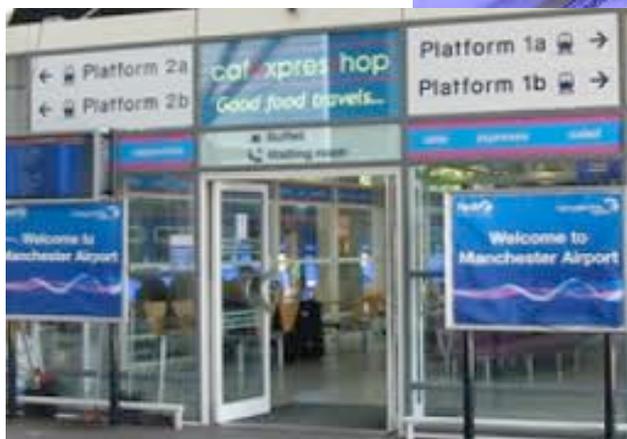


Public Transport Links to UK Airports 2012

Report of a survey of airport users, airport websites and train operating company websites from September 2011 to August 2012





November 2012

Preface

- This survey was commissioned by **railfuture**, which is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Limited.
- **railfuture** is organised in 12 regional branches in England and 2 national branches for Scotland and Wales. We work with all levels of national, devolved and local government, train operators and like-minded voluntary bodies to promote the interests of rail users and secure improvements to rail services. We are completely independent of political parties, trades unions and railway management.
- This survey was prepared for the International Group of **railfuture** by Damian Bell, Chris Brown, Trevor Garrod and Simon Hope, and was published by the Media, Marketing and Communications Group (MMC).
- We are grateful to all members of **railfuture** and Bus Users UK who contributed their experiences as well as **railfuture** Branches who supplied further local information.
- All enquiries about the content of this publication should be directed to the **railfuture** International Group at international@railfuture.org.uk
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HOW GOOD ARE PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS TO UK AIRPORTS?

railfuture is an independent voluntary body for rail passengers throughout the United Kingdom. Passengers sometimes need to travel by other modes and indeed the longer the journey, the more likely it is to be multi modal.

railfuture encourages the use of rail where possible but when air is the most suitable mode it is important that there is environmentally friendly public transport to access the airport.

We asked regular passengers, most of them members of *railfuture*, Bus Users UK (www.bususers.org) and/or a public transport users association, to tell us about a flight they made from a UK airport in the 12 months up to 1st September 2012.

In addition we looked at 40 airport websites and all the UK Train Operating Companies websites to see how well they promoted the use of public transport to get to airports.

197 replies were received to our snapshot survey and these people used 24 different airports.

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Inverness | Belfast City (George Best) |
| Leeds/Bradford | Birmingham International |
| Liverpool John Lennon | Bristol |
| London Luton | London Stansted |
| London Gatwick | London Heathrow |
| London Southend | Manchester |
| East Midlands | Newcastle |
| Edinburgh | Norwich |
| Exeter | Prestwick |
| Southampton | Glasgow |
| Dundee | Humberside |
| Stornoway | Aberdeen |

The key findings of this survey were:

80% of respondents travelled all or part of the way by public transport. Of these 56% used the train as the main mode, 29% by bus or coach and 12% used trams, Metros or underground.

Of the 197 respondents 29.5% went by car and 22% by taxi for all or part of the journey.

Many of the journeys were multi modal which emphasises the need for good information and booking facilities to make travel as seamless as possible and the survey produced the following:

41% obtained information from a website.

34% obtained information from a bus or train operator.

25% knew from previous experience.

88% of respondents said they found it easy to obtain this information.

77% of those who used public transport said there was sufficient luggage space and an encouraging 99% said they found it easy to find their public transport on arrival back at the UK airport.

It is important to note that thousands of people work in or near to airports so we asked these people to reply to our survey and 10 did including a weekly commuter from East Anglia to Amsterdam. This sample was not large enough to produce significant results but airports and Local Authorities may like to conduct their own surveys as the more such workers can use environmentally friendly public transport, then the better it is for everyone. The Skylink services that serve East Midlands Airport are used as much by those who work at the airport as it is by those who fly, hence the 24-hour service provided.

