

Heathrow expansion would be 'Good for Scotland'



Heathrow recently announced a raft of new measures which would be deliverable with the expansion of the airport, and which the airport owner believe would boost Scotland's links to the world, and help Scottish businesses connect to global growth.

For anyone who travels to Heathrow it is a well known frustration that time spent in a holding pattern above the south east of England only adds to the journey time.

According to the airport expansion at Heathrow would allow:

- Better timed and more frequent flights between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen airports and Heathrow
- A new route between Inverness and Heathrow, part of easyJet's indicative network from an expanded Heathrow
- Possible new links to Scottish airports not currently served by Heathrow

As the UK's only hub airport, Heathrow connects to 75 destinations worldwide which are not served by other airports in the UK. The package is designed to help support routes from Scotland to the hub and includes a review of Heathrow's charges for domestic routes to be implemented in January 2016. The airport also confirmed that a £10million Route Development Fund would be established to provide start-up support new routes between airports like Dundee and Heathrow where needed.

While Heathrow has been full for the last ten years, many airlines have been forced to use available capacity for long-haul flights at the expense of Scottish routes. As a result the average number of daily flights departing from Scottish airports to Heathrow has declined from 50 in 2005 to 35 today.

With the loss of the Virgin Little Red services from Aberdeen and Edinburgh in September of this year, this could decrease to just 26 daily departures.

The airport feel that this pattern results in Scottish businesses being increasingly cut off from ready access to international growth opportunities currently more easily available to their competitors in the South East.

In contrast, independent research by Quod, commissioned by Heathrow and based on economic analysis by the Airports Commission, shows how an expanded Heathrow will benefit Scotland, with the nation expected to receive up to £14 billion in economic growth and 16,100 new jobs.

Support for Heathrow appears to be growing with Glasgow Chamber, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber, Inverness Chamber, Glasgow Airport, Aberdeen Airport, Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry all backing expansion. It is also backed by two of the largest UK-wide trade unions, Unite and GMB.

Commenting on the commitments, John Holland-Kaye, Heathrow CEO, said: "Expanding Heathrow could deliver over £14bn in economic benefit and 16,000 new jobs across Scotland. We have been listening to businesses, politicians and now to the National Connectivity Task Force, and today's announcement shows that we have a plan to deliver what Britain needs. Only Heathrow can connect Scotland to global growth. Let's get on with it. "

A spokesperson for the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, said: "Heathrow has undertaken a huge amount of work in terms of measuring the potential benefits to Scotland and other parts of the UK that could result from airport expansion and in developing plans to address the needs of Scottish businesses, should expansion be approved. Our priority is to ensure that investors around the world have access to Scotland

and to strengthen our businesses' ability to compete for global growth. "This plan will deliver more jobs for our region, boost our economy and ensure Scotland continues to grow as an attractive place to live and work."

Mike Cantlay, Chair of VisitScotland, said: "This is potentially hugely significant for air connectivity to Scotland. New and more frequent air services to Scotland could have a profoundly positive impact on Scottish tourism. We know from visitor research that we need to make the journey to Scotland as easy and inexpensive as possible. This shows that Heathrow understands the importance of this to Scottish tourism and should be applauded for this announcement."