

Industrial Profile

Employment

Aviation is a major UK industry carrying over 200 million passengers per annum and over 2.3 million tonnes of freight. The demand for air travel is continuing to grow. Despite stiff competition from Paris Charles De Gaul, Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Madrid airports, last year Heathrow alone carried 1.4 million tonnes of cargo and nearly 68 million passengers followed by Gatwick with 32.8 million passengers and 216,000 tonnes of air cargo and Stansted with over 22 million passengers and 237,000 tonnes of freight.

The Government's aim is to develop a long-term framework that will maximise the beneficial aspects of aviation and minimise the negative ones especially now that aviation has been given a European wide emissions trading scheme. Air travel remains crucial to our economy with well over 200,000 jobs directly and some 700,000 jobs indirectly dependent on it. Heathrow alone contributed around £5 billion into the economy last year.

The growth in passengers travelling in the low cost –no frills – sector has been dramatic. 7 years ago just 7 million people flew on low cost airlines; this year we expect this to rise to almost 50 million. A third of the goods exported by value go by air, and that figure also continues to rise.

Trade Unions

Amicus has approximately 18,000 members in the sector. Other unions within the sector include TGWU, GMB and BALPA. The vast majority of engineers are represented by Amicus.

Employers

The employers in this sector include:- Air Atlanta, Air New Zealand, Air Wales, Astraeus, British Airways, BAA, Britannia Airways, British European, British Mediterranean, British Midland, bmi baby, British World, Cathay Pacific, Channel Express, Eastern Airways, EasyJet, European Aviation Air Charter, Excel Airways, First Choice Airways, Flybe, Flyglobespan, FlyJet Ltd, GB Airways, Japan Airlines, Jet 2, KLM, Loganair, Monarch, MyTravel, Qantas, Ryanair, Thomas Cook Airlines & Virgin Atlantic.

Current Issues and Activities

There is a lack of capacity at our major airports to cope with demand. This requires major investment in the expansion of airports to cope with the demand to maintain the hub status currently enjoyed by London. Heathrow is currently running at 99.6% of capacity causing a major obstacle in the way of commerce and making other nations more attractive. If this hub status is lost then it is believed that a major resource to the British economy will go with it causing major job losses. Amicus is therefore campaigning along with other organisations to promote the expansion of Heathrow and our other major airports so that the hub status can be maintained.

Technology changes have continued to reduce the number of engineers in aircraft maintenance with a growing market in outsourcing globally. This is now leading to closures of facilities despite the expansion of the number of aircraft. The biggest problem is the developing countries of the Far East who are expanding their maintenance facilities.

Many of the established carriers are struggling to make enough profit to make a return on capital and replace assets. BA for example, went through a period where it did not purchase any new aircraft for 4 years. In general 5% of a fleet needs to be replaced every year, taking into account the average 20 years of service per aircraft. There is also continued pressure to move qualified engineers into ground support and customer service staff along side other methods of reducing cost and staff numbers.

Pressure is also being brought to bear on aircraft manufacturers to reduce emissions and sound pollution to make aircraft more environmentally friendly. This has resulted in some manufacturers offering to provide their own servicing packages to ensure that the new technology is maintained to a high standard which might not be found if the end of line customer outsourced.

Due to pressures being brought by airlines to minimise cost and turn around times, concerns are being raised over the working environment of cabin crew. Some airlines are now requiring staff to not only ensure the safe embarkation and disembarkation of passengers, but also to clean and restock aircraft in less than fifteen minutes. This can result in savings on cleaning staff requirements but can also result in cabin crew not being able to take a rest break at anytime during their shift. Had the cabin crew been on ground based duties, this practice would be a breach of the working time directive and health and safety legislation. However, current legislation does not cover the crew in this way once airborne. Amicus is therefore campaigning to close this loophole.