

SASIG AVIATION BULLETIN

Aviation News & Policy

August 2026



SASIG's monthly Aviation Bulletin provides LGA members, affiliates and associate members with focused insights into the parliamentary, policy and industry developments shaping the future direction of the aviation sector in the UK.

Editorial

August 2026 was dominated by two long-running expansion battles reaching decisive, if provisional, milestones. The Court of Appeal cleared Gatwick's Northern Runway for full routine use, while the Government's consultation on the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (HENPS) entered its final weeks, alongside a CAA deadline for commenting on its Heathrow regulatory framework. A record quarter for UK passenger numbers was set against the backdrop of a serious data breach affecting three major airports.

Gatwick's Second Runway Confirmed

On 4 August, **the Court of Appeal dismissed a legal challenge against Gatwick's Northern Runway Project**, removing the last significant obstacle to the airport bringing its standby runway into full, routine dual-runway operation. First flights under the new arrangement are expected from 2030, adding up to 100,000 flights a year and raising capacity from around 43 million to as many as 80 million passengers annually. Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander welcomed the ruling as unlocking **14,000 jobs and £1 billion a year in economic benefit** for the South East.

Heathrow: HENPS Consultation and Regulatory Framework

The Government's **consultation on the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (HENPS) continued through August and closing on 1 September 2026**, alongside Parliamentary Select Committee scrutiny of the draft document being undertaken in parallel. **The CAA's high-level update on the regulatory framework for Heathrow expansion (CAP3286) invited stakeholder comment by 13 August**, following its final decision in July (CAP3289) allowing Heathrow to recover £320 million in early expansion costs through airline charges.

Record Passenger Numbers, Cyber Risk

CAA data published on 26–27 August confirmed **a record 81.16 million passengers travelled through UK airports in Q2 2026**, with low-cost growth on European routes offsetting a sharp decline in Middle East traffic. The month's resilience narrative was tempered by **a major cyber incident at Manchester Airports Group**, which disclosed on 27 August that the personal data of around 8.7 million customers of Manchester, Stansted and East Midlands airports had been accessed by an unauthorised third party.

Action for Members

Local authorities within or near the Heathrow expansion footprint should note that **the HENPS consultation closing on 1 September 2026** — this is the primary opportunity to influence the planning framework before any Development Consent Order process begins. Authorities should also be aware that **both Houses of Parliament return from summer recess on 1 September**, when Commons stages of the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill are expected to resume.

Chris Cain

Policy Director, SASIG

Monthly Highlights

Key stories from this month at a glance:

- **4 August 2026** — [Gatwick's second runway confirmed](#) — Court of Appeal dismisses legal challenge, clearing the way for full dual-runway operation from 2030 (GOV.UK/DfT).
- **4 August 2026** — [Luton Airport expansion clears legal hurdle](#) — an environmental challenge is dismissed, paving the way for a project expected to bring up to 11,000 jobs.
- **11 August 2026** — [Stansted's busiest month on record](#) — 3.1 million passengers in July, up 6.3% year-on-year.
- **13 August 2026** — [CAA comment deadline on Heathrow regulatory framework \(CAP3286\)](#) — stakeholders invited to respond to the CAA's updated approach ahead of a full document in the autumn.
- **26–27 August 2026** — [Record Q2 2026 passenger numbers](#) — 81.16 million passengers through UK airports, the busiest second quarter on record despite a sharp fall in Middle East traffic.
- **27 August 2026** — [Manchester Airports Group cyber breach](#) — data of around 8.7 million customers of Manchester, Stansted and East Midlands airports accessed by an unauthorised third party.
- **27 August 2026** — [Lightning strike shuts Luton Airport](#) — air traffic control equipment knocked out for around 90 minutes, disrupting some 30 flights.

Potential Actions for Local Authorities

Items for member consideration this month:

- Respond to the HENPS consultation on the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement before it closes on 1 September 2026 — particularly relevant to authorities on surface access, noise, air quality and economic impact.
- Review exposure to the Manchester Airports Group data breach if resident data, staff or council services rely on customer accounts at Manchester, Stansted or East Midlands airports; consider signposting affected residents to MAG's guidance.
- Note that Parliament returns from summer recess on 1 September 2026, when Commons scrutiny of the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill is expected to resume.

