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## Airport boss quizzed over new flights, pollution and light aircraft crash

2:00pm Friday 13th June 2014 in [News By David Trayner](#)



Southend Airport

managing director Roger Clements

WITH three new routes starting last week and another three next month, a terminal extension and a new target of carrying five million passengers a year, Southend Airport is really taking off.

But the airport, back to its Seventies heyday after £120million investment by the [Stobart Group](#), has to balance its growth against environmental concerns, complaints of noise and disturbance and serving amateur aviators. Airport managing director ROGER CLEMENTS discusses the challenges ahead.

- *Three-quarters of passengers on last week's new flights were inbound from Europe and most were heading straight to London. How can that benefit the local economy?*

We are London Southend Airport. The local economy and local area is important to us – 95 per cent of our staff are from Southend.

We work with the council and the tourist people in Southend and south-east Essex to highlight attractions in this area to inbound customers.

We have just produced a new brochure. As well as including highlights in London, we have highlighted attractions in Southend and Essex. It's about getting the right balance.

Not everyone will want to spend two weeks in Southend, but we are hopeful a large proportion will. If they don't spend their whole trip in Southend, hopefully they will spend one or two nights in Southend.

- *Are any new airlines going to start flights from Southend?*

We have had considerable growth over the past two years.

We have been the fastest growing airport in Europe for each of the past two years.

We are continually talking to airlines across Europe, promoting Southend and London as destinations.

Those negotiations are ongoing with numerous airlines.

That's one of the reasons I couldn't be at the official opening of the new terminal extension. I was at an air industry conference in Marseilles, talking to two-dozen airlines.

- *How much do you expect new routes to come from new airlines and how much from existing airlines, or those flown by Stobart Air?*

It's going to be a balance, a mixture. We have existing airlines – easyJet and now Flybe.

It's important to develop those.

Customer experience is paramount. It's up to us to make sure the passenger experience is first class each time.

That's why we have made things 'simply easier'.

- *Have any of the airlines you have spoken to recently expressed strong interest in starting flights from Southend?*

There will be a number of them that have an interest and it will develop over time.

It's very usual in the airline industry for discussions to take place over a long time. We have to promote the benefits to the airlines.

It's massive for Flybe to come here. It can take time, but we have to be positive about it. It will continue to grow and develop. We are encouraged by the responses from the airlines.

- *A light aircraft crashed at [Southend Airport](#) recently, although thankfully no one was seriously hurt. What can you say about that?*

Safety both at the approach to the airport and at the airport itself is paramount.

There is an ongoing application for controlled air space for London Southend Airport.

That will help us manage safety and a mixture of aircraft.

- *But now the airport is serving so many commercial flights, is it possible to accommodate amateur pilots?*

We are very aware Southend has a long tradition of local aviators using the airport.

We have to try to find the right balance between airlines developing bigger jets and the local amateur industry.

There are two flying schools attached to the airport. They are valued customers of the airport.

We are conscious we are part of the local community and we have to notice of their views.

The planning permission for the airport's expansion limits the number of aircraft movements.

- *Do you need to reduce the number of light aircraft movements to allow the number of commercial flights necessary to meet your target of serving five million passengers a year by 2020?*

The limit is about 55,000 aircraft movements and we are nowhere near that. In 2013, we had 22,057 movements. It is well below the limit.

It's not a case where we have to cull local aviators to keep within the limit, or to get even five million passengers. It's very important for the airport and why we call ourselves London Southend Airport.

We want to be an airport for London, but we want to maintain that regional feel.

- *Some readers are concerned about the airport's application to discharge run-off from the airport's runway and taxi way, containing de-icer, into Prittle Brook and Eastwood Brook. What assurances can you give them the process is safe?*

Safety and environmental issues are important before we look at airline development.

We have been working very closely with the Environment Agency for the past two years on effective management from run-off from the taxi ways. We have proactively adhered to their advice and continue to do so.

- *There has been considerable redevelopment of the airport over the past few years. Is it all finished?*

The Stobart Group invested £120million in infrastructure and it's in place for the expansion over the next six or seven years to 2020, to achieve our target of passenger numbers.

Now it is the time to deliver returns for the investment. We have done that in collaboration with local councils, the tourist board and the local CBI.

- *What effect would an estuary airport have on Southend Airport?*

An estuary airport would close Southend Airport.

- *How do you think airport capacity in south-east England should be increased?*

We could help provide extra capacity in south-east England.

We wouldn't be the only answer, but we could be part of the solution. I don't feel an estuary airport is the solution, but I feel Southend could be part of the solution. We are at one million capacity over this last 12 months.

The chief executive of Stobart Air said we have the infrastructure for five million passengers. The bigger airports, like Heathrow and Gatwick, could take the bigger aircraft and there is room for the

### Comments (16)

2:06pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**Southend Andy** says...

A very good interview. No doubt there will be the knockers, moaners & wingers.

- Score: -6

2:25pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**paintlad3** says...

Yes a good interview with good reason.

- Score: -6

2:36pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**jayman** says...

WOW!! I read the tag line "Airport boss quizzed over new flights" and thought to myself, Great. The airport boss will be grilled with some hard hitting Probing questions. Imagine my disappointment at reading, what I consider to be an airport press release mixed in with loaded and scripted questions with no cross examination whatsoever. I guess the Echo are both Tory mouthpiece and Airport magazine all rolled into one.

- Score: 13

2:43pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**Sensible Man** says...

jayman -

When you fly off for your 2 weeks on the Costa Del Sol - or wherever jaymen go on holiday - do you seriously still trek to Luton or Stansted rather than making use of Southend Airport? I would be interested to know.

- Score: -2

2:45pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**jayman** says...

