

BCC: Clear focus of aviation strategy welcome, but pace needed

Commenting on the government's response to the call for evidence on a new Aviation Strategy, Jane Gratton, Head of Business Environment at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"Businesses will welcome the clear focus on building a global and connected Britain, developing more trade and investment opportunities and supporting sustainable growth in the sector. Yet there is increasing concern and frustration among firms that the process of increasing aviation capacity is taking too long. Without this, firms will struggle to connect with high-growth and emerging economies beyond Europe, and to develop the strong and successful trading partnerships we need for the future.

"Businesses rely on well-connected flights for face-to-face meetings, the 'just-in-time' delivery of freight and business services, and access to an international labour force. UK competitiveness and growth will be damaged unless urgent action is taken to boost capacity at our airports.

"Firms need to see construction on the third runway at Heathrow begin promptly. That said, well-connected regional airports are also vital, providing short-haul travel and helping to relieve capacity shortages. The Government should commit to implementing its 'Making Best Use' policy, to maximise aviation capacity at regional airports and boost growth across the country.

"We welcome proposals to improve information and accessibility for passengers. A world-class aviation network requires an improved passenger journey, from home to the boarding gate, together with better connectivity for freight. All airports in the UK would benefit from improved integration into the wider transport network. Investment is required in all forms of transportation to and from airports, with HS2, other rail links, road capacity and road maintenance at the top of the list.

"Only government can strike the right balance between the economic, environmental and social impacts of aviation. However, in striking this balance government should take full account of the critical role aviation has to play in supporting the growth of the UK economy."

Ends

Notes to editors:

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For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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