

Direct air route to China within Edinburgh's grasp

Edinburgh is still vying to win the first direct Scotland to China flight and today it is announced that Edinburgh Hotels Association (EHA) will be the second major sponsor of the Edinburgh-China Air Link project (E-CAL).



The various bodies behind the bid, Marketing Edinburgh, Edinburgh Airport and The City of Edinburgh Council form a unique collaboration of private business and public organisations all with one objective.

They are determined to make this high-value direct carrier route a reality.

Representing 50 of Edinburgh's leading hotels, EHA along with luxury family jewellers, Laing Edinburgh, who signed up to the project's inaugural official sponsor in January 2017.

China is one of the top dozen countries when looking at Scotland's inbound markets, Chinese visitor numbers have increased 230% in the last ten years with Edinburgh the number one UK destination outside of London.

The capital attracts 82% of Scotland's total Chinese inbound visitor market, which reached a value of £25.78 million in 2016, accounting for 71% of Chinese visitor spend in Scotland overall.

More food is exported to China to meet the demands of the

country's growing middle class, there are successful research partnerships between University of Edinburgh and Chinese corporations such as Huawei. These and other factors make a direct airlink the pivotal next step in strengthening business connections between Scotland and China.

This year, China became a top source of investment to Scotland, including investment in the energy sector and travel giant Ctrip's acquisition of Skyscanner for £1.4 billion, with a project to create 200 new jobs in Edinburgh.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Chairman of Edinburgh Hotels Association, Tristan Nesbitt said: "As the unified voice of Edinburgh's hotel industry, Edinburgh Hotels Association is thrilled to become a sponsor of this landmark tourism development for Scotland's capital.

"It's evident the popularity of Scotland and Edinburgh as a destination for Chinese visitors has snowballed over the past five years and with no signs of it slowing down, a direct flight from China is the natural next step. We're eager to support this project as it gains momentum, and hope Edinburgh soon becomes the gateway to Scotland for Chinese visitors."

Fiona Hunter, Marketing and Communications Manager of Marketing Edinburgh and the Edinburgh-China Air-link Project Manager, said: "Our bid to secure a direct airlink from Scotland to China has been building traction over the past year as we increase awareness of just how pivotal a direct flight could be for Edinburgh and the country as a whole. Having the city's largest hotel association join E-CAL is hugely exciting and strengthens our proposition to help make it a reality.

"The economic benefits of a direct route have significant and positive implications for Edinburgh's tourism, hospitality and retail sectors. We're keen to build collaborative working other further forward-thinking businesses who recognise the

value and opportunity the E-CAL project represents.”

Gavin Barrie, Economy Convener, City of Edinburgh Council, said: “Later this month we will launch our economic strategy for the next five years and a key part of its success will depend upon our continued ability to promote Edinburgh as a quality investment location to the world’s leading economies, including China’s.

“Securing a direct airlink would undoubtedly be a major step in the right direction and would only serve to strengthen the close relationship we already enjoy with the Chinese Government and their business community.

“With the added support of the city’s hoteliers, I am confident that this innovative partnership approach will soon pay dividends.”

