

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)

promoting quality public transport.....

Transport Committee
 House of Commons
 London SW1A 0AA

9th October 2015

Dear Committee Members,

Surface Transport to Airports

1. TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in North West England. We are pleased to give our views to this inquiry.

2. In 2007 we did some work on public transport information and links to airports. The report included the results of some passenger research conducted at Liverpool John Lennon and Manchester Airports. These showed that for the majority of departing airline passengers public transport links were perceived as being inconvenient. Nevertheless there was a significant reference by those interviewed to the need for better information about public transport options. Many of the findings of that exercise are still relevant today [and here is a link to that report.](#)

3. Generally speaking the majority of flight departures from airports occur between 6.00 am and 10.00 am requiring passengers to check in between 4.00 am and 8.00 am. If passengers are to be attracted to use trains and other public transport to travel to the airport then robust services must be available to get them to the airport in time and give them confidence that they can do so. Many parts of our region do not offer this facility for Manchester Airport.

4. The majority of flight arrivals occur between 6.00 pm and midnight and so passengers will need to be reassured that public transport is available to get them to their final destinations without due delay and also be sufficiently flexible to cater for late flight arrivals suggesting a regular 24 hour timetable and fare flexibility. For example on Mondays to Fridays the last possible departure from Manchester Airport to get to Windermere is as early as 20:30 and earlier at weekends.

5. Airport staff shift patterns are designed to coincide with peak airport use and so public transport needs to be available to take personnel to and from

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the airport at times to cater for the passenger peaks (i.e. in advance of them). Currently it is believed that a large majority travel by private car as public transport timings do not coincide with demand.

6. It has been observed that airport car park courtesy buses are diverted to move staff into the airport terminals at shift time changes as a priority over waiting passengers, who are left with unacceptable delays waiting for buses at car park bus stops. Sufficient dedicated buses are required to cater for this peak pattern.

7. The pattern of travel by both staff and passengers demands a 24 hour availability of public transport with a consistent timetable and delivering an extensive outreach to originating points in the North West with a radius of, say, 100 miles. For example we are very concerned about the lack of through trains between Manchester Airport and Windermere (both directions), the deterioration over the last few years, and the service level in the future. There is also the issue of inadequate and inappropriate rolling stock used, in particular luggage space, and the North West is not well off in that regard. Even the new 4-car FTPE electrics are virtually always full (and standing). Witness those three out of the top ten most (over)crowded trains in the country.

8. Public transport access to Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJL) is poor, making it unattractive for non-car users to reach from beyond the Merseyside region. There is a dedicated express bus service from Liverpool One bus station but this location is inconvenient for central Liverpool rail stations. Liverpool South Parkway has no dedicated bus to LJL though there are slow stopping service bus links. Improvements to this link are sorely needed especially when through services between North Wales/ Chester (important catchments for LJL) and the Airport start to operate hopefully in 2017/18. A direct rail line to the airport is badly needed.

9. Leeds/Bradford, whilst not in the North West is used by many Lancashire passengers. It provides a dismal welcome to the foreign traveller who is presented with 200 yards of open space (often in heavy rain) to reach two plastic bus shelters. From there an all stops bus takes 40 minutes to an hour to reach Bradford or Leeds City Centres. Again a fast surface transport link and improved buildings are urgently required.

10. Access to/from Heathrow and Gatwick Airports from our region is worse, in many cases requiring the need to stay overnight. These two airports serve many destinations, particularly long haul, not served by other airports. If Heathrow is to be developed these destinations will grow. Gatwick used to be served by a direct train service from the NW which was well patronised as it allowed travel to many SE destinations only otherwise accessible by a gruelling journey with luggage across London. The reintroduction of this service would be a considerable benefit.

11. With regard to Heathrow, if it is to be our major UK airport, the lack of fast overland transport other than to London is unacceptable. The re-instatement

of the HS2 Heathrow link would allow regular through services not only to the Midlands and NW but also to Northern European cities giving fast access to City Centres for overseas arrivals without a painful change of planes and then a second journey to the appropriate city centre from another airport.

12. There is also the consideration of some Airports also acting as transport hubs, where people not making journeys to or from the Airport *per se*, board, alight and interchange between transport modes. With reduced bus networks in the region developing new passenger interchange hubs at high volume passenger airports could provide travel options no longer possible via smaller towns.

13. A proportion of air passengers are groups arriving or departing by coach. There needs to be adequate provision for this, including coach layover spaces and appropriate information for such passengers, and critically coach drivers. For example we could not find any information for coach drivers on Manchester Airport's website.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours faithfully

John A Moorhouse

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary