

Government's multimillion-pound support scheme for airports opens today

- airports and ground handlers in England will be eligible to receive up to £8 million each
- significant investment to ease pressure on airports hit by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- scheme reflects the sector's valuable contribution to the UK economy

Airports across England are set to receive a boost as the government's financial support scheme opens for applications today (29 January 2021).

Commercial airports and ground handlers will be able to apply for up to £8 million each to support with fixed costs while travel restrictions remain in place. The financial relief will help airports and ground handlers to cover losses on costs including airfield operations, contracted services such as airfield and runway maintenance, and business rate bills.

The investment will help airports and ground handlers, following the introduction of international travel restrictions designed to protect public health and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Recognising the crucial role the sector plays and its contribution to the UK economy, the scheme will support the aviation industry while the government continues to roll out its vaccination programme.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

A thriving aviation industry has been central to the success of this country and while we recognise the testing conditions airports are currently facing as a result of the pandemic, I believe that the sector will be ready to bounce back once restrictions are lifted.

Today's scheme is another step in the right direction, providing vital support for an industry that is raring to get back to business, once it is safe to do so.

Aviation Minister Robert Courts said:

The aviation sector plays a crucial role in our economy, contributing £22 billion directly to the UK economy and supporting around half a million jobs.

We are well aware of the challenges facing the industry, however, this scheme will give airports and ground handlers in England a

boost, helping them continue to prepare for a future when international travel is ready to take off again.

Airports and ground handlers will be able to [apply to the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme online](#) and, if successful, should receive their funding by the end of the financial year. The financial support scheme, which follows the government's extension of the [Job Retention Scheme](#), is open for applications from today until 21 February 2021.

The government has also provided flexibility to airlines to support them during this difficult time – extending the waiver of the '80:20' slot usage rule in time for the summer scheduling season. This removes the requirement for airlines to operate flights at least 80% of the time to retain their slots, to reflect the current low demand for air travel.

This not only helps airlines' finances but reduces the environmental impact of 'ghost flights' while ensuring that the slots allocation system works in the interests of air passengers.

The government acknowledges the severe impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the travel sector as a whole and continues to provide support while international travel is paused.

[National restrictions for England](#) introduced on 6 January 2021 continue to remain in place, meaning that everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons.