

THE AIRPORT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK
SUMMER 2026

OPERATOR

BORDER FORCE DG
on changes at the
border

BRISTOL AIRPORT
seeks green light for
growth

**LIVERPOOL
AIRPORT** breaks
passenger records

CIVIL AVIATION BILL
addresses challenges

New airlines
New capacity
New ambitions

GATWICK'S TRANSFORMATIONAL YEAR





**AIRPORTSUK IS PLEASED TO WORK
WITH ITS CORPORATE PARTNERS,
GOLD AND SILVER MEMBERS**

CORPORATE PARTNERS



GOLD MEMBERS



SILVER MEMBERS



THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK

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Health and Safety Week

AirportsUK praises "phenomenal engagement" in 2026 Health and Safety Week

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KAREN DEE

INTRODUCTION TO THE AIRPORT OPERATOR



Hello and welcome to the summer issue of The Airport Operator magazine.

What a difference a few months makes!

Since our last issue, we have seen a new conflict in the Middle East throw up new uncertainties thanks to its impact on jet fuel supply. There have been local and regional elections that have stirred the political pot once again and called into question the future of this government. A new Civil Aviation Bill, announced in the King's Speech, has begun its passage through parliament, with ministers suggesting it will help deliver a better legal and regulatory framework.

And we have seen an Easter peak travel period defined by long queues at the EU border because of its Entry/Exit System, nominally in full operation at European airports. On top of this, AirportsUK has held its first major event of the year, its Airports Sustainability Conference, to great success.

So, to say the last quarter has been a busy one would be an understatement, and with the impacts of these issues extending into the second half of the year, as well as a host of other activities we have planned, it is unlikely to get any quieter!

What it also shows, however, is just how important it is for us as an industry to continue coming together and working collaboratively to make our case and work out collective solutions. Because it is only through this joint-working that the sector can credibly present decision-makers with thought through and effective positions that will benefit all. That continues to be how we approach these challenges, convening the whole sector, enabling us to speak with a single voice, and ensuring all UK airports prosper.

We have been ensuring that various bits of legislation and policies, including the Civil Aviation Bill, are scrutinised by politicians effectively. There continues to be a lot of engagement behind the scenes on issues such as business rates and wider competitiveness of the sector, the planning process and airspace modernisation, airport environmental sustainability and noise, and regulatory frameworks and operational challenges and opportunities.

The occasion of our Sustainability Conference, as well as the various working groups that have been held in the last quarter, have provided invaluable insight that feed into our expert advice to government and the regulator.

And I am pleased that, for the most part, our work has that positive outcome, perhaps not always everything that we have asked for, but enough to enable the sector to continue to thrive. Where outcomes may fall a little short, we are committed to continuing to push the case for further evolution, based on further evidence that emerges and one step at a time. The team here at AirportsUK knows and appreciates that this is often how decisions are made and situations are changed, and we remain firmly in your corner to keep the fight going.

In this quarter's bumper issue of The Airport Operator, we are delighted to be able to feature the thoughts of the CAA on the Civil Aviation Bill and how it sees its role considering the provisions it contains. We also look at how the new Air Departure Tax will affect the cost of air travel in Scotland.

We also profile the latest from a host of airports up and down the country, including Bournemouth, Isle of Man, Jersey and Manchester. The results of new analysis looking into the economic impact on regional economies through connectivity through Heathrow are highlighted.

Finally, we also have articles written by non-airport members ABM, CapGemini, OneReg, Comet and SITA, who I am sure you will all be familiar with as key partners in delivery of operations.

I do hope you enjoy reading all of this, and that it helps put some of the recent events into perspective as we look ahead to the summer.

Karen Dee
Chief Executive

UK BORDER FORCE

HOW THE UK BORDER IS TRANSFORMING – AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRITISH AIRPORTS

Phil Douglas CB, Director General of Border Force, outlines the changes that Border Force and the Home Office are delivering before and at the arrivals hall.

British airports and UK Border Force are at our best when we work in partnership. Across the UK, our teams have strong, constructive relationships with colleagues in airports, and that collaboration is fundamental to our shared success. We recognise the operational pressures airports are managing, particularly rising passenger volumes and the need to maintain flow, and we see that firsthand in our day-to-day work together. We rely on one another not just to keep the border secure, but to improve how it works in practice. Our close working helps to drive the kind of innovation passengers increasingly expect. The border today is already very different from where we were a few years ago. We have modernised

systems and make far greater use of data, laying the groundwork for the next phase of change. Over the next 12 months, passengers and airports will start to see that difference more clearly in how the border operates day to day. This time next year the border will feel even more streamlined, bringing real benefits to both passengers and for those running airports.

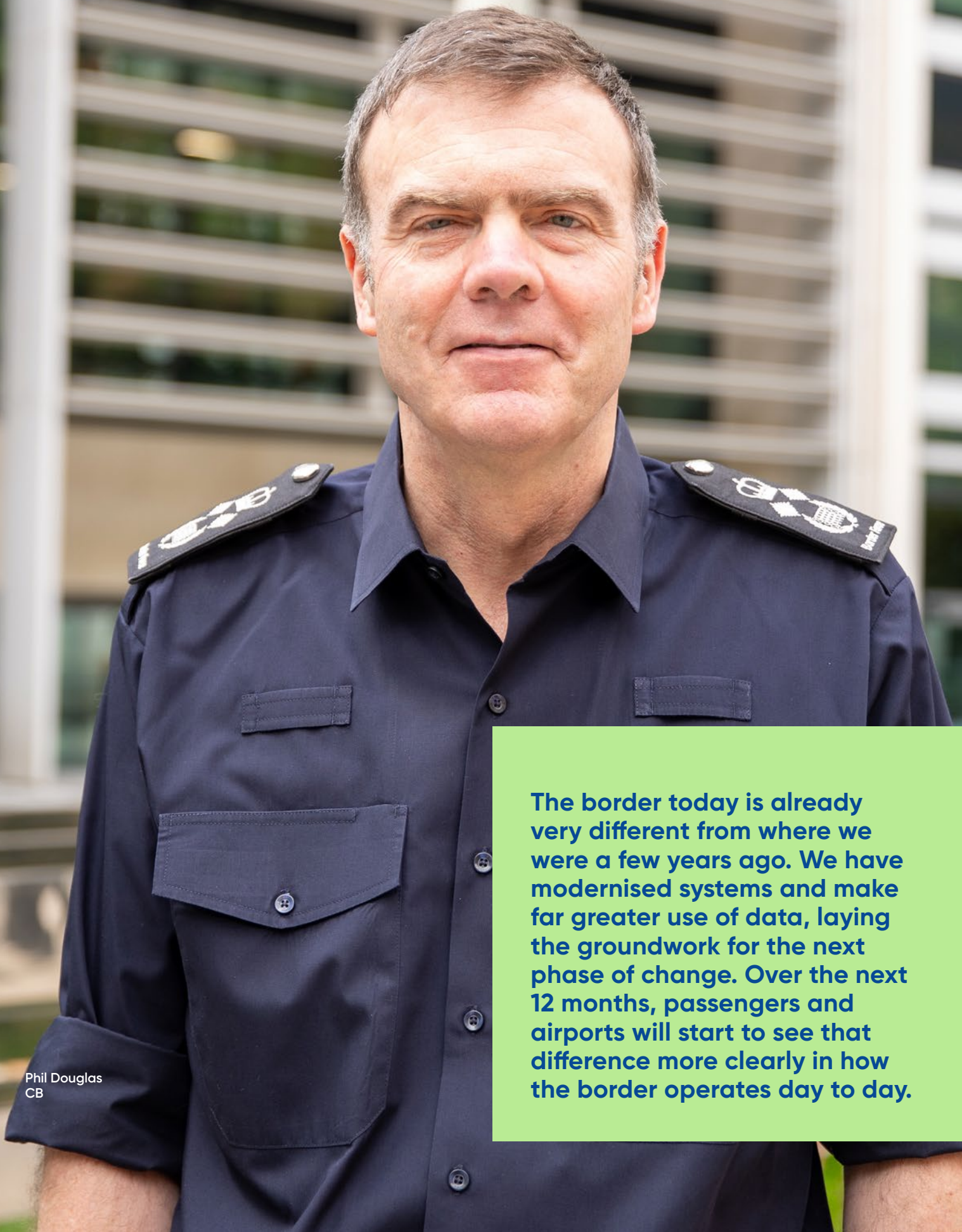
One example is the recent decision to lower the eGate age threshold to include 8- and 9-year-olds. This is an important step forward. It allows more lower-risk passengers to use automated channels, freeing up skilled officers to focus their time and expertise on the most serious threats where they have the greatest impact.

Safeguarding has been central

to this change. A visible officer presence remains critical, and intervention will always be there where needed. We expect the change will come into effect in July, in time for the summer holidays. This will help families move through the border more quickly and ease pressure in arrivals halls. It will also allow our highly skilled officers to focus more of their time on the highest harm threats during one of our busiest periods.

There is clear international precedent for this approach. But given the scale and volume of passenger flows through UK airports, this is a significant step in our context, and part of a wider move towards a more modern and efficient border.

Building on that progress, we are



Phil Douglas
CB

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now going further. The introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisations (ETAs) and eVisas marks a significant step forward in the data we hold on those travelling to the UK. This means we can identify risks earlier and act before people even begin their journey. Permission to travel checks have become a standard part of the border process. As of May 2026, over 24.8 million ETA applications have been submitted. This is already stopping individuals who we believe do not qualify for entry from travelling in the first place. This eases pressure on frontline teams and helps airports manage passenger flow more efficiently.

Looking further ahead, after a successful pilot at Manchester, we are preparing for the introduction of contactless eGates. This will allow passengers to verify their identity biometrically, without needing to get their passport out at all. This relies on holding biometrics in advance that we can verify on arrival. For many travellers, this will be a step change in how the UK border feels. It will be quicker, slicker and more intuitive, without any compromise on border security. Officers will, of course, remain in place to intervene where required. This is a big moment in how the UK border evolves, transforming the journey for passengers while maintaining the high standards of security expected.

At the same time, the environment we operate in is becoming more complex. We expect passenger numbers will continue to grow, and the threats we face are evolving. We need a border that is both faster and more secure, and we are building the capability to do both.

Alongside improvements in the passenger journey, we are strengthening our ability to identify and intercept those who present the greatest risk. Greater



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use of data and technology will allow officers to focus more time on higher-harm activity, including targeted interventions and intelligence-led work at the border. When all of these changes are taken together, our ambition is to make automation the norm for the vast majority of arriving passengers.

This is a real opportunity for Border Force and airport operators to shape the future border together. By continuing to work closely, we can deliver a system that is faster, simpler and more secure – one that keeps pace with demand and sets a new international standard.

I look forward to continuing that partnership in the months ahead. If you have feedback or want to pick up any aspect of this work,



please do get in touch with my team at bfindustryengagement@homeoffice.gov.uk ■



John Irving

LIVERPOOL AIRPORT

LIVERPOOL AIRPORT HEADS FOR SIX MILLION PASSENGERS AFTER BREAKING PASSENGER RECORDS IN 2025

Liverpool John Lennon Airport's CEO, John Irving, is predicting that the airport will exceed six million passengers within a year following a record-breaking 2025.

He told The Airport Operator he expects that a combination of new routes and more frequency on existing routes “will help drive us to over six million passengers in the next 12 months”. Last year over 5.6m passengers passed through the airport, exceeding the highest number previously recorded in 2007, when the total was over 5.5m, and he predicted that “we are well set to break that record this year”.

Irving said that last year’s record had “predominantly been driven by our three main carriers – easyJet, Ryanair and Jet2. We had an extra easyJet aircraft and an extra Jet2 aircraft in 2025, which, alongside Ryanair, took us to our best-ever based aircraft volume. We had 18 aircraft based out of Liverpool in 2025, significantly more than the 12 we had pre-Covid”.

Irving said that easyJet is “performing really well. They were our biggest carrier in 2025

and will have their ninth-based aircraft here in August, which is the highest they have ever had based in Liverpool, and they will be our highest based carrier this year and into next year. The markets that they are flying to now are strong and easyJet holidays is starting to become a much bigger piece of the jigsaw”.

With Ryanair, he said “we have seen growth again. They had five based aircraft here last year and have already got the sixth based here now, which is a great sign of what they do for Liverpool. They will carry the most passengers they have ever carried out of Liverpool this year. Having growth from our two biggest carriers this year means we know we will beat that recently set record quite comfortably”.

Irving said that Jet2 “are also performing well over 2025 and into 2026. We have gone from no Jet2 aircraft to five and they made a huge impact when they came in a couple of years ago. I



think we will see a stronger load factor on all their routes as they become settled into operating out of Liverpool and we hope for further growth in the coming years, moving their five based aircraft to six or seven”.

The airport’s busiest single destination last year was Dublin, served by both Aer Lingus and Ryanair, closely followed by Alicante, Belfast, Malaga and



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Tenerife, with a narrowing gap between the two Irish and the three Spanish destinations. Irving said that “the sunshine and leisure traffic is very strong out of Liverpool, but that connectivity in and out of Ireland and the Isle of Man (served by Loganair and easyJet), will always be important for our customers”.

Even as the airport grew strongly in 2025, recently released data show that flights operating from Liverpool John Lennon Airport experienced the smallest delays. According to the CAA, 81% of flights from the airport departed within 15 minutes of their scheduled time, outperforming the UK average by 8% and departures were delayed by an average of just nine minutes.

Asked how that had been achieved, Irving said it was down to investment in the right places and to strong relationships between all the parties in the airport – the airport team, the

airline team and the ground handlers. “We have worked really hard together to make sure that on-time performance is as good as it can be” he said. “When we grow, we will grow in the right way to make sure that what we offer – whether it is 10-minute security or the best on-time performance in the country – will always be our fundamental USP”.

