

# THE RUNWAY EXTENSION THE FACTS



**In November 2008, George Best Belfast City Airport began pre-planning application discussions with Planning Service regarding an extension to its runway by 590 metres, within its own boundary, in the Kinnegar direction.**

In March 2010, the Environment Minister called a public inquiry into the planning application.

The following hopes to answer some frequently asked questions surrounding the planned runway extension and airport management's reasoning behind the submitting the application.

## WHY DOES BELFAST CITY AIRPORT NEED A LONGER RUNWAY?

The current length of the runway at George Best Belfast City Airport limits the amount of fuel and number of passengers permitted to be carried by some aircraft.

The result is that some airlines can only fly at less than full passenger capacity.

A longer runway would enable planes to carry enough fuel to travel longer distances to mainland Europe.

At present the airport flies to every major UK airport, we

wish to offer direct European destinations not currently served from Northern Ireland such as Brussels, Frankfurt and Madrid.

## WILL A RUNWAY EXTENSION RESULT IN BIGGER PLANES AND MORE FLIGHTS?

A runway extension will simply mean the same planes flying further.

No bigger aircraft than currently use the airfield will be permitted to operate, so no wide-bodied aircraft or jumbo jets.

The runway extension will not mean extra flights as the airport is restricted by its planning agreement which caps annually flights at 48,000.

In 2009 we operated 39,000 flights and carried 2.6 million passengers.

So whether or not the runway extension is granted, based on last year's figures, the airport could potentially operate 9,000 extra flights each year up the 48,000 ceiling.

If the runway extension is granted there will be:

- NO BIGGER PLANES THAN CURRENTLY USE THE AIRFIELD
- NO MORE FLIGHTS (this is capped at 48,000 in the agreement)
- NO CHANGE IN OUR OPERATING HOURS – all scheduled flights will continue to operate between 0630 and 2130 with no flights after the 23:59 curfew



**PEOPLE ON THE GROUND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FLIGHT BOUND FOR BRUSSELS OR BRISTOL.**

**WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND - WILL THE RUNWAY CREATE MORE JOBS?**

Certainly new jobs will be created but more importantly the runway extension will safeguard the employment of its current workforce of 1,500 people from all parts of Belfast, North Down and further afield.

The Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland sets a target of 4.5 million visitors per year by 2020. We anticipate an additional 500,000 European visitors over the next five years generating £120 million of tourism revenue.

**DOES THE CITY AIRPORT WANT TO BECOME BELFAST INTERNATIONAL?**

The City Airport will never be able to handle trans-Atlantic or long haul flights.

We do wish to offer the Northern Ireland consumer direct European flights and compete for 15% of the European market currently monopolised by Belfast International.

For many years Belfast International has competed with the City in the UK domestic market.

Over the last ten years Belfast City and Belfast International have grown at the same rate – the International handling approximately double the passengers of the City.

**IS THE RUNWAY EXTENSION SOLELY FOR RYANAIR?**

It's been widely publicised that Ryanair is supportive of the runway extension as it would enable the airline to carry full passengers loads. Ryanair has also put on record that it will begin a series of international services if the runway extension is granted.

The decision to submit a planning application to extend the runway was first raised by the airport back in 2006, long before Ryanair began services at the City.

Airport management are confident that they will secure other airlines and routes from the airport should the runway extension be granted.

The planned extension is a business decision with a significant private investment that is not based on the premise of one airline benefiting from a longer runway.

**WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE PUBLIC INQUIRY?**

We applied for planning permission for the 590metre extension to the runway in 2008 and in March of this year the Environment Minister called a public inquiry into the application.

We are waiting for the Planning Service to detail the nature of the inquiry which we hope will be carried out very soon.

We are happy to engage in the public inquiry but believe it should be held in a fashion that does not further postpone



a much needed boost to the economy through increased access, job creation and tourism revenue.

## HOW WILL A NEW RUNWAY AFFECT PEOPLE LIVING NEAR THE AIRPORT?

There will be no change in our operating hours.

The increase in average noise levels will not be discernible by the human ear.

According to Government guidelines and scientific advice only a 3 decibels (dB) or greater noise variation is distinguishable from current aircraft noise levels.

