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Manston Airport owner Ann Gloag brings in Alastair Welch onto board to work alongside chief executive Charles Buchanan

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The new owner of Manston Airport has wasted no time in making her mark on the site she bought for £1.

Scottish businesswoman Ann Gloag, who established the Stagecoach Group, announced the appointment of Alastair Welch to the board just minutes after the official paperwork for the sale went through today.

Turnaround specialist Mr Welch will work alongside chief executive Charles Buchanan in running the airport and deciding future strategy.

Manston Airport

Ms Gloag said: “As the new owner of Manston Airport, I am ready to work on investigating opportunities for growth at Manston.

“I have over 30 years experience in the transport industry and will use that expertise as best as I can to optimise both freight and passenger growth at Manston.

“To help me in that challenge, I am delighted to have on board Alastair Welch. He will lead our work at the airport, working alongside Charles Buchanan and the wider Manston team as we scope the future strategy of the business.

Chief executive Charles Buchanan, pictured, will work alongside turnaround specialist Alastair Welch

“Whilst this is a loss making airport, I hope that with the co-operation of our neighbours and the wider community of Kent, the airport partners and staff, we can capitalise on the opportunities available to give Kent the best chance possible of having a successful and vibrant airport.”

Last month it was announced Manston was to be bought from Infratil Ltd by Lothian Shelf (710) Limited, wholly owned by Ms Gloag.

Incoming board member Mr Welch joined BAA at Heathrow in 1995, taking on roles in operations, finance, corporate strategy and project management.

After working as general manager at Stansted from 2001 to 2006, he became managing director at Southend Airport from 2007 before taking on his latest role.

At Southend he oversaw the construction of a new terminal, rail station, control tower, hotel, road and runway extension, as well as the introduction of Easyjet, Tui and Aer Lingus services.

Mr Welch added: “Our focus will be on doing what we need to do to build a successful business and we are looking at all options to give us the best chance of achieving that.

“For the airport to thrive and fulfil its potential, it is vital that we create an environment where new partners are attracted to do business at Manston.

“We are already working hard exploring a number of opportunities and we greatly appreciate the positive support we have received from key stakeholders and staff so far.

“Manston’s future not only depends on Ann Gloag and our team. It also depends on a collaborative approach from everyone in Kent who wants the airport to thrive.

“We look forward to working with all stakeholders to make this happen.”

Manston Airport operates twice daily KLM flights connecting Kent to worldwide destinations via Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport.

Kent County Council leader Paul Carter said: “We are delighted that Manston Airport has ambitious new owners in Ann Gloag and her company.

“Manston Airport has massive potential to create prosperity and job opportunities in East Kent.

“We at Kent County Council are here to help facilitate the new owners in creating new and exciting opportunities at the airport.”