

No more security queues promised at Edinburgh Airport



Edinburgh Airport is undergoing a £25m transformation which will introduce a new security hall with half the number of security stations as the existing one, but which will allow twice as many people to pass through in an hour. At present the airport on a good day can 'process' around 260 passengers through security in an hour, but this will rise to around 600 with the new hall – and they promise there will be no queues.

If you find that hard to believe then you need to know that the new building is not just a box thrown up on a whim, there has been real thought put into the expansion of the terminal building. The rationale behind the single biggest investment by the airport owner GIP since they took over ownership in 2012 is a desire to make the passenger experience a more seamless one, and there is a conscious decision to use new technology to enhance the security procedures. Security staff have been seconded into the team designing the new facilities so that they can offer real input into how the airport will cope with rising passenger numbers in future. Staff were also asked for their agreement on how the outside of the new part of the building would look.



The expansion is being constructed at the eastern end of the terminal and will bring the airport nearer to the new tram stop where a tram will almost always be waiting for passengers to leave the airport every 6 minutes. As well as this the coach park, Lothian Buses terminus and the car rental area are all at this end of the building for ease of access.



The new 6000 square metre structure which you will have seen while passing through Edinburgh Airport is large enough to house two Airbus A319 aircraft, which each have a wingspan of 34 metres. This might give you some idea of how big the extension is!

The new security hall is just a shell at the moment without outside walls but it is easy to envisage the new modern customer facing areas which will house shops, offices and the security hall if you look at the architects drawings.



The airport say that they will not actually need all six security lanes which they are installing at the outset, as they have improved the ways that they measure any existing queues. This facial recognition technology tracks how long it takes any passenger to clear security from the moment they enter the building. The airport owners can also estimate more accurately how many passengers are expected in the airport at any one time, and so ought to be able to predict the number of staff required in security, meaning no waiting time. As fewer seasonal staff will be required the hope is that the core security staff, who get refresher courses each year will be more efficient.

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There will be many more loading stations for passengers to begin their security journey by placing their belongings into a tray which will then pass through security screening. The trays have not been left out of the new processes either; from now on there will be no bunching up of security trays! They will all have grips to attach them to the conveyor belt which ought to mean a slicker experience all round.

We are assured that increasing the number of starting points alone will speed up the whole process, and security staff say

that there will be no need for any queuing when passengers arrive at the new security area. If there are any queuing times Edinburgh Airport will publish these on their website in an effort to be more transparent.

Every part of the security process has been scrutinised and most of it has been changed. The airport staff are able to use Gatwick Airport owned by the same company as a guinea pig for the changes proposed. One of the most important changes is that the security hall will have no pillars in it. The area is often subject to police surveillance and so for the purposes of enhancing safety the design has been made as open as possible. The staff who are examining the X-ray images will be in a quiet room behind the security hall and will electronically tag any bags which they consider need further examination.

The area which is currently used as security will be changed into a retail area, and by introducing more shopping outlets the airport hope to keep charges for their airline customers down. At present the balance is around 50/50 from retail and airline, and the idea is to reduce that even further to give more leeway on negotiating the costs airlines have to pay.

The development is only part of the total £150m programme planned for Edinburgh Airport and has been planned with expansion in mind.

The building will be wind and weather tight by 16 May 2014 and the new security hall is set to become operational by the end of October 2014.



Julie Matthews Head of Security, Gordon Robertson Director of Communications Edinburgh Airport, Colin Keir MSP and Ian Lang of Balfour Beatty pose in the new building

The Edinburgh Reporter asked Colin Keir MSP what he thought

after a tour of the new building.

This is what he said:-

[listen to 'Colin Keir MSP on Edinburgh Airport expansion' on Audioboo](#)