



The Voice of UK Airlines

Media Release

Date of Issue: Monday 28th November 2011
For Immediate Use

“Don’t like it!!” – BATA accuses George Osborne of a “Little Britain” approach to UK infrastructure provision

Commenting on the reports that the Chancellor will announce details of a National Infrastructure Plan, involving billions of pounds of investment in transport links, as part of tomorrow’s Autumn Statement, Simon Buck, Chief Executive of the British Air Transport Association said:

“The Chancellor clearly recognises the importance of modern, efficient, national transport infrastructure to facilitate growth and investment in the wider economy but is ignoring a critical area of infrastructure provision so desperately needed if Britain is to maintain its international competitiveness and global trading links.

British business is crying out for the Government to permit airport expansion, especially in the capacity constrained south-east. If Britain is to be able to win new business from the world’s emerging markets then we must be allowed to grow and invest private capital in our airport infrastructure in order that we can offer direct air links where we are losing ground to our Continental competitors.

At a time when the UK is suffering arguably its worse ever economic recession and the highest levels of unemployment in seventeen years, we can ill afford continued indecision from Government on new airport capacity. Airport investment has the added benefit of being private investment for the future of the public good at little or no cost to the taxpayer. But by ruling out the construction of new runways where extra capacity is urgently needed, the Government has put at risk Britain’s ability to win business with new emerging world economies because we do not have the air services with them that we so desperately need.

Approval of privately funded airport expansion would represent excellent value for UK plc especially where approval has already been given by the previous government following a long period of consultation where all the evidence for and against was fully considered. At

a time of economic crisis, it is decisions we need, not yet more consultation. Successive UK Governments have been consulting on the future of aviation and new runway capacity for decades. Instead we need a Government able to grasp the nettle and take bold decisions if we are not to damage permanently our economic prospects.

There is an urgent need for the Government to reassess its priorities and we cannot afford to wait another two years before its new aviation policy is unveiled. Otherwise, with competitors such as Germany, which has just added a fourth runway at its main hub airport of Frankfurt, the UK risks losing out in attracting new international investment and business.

Constraining growth at Britain's airports costs the UK economy over £1 billion per year and puts many thousands of UK jobs at risk. Ministers need to wake-up from their "Little Britain" obsession with planning hugely expensive, publicly funded national railway and road schemes in isolation from our international links and recognise the urgent need to permit privately funded investment at our overcrowded airports in order for the UK to compete for business with the rest of the world."

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Notes to Editors

- BATA is the trade body for UK-registered airlines, with members representing all sectors of the industry.
- In 2010, BATA members employed over 71,000 people, operated four-fifths of the UK commercial aircraft fleet and were responsible for some 96% of UK airline output, carrying 119 million passengers and 1 million tonnes of cargo.
- The ten BATA member airlines are: bmi, British Airways, DHL, easyJet, flybe, Jet2.com, Monarch, Thomas Cook, Thomson Airways and Virgin Atlantic.

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