

Echo comment: Southend Airport is still in line for targets



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SO much good news has come out of Southend Airport recently that we have started to take its continued growth for granted.

So it comes as something of a shock when the airport's figures suddenly stall.

Stobart's trading statement, just issued, represents the first downturn since the company acquired the airport. An annual drop in passenger numbers of 99,000 is not what anyone expected from this source. [Southend Airport](#) has become a significant plank in the town's economy, and a major source of civic pride and prestige. The airport's fortunes have an impact well beyond its borders. It is not just Stobart who will be concerned about the latest numbers. A number of routes have been dropped in the course of the year. The budget airline market is becoming increasingly competitive. EasyJet is being fiercely wooed by rival airports. Against this, Stobart is arguably holding up well. Its cashflow appears to be healthy even if passenger numbers are down, revenue per passenger is up.

Stobart is right to stick to its ambitious targets. One year's slide in passenger numbers does not mean they are unrealistic. The days when soaring growth came easy at Southend Airport may be over. The drive to retain and increase business is set to become more of a struggle.