

THE AIRPORT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK
AUTUMN 2026

OPERATOR

GIBRALTAR AIRPORT
new border
arrangements

AGS AIRPORTS
£350m transformation
programme

SUSTAINABLE AVIATION
Decarbonisation
Road-Map

STORNOWAY AIRPORT
Key role for Isle
of Lewis

**FARNBOROUGH
AIRPORT NEW CEO
MARINE EUGÈNE**

SETTING A NEW COURSE FOR GROWTH



**Airports
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THE AIRPORT OPERATOR

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIRPORTSUK

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KAREN DEE

INTRODUCTION TO THE AIRPORT OPERATOR



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

Firstly, let me offer my congratulations to all of you for all your work to deliver a successful summer peak period. I have heard from many of you that records were broken in terms of passenger numbers which is incredibly heartening, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine and the challenges these continue to generate. That the summer passed off largely without any major disruption or incidents is a testament to the whole sector's efforts to ensure we all got to enjoy the holiday period.

Secondly, it would be remiss of me not to recognise all your efforts in dealing with another NATS outage that forced the cancellation of thousands of flights and left hundreds of thousands of passengers stranded. This obviously caused a huge amount of stress as a result of actions well outside of your control, brought your teams into contact with angry and fraught travellers, and meant operations and terminals were at the edge of their capacities. That the disruption was managed and largely cleared, working jointly with airlines, in a matter of days, is something to be proud of and we will be working to ensure this is recognised in the inevitable review into the outage.

Of course, we at AirportsUK have also been busy elsewhere, especially following the sudden change in government that marked the start of the summer season. While this has led to a change in focus as the new prime minister has sought to bring a more regional emphasis to policy making and to bring in and place more political figures of a similar mind into key areas, there has been much consistency as well. We were pleased to see much of the Department for Transport ministerial team remaining in place and we have always sought to highlight the regional benefits of airports as hubs of economic activity.

Our work on business rates continues, with regular engagement with the Treasury as we collaborate on a new approach to valuation and through our Budget

2026 submission, which you can read more about elsewhere in these pages. We have given evidence to the Commons Transport Committee inquiry into the Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (HENPS), highlighting the benefits of airport expansion and how the statement is undervaluing these. There have also been meetings of several of our working groups, including public affairs, health and safety, and our new customer experience groups, bringing together all the knowledge and experience of our members to help inform our work.

Looking ahead, by the time you read this our industry leading Airport Security Conference will be upon us, gathering together over one hundred experts in the field to discuss the latest developments. We will also be a month away from our Annual Conference, featuring a host of senior political, economic and industry speakers for high level discussions on how the sector should approach key strategic challenges and opportunities. In addition, there will be a lot of activity around the upcoming Budget, and the various party-political conferences, so plenty keeping us busy until the end of the year!

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, which contains articles from across the aviation world. In this issue we have interviews with Terence Lopez from Gibraltar Airport, Kam Jandu from AGS, and the new CEO of Farnborough Airport, Marine Eugène, as well as stories on Stornoway Airport, the Budget, the HENPS and from non-airport members Airbus Protect and Vanderlande. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible out and about over the coming months, and to continuing to represent the interests of the airport sector. Enjoy!

Karen Dee
Chief Executive

JOSHUA HASSAN GIBRALTAR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

GIBRALTAR'S LAND BORDER WITH SPAIN OPEN – THANKS TO NEW BORDER ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE AIRPORT

The land border between Gibraltar and Spain, created in 1704, has been open since 15 July this year following the introduction of new border procedures at Joshua Hassan Gibraltar International Airport.

Closed with checkpoints for 322 years and with a physical fence since 1909, the land frontier no longer exists, transforming the experience for 15,000 workers who travel in and out of Gibraltar from Spain every day (including a third of the airport's own workers) and opening the whole of the Schengen area to both Gibraltar residents and visitors arriving by air. Regular queues at the former land border, which could sometimes take more than an hour to cross, are now largely a thing of the past.

Air Terminal Director, Terence Lopez, told The Airport Operator he thought that the new procedures at the airport had been "a small price to pay for

the completely open border". It meant, he said, that once you exit the airport building "you can walk all the way to Finland, if you want to. The whole of the Schengen zone is open to you".

Passengers arriving at Gibraltar Airport from the UK now pass first through passport control by Gibraltar's Borders and Coast Guard Agency and then through Schengen passport control, carried out by Spain's Policia Nacional from a part of the airport building that is in Spain. After baggage reclaim, passengers clear customs, either (depending on their destination) in Gibraltar or Spain. Departing passengers make the same journey in reverse.

Lopez said he was happy to see

that the new arrangements have been working as expected, with all the infrastructural changes delivered as planned and changes to everyday aviation processes achieved successfully and compliantly. He noted that, as in airports across the EU, there had been some delays to UK visitors registering with the EU's Entry/Exit system for the first time, but he said that waiting times are expected to improve as everyone gets used to the new system.

The airport faces its longest queues on a couple of mornings a week when four or five flights arrive from the UK within around an hour of each other. Lopez said "we tried to get the airlines to change that, and we didn't get much joy, and



Terence
Lopez

Terence Lopez, told The Airport Operator he thought that the new procedures at the airport had been "a small price to pay for the completely open border". It meant, he said, that once you exit the airport building "you can walk all the way to Finland, if you want to. The whole of the Schengen zone is open to you".

we are certainly not going to allow that in the future. We tried to do something about it this year, but they all had slots at source that they couldn't change. We need to protect our reputation too and certainly we are not going to allow them to swamp us".

Currently all the airport's routes are to and from the UK, but Gibraltar's Minister for Tourism, Christian Santos, has suggested that could change in the future. He said the UK-EU treaty on Gibraltar had "fundamentally changed the potential catchment area for Joshua Hassan Gibraltar International Airport, from the local population of 35,000 to four million people. It's a different ball game. Gibraltar is now not just a destination, but also an airport hub for an area".

Santos said that Gibraltar has had interest from airlines in potential new routes from Spain, France and the Netherlands and new flights could emerge as early as next summer. He said it would be the airlines who would decide on commercial viability and expansion would also have to take into account the airport's physical limitations, including the length of its runway. It would start slowly, he said. "Slow and steady wins the race".

Lopez said "I am not directly involved in route development, but clearly having direct access to Schengen has created a new market with a much larger destination footprint than we have ever enjoyed. The UK is our prime market, and this will remain so, but the Government of Gibraltar is beginning to explore the fact that we can now enjoy freedom of movement within the Schengen zone, and we will see where this takes us. I think it is just a question of time".

Meanwhile, one unique feature of Gibraltar Airport remains popular



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and unchanged. Since 2023 a road tunnel has ended the need for motor traffic to cross the runway, allowing traffic to flow while aircraft are landing or taking off, but pedestrians, cyclists and people on electric scooters can still cross the runway when aircraft are not operating. Lopez described that as "a privilege, which is still one of our unique features and still very much enjoyed by users. It is even

popular when the access gates are shut and the barriers are down for aircraft movements as

it provides a very good viewing point to watch the aircraft close up". ■

FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT

NEW FARNBOROUGH CEO SAYS LIFTING SOME CURRENT PLANNING RESTRICTIONS WILL BE VITAL TO SECURE THE AIRPORT'S INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Marine Eugène, who began working as Group CEO of Farnborough Airport on 1 September, has said that achieving modest planning changes is the business airport's number one priority.

Marine
Eugène

"It is important for us to be able to continue defending the competitiveness of the airport. To remain really competitive internationally we need a little bit more capacity so that we can respond to the pace of demand that is coming from international players".

She told The Airport Operator that Farnborough needs targeted changes to existing planning rules to remain internationally competitive. "It is important for us to be able to continue defending the competitiveness of the airport" she said. "To remain really competitive internationally we need a little bit more capacity so that we can respond to the pace of demand that is coming from international players".

The airport will make a submission to the UK Planning Inspectorate seeking a decision on what it describes as "minor but essential changes to its existing planning restrictions which would allow it to meet market demand for flights over the next 10 years". It would like to be allowed to grow its non-weekday flights at the same rate as its weekday flights and it is also seeking minor amendments to existing aircraft weight restrictions.

Farnborough initially submitted its planning application to Rushmoor Borough Council in November 2025 and had hoped for a decision on it by the spring of this year, but the council has so far been unable to come to a final determination. The inspectorate is expected to make a decision towards the end of next year.

Simon Geere, previously Farnborough's Chief Executive and now its Group Executive Chair, said that, by making a 'non-determination' filing in June, the airport had set in motion a process to secure a successful outcome, "with the outstanding technical and legal matters being reviewed in the context of the wider economic benefits of our proposals". The application could be "appropriately considered in the context of UK government policy which recognises the importance of maximising the use of existing airport infrastructure

to meet demand, a strategic imperative which our proposals will clearly deliver upon".

Eugène emphasised that Farnborough's overall cap of 50,000 traffic movements a year "for the moment provides capacity to accommodate growth over the medium term", and the airport is therefore seeking only these two targeted amendments.

On the restriction on weekend flight numbers, she said "business decision-makers and international companies fly in sometimes on a Sunday to be ready for that Monday morning meeting. If you want to keep putting Farnborough at the heart of that community, we are going to need amendments to the number of movements we can handle on weekends to remain competitive in that international space".

