

AIRPORTSUK | ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

AIRPORTS IN A CHANGING WORLD

08:30 | Registration & breakfast

09:30 | Welcome & opening remarks

Dharshini David OBE, Moderator – Chief Economics Correspondent, BBC
Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE, Chair – AirportsUK
Karen Dee, Chief Executive – AirportsUK

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

09:40 | Geopolitics, trade and aviation policy

Chair: Dharshini David OBE

Vincent Hodder, Chief Executive Officer – Leeds Bradford Airport
Dave Lees, Chief Executive Officer – Bristol Airport
Andrew Macmillan, Chief Strategy Officer – Manchester Airports Group

A panel of senior airport CEOs will discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the UK aviation sector, from geopolitical uncertainty and supply chain pressures to opportunities in global trade and the nature of evolving security risks. This panel will discuss how the sector can drive UK connectivity in uncertain times, and what it needs from government to do so, driving the economic growth we need.

10:10 | The UK economic and financial outlook

Paul Johnson, Senior Adviser – Frontier Economics and Provost – The Queen's College Oxford

The UK continues to face significant economic and financial pressures, including constrained public finances and global market volatility and disruption. Higher operating costs and changing economic conditions are undermining the government's focus on delivering long-term growth, improved productivity, increased investment and fiscal stability. Here, the former chief executive of the Institute for Fiscal Studies will discuss these challenges and how they could affect the wider economy in the year ahead.

10:30 | Networking coffee break

11:00 | The view from Great Minster House

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

This past year we have seen continued discussion around airport expansion, a new civil aviation bill going through parliament, and a new national policy statement. So here is an opportunity to step back and hear directly from the government about how it sees the next steps for aviation policy and what the sector can now be doing to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead.

11:20 | Adaptation and resilience in the age of climate change

Chair: Christopher Snelling

James Richardson, Chief Analyst – Climate Change Committee (CCC)
Jonny Saks, Director, Strategy and System Change – NISTA
Ian Lisk, Chief Meteorologist – MET Office
Ian Jopson, Director Sustainability – NATS
Matt Gorman, Carbon Strategy Director – Heathrow Airport

The UK must get its infrastructure ready for a changed and potentially more extreme climate. By 2050, 2°C of global warming could bring more heatwaves, droughts and floods. These conditions will bring challenges for all parts of airport and airline operations as well as surface access and the utilities infrastructure we rely on. The Cabinet Office is reviewing resilience standards across 14 critical sectors, with results due in 2026 as part of its UK Infrastructure: A 10-year Strategy launched by HMT and NISTA. The panel of experts will highlight how UK aviation can adapt to address these challenges.

12:00 | Changing political landscape fireside chat

Chair: Dharshini David OBE

Rt Hon The Lord Michael Gove, Editor – Spectator

Join UK's most respected voices in discussion about the challenges facing the UK, as the old two-party structure breaks down and four or even five party politics increasingly becomes a reality. There will be fascinating insight into the changing shape of the British electorate, as well as what it will mean for governing in the years ahead.

12:30 | Networking lunch

13:45 | The view from the Opposition

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

The Conservative party continues to develop its policy platform and to hold the government to account in parliament as it hopes that the next general election will see them return to government. As part of this, we will be joined by the shadow transport secretary, who will lay out his views on the role airports can play now, and as part of the UK under a future Conservative administration.

14:00 | Financing infrastructure and attracting investment

Chair: Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith

Andy Cliffe - Chief Executive Officer – London City Airport
Parminder Kohli, Director General – Office for Investment
Lucy Chadwick, Partner and Head of ESG – Global Infrastructure Partners
Muniya Barua, Deputy Chief Executive - BusinessLDN

Attracting investment for airport infrastructure remains both a challenge and an opportunity. Rising construction and planning costs, economic uncertainty and evolving environmental requirements continue to affect investor confidence. However, growing passenger demand, regional growth ambitions and the transition to more sustainable aviation create strong long-term opportunities for partnerships and private capital investment that can strengthen connectivity, capacity and economic resilience.

14:40 | Implementing the border of the future

Lord Ray Collins of Highbury, Lords Home Office Minister

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

15:00 | Networking coffee break

15:30 | Delivering the government's aviation policy – government and regulator perspectives

Chair: Karen Dee

Ashley Ibbett, Director General for Aviation, Maritime and Security – Department for Transport

As passenger demand continues to grow, airports face increasing pressure to maximise capacity while balancing environmental, operational and community considerations. This panel will explore how strategic planning, infrastructure investment and airspace modernisation can work together to unlock future growth. Attendees will gain insights into emerging priorities, regulatory developments and collaborative approaches that can help ensure airports remain fit for purpose in an evolving aviation landscape.

15:45 | Connecting the UK domestically and globally

Chair: Karen Dee

Kam Jandu, Chief Executive Officer – AGS Airports
Andrew Devaney, Assistant Director of Investment – Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Andrew Bell, Chief Executive – Regional and City Airports
Bethany Windsor, Head of Multimodal and Skills Policy – Logistics UK

Regional airports are vital to our economic and social connectivity, supporting jobs, trade, tourism and investment across all nations and regions. They provide essential links for businesses and communities, strengthen domestic and international connectivity, and play an important role in driving regional growth while enhancing the resilience and capacity of the UK's wider aviation network. Here we gather a panel of senior experts to look at how we can maximise regional airports' impact and drive growth for all parts of the UK.

16:15 | Energy

John Kemp, Founder – Base Research

This leading expert in energy and fuel will provide his insight into the leading challenges and opportunities facing aviation, as the sector continues to operate in a time of global conflict and change. The session will give delegates the chance to gain further understanding of where the world is likely heading as continued uncertainty in the Middle East and elsewhere threatens to impact costs and supply of jet fuel.

16:30 | Big aviation interview

Chair: Dharshini David OBE

Jim Butler, Chief Financial Officer – London Gatwick Airport

Hear from senior member of the aviation sector on their thoughts on what airports need to prioritise if we are to continue to be at the forefront of the economic and social life of the UK, well into the next decade. Their insight will provide food for thought for the entire sector as we close our conference and ensure that attendees are able to return to their airports with new ideas on how to address the challenges and opportunities we will face in the coming years.

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16:50 | Closing remarks

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE, Chair – AirportsUK
Karen Dee, Chief Executive – AirportsUK

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

17:00 – 18:30 | Networking drinks reception

Speakers and timings may be subject to change