The maximum projected average increase in noise from the runway extension will be 1.3 decibels (dB) at Kinnegar, Holywood, while the maximum projected average decrease in aircraft noise will be 2.1dB at Knocknagoney.

The runway extension would not mean an increase in flights over the city as the majority of flights must operate over Belfast Lough. Currently 55% of flights operate over the Lough.

The runway extension will be built within the current site boundary.

## WILL THE RUNWAY EXTENSION HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE WILDLIFE IN THE AREA?

Independent experts have considered potential impacts on flora and fauna as part of the environmental impact assessment. They concluded that the runway extension is unlikely to have any significant impact on ecological interests.

### COMMERCIAL OPPOSITION

Certain commercial organisations have a vested interest in preventing greater competition for air travel within the Northern Ireland marketplace. We believe that Northern Ireland is large enough to support two airports serving a range of European destinations. Increased competition on European routes will create better value for Northern Ireland consumers, more choice for travellers and bring additional visitors to Northern Ireland which can only strengthen the local economy.

### SUPPORT FOR THE RUNWAY EXTENSION

81% of businesses in Belfast support the proposed runway extension at George Best Belfast City Airport and believe it would help Belfast expand as a prospering city according to a research study conducted by Millward Brown Ulster.

The survey uncovered overwhelming support from the business community for the airport's planning application to lengthen the runway with almost 90% believing the airport had a positive impact on Belfast's economy.

Other findings from the research:

- 76% believe the runway extension would increase tourists visiting Northern Ireland, especially Belfast
- 73% of those polled stated that if all things were equal ie price and destination they would use Belfast City rather than Belfast International Airport



## INCREASED COMPETITION ON EUROPEAN ROUTES WILL CREATE BETTER VALUE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND CONSUMERS



**A MORI POLL ON THE PROPOSED RUNWAY EXTENSION AT BELFAST CITY AIRPORT HIGHLIGHTED THAT 70% OF RESIDENTS IN BELFAST STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE PROPOSAL.**

**The poll which took the form of face-to-face interviews with 385 residents within Belfast City and greater Belfast areas also highlighted that 81% and 72% of people living in those locations respectively, believed the airport had a positive impact on the Belfast economy.**

"We have a plan to turn this economy into an export lead, internationally engaged economy. How you can do that without increasing the accessibility of Northern Ireland to people from all over the world is beyond me. It's a matter of weighing up the vested interests of a small number of people with the wider good of Northern Ireland and for our future prosperity, to me it's no contest."

**Mike Smyth,**  
Economist, University of Ulster

"When tourists come to Northern Ireland they spend a great deal of money in our local hotels and local shops. If you look at Belfast City Airport's figures, 50% of the people that come through the Airport to Belfast are outside visitors and if we can increase that number and get them going to Belfast City centre or indeed throughout the rest of Northern Ireland and contributing to our economy, I think that's a positive thing."

**Glyn Roberts,**  
Northern Ireland Independent  
Retail Trade Association

"Belfast's rise as a new tourist destination especially in the 'city break' market is evident with the large number of tourists that we currently cater for in our restaurants. If the runway extension was to be given the green light... it would manifest itself in more trade for businesses such as my own in the city centre"

**Jason Moore,**  
Chef and Owner of Coco Restaurant,  
Linenhall Street

"From the perspective of enhancing the wellbeing of the Northern Ireland economy through increased visitor numbers, this plan should be endorsed"

**David Carson,**  
Professor of Marketing,  
University of Ulster

"There is no doubt the City Airport is a driver in the continuing economic success of Belfast and all avenues should be explored in ensuring that the runway extension is given due consideration. In this current economic climate the business community should rally behind any development which will guarantee more visitors and their spending power to the city"

**Keith Freeman,**  
Cluster Manager for  
Premier Inn Hotels

"The benefits of the planned runway extension are clear– new European routes not currently being offered which create and sustain local jobs, bringing tourists and their currency to the region... it would be inconceivable to shut the door to this planning application."

**Howard Hastings,**  
Managing Director, Hastings Hotels

For further information on the runway extension go to [www.belfastcityairport.com](http://www.belfastcityairport.com)