On the aircraft weight restrictions, Eugène said that heavier aircraft were not necessarily noisier aircraft, as modern aircraft technology had changed this, with bigger business jets perfectly meeting ICAO's strict noise requirements. More business aviation operators are now using these modern and quieter larger business aircraft. Historically Farnborough had been limited "on the number of movements that we can take for aircraft that weigh above 50 tonnes, so we would like this revised so that we can stay competitive and accommodate the flexibility required by those users".

Eugène herself has had a long career in business aviation, including senior roles at NetJets and Flexjet, two of Farnborough's main operators. She said, "I believe that is one of the reasons why I was appointed, that understanding of the customer segmentation, who the users are and understanding what the operators' requirements are".



She said she was "extremely proud" of being appointed as Farnborough's Chief Executive, as she had always looked at the airport "as a unique place. It is very special. There is no other dedicated business aviation platform in Europe that has the quality of infrastructure and it is really at the heart of a super-interesting innovation cluster of 70 businesses that are looking at the future of defence, aviation and aeronautics - key industries that we need to protect and invest in



Simon Geere

for the future of the country”.

Eugène said she felt “very lucky” that Geere had stayed on as Chairman. “Simon has done a phenomenal job for the past six years. It is very reassuring for me to know that he is staying as my Chair. We have complementary skill sets and backgrounds. I find this set-up absolutely perfect. I benefit from his stewardship, his coaching and his knowledge. There will be a sense of continuity for our most important

“It is a pleasure to welcome Marine as our new Group CEO. She brings an exceptional background in product and business development from our sector”.

stakeholders. We should be a winning couple”.

Geere told The Airport Operator “It is a pleasure to welcome Marine as our new Group CEO. She brings an exceptional background in product and business development from our sector. As Group Executive Chair I shall focus on some of the bigger picture opportunities for Farnborough Airport, including its long-term growth strategy as well as delivering a successful planning



outcome which is currently in process”.

Asked to describe the main challenges and achievements at the airport during his six years as Chief Executive, Geere said, “Since the change in ownership back in 2019 and my subsequent appointment as CEO, the airport company has been on an ever-improving journey in terms of its corporatisation, its continued investment in service quality and state-of-the-art facilities, and its work around social value and its role in the community”.

“We have made some big strides in all these areas, in particular resetting the narrative around the role of business aviation and its value to UK PLC. Of course one of the biggest challenges has been, and continues to be, the negative perception of business aviation and the oversimplification that it is all about wealthy people using private jets to go on holiday; this is simply not the case”.

Reflecting on the airport’s business aviation role, Geere said “Farnborough Airport has an unrivalled track record of being

voted the best business aviation airport in Europe over many decades. It has achieved this by offering its users the highest levels of luxury and service, which are unmatched in the commercial airline sector. We are also unique in the business aviation industry in operating a fully integrated and dedicated user experience. Owning the airport, only serving business aviation, and operating all the primary operational activities itself gives Farnborough full control over product delivery and a clear competitive edge over other airports, making it the largest and most successful business aviation gateway in the UK”.

Commenting on the role that the airport has played in sustainability and innovation, Geere noted that it became the first carbon accredited business aviation airport in 2018 and today is one of only a few airports in the UK to be Level4+. He said that “as the largest provider of airport services to one of the world’s busiest business aviation markets, for Farnborough to be at the vanguard of sustainability is

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a natural position for us. The airport has always been a catalyst for innovation in the wider aviation sector. From the first UK powered flight in 1908 to the advancement of the jet engine, no single site location in the world has contributed so much to technological innovation in global aviation as Farnborough has over the last century”. ■

AIRPORTSUK SECURITY CONFERENCE

AIRPORTSUK SECURITY CONFERENCE TO ADDRESS THE EVOLVING THREAT ENVIRONMENT

By Dr Rupinder Pamme, Senior Policy Manager, AirportsUK

At a time when security, resilience and innovation are more closely connected than ever, the AirportsUK Security Conference 2026 offers an opportunity not only to learn, but to examine the challenges and opportunities shaping the future of airport security.

Hosted at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Manchester Airport, this year's conference opens on 16 September with a keynote address from The Rt Hon. Baroness Neville-Jones DCMG, a former Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee and a former Minister of State for Security and Counterterrorism. Drawing on her distinguished career in intelligence, national security, counterterrorism and cyber security, Baroness Neville-Jones will offer delegates a sharp perspective on the evolving threat environment. In discussion with Security Working Group Chair

Caroline Vear of Bristol Airport and Vice Chair Joanna McMahon of Birmingham Airport, she will set the strategic context for two days of debate, insight and collaboration.

The programme will connect policy with practice. Chris Selim from the Department for Transport will outline the Government's perspective on the future direction of aviation security policy and strategy, while airline colleagues Rachael Smith of Jet2 and Peter Miller of easyJet will share operational insight into how additional security measures are being delivered across the sector.

Across the conference, delegates will explore some of the most pressing issues facing aviation. Dr Melanie Garson of University College London will examine how geopolitical competition and technological rivalry are reshaping the systems on which aviation depends. Sarah-Jane Prew of Arup and Nikki Bains of Birmingham Airport will consider how security can be built into airport infrastructure projects from concept through to operation. Will Hunt from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office will also provide an update on the airport security toolkit and the support

available to UK airports.

Cyber security and organisational resilience will be central themes. A panel featuring Jonathan Hogben and Simon Sheeran from the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Mark Ward from Heathrow Airport, John Fazakerley from Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Stefan Hechler from Airbus Protect will discuss the implications of the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill and the practical steps organisations are taking to strengthen resilience across airport operations.

Regulation is also evolving, and the conference will look ahead to what that means for airports. Kirsty Richardson of the CAA, together with Liz Neate of Farnborough Airport and Kenny Welsh of Glasgow Airport, will explore the development of Risk-Based Oversight and its potential impact in the years ahead.

Day two continues on 17 September with an industry keynote from Chris Woodroffe, Managing Director of Manchester Airport. Delegates will also receive an update from the CAA's Guy Slaney on the Background Check Review, hear the latest accessibility initiatives from Steve Wilson of Jet2, and then an airport spotlight session with Anthony Parker of Gatwick Airport and Andrew Proudlove of Manchester Airport, who will share practical lessons from innovative projects across the sector.

AirportsUK is grateful to its sponsors – Airbus Protect, Dallmeier, ICTS UK & Ireland and Leidos – for their valued support, and to every speaker, exhibitor and delegate whose expertise and engagement make this event an important forum for collaboration and learning. Special thanks to Caroline Vear and Joanna McMahon for supporting conference moderation with Christopher Snelling, to

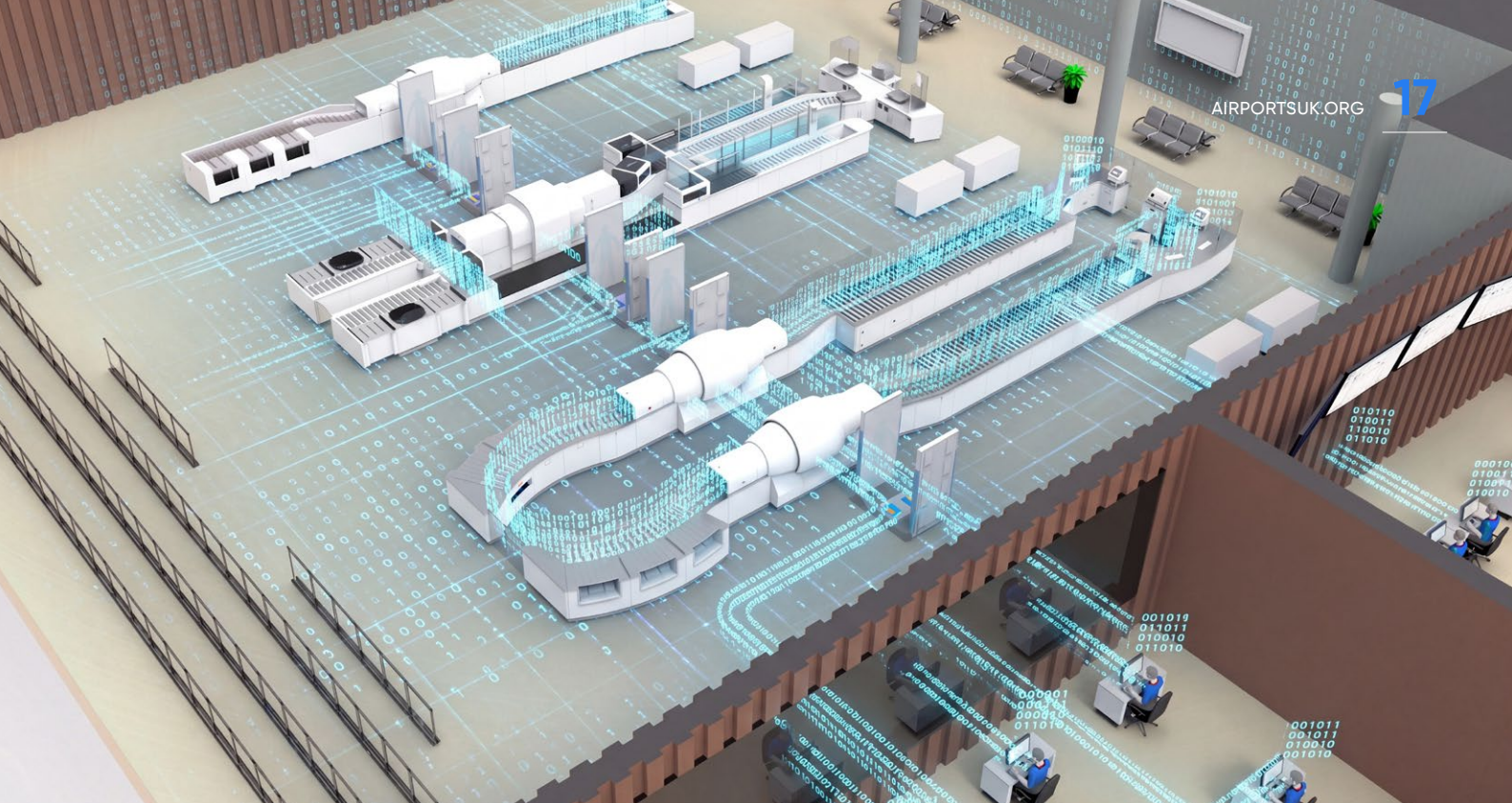


Baroness Neville-Jones

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Marko Saaret for managing conference logistics, and to the

wider AirportsUK team for their contribution. ■



VANDERLANDE

READY FOR PASSENGER GROWTH: ACHIEVING MORE AT THE SECURITY CHECKPOINT

By Wouter Berben, Commercial Director Airports UK & Ireland, Vanderlande

Passenger volumes across wider Europe are forecast to grow by 23% over the next decade. For airports, this means accommodating millions of additional travellers while managing a familiar set of challenges: limited space for expansion, labour scarcity and increasing security requirements.