We have analysed in detail the replies relating to each airport and these are summarised in alphabetical order below. We hope these will assist airlines, airport operators, public transport operators and local authorities. Input has also been received from our local branches based on their local knowledge and this has been included in the reports below.

Aberdeen Two local members flew from this airport, one went by bus and the other by taxi as there was no convenient public transport for his flight.

Belfast City (George Best) Two members flew from here. One drove each way the other by taxi to catch an early flight, returning by bus helped by the Translink website. They commented that Sydenham station was too far from the airport and should have been incorporated in to the newly rebuilt terminal.

Birmingham International The importance of this airport brought home by the fact that, of the ten members who used it, six lived beyond the West Midlands including Cardiff and Aberystwyth. Five came by train and one by bus with five travelling by car for all or part of the journey. The two people from Cardiff came by car, as there was no suitable public transport for their early morning flights. Others had difficulty getting to a station to catch a train using public transport. The local branch suggested that terminating trains arriving at New Street from the Hereford direction could be extended to the Airport.

Bristol Seven members used this airport including two from Wales who went by train to Temple Meads then used the Bristol Flyer Bus from the station commenting favourably on the combined train & bus ticket. This bus also stops at Parson Street Station. Two who went by car commented that it was cheaper for a family to go by car even when adding in airport parking.

Dundee One member travelled from Montrose by train then walked (30 minutes) to the airport as he only had hand baggage otherwise it would have had to be a taxi. With only six flights a day it is unrealistic to expect a bus link.

East Midlands Five respondents used this airport two of whom were from outside the area, Redditch and Worcester, of which one used the bus and four went by car. The nearest station East Midlands Parkway does not have a bus service but there are good bus links from Derby, Nottingham, Long Eaton, Loughborough and Leicester which run twenty four hours a day but it is difficult to use the train for flights before 10.30.

Edinburgh Used by seven members from Dundee, Dumfries, Glasgow, Melrose, Perth and Edinburgh. None used the train at all. One each used the bus and express coach the rest driving. Lack of an airport station, despite the railway being nearby and the distance to the nearest station to home were given as reasons. The hope is that the new tram in 2014 will improve things although the Airlink bus services will still be quicker from the main stations.

Exeter Three members used this airport, one coming from Honiton by bus, and the other two driving. All commented that flight times and public transport were not always compatible. Will the new station proposed for Cranbrook improve matters for airport users?

London Gatwick The third most popular in our survey with twenty-three users who came from twelve places in the South East plus Bristol. Fourteen went by train, three by express coach and one by bus. Those who used a car to get there said that time and costs were the deciding factors. Poor publicity for rail services to the airport gave motorists no realistic idea that an alternative to using their car existed. Overall, the rail link from London was described as good but the airport station facilities were poor with difficult to use ticket machines. Rail access from Reading, Basingstoke and Guildford was, however, found to be more difficult. Luggage space was criticised on all services.

Glasgow Four members in our sample used Glasgow but only one journey featured rail and that had to be completed by bus from Buchanan Street. The cancellation of the direct rail link was criticised, as was lack of early/late bus connections. Through rail tickets can be purchased via the Paisley Bus link and buses, express and semi fast run regularly from Glasgow City Centre.

London Heathrow This was the most popular airport with thirty-seven respondents from twenty-seven places outside London. Eighteen used national Rail, eleven the Underground, eight the bus and thirteen the coach for all or part of their journey. Six arrived by Heathrow Express/Connect and seven by Underground. Respondents from West of Heathrow found public transport particularly inconvenient. One had to drive for a Sunday flight because of the disruption caused by engineering works.

Some respondents criticised the Piccadilly Line ticket machines, as there was no facility for through booking to the National Rail system but some users preferred to use the Underground rather than Heathrow Express, as it was cheaper and more convenient.

