

News story: Britain open for business as UK and China further relax limits on flights

Britain's regions are set for an economic boost after a landmark agreement for a 50% boost in the number of flights allowed between the UK and China.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling today (10 December 2017) unveiled the deal, which allows for a huge expansion in routes from regional airports – potentially boosting local economies by hundreds of millions of pounds by opening up new business and tourism opportunities.

The announcement builds on [successful discussions in October 2016](#) that saw limits on passenger flights between the 2 countries raised from 40 per week to a maximum of 100.

The number of Chinese tourists visiting the UK has rocketed during the first half of this year. Between January and June, 115,000 visits were made from China to the UK, a rise of 47% on the same period last year. Spending also increased to £231 million, up 54%.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

These agreements are an important part of preparing Britain for a post-Brexit world and making sure we have access to key markets in the Far East, and they come at a time when our exports are growing and we continue to attract international investment. It just underlines that Britain will do well regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

The whole government is working to secure the best possible future relationship with the EU, and great progress has been made this week, but no one should believe that Britain's future success depends on decisions taken in Brussels.

Under the current arrangement, agreed in October 2016, a maximum of 100 passenger flights per week can operate between the UK and China, with this figure set to increase to 150 under the terms of the new deal.

Chinese tourists are some of the UK's highest spenders, staying longer and travelling more than visitors from other countries.

Last year, Manchester airport launched the first direct regional flight between the 2 countries, worth an estimated £250 million in economic benefits to the UK over the next decade.

During the same year restrictions were relaxed allowing an unlimited number

of cargo flights to operate between the UK and China. By the end of 2016, more than 74,000 tonnes of freight had been transported between the UK and China by air, an increase of 27% when compared to 2015.