SASIG Activities This Month

- SASIG HENPS consultation response submitted.
- Preparation for CAG meeting on 15th September underway.
- Next SASIG Members' Meeting: Tuesday 6th October 2026 (Online).

Events, Meetings & Consultations

SASIG Meetings

Note: SASIG meetings continue to be held predominantly online. Please confirm arrangements with the Secretariat before making travel plans.

Last SASIG Members' Meeting: Held: 17th June 2026 (Online)

Next SASIG Members' Meeting: Tuesday 6th October 2026 (Online)

Consultations

- **Opened 8 August 2026:** Doncaster Sheffield Airport — consultation on proposed flight path changes (see National & Regional Aviation News — North of England).
- **Closed 13 August 2026: CAA** — [CAP3286 Heathrow capacity expansion, update on the approach to the regulatory framework](#) — stakeholders invited to comment on the CAA's proposed next steps ahead of a further document in the autumn.
- **Closing 1 September 2026:** DfT — [Draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement \(HENPS\)](#) — consultation on proposed amendments to the 2018 Airports National Policy Statement, covering surface access, economic, social and environmental considerations for a Northwest Runway scheme.

External Conferences & Events

23–24 September 2026: IATA Cargo Experts Conference (CEC), Budapest, Hungary

29–30 September 2026: A.I.R. – Aviation Infrastructure Resilience Conference: at Excel, London, focusing on the UK aviation sector's infrastructure and future. SASIG's Policy Director, Chris Cain, will be speaking. Attendance is free. More info and to register click [here](#).

Parliamentary & Government News

Transport Questions: House of Commons

The House of Commons rose for summer recess on 16 July 2026 and will return 1 September 2026.

No Commons debates or Transport Questions sessions relevant to aviation took place during August owing to the summer recess.

Transport Questions: House of Lords

The House of Lords rose for summer recess on 23 July 2026 and will return 1 September 2026.

No Lords business relevant to aviation took place during the recess. The Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill completed Third Reading in the Lords on 20 July, ahead of its transfer to the Commons after recess.

Parliamentary Questions

No parliamentary questions on aviation were tabled or answered in either House during August, as both Houses were in recess for the entire month.

Government Announcements & Publications

4 August 2026 — [Gatwick to open second runway as government wins legal challenge](#) (GOV.UK/DfT) — Court of Appeal dismisses campaigners' challenge to the Northern Runway Project; government confirms 14,000 jobs and £1bn a year in economic benefit expected (see UK Aviation Policy — Airport Expansion & Capacity).

10 August 2026 — [CAA appoints regulatory expert as non-executive director](#) — governance appointment strengthens the regulator's board as it continues to weigh Heathrow and Gatwick capacity decisions.

12 August 2026 — [MPs urge mandatory cabin air monitoring on commercial aircraft](#) — cross-party call for stronger air quality safeguards for passengers and crew.

13 August 2026 — [CAP3286: Heathrow capacity expansion, update on the approach to the regulatory framework](#) (CAA) — high-level update on regulatory models, with comments invited by 13 August ahead of a further document in the autumn (see UK Aviation Policy — Airport Expansion & Capacity).

19 August 2026 — [CAA publishes H8 passenger forecast update](#) — the regulator flags demand-forecasting uncertainties ('shock factors') to be addressed ahead of the next Heathrow regulatory settlement.

24 August 2026 — [CAA publishes independent ex post assessment of H7 capital efficiency](#) — members have been informed of the report's findings.

27 August 2026 — [UK aviation records busiest-ever second quarter](#) (CAA) — 81.16 million passengers travelled through UK airports between April and June 2026, narrowly beating the 2025 record despite a collapse in Middle East traffic (see Monthly Highlights).

Transport Committee

The Transport Committee did not hold formal evidence sessions during the August recess. Its ongoing inquiry into Airport Expansion and Economic Growth, examining whether expansion in the South East can benefit the rest of the UK, resumes when Parliament returns on 1 September.

Environmental Audit Committee

August 2026 — No new activity from the Environmental Audit Committee was recorded during the recess; its inquiry into airport expansion and climate and nature targets remains a live reference point for scrutiny of the draft HENPS, on which the Committee is expected to report following Parliament's return.

