

£5.5 million to drive improvements to UK's 'motorways in the sky'

- up to £5.5 million made available to support airports in reducing journey times, pollution and delays
- funding will aid industry as it develops and evaluates new flight routes to modernise UK airspace
- move will play a vital role in the Civil Aviation Authority's Airspace Modernisation Strategy ready for when travel restrictions lift

The UK's 'motorways in the sky' are on track to be redesigned for the first time since the 1950s, thanks to a £5.5 million investment announced today (19 March 2021).

Before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, there were approximately 7,000 aircraft in UK airspace, dependent on a complex network of routes that allows planes to operate safely. However, since these flight paths were initially mapped out decades ago, growing numbers of routes and a surge in demand has resulted in an increase in delays, noise and pollution.

The £5.5 million fund announced today will support airports to develop and evaluate design options aimed at making journeys quicker, quieter and cleaner.

Although [national lockdown restrictions](#) remain in place, meaning everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons, this work will help the sector build back better and greener from the pandemic.

Aviation Minister Robert Courts said:

As an island nation, our airspace is vital in keeping us connected to the rest of the world.

Modernising our 'sky motorways' could put an end to the days of circling the airport waiting for a landing slot, improving efficiency, and leading to flights that are quicker, quieter and greener than ever before.

Mark Swan, Head of the Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG), said:

We're delighted that the government has reaffirmed the essential role that airspace modernisation will play in helping the aviation industry to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will continue to work with our partners across the industry to ensure this programme is one that delivers for all of the UK.

Creating more efficient and streamlined airspace, not only benefits airports and airlines but also the passengers and communities surrounding them, through reduced emissions, lower levels of noise pollution and fewer delays.

The investment has been made available to airports involved in the [Airspace Modernisation Strategy](#) to ensure this vital project remains on track, reflecting the government's commitment to modernising the airways while supporting the aviation sector as we recover from the pandemic.

The government has also put in place one of the most comprehensive packages of business support in the world, [pledging around £7 billion for the aviation sector](#) since the start of the pandemic while working to develop a framework for the restart of safe and sustainable international travel.

The [Global Travel Taskforce](#) will publish its recommendations next month, with international travel resuming from 17 May at the earliest.