Irving acknowledged that, like others, the airport has been keeping a close eye on the Middle East crisis, though he said the airport’s airlines continue to trade well. “Our message is ‘summer is on’”, he said, though he added that “from a fuel price point of view obviously we all want to see that come back to some sort of normality to protect winter and to allow flights to fly full”.

Another recent headwind for the airport, has been the doubling of its business rates. He said that “the structure of business rates for airports doesn’t work. We have

seen a huge cost increase to us on business rates on a year-on-year basis and we are certainly in the team trying to make sure that this is resolved and is equitable and fair. That increase and the increase in all the tax that we have had to pay over the last couple of years really reduces our ability to invest in the airport”.

Nevertheless Irving said that, looking ahead, “we want to grow. We want to do the best we can to deliver more connectivity and more routes to new destinations, for example, in Greece, Italy and Scandinavia, and we also want to recover our hub connectivity, which we had with Lufthansa. It is a challenge, but it is a challenge we are up for. Strategically we would like to add a hub, like Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Munich or Paris, as much for the city region as for the airport. We are doing well at Liverpool, but our ambition for the future remains very strong”. ■



**AIRPORT
SUSTAINABILITY
CONFERENCE**
6-7 MAY 2026

AIRPORTSUK SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE FOCUSSED ON PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



A report from AirportsUK Policy Director, Christopher Snelling

We were delighted to welcome so many of you to Glasgow on 6 and 7 May for the biennial AirportsUK Sustainability Conference. The event brought together airport leaders, regulators, government officials, technical experts and industry partners to explore how aviation can make meaningful progress towards decarbonisation, while also addressing wider environmental and community responsibilities.

The conference was opened by Kam Jandu, Chief Executive Officer of AGS Airports, who shared his perspective on sustainability and explained that it is front and centre in the airports' work and their interaction with stakeholders. The first day, which I moderated, included updates on the policy and technical

landscape from Harry Armstrong, Head of Sustainability at the Civil Aviation Authority, and Dan Walker, Technical Director at Sustainable Aviation. Fiona Smith, Co-Chair of the Zero Emissions Flight Infrastructure Group (ZEFIG) and Sustainability Director at AGS Airports, then took part in a fireside chat and provided a progress report on ZEFIG. There was also a

dynamic discussion on regulation of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) with the Environment Agency's Martin Flack and a remediation panel discussion with Puragen, Geosynthetic and Tetra Tech - reflecting the sector's need to respond to legacy environmental risks.

Other key topics from the

first day included Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), presented by the Department for Transport's Rachael Gilbert (Head of SAF Commercialisation), and noise policy by her colleague, Tim May (Head of Aviation Environmental Impacts), carbon targets and accreditation, with a panel discussion from Trowers & Hamblins LLP, ICF and Environmental Minds, as well as greenhouse gas removals, and surface access from academics representing Imperial College London and the University of Sydney.

Alongside the formal sessions, there were valuable opportunities to connect, share ideas and learn from one another. We hope the breaks, and especially the dinner and quiz, gave everyone time to continue those conversations and strengthen relationships across the sector.

Day two was led for AirportsUK by Senior Policy Manager Rupinder Pamme, and turned towards implementation, collaboration and the wider sustainability responsibilities of airports. It opened with a thoughtful discussion on social sustainability, and the role airports play in their local communities, with contributions from Newcastle, Jersey and Edinburgh Airports, alongside the charities FareShare and The Felix Project, which help turn surplus food into meals for those who need them. We then moved on to environmental topics such as air quality and biodiversity net gain. The later sessions, moderated by Sustainability Working Group Chair, Mark Edwards (Head of Sustainability at Gatwick Airport), explored how sustainability can be delivered in practice through collaboration between airport operators, represented by AGS Airports and Liverpool John Lennon Airport, and key partners including airlines, represented by Jet2, as



well as Egis, NATS, ground services provider, dnata, and infrastructure provider, VEV. Together, these discussions highlighted just how much can be achieved when the wider aviation ecosystem works in partnership.

Across both days, we hope the conference offered a valuable blend of strategic policy discussion and practical delivery, giving delegates a clear sense of current priorities, shared challenges and the emerging solutions shaping the future of airport sustainability.

AirportsUK extends its sincere thanks to its sponsors, whose support helped make this event possible: Egis, the global engineering and operating firm, and NATS, the air traffic control and airport services provider. We are also grateful to Geosyntec and Puragen for exhibiting at

the conference. We would like to thank Mark Edwards for his contribution to the development of the day two panel sessions and for moderating them, as well as our AirportsUK colleague, Marko Saaret, Senior Manager, Events and Member Engagement, and the wider AirportsUK team for all their hard work in organising the event. Above all, our greatest thanks go to everyone who presented, took part in the panel sessions and attended the conference. Without your support and participation, it would not have been the success it was. ■



GATWICK AIRPORT

A “TRANSFORMATIONAL YEAR” FOR LONDON GATWICK AS NEW AIRLINES ARRIVE AND FIRST STEPS ARE TAKEN ON ITS NORTHERN RUNWAY PROJECT

London Gatwick Chief Executive, Pierre-Hugues Schmit, sees 2026 as a crucially important “transformational year” for the airport, as a raft of new airlines arrive and work continues on the Government-approved plans to unlock new capacity at the airport by bringing its Northern Runway into routine use.



He told The Airport Operator that Gatwick had started the year “with the fantastic news of nine new carriers. We clearly saw that there was very strong momentum. Our quality of operation, combined with our pricing point, and our strong catchment have paved the way for what will be a strong 2026 despite some significant challenges”.

The new airlines include Air Arabia, Air Asia X, Air France, Condor, Eurowings and Jet2 – with Jet2’s announcement that it would open its newest UK base at Gatwick heralding the airport’s largest airline launch in a decade. The UK’s third largest airline has five based aircraft at Gatwick this summer and is operating 29 routes, with an increase in routes and capacity from the airport already announced for next year.

Schmit acknowledged that the Middle East crisis had affected a small portion of Gatwick’s business, with routes to the region directly impacted in March, though most have subsequently been reinstated. Meanwhile, traffic through the Middle East to Asia and Australia has been rerouted through Istanbul and Singapore and straight into China, seeing carriers such as Singapore Airlines and Air China increasing services from London Gatwick. He cautiously described the impact of higher fuel prices on the second half of the year as “difficult to evaluate at this stage”.

Turning to the Northern Runway project, Schmit said that Gatwick is “in a unique position because we have the planning permission. It is a fantastic opportunity that very few airports in Europe have and we are organising ourselves to hit the ground running. We are hiring in the world of construction, and we are looking at the sequence of works from an internal



Pierre-Hugues Schmit

Gatwick is “in a unique position because we have the planning permission. It is a fantastic opportunity that very few airports in Europe have and we are organising ourselves to hit the ground running”.

planning point of view”.

Gatwick was granted a Development Consent Order (DCO) for its Northern Runway project last September, with the DCO providing the airport with a single, comprehensive planning permission. Judicial review hearings were held in January, and a court ruling is imminent. “It has been a six- or seven-year process” Schmit said “but we have our planning permission”.

He described the Northern Runway programme as “unique in Europe, a fantastic opportunity for development, growth, employment and connectivity, but also for better quality of service and for resilience in operation – an opportunity to expand the service we deliver to the country and the region. We have very well-thought plans, and we have the resources to deliver these”.

Schmit became London Gatwick’s Chief Executive last September, joining from its majority shareholder, VINCI Airports, owner of 70 airports around the world, after eight years as that company’s Chief Commercial and Operational Officer. Within weeks of his appointment as Chief Executive, the UK Government had confirmed that the airport’s business rate bill will more than double this year to £80m, which he described as “a spectacular surge”.

In its contribution to this year’s Government business rates consultation the airport argued for a structure that would be “proportionate, predictable and stable”. Schmit said that “we are about to place more than £2bn of investment of private money in public infrastructure, so we need to know exactly what sort of fiscal regime will apply in the long run”.

“We are trying to get some initial answers to understand what

a more proportionate scheme for the future could be” he said “and remain in dialogue with Government. We have two large globally active shareholders, VINCI and GIP. Both are worldwide investors in infrastructure, knowledgeable when it comes to transport infrastructure and airports in particular – they are long-term investors and it’s important to have a more predictable and proportionate fiscal outlook for airports”.

Schmit was educated at the Ecole Nationale de l’Aviation Civile, the national school of aviation in France, before joining the Direction Generale de l’Aviation Civile, the French equivalent of the CAA. After a period as Deputy Airport Manager at Le Bourget, he joined

the headquarters of VINCI Airports in 2017. Describing his role there, he said “it was great. I enjoyed it. It allowed me to see the world and to meet many different airport colleagues in many different cultures”. Following VINCI’s acquisition of a majority stake in Gatwick in 2019, he joined the airport’s Board of Directors.

Asked to recall his first impressions of Gatwick after becoming Chief Executive, he said he had taken time initially to “walk the airport and meet our teams in different environments, including fire fighters, security officers, engineering, airfield operations and biodiversity teams, and what struck me then was the very strong sense of belonging and a very strong dedication to the

The Northern Runway programme is “unique in Europe, a fantastic opportunity for development, growth, employment and connectivity, but also for better quality of service and for resilience in operation – an opportunity to expand the service we deliver to the country and the region”.



passenger journey. I have seen different airports. At this sort of size of airport quite often you start to see silos. Here people are very proud of working at Gatwick, they are very committed. You can see that there is a strong sense of connection between our teams and the passenger, which is really a good place to be, so that was striking”.

Schmit also expressed gratitude for the support that he has received as Chief Executive from Stewart Wingate, now Managing Director, UK Airports, for both VINCI Airports and Global Infrastructure Partners, and previously his immediate predecessor as Gatwick’s Chief Executive for over 15 years. He said “Stewart has been a very strong support,

providing guidance. It has worked very well, and he has helped me to navigate not only UK politics but also the investor side. I feel

privileged to have the capacity to work with him, to learn from him and to speak to him whenever we need it”. ■



UK CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

THE NEW CIVIL AVIATION BILL: PROTECTING PEOPLE, ENABLING AEROSPACE

By Tim Johnson, Policy Director, UK Civil Aviation Authority

Last year was a record-breaking year that saw over 300 million passengers travelling through UK airports. The UK has never seen so many people flying, so how do we protect hundreds of millions of passengers, help them fly safely and smoothly, and enable the sector to grow into the future?

The Civil Aviation Bill now being considered by Parliament represents an important step forward. We welcome the Bill, which addresses many current and future challenges facing our sector:

- Making our safety regulation process more agile so we can adapt more quickly to emerging safety issues and developing sectors
- Building consumer confidence in UK aviation by strengthening our ability to enforce existing regulations if passenger rights are systematically failing to be upheld
- Enabling implementation of airspace modernisation changes to improve the efficiency of the airspace system.

MORE AGILE SAFETY REGULATIONS

The Bill proposes to give the Civil Aviation Authority the power to set detailed, legally binding technical aviation safety rules. Safety remains our top priority and so the system needs to keep up with and anticipate changes in the aviation sector.

The new powers would let us make changes to technical rules more quickly to maintain safety standards, meet the UK's international obligations under the ICAO framework as well as allowing us to support innovation and growth as new sectors emerge.

If granted, these powers would enable us to create a single, consolidated safety rulebook for



Tim Johnson

industry. This will make it easier to understand what is a complex set of rules.

At first, most rules would stay the same as the existing rule set is moved into the CAA's new rulebook. Over time, elements of it will be updated as aviation

standards evolve and we look to consolidate and improve the rulebook. Any change will be subject to consultation with you, the industry, so you can have your say on the rulemaking plans and on the details of the specific changes.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Building consumer confidence has been key to growing the sector after the pandemic. Industry usually takes consumer protection seriously: the Bill proposes strengthened enforcement powers in the event that airlines or airports systematically fail to meet their obligations.

At the moment, the Civil Aviation Authority must rely on the courts to enforce air passenger rules, which can take years to deliver results for passengers. These powers would allow the CAA to achieve the same in significantly less time, investigating and making decisions on non-compliance when needed, including issuing monetary penalties.

It means consumer protection laws could be enforced more effectively, with stronger deterrents to unfair commercial practices. We also expect this to boost confidence in the UK aviation system and create a fairer environment for businesses that are already doing the right thing.

AIRSPACE MODERNISATION

Modernising our airspace remains critical to supporting growth. It will enable a more efficient airspace system with benefits to capacity, delays and efficiency. As we highlighted at our recent annual stakeholder address, it is one of the most important areas of change for the sector.

The Bill includes measures to support the UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) and strengthens direction powers to enable more

coordinated airspace change, which would also support any future airport expansion.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PREPARING FOR USING NEW POWERS

Alongside granting new powers, the Bill would also create new mechanisms for Parliament and Government to hold us to account for their use. This is entirely appropriate and we recognise the importance of using these powers effectively and proportionately.

We already are deeply engaged in UK technical safety rule making activities, in support of Government's existing legislative programme. We recognise that the new powers set out in the Bill would involve additional responsibilities. That is why we have established a programme of work to ensure we have all the capabilities, assurance and governance mechanisms to exercise them in this way.

Fundamental to our success will be deep and regular engagement with the sector to inform how they are used and to understand and anticipate the sector's needs. We welcome all these new mechanisms and arrangements.

CONCLUSION

UK aviation is a key part of a successful global industry. It must continue to be a world-leading sector where the highest safety and consumer standards are expected, and where growth and innovation can thrive. As the world changes ever more quickly and new issues and innovation emerge, it is important that the regulatory framework that supports the success of the sector is fit for purpose. This Bill, with its long called for changes, would create a more agile and responsive regulatory toolset and is an essential ingredient of that success. The Civil Aviation Bill is good news for the sector. ■



BRISTOL AIRPORT

BRISTOL AIRPORT SEEKS A GREEN LIGHT FOR FURTHER GROWTH AS CEO HEADS FOR THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE

Bristol Airport has submitted a planning application to allow an increase in its passenger numbers to 15m passengers a year.

