

# Government to safeguard vital Great Britain-Northern Ireland air links

- £5.7 million government investment will protect Great Britain-Northern Ireland air passenger flights
- vital routes safeguarded for transporting critical workers
- funding also recently announced to support ferry freight services across the UK

Air passenger services between Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be safeguarded through a £5.7 million government investment, announced today by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

The funding will ensure lifeline services are maintained, protecting key air links across the Union which are vital for connecting critical workers and ensuring that those who need to travel at this time can continue to do so.

The package is being funded by the UK government and the Northern Ireland Executive and will temporarily support airlines and airports that are currently operating, allowing them to continue running air passenger services along 2 routes from Belfast City, and City of Derry, to London during the coronavirus pandemic.

The package will:

- maintain 2 lifeline passenger services (Derry-Londonderry to London and Belfast to London)
- IAG Group (Aer Lingus) will maintain the Belfast to London route which would be at risk without financial assistance given low passenger numbers
- Belfast City Airport will provide airport services for the flight to and from London
- increased subsidies to Loganair to continue operating the City of Derry Airport (LDY) to London route
- support for City of Derry Airport to continue to provide airport services for this route

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Maintaining air links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is vital. We must ensure that critical workers can continue to fly over the Irish Sea, and today's investment in these lifeline services guarantees that.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis MP said:

Today's announcement is great news for people and businesses in

Northern Ireland, it means that crucial air services to and from London, Belfast City Airport and City of Derry Airport will be safeguarded, thanks to this multi-million pound government support package.

Alongside the recent £17 million support package the UK government announced to ensure essential ferry routes were maintained, this additional commitment to safeguard the connectivity of the entire United Kingdom will guarantee the continued supply of critical goods, such as food and medical supplies and ensure key workers are able to carry out their roles.

The UK government has promised to do everything in its power to defeat coronavirus and to protect people, jobs and livelihoods across the United Kingdom. As part of our efforts, we have been working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department for the Economy to deliver this new air connectivity support package and we will continue to work closely with them in the weeks and months ahead as we tackle this pandemic.

Northern Ireland's Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon said:

I am delighted that I and my executive colleagues have worked together with the British Government to secure this critical package of support of £5.7 million for City of Derry Airport (CODA) and Belfast City Airport (BCA) to help with their operating costs when so much of their business has been affected by the impact of the COVID-19 virus. This assistance will also provide financial aid to keep the remaining flights operating out of CODA and BCA during this difficult time.

Our airports have been badly affected by the dramatic drop in passenger numbers but, like me, they recognise the need to keep our island connected. This is a unique payment that will offer much needed support in the short term during the crisis. I wish to express my thanks to CODA and BCA who offer routes for essential travel and to Belfast International who keep our air freight moving. Working with Executive colleagues I will continue to do all I can to protect our people and businesses as we get through and recover from this crisis.

In addition to the funding announced today, the UK government also recently announced a [£17 million package to safeguard vital sea routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#), helping ensure critical freight and essential supplies continue to move across the Union.