet2 formula to London Gatwick will be a game-changer for customers and we are looking forward to a hugely

successful future from our newest UK airport base”.

The airport’s Chief Executive, Pierre-Hugues Schmit, said “We are thrilled to welcome Jet2 to London Gatwick, marking an exciting new chapter for the airport and our passengers. Jet2’s arrival brings even more choice and flexibility to passengers across the South East and beyond, strengthening our vision to be the airport for everyone, whatever your journey. We look forward to supporting Jet2’s growth and success here at London Gatwick”. ■



From around the sector

NEW FLIGHTS START FROM MANCHESTER AIRPORT TO DELHI AND ISLAMABAD

Manchester Airport is celebrating the launch of new routes to India and Pakistan and its busiest ever October.

The new route to the Indian capital, Delhi, operated by India's biggest airline, IndiGo, was announced by the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, during his recent trade mission to India. He said that it would unlock new opportunities for businesses, create hundreds of jobs and drive growth.

Manchester Airport's Managing Director, Chris

Woodroffe, who was also on the four-day mission, said the announcement meant that people and businesses across the North would now have direct access to both India's capital and its financial centre, with Manchester being the only UK airport outside London to have flights to both cities.

The new route to the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, has been launched by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Woodroffe said "For a long time many thousands of people of Pakistani origin who live in the region haven't been able

to travel directly from an airport in the North – but now that changes thanks to our partnership with PIA".

Announcements of the two new routes came shortly before Manchester Airport reported that October had been its busiest month ever, which had also been the case every month for the last two years. Almost 2.9m passengers used the airport in October, over 2% up on October 2024.

Commenting on the passenger numbers, Woodroffe said "It was particularly good to have so many people going through our amazing

new Terminal 2, which is getting close to being finished. The fact that we have now seen two full years of monthly passenger records is in no small part down to the success of the £1.3bn we've invested in Terminal 2 and the wider operation. It's not only helping us deliver great customer experience but also unlocking our full capacity. It's helped us attract airlines like IndiGo and Pakistan International Airlines and the Chinese airlines, Hainan and Juneyao, as well as helping airlines that already operated here grow their networks". ■



ARUP APPOINTED BY BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT TO DEVELOP MASTER PLAN

Birmingham Airport has appointed global built environment consultancy, Arup, to lead the development of its next Master Plan.

The plan will define how the airport will evolve to serve an increasing number of passengers and airlines, while focusing on sustainability, operational efficiency and an enhanced passenger experience. Work has already begun with key airport stakeholders, with a draft Master Plan expected to be unveiled

for public consultation in summer 2026.

Alan Newbold, Aviation Business Leader for UKIMEA, Arup said "Well-planned, sustainable airport growth is a vital enabler of economic opportunity, connectivity and regional prosperity. We look forward to providing the technical expertise and strategic insight needed to ensure the airport's development supports climate goals and the West Midlands' future growth, while contributing to national prosperity".

Birmingham Airport has returned to pre-pandemic passenger volumes, recording its busiest October ever this year, with 1.24m passengers passing through the airport, a 4% increase on October last year. Annual passenger numbers are expected to reach about 17m by 2029.

October also saw the airport's announcement of a £300m infrastructure investment programme for the next four years. Nick Barton, the airport's CEO, said "We are currently in our most successful year ever and we are confident

that this growth is set to continue. We have already made significant investment this year, but we need to go further as we can see more growth coming. We need to make sure all areas are fit for the future including check in, immigration, security, retail and our airfield. Our plan for the next four years shows how we are on our way to delivering more choice for our passengers and enhanced service, while continuing the journey to Net Zero". ■

CORNISH COMPANY, SKYBUS, TAKES OVER OPERATION OF CORNWALL AIRPORT NEWQUAY'S LINK TO GATWICK

Following the collapse of Eastern Airways, Skybus, the airline of the Isles of Scilly Steamship Group, has been awarded the Public Service Obligation contract to operate the air service connecting Cornwall Airport Newquay with London Gatwick.

Daily flights began on 23 November and will gear up to twice-daily services on weekdays

from February next year. Skybus, the longest serving airline at Cornwall Airport Newquay having flown to the Isles of Scilly for more than 30 years, is operating the Gatwick route using a 70-seat ATR72 turboprop aircraft. From February next year the company plans to introduce new same-ticket fast connections between London and the Isles of Scilly by aligning the new Gatwick-Newquay flights with existing services from Newquay to the Isles of Scilly.

