

Further information concerning airfreight in the UK 2021

As the CAA has just recently published year-end figures for 2021 I was unable to include them in my original submission

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR020002/TR020002-005899-20%20-%20Barry%20James.pdf>

So now I am asking that this information be added to the above submission

From the CAA [REDACTED]

“The UK Civil Aviation Authority has published aviation statistics for the fourth quarter of 2021. Overall, 30.9 million passengers flew in and out of the UK between October and December this year (compared to 24.8 million in the previous quarter) on 315,202 flights (286,852 flights in Q3 2021). This represents a 55% fall in passengers compared to the same period in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic.

The latest quarter again saw multiple changes to the UK’s international travel rules. At the beginning of October, the Green and Amber lists were merged into the ‘Rest of the World’ grouping, whilst double vaccinated travelers to the UK were no longer required to take PCR tests on arrival, but could opt for cheaper and quicker lateral flow tests. This came at a good time - ahead of the October half term holiday - leading to higher passenger levels than observed over the summer.

All countries were removed from the Red list on 1st November, and the reopening of travel to the USA from 8th November had a further a positive effect on passenger numbers. However, later that month 11 countries were placed back onto the Red list and PCR testing reintroduced in response to the emergence of the Omicron variant. This led to many flight cancellations and some key European markets imposing bans on UK travelers, resulting in a weaker festive period than perhaps was anticipated.

The total cargo - by weight - transported was down 4% compared to the final quarter of 2019, with 680,293 tonnes of carried, however cargo dedicated flights carried a 58% increase in goods. The average flight delay increased slightly to 10 minutes per flight (up from 8 minutes in Q3 2021), whilst 82% of flights were determined to have left “on-time”.

2021 Summary

Passenger numbers in 2021 were more heavily impacted than flights at UK airports, primarily due to travel restrictions being maintained in some form throughout the majority of the year. Air freight maintained its recent good performance as supply chains were restricted and additionally aiding the fight against the covid-19 pandemic.

Key statistics are outlined below:

Air Transport Movements – 809,442 (down 65% on 2019).

Passengers – 65.4million (down 78% on 2019)

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Cargo carried on cargo dedicated flights – 1.6million tonnes (up 87% on 2019)

% On-time flights (within 15mins of scheduled) – 84% (up 9%pt on 2019)

Average delay – 9mins (down 35% on 2019)”

The key point of this summary are the fact that the trend towards aircargo has stalled and as passenger numbers increase so will bellyhold cargo.

Looking at the figures for aircargo since 2005 I have to concur with OVE Arup’s conclusion that there is no increase in airfreight to and from the UK in the last 17 years. OVE Arup stated that as a % of all freight imports airfreight has only reached 1.5% and that hasn’t changed in all that time.

From CAA data (all reporting airports)

Year	bellyhold	Pure freighter	Total
2005	1503080	860265	2363345
2006	1484056	831382	2315438
2015	1611432	687911	2299343
2016	1676594	707813	2384407
2017	1861759	760737	2622496
2018	1859178	772005	2631183
2019	1763776	771646	2535422
2020	766149	1236037	2002186
2021	820041	1477771	2297812

This however doesn’t show the recovery of freight carried on passenger aircraft which shows a turnaround starting in July 2021 when passenger restrictions began easing

CAA data for 2021

Month	Bellyhold	Pure freighter	Total
January	49460	116008	165468
February	42067	129271	171338
March	49243	155180	204423
April	47539	145785	193324
May	49394	142975	192369
June	56286	129077	185363
July	68212	122260	190472
August	72200	113726	185926
September	83842	109049	192891
October	98189	93494	191683
November	100331	106338	206669
December	103278	114608	217886

Having discussed this with an aviation expert he stated that in Europe freight is showing an increase in Cargo Tonne Kilometres (CTKs) but this isn’t reflected in the UK which is where Manston is situated

“The overall volume of UK air freight (including bellyhold) is still significantly lower than pre-Covid levels. This seems to be contrary to global and European trends. The latest published IATA data

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indicates that global CTKs (cargo tonne kilometres) in October 2021 were some 9.4% higher than October 2019 - with Europe some 9.0% higher. Whilst CTKs and freight tonnes handled (the CAA's statistic) are slightly different measures, this could suggest that European air cargo (eg through the main continental hubs - Frankfurt, Paris CDG, Brussels etc) may be doing better than that through UK airports." [REDACTED]

"The volume of air freight carried by dedicated freighters in 2021 is higher than pre-Covid levels, although the higher demand earlier in the year seems to have tapered off a little. The increases are largely due to global supply issues, including those for maritime cargo. I suspect that much of the increase is due to shippers needing some level of certainty re-delivery dates. I suspect that the volume of air freight carried by dedicated freighters will decline during 2022 as more long-haul passenger services resume and bellyhold options become available and are increasingly more cost-effective"

Conclusion

RSP would like to convince their audience that Manston is needed as airfreight is increasing however they are being somewhat disingenuous with their conclusion. As noted by Peter Forbes of ASA and OVE Arup themselves the UK show no major growth in pure freighter aircargo bar that has been caused by reduced passenger numbers due to covid which as shown above is already showing signs of recovery.

Whatever IATA reports from Europe isn't being replicated in the UK.