Three weeks after the application was submitted to North Somerset Council at the end of March, the airport's Chief Executive Officer, Dave Lees, announced that he will be stepping down later this year after eight years in the role.


Early in his period in office he said that the Covid pandemic had forced the airport to make some difficult decisions, including "a really challenging decision around making a third of our team members redundant". Then post-Covid "the business bounced back incredibly successfully. That has taken a real team effort and now we are at traffic levels nearly 25% above where we were in 2019, which is industry-leading in the UK".

Invited by The Airport Operator to reflect on his achievements as CEO, he politely declined and said that he preferred to talk about what the team at Bristol Airport had done during the period, rather than himself. He focussed on three of the team's achievements: securing planning approval in 2023 to allow an increase in annual passenger numbers to 12m, significantly ramping up the airport's capital development programme and going a long way towards delivering on a pioneering commitment by the airport to be Net Zero for its own operations by 2030.

The growth in Bristol's passenger numbers during the post-Covid period has been striking. In 2019,

just before the pandemic, 8.96m passengers passed through the airport. That fell to 2.08m in 2021, before four years of steady recovery - 7.94m in 2022, 9.91m in 2023, 10.61m in 2024 and 10.83m last year, with Lees anticipating a further rise to about 11m this year.

On investment, Lees said "at the moment we are mid-point in terms of our development to 12m passengers, which is costing £400m. We delivered our public transport interchange last year; it opened early, on budget and really transformed the customer experience. At the same time we have commenced our next phase of development, which is going to add over 50% to our airside departure lounge, doubling the number of food



"At the moment we are mid-point in terms of our development to 12m passengers, which is costing £400m. We delivered our public transport interchange last year; it opened early, on budget and really transformed the customer experience."

and beverage outlets; that will be delivered by 2028 and will once again transform the customer experience”.

As part of the next phase of proposed development to 15m passengers, he said “we would be looking at least at another £400m of investment. We are going to be increasing the number of aircraft stands and the size of all our passenger facilities – including immigration, security and baggage reclaim. The scale of our planned development really does reflect the level of ambition for growth in our region, which is currently the fastest-growing outside of London”.

Bristol Airport set out its sustainability strategy during Covid, announcing a plan to be Net Zero for its own operations by 2030. Lees said “it is great that we are delivering against that. We have already reduced emissions versus 2019 by over 50%. We are building an energy centre this year, which will get rid of gas from the terminal. By 2027 we will have reduced our emissions by 73%, so we have got a huge amount of credence behind our assertion that we will be Net Zero by 2030 and probably the first airport anywhere in the UK to have Net Zero operations”.

Turning to this year’s planning application, Lees said that its key elements are firstly, investment

“The scale of our planned development really does reflect the level of ambition for growth in our region, which is currently the fastest-growing outside of London”.



Immigration Hall

plans to transform the customer experience; secondly, “relatively modest” plans to extend the airport runway by about 150 metres (less than 10% of the existing runway length and within the airport’s existing boundary) to enable newer aircraft types, such as the A350 and B787, to operate from the runway to

destinations beyond Europe; and thirdly, around delivering another thousand jobs at the airport, “really powering forward that growth trajectory from an employment perspective. We are currently the single largest employment site in our region, with just under 6,000 jobs here at the airport already”.

Boarding gate



If the application is approved, the airport hopes to see new routes opened to the east coast of the United States, the Caribbean and the Middle East. Of these, despite this year's crisis in the region, Lees anticipates that the biggest element will be into the Middle East. He said "this covers a big area from Istanbul through to Saudi Arabia. I am sure it will rebound back and connectivity will be back in future. At Bristol we are not talking about this year, but about the end of the decade. Because of its growth over the last ten years, the Middle East is the single biggest untapped market where people currently travel from our region up to London".

An element of the planning application which appears to have provoked some of the most strident criticism locally relates to the proposed runway extension, which will require runway lights to be extended on to an adjacent area, which is common land. Lees



Check-in area



points out that "the footprint is less than 1% of the common land, so really at the margins, but we continue to work with our local communities on how we can mitigate the effects of the proposed runway lights to ensure that we can maintain the bridle paths and walking paths which criss-cross the common. The overall principle of working with our local community, finding a way forward with a credible mitigation package for the affected communities, is right at the top of our list here".

On aircraft noise, Lees said that the airport continues to incentivise its airlines to operate the quietest aircraft possible to lessen the noise footprint in adjacent communities. He emphasised that, "we have got a really good track record of having reduced our

noise footprint consistently over the last few years, despite the fact that we have actually grown the number of passengers at the airport".

Looking ahead, the airport hopes to receive a positive decision from North Somerset Council's Planning Committee on its planning application by the end of this year, though he acknowledged that, as with other UK airports granted approval for their expansion plans, this could be followed by a judicial review. By then, Lees expects that he will have left Bristol Airport, with a planned future career phase that "is going to be portfolio – a non-executive directorship, a trustee and doing some other exciting things, as well as having a bit of a break". ■

HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK 2026

AIRPORTSUK PRAISES "PHENOMENAL ENGAGEMENT" IN 2026 HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK

Victoria MacRae, AirportsUK's Head of Regulation, Operations and Compliance, said that the engagement by airports across the UK in this year's UK Airports Health and Safety Week had been "phenomenal".

MacRae, who until last year held a senior health and safety role at Bristol Airport, said "as someone who last year was involved in this event from the other side of the fence, I have really enjoyed getting involved from an AirportsUK perspective. I have been struck by the time, energy and care people put into it and it's a powerful message that health and safety isn't just a priority for our airports – it's a shared commitment, driven by people who work tirelessly to keep others safe, 24/7".

This year's Health and Safety Week ran from 11 to 15 May and focussed on three key themes:

- occupational health risks, such as vibration, noise, musculoskeletal disorders and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)
- mental health, wellbeing and

safety culture, and

- climate change and safety in outdoor operations.

A clear indication of the level of engagement was the fact that Heathrow Airport's week was its biggest ever, bringing together over 2,500 colleagues and 48 presenting teams for a programme of demonstrations, interactive activities, and safety initiatives. The airport's COO, Javier Echave Esport, said "I love the energy; I love the conversation. Safety continues being the unified value of Heathrow".

The airport's

safety week had a strong focus on safe driving and reducing vehicle-aircraft conflict, combining practical learning with innovation, from flight simulator experiences and 'boarding card' check-ins to informal conversations over an ice-cream, extending beyond airside to involve teams across retail, security,



London Gatwick

rail and business services, alongside community outreach and wellbeing activities.

Elsewhere in London and the South East, **London Gatwick Airport** offered practical ways to learn and share insights from airfield and biodiversity walks to hands-on activities, demonstrations and a Health and Safety roadshow. The airport said that under the theme of 'zero compromise for zero injury' the week had reinforced that safety and security underpin everything that Gatwick does.

London Stansted Airport held sessions to raise awareness of the COSHH symbol, as well as outlining appropriate personal protective equipment requirements. To promote awareness of musculoskeletal disorders, the airport brought in a racing car, encouraging employees to participate in a wheel change challenge, which demonstrated effective movement and safety techniques.

At **London Luton Airport** one of the airside stands became the centre of the week, with colleagues from across the airport campus coming together to take part in manual handling talks, learn about critical safety behaviours, and understand the importance of noise engagement.

The programme of events at **London**



London Stansted Airport

City put wellbeing, safety and teamwork front and centre, with all staff members being asked to make a personal health and safety promise for the year ahead. There were live demonstrations from the emergency services, including First Aid training from London's Air Ambulance charity and police dog team demonstrations.

London and the South East's two business airports organised busy programmes. **London Biggin Hill Airport** welcomed over 1,500 participants from colleagues and the community, showcasing emergency services, alongside a

"I have been struck by the time, energy and care people put into it and it's a powerful message that health and safety isn't just a priority for our airports – it's a shared commitment, driven by people who work tirelessly to keep others safe, 24/7".



London City Airport



London Luton Airport



Cornwall Airport Newquay



Farnborough Airport

programme of practical safety activities, training sessions and wellbeing initiatives. **Farnborough Airport** opened their week with a session on fatigue management, before the main event brought together Foreign Object Debris awareness, wellbeing and occupational health stands, manual handling sessions, VR fire extinguisher and first aid activities, airport Rescue and Fire Fighting Services displays, and ground handling showcases.

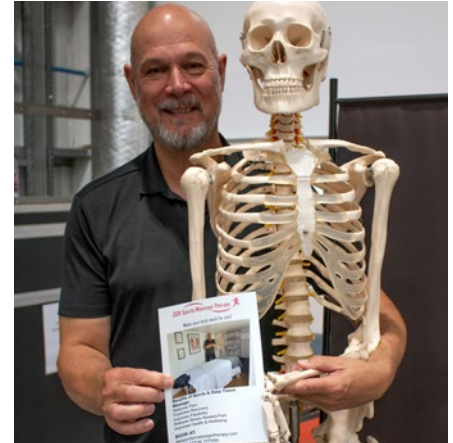
Across England, airports, large and small, organised a wide range of activities designed to get everyone involved and engaged in health and safety. **Cornwall Airport Newquay** hosted 20 sessions with over 180 bookings. Highlights included a visit from the Danish baggage and ground handling

company, Power Stow, to share best practices on rollertrack and tail loading operations, two women's self-defence sessions, a session on climate change and a visit from Darcy, the Devon & Cornwall Police therapy dog.

Focussing on occupational health risks in terms of musculoskeletal disorders, **Bristol Airport** organised posture checks with a chiropractor, with clinics held for airside and



Heathrow Airport



Bristol Airport

landside staff around the site. The sessions, including practical tips, aimed to ensure that staff had a good understanding of how posture affects comfort and health at work.

The programme at **Liverpool John Lennon Airport** was led by the Rescue and Fire Fighting Services team, who organised fire extinguisher training and training



Edinburgh Airport

in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and the use of AEDs (automated external defibrillators) during sudden cardiac arrests.

In Scotland, **Edinburgh Airport** delivered a varied programme, bringing together staff, partners and passengers with a mix of educational, operational and wellbeing activities. Highlights included behind-the-scenes Air Traffic Control tower tours and wellbeing initiatives involving therapy dogs. An airside safety day featured interactive simulators, with participation from airlines, ground handlers and campus partners.

Over in Northern Ireland, **Belfast City Airport** organised workshops and activities focussed on building a strong safety culture, with sessions on conflict management, disability awareness, and risk prevention, alongside hands-on experiences with the airport fire service covering emergency response, CPR, and hazard management.

As in previous years, participating airports are being invited to enter their Health and Safety Week activities for awards to be presented at a ceremony at the AirportsUK offices at the end of September. ■



London Biggin Hill Airport

Belfast City Airport



Liverpool John Lennon Airport Airport

TIREE AIRPORT

TIREE THE AIRPORT OF THE SUNSHINE ISLE

Part of the Inner Hebrides, Tiree is an island 22 miles west of the Scottish mainland. Known as the 'sunshine isle', it has a deserved reputation for bright early summers, though it also has an average of 34 days of gales each year.



Tiree has played a key role in aviation history in Scotland, with the first flight landing on the island on 18 July in 1929. Chartered by the Tiree Association and piloted by Captain A N Kingwill, it flew over to visit a sports day on The Reef, performing a short aerial display and taking paying customers for flights around the island.

In 1934, the first air ambulance came to Tiree. Pilot David Barclay made the first commercial flight to the island in a DH 89 Dragon Rapide on 1 July 1936 for Northern and Scottish Airways, marking the start of regular flights to and from the island. Passengers for these early flights would meet the crew in a wooden hut on the concourse of St Enoch railway station in Glasgow, travelling to Renfrew airfield to board the aircraft.

Tickets for the early commercial flights were sold by local agents, the first of whom was Colin MacPhail, who was a crofter, a special constable and lay preacher. Described as having, "handcuffs in one pocket and a Bible in the other", before each flight he would weigh passengers near his wooden hut on The Reef. His role also included clearing the beach of any cattle or livestock before each flight and hoisting the windsock.

The Air Ministry requisitioned The Reef in 1940, in the hope of building a fighter base on the island. However, construction of the first runways was not successful, and they were replaced with three more substantial runways, of which the longest was 1,472m, with deeper foundations using local stone.

A new aerodrome was constructed with ten large aircraft hangars and a camp supporting 2,000 service personnel from all over the world. 224 Squadron arrived in 1942, flying Hudsons on anti-submarine patrols and air-sea rescue missions. RAF Tiree was mothballed after five



Phil Knowles, Tiree Airport Manager

months when the squadron moved to Hampshire but reopened a year later when 518 Squadron arrived. Using Halifaxes, they collected weather information and it was a message from one of these flights in June 1944 that persuaded Churchill to delay the D-Day landings by 24 hours to let a storm pass.

Sadly, two of these aircraft collided in low cloud over the aerodrome on 16 August 1944 and all 16 crew members were lost. A memorial plaque outside the current terminal building commemorates this Coastal Command crew.

Commercial flights continued during the Second World War, using a landing strip on the grass some distance from the RAF base. Only passengers with a personal connection to the island were allowed to travel, as Tiree was a restricted area requiring travel permits.

"We are a small team, and we all have to be skilled in all aspects of airport operations, from ground-handling, providing a fire service, wildlife management, cutting grass and providing flight information services. We all have strong links to the community on the island which makes us a close-knit team."

The RAF handed the airfield over to the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 1947 with Captain David Barclay continuing to pilot the Tiree plane as he had done in the years previously.

He retired in 1965, having flown 17,349 hours and one and a half million miles in his civilian career.

A local legendary figure, known as 'BEA Archie', Archie MacArthur took up the position of Station Manager in 1960, serving 28 years in the role. He was known for greeting every passenger by name and even handing 'spends' (pocket money) to children on their way to Glasgow.