Jonathan Hinkles, Managing Director of Skybus, said "We are thrilled to launch this new service. It is not just about making travel easier for passengers; it's about creating opportunities – for businesses, tourism and the local communities we serve. As a Cornish company with more than 40 years of aviation experience, we understand how crucial dependable air links are for our region and are proud to step up and operate this vital route. None of us underestimate

the challenge ahead to build the route to be a thriving cornerstone of the local economy once more. We're wholly confident that we can achieve this through our record for reliability and service".

Skybus was selected to operate the Gatwick link by Cornwall Council via an expedited tender process after Eastern Airways collapsed. A new four-year tender from the council will begin in mid-2026. ■



From around the sector

GLASGOW AIRPORT RECONNECTED TO TORONTO AND NEW YORK

WestJet, one of Canada's largest airlines, has confirmed it is to return to Glasgow Airport next year with the launch of direct services to Toronto.

The news, announced on 18 November, came little more than a month after United Airlines said that it will reinstate direct flights from Glasgow to Newark, its New York hub, in 2026.

WestJet's inaugural flight to Toronto will take off on 15 May, with the airline operating four services per week using one of its growing fleet of 737 MAX aircraft. It is the first time WestJet will have

operated at Glasgow since 2022.

Matt Hazlewood, Chief Commercial Officer at AGS airports, said "We are thrilled to welcome WestJet back to Glasgow Airport, which has a close affinity with WestJet since it was the first UK airport the airline ever operated from when it first touched down back in 2015. The airline's decision to re-establish this route highlights its confidence in the Glasgow market and demonstrates the strong demand that clearly exists from both leisure and business passengers".

Glasgow City Council leader, Councillor Susan Aitken, described the

service as "more great news for Glasgow and for our standing as a global and connected city. Coming so soon after the resumption of direct flights between Glasgow and New York, we've a brilliant opportunity to raise this city's profile across North America".

United's new daily scheduled service to New York will take off on 8 May and will also be operated by Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. It is the first time the airline will have operated at Glasgow since 2019. Hazlewood said New York was "the most requested destination from our passengers. This new service will provide a

vital link for both leisure and business travellers and represents a major opportunity for inbound tourism. It will be a fantastic boost for the region and the wider Scottish economy".

Stuart Patrick, Chief Executive of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, said that securing the New York route was "a landmark achievement" for Glasgow Airport and AGS. Aitken described it as "a significant boost for our economy" that would "bring considerable cultural and tourism benefits, as well as connect businesses across the west of Scotland with one of the world's largest economies". ■

TEESSIDE AIRPORT SIGNS DEAL TO SUPPORT MULTI-MILLION POUND EXPANSION OF AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

Teesside International Airport has signed a 250-year lease agreement for 50 acres of airport land with Willis Aviation to drive significant growth at its Teesside base.

The deal paves the way for the development of up to six new narrow and wide-body hangars across the airport estate and follows the opening in October of Willis's

new £13.5m twin-bay hangar, a state-of-the-art facility designed to support major aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul operations.

Phil Forster, the airport's Managing Director said "Willis Aviation has been a fantastic supporter of Teesside Airport for many years, and this long-lease agreement is a huge step in their commitment to our airport and our region. This is a hugely significant moment for Teesside

Airport and a major milestone in securing the airport's long-term future".

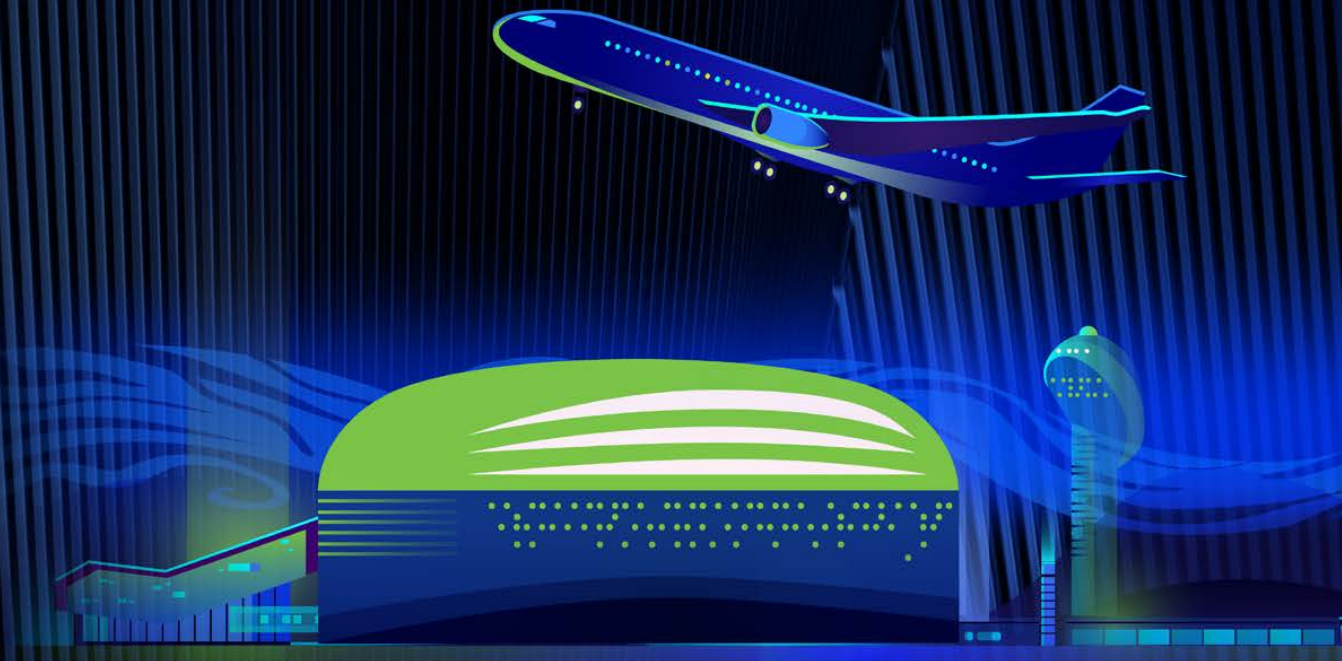
Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen, said that Willis's decision showed their confidence in Teesside and its vision for the future. "It's a hugely important step" he said, "that will help put Teesside Airport on a more secure financial footing for years to come and bring hundreds more well-paid jobs for people to build their careers here".