Delegated Powers & Regulatory Reform Committee

No new Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee report was published in August. The Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill completed its passage through the House of Lords with Third Reading on 20 July 2026 and now awaits its first Commons stages after recess.

UK Aviation Policy

Airport Expansion & Capacity

4 August 2026 — [Gatwick's second runway confirmed](#) — Court of Appeal dismisses campaigners' legal challenge to the Northern Runway Project, clearing the way for full dual-runway operation from 2030, raising capacity from around 43 million to up to 80 million passengers a year (see National & Regional Aviation News — Gatwick).

4 August 2026 — [Luton Airport's environmental legal challenge dismissed](#) — clears the way for an expansion expected to create up to 11,000 jobs (see National & Regional Aviation News — London Stansted & Luton).

10 August 2026 — [Court rulings 'highlight need for a National Airport Strategy'](#) — the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport argues that resolving expansion decisions airport-by-airport through litigation is an inefficient approach to national capacity planning.

13 August 2026 — [CAP3286: CAA update on Heathrow regulatory framework](#) — stakeholders invited to comment on the CAA's proposed next steps for regulatory models, following its July final decision (CAP3289) allowing £320 million of early cost recovery.

Consultation closing 1 September 2026 — [Draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement \(HENPS\)](#) — DfT consultation on proposed amendments to the 2018 ANPS, running alongside Parliamentary Select Committee scrutiny of the draft document (see National & Regional Aviation News — Heathrow).

Airspace, ATM & Air Navigation

5 August 2026 — [NATS sets out how airspace change is deployed](#) — a NATS blog explained how new airspace designs are introduced with minimal operational disruption, as work continues on modernisation supporting future Heathrow and London Terminal Control Area capacity.

8 August 2026 — [Doncaster Sheffield Airport opens consultation on proposed flight path changes](#) (see Events, Meetings & Consultations and National & Regional Aviation News — North of England).

13 August 2026 — [Ryanair blames UK air traffic controller shortages for widespread summer delays](#).

Sustainability, SAF & Decarbonisation

18 August 2026 — [UK consortium launches government-backed oceanic contrail avoidance trial](#) — NATS, Google, the Met Office, Imperial College London and the University of Cambridge will trial AI-driven contrail avoidance across the Stanwick oceanic airspace from winter 2026/27, backed by £2.65 million in DfT funding through the Aerospace Technology Institute.

26 August 2026 — [New Economics Foundation research finds aircraft noise more damaging to community wellbeing than previously understood](#).

Advanced Air Mobility, Drones & New Technology

3 August 2026 — [Bristow-led consortium begins testing ALIA aircraft in Scotland](#), advancing eVTOL trials within UK airspace.

7 August 2026 — [Aurigo secures £1.43 million in funding for an autonomous airport safety vehicle project](#).

Land Use, Planning & Economic Impact

4 August 2026 — Gatwick Development Consent Order upheld — the Court of Appeal's dismissal of the legal challenge confirms the planning basis for the Northern Runway Project, including associated airfield, terminal and surface access works (see Airport Expansion & Capacity, above). The draft HENPS consultation, closing 1 September, similarly sets the planning framework against which any future Heathrow development consent application would be judged.

4 August 2026 — [Gatwick's expansion criticised by the New Economics Foundation](#), which warns the project risks displacing jobs to the detriment of wider regions (see National & Regional Aviation News — Gatwick).

17 August 2026 — Heathrow compensation and heritage concerns mount — [reports highlight households 'short-changed' on runway compensation payouts](#), [London Mayor Sadiq Khan restates his objections to the third runway](#), and campaigners warn expansion threatens England's largest surviving medieval barn, with Stanwell Moor residents separately raising concerns over compensation arrangements (see National & Regional Aviation News — Heathrow).

26 August 2026 — [New Economics Foundation research finds aircraft noise more damaging to community wellbeing than previously understood](#) (see Sustainability, SAF & Decarbonisation, above).

