LET LONDON CITY AIRPORT EXPAND AND WE'LL ALL ENJOY THE BENEFITS

News / Airports / Routes



UK airports had their busiest ever summer last year, collectively handling 78m passengers, and the indicators are that 2015 as a whole was the busiest year on record. London City Airport certainly had a record-breaking year, with 18 per cent growth in passengers to 4.3m.

More people than ever are taking to the skies and generating wealth for the UK economy in doing so – passengers travelling through London City did £11bn worth of trade last year. People want to travel. Business people need to travel: Civil Aviation Authority statistics show that growth was driven by scheduled traffic, rising by 4.8 per cent at London airports in the third quarter of 2015.

Airports generate income, support jobs, enable trade and nurture tourism, and yet future growth is being stifled.

Three years after first submitting an application for planning permission, and some £13m in costs later, a public inquiry into expansion at London City Airport opens today at City Hall.

A decision by the mayor of London, taken against the recommendations of his advisers, blocked plans to expand London City Airport through developing infrastructure to reach an already permitted number of flights. In 2015, there were 79,000 flights at the airport and our forecasts

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show this will grow to 111,000 by 2025. That's an additional 32,000 flight movements a year in and out of London; capacity that can free up slots at Heathrow for long-haul by moving selected short-haul services to London City, and which can offer more choice to travellers over when and where they travel.

At the inquiry, expected to run for three weeks, we will present our case for expansion. As the airport with by far the largest proportion of business travellers in the UK (52 per cent), we know growth at London City supports growth in and around East London, and in the key business and financial centres of the capital.

The Airports Commission recommended that the UK should make best use of existing capacity in the short term, before any new runway can be built. While a decision on that new runway continues to be delayed, it is crucial that we are allowed to deliver on this recommendation.

Expansion at London City does not require a new runway or an extension to the existing one. It simply enables us to make the most of what we've got.

Business travellers want to travel during peak hours and, as a result, we are full in the early morning and evening. We want to build a parallel taxi-lane to get aircraft on and off the runway quicker, to maximise runway use at peak times, and to accommodate around seven additional flights in the busiest hours.

We also need to be able to manage more "next generation" aircraft on the ground at one time, so we will build seven new aircraft parking stands. The stands will be bigger, enabling these larger next generation aircraft to operate out of London City. SWISS Airlines will soon be adding the Bombardier C-Series to its London City fleet, which is quieter and more fuel-efficient so can fly further, able to reach as far as the Middle East, Russia and the US. Our development has the potential to allow direct flights to these destinations from Zone 3, just 15 minutes on public transport from Canary Wharf and 22 minutes from Bank.

The final piece of the jigsaw is expanding the terminal building itself. London City was built in 1987 to cater for up to 1.2m passengers. Last year 4.3m people passed through the doors and the building is struggling to keep pace. By extending the terminal, the airport can continue to offer the speed of transit it is well-known for – 20 minutes door to plane on departure and 15 minutes plane to train on arrival – while maintaining the levels of customer service and experience that have made London City a multi award-winning airport.

A positive decision following the appeal will enable the creation of more than 2,000 new jobs – 1,600 airport jobs and a further 500 during construction. And it will enable the airport's contribution to the UK economy to rise to £1.3bn per year.

A decision on the location of a new runway in the South East has yet to be made by the government. However, whatever it does ultimately decide, the runway is unlikely to be delivered before 2028 at the earliest. Better use of existing airport capacity must be made in the interim. London City already has permission to increase flight movements. We simply require permission to expand existing infrastructure to inject much-needed capacity into the London system, and it could be operational within two years.

Airports bring immense benefits to the communities in which they operate – through employment, education, training and community relations – and to the wider economy, as well as facilitating trade and providing businesses with the opportunity to develop and invest. Expansion at London City will benefit the people of East London, inward investment in the area, and the business heart

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of the capital. Our development plans have the support of the local community and London businesses – 80 per cent of business decision-makers say greater air connectivity to other business destinations from London City is important to them and their company.

London City is the most punctual airport in London, and yet is being subjected to entirely avoidable delays. Let’s get growth off the ground now.

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