Meanwhile, Europe's only privately owned aircraft painting company, Airbourne Colours, has opened its second aircraft painting facility at the airport to accommodate narrow-body aircraft, including the Airbus A321 and Boeing 737 MAX 10. Airbourne began work at its first facility at the airport last year. The firm has annual turnover of £15m and works for many of Europe's leading airlines. ■



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**UK AIRPORTS: DELIVERING
CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH**



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GROWTH



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We are committed to your success by investing in your places, so they perform at their best today and tomorrow. This provides exceptional experiences and better value.

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From offices and shopping centres to hospitals and airports, Mitie creates better places for the communities we serve to thrive.

Our work touches the lives of over 7.5 million people every day. Wherever it matters, we're there, providing services that keep society running. When we look after places, we're looking after people and communities – unlocking potential, creating connections and building a future where everyone can be their best.

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SITA is the air transport industry's tech engine, making travel safer, easier, and more sustainable. From the earliest days of commercial aviation to today's digital frontiers, SITA has been connecting the industry and helping it evolve.

With around 2,500 customers, SITA technology supports over 1,000 airports and more than 19,600 aircraft worldwide. It also helps over 70 governments strike the balance between secure borders and seamless journeys. Behind the scenes, SITA bridges 45–50% of the industry's data exchange, enabling a highly complex global network to operate smoothly and reliably.

SITA is transforming fast. From advanced self-service and operations control to airport design and digital borders, we're shaping the next generation of travel through key acquisitions like Materna IPS, ASISTIM, and CCM. We're also expanding beyond aviation with initiatives such as SmartSea, bringing our trusted technologies to cruise, rail, and urban air mobility.

This transformation is about more than new products. We're investing to help the industry move with greater intelligence and agility, bringing together smart systems, seamless data, and sustainable innovation. Because as global travel surges, flow is everything.

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WELCOME TO THE AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Karen Dee
Chief Executive
AirportsUK

WELCOME TO THE AIRPORTSUK 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE, WHERE THE THEME IS "DELIVERING CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH".

Our Chair, Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith and I are greatly looking forward to welcoming you all and to celebrating your successes, your contributions to the life of the country and to playing your part in our story.

We are delighted to be able to welcome the Aviation Minister, Keir Mather MP, to deliver this year's Ministerial keynote address and that we will hear an Opposition perspective from the Shadow Transport Secretary, Richard Holden MP. Their contributions will be complemented by the keen insight of Spectator Editor and former Cabinet Member, Lord Michael Gove, who will help us all make sense of the Westminster landscape and the year ahead.

From an industry perspective, we have again assembled a series of fascinating panels with leading aviation spokespeople. You will also hear from the chief executives of our largest airports, senior airline, economic, planning and regulatory commentators on the outlook for the sector, how we can drive growth and investment, and deliver improvements to the passenger experience.

Once again, we will have our traditional 'big interviews', with Thomas Woldbye, Chief Executive of Heathrow, and Stewart Wingate, Managing Director, UK Airports for VINCI and GIP, giving us their perspectives on the challenges of running two of our busiest airports. There will also be other panel sessions that will focus on specific issues regarding the future technologies and innovations we will see, and how planning reforms can help deliver the infrastructure we need.

