

I am speaking in support of the application on behalf of the members of Prospect. We are a trade union representing over 157,000 members across both the private and public sectors of the economy. This includes representing thousands of members in the aviation sector working in a diverse range of roles including air traffic control, aircraft and airport engineering and regulation among many others. Members in the sector were among the very hardest hit by the Covid pandemic and have been central to delivering economic recovery since then.

Prospect has long highlighted that our airspace is full, and airspace is at capacity thanks to a political failure to match levels of demand for air travel with delivery of the necessary infrastructure. These proposals can play a part in relieving some of these pressures.

I would like to highlight two issues particularly relevant to our members, firstly capacity and resilience and secondly skills and workforce.

There is a direct relationship between capacity of both the physical and workforce infrastructure available and the resilience of our airports and airspace.

Put more simply we are already trying to operate too many flights with too little infrastructure. This means as soon as there is disruption, the consequences quickly become difficult to manage. For example, certain weather conditions may mean increased spacing is required between aircraft landings. This reduces the number of aircraft that can use a runway in a given period of time. In the UK, unlike many places abroad, this often leads to flight cancellations as so many flights are scheduled to use a runway in that period there is no margin for this type of disruption.

Only by planning for more infrastructure, like further runways, can we deliver greater resilience and in turn reliability for passengers.

Moving on to skills and workforce, investment in aviation projects is investment in our Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) workforce. Gatwick estimate that 50% of jobs created on-airport will be skilled or semi-skilled; but crucially unlike in other sectors, even those unskilled jobs can open the eyes of workers to the opportunities in aviation and put them on a path to upskilling.

As a union we have repeatedly warned that a failure to address an aging workforce across many engineering disciplines and sectors presents serious challenges for the future.

Gatwick also playing a role in inspiring workers and young people to enter the industry through its STEM Centre. The industry also provides jobs to those coming through vocational routes as well as academic.

It also needs to be recognised that aviation is a highly productive sector, with the average worker's GVA being 60 per cent higher than average. Part of this because unlike many other areas, aviation workers often have a voice at work through collective representation. This means aviation work is an important net contributor to the exchequer and wider society.

For these reasons, we hope, in principle this project succeeds.

[488 words]

- 50% of jobs created on-airport will be skilled or semi-skilled;
- Gatwick has prepared an [Employment and Skills Strategy](#), with objectives including:
  - Harnessing the potential of the Project to inspire young people to want to have a career in aviation;
  - Promote conditions where people from all backgrounds can reach their full potential and share in the benefits of a healthy economy;
  - Promoting ED&I and breaking down barriers that prevent social mobility.
- Gatwick recently opened a specialist facility, our STEM Centre, on-campus to support a diverse and skilled pipeline of local talent and support the national STEM skills agenda: <https://www.mediacentre.gatwickairport.com/news/london-gatwick-opens-brand-new-stem-centre-to-inspire-local-children-and-students-to-pursue-airport-related-careers-e10a-40f32.html>
- [More than 70,000 students](#) benefitted from London Gatwick's education programmes in the last academic year (2022-23) – a large part of those programmes were focussed on STEM.