National & Regional Aviation News — UK

London Airports

Heathrow

10 August 2026 — [Major disruption to Heathrow rail links after a tunnel is closed for safety reasons](#).

11 August 2026 — [Heathrow urges third-runway approval as Istanbul Airport overtakes it on July traffic volumes](#).

14 August 2026 — [IAG, British Airways' parent company, questions the cost of Heathrow's proposed third runway](#).

18 August 2026 — [London Mayor Sadiq Khan restates his objections to Heathrow's third runway](#); Gatwick separately argues Heathrow's expansion proposals leave local households out of pocket (see UK Aviation Policy — Land Use, Planning & Economic Impact).

20 August 2026 — HENPS scrutiny continues — commentary on the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement has questioned whether delivery of the rail links assumed in Heathrow's surface access plans is guaranteed; [the consultation](#) remains open until 1 September 2026 (see UK Aviation Policy — Airport Expansion & Capacity).

Gatwick

4 August 2026 — [Gatwick warned it is 'running out of fuel'](#), sparking fears of summer holiday disruption; supplies were subsequently confirmed secure.

4 August 2026 — [Second runway confirmed](#) — Court of Appeal dismisses legal challenge to the Northern Runway Project (see UK Aviation Policy — Airport Expansion & Capacity).

4 August 2026 — [Gatwick's expansion criticised by the New Economics Foundation](#), which warns the project could displace jobs from wider regions rather than create net new economic benefit.

26 August 2026 — Gatwick weighs premium upgrades — Chief Executive Pierre-Hugues Schmit says the airport is considering lounge, valet parking and hospitality upgrades to meet growing demand for premium travel, alongside easyJet's own move upmarket.

26 August 2026 — [Gatwick reports solid first-half operational and financial performance](#) with the Northern Runway now cleared for use, though overall profits fell as the Iran conflict reduced passenger numbers earlier in the period.

London City Airport

19 August 2026 — [London City Airport advances plans for bigger, quieter aircraft](#), with local stakeholders describing the proposals as 'rooted in East London growth'.

London Stansted & Luton

3 August 2026 — [Greater Anglia's overnight Stansted Express trial attracts more than 1,000 additional journeys in its first month](#).

4 August 2026 — [Luton Airport's expansion, expected to bring up to 11,000 jobs, clears an environmental legal challenge](#) (see UK Aviation Policy — Airport Expansion & Capacity).

7 August 2026 — [Farrans appointed to build Stansted's new Skylink walkways](#), the next phase of the airport's transformation programme.

11 August 2026 — [An illegal car park near Stansted is found to be holding around 1,000 vehicles](#).

11 August 2026 — [Stansted's busiest month on record](#) — 3.1 million passengers in July 2026, up 6.3% year-on-year, including a single-day record of 693 aircraft movements marked on National Aviation Day.

27 August 2026 — [Lightning strike shuts Luton Airport](#) — a direct lightning strike on air traffic control equipment suspended operations for around 90 minutes during evening thunderstorms, disrupting some 30 flights and diverting aircraft to Gatwick, Stansted and East Midlands.

28 August 2026 — [Manchester Airports Group cyber breach](#) affects Stansted customers — data including email addresses, phone numbers, vehicle registrations and postcodes accessed for Stansted customers alongside Manchester and East Midlands (see Wider Industry News — Technology, AI & Airport Operations).

London Southend

No significant developments from London Southend reported this month.

Midlands & East of England

3 August 2026 — [Work begins on former Coventry Airport's £2.5 billion transformation project](#).

5 August 2026 — [East Midlands Airport reports a £6.2 billion boost to the UK economy over the past year](#).

27 August 2026 — [East Midlands Airport cargo growth continues](#) — the UK's leading dedicated freight airport reported cargo volumes for May–July up 17.4% year-on-year, outpacing growth at Heathrow (see Wider Industry News — Air Cargo & Freight).

North of England

7 August 2026 — [Doncaster Sheffield Airport secures council backing for a £7 million radar contract](#), finalised as a [multi-million-pound order](#) on 13 August.

8 August 2026 — [Doncaster Sheffield Airport opens a consultation on proposed flight path changes](#) (see Events, Meetings & Consultations).

10 August 2026 — [EasyJet launches new routes from Newcastle Airport to four destinations](#).

18 August 2026 — [A report examines the economic impact of Manchester Airport's Runway 2](#), twenty-five years after it opened.