Few areas experience these pressures more directly than the security checkpoint.

As an essential part of every passenger journey, checkpoints must meet security requirements, while balancing operational efficiency and passenger experience. Increasingly, airports are being asked to achieve more without significantly expanding their physical footprint.

COMMON THEMES ACROSS AIRPORTS

To better understand how airports are approaching these challenges, Vanderlande brought together representatives from seven European airports during an industry exchange in June 2026 to share experiences and perspectives on checkpoint operations. Conversations explored what operational success means, data-informed decision making, and future developments in checkpoint operations, revealing several common themes across airports.

One of the clearest themes from the discussions was that airports do not necessarily need more data. Most already have access to significant amounts of checkpoint information. The challenge lies in turning fragmented data into timely and trusted operational decisions. Better forecasting, stronger connectivity between systems and improved operational visibility were all seen as important enablers.

A second theme was that successful checkpoint operations go beyond operational Key Performance Indicators. While throughput, queue times and screening performance remain important, airports highlighted the need to balance these measures with staff and passenger experience.

Airport representatives also



Wouter Berben

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highlighted a shift in operational thinking. Forecasting, real-time insights and predictive maintenance were repeatedly identified as important enablers of more proactive and resilient operations. The focus is increasingly moving towards anticipating issues, optimising resources and addressing

potential disruptions before they impact performance.

BUILDING CONNECTED, PROACTIVE OPERATIONS

The discussions highlighted a clear ambition: to move towards more connected, data-informed operations that help airports adapt to growing demand

while making better use of available resources. The ability to accommodate future growth will increasingly depend on how well airports connect, integrate and make better use of the systems and information already available across the checkpoint.

Security lanes, screening technology and software solutions each generate valuable operational data. When these elements are connected, checkpoints can evolve from a collection of individual technologies into a more integrated operational system.

Greater connectivity can provide a broader view of checkpoint performance and support more informed decision making. Real-time visibility can help operators understand changing demand, anticipate potential issues and respond more effectively to operational challenges.

Looking further ahead, the potential extends beyond the checkpoint itself. Greater connectivity between systems can support forecasting and resource optimisation across both passenger and baggage operations, helping airports develop a more integrated view of airport performance. In this environment, operations can become increasingly adaptable, balancing capacity and demand as conditions change throughout the day.

TECHNOLOGIES SHAPING THE CHECKPOINT OF TOMORROW

Delivering this vision will depend on a combination of technologies that improve connectivity, operational visibility and decision making. Modern checkpoint solutions increasingly combine automation, central image processing and data integration to create a more connected operational environment.

Forecasting capabilities, real-time operational insights and predictive maintenance approaches can further support more proactive and adaptable operations.

Artificial intelligence also featured prominently in the discussions. Airport representatives saw potential for AI to help make greater use of operational data, support operator decision making and enhance operational performance. At the same time, airports highlighted an important consideration: they carry the operational responsibility associated with implementing new technologies. While interest is high, adoption will depend on proven reliability and clear operational value.

LOOKING AHEAD

As passenger volumes across wider Europe continue to grow, the opportunity lies in creating

checkpoint operations that are better connected, more adaptable and prepared for the demands of the future. While every airport's journey is different, the discussions revealed broad agreement on the value of connected systems, data-informed decision making and solutions designed around operational needs.

Preparing for future growth is not about any single technology. It requires a holistic approach that brings together systems, processes and people to support day-to-day operations while remaining flexible for future developments. By building on these foundations, airports can strengthen operational resilience today while creating a platform for continuous improvement in the years ahead. ■

Vanderlande is an AirportsUK Corporate Partner.

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Kam Jandu

AGS AIRPORTS

WORK STARTS ON £350M TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME AT GLASGOW, SOUTHAMPTON AND ABERDEEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

A “best-in-class” modern terminal at Glasgow Airport will form the centrepiece of the five-year £350m transformation programme launched by AGS Airports.

Chief Executive, Kam Jandu, told The Airport Operator that the AGS Reimagined project will enable all three airports to deliver “more intuitive passenger journeys, better operational performance, improved sustainability outcomes and infrastructure capable of supporting future growth”.

The transformation programme is the largest capital commitment to AGS since its formation in 2014. Jandu said that the airports’ new owners, AviAlliance and Blackstone Infrastructure, wanted to send a positive message that they intend to deliver “a best-in-class experience and to be associated with quality, efficiency and sustainability”.

A reimagined main terminal building at Glasgow Airport will restore much of the original 1966 design of Scottish architect, Sir Basil Spence, who is most-well known for his design for the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral after the Second World War. Jandu said that previous owners of the airport had made a series of incremental changes that had covered up his original design. The core of the transformation would be “to really bring back to life his vision, so you will start to see a lot of the curvatures of

the roof and the ceilings coming back into the new space and we are also broadening a lot of the flows to make it much bigger and brighter, creating space and opportunity for passengers and retailers”.

Work has already started on some of the retail transformation with more space for more brands, to bring “not just products and offers but more local sense of place products. This is something that we need to showcase so that

when people fly through Glasgow, they recognise that they are flying through Glasgow and not just a monotone airport. That will start to become visible within the next few months, but you will see it coming to life in phases over the next five years”.

At Southampton Airport the aim of the transformation will be to make the airport, which was originally designed for small regional aircraft, fit for bigger aircraft, such as the A320. Their use became

Kate Forbes, the then Scottish Deputy First Minister, and Kam Jandu at the launch of the AGS investment plans



“A reimagined main terminal building at Glasgow Airport will restore much of the original 1966 design of Scottish architect, Sir Basil Spence, who is most-well known for his design for the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral after the Second World War”.

possible from 2023 following a runway extension and they are now deployed by easyJet on its busiest routes from Southampton. Next year the airport will extend stands, expand gate rooms in the terminal and add more of them.

Aberdeen International Airport's terminal was transformed by a £20m project launched in 2016. Between now and next year the airport's retail and food and beverage units will be refreshed or redeveloped, but most of the

investment at Aberdeen next year will be on airfield infrastructure improvements, with runway and taxiway uplifts.

Turning to current operations across the three airports, Jandu reported a mixed picture for 2026. The war in the Middle East has had a direct impact on Glasgow, with Emirates downgrading from an Airbus A380 to a Boeing 777 and Lufthansa, facing rising fuel costs, cancelling its double-daily route to Frankfurt. "Just combining

AGS Airports has revised its passenger number expectations for the year downwards from 12.2m across the group to 11.6m, which would still be an increase on the 2025 total of 11.4m.

those two" Jandu said "that is 350,000 passengers that we will miss this year". For Aberdeen and Southampton, he said "the impact there has been more indirect. Airlines with whom we had conversations about increasing frequencies or launching routes into those markets are just pressing the pause button because everyone is waiting to see when this thing is going to end, because then they can be a bit more robust in terms of their route planning. They are very optimistic about the future once the war ends".

Also more positively, Jandu said, "we have had, for the first time in over 20 years, more new airlines flying to Glasgow than any other airport in Scotland". He referenced the return of United Airlines and WestJet and new routes from Edelweiss (to Zurich), Eurowings (to Hanover) and Norwegian (to Tromsø). "So we have five new tails" he said, "which is a big milestone moment and shows the team have been working diligently".

Taking into account all these developments, AGS Airports has revised its passenger number expectations for the year downwards from 12.2m across the group to 11.6m, which would still be an increase on the 2025 total of 11.4m. Glasgow is expected





to come in at 8.5m passengers (compared to 8.2m last year), Aberdeen at 2.25m passengers (down from last year after the collapse of Eastern Airways) and Southampton at just under a million passengers (comparable to last year, despite the collapse of Blue Islands).

Looking ahead, Jandu foresees “a golden opportunity” for continuing growth in flights from Southampton for as long as other airports in the South East remain at capacity. He also noted that at both Glasgow and Southampton, AGS Airports will be seeking to grow non-aviation revenue by taking advantage of envelopes of land that it owns in two tax-free zones, the Glasgow City Region Investment Zone and Navigation Quarter, within the Solent Freeport.