It promises to be a very informative and interesting day, and I hope that you will both profit from, and enjoy

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

As I have already said, the theme for this year's conference is Delivering Connectivity and Growth, and it comes at a time when the government has put the role airports play in economic growth at the heart of its agenda. Only with airports as a senior partner will this effort succeed, bringing in the foreign investment we need, creating the import and export opportunities for business, and helping people travel to and from the UK for their holidays.

Over the past year, government has made a number of decisions and implemented several policies that support this aim. From pro-expansion decisions at Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton and London City and planning reforms that will deliver new capacity and connectivity, to taking the SAF bill and revenue certainty mechanism through parliament that will help the sector decarbonise.

Today's conference marks a chance for us to gather together and consider the opportunities and challenges in all of this. To seek answers to the questions of how airports can contribute, what our priorities should be and how we should make our case. With the continued support of all of you, of your teams, of everyone working in airports and aviation more widely, I am sure we can take face up to the future with confidence.

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

AGENDA

**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE 2025
DELIVERING
CONNECTIVITY &
GROWTH**



08:45	Registration and Breakfast
09:30	<p>Welcome and opening remarks</p> <p>Dharshini David, Broadcaster, Economist and Author Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE, Chair – AirportsUK Karen Dee, Chief Executive – AirportsUK</p> <p>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.</p>
09:40	<p>Keynote Speech</p> <p>Keir Mather MP, Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation – Department for Transport</p> <p>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 aviation minister as he highlights the work government has done, and how it will be continuing to champion UK aviation in the year ahead.</p>
10:00	<p>Industry response and outlook</p> <p>Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive – Edinburgh Airport Dave Lees, Chief Executive Officer – Bristol Airport Andrew Macmillan, Chief Strategy Officer – Manchester Airports Group Chair – Dharshini David</p> <p>Responding to the aviation minister, 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.</p>
10:30	Networking coffee break
11:10	<p>Political and economic outlook - what do businesses need to know and consider?</p> <p>Rt Hon Lord Michael Gove, Editor – The Spectator and Former Cabinet Minister</p> <p>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?</p>
11:30	<p>Competitiveness and connectivity</p> <p>Nick Barton, Chief Executive Officer – Birmingham Airport Holly Boyd-Boland, Vice President, Corporate Development and Chief of Staff – Virgin Atlantic Nick Faith, Chief Executive – WPI Strategy Peter Glade, Chief Commercial Officer – TUI Airline Kam Jandu, Chief Executive – AGS Airports Chair – Karen Dee</p> <p>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.</p>
12:00	<p>Border and immigration keynote</p> <p>Mike Tapp MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Migration and Citizenship – Home Office</p> <p>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.</p>
12:30	Networking lunch

13:45	<p>Government and regulator approaches to new technology</p> <p>Rob Bishton, Chief Executive Officer – UK Civil Aviation Authority Chair – Dharshini David</p> <p>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.</p>
14:15	<p>Managing opportunities and risks of future technology</p> <p>Federico Bonaudi, Director for Facilitation, Regional Airports and Parliamentary Relations – ACI Europe Simon Bond, Senior Director of Border Strategy and Transformation – Home Office Phil Ebbage, Regional Operations Director – Swissport Alison FitzGerald, Chief Executive Officer – London City Airport Chair – Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE</p> <p>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.</p>
14:45	<p>Key trends driving aviation</p> <p>Steve Saxon, Partner – McKinsey & Company</p> <p>The head of the UK aviation regulator will give us his thoughts on the regulatory challenges that must be overcome to ensure safe deployment of new technologies. Ensuring the continued safety of UK aviation is paramount and aligning innovations through close collaboration between airports and the regulator is vital if we are to succeed.</p>
15:00	Networking coffee break
15:30	<p>The view from opposition</p> <p>Rt Hon Richard Holden MP – Shadow Secretary of State for Transport</p> <p>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.</p>
15:50	<p>Speeding up planning and delivery of infrastructure</p> <p>Kathryn Leahy, Chief Operations Officer – NATS Robbie Owen, Partner and Head of Infrastructure Planning and Government Affairs – Pinsent Masons Chair – Karen Dee</p> <p>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.</p>
16:15	<p>Big interview – delivering runway capacity</p> <p>Stewart Wingate, Managing Director – UK Airports for VINCI and GIP Thomas Woldbye, Chief Executive Officer – Heathrow Airport Chair – Dharshini David</p> <p>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.</p>
16:45	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE, Chair – AirportsUK Karen Dee, Chief Executive – AirportsUK</p> <p>Wrapping up the conference and closing remarks from the chair and chief executive of AirportsUK.</p>
17:00 19:00	Networking drinks reception