**Sensible Man** wrote:  
jayman -

When you fly off for your 2 weeks on the Costa Del Sol - or wherever jaymen go on holiday - do you seriously still trek to Luton or Stansted rather than making use of Southend Airport? I would be interested to know.

I don't use air travel.

- Score: 6

3:35pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**Joe Clark** says...

**jayman** wrote:  
**Sensible Man** wrote:  
jayman -

When you fly off for your 2 weeks on the Costa Del Sol - or wherever jaymen go on holiday - do you seriously still trek to Luton or Stansted rather than making use of Southend Airport? I would be interested to know.

I don't use air travel.

I am sure I speak for the vast majority here when I say...

YAHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO  
OOOOOOOOOOO to that!

- Score: -8

4:48pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**rayleighrunner** says...

I would be happy for the airport to stay as it is and perhaps add an extra flight once or twice a day. But that is it. I don't want a busy airport with planes flying over my house day and night. It's a handy airport to have. Offers a nice range of destinations which should change depending on the time of year, but no more than that thank you! Otherwise I think many will be hoping for the estuary airport and the closure of Southend.

- Score: 0

5:00pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**runwellian** says...

The airport will grow and grow until like Heathrow, it is hell to live nearby.

I am fed up of being woken up early every morning to the noise of Easyjet flying over my home ... and Yes, I am looking to move out of the area!!

- Score: 7

5:18pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**mauwoman** says...

Be careful what you wish for Rayleighrunner. The Estuary Airport if developed would have a devastating effect on Southend. Jumbos constantly overhead would be the end of Southend as a resort

- Score: -1

5:35pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**rob-wos** says...

**mauwoman** wrote:

Be careful what you wish for Rayleighrunner. The Estuary Airport if developed would have a devastating effect on Southend. Jumbos constantly overhead would be the end of Southend as a resort

There is always Jumbos flying overhead !!!

Look up in the sky.

Where do you think the contrails come from.

- Score: 5

5:41pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**jollyboy** says...

What they dont say is that Southend has not benefited from the airport as people go to London. We can use the airport but the choice truly is not enough and never will be with the runway as it is. Any future growth would be at the expense of other intended development in the area since the watercourses and brooks cannot take an unlimited amount of additional input. So if you want the retail and business park you dont want the airport to expand much more. The airport offers hundreds of jobs but the park thousands. Pure mathematics. I dont hold with the pollution either and who will monitor it ? just like the noise - Stobarts. They cannot be

trusted as they have been sending chemicals into the brook all this time but only now a consultation. not on and the Environment Agency should be ashamed of themselves.

- Score: 7

5:44pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**mauwoman** says...

rob-wos think what we have overhead now and then think much, much lower and more. Currently not all planes heading for Heathrow fly over us.

- Score: -2

6:15pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**jayman** says...

I love the way that the article concludes itself, following the overall way in which it was written.

"like Heathrow and Gatwick, could take the bigger aircraft and there is room for the" .....?

The the beano would have done a more plausible job.

- Score: 11

6:29pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**jayman** says...

**Joe Clark** wrote:

**jayman** wrote:

**Sensible Man** wrote:

jayman -

When you fly off for your 2 weeks on the Costa Del Sol - or wherever jaymen go on holiday - do you seriously still trek to Luton or Stansted rather than making use of Southend Airport? I would be interested to know.

I don't use air travel.

I am sure I speak for the vast majority here when I say...

YAHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

OOOOOOOOOO to that!

when I served in the army i was flown out/In while sat no the floor between two others who where sat on the seats, in a continuous herringbone formation running along the side of the aircraft with cargo in the centre. I would imagine Flying Easyjet is a similar experience in

regards to human comfort but in a more restrictive commercial environment. I mean, Christ! at least I felt safe around the people I was flying with, with the expense limitations that easyjet impose, I would feel both cheated and on edge that riot would begin at any minute. Alas, thankfully there is only so much anger that can be vented at several thousand feet above the strata while within the soul destroying confines of a large metal tube.

- Score: 4

8:09pm Fri 13 Jun 14

**mauwoman** says...

In the interests of balance flying Easyjet is comparable to flying economy on any other airline in my experience

- Score: -1

9:27am Sat 14 Jun 14

**maxell** says...

Most truthful in depth airport interview yet. Interview by THE PR MACHINE

(Q) What do you think of the airport .

(a) This its a grate airport, I just cant beleive that the last owner only paid a £1 for it, it most be worth at least 50 million now, but we like to keep telling people its worth twice that, "It keeps the investors happy".

(Q) On your journey since being loaned £millions has it been an easier ride than you anticipated.

(a) Absoloutley the whole of the population in the uk have been behind us , I can honestly say that there has never been a one single instance where people have been nothing more than supportive, even our staff who regularly post on the comments page , only have good things to say about us. everyone is happy even our truck drivers.

(Q) How much revenue have you turned over from landing fees from easyjet,

(a) Arh well you got me there as they dont actully pay landing fees at the moment as such , but I have been told that they told someone that they promised not to leave when they have to start paying the fees. One thing we have considered is raising our prices so we can cover the cost of the landing fees hopefully this will encourage them tto stay, "Oh what am I saying they have promised me already," ' arh my silly head". I have not not had to much sleep as I was at a horse racing meet, and then had to jet of to change the tyres on my rally cars and then onto a party. It was good to see the old crowd again from the councils.

(q) I hear that you have had a book written about you.

(a) Yes you can get it on amazon

Well that was a good interview email of to dave tell him what page to put on and make sure that this news goes before any silly stories like big ben collapsing. Thinking about it better put on front page, as they wont be able to close the pages due to my ego. ALL my Opinion as always.

The reported interview was conducted by the airprot PR machine, and sent to dave trayner to put his name to it . also my opinion