Two members travelled from Cambridge by train on a through single ticket using the Underground and Heathrow Express. A return was not available as they were away for more than thirty-one days. When they returned and tried to book singles to Cambridge at the

Heathrow Express ticket office they were told it was company policy not to issue tickets to National Rail stations. They had to book singles to King's Cross, and then rebook at a higher combined price than for the outward journey.

This incident causes us great concern. What a welcome for visitors from abroad who land at Heathrow and want to go to a place beyond London by rail!

Humberside One respondent, from Barton on Humber flew from here and reached the airport by bus. Information was easily found and the service was good.

Inverness Three people used this airport, one reaching it by bus and two by car. The bus service is infrequent especially early in the morning and in the evening but it is a small airport.

Leeds/Bradford Four members used this airport, all from North or West Yorkshire one of which reached it by "an excellent hourly bus service from Harrogate". The other three went by car citing lack of convenient public transport from where they lived. There are bus links to Leeds and Bradford rail stations.

Liverpool John Lennon Six passengers used this air port travelling from as far away as Burton upon Trent, Keswick and Lancaster. Three used rail for the main part of the journey but all but one arrived at the airport by bus. The member from Burton said he would travel by car next time, as the cost of an anytime return was too high. The member in Lancaster had a fifty-minute bus journey, as the rail service was inconvenient. Could Liverpool South Parkway station have information about bus journey times and a real time running bus times display?

London Luton Eleven forms were received about Luton from eight places as well as Luton. Six used rail for all or part of the journey as far as Luton Parkway while six arrived at the airport by bus, one by express coach, two by car and two by taxi. The station to airport bus link was working well but there were luggage problems on Thameslink trains. One drove, as the alternative was two bus journeys and one because his flight was too early for public transport.

Manchester This was the second most popular in our survey being used by twenty six respondents from twenty two places outside Manchester, including Yorkshire (5), West Midlands (4), North Wales (3), Lincolnshire (1) and the rest of the North West (9). Fourteen arrived by train, 4 by car and 8 by taxi. The most common reasons for the use of the latter two modes were the lack of a station near to where they lived or the very complicated public transport journey needed. There were criticisms of the lack of luggage space, overcrowding and early morning departures on the train services to the airport.

A few members travelled relatively long distances by taxi because of a combination of heavy luggage, lack of parking at local station, the need to change trains and expensive parking at the airport. Members with railcards found it cheaper to travel by train and one member from North Wales was very pleased with his train journey but was surprised by the lack of publicity by Arriva Trains. One member flew from Manchester to Heathrow for a long haul flight as it was easier than going by train, Underground and Heathrow Express.

Newcastle Three members all from the North east flew from here two arriving by the Metro one of whom endured an uncomfortable bus journey to catch the Metro as the bus had no luggage space. The third person used a taxi, as there was no public transport to connect with his early flight. Criticism was also made of poor signage to the Metro in the terminal for arriving passengers as well as a lack of bus service information and a long outdoor walk to the nearest bus stop.

Norwich Three members arrived by car, taxi, and train + taxi. There is no bus service from the station in Norwich to the airport but if you have good local knowledge you can get a bus to a Park + Ride site close to the airport, except in the evenings or on a Sunday. One member flies to Manchester and Edinburgh rather than the train because of the lack of luggage space and the lack of refreshments until you get to Nottingham.

Prestwick One member living in Ayr went by train to catch his flight and said it was easy to find information, book tickets and use. Luggage space was ok except at peak times. Express bus services run early and late when there are no train services.

Southampton Five members, all living in Hampshire and Dorset flew from here three going by train & two by car. There was criticism of a lack of luggage space on South West Trains and expensive fares. One member drove because there was no direct public transport link from where he lived and the other because the cost of parking at the airport was still less than the cost of two anytime returns! Currently 15% of passengers arrive by train.

London Southend One member, from Lowestoft, used this airport on the recommendation of a friend travelling all the way by train with two changes commenting that, “everyone we encountered both at the station and the airport was helpful and welcoming showing both pleasure and pride in their new facility”. Another member however, from Halesworth, found the journey much less convenient and would probably not use rail again.

