

6 June 2025

Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

FAO: Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit

Subject: **Application by Gatwick Airport Limited Seeking Development Consent for the Proposed Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Project (Ref: TR020005)**

Dear Secretary of State,

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the abovementioned application by Gatwick Airport.

The CBI represents 850 members who themselves comprise 1,100 separate registered companies and 150,000 trade association members.

With members representing businesses of all sizes and sectors, most importantly, the users of aviation services, the CBI is well placed to give evidence about the whole economy value of Gatwick Airport's plans for investment in new infrastructure and bringing the existing Northern Runway into routine use.

The CBI is pleased to express its support for Gatwick Airport's Northern Runway project. We believe this development is crucial for enhancing the UK's aviation infrastructure, boosting economic growth, and reinforcing our position as a global leader in connectivity.

Economic Benefits

The Northern Runway project promises substantial economic benefits, including the creation of 14,000 jobs and generating £1 billion annually. This will significantly contribute to the local and national economy, providing employment opportunities and fostering economic resilience. The project's potential to enhance trade and tourism aligns with the government's growth agenda and supports the UK's competitive edge in the global market.

Boosting Trade and Investment

Gatwick Airport's Northern Runway is poised to play a pivotal role in boosting trade and investment, which are critical components of the UK's competitiveness on the global stage.

In an era of heightened geopolitical uncertainty and global turbulence, enhancing the UK's aviation infrastructure—such as progressing with Gatwick's Northern Runway—strengthens national resilience by improving connectivity, supply chain flexibility, and economic self-reliance. Investing in strategic capacity now ensures the UK remains agile and globally competitive, whatever challenges may arise.

1. **Enhanced Connectivity:** The Northern Runway will significantly enhance Gatwick's connectivity, linking the South East to global centres of commerce in Europe and beyond. This improved connectivity is vital for businesses seeking to expand their international reach, facilitating easier access to new markets and fostering stronger trade relationships. Allowing dual runway operations will also significantly boost the capacity of the airport, providing the means to attract more airlines, increase flight capacity and number of destinations. This will also make the airport a more attractive proposition for investors, while at the same time boosting growth, creating jobs and enhancing the UK's competitiveness.
2. **Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Robust aviation infrastructure is a key factor in attracting foreign direct investment. Investors are more likely to commit to regions with excellent transport links, as it ensures smooth operations and accessibility.
3. **Supporting Export Growth:** The expanded capacity at Gatwick will support the growth of UK exports by providing businesses with more opportunities to transport goods quickly and efficiently. This is particularly important for sectors that rely on rapid delivery, such as high-value manufacturing and perishable goods. Moreover, bringing Gatwick's Northern Runway into routine use will not just boost the flow of goods, it will unlock faster, broader access to global markets for services as well – enhancing the UK's already formidable reputation as a world leader in the services industry.
4. **Tourism and Hospitality:** The Northern Runway will also boost the tourism sector, which is a significant contributor to the UK economy. By increasing the number of flights and destinations, Gatwick will attract more international tourists, leading to higher spending in the hospitality, retail, and entertainment sectors.
5. **Regional Economic Impact:** Gatwick's growth will have a ripple effect on the regional economy. The airport already supports a complex ecosystem of aviation services companies in the South East. Increased capacity will enable these businesses to thrive, creating more jobs and stimulating economic activity across the region. Bringing the Northern Runway into routine use can create around 14,000 jobs and inject up to £1 billion into the region's economy every year.
6. **Innovation and Sustainability:** Gatwick's commitment to sustainability, including its pledge to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and its facilitation and support of sustainable aviation fuels, positions it as a leader in green aviation. This focus on innovation will attract businesses and investors who prioritize sustainability, further enhancing the UK's competitive advantage.

Sustainable Growth

Gatwick Airport has demonstrated a commitment to sustainable growth by addressing key environmental concerns raised by the Secretary of State. The airport's acceptance of stricter limits on aircraft noise and the implementation of an improved noise insulation scheme for local residents reflect a responsible approach to mitigating environmental impacts.

Additionally, the commitment to work with government and transport providers to achieve a 54% public transport mode share before the Northern Runway becomes operational underscores Gatwick's dedication to working in collaboration towards sustainable transport solutions. Given the Airport has little control over public transport, the 54% should not be binding, as this would hamper the use of the Northern Runway. Therefore, a scheme should be adopted that would apply if this threshold were not met – something already proposed by Gatwick, which we support.

Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed highway improvement works, totalling over £350 million, will help to ensure that the increased traffic from the Northern Runway does not lead to congestion. These improvements, agreed upon with National Highways, will enhance road capacity and support the seamless integration of the expanded airport operations with the existing transport network. Gatwick's proactive measures, including the Transport Mitigation Fund, further demonstrate its readiness to address any unforeseen impacts on the local infrastructure.

Environmental Commitments

Gatwick Airport's environmental strategy has evolved to align with the UK's broader planning and sustainability reforms. The airport's revised noise insulation scheme, which offers full mitigation for properties within the 60dB contour and tiered financial contributions for those within the 54–60dB range, continues to set a high standard for environmental responsibility. However, Gatwick's environmental commitments now extend beyond noise mitigation.

In line with the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB45), Gatwick supports the introduction of the Nature Restoration Fund, which aims to simplify and strengthen developer contributions to biodiversity and nature recovery. This fund is expected to operate alongside Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, ensuring that infrastructure projects like the Northern Runway contribute positively to the natural environment.

Gatwick is also engaging with Natural England and local stakeholders to ensure that its development plans support regional biodiversity objectives. This includes habitat restoration, green corridor integration, and long-term ecological monitoring.

Regional Connectivity and Economic Impact

Gatwick Airport is a critical economic hub for the Southeast, linking the region to global centres of commerce in Europe and new markets further afield. Good connectivity is vital for regional growth, and investing in the Northern Runway will bring significant benefits to the region. Gatwick has already secured significant growth in long-haul services across China, India, the Middle East and Africa. Air cargo at Gatwick goes in the belly hold of these long-haul aircraft, with volumes forecast to double to around 305,000 tonnes by 2032. In the context of the government's recent announcement of a new trade deal with India, the potential for Gatwick to support growth in this market is significant.

Support for Local Employment

Gatwick Airport directly supported around 23,000 jobs in 2023, and its growth plans have the potential to create an additional 14,000 jobs across the Southeast. This extends beyond direct employment into supply chain opportunities for hundreds of businesses within the region. The airport's expansion will also support the UK's leadership role in developing low-carbon solutions for air travel.

Sustainable Development

The CBI believes that Gatwick's expansion can be delivered sustainably, in line with the UK's Net Zero commitments and the government's Jet Zero Strategy. Gatwick has pledged to achieve net zero scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030 and already operates on 100% renewable electricity. However, the airport recognises that the majority of emissions stem from aircraft operations.

To address this, Gatwick is actively supporting the development and adoption of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). The UK government's recent announcement of a £400,000 fund to accelerate SAF testing and qualification, alongside a revenue certainty mechanism to support producers, is a significant step forward.

Gatwick is well-positioned to be a key hub in the emerging SAF supply chain, and its expansion – alongside a mix of regulatory approaches to grow the market – will help create demand-side momentum for greener fuels.

The airport's public transport strategy, including investments in electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and a target of 54% public transport mode share, remains central to its sustainability agenda. While Gatwick has limited control over public transport provision, it has proposed a contingency scheme should the 54% threshold not be met—an approach the CBI supports.

By integrating SAF, renewable energy, biodiversity restoration, and sustainable transport, Gatwick's Northern Runway project can serve as a model for low-carbon infrastructure development in the aviation sector.

Conclusion

The CBI believes that the Northern Runway project at Gatwick Airport can be a vital development for the UK's aviation sector. It has significant potential to balance economic growth with environmental stewardship, providing a blueprint for sustainable airport expansion.

Successful delivery of the northern runway will require confidence that planning conditions are within the control of Gatwick Airport to deliver. The CBI acknowledges and welcomes the government's commitments to reform the planning system and strongly supports the Planning & Infrastructure Bill making its way through parliament. A pro-growth planning system will certainly aid the delivery of this project.

We urge the Secretary of State to grant consent for this project, recognizing its potential to drive significant economic benefits, enhance connectivity, and support the UK's leadership in global aviation.

Thank you for considering our views. We look forward to the positive outcome of this application and the continued support for Gatwick Airport's ambitious plans.

Yours sincerely

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