

St Athan Airfield: Maximising the Economic Benefits

A 10 year contractual joint venture between Welsh Government and Cardiff International Airport Ltd (CIAL) will drive efficiencies and integrated service provision.

Under the plans the business park, combined with the airfield activity, will generate significant economic benefits to Wales amounting to around £236m and approximately 2000 jobs, which includes the 750 already committed by Aston Martin.

The transition to civilian operation of the airfield and business park combined with the completion of the new northern access road in 2019 and the Aston Martin project make St Athan an exciting opportunity ready to deliver jobs and projects.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“We know we do not have the internal expertise to operate and manage an airport directly. Under the current arrangements we have an obligation to the MOD to operate, manage and maintain the airfield for military purposes.

Our plan now is to transfer responsibility for airfield operations including management and maintenance, security, radar services and air traffic control to a single source supplier.

Cardiff International Airport Ltd (CIAL) has been identified as the only supplier capable of providing all services required, due in part to its proximity to St Athan.

We have developed a proposal to manage the transition of the airfield from Military Aviation Authority (MAA) to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) licensing and have begun making submissions to CAA in this respect. We have also entered into a JV contract with Cardiff International Airport Ltd which will enable operation of the airfield and air traffic control to be delivered by them in a phased manner to ensure continuity of service.”

News of the joint venture follows Cardiff International Airport Ltd beginning an exercise of public engagement on its Masterplan, which is aimed at further developing the importance of the Cardiff Airport and St Athan Enterprise Zone as a centre of aeronautical excellence.

Deb Barber, CEO of Cardiff Airport, added:

“The Minister’s announcement complements the release of our draft Masterplan which sets out our vision up to 2040. Since Cardiff Airport came under public ownership in 2013, we have worked tirelessly to improve the terminal infrastructure, increase passenger numbers and welcome new routes and airlines to Wales.

As we enter the next phase of our journey, we remain focused on delivering a sustainable airport business focused on continued passenger growth, improving infrastructure and maximising opportunities to diversify the business.

As such, we welcome the opportunity to take over the operation, management and maintenance of the St Athan airfield and business park and remain grateful to our shareholder for recognising the potential of Cardiff Airport, both as a key asset for Wales and a contributor to the local economy.”