London Stansted Ten respondents flew from here, four arriving by train, one each by bus and coach, two by car and one by taxi because flight times were not compatible with public transport. The sample came from Cambridge, Ipswich, Norwich, Peterborough, Kenilworth, Basingstoke and Edinburgh.

Cross Country Trains were criticised for not serving main flight times and not waiting at Peterborough for a late running East Coast train even though their train was still in the platform when the East Coast train arrived. Inconvenient connecting times at Ely or Cambridge for Norwich services were also noted. Luggage space on trains and buses was considered to be satisfactory.

Stansted claim that 49% of passengers arrive by public transport but give no figures for workers. The rail spur from the main line to the airport includes a single line tunnel, which will hamper future expansion of services.

Stornoway The one member who used this airport went by car. The airport is small and the only other feasible means of access is by taxi.

NOTES

Sometimes a major airport can also be also be a transport hub even for people not flying. One respondent noted that he used Heathrow to change from one bus or coach to another. It has also been noted that Stansted Airport can be used to travel by bus from Colchester and change to a train towards either London or Cambridge.

Gloucester Airport (Staverton) handles about 20,000 passengers a year but none of our members flew from there. However First Great Western is starting to mention it in its timetable booklets noting Gloucester and Cheltenham as the nearest railheads, with basic information about bus stops and frequencies. This is welcome news.

London Oxford airport currently has only two flights a day and was not used but a local bus passes every fifteen minutes. Future developments could see a shuttle bus to the proposed Water Eaton Parkway station with a journey time of just over an hour to London Marylebone.

OUR MAIN CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It should be easy for visitors to our country to continue their journey by public transport when they land. Some airports, such as Newcastle, could improve signage and if the Tyne and Wear Metro was part of the Rail Settlement Plan then tickets from the airport Metro station could be issued to the rest of the UK. We also find it amazing that a passenger landing at Heathrow is unable to buy a train ticket to anywhere other than Central London. This issue MUST be addressed at our largest airport.
2. Fares to airports are not always attractive. We appreciate that cheap fares may not be available on crowded commuter trains but Train Operating Companies must give more thought to this issue.
3. Some rolling stock is not ideal for airport services because of a shortage of luggage space. This could easily be resolved by replacing one double seat per coach with a luggage rack.
4. In the franchising process would be operators must be required to take account of the needs of the airports they serve.
5. All Train Operating Companies and airports should strive to give good and reliable public transport information, as should all relevant stakeholders.
6. Further research on an airport-by-airport basis into the access needs of airport workers and ‘meeters and greeters’ would be valuable. We are not aware of any such surveys but would be interested to learn of any that have been undertaken in recent years.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Despite our members being committed to public transport in many cases they had to travel by car or taxi for a variety of reasons including cost, convenience, lack of suitable services and difficulties with cumbersome luggage. These reasons are even more relevant when travelling as a family.
2. Recent cuts in bus services have not helped as in many places early morning, evening and Sunday services have been withdrawn meaning prospective passengers are unable to get to or from their nearest station.
3. Many flights leave too early in the morning or arrive too late in the evening to make the complete journey by public transport which for most airports means flights departing before 10.00 or arriving after 19.00, given the need to arrive at least two hours before the flight departure time.

Appendix A

AIRPORT WEBSITE BASED INFORMATION

Penzance Heliport

Dedicated Bus Link from Penzance Railway Station leaves 45 minutes before each flight and meets each arriving flight. Wide range of destinations by rail but great concern in Cornwall that heliport may close or move to Newquay to make way for supermarket development. Closure announced as from 31st October 2012.

Newquay Airport

Regular Bus Service from Town Centre and link to First Great Western & Traveline websites. Local trains only.

Plymouth Airport

Closed December 2011.

Exeter Airport

Nearest Main Line Station Exeter St. Davids. Wide range of destinations. Good link to transport services. Shows 4 nearest stations and how to get to/from them. Stagecoach Bus service to Exeter St David's and link to Stagecoach Bus website for timetables.

Bristol Airport.

Bus link, Airport Flyer Express, from Bristol Temple Meads. Big advert on website & link to Trainline to buy through tickets. Wide range of destinations. National Express Coach services.

Bournemouth Airport

Link at bottom of website to train. Use hourly bus service from station to airport. Wide range of destinations.

Southampton Airport

Own Station. Excellent links on website to rail journeys. Wide range of destinations. Range of local bus services with good links to their websites. Nearest express coach link Southampton City centre.

Gatwick Airport

Own Station. Prominent link to rail services. Services to London & South Coast & Reading. National Express Coach Services.

Heathrow Airport

Own Stations. Excellent links to all services from/to Airport. Trains/Tube to London only. National Express Coach Services.

London City Airport

Own Station. Local services to Greater London only. Excellent link on website. Website also encourages people to use Public Transport.

Southend Airport

Own station. Excellent links to Bus & rail services. Local and London services only by rail. Local buses and express link to Stansted Airport via Chelmsford.

Stansted Airport

Own Station. Direct services to London, East Anglia and The Midlands. Excellent links via website. National Express Coach Services. Local buses and express link to Chelmsford and Southend Airport.

Luton Airport.

Nearest Station Luton Airport Parkway with 10 minute interval Shuttle Bus to Airport. Services to London & East Midlands. Excellent web links to all possible services including Virgin via Bus Link to Milton Keynes. Through tickets available via FCC and EMT to airport otherwise shuttle bus is £1.50 each way. National Express Coach Services.

Gloucester (Staverton) Airport

Nearest stations Gloucester and Cheltenham with Taxi recommended to airport. Ten-minute frequency bus service, No.94 from Gloucester and Cheltenham town centres.

Birmingham Airport

Own station. Excellent link on website plus links to buying tickets. Trains to most of UK National Express Coach Services.

Coventry Airport

Excellent link on Home Page with details of Bus Link from Coventry Station plus links to 4 TOCs serving it and Bus Company that provides bus link.

East Midlands Airport.

Nearest Station East Midlands Parkway no longer has Bus Link have to book a taxi. Direct Bus Link from Derby Station, Loughborough and Leicester (not rail stations). Nottingham walk 100 mtrs. to Broadmarsh Bus Station to catch Skylink Service which now takes 55 minutes rather than 40 minutes previously but now calls at Beeston and Long Eaton station. All bus services run 24 hours. Good information on website Main Line and Local services to London, East Midlands, Midlands & the North. National Express Coach Service.

Robin Hood Airport.

Nearest station Doncaster. Services to most of UK Good link to dedicated Bus Link & web links to Traveline, Trainline and National Rail. Pity it still thinks East Coast Main Line is run by National Express!

Humberside Airport.

Poor information. Suggests Barnetby, three miles away to get to Doncaster, but does not tell you how to get there. Bus section shows only direct link to Hull and Grimsby. Poor rail connectivity.

Norwich Airport.

No direct link, suggests Norwich Station and then get a taxi

Leeds/Bradford Airport

Simple link but poor information, just gives phone numbers for information on Bus services to Leeds and Bradford. Extensive services from Leeds and Bradford stations.

Durham Tees Valley Airport

Nearest station is Darlington. Link to normal service buses to Darlington. Extensive list of destinations from Darlington.

Manchester Airport

Own Station. Excellent links to all rail services and on page Transpennine Express journey planner. Services to Scotland, Yorkshire, North East and most stations in North West. National Express Coach Services and Local Bus services

Blackpool Airport

Squires Gate Station, 5 minutes walk to airport. Good link on web to public transport then good rail information. Local services only. Local buses.

Liverpool Airport

Nearest Station is Liverpool South Parkway. Frequent Bus Links to Airport, 2 miles. Excellent links on website to all services serving station and to Bus operators. Liverpool and regional services. National Express Coach Services.