20 August 2026 — [EasyJet confirms it will halt flights from Leeds Bradford Airport after 16 years](#), with [Jet2 launching promotions to capture demand](#); [Leeds Bradford separately seeks to update its night flight regulations](#).

27 August 2026 — [Manchester Airports Group cyber breach](#) — MAG disclosed that data belonging to around 8.7 million customers across Manchester, Stansted and East Midlands airports had been accessed by an unauthorised third party; the extortion group FulcrumSec later claimed responsibility. Passenger safety and flight operations were not affected (see Wider Industry News — Technology, AI & Airport Operations).

Scotland

11 August 2026 — [Loganair's planned withdrawal puts the future of Dundee Airport in doubt](#).

20 August 2026 — [Loganair confirms it will close its Dundee operating base](#), describing continued operation there as 'unsustainable'.

24 August 2026 — [Green light given for a 'milestone' expansion of an innovation park next to Glasgow Airport](#).

27 August 2026 — [Scottish airports share in record Q2 passenger growth](#) — Edinburgh grew 5%, Glasgow 3% and Inverness 8% year-on-year, with cargo volumes also rising sharply at Glasgow Prestwick (see Monthly Highlights).

Wales & South West England

20 August 2026 — [It is reported that running Newquay Airport now costs Cornish taxpayers almost £10 million a year](#).

27 August 2026 — [Cardiff Airport records strongest UK growth](#) — passenger traffic rose 16% year-on-year in Q2 2026, the second-highest proportional growth of any UK airport, as the Welsh Government-owned airport passed one million passengers on a rolling 12-month basis for the first time since the pandemic (see Monthly Highlights).

Channel Islands & Crown Dependencies

No significant developments from the Channel Islands or Crown Dependencies reported this month.

Wider Industry News

Air Cargo & Freight

27 August 2026 — [East Midlands Airport cargo growth outpaces Heathrow](#) — more than 100,000 tonnes handled at the UK's leading dedicated freight airport between May and July, up 17.4% year-on-year, while belly-hold cargo volumes at Heathrow remained broadly flat (see National & Regional Aviation News — Midlands & East of England).

31 August 2026 — [China-Europe air cargo stabilises](#) — WorldACD data shows traffic beginning to steady after several weeks of decline following the EU's 1 July introduction of import duty rules for low-value e-commerce imports.

Aerospace Manufacturing & Innovation

10 August 2026 — [Cambridge Aerospace raises \\$300m](#) — the UK counter-drone and air-defence manufacturer closed a Series C funding round at a \$3.4bn valuation, backed by DFJ Growth, Accel and others, to expand production of its Skyhammer interceptor and other low-cost air-defence systems.

Technology, AI & Airport Operations

27 August 2026 — [Manchester Airports Group discloses major data breach](#) — an unauthorised third party accessed data belonging to around 8.7 million customers of Manchester, Stansted and East Midlands airports, including email addresses, phone numbers, vehicle registrations and postcodes drawn from car park, lounge, Fast Track and Wi-Fi sign-up records. MAG said passenger safety, aviation security and flight operations were unaffected; the extortion group FulcrumSec later claimed responsibility for the theft of around 86GB of data. The Information Commissioner's Office and National Cyber Security Centre have been notified (see National & Regional Aviation News — North of England and London Stansted & Luton).

International Context

26 August 2026 — [Middle East conflict reshapes UK international traffic](#) — CAA Q2 data shows UK–Gulf traffic collapsing (Dubai down 50%, UAE down 42%, Qatar down 45%), with Emirates' UK passenger numbers down 46% and Qatar Airways down 42%, even as overall UK passenger numbers hit a record high (see Monthly Highlights).

Library Additions

Key publications, reports and official documents added to the SASIG website library this month:

- SASIG Bulletin — July 2026 in **Newsletter & Bulletins**

Full library available in the SASIG members' area.

Contact & Membership

CONTACT

SASIG Secretariat
Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group
www.sasig.org.uk
Policy Director: Chris Cain
Email: secretariat@sasig.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP

SASIG membership is open to local authorities and other public bodies with a strategic interest in aviation.

For membership enquiries, please email the secretariat.

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