In Glasgow, he said, “we are in good conversations with some airlines that are maintenance related. Also we are talking to the hydrogen-electric company, ZeroAvia, who are working towards building hydrogen flight”. In Southampton “we have up to 1m sq. ft. of land in a phased development opportunity. We have grant funding for that, and we have got a partner where we

are exploring what real estate development can look like there”. The primary goal will be to get the best opportunities for the business, “but we also want to do that in a sustainable way because both of those areas can show how those two airports can become true engines of growth. They will create jobs, attract investment and ultimately strengthen the connectivity on which the regional economies depend”.

Asked to name the biggest challenge that AGS Airports has faced this year, Jandu said, “the biggest challenge for us and the airport industry in the UK and across Europe as well is the rising costs that we are facing, with costs rising faster than revenues”. For AGS specifically, business rates had increased significantly and in Scotland police security costs had increased by 50%. Next generation security had cost a lot to set up, and cost of living increases had been reflected in higher staff costs. “Taxes, business rates, all of the above, it is not a good place for UK aviation at the moment, but it is something that we are aware of and we are working towards doing something about it” he said.

Jandu co-chairs the UK Aviation

“We have had, for the first time in over 20 years, more new airlines flying to Glasgow than any other airport in Scotland. So we have five new tails which is a big milestone moment and shows the team have been working diligently.”

Council’s regional aviation working group which has collected data suggesting that UK regional aviation costs have been going up over the last 15 years far faster than European counterparts. “We are now putting together some policy thoughts” he said “that we will take back to the UK Government saying ‘why don’t we take this opportunity to support regional aviation by introducing Air Passenger Duty holidays to incentivise new connections’. Give us APD holidays and then we can use that to incentivise airlines to come to UK regional airports”. ■

DR RUPINDER PAMME, AIRPORTSUK SENIOR POLICY MANAGER

AIRPORTSUK SUPPORTS DRAFT HEATHROW EXPANSION NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT – BUT SAYS IT SHOULD NOT BECOME A UNIFORM TEMPLATE FOR OTHER AIRPORTS

Heathrow expansion has implications that extend well beyond that airport. As the UK's major hub airport, Heathrow has a particular role for the UK in connecting passengers, businesses and freight to global markets. Additional capacity would strengthen that role and support wider connectivity across the UK. To deliver that capacity there needs to be a policy framework that is clear, proportionate and sensitive to local and national impacts.

AirportsUK has submitted evidence to both the Transport Select Committee and the Government's own consultation. The Transport Select Committee will now scrutinise the draft, review responses and evidence, hold public oral evidence sessions, and publish recommendations. AirportsUK gave oral evidence on 9 September. DfT will consider the Committee's final report and consultation feedback before revising the draft as needed. The Government aims to



Dr Rupinder Pamme

secure final parliamentary approval and a development consent decision within this Parliament.

AirportsUK supports the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (HENPS) as it enables timely delivery while remaining focused on Heathrow's specific circumstances. We are clear that conditions appropriate for a hub airport of Heathrow's scale and location should not automatically become the benchmark for every UK airport

development.

UK airports served a record 302 million passengers in 2025 and handled almost 2.7 million tonnes of freight, connecting the country to around 470 destinations in 104 countries. Aviation supports trade, tourism, investment and family connections, contributing £159 billion in Gross Value Added and almost one million jobs. Heathrow's capacity constraints may limit the UK's ability to build on these benefits, particularly on long-haul routes to emerging and underserved markets.

In our assessment, expansion could also increase passenger choice, improve cargo capacity and make some new or reinstated domestic routes more viable. As we have highlighted in our response, Heathrow growth should complement, not crowd out, growth elsewhere in the UK.

As we see it the draft HENPS sets robust, proportionate

environmental requirements for Heathrow. All airport growth must sit within the aviation sector's pathway to net zero by 2050, but Heathrow-specific mitigations should reflect Heathrow's actual impacts, not become a uniform template for other airports.

The draft HENPS provides a broadly satisfactory noise framework, reflecting Heathrow's unique scale. The established approach of limiting, and where possible reducing, noise impacts, alongside the international Balanced Approach, remains a sensible basis for policy and should continue to apply.

Improved public transport to Heathrow should reflect what the airport can reasonably influence. Rail capacity, service patterns and wider upgrades depend on government, transport bodies and local authorities. Funding arrangements should recognise that many schemes benefit non-

airport users as well as passengers, rather than placing the burden solely on the airport.

Designating Heathrow expansion as Critical National Growth Infrastructure should not diminish other airports or disadvantage future proposals using different planning routes. The Making Best Use policy remains important for airports outside Heathrow and should continue to support sustainable growth where demand exists and environmental and planning requirements can be met.

The Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement should provide certainty for communities, investors, airlines and government while staying focused on the scheme it is intended to enable. Heathrow expansion could deliver substantial economic and connectivity benefits for the UK, but the policy must avoid creating unintended precedent for the wider airport sector. ■



AIRBUS PROTECT

NAVIGATING THE CYBER SECURITY AND RESILIENCE BILL: FROM REGULATORY PAIN POINTS TO OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE

Airbus Protect explains the Bill's implications for UK airports



The legislative progression of the UK's Cyber Security and Resilience Bill represents an aggressive modernisation of the ageing Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018. For UK airport operators, this legislation fundamentally alters the boundaries of legal accountability. With financial penalties capped at up to £17m or 4% of global annual turnover for severe non-compliance, boardroom risk assessments are rightly focusing on the structural liabilities this legislation introduces across the aviation supply chain.

However, the real pressure will be felt on the airfield. Modern airports operate as federated ecosystems comprising airlines, ground handlers, baggage operators, air navigation providers, and outsourced Information Technology (IT) vendors. The Bill creates a distinct perimeter paradox: operators are now legally accountable for networks they do not own, running legacy Operational Technology (OT) they did not configure, and utilising third-party data streams they cannot natively audit.

THE CORE PAIN POINTS FACING UK AIRPORTS

1. Extended supply chain footprint

The Bill expands regulatory oversight to Managed Service Providers, data infrastructure, electrical power supply networks, and critical supply chains. As demonstrated by last year's cyber attack on a high-profile supply chain, a compromise in a third-party vendor's cloud can instantly freeze check-in desks and halt airside operations. Under the new legislation, an outage in third-party software is no longer just a vendor issue; it is a direct regulatory breach for the airport operator.

2. Strict 24/72-hour reporting



Stefan Hechler

window

The legislation introduces a mandatory two-stage reporting structure:

- 24 hours: Initial light-touch notification to the Civil Aviation Authority, the Department for Transport, and the National Cyber Security Centre upon becoming aware of a significant incident or pre-positioning attack.
- 72 hours: A comprehensive operational assessment detailing root-cause analysis, impact metrics, and active remediation steps.
- 1 month: Final post-resolution closure report.

Attempting to contain a live crisis across operational systems

"The primary challenge is that an airport isn't a single corporate IT network – it is a highly complex, interconnected web of operational technology, physical safety systems, and third-party supply chains. The new Bill demands that operators assert legal governance across this entire ecosystem".

– such as baggage handling Programmable Logic Controllers or digital Flight Information Display Systems – while simultaneously producing detailed forensic reports within 72 hours introduces severe operational friction. Without pre-established forensic readiness, Security Operations Centres risk falling into administrative paralysis.

3. Legacy Operational Technology challenge

Airside Operational Technology architectures were engineered

for physical safety and reliability, often lacking native logging, encryption, or modern authentication. Aligning these legacy systems with the National Cyber Security Centre's Cyber Assessment Framework, and European Union Aviation Safety Agency Part-Information Security (Part-IS) mandates requires sophisticated cross-domain visibility rather than basic software patches.

Overcoming these specific regulatory and technical hurdles demands a shift from rigid, tick-box exercises towards proactive digital defence – an area where Stefan Hechler, Senior Cybersecurity Leader at Airbus Protect, brings extensive experience in mapping complex Information Technology and Operational Technology interdependencies to build true operational strength.

When addressing why the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill creates such significant headwinds for executive leadership, he highlights how the fundamental structure of modern airfields complicates compliance: "The primary challenge is that an airport isn't a single corporate IT network – it is a highly complex, interconnected web of operational technology, physical safety systems, and third-party supply chains. The new Bill demands that operators assert legal governance across this entire ecosystem. The risk is that airports get trapped in an administrative nightmare, spending all their time writing compliance reports to meet the 24/72-hour clock rather than actually containing live operational threats."

To prevent getting tied down in administrative noise during a critical event, Hechler emphasises that overcoming notification paralysis relies on automated telemetry and rapid forensic

readiness. He cautions that security teams cannot afford to start building an incident response plan after a ransomware payload has locked a baggage sortation system. Instead, Airbus Protect integrates security data into a 24/7 Sovereign UK Security Operations Centre, mapping live threat activity directly to the MITRE ATT&CK framework to decode adversary behaviour. Combined with contextual threat intelligence, this allows organisations to rapidly share actionable insights across supply chains, which can subsequently be translated into robust security controls to validate alignment with the NCSC Cyber Assessment Framework. When an incident occurs, retained Incident Response teams deploy under guaranteed Service-Level Agreements to rapidly understand the threat, isolate affected systems, and remediate the breach. Following remediation, they deliver the comprehensive root-cause forensics required by regulators like the CAA and DfT within tight reporting windows.