EXHIBITORS



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Nick Barton | Chief Executive Officer, Birmingham Airport

Nick took up the appointment of Chief Executive Officer at Birmingham Airport in January 2019, having joined the airport at an exciting time in its history following the announcement of the ambitious draft Master Plan. Although it was on hold due to the impact of COVID-19 on air travel, the airport's long-term plans include upgrading and expanding capacity of the terminal operations, aircraft stands and support facilities, combined with achieving net zero by 2033. Nick has a long track-record as a successful leader, with extensive experience in the airports sector. He was previously Chief Executive at London Luton Airport, Managing Director of London Stansted and CEO of Aberdeen International Airport and is also Deputy Chair of AirportsUK.



Rob Bishton | Chief Executive Officer, UK Civil Aviation Authority

Rob became Chief Executive after serving as Interim Joint Chief Executive between April and October 2023. Appointed to the Board as Group Director of Safety and Airspace Regulation in November 2019, Rob has been at the CAA since 2014, and previously held the role of Head of Flight Operations. He has extensive experience in the aviation industry, including positions at Fastjet, Astraeus, and easyJet. A qualified commercial pilot, Rob has more than 10,000 flying hours on B787 and B737 aircraft. He has also represented the UK at the EASA Management Board and was formerly a Non-Executive Director of the UK Flight Safety Committee.



Federico Bonaudi | Director for Facilitation, Regional Airports and Parliamentary Relations, ACI EUROPE

Federico Bonaudi has over 20 years of experience in the aviation sector and European affairs. He is currently Director for Facilitation, Regional Airports and Parliamentary Relations at ACI EUROPE – Airports Council International. In this role, he leads the association's work on all passenger-related topics, ranging from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the deployment of biometric pilots at European airports.



Simon Bond | Senior Director of Border Strategy and Transformation, Home Office

Simon is the Senior Director of the Border Force at the Home Office and the joint SRO of the Future Border and Immigration System programme for Migration and Borders. His holistic approach to transformation across both the regular passenger migration and the goods journey is enabling the creation of the most secure yet efficient system possible in making our border better.



Holly Boyd-Boland

Vice President, Corporate Development and Chief of Staff, Virgin Atlantic

Holly is Vice President, Corporate Development and Chief of Staff at Virgin Atlantic. Leading the airline's strategy, sustainability and community and Government Affairs teams. Since her appointment in October 2021, she has led Virgin Atlantic's efforts towards decarbonisation, including the world's first transatlantic flight on 100% SAF on a commercial aircraft.

Holly also serves as the Industry Chair on the UK Government's Jet Zero Taskforce which brings together key stakeholders across industry, Government and academia to overcome the challenges for UK aviation in meeting Net Zero 2050. In her role as Chief of Staff, Holly works closely with the CEO and Leadership Team on enterprise-wide prioritisation, organisational effectiveness and delivery of corporate and financial targets. Having coordinated Virgin Atlantic's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, she played a central role in securing the £1.5bn recapitalisation of the airline and led lobbying efforts with the UK Government to remove Covid-19 travel restrictions. Before joining Virgin Atlantic, Holly gained over 10 years of legal experience working across aviation, transport and energy as a competition and regulatory lawyer. She holds a Law Degree from the London School of Economics, has two young children and is an avid Arsenal fan.



Darshini David | Broadcaster, Economist and Author

Award-winning broadcaster, economist and author Dharshini is the BBC's Chief Economics Correspondent and presents programmes for Radio 4.

She worked for the Government Economic Service before being appointed HSBC Investment Bank's Senior UK Economist. She swapped the trading floor for the BBC, to cover economics and present financial programmes in London, and then New York where she led analysis on Great Financial Crisis. Dharshini has also presented flagship business and political programmes for Sky and sat on the consumer finance board of the financial regulator. She rejoined the BBC initially as Business Presenter for Radio 4's Today, and subsequently as Chief Economics Correspondent, leading agenda-setting coverage on the impact of Covid, the recent recession and change of government while holding policymakers to account. Her Analysis documentary for Radio 4 "Is Britain the Sick Man of Europe?" won the prestigious 2022 Wincott Prize for financial journalism, hailed by judges as "the BBC at its best". Dharshini is the author of "The Almighty Dollar" (2018) the best-selling guide to the global economy and Environomics (2024). She was appointed an Honorary Fellow of Downing College, Cambridge in 2024.



