



SIGNIFICANCE OF CARGO AT HEATHROW ONLY JUST REALISED

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Heathrow Airport chief executive officer John Holland-Kaye says the gateway “didn’t understand the **significance of cargo**” until it started working in the Airports Commission process.

He was speaking at the Airport Operators Association’s (AOA) UK Aviation Conference at the Hilton Metropole in London on Tuesday, where he set out why he feels the government should approve a third runway at the airport, which was recommended this year by the Commission.

Holland-Kaye says he has learnt how important freight and exports are to businesses large and small. “Air routes are this country’s vital trading routes. And Heathrow is Britain’s biggest port – handling over a quarter of all British exports by value.

“Anything high value, fragile, with a short shelf life or requiring just-in-time delivery goes in the bellyhold of a passenger jet from Heathrow – think Scottish Salmon, pharmaceuticals, Brompton bikes, Formula 1 cars, or emergency aid.”

He says the fastest growing export markets are in Asia and South America and exports to China via Heathrow at £7 billion are up by 117 per cent year-on-year.

“You may not be surprised to know that we didn’t understand the significance of cargo to our airlines or the economy until we started working on the Commission process – because we make no money out of it directly, we had neglected it.

“That has changed. We have now appointed a freight veteran as head of cargo and last month I outlined our Cargo Blueprint which will help get British exports through the UK’s biggest port more quickly and predictably,” Holland-Kaye says.

He says this make exporters more competitive, but adds it doesn’t get over the real issue that some of the cargo routes are already full.

Holland-Kaye continues: “How do you grow exports if your largest port is full? With expansion, we will double our cargo capacity, providing the infrastructure needed to meet the government’s goal of becoming Europe’s second largest exporting nation.

“And just think how much more we could export if we had direct flights to the great cities of China – Xian, Chongqing, Wuhan, Tianjin ... cities that are already as large as London, whose names I can barely pronounce, and yet which will be as familiar to our childrens’ generation as Atlanta and Chicago are to us.”

“If the government is serious about keeping Britain as a leading trading nation, they will back Heathrow expansion,” Holland Kaye concludes.

The UK government is set to give its decision on whether a runway should be built at Gatwick or Heathrow by the end of the year. The Airports Commission, led by Sir Howard Davies has recommended a third runway should be build at Heathrow.

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