



**SCOTTISH
TOURISM
ALLIANCE**

Your voice in tourism matters

House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee Punctuality of flights between Scotland and London – Scottish Tourism Alliance Response

About The Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA)

The STA is the overarching leadership and representative body for the tourism industry in Scotland, comprising of over 250 trade associations, businesses, destination groups and other organisations with an interest in tourism, reaching across all regions and destinations. To learn more about our work, visit: <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/>

The STA led and co-ordinated the development and launch of Scotland's national tourism strategy, [Scotland Outlook 2030](#), in collaboration with the Scottish Government and its agencies. We remain driven by this strategy, growing the value and positively enhancing the benefits of tourism across Scotland by delivering the very best for our visitors, our businesses, our people, our communities and our environment.

The STA's Chief Executive, Marc Crothall MBE, co-chairs the Tourism and Hospitality Industry Leadership Group, alongside Richard Lochhead, the Scottish Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade. The group is helping drive recovery and sustainable growth across both tourism and hospitality in the long-term, building on the partnership approach of the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG), which led the industry's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is the current view of punctuality of flights to and from Scottish airports?

The STA would like to thank the Scottish Affairs Committee for contacting us to seek further comment from our membership concerning the punctuality of flights from Scotland to London airports.

A small proportion of STA's Council organisations have reported to us that they and their members continue to experience challenges concerning the punctuality and last-minute cancellation of flights between Scotland and London.

There appears to be a general expectation that flights to and from Scottish airports to London airports will be delayed or cancelled, while some have fed back to us that they are more likely to travel by train due to punctuality, cost and environmental considerations.

Given ongoing rail disruption, it is concerning that some businesses feel this is still a more reliable way to travel to London than flying – although some remarked that the cost of train travel between Scotland and London remained prohibitive.

The STA has received comments that it is often flights scheduled to depart later in the day to and from Glasgow and Edinburgh airports that are more likely to be delayed. This is particularly challenging for businesses, given the limited availability of train travel options during the evening.

We've also received comments about the punctuality of flights between Wick John O'Groats Airport, Aberdeen and London, which is operated under a Public Service Obligation (PSO) contract between Highland Council and Eastern Airways. Due to the unreliability of Aberdeen to London connections, some people are choosing to travel to Inverness to fly direct to London.

Smaller remote and regional airports like Wick John O'Groats Airport are particularly reliant on the punctuality and performance of larger airports to make connections, and the impact on these business communities may be something the Scottish Affairs Committee wants to consider in more detail.

The comments we have received indicate that the issues around punctuality and performance are not exclusive to one airport but indicates a broader issue across the domestic aviation industry.

How has this changed over the last 3, 10, 15 and 20 years?

The STA has received feedback that in the past five years there has been a reduction in the level of connectivity between Scottish and London airports, and that prices to fly are much higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positively, we had feedback that services out of Aberdeen Airport to London are now close to returning to pre-COVID-19 levels of performance and reliability. Figures shared with us show that 2018 on-time performance averaged 73% and reliability 96% across all London routes out of Aberdeen, while in 2022 this was 70% and 99% respectively.

However, the average delay length has increased, notably for Heathrow Airport where delays have risen from 9 minutes to 20 minutes in 2022, which is a significant impediment to catching connecting flights. Concerns have also been reported about flying in and out of London City and Luton airports.

How has punctuality of airlines to and from Scottish airports affected your members' business activities including but not limited to: Meetings, Trade and Connecting travel?

The STA has received comments from our Council membership that flight punctuality and cancellations have impacted on attendance at meetings and trade shows.

Issues have been raised recently concerning the flight route between Glasgow and London Stansted flying by easyJet, with lengthy delays regularly experienced and communicated to passengers at the last minute at the time of boarding.

Problems were also reported regarding delays from Edinburgh Airport, with one of our Council members delayed by around four hours flying outbound, while all other outbound flights from London to Scotland were cancelled that evening.

For those that have flown via Loganair between Dundee and London, there have been incidents where planes have been cancelled last minute to divert the plane to another airport due to lack of staffing, and on one occasion the flight to Dundee had to divert to Aberdeen Airport due to bad weather and there were no travel provisions in place when passengers arrived there.

Due to the limited availability of flights to and from Dundee, changes to the time of flights and last-minute cancellations have a significant impact on businesses flying from the city and their ability to take an alternative flight or other mode of transport.

Flight fares also remain prohibitively expensive to fly from Dundee, with people often choosing to take the shuttle bus option to fly via Edinburgh Airport instead due to cost and greater flight availability. The London flight route has also regularly changed over the years between London City, London Stansted and London Heathrow.

For those whose flights are delayed, there is also the added travel time to get from London Stansted and London Heathrow to the centre of London for business.

It is our understanding that careful forward planning is routinely needed by businesses based in Scotland because of the expectation there will be flight delays or cancellations to ensure they can attend meetings and make connecting travel. If overnight accommodation is required as a result, then this is considerably adding to their business trip costs.

This includes factoring travel delays to facilitate press trips, travelling delegations, and people coming to Scotland to conduct business, attend conferences and go to launch events.