

Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Rd
London, SW1P 4DR

Sent by email: [REDACTED]

22nd October 2024

Proposed Northern Runway Project at London Gatwick Airport

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing further to my letter of 20th June on behalf of easyJet, the UK's largest airline, to request a meeting with you as soon as possible, in advance of the forthcoming decision on the expansion of Gatwick Airport. While we have engaged fully in the formal planning process, we thought it would also be helpful to raise some of these issues with you directly and given the short timescale, we very much hope to be able to speak with you soon.

While we acknowledge the potential economic benefits of the proposed expansion, as the largest airline at Gatwick, with around 22 million customers currently travelling through the airport annually, we feel it is only right for us to express our concerns about expansion taking place before improvements are made to provide more resilience and a better customer experience.

Eurocontrol data clearly shows that London Gatwick has one of Europe's worst punctuality records. Last summer, between 31st March 2023 and 20th August 2024, just 59.27% of flights departed on time, lagging behind other London airports like Heathrow and Stansted, and across all the European Airports that Eurocontrol monitors, London Gatwick has been measured as the third worst in Europe for punctual arrivals.

Staff shortages in the Gatwick ATC Tower have resulted in many thousands of passengers being subject to delays and cancellations over the past 18 months. ATC has to be appropriately resourced to ensure the necessary levels of resilience for a reliable operation. Although there have been some improvements since 2023, there have still been a number of days this year where short staffing in the tower has led to forced cancellations.

Furthermore, London Gatwick must improve its infrastructure and operations. The airport's current performance is well below that of other large airports in Europe. So, expansion and refurbishment should be completed in both terminals as a precursor to any approval, as the lounge is unable to meet current demand and forecasted growth alongside improvements in security. There needs to be material investment and improvement in ground movement control and airfield flow through the acceleration of new taxiways.

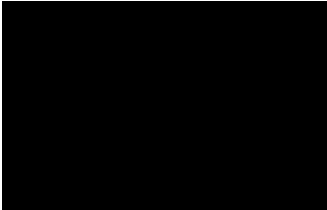
As the largest airline operating at Gatwick, operating over 48% of all flights, we are continually working with our partners to see our passenger experience at the airport improve. However, should expansion go ahead without these, and other issues being addressed, we fear the opposite will happen.

From the Chief Executive's Office

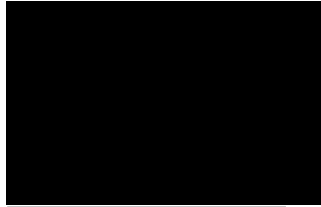
And finally, as an enabler of sustainable growth, it is absolutely critical that airspace modernisation is completed before Gatwick takes on additional traffic. A failure to modernise the airspace, coupled with further demands on the already constrained airspace capacity at London Gatwick would lead to untenable delays for passengers and excess fuel burn. We welcome today's announcement about the new UKADS and looking to focus on London airspace in the first instance. We will be responding to the consultation in due course however it is crucial this momentum continues to ensure the benefits can be unlocked by the end of the decade at the latest.

I hope we will be able to meet in the coming weeks to discuss Gatwick expansion and build on the points highlighted above. Our Public Affairs Manager Thom Rawlinson would be happy to arrange a suitable time for our meeting and can be reached at [REDACTED]

Best regards,



Johan Lundgren
CEO, easyJet



Kenton Jarvis
CEO Designate, easyJet