On 4 March 1986, Tiree Airport, along with seven other airports, were incorporated by the UK Civil Aviation Authority into the newly formed Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. The current Airport Manager, Phil Knowles, moved to the island in 2001.

He said, "We are a small team, and we all have to be skilled in all aspects of airport operations, from ground-handling, providing a fire service, wildlife management, cutting grass and providing flight information services. We all have strong links to the community on the island which makes us a close-knit team."

Tiree airport is situated in an area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. While not endangering aircraft movements, the airport team have worked with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to create a breeding-friendly environment for birds,

including corncrakes and small terns. At the same time, the team work to manage the numbers of geese attempting to set up home on the airfield.

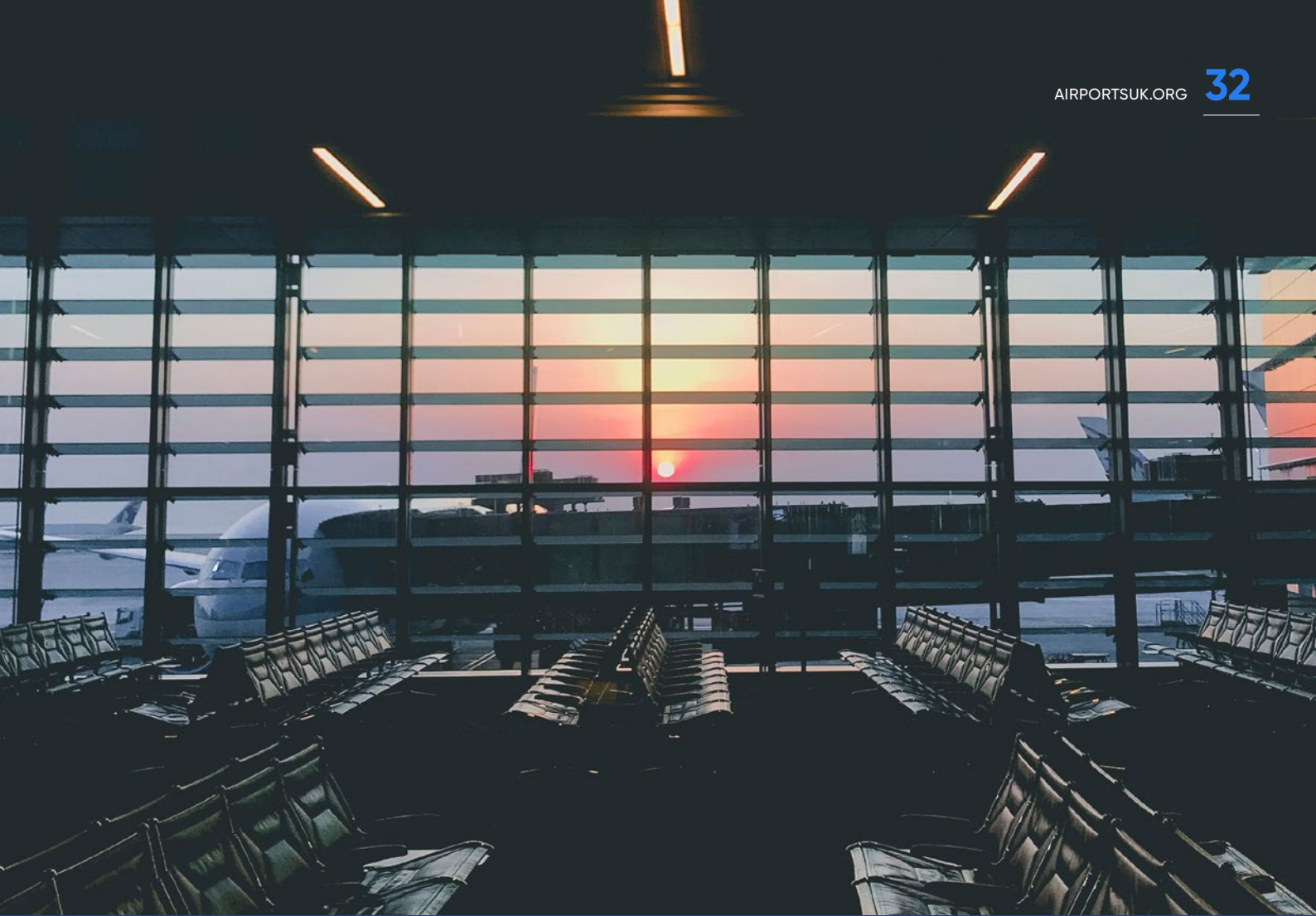
The airport has also recently replaced 12 metres of drainage pipe which helps to drain the reef. Controlling this flow of water run-off from land to sea also creates the ideal conditions and habitat for native species of wildlife, with herons and otters being a regular sight. Tiree is also home to nine species of bees including the rare great yellow bumblebee and work is underway to attract them by creating a wildflower area alongside the disused runway.

Due to storm surges, Tiree has experienced coastal erosion

over the years at Tràigh Bhàigh (Crossapol beach), which is adjacent to Tiree Airport. This erosion has exposed metal and concrete demolition waste from the former RAF base. Non-hazardous, these materials now act as dune protection with the marram grass and native species once again taking hold as the dunes reform.

The airport team regularly hold open days and participate in events such as charity car washes to raise money for local charities, including the Scottish Charity Air Ambulance, and for suicide awareness groups. They also work with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on training exercises at the airport and outside of airport operations attend domestic fire incidents. ■





SITA

TOTAL AIRPORT MANAGEMENT: THE CASE FOR SYSTEM- WIDE COORDINATION

By Nick Batchelor, Vice President, Innovation, SITA

For decades, airport capacity has been treated as a function of physical infrastructure. Runways, terminals and gates have defined the ceiling on growth. That assumption no longer holds. The real constraint today is operational coordination – and that is a problem airports are increasingly equipped to solve.

Airports are deeply interconnected systems. Delays rarely stay where they start. A late inbound aircraft can block a gate, slow down boarding, create baggage congestion and eventually affect departure slots. What looks like a single issue is usually the result of disconnected decisions across teams.

When check-in, security, ground handling and airside operations each optimise for their own metrics, the system as a whole absorbs the cost. Pressure does not disappear; it moves.

Total Airport Management (TAM) is a direct response to this structural problem. Building on the foundations of Airport Collaborative Decision Making, which has already demonstrated the value of shared situational awareness and collaborative data sharing for flight operations, TAM extends that logic end-to-end. Terminal flows, baggage throughput, passenger processing, airside operations and airspace management are brought into a unified operational model, coordinated in real time across all stakeholders. In practice, this means connecting existing systems into a shared operational layer that combines real-time data, predictive insights and decision support, so stakeholders can act earlier and in sync rather than reacting in isolation.

The gap is joint action – the ability for airports, airlines, ground handlers, security agencies and air traffic control to move from shared information to shared decisions. TAM closes that gap by establishing a common operational picture, underpinned by integrated data, that enables earlier and more effective intervention across the network.

The performance case is well established. With close to a



Nick Batchelor

quarter of global passengers affected by delays or cancellations in recent years, the cost of fragmented operations is measurable and material. Airports that have piloted shared operational platforms are already demonstrating that earlier stakeholder alignment reduces the propagation of disruption and protects on-time performance without requiring additional physical capacity. That matters in an environment where infrastructure investment timelines are long, and demand growth is not waiting.

The role of artificial intelligence within TAM is evolving rapidly. The most significant shift is the move from passive analytics to active orchestration. Agentic AI systems can now continuously monitor operations, detect early signals of disruption: an inbound delay, a ground equipment shortage, or a security queue building beyond a set threshold, and trigger pre-configured workflows before the impact spreads. In a TAM environment, this could mean identifying a delayed inbound flight, assessing the knock-on impact on gates, baggage and passenger flow, and triggering coordinated adjustments across teams before disruption escalates.

This is not automation

Total Airport Management (TAM) is a direct response to this structural problem. Building on the foundations of Airport Collaborative Decision Making, which has already demonstrated the value of shared situational awareness and collaborative data sharing for flight operations, TAM extends that logic end-to-end.

replacing human judgement; it is automation handling the procedural load so that experienced operators can focus on exceptions that genuinely require contextual reasoning.

That distinction matters as the industry faces a structural workforce challenge. Experienced operational staff are retiring faster than they are being replaced. The institutional knowledge embedded in those teams is difficult to replicate. AI-augmented TAM environments can encode best-practice decision logic, reducing dependence on individual expertise while also shortening the learning curve for less experienced staff.

The data and integration challenges are real but manageable. Legacy systems, fragmented data ownership and concerns over implementation cost are consistent barriers. The pragmatic path forward is not wholesale replacement, but layering a shared coordination



platform over existing infrastructure, connecting data sources that already exist and enabling optimisation at a pan-system level. This approach allows airports to prioritise high-value use cases, demonstrate returns quickly, and expand scope incrementally. Critically, the value of the shared data layer increases as more stakeholders contribute to it, creating a reinforcing dynamic that drives adoption over time.

The horizon for TAM extends beyond operational efficiency. As the model matures, it provides a framework for balancing multiple objectives simultaneously - including punctuality, sustainability metrics, resource utilisation and passenger experience - within a single operational view. That capability will be increasingly important as airports face growing pressure to demonstrate performance against a broader set of outcomes.

For airport leaders, the core

message is this: growth does not have to mean congestion, and congestion does not require new infrastructure to resolve. The capacity exists within current operations. Unlocking it comes down to coordination, with the right data shared in real time to enable aligned decisions across the airport system. Total Airport Management is the framework for doing exactly that. ■

SITA is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner.

SITA

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AIRPORTSUK AIRPORT OPERATIONS CONFERENCE

AIRPORTSUK TO HOST MAJOR CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF UK AIRPORT OPERATIONS

Senior officials from the UK Civil Aviation Authority, the Department for Transport and NATS will explore the latest developments shaping the future of airport operations at the conference in Bournemouth on 1 and 2 July.

Over 120 attendees from across the UK airport operations community – including operational leaders, suppliers and key industry stakeholders – will gather at the Hilton Bournemouth for two days of keynote speeches, panel sessions and presentations. This year's Airport Operations Conference will focus on regulation, innovation and resilience.

Marko Saaret, Airport UK's Senior Manager, Events & Member Engagement, said that, in line with AirportUK's approach to its events, there will be ample networking and socialising opportunities during lunches and networking breaks and a three-course dinner in the evening of the first day of the conference.

Andrew Bell, Chief Executive of Regional & City Airports (which includes Bournemouth Airport) will open the conference before a keynote speech from Jon Round, Head of Airspace, Air Traffic Management and Aerodromes at the CAA.

On 1 July a wide range of issue-

specific sessions will consider fire risk in the electrified airport (particularly in relation to lithium-ion batteries), climate adaptation, aviation skills shortages and technology and data in operations. The subjects covered on 2 July will include accessibility, keeping airports safe while building for the future, ground handling and airside compliance.

Confirmed speakers from aviation industry suppliers will include Amy Dickinson (Sustainability Director at Egis), Carly Waddleton (Chief Customer Officer at OneReg), Abhi Chacko (Founder at Ostrum) and Nick Batchelor (Vice President, Innovation, Apps and Data at SITA). Wilson James will also provide a speaker.

CAA speakers will include Graeme Day (RFFS Policy), James Freemantle (consumer policy and enforcement), Sophie Jones (Head of Customer Experience), Steve Parry

(Principal Aerodrome Inspector) and Mike Sparrow (aerodromes policy specialist). Joe Silverman, Head of Aviation Resilience at the Department for Transport will also be speaking.

Saaret said that AirportsUK is delighted to have the support of the conference's headline sponsors – Egis, the global engineering and operating firm; NATS, the air traffic control and airport services provider; OneReg, the aviation compliance and regulatory company; and SITA, the communications and information technology firm. He said "their involvement ensures we can deliver these agenda-setting events, and we are grateful to them. It is also great to see the companies Comet, Enhancing Excellence and Intelligent Fingerprinting exhibiting at the conference". ■



COMET

FROM RECORDING TO PREVENTING: HOW AVIATION CAN CLOSE THE INVESTIGATION GAP

Steve Holmes, Chief Operating Officer at COMET, explains why the industry's safety ambitions deserve better investigation tools to match them.

Aviation has earned its safety record the hard way. Decades of sustained commitment to crew resource management, human factors training, and the development of increasingly sophisticated safety management frameworks have made commercial flight one of the safest activities in the modern world. It is an achievement that Steve Holmes, COO at incident investigation and root cause analysis specialists COMET, is quick to acknowledge.

"The industry deserves real credit for what it has built," he says. "The regulatory frameworks, the safety culture, the willingness to report and learn from events. That foundation is genuinely world-class. What we are talking about now is building on that, not completely changing it."

The opportunity Steve has in mind sits at the intersection of



Steve Holmes

investigation quality and data intelligence, and it applies across the full breadth of aviation operations: airlines, airports, ground handlers, and everyone in between.

THE GAP BETWEEN INTENT AND OUTCOME

Despite the strength of aviation's safety culture, Steve points to a pattern that safety leaders across

the sector will recognise. Incident reporting volumes are healthy, investigations are conducted, actions are assigned. Yet the same failure types can recur in the same operational areas, involving the same contributing factors.

“That is rarely a failure of effort,” he is careful to say. “The people running these safety programmes care deeply. What we see more often is a gap in methodology and infrastructure. The investigation process answers the question of what happened and who was involved. It does not always get to why it happened, and what systemic conditions made it possible.”

The most common point of breakdown, in Steve’s experience, is the treatment of human error as an endpoint rather than a starting point. When an investigation concludes that a ground handler failed to follow a procedure, or that an operative made an error of judgement under pressure, it has identified a symptom, not a cause.

“Human error is where the investigation should begin, not where it should stop,” he says. “The

real question is what conditions, pressures, training gaps, or system weaknesses made that error not just possible but likely. Without structured human factors analysis embedded in the process, those conditions stay in place. And they produce the next event.”

