

Edinburgh Airport rolls out the red carpet for the Prime Minister



Edinburgh Airport today welcomed the Prime Minister and also issued a cautious welcome to the plans in the draft legislation following the Smith Commission report to devolve Air Passenger Duty to the Scottish Government. The Edinburgh Reporter spoke to Gordon Dewar Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport about what it means for Scottish airports.

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The Prime Minister visited Edinburgh today to meet with the First Minister at Holyrood for discussions on the Smith Commission legislation as the airport announced a new £50m airside investment programme.

Work begins this week on an extensive redevelopment of the airport's immigration and baggage reclaim facilities, a move that will triple capacity for bigger long-haul aircraft.

The Prime Minister was met by Chairman, Sir John Elvidge, and CEO Gordon Dewar, who took him on a tour of the airport's new airside construction site which will be phased over the next four years.

With long-haul traffic up almost 90% in 2014, thanks to new routes with Qatar Airways, United Airlines and US Airways, and increased services from Turkish Airlines, Edinburgh Airport is embarking on this ambitious development plan which will see a second immigration hall and baggage reclaim area created and extensive construction of new aircraft stands and air bridges.

In 2013, the Board of Edinburgh Airport committed to investing £150m in Scotland's busiest airport over five years to allow it to compete more energetically on the international stage

and to ensure that its facilities reflected the predicted growth in passenger numbers. This new £50m airside expansion is the second major project in an ambitious plan and follows the completion of the terminal extension late last year.

The first phase of the airside programme is due for delivery this summer, ahead of the arrival of Etihad Airways on 8 June when it launches the first link between Scotland and Abu Dhabi.

The first stage of the development will see the creation of a 2000m² rapid-build structure to house a new state-of-the-art immigration hall, around which a bigger structure will be built over the next five years.

Over 50 jobs will be created and preparation work is already underway on the site.



Gordon Dewar said: “As we announce the next part of our five-year investment programme, it was a pleasure to welcome the Prime Minister to Edinburgh Airport today so he can see the extensive changes we’ve already made and those we are about to start.

“We’re committed to providing our passengers with choice and giving them the best experience. The work we’ll be carrying out over the next four years will transform our airside facilities, tripling our capacity to handle bigger aircraft and paving the way for the next 10 years of increased international connectivity.

“We’ll effectively be creating a new international facility for our airlines, and underpinning our future aspirations to increase passenger numbers and enhance their experience and be one of the leading European airports for our size.

“We’ve grown significantly over the last several years and

have worked hard to redefine our airport strategy with the passenger at the core of everything we do. It's wonderful that we can showcase the ongoing investment in Edinburgh Airport and our plans for continued growth to the Prime Minister and to the millions of passengers which travel through here each year."

Prime Minister David Cameron said: "Having first class infrastructure is a crucial part of our long term economic plan to support business, create jobs and secure a brighter future for hardworking families across the country.

"The expansion of Edinburgh Airport is great news for Scotland and for the whole of the UK. It will open the door to more long-haul flights and new routes, meaning more tourism, more trade and more jobs for people here in Edinburgh and beyond.

"It will also help Scotland to compete on an international scale and of course the UK's large network of embassies across the globe will continue to keep banging the drum for Scotland and help maximise any opportunities, whether it is bringing in overseas investment or supporting businesses in Scotland to export worldwide".

Not everyone was quite as welcoming of the new UK government proposals.

SNP MSP Colin Keir whose Edinburgh Western constituency includes Edinburgh Airport has hit out at the Prime Minister and his UK government coalition lack of action on aviation issues.

Mr Keir said: "Every long haul passenger arriving at Edinburgh Airport will appreciate this investment. I do find however the Prime Ministers audacity in welcoming investment into an industry which has been improving despite mismanagement from Westminster.

"The London Treasury has been fleecing travellers who fly

through Scottish airports for years to the tune of millions of pounds thanks to Air Passenger Duty (APD). His government because of electoral reasons hasn't made a decision regarding which airport in London will be upgraded to act as a modern UK hub.

"The effect of this is that when there is poor weather or emergencies its Scottish flights that are cancelled first because of space issues at Heathrow and Gatwick".

"Travellers to and from Scotland deserve a better deal that's why I commend the management at Edinburgh Airport in bringing more direct flights to the city. It is obvious the UK have done very little to improve the plight of those who have to use London such as local business people. Mr Cameron's government cannot keep treating Scottish passengers with the contempt they have shown over the past years".