

22 APR 2011

Minister for Transport and Infrastructure  
Keith Brown MSP



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Councillor Iris Hawkins  
On behalf of Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships  
c/o SEStran  
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20 April 2011

Dear Cllr Hawkins,

Thank you for your letter of 15 April on behalf of the Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships about access to London and world markets through Heathrow and Gatwick.

I fully appreciate the concerns of the Regional Transport Partnerships on this matter. I have already been in touch with the UK Secretary of State for Transport and stressed that access to Heathrow is not an option but a necessity for Scotland. Any reduction in access to Heathrow directly affects Scotland's competitiveness. The consultation on the new aviation policy framework would have been a useful platform to address this issue in detail. However, the speed of developments on domestic access to the London airports means that irreversible changes could take place before the new framework is announced in 2013. I have therefore made it clear to Philip Hammond that action needs to be taken now to avoid an irreversible decline in Scotland's access to strategic hub airports in the south east. I have also written to the Chief Executives of the Civil Aviation Authority and Gatwick Airport to express concern.

The new charging regime at Heathrow would have been one of the main factors for bmi's decision to withdraw its service from Glasgow. You may be aware that British Airways (BA) recently announced that it is increasing capacity on routes connecting Glasgow and Edinburgh to London. From 2 May, a fifth daily service will be introduced between Glasgow and London City Airport, while larger aircraft on morning flights from Glasgow to Heathrow and London City will make more seats available. The changes on the Glasgow-Heathrow route represent an additional 25,000 seats during the summer period. BA will also increase its Edinburgh to London city schedule from seven return flights to eight daily.

Kind regards

KEITH BROWN