What ultimately sets Airbus Protect apart in navigating this evolving landscape is an airfield-first perspective grounded in

critical infrastructure heritage: "We understand the airfield. Airbus Protect isn't just an IT consultancy; our heritage comes from building and securing the complex infrastructure, OT environments, and critical assets that allow aviation to function. We help airports isolate legacy third-party risks at the network level and bridge the gap between IT, OT, and airside operations. Our goal is simple: ensure operational continuity, protect passenger throughput, and turn regulatory pressure into continuous, audit-ready resilience." ■

MEET AIRBUS PROTECT AT THE AIRPORTSUK SECURITY CONFERENCE 2026

Want to discuss your Part-IS readiness, Cyber Assessment Framework alignment, or Sovereign Security Operation Centre requirements in person? You can meet Stefan Hechler and the Airbus Protect team of aviation cyber experts at the AirportsUK Security Conference at the Radisson Blu Manchester Airport on 16 and 17 September 2026.

Or learn more about Airbus Protect by visiting www.protect.airbus.com

Airbus Protect is an AirportsUK Gold Member.



PETER CAMPBELL, AIRPORTSUK HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND MEDIA

PETER CAMPBELL LOOKS AHEAD TO THE BUDGET AND HOW AIRPORTSUK IS APPROACHING IT

Next month's Budget is a watershed moment for this new government, a chance to demonstrate that it really means it when it says it wants to boost economic growth. Whether that growth will emerge in the coming years will particularly depend on the tax decisions new chancellor, John Healey MP, announces when he stands in front of MPs at the despatch box at the end of October. Businesses up and down the country, including airports, will want to see that their decisions to invest will be rewarded with a supportive tax regime that recognises rather than punishes the risks taken to grow workforces, assets and activities.

For airports, this will undoubtedly mean we will be looking out for movement on business rates. This has been the number one fiscal priority for AirportsUK and its members for several years now. Given the context, that airports saw an average fourfold increase in their business rates for the period starting in April 2026, the result of a flawed and inconsistent valuation process, it is easy to understand why this would be the case.

To its credit, following extensive engagement by the whole sector, the previous government



Peter Campbell

acknowledged there was an issue and committed to an enhanced transitional relief scheme at Budget 2025 that limited increases in business rates to a mere doubling. It also announced a consultation and engagement process aimed at producing a fair, consistent and proportionate future valuation process that would provide more certainty around future business rates and ensuring increases of the scale initially proposed are avoided.

That process is nearing completion, and the previous chancellor imposed a Budget 2026 deadline for a solution that

can be implemented ahead of the start of discussions early next year around the next valuation period, which starts in 2029. It is why for this Budget, AirportsUK chose to focus its submission exclusively on the need for Healey to deliver on this commitment, highlighting the impact on economic growth of a failure to do so. This impact would be felt not only in aviation but across all sectors that air travel facilitates, including trade, tourism and business, through lower connectivity to UK markets and destinations.

Without changes to the business rates regime, government risks a number of negative outcomes, including:

- Putting new inward investment at risk and making the UK uncompetitive as a destination for Foreign Direct Investment;
- Meaning airports could not create jobs and could even put existing jobs at risk, as commercial activity is held back rather than facilitated;
- Undermining UK connectivity through an uncompetitive tax environment for investment and route development, making competitor airports more attractive locations for airlines to introduce additional routes/ connectivity; and
- Threatening to upend the role aviation is already playing in growing the economy, especially at regional airports that cannot foot the bill, and for larger airports where investment will be significantly scaled back.

New analysis from MAG and Gatwick shows the UK has already fallen behind and that since 2000 the cumulative shortfall in investment stands at £1.9 trillion, with business taxation listed as a main reason. Addressing this, partly through addressing airport business rates, would be worth



John Healey MP

an estimated £1,540 in additional real disposable income per household in 2040. Without action, investment will be deterred and deferred, while the population would be appreciably less well off.

Between now and Budget 2026, our activity and engagement with the Treasury will continue, therefore, to ensure government knows the importance of delivering for airports and by extension the whole of the UK. Meetings with ministers and officials, at Treasury and other Whitehall departments, using our upcoming annual conference and other sectoral events to draw attention to the issue, and seeking to generate media interest will all play a role. Then we will hopefully be able to

Between now and Budget 2026, our activity and engagement with the Treasury will continue, therefore, to ensure government knows the importance of delivering for airports and by extension the whole of the UK.

see the new government putting the UK at the forefront of the world for investment by turning its warm words about wanting to support economic growth into action. ■



SUSTAINABLE AVIATION

NET ZERO AVIATION IS POSSIBLE. NOW WE NEED TO DELIVER IT

By Duncan McCourt, Chief Executive, Sustainable Aviation

There is a persistent myth about aviation: that you cannot reduce emissions without reducing flying. It's not true.

The UK aviation sector has just completed a comprehensive technical assessment of how we can reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Will it be easy? No. Aviation is one of the hardest sectors to decarbonise. It will require a sustained commitment from industry, investors, and government over the coming decades. Is there a credible pathway? Definitely.

We cannot do without aviation – a critical enabler of economic growth, international trade, investment, tourism, connectivity, and human happiness. We have to ensure aviation can keep delivering these benefits while meeting the UK's climate ambitions. Our latest Decarbonisation Road-Map shows that we can.

Perhaps the most striking finding is that hitting net zero does not require aviation to stop growing. The Road-Map models different scenarios for the future. Under our central scenario, passenger demand continues to increase, with **revenue passenger kilometres growing by around 54% by 2050**. Yet aviation still reaches net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Decarbonisation is not about choosing between economic prosperity and environmental responsibility. It is about transforming how aviation operates.

There is no single silver bullet. Net zero will be delivered through a combination of technologies and measures. The largest contribution comes from Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

By 2050, SAF is expected to deliver an annual reduction of around **21 million tonnes of CO₂**, accounting for approximately **31% of total emissions abatement** from aviation. In the central scenario, SAF reaches **65% of total**



Duncan McCourt

jet fuel consumption by 2050, transforming the carbon intensity of aviation fuel while allowing airlines and airports to continue operating existing fleets and infrastructure.

UK aviation will need a balanced regulatory regime for SAF to maintain competitiveness – with carbon accounting rules that take account of the vital role of imported SAF. Domestic SAF production offers the UK an opportunity to boost manufacturing, skilled jobs, and energy resilience. The government has already taken important steps through the SAF Mandate and the introduction of a revenue certainty mechanism.

Technology is the second major pillar of the transition.

Aircraft today are significantly more fuel efficient. Fleet renewal using today's technology will deliver around **7 million tonnes of CO₂ reduction by 2050**, accounting for around **10% of total emissions savings**.

Beyond this, the next generation of aircraft technologies – including advanced conventional aircraft, hydrogen-powered aircraft, and electric flight – will contribute

By 2050, SAF is expected to deliver an annual reduction of around 21 million tonnes of CO₂, accounting for approximately 31% of total emissions abatement from aviation. In the central scenario, SAF reaches 65% of total jet fuel consumption by 2050, transforming the carbon intensity of aviation fuel while allowing airlines and airports to continue operating existing fleets and infrastructure.

a further 6.9 million tonnes of reductions, representing a further 10% of total abatement.

Innovation remains at the heart of aviation's future. Hydrogen and electric aircraft are unlikely to replace long-haul aircraft any time soon, but they have considerable potential on domestic and regional routes. Their development will reinforce the UK's position as a global aerospace leader and create opportunities in engineering, manufacturing, and clean energy supply chains. Some of these innovations will require airports to update their infrastructure.

Operational improvements also play an important role.

Emissions reductions are being delivered today through smarter operations. Improved flight

planning, more efficient airport operations, and airspace modernisation all reduce fuel burn and emissions.

By 2050, these measures will contribute around **2.5 million tonnes (approximately 4%) CO² savings annually**. The numbers may appear modest compared with SAF, but these reductions can be achieved sooner and often less expensively. Programmes like UK airspace modernisation are essential foundations of the net zero pathway.

Yet even deploying SAF at scale, introducing new aircraft technologies, and improving operational efficiency is not enough. Net zero aviation requires significant volumes of greenhouse gas removals.

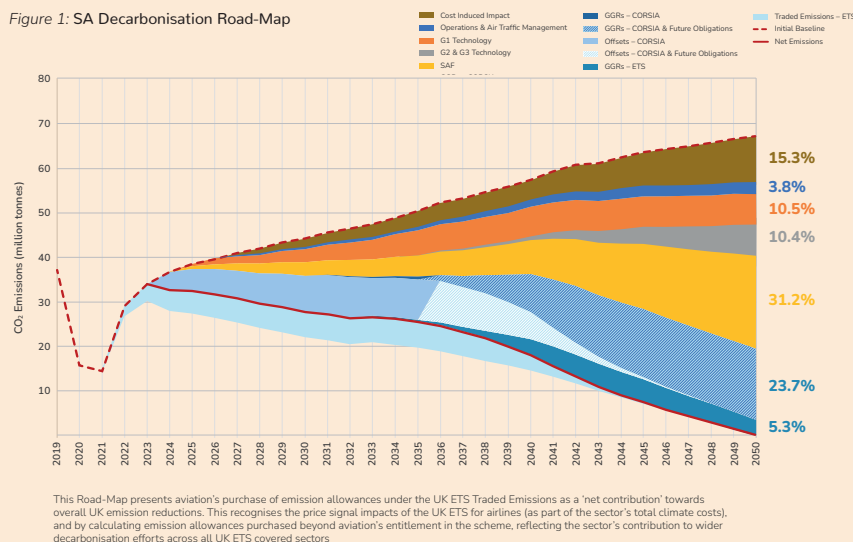
Our central scenario assumes aviation will require approximately **19.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas removals (GGRs) annually by 2050 (29%)**. These removals are expected to come from a mixture of engineered solutions such as Direct Air Carbon Capture and Storage, Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage, and Nature Based Removals.

UK aviation needs affordable access to international GGRs. Carbon removal needs to be durable and verifiable. Policy and regulatory frameworks need to be improved. UK, European Union, international, and corporate reporting frameworks do not always align.

This creates another major opportunity for the UK.

The expertise required to develop carbon removals overlaps with existing UK strengths in engineering, energy systems, carbon transport, and geological storage. Supported by the right policy framework, carbon removals could become

Figure 1: SA Decarbonisation Road-Map



The Road-Map shows a pathway to net zero. It relies on technologies and solutions that already exist and are progressing towards commercial deployment at scale.

a significant UK industry while helping to meet climate targets.

The UK has all the ingredients for success: world-leading aerospace expertise, best-in-class airports, significant renewable energy resources, innovative fuel developers, carbon storage capacity, and strong climate ambitions.

Industry is investing. Airlines are purchasing SAF. Aircraft manufacturers are developing the next generation of technology. Airports are preparing for the future.

The Road-Map shows a pathway to net zero. It relies on technologies and solutions that already exist and are progressing towards commercial deployment at scale.

The pathway ahead is not an

easy one, but we can skilfully navigate it together. The reward – an aviation sector that continues to grow and thrive but with a net zero carbon impact – will be huge. ■

AIRPORTSUK LAUNCHES NEW CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WORKING GROUP – PUTTING PASSENGERS AT THE CENTRE

By Victoria MacRae, Head of Regulations, Operations and Compliance, AirportsUK

AirportsUK is pleased to announce the launch of a new Customer Experience Working Group. The group will provide a dedicated forum for members to exchange ideas, discuss emerging issues and explore practical solutions that can help enhance the passenger journey across UK airports.

Whilst growth, expansion and connectivity are essential to the success of UK airports, it is increasingly recognised that these ambitions must be matched by a commitment to put passengers at the centre and deliver exceptional customer service.

Varying in terms of size, location and operation, airports face remarkably similar challenges when it comes to meeting the needs and expectations of passengers. Whether managing peak-period congestion or supporting vulnerable travellers, airports are continually balancing operational demands with the need to provide excellent customer service and seamless transition through terminals.

Existing AirportsUK working groups have already demonstrated the significant value that collaboration from across the sector can deliver. Bringing together professionals



Victoria MacRae

to discuss common challenges, share good practice and learn from one another has helped drive improvements in a range of operational areas.

Providing a forum for customer relations and terminal operations teams to talk about shared challenges and innovative solutions, the group will support airports in delivering the high-quality experiences and care that today's passengers increasingly

expect. By creating a space for open discussion and shared learning, the working group aims to strengthen collaboration across the industry.

The new working group, which held its first meeting this month, will provide a platform to discuss a wide range of topics affecting customer experience, including:

- Customer service standards
- Accessibility
- Passenger communications
- Queue management
- Wayfinding and signage
- Managing disruptive passengers
- De-escalation techniques
- Staff visibility and uniform policies
- Passenger welfare issues

The working group aims to encourage meaningful discussion about what works well, what challenges remain and where airports may benefit from learning from one another. ■

STORNOWAY AIRPORT

STORNOWAY AIRPORT THE ISLAND AIRPORT WITH STRONG LINKS TO THE MILITARY AND TO ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY

Stornoway Airport is located on the Isle of Lewis, situated off the west coast of Scotland, just over two miles east of Stornoway, the biggest town on the Outer Hebridean island.



The original airfield at Stornoway was built on Melbost Golf Links, opening in 1937 with grass runways as part of Capt EE Fresson's work to develop aviation in the Highlands and Islands. When the Second World War broke out, the site was acquired by the Air Ministry, and the Royal Air Force maintained an airbase there until 1998. Commercial flights between Glasgow and the Hebrides commenced in May 1940, provided by Scottish Airways, using a de Havilland Rapide, but military operations dominated throughout the war years.

Four paved runways were completed by 1941, to meet the requirements of RAF Coastal Command who patrolled the North Atlantic looking for enemy vessels during wartime. US military personnel were based at Stornoway during the war, and these transatlantic connections were commemorated in 2022 with a visit to the airport by the US Consul to Scotland, Michael Feldman. RAF Stornoway features in the Tom Clancy novel, *Red Storm Rising*, as the base for RAF operations over the North Atlantic against Soviet-controlled Iceland; the USS Nimitz ends up there after sustaining damage in battle.

In 1946 the airfield passed into the ownership of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and reverted to the name of Stornoway Airport. Later, between 1960 and 1983, the airport was home to No 112 Signals Unit RAF who worked on the development of electronic countermeasures to protect aircraft from attack. This work proved valuable as part of operations during the Cold War.

During the 1970s through to the late 1990s, the airport acted as a NATO forward operating base, supporting missions over the North Atlantic and stop-overs for



Jordan Carberry

In the 1980s, a £40m investment programme to extend the main runway and taxiways, along with new hangars was completed, to accommodate RAF Panavia Tornado aircraft, with RAF Stornoway reinstated as a forward operations base.

flights heading to Greenland and the USA. In the 1980s, a £40m investment programme to extend the main runway and taxiways, along with new hangars was completed, to accommodate RAF Panavia Tornado aircraft, with RAF Stornoway reinstated as a forward operations base.

Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL) has managed and operated the airport since 4 March 1986, when the company was incorporated by the UK Civil Aviation Authority. The RAF station was closed again in 1998. The Ministry of Defence sold the site to Western Isles Council (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) and the airport reverted to civilian use once again, although the Ministry and NATO still use the site for military exercises.

In 2025, a memorial flight by serving members and veterans of 8 Squadron flew into Stornoway Airport in an RAF Avro Shackleton Early Warning aircraft. The group were marking the 35th anniversary of a crash of the same type of aircraft on nearby Maodal hill, which claimed the lives of all



Stornoway is an airport with far reaching links to the military and to this day plays a key role for local people, providing access to the Scottish mainland with flights to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness, as well as to the nearby island of Benbecula.

ten crew on board, including the Officer commanding 8 Squadron at the time.

In 2022/2023, HIAL invested in coastal protection works carried out along Broad Bay beach, which is adjacent to the airfield. Designed to protect the infrastructure and operations at the airport, the project used materials taken from local quarries to strengthen the rock armour at the eastern end of the main runway and to shield the airfield from erosion. Reno-mattresses, which are baskets made of steel wire mesh, were placed to protect the seaward face of the dunes.

The RAF Red Arrows are regular visitors to Stornoway as they travel overseas for their flying displays. In August 2024, 12 jets landed ahead of their trip to Canada to mark their 60th anniversary, much to the delight of the local community who took full advantage of the photo opportunity.

At the start of this year a charity event was held at Stornoway Airport to mark more than a century since the *lolaire* tragedy,



which was one of the worst maritime disasters to have occurred in British waters in the 20th century. On 1 January 1919 *HMV lolaire*, carrying around 280 servicemen home from the First World War, struck rocks near the entrance to Stornoway harbour. The vessel sank just 20 yards from the shore with many of the passengers and crew unable to swim to shore due to the cold water and heavy seas. It is estimated that over 200 people perished, with the majority being natives to the Isle of Lewis. The disaster had a profound effect on the island's population and on its economy.

Recently, Jordan Carberry joined HIAL as Airport Manager at Stornoway, after holding

operational and management roles within Western Isles Council's education, skills and children's services department. He describes himself as having "a keen interest in aviation and a deep understanding of the importance of air connectivity for the local community."

Stornoway is an airport with far reaching links to the military and to this day plays a key role for local people, providing access to the Scottish mainland with flights to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness, as well as to the nearby island of Benbecula. It also serves as a base for search and rescue on behalf of HM Coastguard UK and provides support to the North Atlantic oil and gas sector. ■



ANNUAL CONFERENCE **Airports in a Changing World**

14th October 2026



AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

TRANSPORT SECRETARY TO OUTLINE NEXT STEPS FOR AVIATION POLICY AT AIRPORTSUK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Marko Saaret, Senior Manager, Events and Member Engagement, AirportsUK, previews the 2026 conference

Heidi Alexander MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, will be the keynote speaker at this year's AirportsUK Annual Conference and will address both the future of aviation policy and what the sector can do to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead.

The 2026 conference, being held on 14 October at London's County Hall, will take as its theme, Airports in a Changing World. An overview of the economic and geopolitical outlook will be provided by the prominent economist and media commentator, Paul Johnson, who headed the Institute for Fiscal Studies from 2011 until last year.

We are looking forward to welcoming conference delegates back to one of London's most charming and popular conference destinations, which previously hosted our annual conference in 2018 and 2019. Designed in a grand Edwardian Baroque style by Ralph Knott, County Hall, on the south bank of the River Thames, was officially opened by King George V in 1922, ahead of its completion in 1939, with further additions being made over subsequent decades.

One of the factors making County Hall so special is that it directly overlooks some of London's most significant landmarks, including the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben. Throughout its history as the former headquarters of the London County Council and the Greater London Council, the building was regarded not only as a tangible symbol of the centre of London's local government, but also as an architectural rival to other significant Thames-side buildings such as Somerset House and the Palace of Westminster.

As always, our flagship event this year will focus on the outlook for the aviation sector, providing an opportunity to hear not only from the top of government but also from senior leaders in UK aviation.

