# Bristol Airport calls for balanced Aviation Policy
## Government urged to encourage use of existing airport capacity outside London

Bristol Airport has responded to the Government's consultation on its Draft Aviation Policy Framework with five recommendations which would deliver real benefits for airports in the regions, the wider economy and passengers across the country.

The Draft Framework was published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in July 2012 and outlines the Government's high level aviation strategy. Bristol Airport has submitted a formal response to the DfT consultation on the Draft Framework, alongside a position paper containing policy proposals which would help rebalance the economy.

Entitled '*Giving wings to airports across the UK*", the position paper will be launched today (Monday 22 October) at the Airport Operators Association (AOA) Annual Conference. It sets out five recommendations for Government policy which would enable airports outside London to more effectively serve their local markets by making best use of existing capacity, easing congestion in the South East as a result.

In the foreword to the paper, Bristol Airport's Chief Executive Officer, Robert Sinclair, says: "As politicians, Government officials, aviation professionals and other stakeholders debate issues around capacity and new schemes costing billions of pounds, it is critical to remember that significant airport capacity already exists in the UK regions.

"Government policy should encourage the use of this capacity and should encourage private sector investment in long-term infrastructure. Not only will this relieve congestion at airports in the South East, but it will help rebalance the economy at the same time.

"Like many airports outside London, Bristol Airport is very well placed to create jobs and drive economic growth in its region. What we need is a very clear and very tangible aviation policy which supports growth and investment."

Bristol Airport's five recommendations for a balanced aviation policy are:

1.      Rebalancing the economy
In order to deliver the forecast growth in UK air passengers and spread the benefits of connectivity more evenly across the UK, aviation policy must provide clear support for specific growth proposals at airports in the regions. Without an explicit Government policy directive, critical decisions affecting regional economic growth risk becoming bogged down in local planning disputes. Action is also required to make best use of existing capacity outside London. While it is airlines who decide which routes are operated from which

airports, a range of policy levers and fiscal measures should be employed to ensure best use is made of existing airport capacity.

2.    Investing in surface access improvements

Government policy should prioritise transport proposals that would deliver short, medium and long-term improvements in surface access to airports outside London in order to drive economic growth within the regions.  Links to nearby airports should be a key consideration when assessing applications for funding of new transport schemes, and integration of rail and air services must be central to the assessment of rail franchise replacement bids.  The scope of the Department for Transport's review of rail access to airports should be extended beyond those airports named in the Draft Aviation Policy Framework and widened to include road transport.

3.    Supporting inbound tourism to the regions

The Government's tourism strategy should encourage international visitors to use airports in the regions as gateways to the UK.  The proximity of regional attractions to local airports with access to international connections should be highlighted in marketing materials promoting the UK overseas.  Priority should also be given to airports outside London when considering initiatives, such as US pre-clearance, which would increase their appeal to international passengers.   Similarly, where this would provide benefits to inbound passengers, Government agencies should consider piloting other innovative technology and processes at airports in the regions.

4.    Promoting travel policies which embrace airports in the regions

Private and public sector organisations should be encouraged to revise travel policies to, where possible, favour the use of airports in the region in which they are located.  This would deliver a combination of time, cost and emissions savings, while also relieving congestion at London airports.   Government should also address the anomaly whereby passengers on domestic flights linking far-flung regions of the UK pay double the tax of those making return trips to destinations in other European countries.

5.    Maintaining 'light touch' regulation in the aviation sector

The Government should act decisively to reduce the regulatory burden and costs for airports. Additional regulatory costs act as a drag on efficiency and should be avoided wherever possible.  Regulation should avoid a 'one size fits all' approach, with the characteristics of individual airports taken into consideration when framing any limits or guidelines required. A Joint Task Force should be formed to enable airports to work with Government to identify areas where red tape could be removed.

Robert Sinclair will be taking part in a panel debate on 'Promoting Regional Development' at the AOA Annual Conference at the London Hilton Metropole today (22 October).

**A copy of the paper can be downloaded at:** http://www.bristolairport.co.uk/about-us/planning-and-development/aviation-policy-reccommendations.aspx

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