Karen Dee | Chief Executive, AirportsUK

Karen Dee joined the Airport Operators Association (now AirportsUK) as Chief Executive on 1 March 2017. Karen has more than 20 years' experience in policy development, communications and representation activities within the transport sector. Her career has incorporated roles in government, consultancy and trade associations including: the Department for Transport, Market Access, the Road Haulage Association, CBI, Policy Solutions and more recently, the Freight Transport Association where she worked as Director of Policy for six years.



Gordon Dewar | Chief Executive, Edinburgh Airport

Gordon Dewar took up the post of Chief Executive in July 2012, with the airport experiencing 63% growth in passengers from 9m to 15.8m passengers in 2024 – a record for any Scottish airport. Rebranding the airport as the place where 'Scotland meets the world', Gordon has overseen significant capital investment in capacity, productivity improvements and customer service enhancements that have been recognised through airport and wider business awards in Scotland, the UK and internationally. Gordon spent 4 years with BAA running Glasgow and Edinburgh airports through periods of extensive investments in terminal capacity and passenger growth from 2007 to 2010. He then spent 2 years as Chief Executive at Bahrain International Airport creating a independent and profitable business for the first time after a carve out from Government. Gordon has held a number of senior positions with leading transport operators, including commercial, general management and business development roles in bus and rail operations. Prior to this he spent 10 years in Transport Consultancy. Gordon is a Board member of AirportsUK.



Phil Ebbage | Regional Operations Director, Swissport

Phil Ebbage is the Operations Director for Swissport, bringing 15 years of leadership experience within the aviation services sector. With a career spanning over 30 years in Supply Chain, Logistics, and Transport, Phil has a proven track record of driving major change initiatives and delivering continuous improvement programs. His expertise includes infrastructure transformation and the successful implementation of large-scale systems, ensuring operational excellence and efficiency. Passionate about innovation and performance, Phil combines strategic vision with hands-on experience to lead complex projects and optimize processes across diverse operational environments.



Nick Faith | Chief Executive, WPI Strategy

Nick is the Founder and Chief Executive of WPI Strategy, an award winning economics and political consultancy which has worked for a number of organisations in the aviation sector including Heathrow, Gatwick, London City Airport and Virgin Atlantic. The business provides research driven advocacy, including analysis authored by a team of economists, which shapes the policy and regulatory agenda. Nick has 20 years' experience in policy and communications having previously been Director of Communications for the think tank Policy Exchange. He helped set up and remains a trustee of Onward and has been recognised by PR Week as one of the most influential people in communications for the past several years.



Alison FitzGerald | Chief Executive Officer, London City Airport

Alison was appointed as Chief Executive Officer in May 2024. She joined London City Airport as Chief Information Officer in January 2014 and subsequently became Chief Operating Officer (COO) in September 2016. As COO, Alison had responsibility for the overall airfield operation, security, passenger proposition as well as for the delivery of all technology services to the business, including the Digital Air Traffic Control Tower. Prior to her roles at the airport, Alison was CIO at the Financial Times where she was responsible for both print and digital technology. Before joining the FT, Alison spent 16 years at Abbey/Santander where she held a number of senior management technology positions. She holds a professional Non-Executive Director qualification and currently sits on the Boards of the Royal Docks Management Authority (RoDMA), AirportsUK and the Airports Council International (ACI) Europe.



Peter Glade | Chief Commercial Officer, TUI Airline

Peter Glade is a "three P leader": proven turnaround manager, profitability aficionado and proud family father. He enjoys working across cultures and travelling the world. As CCO of TUI Airline, Peter is spearheading the creation of a new entity that will perform the commercial functions across the five TUI airlines, forming a European top ten airline group. Before joining TUI, Peter served for eight years as CCO of SunExpress, the Turkey based Lufthansa-Turkish Airlines JV. Prior to this, he played a pivotal role in the strategic realignment of Austrian Airlines as Vice President of Partner Management and Strategy and spent eight years driving sales and market development for Star Alliance.



Rt Hon Lord Michael Gove | Editor, The Spectator and Former Cabinet Minister

Michael Gove is the Editor of The Spectator. As the former Member of Parliament for Surrey Heath and UK Government Cabinet Minister, he served in Cabinet across five government departments for more than a decade, from the 2010 Coalition government onwards. As Secretary of State for Education, he steered through some of the biggest changes to education in half a century. He went on to serve in the cabinets of three of the four subsequent Prime Ministers, including as Chief Whip, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Secretary of State for Justice, for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. In May 2025, Michael was made a peer in Rishi Sunak's honours list and joined the House of Lords, choosing the title of Lord Gove of Torry.



