

Airport's one in a million

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SOUTHEND Airport has enjoyed its busiest ever year, flying almost a million passengers.

A total of 970,167 passengers passed through the terminal between January and December 2013.

It eclipses the previous record of 692,000 in 1967, back in its heyday when Southend was the third busiest airport in the UK – behind only Heathrow and Manchester.

Southend also enjoyed a booming festive period, with 45,678 passengers in total flying in and out of the airport between December 19 and January 2.

The busiest day was December 27, when 3,865 people used the airport.

The most popular route over Christmas was Amsterdam, both for people flying out of the UK and back.

Airport operations director David Lister said: “Last year was a fantastic year for London Southend, topped off with us being named best airport in Britain in the Which? airport passenger survey.

“We think our unique promises to passengers – that they should wait no more than four minutes to go through security and that, on arrival with hand baggage, they are on the rail station platform within 15 minutes of leaving the aircraft and then in central London in 53 minutes – is what has been a big part of our success.

“These are the factors driving more and more passengers to choose London’s newest airport, and we have more great things to come in 2014.”

A new, twice-weekly easyJet route to the winter sunshine island of Tenerife, which started on December 13, is proving hugely popular during its first few weeks.

On Christmas Eve, the busiest flight of the entire festive season saw 178 people flying from Tenerife via Southend.

To support the rapid growth of the airport, a £10million extension to the terminal is scheduled to open in 'early 2014'.

This extension will provide more check-in desks, and the project has created more than 300 jobs.

The airport has undergone massive growth and investment since owners [Stobart Group](#) bought it in 2008. About £120million has been spent on numerous building projects.

To improve connections to London a new train station was built at the airport, which sits on the London Liverpool Street line.

It means passengers can get from the terminal to the station in minutes.

A new air traffic control tower was also built and the runway was extended to cope with all the extra flights.

Alongside this, the four-star Holiday Inn Hotel opened for business over a year ago, to make the airport more convenient to people travelling from further afield.

[Southend Airport](#) currently has departures each week to Amsterdam, Alicante, Barcelona, Belfast, Berlin, Edinburgh, Faro, Geneva, Ibiza, Jersey, Krakow, Malaga, Mallorca, Tenerife and Venice with easyJet.

Aer Lingus has three daily return services between Southend and Dublin, where travellers are able to take advantage of transatlantic connections to Boston, Chicago, New York, Orlando, San Francisco and Toronto.

Mr Lister added: "We are working closely with all our partners – as well as speaking to potential new ones – to offer an even wider variety of destinations for business and leisure travellers, at a reasonable cost all year round.

"We hope 2014 is going to be another great year for us.