A second area of opportunity lies in how near misses and lower-severity events are treated. Steve is direct on this point: “Near misses are not background noise. The root causes behind a near miss and a fatality are very often identical. The difference is circumstance and timing. If you are only investigating your most serious events with genuine rigour, you are missing the earliest and most actionable

signals in your safety data.”

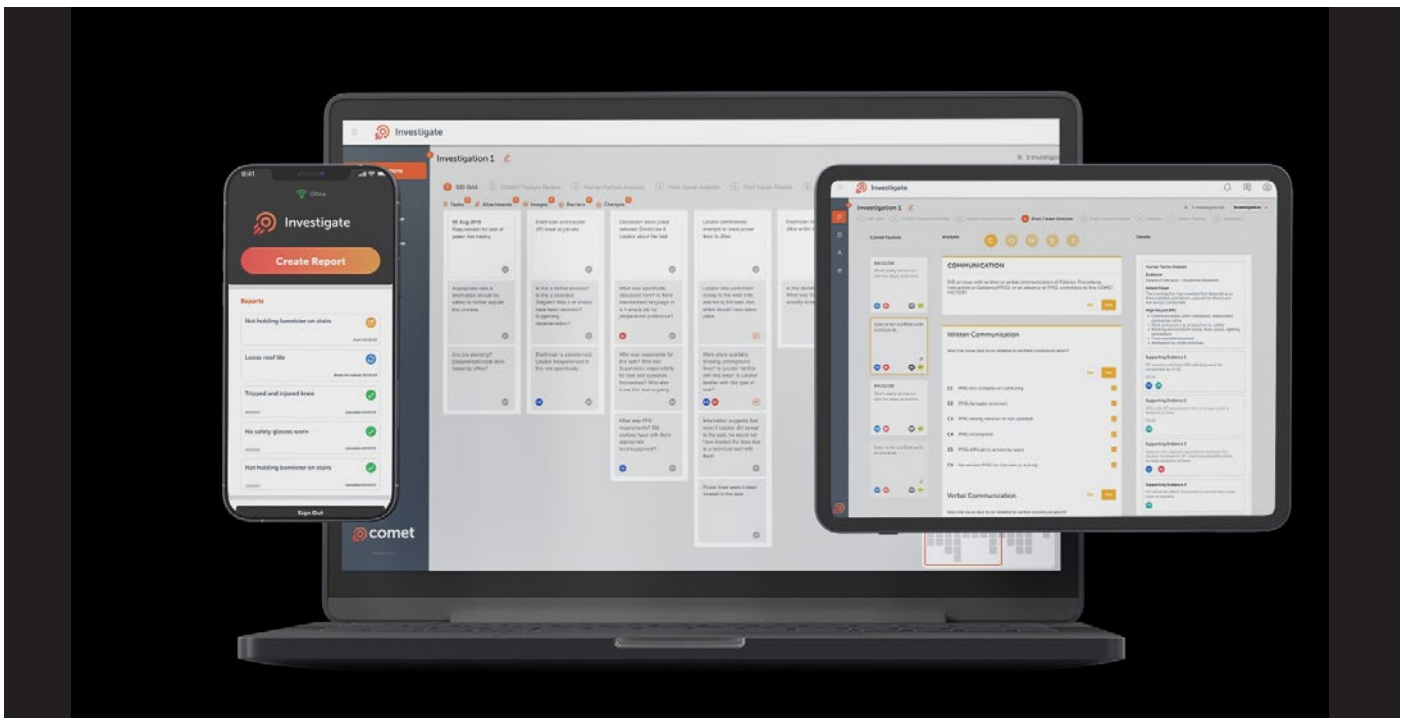
THE ROLE OF AI IN FINDING WHAT HUMANS CANNOT

This is where Steve believes technology, and specifically artificial intelligence, is beginning to change what is possible for aviation safety leaders.

Historically, incident investigation has been a human-led, case-by-case process. Effective in many respects, but limited in its ability to harness the collective intelligence held across an organisation’s full data set.

“AI introduces a new dimension,” says Steve. “It is something we have been working towards for

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some time, and just last month we launched the COMET AI Assistant, the only AI capability built specifically for incident investigation and root cause analysis. It works both inside individual investigations and across an entire portfolio of data over time, surfacing patterns and insights that no individual investigator could find on their own. It can answer questions that previously had no practical answer: which causal factors appear most frequently across high-severity incidents? Where is systemic risk accumulating? Which interventions are actually working? All through natural conversation. All you have to do is ask.

That capability does more than identify where systemic compliance gaps exist. It also surfaces pockets of genuinely good performance and the conditions that created them. "Understanding why some areas are performing well is just as valuable as understanding why others are struggling," Steve explains. "It means you can replicate success, not just respond to failure. And it means preventive spend goes where it will actually make a difference, rather than where the most recent serious event happened to occur."

WHAT THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIP DELIVERS

COMET works in aviation as part of a three-way partnership with Intellex and Arcadis that Steve describes as genuinely end-to-end. Intellex provides the enterprise-grade safety management platform that captures, manages, and tracks incident data at scale across complex multi-site operations. COMET contributes the structured root cause analysis methodology, built by professional investigators, with human factors analysis embedded directly into the



"Together, the three of us link every report to a root cause, every root cause to a corrective action, and every corrective action to a measurable outcome. That closed loop is what turns an investigation programme from a record-keeping exercise into something that genuinely reduces events over time."

investigation workflow and AI-assisted analytics that turn coded investigation data into strategic prevention intelligence. Arcadis brings the aviation-specific implementation expertise and change management capability that ensures the technology is adopted and embedded across operational teams, not just deployed and left to find its own way.

"Together, the three of us link every report to a root cause, every root cause to a corrective action, and every corrective action to a measurable outcome," Steve says. "That closed loop is what turns an investigation programme from a record-keeping exercise into something that genuinely

reduces events over time."

Aviation has always been an industry that looks honestly at where improvement is possible and acts on it. The investigation capability now available means that ambition has never been better equipped to deliver results. ■

COMET is an AirportsUK Gold Member.



CHRISTOPHER SNELLING, AIRPORTSUK POLICY DIRECTOR, REPORTS

AIRPORTSUK BACKS NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO AVIATION COMPETITIVENESS

AirportsUK submitted its response to the Northern Ireland Government's Consultation on Aviation Policy in May.

The consultation was a welcome and supportive document. It discussed the importance of aviation to the Northern Ireland economy and described the difficult competitive environment (especially vis-à-vis Dublin and its advantageous tax regime). Potential areas for action it identified were route development support, how to adjust Air Passenger Duty, and addressing the iniquitous position Northern Ireland is in on duty free sales.

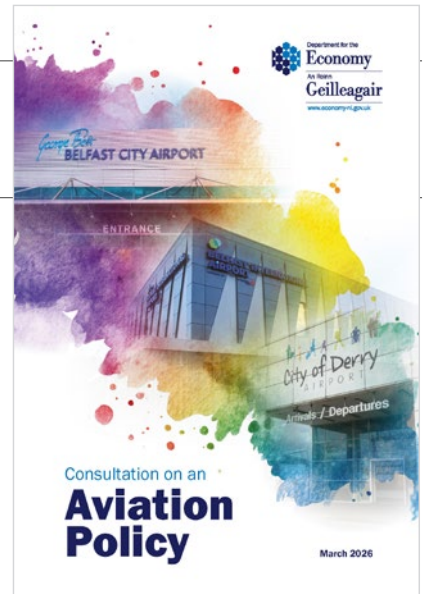
AirportsUK's response reflected back the correctness of the Government's analysis and added supporting information for these positions.

We discussed the effort that airports have to go to to entice airlines to start new routes, and the costs they face, and the various options for Government to support such route development to enable new routes to move towards commercial viability.

We noted that taxation remains one of the clearest areas where policy can make a practical difference. Air Passenger Duty continues to suppress demand, weaken route economics and deter investment in a region that already faces intense cross-border competition with Dublin Airport, where flights face no aviation taxation. Reducing APD, whether through broad reform or targeted measures, would strengthen Northern Ireland's offer to airlines and help improve connectivity for passengers and businesses alike.

We also supported efforts to address the current inequity on duty free sales, which limits commercial revenue for airports in Northern Ireland as they are prevented from having duty free either between Northern Ireland and the European Union, or between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, due to their unique Brexit status.

On decarbonisation we set out that the right approach is to



enable aviation to change through innovation, cleaner technology and long-term investment, not to restrict demand in a region that relies so heavily on flying. The consultation also rightly recognised the need to address skills challenges, particularly in specialist areas critical for future growth.

Overall, this consultation provides a beneficial starting point for policy consideration. The difficulty will come in turning these good intentions to practical actions, given the potential fiscal impacts and the current state of public finances. ■



ONEREG

AN INDUSTRY AT AN INFLECTION POINT: RETHINKING AIRPORT RISK

By Carly Waddleton, Co-Founder and Chief Customer Officer, OneReg

Across the UK, airports are in the middle of the most significant operational transformation the industry has seen in a generation. New systems, new digital capabilities and new regulatory expectations are arriving in parallel. What we are seeing goes beyond digital change. It is a fundamental shift in how risk and regulation need to operate.

Across the UK, airports are in the middle of the most significant operational transformation the industry has seen in a generation. New systems, new digital capabilities and new regulatory expectations are arriving in parallel. What we are seeing goes beyond digital change. It is a fundamental shift in how risk and regulation need to operate.

And yet, the model most airports still use to manage risk and compliance remains unchanged.

THE PATTERNS WE KEEP SEEING

Working across dozens of airports, the picture is remarkably consistent. Operational landscapes are fragmented, with manual processes and multiple legacy systems running side by side with little interoperability between them. Data is non-standardised: formats, definitions and structures vary across functions, making it difficult to aggregate or compare anything reliably. Compliance, in many places, is still managed through spreadsheets that are scattered, duplicated and hard to audit. Institutional knowledge lives in people's heads rather than in systems, creating a key-person risk that most organisations do not fully account for.

At the same time, cybersecurity exposure is climbing and legacy systems expand the attack surface. Regulatory scrutiny is intensifying too, and demonstrating compliance clearly and consistently is becoming a heavier lift than ever.

THE EMERGING RISK REALITY

Risk today looks very different from a decade ago. It is more interconnected, with operational, cyber, safety and compliance concerns overlapping in new ways. However, it is harder to see, because fragmented data hides

Compliance, in many places, is still managed through spreadsheets that are scattered, duplicated and hard to audit. Institutional knowledge lives in people's heads rather than in systems, creating a key-person risk that most organisations do not fully account for.

Carly Waddleton



as much as it reveals. And it moves faster than traditional reporting cycles can keep up with.

The implication is uncomfortable. The risk model airports were built on is no longer aligned to the environment they operate in. Periodic reporting is not real risk visibility, and siloed ownership is not effective control. An issue poorly managed in one airport does not stay contained. It can have implications across the wider network.

FROM COMPLIANCE TO ASSURANCE

What is emerging is a shift from static compliance to continuous regulatory assurance. Compliance is about producing evidence that controls existed at a point in time. Assurance is about knowing, at any point in time, that controls are working as intended.

That is a higher bar. It requires real-time visibility into control performance, connected data rather than spreadsheets stitched together at audit time, and a culture that treats risk as live and dynamic.

A SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH, AND THE AI QUESTION

Every shift described above depends on the same foundation: a single source of operational truth. Without it, dashboards remain partial, assurance remains aspirational, and the data needed to demonstrate that controls are working stays trapped across different spreadsheets and systems.

And without a single source of truth, the benefits being promised by AI – including predictive risk insight, anomaly detection, and intelligent automation – are not accessible. They require a comprehensive, standardised data foundation underneath. AI does not solve fragmentation; it

The future has to be more connected and collective: shared visibility, cross-airport learning and industry-level resilience as the goal, not individual optimisation. If one airport learns something critical, the industry should learn it instantly.

amplifies whatever is already there. Airports that invest now in a coherent operational data layer are doing more than modernising compliance. They are building the runway for what AI will offer next.

COLLECTIVE, NOT ISOLATED

The bigger shift is about the boundary of risk itself. The industry has historically treated each airport as its own risk environment, but risks propagate across systems, partners, supply chains and airports.

The future has to be more connected and collective: shared visibility, cross-airport learning and industry-level resilience as the goal, not individual optimisation. If one airport learns something critical, the industry should learn it instantly. Imagine cyber incidents shared in near real time, wildlife strike trends benchmarked nationally, contractor risk flagged across the network, and best practice evolving continuously rather than periodically.

A DIFFERENT ROLE FOR REGULATORS

This also reshapes the relationship between regulators and operators.

Periodic inspection separated by long gaps is giving way to shared visibility into operational performance, continuous dialogue in place of scheduled audits, and issues surfaced and worked through as they emerge. The defining question becomes one operators and regulators ask together: not “are you compliant?” but “are the controls working effectively?” And most importantly, airports will have confidence that they know the answer to that question at all times.

A DEFINING MOMENT

UK airports are at an inflection point. The shift away from static compliance, siloed systems and isolated risk management is already happening. Those who move early will improve resilience, reduce exposure and be better positioned for the next wave of regulatory and technological change.

The destination is beyond digitisation. Replacing paper forms with digital ones is not the goal; connected operational visibility is. There’s a future where every piece of data informs every other and the full operation is seen and managed as a coherent whole. The bigger opportunity here is to altogether reshape how the industry manages risk – and now is the time for UK airports to seize that opportunity. ■

OneReg is an AirportsUK Gold Member and a sponsor of the AirportsUK Airports Operations Conference, Bournemouth, 1-2 July 2026.



CHRISTOPHER SNELLING, AIRPORTSUK POLICY DIRECTOR

AIRPORTSUK URGES SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TO SET A LOWER RATE OF AIR DEPARTURE TAX

Since the last edition of *The Airport Operator* was published, AirportsUK has responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on how to deploy their new Air Departure Tax that will replace Air Passenger Duty next year.