Rt Hon Richard Holden MP | Shadow Secretary of State for Transport

First elected in 2019, Richard Holden was elected as the Conservative MP for Basildon and Billericay in 2024. In July, he was appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, having previously been the Shadow Paymaster General. Richard was Chairman of the Conservative Party and served as Cabinet Minister without Portfolio in the Cabinet Office from November 2023 to July 2024. He was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport from October 2022 to November 2023 and served on the Public Accounts Committee from 2019 to 2021. Richard led parliamentary campaigns to ban hymenoplasty and so-called virginity testing, and played a key role in efforts to lower duty on draught beer, cut Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) on motorhomes, and expand pension auto-enrolment. He has also been active in national campaigns to regulate gambling and improve mental health services. Before entering Parliament, Richard worked across the public and private sectors as well as on political campaigns. He graduated from the London School of Economics in 2007.



Kam Jandu | Chief Executive, AGS Airports

Kam Jandu was appointed CEO of AGS Airports on 29 January 2025 after the airport group was acquired by global airports' investor AviAlliance. Assuming management responsibility for Aberdeen, Glasgow and Southampton airports, Kam is tasked with helping drive AGS Airports plans for sustainable growth, improved quality of services, all underpinned with significant investment. Kam was previously CEO of Budapest Airport where he worked for 15 years, having initially been recruited as Aviation Director before being promoted to Chief Commercial Officer and finally as CEO. Prior to joining Budapest Airport, Kam worked in the airline industry for over 10 years with bmi in London and Star Alliance GmbH in Frankfurt in a variety of senior sales and marketing roles. A British National, Kam holds various managerial qualifications from his career including a Professional Diploma in Management and an MBA in Strategy and Human Resource Management from the Open University Business School.



Kathryn Leahy | Chief Operations Officer, NATS

Kathryn was appointed Chief Operations Officer in June 2023 and joined NATS in October. She is responsible for leading the day-to-day running of Swanwick, Prestwick and the airports where NATS provides the ATM service. Kathryn joined NATS from Heathrow Airport, where since 2017 she had been Director of Operations, responsible for airside and airfield operations with day-to-day responsibility for the airport operations centre, resilience and emergency planning. Her career started in financial services, working for AIG. She moved to aviation in 1997 and spent 13 years at Virgin Atlantic Airways focusing on risk, safety management and audit. In 2010, she joined BAA at Heathrow and moved quickly to her first operational role as Director of Terminal 3. She was then appointed to manage Customer Service, tasked with improving relationships with airlines. During her operational career she has delivered a number of major transformation programmes and overseen the integration of technology and asset programmes into the live airport operation.



Dave Lees | Chief Executive Officer, Bristol Airport

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



Andrew Macmillan | Chief Strategy Officer, Manchester Airports Group

Andrew was appointed MAG's Chief Strategy Officer in September 2024. He leads the Group's work on sustainability, corporate affairs, strategic planning, property and international development. Andrew was previously the Chief Commercial Officer at Vertical Aerospace, a UK start-up developing of electric aircraft. He led development for a global order book across airline and other customers in the US, Asia and Europe and work on new infrastructure and policy solutions for the novel aircraft. Andrew also spent more than a decade at Heathrow Airport, most recently as Chief Strategy and Carbon Officer.

He worked across many areas including Airport Expansion, regulation, operations, strategic planning and commercial developments with airlines and other partners. Andrew began his working life at McKinsey & Co, with roles in Tokyo and London focused on transport and infrastructure. He has degrees from Hitotsubashi University, LSE and INSEAD. He has held a number of non-executive roles, including with the UK Government's Jet Zero Council, a large pension fund, Heathrow Express railway and as Co-Chair of the Future Aerospace Integration working group.



Keir Mather MP | Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation

Keir Mather was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Transport (Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation) on 7 September 2025.

He was previously Assistant Whip, House of Commons between 10 July 2024 and 7 September 2025. He was elected as the MP for Selby in July 2024.



Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE | Chair, AirportsUK

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE is an established Chair, former FTSE Chief Executive and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). She currently heads the Board of AirportsUK, as well as acting as Deputy Chair for the Tideway Tunnel. She is a non-Executive Director for AtkinsRealis Inc, Thales SA and Everyman Media Group plc and President of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Former roles include President of the British Chambers of Commerce and Chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

Ruby's business background included time as Chief Executive of Mitie Group plc between 2007 and 2016, making her one of a small number of women who have been Chief Executive in the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250, and the first Asian woman to be appointed these roles within that group of companies. She was recognised as a top 50 female world business leader by the FT in 2013. Since, 2015, Ruby has sat in the House of Lords, having been granted a Life Peerage and was responsible for the Independent Report to the UK Government on Race in the Workplace, published in February 2017. She chaired the UK Government's Women's Business Council between 2012 and 2016 and was a Business Trade Ambassador for the UK from 2012 to 2019. Additionally, the UK Government made her the In-Work Progression Commissioner in 2020 and she now sits as a Member of the Labour Market Advisory Board.