Ours is a very complex industry, facing numerous challenges. At this year's conference we will hear about climate change issues and how to achieve better resilience. A leading expert in

Heidi Alexander MP



the energy and fuel sector will provide insight into some of the most important challenges and opportunities facing aviation, as the sector continues to operate in a time of global conflict and change. Topics such as airport infrastructure and investment, UK connectivity and priorities for a thriving aviation sector to 2030 and beyond will provide an opportunity to hear expert views and strategic visions from leading airport CEOs.

This year's flagship event for AirportsUK will provide ample networking opportunities in the form of coffee breaks, lunch and an evening drinks reception. Alongside networking, there will be a chance to get better acquainted with some of the leading airport suppliers, including



Paul Johnson

event sponsors NATS and SITA, as well as several exhibitors. A small number of exhibition slots remain.

The entire AirportsUK team is really looking forward to the conference, and we hope to see many of you at one of this year's principal gatherings for the aviation industry. ■

EVENTS & MEETINGS

2026



Airport Conference: Security
Radisson Blu, Manchester Airport
16 – 17 September

Fire Safety Forum
Virtual meeting
18 September @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm

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

Health & Safety Week Awards
AirportsUK Office
22 September @ 1:00pm – 2:30pm

Aerodrome Safeguarding
Virtual meeting
24 September @ 11:00am – 1:00pm

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

AirportsUK Annual Conference
County Hall, London
14 October @ 9:30am – 5:00pm

Sustainability Group
Virtual meeting
22 October @ 10:00am – 12:00 midday

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

Fire Safety Forum
Virtual meeting
8 December @ 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Security Group
AirportsUK Office
10 December @ 11:00am – 12:30pm

Security Group (Airports only)
AirportsUK Office
10 December @ 1:30pm – 3:00pm





From around the sector

EASYJET BOOSTS NEWCASTLE AIRPORT WITH NINE NEW ROUTES

easyJet, which opened its new base at Newcastle in March, launched four new routes in August and has announced five more for this winter.

The four new services, launched at the beginning of last month, are to Prague, Reus, Sharm el-Sheikh and Tenerife, while the five new winter

routes are to Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen, Hurghada and Rovaniemi. All the new routes are twice weekly. Flights to Barcelona will take off on 25 October and to Hurghada two days later. Flights to Copenhagen will start on 5 November, to Berlin on 20 November and to Rovaniemi on 25 November.

Leon McQuaid, Director

of Aviation Development at the airport, said "The launch of easyJet's new routes marks another significant milestone in the airline's continued growth at Newcastle Airport following the opening of its new base in March. In just a few months, easyJet has more than quadrupled its network with flights and package holidays now on sale to 31 destinations. EasyJet's

continued growth underlines their strong commitment to both the airport and the wider North East region". ■



PRESTWICK APPOINTS LONG-SERVING AIRPORT VETERAN AS NEW CEO

Glasgow Prestwick Airport has appointed Jules Matteoni as its new CEO, succeeding Ian Forgie, who has retired after five years in the role.

Matteoni has worked at the airport for more than 33 years, most recently as Operations Director and played a central role in developing the airport's position as a leading UK gateway for international cargo and e-commerce traffic.

Prestwick's Chairman, Willie Mackie CBE, said Matteoni was "highly respected across the aviation sector. His leadership has been instrumental in the

development of our e-commerce business, which has transformed our cargo operations, and he is exceptionally well placed to lead the airport through its next phase of growth".

Matteoni said he is looking forward to working with the airport team "to build on the strong progress we have achieved together. We will continue to strengthen our existing markets while pursuing new opportunities that reflect the airport's unique commercial advantages and strategic position within the UK supply chain".

Forgie, who became CEO in March 2021, oversaw significant expansion across the airport's cargo



operations, including the processing of 33m e-commerce parcels during the past year, the establishment of regular freighter services linking Scotland and China and the export of more than 1.5m kilograms of Scottish salmon during a recent five-month period. ■



NORTHERN ECONOMY TRANSFORMED BY MANCHESTER AIRPORT'S GROWTH

A new report by economic consultants, Metro Dynamics, says that the airport's development since its second runway was opened 25 years ago has driven foreign investment and boosted businesses in the North of England.

The study on the impact of the last new runway to be built in the UK notes that "25 years ago, local leaders backed Runway 2 before demand fully existed. That decision helped transform Greater Manchester and the North's economy. The challenge now is to show the same ambition again. The conditions are in place for the North's next take off. This time the prize is not just regional prosperity, but a stronger and more balanced British economy".

According to the report, the single most important element for further growth in the region would be to press ahead with the building of Northern Powerhouse Rail, including a new high-speed station at Manchester Airport. It says that "unlocking the airport's full potential requires coordinated action across the wider economic and transport system. Northern

Powerhouse Rail is the most important of these and represents the next phase of backing required to unlock Manchester Airport's catchment area".

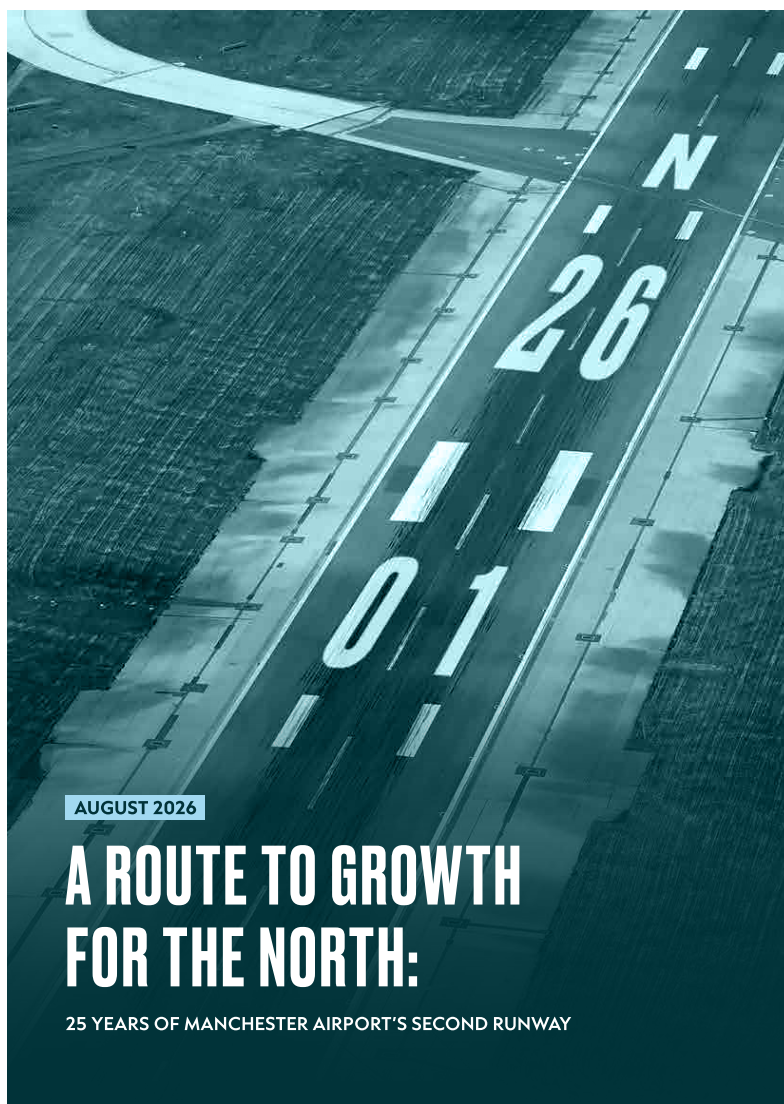
Greater Manchester's new Mayor, Bev Craig, described Manchester Airport as "Greater Manchester's gateway to the world and one of the North's great success stories. For 25 years its second runway has helped connect our businesses, universities and communities to global markets and has played a major role in our city region's reinvention.

Now we need to make sure more people and places share in that success. Northern Powerhouse Rail, including a high-speed station at the airport, would cut journey times, open up access to jobs and opportunities, and help unlock the North's full potential. That is the investment our region

needs – and the case we will keep making".

MAG CEO, Ken O'Toole, said "while Runway 2 shows what is possible, the UK's overall performance on investment ranks poorly against other major economies. This Government has an opportunity to embed a

policy environment that encourages key strategic investments just like this in regions across the UK. That includes delivering on Northern Powerhouse Rail and reforming business taxes to remove barriers to much-needed investment". ■





From around the sector



BOURNEMOUTH AIRPORT CELEBRATES 85TH BIRTHDAY WITH RECORD-BREAKING GROWTH

Bournemouth Airport celebrated its 85th birthday in August following a record-breaking year, with more passengers than ever before.

The airport began life as RAF Hurn in August 1941, before being transferred to civilian control in 1944. It subsequently served as London's transatlantic airport until Heathrow opened in 1946, with Pan Am operating flights to New York five days a week. The journey took almost 18 hours because of several refuelling stops. Today Bournemouth is

one of the UK's fastest growing regional airports, serving more than 40 destinations. A record 1.4m passengers travelled through the airport in the year to June, an increase of 17% on the previous 12 months. In July the airport welcomed a special guest when Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky flew in for his first meeting with Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, before continuing on to Washington to see President Trump.

Following its second summer season at Bournemouth this year, Jet2 will offer its biggest ever programme from

the airport next summer, with 22 routes. TUI and Ryanair have also continued to grow their Bournemouth operations. Recent growth has been supported by a £17m investment programme, including a new immigration and arrivals hall, a larger baggage reclaim hall, a new outbound baggage facility, expanded check-in and more than 800 additional car parking spaces.