The consultation noted the power that the Scottish Government will now have to adjust taxation and considered the implications of doing so. This consultation was carried out before the Scottish Parliament elections, but the responses to it were expected to be assessed by new Ministers after the election. Possible action could range from decreasing taxes to support Scottish connectivity and competitiveness, to increasing it to drive an environmental agenda.

In our response, we said that the Scottish Government should use its new powers over air departure tax to set a rate that is more competitive with comparable markets such as the Republic of Ireland and the Nordic countries. We explained that a lower rate would improve the economics of Scottish routes, strengthen confidence in Scotland as a place for aviation investment, and make airlines more willing to take the commercial risk of launching new services.



Christopher Snelling

We also said that stronger economic growth arising from better connectivity could help offset some of the impact on public finances. More broadly, we argued that reshaping Scotland's tax base to support growth sectors is one of the clearest ways tax policy can contribute to a stronger long-term economy.

We suggested that the Scottish Government should also consider targeted measures such as an 'ADT holiday' for new routes. We said

that a three-year ADT-free period for new Scottish services would materially improve the business case for airline investment, while avoiding a direct cost to the public finances because the routes would not otherwise exist. We noted that safeguards could be introduced to prevent misuse.

We also said that changes to ADT should sit alongside continued support for aviation decarbonisation, including action to back Sustainable Aviation Fuel production in Scotland and to ensure the infrastructure and market conditions are in place for future hydrogen flight.

We warned that failing to use these powers effectively could mean missing the opportunity to secure meaningful benefits for Scotland, and could even weaken the country's international connectivity if tax policy is used primarily as a tool to address climate change. We therefore said that new Scottish Ministers should be fully aware of both the opportunities and the risks involved in setting ADT policy. ■



CAPGEMINI

RETHINKING AIRPORT SYSTEMS CONNECTIVITY: THE BACKBONE OF AN INTELLIGENT AIRPORT

The role of advanced and mission-critical communications in modern airports

By Anastasia Karatrantou - Director, Advanced Connectivity, Group Portfolio
and David Wrou - Director, Capgemini Intelligent Industry, UK

CAN CONNECTIVITY BE AN ITEM THAT OPENS AN AIRPORT BOARD AGENDA?

Yes, if you mean how an airport connects people to other cities, regions and countries, but, historically, not if you are referring to how an airport's systems connect to each other.

Such connectivity is like lighting or fuelling; it sits behind the scenes, supporting operations, enabling technologies to work and transporting data from one system to the other. Increasing operational resilience in an ever more dynamic environment, ensuring trust and safety for critical infrastructure, capacity optimisation and the route to expansion: these are board-level priorities.

In practice, these priorities translate into operational use cases such as real-time situational awareness across airside, coordinated aircraft turnarounds, safer and faster incident response, and more productive, mobile teams operating across terminals, aprons and perimeters. They also extend to digitally monitoring and managing infrastructure, enabling predictive maintenance, improving energy management, and optimising the use of people, vehicles and assets across the airports in real-time. For early-adopters and innovators, they also translate to implementation of increased levels of automation with mobile robots or autonomous vehicles.

CONNECTING FOR TODAY'S PLAN AND TOMORROW'S AMBITION.

Across airports and adjacent sectors, the opportunity is clear - we are seeing the acceleration of digital, data, AI, automation, and robotics; all connected and enabled by advanced connectivity.

High value connectivity and AI enabled use cases across



Anastasia Karatrantou

Increasing operational resilience in an ever more dynamic environment, ensuring trust and safety for critical infrastructure, capacity optimisation and the route to expansion: these are board-level priorities.

all airport domains include synchronising complex, time critical operations; enhancing real time airport operations; scaling, protecting and augmenting the airport workforce and protecting infrastructure, resilience and expansion.

Automating operations encompasses aircraft turnaround orchestration, automated baggage and cargo weighing, automated guided vehicles moving baggage and assets, autonomous passenger transport, stand and resource optimisation

and operational digital twins.

Enhancing airport operations includes real time command and control of automated baggage systems, airside situational awareness, autonomous and remotely supervised airside vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles and drones for security and rapid response, and robotics for remote inspections in hazardous or inaccessible environments.

Augmenting the airport workforce includes connected workers operating seamlessly

across terminals and airside, augmenting the workforce with humanoid robots undertaking the 'heavy lifting' in baggage and on the apron, augmented and virtual reality support for maintenance, inspections and training, remotely guided and remote expert assistance and location-based monitoring for lone worker protection, welfare and emergency response.

Protecting infrastructure, resilience and expansion

encompassing digitally enhanced and efficient energy and utilities, predictive maintenance of critical infrastructure, asset intelligence and tracking, remote diagnostics and inspection and digitally visualising, simulating and modelling construction and expansion plans.

Here is the catch: these use cases can only perform as well as the connectivity infrastructure that underpins them. Legacy, purpose-built and monolithic connectivity solutions are no longer fit for purpose; they risk becoming a bottleneck to scaling the solutions that will drive efficiency, sustainability and security in the airport of the future.

EVOLVING THE ENABLING NETWORK

In an ever-accelerating effort for integrated and streamlined airport operations, the invisible force powering them remains, oddly, anything but. In many cases, connectivity has organically grown to be a patchwork of purpose-built solutions: from Wi-Fi and dedicated operational technology (OT) networks to land mobile radio, paging systems and a variety of Internet of Things solutions. Each is designed to solve a specific problem, but together they result in fragmentation, complexity, limited data visibility and constrained scalability. The consequence is



David Wrout

In many cases, connectivity has organically grown to be a patchwork of purpose-built solutions: from Wi-Fi and dedicated operational technology (OT) networks to land mobile radio, paging systems and a variety of Internet of Things solutions.

often over-engineered resilience, restricted use of cloud due to compliance and cybersecurity concerns, mission-critical communications still largely limited to voice, and an overall high total

cost of ownership that ultimately slows innovation and operational efficiency. What if connectivity were no longer an invisible enabler but a strategic asset, transformed into a convergent, internet protocol (IP)-based, broadband platform?

While it is not about one single connectivity solution solving the problem, 5G (5th Generation Mobile Connectivity) is the epicentre of this transformation. With 5G's unique blend of ultra-high speed and ultra-low latency mobile connectivity – it unlocks new possibilities; new ways of working and brings operational flexibility, resilience and robustness unlocking the opportunity to phase out legacy alternatives. 5G is the unifier that, one step at a time, will drive platformisation of airport connectivity across previously siloed networks and use cases. Its key differentiator lies in the ability to engineer a

single, scalable system that can support both business-critical and mission-critical applications with predictable performance and prioritisation. While 5G has been extensively discussed for airports, there are three key aspects that stand out over the associated hype. By providing a common, policy-driven IP platform across IT and OT environments and complemented by edge computing, data and AI, 5G (used as a private network platform) accelerates convergence by enabling operational systems and digital applications to interact locally, while still meeting stringent latency, safety and compliance requirements. Deployed alongside mission-critical communications, 5G is being established across critical national infrastructure sectors as a replacement to legacy narrowband systems such as terrestrial trunked radio and digital enhanced cordless telecommunications, while expanding mission-critical services beyond voice. Less obvious, but equally important, is the opportunity for airports to rethink connectivity with 5G as a capability that can be offered to tenants as-a-service. Airlines follow a similar trajectory and are

equally experimenting with 5G. It's a natural match, allowing for managed connectivity foundation while reducing duplication and accelerating return-on-investment.

This transformation towards a convergent connectivity model is not about bold steps and big leaps. Building upon the experience of early-adopter critical national infrastructure operators, it is about proven practical steps. The necessary starting point to build a strong foundation is conducting rigorous due diligence of the complex connectivity estate that has been developed over years of operation. In parallel and as experience shows, it is equally important to develop a common team, spanning IT, OT/ engineering, operations and security. A single team operating with a shared objective and a jointly developed business case. From a technology perspective, lessons from adjacent sectors also suggest that this transformation is inherently phased. New capabilities must be designed to coexist with legacy systems over time, allowing trust to be built gradually and adoption to

remain safe, predictable and non-disruptive for operational users.

As 5G, and more broadly advanced connectivity, has become a mature reality across many operators worldwide, success increasingly depends on collaboration: learning from peers, sharing experience, and building on the lessons of early movers.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

As connectivity transformation reaches an inflection point, industry forums enable stakeholders to learn from experience, challenge assumptions, and accelerate their journey with greater confidence.

Join us at the Capgemini booth at Farnborough International Airshow, showcasing within the UK the latest developments that are being realised globally. The event will be held from 20 to 24 July at the Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre. ■

Capgemini is an AirportsUK Gold Member.



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Collaborate
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real.**

**Farnborough
International
Airshow
20-24 July, 2026**

Capgemini

AIRPORTSUK POLICY DIRECTOR, CHRISTOPHER SNELLING

HOPEFUL SIGNS ON WIND FARMS AND AIRPORTS

AirportsUK Policy Director, Christopher Snelling, forecasts that dialogue on the issue could be set to improve

For several years now, the development of wind farms in the UK has posed an increasing challenge for airport operations. Relations between our sector, wind farm developers, and the government bodies promoting wind power have not been good in recent years, but it is now possible that arrangements will improve in this contentious area.

Onshore wind farms create issues for airport and aviation operations. Radar is the most talked-about, but issues for instrument flight procedures and Very High Frequency and Ultra High Frequency communications also occur.

This issue is a growing one for UK airports. Wind farm developments

are multiplying as the net-zero energy push grows, and wind turbines themselves are increasing in height, creating greater impacts per turbine. The UK Labour Government ended the English ban on onshore wind in 2024, so these developments are now spreading across more of the country.



To be clear, it is in airports' interests, as much as everyone else's, for clean, lower-cost energy generation to be possible in the UK. Airports do not want to oppose wind farm development, but we must be able to keep operating safely – there can never be any compromise on this. There is also a principle of fairness embedded in the planning system that must be adhered to. 'Agents of change' (in this case, the wind farm developers) bear the cost of the adjustments needed to accommodate their new business.

In recent years, the relationship between developers and airports has been dysfunctional, becoming more adversarial than is ideal. This has involved members having to spend significant amounts of administrative time and money assessing wind farm applications and contesting them in the courts, not to mention adjusting radar operations on a contested and piecemeal basis.

There has often been a perception in recent years that government bodies (both the Scottish Government and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) across the UK) have been focused more on developers' needs than on the airport perspective. This has led to discussions in which airports' objections are seen as the problem, rather than as a reflection of the very real impacts developments have on our safeguarding.

Although it is early days, there are now hopefully signs that, thanks to challenges from us and our members, the nature of the dialogue is changing. DESNZ will now establish a steering group that will be jointly led by it and the Department for Transport – thus involving our sponsor department in full for the first time and taking responsibility away from groups

"Airports do not want to oppose wind farm development, but we must be able to keep operating safely – there can never be any compromise on this. There is also a principle of fairness embedded in the planning system that must be adhered to".

led by the renewables industry. The CAA is also working to employ a full-time role to support a more co-ordinated approach to airports and radar mitigations. In policy terms, DESNZ has agreed to come forward with proposals for a developer-funded Radar Mitigation Fund (possibly on a model similar to the UK Airspace Design Support Fund) to enable a more strategic approach to mitigation and upfront funding.

If this policy works (and there are many layers of complexity still to resolve), it could enable a much smoother and better understood process for securing the necessary updates. Increased CAA and DfT involvement should enable us to raise more effectively the issue of the collective effect on



Christopher Snelling

safeguarding of the mitigations that are asked of us.

There is a long way to go and, in the short term, problems may still increase as wind farm development spreads across the UK and turbines grow in size, but for now at least some options for improving the process in the future are being developed.

AirportsUK will continue to press government to deliver progress in these areas. ■





ABM

THE CASE FOR COLLABORATION AT 30,000 FEET

By Kelly Parish, Vice President, Transport & Aviation, ABM

Move landside to airside in any major international airport and what you see is, on the surface, seamless. Passengers flow through check-in, security, retail and departures with barely a pause. Behind that experience sits an extraordinarily diverse ecosystem of organisations, one of the most complex operating environments in the world. A major airport can rely on thousands of frontline workers, and dozens of interconnected systems. The challenge today is not simply managing that complexity; it is creating an environment where multiple organisations operate as one.



Having spent nearly two decades in transport and aviation, I've learned that operational excellence is rarely about individual performance. It is about how effectively organisations collaborate when scale and scope increases. The organisations that thrive are those that build cultures and service models, designed to move with the constant changes in complex operating environments.

Airports in the UK work with up to 1,200 suppliers, with annual supply chain spend well into the billions. These figures aren't just indicators of scale; they're indicators of

many moving parts. As passenger expectations rise and operational pressures increase, the challenge is no longer simply managing that nuance; it is creating an environment where multiple organisations can work as one. Increasingly, airports are looking for solutions partners rather than service vendors. The distinction matters. Vendors deliver contracts. Solutions partners take accountability for outcomes across the wider operation and understand how every part of the passenger journey connects to every other.

That shift is also changing how

suppliers work with one another. Passenger journeys rarely sit neatly within a single contract boundary. Cleaning teams, passenger assistance providers, security personnel, retail operators and airport operations all influence the same experience. The most successful airports are increasingly those where information, accountability and decision-making flow across organisational lines rather than stopping at them. Technology is increasingly the enabler of that collaboration. When frontline teams, clients and managers are looking at the same real-time data, the conversation changes. It moves from reactive

questions to the proactive: here's what we're seeing, here's what we're doing about it. That shared visibility is the foundation of genuine partnership.