Cardiff Airport

Own Station. Rhose Cardiff Airport Hourly service to Cardiff and Bridgend with free shuttle bus to terminal. Good on site link to FGW and Arriva websites.

Newcastle Airport.

Has own Metro Station. 30-minute journey to Newcastle Central. Link on website to Main Line services via Trainlink portal.

Glasgow Airport.

Nearest station Paisley Gilmour Street. Site gives service numbers for buses to from Airport to Paisley or suggests use of taxi.

Prestwick Airport

Own Station. Click on Transport Links then get good information on services and onward services from Glasgow. Services to Glasgow and Ayrshire only.

Edinburgh Airport.

Nearest Stations Inverkeithing, Edinburgh Waverley and Haymarket. Good link to dedicated Airlink Bus services from these stations to Airport. Links to all TOC's serving these stations.

Dundee Airport

Nearest Station Dundee Tay Bridge. Services to Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Suggests 5 minute Taxi journey.

Inverness Airport

Basic information. Suggests service bus or taxi to City Centre.

Aberdeen Airport

Suggests passengers use Dyce station then Bus link to airport, hourly. Bus link tickets can be bought on train. Services to Aberdeen and Inverness.

Belfast International Airport.

Bus links to Belfast Europa Buscentre, Lisburn centre and rail station plus Londonderry.

Belfast George Best Airport.

Excellent link on Home Page. Shuttle Bus to nearby Sydenham station which has half hourly service Monday – Saturday and hourly service Sundays.

City of Derry Airport.

Bus links to Londonderry centre and rail station.

Appendix B**SURVEY OF TOC WEBSITES FOR AIRPORT LINK INFORMATION****ScotRail**

Click on Timetables and Connections, then select Airport Links from banner at top of page for all Scottish Mainland airports.

First Transpennine Express

Click on Destinations and select Travel Connections, then Airports. This gives details of all airports on or near their network.

Northern Rail

No obvious link on how to get to airports.

Merseyrail

Home page, click on Trains to Airport for details of Liverpool South Parkway & link to John Lennon Airport.

ARRIVA Trains Wales

Home page, scroll to bottom and select Airport Connections.

London Midland

Click on 'Your Journey' then select Airports.

Virgin Trains

Can't find any obvious link to airport information.

East Midlands Trains

Click on Our Routes; select Airports then excellent information on airports served directly or via a bus or train link.

East Coast

No obvious link.

First Hull Trains

No obvious link.

Grand Central

No obvious link.

Crosscountry Trains

Click on Tickets and Timetables, and then select Airport Connections for details of Airports near its routes.

Chiltern Railways

No obvious link.

First Capital Connect

Click on Tickets and Trains, and then select Airport and International Tickets for details of connections to London's Airports.

First Great Western

Select Your Journey, then Travel Connections for details of Heathrow connections only despite serving several other airports.

Gatwick Express

Dedicated website with good information about how to get to the airport by Gatwick Express train from Victoria, and some helpful advice for motorists where using a car was unavoidable.

Heathrow Connect

Dedicated website with good information about how to get to the airport by Heathrow Connect train from Paddington.

Heathrow Express

Not too surprising that this gives good information.

Greater Anglia

Click on travel information then select air links under journey planner. Click on air links and good link to both Stansted and Southend airport services. No mention of other London Airports.

C2C

No obvious link.

South West Trains

No obvious link, not even to Southampton Airport.

Southern

No obvious link, not even to Gatwick!

Southeastern

No obvious link.

Stansted Express

Dedicated website with good information about how to get to the airport by Stansted Express train from Liverpool Street.

London Underground

Transport for London website. Click on Getting Around, and then select London Airports for excellent information for Heathrow, Luton, Stansted, Gatwick and London City.

London Overground

As above, same Transport for London website.

Docklands Light Railway

On Homepage select Transport for London link then as above.

Northern Ireland

A link from the Translink Home Page takes you to details of bus and rail links to all Northern Ireland Airports and advice on how to get to Dublin Airport.