The airport's Managing Director, Steve Gill, said "Bournemouth Airport has changed enormously during its 85-year history, but its importance to

the region has remained constant. We have recorded the busiest year in the airport's history, and our airline partners are continuing to grow, giving local people more choice and making it easier and more convenient to fly from their local airport". ■

FREIGHT DRIVES SURGE IN ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT

A new study by York Aviation, released last month, shows the airport's economic impact grew to £6.2bn in 2025, up £2bn on the previous year.

Driven largely by growth in its cargo operation, the airport supported £1.5bn in Gross Value Added and over 15,000 jobs in the East Midlands, including 7,500 jobs on site, and over £500m in GVA and more than 6,000 jobs in

the neighbouring West Midlands.

More than 400,000 tonnes of cargo passed through the airport last year, up 12.5%, accounting for more than a third of all cargo growth across the UK. Goods for export worth £13bn passed through East Midlands Airport, underlining its importance for high-value, time-sensitive and supply-chain-critical goods. More than half of the goods exported were manufactured in the

Midlands.

The airport's Managing Director, Steve Griffiths, said "I'm proud of the huge contribution the airport makes to the economy, which increased by £2bn in 2025, driven largely by the growth in our fantastic cargo operation that plays such a vital role in the UK's international trade. We're proud to help high-value industries like advanced manufacturing and life sciences ship high value, time critical items

to key global markets, supporting almost 22,000 jobs at businesses in the Midlands alone".

East Midlands Airport connects the UK to more than 185 international markets. It is the main UK base for global logistics giants, DHL, UPS and FedEx and has recently attracted seven new cargo operators, including China's Yun Express, which has developed a new handling facility at the airport. ■

BELFAST CITY AIRPORT SUBMITS DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR £200M IMPROVEMENTS AND INVESTMENT

Belfast City Airport has submitted Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) to its local authorities to enhance passenger facilities, improve airport operations and invest in critical infrastructure.

The submissions to Belfast City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council are the first step in the planning process to deliver its Master Plan 2040 vision. Next will come a consultation on its draft plans and on proposed changes to its current Planning Agreement, which is

governed by Northern Ireland's Department for Infrastructure.

Included in the draft Planning Agreement changes is a one-hour increase in scheduled operations, moving from a 15-hour day to a 16-hour day, with scheduled movements allowed up to 22.30, whilst maintaining the current no-fly period between midnight and 06.29. The draft also proposes an increase in annual traffic movements from 48,000 to 61,000, which would be accommodated within the airport's existing noise contour area limit and environmental controls.

Subject to feedback received during the consultation exercise, it is likely that planning applications will be submitted to the two councils later this year for comprehensive redevelopment of the airport's infrastructure, alongside a submission to the Department for Infrastructure seeking modifications to the airport's operational controls.

Belfast City Airport's Chief Executive, Matthew Hall, said "These draft infrastructure proposals have been designed to support the airport's growth in a way that is

balanced and mindful of our surroundings and, importantly, do not include any extension to the existing runway".

He added that "extended operating hours and increased annual traffic movement limits are critical for the airport to be able to meet the forecast increase in demand for air travel and enable it to unlock the associated benefits, including increased connectivity to the UK and Europe. They are also essential to support the investment needed to deliver the infrastructure required for the airport's long-term growth". ■



From around the sector

TEESSIDE AIRPORT SECURES £50M DEAL FOR NEW AIRCRAFT CONVERSION FACILITY

Teesside International Airport has secured a 50-year agreement with a global aerospace innovator to establish a major new facility to convert passenger aircraft into freighters.

Alfor Aviation will make Teesside its global headquarters and create 250 permanent high-skilled jobs at a purpose-built facility comprising new hangars, engineering workshops and warehousing. Construction is expected to begin shortly, with the facility starting operations by the end of next year. Once fully operational

it will be capable of converting up to 24 passenger aircraft into freighters each year.

The company's Internal Loading System technology enables aircraft to be converted for cargo operations without cutting a large cargo door into the fuselage, greatly reducing conversion costs and significantly accelerating turnaround times.

Omer Mafa, Director of Alfor Aviation, said "this is a transformational moment for us and a major vote of confidence in both the UK and Teesside. We examined numerous locations across Europe for our long-



term home, but nowhere matched what Teesside offers. The deciding factor was Teesside Freeport. As the UK's largest free trade zone, it provides exactly the kind of internationally competitive environment aerospace businesses need".

Phil Forster, the airport's Managing Director, said "this is a landmark investment for Teesside Airport and another

major endorsement of the ambitious growth strategy we have been delivering over recent years. By bringing its unique technology to Teesside, Alfor will establish the airport as a centre of excellence for air freight innovation. Aircraft will be converted here and will also be flying from here, further strengthening Teesside's role in the future of international cargo aviation". ■

UK AIRPORTS HIT RECORD PASSENGER NUMBERS, DESPITE MIDDLE EAST DISRUPTION

Latest UK aviation data show passenger records were broken in the second quarter of this year, despite disruption caused by conflict in the Middle East.

More than 81m passengers travelled through UK airports between April and June, up more than 120,000 on the numbers recorded in the same period last year. Growth

was largely driven by low-cost airlines, with Ryanair and Jet2 both seeing 9% year-on-year growth in second quarter passenger numbers.

The most popular destinations in the quarter were Dublin, Palma de Mallorca, Amsterdam, Alicante and Malaga. Passenger numbers travelling to Dubai halved compared to last year, and Middle Eastern airlines also saw

significant reductions.

Ross Lydall, spokesperson for the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said "demand for flying remains high, as passengers adjust their travel plans around global events. These results highlight the sector's resilience and hard work and keep it on course for another record-breaking year".

Karen Dee, AirportsUK's Chief Executive, said "it

is good to see that air travel has continued to grow, despite ongoing challenges in places like the Middle East. As an island nation, our air links play a pivotal role in business, trade, investment and tourism so it is extremely important that we support and grow our connectivity. This will contribute towards the economic growth which is key to the UK's future prosperity". ■

GATWICK'S NORTHERN RUNWAY CLEARED FOR TAKE OFF

The Court of Appeal has rejected the legal challenges to the Government's decision to approve London Gatwick's Northern Runway project – one of the UK's largest privately financed infrastructure projects.

Its 4 August decision to reject challenges brought by two campaign groups opposing the project brings to an end an eight-year planning and legal process and clears the way for the airport to move from planning to the detailed design and delivery phase.

Gatwick's Chief Executive, Pierre-Hugues Schmit, said "the decision confirms that the September 2025 decision by the Secretary of State for Transport to approve the project was taken properly and lawfully. The Northern Runway project will deliver significant business, tourism and trade benefits for the UK, including 14,000 new jobs, a £1bn boost to the economy every year and a comprehensive employment, skills and business strategy designed to bring maximum benefits to local people and the Gatwick region".

On 26 August the airport announced its operational and financial performance



for the first half of this year, with revenue and earnings both up, revenue by 4.8% and earnings by 5.5%. Passenger numbers at 19.1m (down 4.7%) were driven by the conflict in the Middle East and capacity reductions from some low-cost carriers.

Schmit said "despite a challenging geopolitical and economic backdrop, London Gatwick has continued to perform well, grow its network and deliver a world-class service for passengers.

As we look ahead, it is important that the wider policy environment continues to support businesses that are investing for the long-



term. In the build-up to the Budget therefore, our key ask of Government is for a more stable and proportionate approach on key issues such as

business rates, to ensure the UK aviation sector remains competitive and affordable for passengers". ■



From around the sector

LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT SEEKING TO UPDATE PLANNING CONDITIONS FOR NIGHT-TIME OPERATIONS

Leeds Bradford Airport has submitted proposals to Leeds City Council to change planning conditions that currently control night flights.

The airport is seeking to replace a decades-old air traffic movement-based system with a modern cap system, already adopted at most regional airports, that would incentivise quieter, more environmentally friendly planes. It is also asking for night-time hours to be defined as 23.30 to 05.59, in line with other UK airports and in keeping with standard European flight patterns.

Alongside these proposed changes the airport has announced plans for a new night noise insulation scheme, designed to provide practical support for those most affected by aircraft noise. The proposed scheme would offer grants towards insulation measures, including glazing, ventilation improvements and, for the first time at a UK airport, funding for bedroom air conditioning in eligible properties.

Vincent Hodder, the airport's CEO, said "Leeds Bradford Airport is transforming into a modern gateway for Yorkshire and a catalyst



for regional growth, building an airport that is fit for the future. Today we support thousands of jobs and generate hundreds of millions of pounds for the regional economy. As we deliver our Vision 2030 strategy and LBA:REGEN, that contribution will grow significantly".

"Modernising operating conditions that were introduced more than three decades ago is an important part of that journey. It enables us

to encourage quieter, cleaner aircraft while maintaining robust environmental controls and providing meaningful support for our neighbours. This is about creating a stronger, more sustainable and better-connected Yorkshire for the decades ahead. This is not the 'thousands more night flights' some would claim. The quota count system LBA is applying for is set to match the existing noise footprint – the same noise limits,

allocated differently".

Steve Heapy, CEO, Jet2, said "This modernisation is welcome news, both for the regional economy and for local holidaymakers. We have been proudly operating from Leeds Bradford Airport since 2003, and our longstanding commitment has never been stronger. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the airport on the next exciting phase of development". ■



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