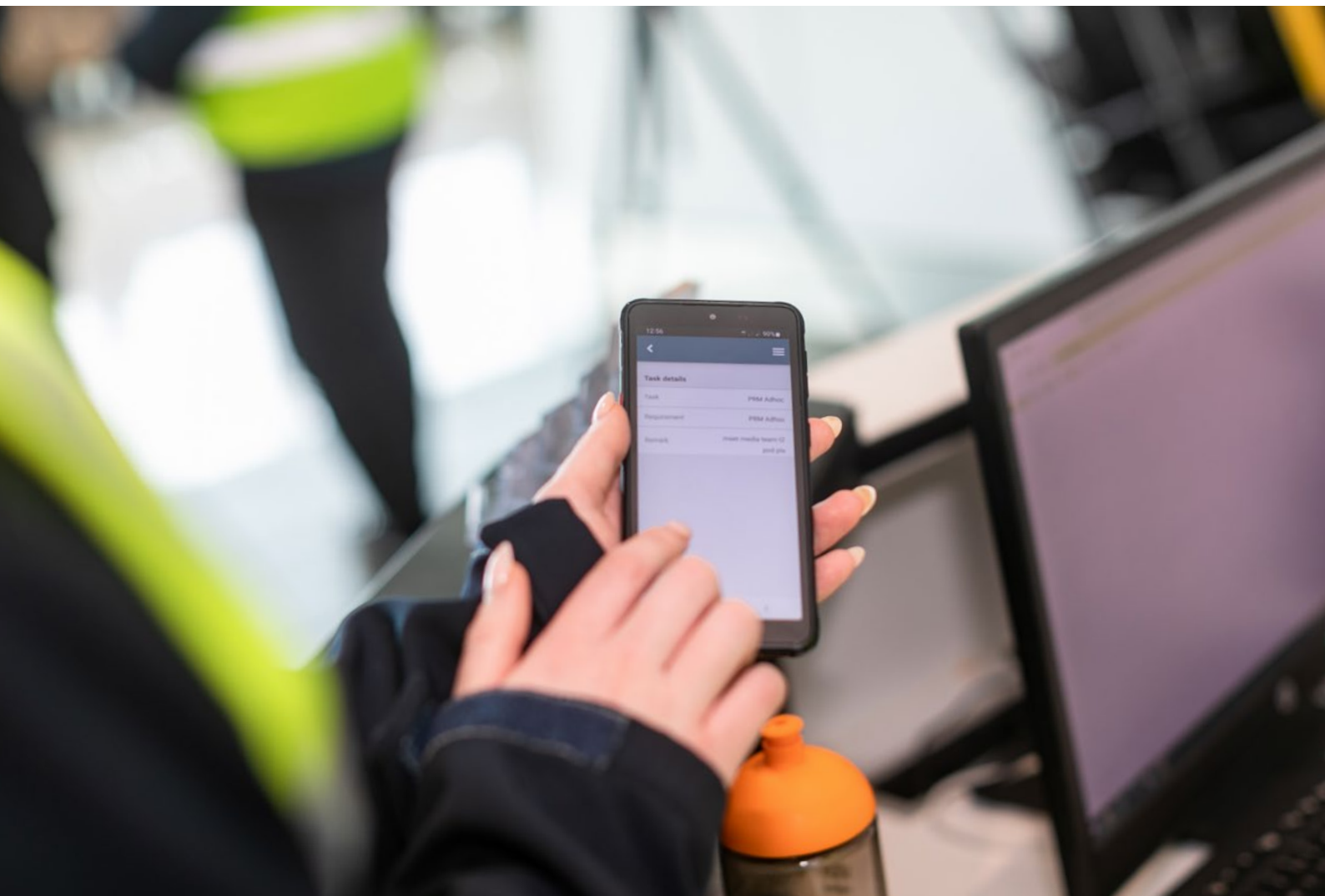
Proprietary tech like ABM Connect is a clear example of that principle in practice. It gives frontline teams, clients and managers a single real-time view: Tracking performance, flagging issues as they arise, and ensuring resource is always matched to demand. It's about creating efficiencies without compromising service. Passenger numbers are rising year-on-year. Heathrow handled a record 84.5 million passengers in 2025; Manchester, the UK's third busiest airport, welcomed 32 million - its busiest year yet. Rising passenger numbers require smarter operating models, not simply larger workforces. We must find smarter ways of working while continuing to raise standards.

And that principle doesn't stop at the client relationship. We are developing platforms that bring passengers themselves into that communication loop; allowing travellers requiring assistance to share journey details in advance and connect directly

We are developing platforms that bring passengers themselves into that communication loop; allowing travellers requiring assistance to share journey details in advance and connect directly with support teams during travel.

with support teams during travel. These platforms are designed to strengthen the relationships between every stakeholder in the airport ecosystem - all working together with a shared focus on delivering the service passengers deserve. Open communication, at every level of the operation, is what we believe makes the whole system work in the future.

That integration matters more, not less, as airports face growing pressure, rising passenger volumes, increasing sustainability obligations, tighter operational margins and ever-higher expectations on experience. Capability across facilities management, ground handling, travel retail services, accessible travel assistance, security, engineering, cleaning, bussing and passenger services is increasingly attractive and precisely what ABM has built its



aviation presence around: Working across 75 airports worldwide, often bringing together a depth and breadth of service capability under a single integrated partner. Customers are no longer interested in stitching together a patchwork of individual contracts and hoping the joins hold. They want to work with fewer, accountable partners, with one set of outcomes to stand behind. This shift towards integrated delivery is already evident across the sector. Our recent partnership with Edinburgh Airport, bringing facilities management services together under a single operating model, reflects the growing demand for greater coordination, accountability and operational consistency.

The future of aviation will not be shaped by individual organisations working harder in isolation. It will be shaped by ecosystems working smarter together.



Kelly Parish

Airports are complex environments, but the principle is simple: when data is shared, accountability is aligned, and

partners are invested in common outcomes, passengers experience the difference.

At ABM, that is the future we are helping to build: One where collaboration is not an aspiration, but an operating model. ■

ABM is an AirportsUK Gold Member.



The future of aviation will not be shaped by individual organisations working harder in isolation. It will be shaped by ecosystems working smarter together.

NEW MEMBERS

AIRPORTSUK WELCOMES FIVE NEW MEMBERS

Four new Silver Members and one Associate Member have joined AirportsUK in the last three months. The new Silver Members are Geosyntec, Womble Bond Dickinson, TrustFlight and Deloitte. Intelligent Fingerprinting has joined as an Associate Member.



Geosyntec is a consulting and engineering firm that works with private and public sector clients to address new ventures and complex problems involving the environment, natural resources, energy, and civil infrastructure.

With a combined staff of over 2,800 engineers, scientists, and related technical and project support personnel, the company serves its clients from more than 130 offices globally in the United Kingdom and Ireland, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Australia.

Geosyntec says that it keeps clients compliant in a changing regulatory landscape with clear and concise technical advice and realistic yearly cost estimating, aligned with organisations' corporate and commercial requirements.



Womble Bond Dickinson

describes itself as a full-service transatlantic law firm with deep expertise supporting the aviation and airports sector. It advises airport operators, investors, and supply chain partners on all aspects of airport operations, development, and compliance -including planning, property, regulatory, commercial contracts, employment, and dispute resolution.

It says that its team is experienced in safeguarding, ESG and sustainability, infrastructure projects, and digital transformation, helping clients navigate complex regulatory frameworks, manage risk, and unlock growth opportunities, drawing on sector insight and a collaborative approach. With offices across the UK and US, it says that its combines local knowledge with global reach to deliver practical, commercially focused legal solutions for airports and their partners.



Founded in 2017, **TrustFlight** says that it has quickly grown into the leading platform for aerospace safety, compliance, and risk management, with more than 150 professionals working across nearly every vertical of aerospace.

The company says that it is working to digitise the aerospace industry, providing new levels of efficiency and insight to everyone involved in the safe operation and maintenance of aircraft, building integrated platforms to support this transformation: safety and security technology, specialist training and consulting, and crisis management and response, all connected.

TrustFlight has acquired former AirportsUK members Baines Simmons and Redline Assured Security.



Deloitte.

Deloitte describes itself as the largest global professional services network in the world, headquartered in London and operating across over 150 countries. It says that it is dedicated to working with people and organisations from every industry to solve their most pressing challenges, from corporate and technology strategy to digital transformation and accounting, tax, and legal services. Combining industry insight with technology, data, and innovation, Deloitte says that it helps clients navigate complexity, build resilience, and create measurable impact in an increasingly dynamic business environment.

For airport operators, Deloitte says that it brings dedicated aviation and transportation expertise, working with airports worldwide to improve operational performance, passenger experience, and financial sustainability. It supports capital planning and major infrastructure programmes, digital and data-led transformation, regulatory and security compliance, and decarbonisation strategies, while strengthening organisational capability and workforce readiness. Deloitte says that by blending practical aviation insight with leading-edge technology and analytics, it helps airports respond confidently to growth, disruption, and long-term change.



Intelligent Fingerprinting says that it supports safety-critical environments with a fast, non-invasive approach to workplace drug testing. Chosen by more than 450 organisations across 27 countries, the Intelligent Fingerprinting Drug Screening System uses fingerprint sweat to deliver on-site results in under ten minutes, without the need for specialist staff or facilities.

Testing can be carried out with ease across multiple sites, including remote locations and, with a 16 to 24-hour detection window focused on recent drug use and fitness for duty, Intelligent Fingerprinting says that its Drug Screening System enables timely, informed decisions while helping to protect safety, compliance, and workforce dignity.

EVENTS & MEETINGS

2026



AirportsUK Board Meeting

AirportsUK Office
30 June @ 10:00am – 1:00pm

Airport Conference: Operations

Hilton Hotel, Bournemouth
1 – 2 July

General Counsels Forum (Airports only)

Virtual meeting
6 July @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Sustainability Group

Virtual meeting
9 July @ 10:00am – 11:00am

Aerodrome Safety & Compliance (ASC)

Virtual Meeting
9 July @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Airspace & Air Traffic Services (AATS)

Virtual Meeting
14 July @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Customer Experience Group

Virtual meeting
8 September @ 10:30am – 12:00 midday

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

AirportsUK Office
8 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Health & Safety Group

Virtual Meeting
9 September @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Airport Conference: Security

Radisson Blu, Manchester Airport
16 – 17 September

AirportsUK Board Meeting

AirportsUK Office
22 September @ 10:30am – 1:00pm

Sustainability 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 (AATS)

Virtual Meeting
29 September @ 11:00am – 1:30pm

Aerodrome Safety & Compliance (ASC)

London Biggin Hill Airport
1 October @ 11:00am – 4:00pm

Planners Forum (Airports only)

Virtual meeting
6 October @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Rescue & Fire Fighting Services (RFFS)

Heathrow Airport
27 October @ 10:00am – 2:00pm

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

AirportsUK Office
3 November @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

Health & Safety Group

Birmingham Airport
12 November @ 11:00am – 4:00pm

General Counsels Forum (Airports only)

Virtual Meeting
13 November @ 2:00pm – 4:00pm

AirportsUK Board Meeting

AirportsUK Office
17 November @ 10:30am – 3:00pm

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

NEW WELSH GOVERNMENT BACKS FAST-GROWING CARDIFF AIRPORT AS FIRST TORONTO FLIGHT ARRIVES

Plaid Cymru Cabinet Minister, Adam Price MS, described Cardiff Airport as “a vital piece of our economic infrastructure” as he welcomed a new direct transatlantic service between the airport and Toronto.

Price, a former Plaid leader and now Welsh Cabinet Minister for Enterprise, Connectivity and Energy, was speaking at the airport on 23 May just days after the appointment of Wales’ first ever Plaid Cymru Government. The arrival of the first ever WestJet

flight from Toronto Pearson International Airport to Cardiff marked the start of Cardiff’s first direct Canada service in nearly 20 years.

“WestJet’s inaugural flight is a powerful signal to the world that our nation is open for business” Price said. “Direct transatlantic connectivity like this is exactly what Welsh businesses need to reach new markets, attract investment and grow and it reinforces our ambition to make Wales one of the best-connected economies in the UK. Today’s milestone is something to celebrate”.

The airport’s CEO, Jon Bridge, said “Today is a landmark moment. The arrival of WestJet’s direct service gives customers easier access to Toronto and onward destinations across North America and firmly strengthens Cardiff Airport’s position as the international gateway for Wales. We are proud to welcome WestJet and excited about the long-term potential of this partnership”.

Days after the WestJet launch, the airport announced that it has welcomed more than one million passengers over the last 12 months. New CAA data names Cardiff

as the second fastest-growing airport in the UK, with a 24% increase in passenger numbers in the first quarter of this year, compared with the same period last year.

Bridge said “Welcoming more than a million passengers is a major milestone and a clear sign of the growing demand for flights from Wales. To be the second fastest-growing UK airport is a fantastic achievement. We are focused on building on this momentum, expanding connectivity and delivering long-term benefits for Wales and the wider economy”. ■

JET2 ADDS TWO NEW ROUTES TO JERSEY AND INCREASES CAPACITY BY OVER 140%

Jet2 has announced a significant expansion to its Jersey programme for summer 2027 by putting two new routes and additional capacity on sale, as well as extending the season.

The airline has introduced flights and holidays from Birmingham (three weekly services) and Bristol (two weekly services), with additional capacity from Manchester (three weekly

services). It has also extended the summer season, with flights operating through to the end of October. Jet2 also operates to Jersey from East Midlands, Leeds Bradford and Newcastle.

Matt Thomas, Chief Executive of Ports of Jersey, said “the growth that Jet2 has announced for 2027 demonstrates the growing confidence airlines have in Jersey. Increased capacity and a longer season deliver greater choice and improved connectivity.