In 2015, Ruby was awarded the ICAEW and the accounting profession's most prestigious award, the Outstanding Achievement Award, in 2015. She has received honorary doctorates from Cranfield University, Kingston University and the University of the West of England. Ruby is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award in 2015, the profession's most prestigious Award.



Robbie Owen | Partner and Head of Infrastructure Planning and Government Affairs, Pinsent Masons

Robbie leads Pinsent Masons' UK infrastructure planning and government affairs businesses. He advises on UK infrastructure and economic development policies, programmes and major projects, focussing on policy formulation, parliamentary issues including enabling legislation, major project consenting and delivery. He specialises in a wide range of planning, highways, environmental, compulsory acquisition and other aspects of public and administrative law.

In particular he has over 35 years' experience of advising on the planning and consenting of a wide variety of UK nationally significant and other major infrastructure projects under a variety of consenting regimes, including development consent orders / DCOs made under the Planning Act 2008 for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. In the case of airport development Robbie leads Pinsent Masons' advice to Heathrow Airport on its Expansion programme and he recently led its advice to the five host local authorities on the London Luton Airport Expansion DCO. He is the founder, a Board Director and Secretary of the National Infrastructure Planning Association (NIPA).



Steve Saxon | Partner, McKinsey & Company

Being a Partner in McKinsey and Company's London office, Steve leads the Travel, Logistics and Infrastructure practice in the UK, and specialises in serving airlines and aviation. Steve joined McKinsey in 2000, and spent 20 years in Asia, before returning to London in 2024. Steve has worked with over 20 carriers globally, and has worked with LCCs and mainline carriers. His work includes airline transformation and strategy, improving frequent flyer schemes, air cargo, improving sales and driving online distribution. He has partnered with several leading airports, on topics including sustainability, fuel supply, portfolio expansion and operating models. Steve's recent publications include The Six Secrets of Profitable Airlines, using economic data to understand what makes some airlines outperform their peers in an overall challenging industry, and McKinsey's analysis into the aviation value chain profitability.



Mike Tapp MP | **Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Citizenship, Home Office**

Mike was appointed an immigration minister in the Home Office on 6 September 2025. His brief includes visa policy, operations of UK Visas and Immigration, legal migration and Border operations including the digital transformation of the UK Border. He was elected as the MP for Dover and Deal in July 2024 and previously served in HM Armed Forces completing tours in Afghanistan and Iraq before joining the National Crime Agency.



Stewart Wingate | **Managing Director, UK Airports for VINCI and GIP**

Stewart Wingate is the Managing Director for UK Airports in VINCI and Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) networks, overseeing future development and strategic direction of London Gatwick, Edinburgh Airport and Belfast International. Before starting this new role in September 2025, he spent 15 years as CEO of London Gatwick, after working at BAA (British Airports Authority) in various roles. He started as the Customer Services Director at Glasgow Airport and later became the CEO of Budapest Airport. Previously he served as the Managing Director of Stansted Airport. He started his career at Black & Decker. Stewart holds a master's degree in business administration with distinction and a first-class honours degree in electrical and electronic engineering. He is also a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of both the Institute of Engineering and Technology and the Chartered Institute of Marketing.



Thomas Woldbye | **Chief Executive Officer, Heathrow Airport**

Thomas took up the role as Heathrow CEO in October 2023. As CEO, Thomas is focussed on driving innovation in passenger service, sustainability and growth at the UK's hub airport. He is also overseeing the airport's multi-billion pound investment plans to upgrade existing facilities and provide an even better service for passengers, including the next generation security programme and new baggage system for Terminal 2. Thomas is a member of His Majesty's Sustainable Markets Initiative, the British American Business Advisory Board, the Jet Zero Council and the TOURISE Advisory Board.

Thomas was previously CEO of Copenhagen Airport from May 2011 – September 2023. Under Thomas's stewardship, Copenhagen Airport was consistently rated as one of the world's top airports, both in terms of customer and retail experience as well as efficiency and profitability. He worked in partnership with the trade unions in Denmark and put customers at the front of mind for all colleagues at the airport. Previously, Thomas worked for A.P. Møller-Maersk for 27 years. He started his career as a management trainee in 1983, and over the next 20 years, held several management positions in Indonesia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, the Netherlands and Denmark. During this period, he was primarily involved in the management of Maersk Line, the company's worldwide container business. In 2004, Thomas took over as Group CEO of Norfolkline Group with headquarters in The Hague.

Thomas has an HD in Financing from Copenhagen Business School and professional qualifications from the London Business School and the IMD in Switzerland.



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