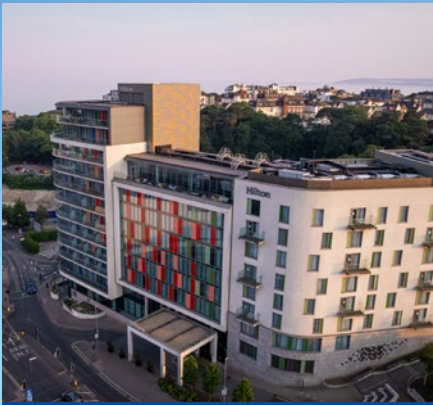
It’s a great boost for our tourism industry, making Jersey more accessible to key UK markets and providing more flexibility for Islanders”.

Thomas also welcomed this summer’s new KLM service from Jersey to Amsterdam, initially weekly, and then daily in July and August. He said “we’re thrilled to welcome KLM to Jersey. The new Amsterdam service strengthens opportunities for our island, providing our community with more freedom and more

flexibility to connect with destinations across the world on KLM’s global network, while also supporting business travel and our visitor economy. It’s a great boost for Jersey”.

Jersey Airport’s other airlines include British Airways, which flies from both Gatwick and Heathrow, easyJet, with flights from eight UK destinations, and Loganair, with flights from five UK destinations, plus Bordeaux and Paris Charles de Gaulle. ■

AIRPORTSUK AIRPORT CONFERENCES 2026



**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

NEW YORK ROUTE RETURNS TO GLASGOW AIRPORT

United Airlines has launched a daily service from Glasgow Airport to its Newark/New York hub, providing the first scheduled service by a U.S. airline between Glasgow and the United States since 2019.

The airport celebrated the arrival of the inaugural

flight on 9 May. United's daily service from Glasgow to Newark is operated by Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, with flights departing at 14.00, while flights leave Newark each day at 22.15. The airline previously served Glasgow until October 2019.

Kam Jandu, AGS Airports CEO, said "We are delighted to welcome the return of the United Airlines direct service

between Glasgow and New York, restoring one of our most popular long-haul routes. The route has always been in strong demand, previously carrying significant passenger numbers, as well as key Scottish exports such as whisky and seafood. The new service is a significant boost for connectivity, providing a vital link for travellers from the west coast of Scotland, whilst

supporting inbound tourism".

A week after the New York launch, Glasgow Airport also celebrated the departure of WestJet's new direct service to Toronto Pearson International Airport, marking the airline's return to Glasgow for the first time since 2022. The route is operating four times a week using WestJet's Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. ■

PHASE ONE OF BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT'S £100M REDEVELOPMENT OPENS

Northern Ireland's First Minister, Michelle O'Neil MLA, and VINCI CEO, Pierre Anjolas, have inaugurated the first £25m phase of its £100m five-year investment programme.

The first phase includes a new 1,600sqm duty free store, a new terminal extension, including a state-of-the-art security hall, and enhancements to the arrivals experience, including a new external forecourt area. Work is continuing across the terminal to upgrade facilities, including new food and beverage areas.

VINCI Airports, the world's leading private airport

operator, acquired Belfast International Airport in 2018 and launched the investment programme in 2023, aiming to improve the airport's operational efficiency, passenger experience and environmental performance.

Reflecting on progress since then, the airport's Chief Executive, Dan Owens, said "When we started this process, we were focussed on our goal to transform the passenger experience. Today we can say we have made significant progress. We provide employment for over 4,000 people, connecting almost 7 million passengers across our airline network. As



the economic driver for this region in terms of economic development and tourism growth we are committed to further enhancing the passenger experience while also working with our airline partners to develop our network of routes".

Meanwhile, new

research commissioned by Heathrow Airport has identified Belfast International as one of five UK airports most likely to gain a connection with the hub if the go-ahead is given to expand capacity there by building a third runway. ■

MARK BEVERIDGE IS NEW DIRECTOR OF ISLE OF MAN AIRPORT

Mark Beveridge, former Managing Director of Aberdeen Airport, has started work as the new Director of Isle of Man Airport.

Having relocated to the island from his home in Angus, he said his priorities are “to get to know the staff, understand the risks and opportunities facing the airport, and build strong relationships with airlines, ground handlers, businesses and

the wider community”.

Beveridge was Managing Director of Aberdeen Airport for over five years until this February. He also held operations roles at both Glasgow and Southampton airports, overseeing the opening of the runway extension at Southampton.

Jeffrey Robinson, Deputy Chief Officer of the Isle of Man Government’s Department of Infrastructure, said that Beveridge would “bring a wealth of

experience from major UK airports, with a proven record in operational leadership, infrastructure management and strategic development. His experience will be invaluable to us as we continue to develop Isle of Man Airport to support the island’s connectivity, economy and community”. The airport’s principal airlines are Aer Lingus, easyJet and Loganair, with flights to Birmingham, Bristol, Dublin, Edinburgh,



Gatwick, Heathrow, Liverpool, London City, Manchester and Newquay. FlyDirect also operates seasonal flights to Faro, Ibiza, Majorca, Malaga and Tenerife. ■

NEW RULES FOR LANDING BOOST BIGGIN HILL’S RESILIENCE

The UK Civil Aviation Authority has given the green light for aircraft to adopt a satellite-based approach to landing on London Biggin Hill Airport’s primary operational runway.

Prior to 30 April arriving aircraft had to approach Runway 03 visually, obliging pilots to see the runway before landing. Now all suitably equipped aircraft and operators can fly the new instrument approach, enabling aircraft to operate in a wider range of weather conditions.

Announcing the change, the airport said that the

satellite-based approach would deliver more predictable and reliable arrivals and strengthen its operational resilience, providing dependable access for business and private aviation customers flying into London.

New landing rules for Runway 03 follow completion of runway resurfacing works, upgraded LED and centreline lighting, enhanced instrument runway visual range technology and the introduction of a fully automated 24-hour weather reporting service.

The airport’s Commercial Director, Robert Walters,



said that CAA approval “marks another important step in strengthening the airport’s operational capability. Alongside our recent wider airfield investments, the procedure gives operators greater

flexibility and confidence when planning flights into London Biggin Hill Airport. Together, these upgrades reinforce our commitment to delivering safe, reliable and efficient operations for our customers”. ■



From around the sector

FIVE REGIONAL AIRPORTS IN THE UK "MOST LIKELY" TO GAIN A LINK TO HEATHROW AFTER EXPANSION

New research by Frontier Economics, commissioned by Heathrow, has identified the UK airports most likely to benefit from new or restored connections to the UK's hub airport, when additional capacity is delivered by a third runway.

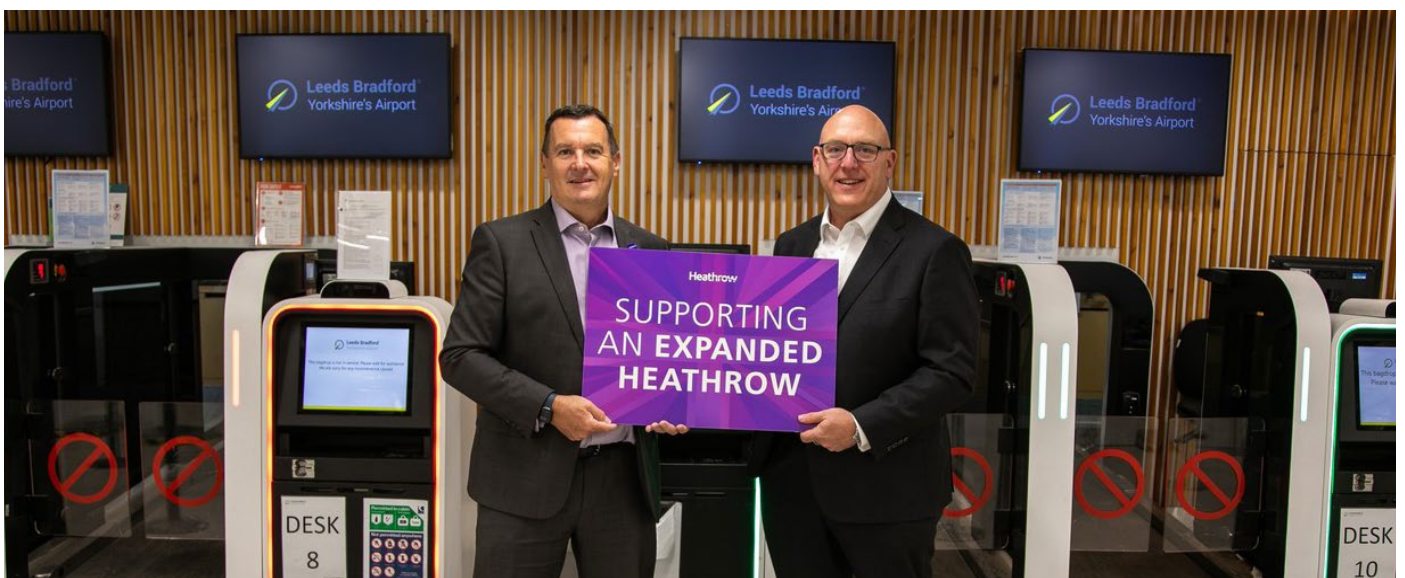
The analysis highlights Belfast International, Cornwall Airport Newquay, Leeds Bradford, Liverpool John Lennon and Teesside International as the strongest domestic candidates for new links to

Heathrow, based on clear evidence of underlying demand, bringing more of the UK within easy reach of the airport's global network. If these five routes were introduced and operated five days a week, they would generate around £335m in additional tourism spending and support thousands of jobs in the UK's tourism and hospitality sector.

Nigel Milton, Heathrow's Chief Communications and Sustainability Officer, said "domestic connectivity has always been central to Heathrow's role as the UK's only hub airport. For many communities these links are not

a luxury, they are a lifeline, connecting people and businesses to opportunities across the UK and around the world. With additional capacity, we can strengthen these vital connections and ensure every part of the country can benefit from Heathrow's global network".

Heathrow currently connects to 11 regional UK airports and to the three Crown Dependencies: Aberdeen, Belfast City, City of Derry, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Kirkwall, Manchester, Newcastle and Sumburgh, and Guernsey, the Isle of Man and Jersey. ■



ALGIERS AND LAHORE AMONG A DOZEN NEW DESTINATIONS FROM MANCHESTER THIS SUMMER

Manchester Airport is adding to its long-haul route network this summer with new direct flights to Algiers and Lahore.

Air Algérie has been flying from Manchester to Algeria's capital since 14 June, while Pakistan International Airlines will add Lahore as its second destination from Manchester from 3 July, following the launch of its service to Islamabad.

In addition, easyJet, Jet2.com and Ryanair are all introducing new short-haul services from Manchester for their summer 2026 schedules.

easyJet has new routes



to Bari in Italy, Montpellier in France and Preveza in Greece. Jet2.com's new routes are to Jerez de la Frontera in Spain, La Palma in the Canaries, Palermo in Sicily, Pula in Croatia and Samos in Greece. Ryanair's new services are to Castellon in Spain and Rimini in Italy.

Stephen Turner, Chief Commercial Officer at Manchester Airport, said "We're excited to see a dozen new routes coming on board this summer, several of which will connect Manchester to destinations unserved by any other Northern airport. When we say

we connect people to places no-one else in the North does, we don't just mean global cities – we mean sun, sea and sand destinations too. We're grateful to our airlines for their ongoing commitment to offer passengers flying from Manchester unrivalled choice". ■

BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT REPORTS BEST EVER YEAR WITH 26% RISE IN PASSENGERS

Passenger numbers at Bournemouth Airport in the year ended 31 March 2026 rose by 26% to just under 1.4m passengers, compared to 1.1m in the previous year.

The strong growth reflects the first full year of operations by Jet2.com and Jet2holidays, which began flying from

Bournemouth in February 2025 with 16 destinations. Overall, Jet2 will increase capacity at the airport by 5% this summer compared to last year, with two based aircraft operating from the airport.

Ryanair's summer 2026 schedule from Bournemouth offers 20 routes and the airline has increased frequencies to Alicante, Edinburgh and Malaga. TUI will offer 16

routes from the airport this summer.

Steve Gill, the airport's Managing Director, said "This has been a record year for Bournemouth Airport and the strongest in our history. The growth we've seen reflects the fantastic support from our passengers and the continued investment and confidence shown by our airline partners. We've also invested heavily in

improving our facilities to deliver a high-quality, efficient experience as passenger numbers grow".

The airport's £17m investment programme has delivered a new immigration and arrivals hall, a new outbound baggage facility, an enlarged baggage reclaim hall and an expansion of the main car park, providing more than 800 additional spaces.



From around the sector

EDINBURGH AIRPORT DELIVERS £2.7BN TO SCOTLAND'S ECONOMY

A new independent economic impact report has shown that Edinburgh Airport delivered £2.7bn of economic value to Scotland in 2025 and supported almost 44,000 jobs.

The study, by the Edinburgh-based economic consultancy, BIGGAR Economics, found that the airport's contribution has grown significantly since 2019, driven by rising passenger numbers – almost 17m in 2025, a record for any Scottish airport, expanding international

connectivity and increased investment.

A BiGGAR report on 2019 said that in that year the airport had generated £1.4bn Gross Value Added and 28,000 jobs. On a like-for-like basis, GVA impact has increased since then by 31% and employment impact by 37%.

The 2025 analysis reported that tourism remains the airport's single largest contribution, generating £1.8bn in visitor spending across Scotland. The airport also plays a key role in international trade, handling over

£500m worth of air freight, supporting exporters and importers in sectors including life sciences, manufacturing and engineering.

Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport, said "The airport plays a vital role in supporting Scotland's economy, from tourism and trade to jobs and investment. This report demonstrates the scale of our contribution and the confidence airlines, businesses and passengers place in Edinburgh as a global gateway, and in Scotland as a place to do

business".

However, he added "That confidence cannot be taken for granted. The Scottish Government must make economic growth a clear priority and provide the long-term policy certainty and stable operating environment that businesses need to commit investment and plan for the future. We are proud of the contribution that we make and will continue to grow connectivity responsibly, but sustained growth depends on clear, consistent decisions that support Scotland's competitiveness". ■





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