

2.14 Deputy S. Power of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the number of people travelling to and from Heathrow on British Midland Airways:

Can the Minister inform the Assembly how many people have travelled on the Jersey-Heathrow service operated by B.M.I. (British Midland Airways) on both the outbound and inbound legs since the inception of the service on 26th March 2007, and if the service will continue as a twice a day service on certain days?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Economic Development):

May I ask my Assistant Minister to be the Rapporteur again?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean (Assistant Minister, Economic Development - rapporteur):

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that since the B.M.I. Heathrow service commenced some 61,300 passengers have used it up until the end of October. Despite the loss of 12,600 passengers when we lost Stansted last year, we have succeeded in growing the total London market by 67,000 in 2007. **[Laughter]** Is that all? Just a ripple, just a ripple. A significant contributor has been the re-establishment of the Heathrow route. This dramatic growth demonstrates the commitment to actively supporting the Heathrow services is already proving to be a good decision and furthermore it is a demonstration that the combined approach by Economic Development and the airport is delivering tangible economic and social benefits to Jersey. Responding to the question about frequency of the Heathrow service, I am advised that consideration is being given to additional frequency. This, however, is subject of ongoing assessment by the airline. In the meantime, we have not been advised of any further adjustments to the twice-daily frequency that is currently operated. Thank you, Sir.

2.14.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I did not stamp too hard with the news that we have got an increase at Heathrow but could I ask the Assistant Minister, has the gain at Heathrow been at the cost of the Gatwick? Have the Gatwick figures dropped?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

The total London market has grown by 67,000. Specifically, with regard to Gatwick, there has been a loss at Gatwick which amounts to around about 12,000 but, in consideration of the dynamics of that particular move, what we have seen is a shift between the 2 airlines that currently operate the Gatwick route. There has been significant shift there between one and the other. The route is down about 12,000 but overall, and this is the important measure, London in total is up 67,000 so there has been a net gain.

2.14.2 Deputy S. Power:

I wonder if the Assistant Minister could confirm to the Assembly that on the 60,000-odd people that he confirmed have travelled outbound and inbound on the Heathrow services, does he know what this figure is as a percentage of the load capability of the airline?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

The load factors that B.M.I. are currently operating to are approximately 58 per cent although clearly it does fluctuate but that is the year to date figure.

2.14.3 The Deputy of St. John:

I wonder if the Assistant Minister could answer a similar question concerning how this successful route will affect other routes. He answered recently that London Luton will become served by a new operator and perhaps with some increased frequency. He is suggesting that there may be some increased frequency on Heathrow as well which is excellent but how will this, does he think, affect the Gatwick route which is serviced of course currently by a prolific operator to Jersey that will

probably find that as their flagship route if you like. Is he concerned as to how these 2 routes may affect that relationship with Gatwick and indeed that flagship operator? Thank you, Sir.

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

No, Sir, I am not overly concerned at this stage about an effect on Gatwick. Yes, we have seen a modest fall in passenger numbers but, of course, this year we have seen growth in Luton. It has been operated currently by Thomson. They have an increase of 30,000 passengers and I think we will be looking to recapture that when easyJet start their services. I would not be expecting to see a dramatic change in the numbers at Gatwick but the most important figure that we are interested in is London as an overall. With all the airports that are served, there is London City, there is Gatwick, there is Heathrow, there is Luton, it is a good network into the city and we are concentrating on the fact that we are seeing increased numbers over the entire network. Thank you, Sir.

2.14.4 The Deputy of St. John:

Gatwick, as many of you will know, currently has 2 operators, both Flybe and British Airways. British Airways is a very important interline route into London and having that capacity on Gatwick and then having capacity on Heathrow as well, is he not at all concerned that we may lose that Gatwick link as supplied currently by British Airways?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

I am certainly not concerned that we are likely to lose British Airways. British Airways are delighted with the way in which Gatwick is performing. In fact, their figures are up significantly as far as Gatwick is concerned.

2.14.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Assistant Minister comment on whether the momentum established on the Heathrow route will be sustained on, for example, the Doncaster route or is that likely, after a very good start, to deteriorate?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

We are delighted with the way in which the Heathrow route has performed to date. Members should recall that it was a standing start when B.M.I. took on this particular route. Normally there is a lead in period for airlines as we are seeing with easyJet who have just announced their new services. They have a number of months in which to promote the route. When B.M.I. started on Heathrow, it started almost immediately from a standing start. We were anticipating, and part of our modelling included, the figures that were previously achieved by British Airways when they ceased the service in 2000. We were targeting 90,000 and we are certainly on target for that and we would certainly hope that the figures would be increased and indeed built upon, and B.M.I. are sharing our view on this, which is very positive.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Sorry, Sir, a misunderstanding. Will that success be repeated on the Doncaster route?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

I would certainly hope so. We work very hard with airlines to ensure that all the routes that are operated to and from the Island are maintained. We spend a great deal of time looking at the statistics and analysing them. We are prepared to and have, to date, been working with airlines where we have seen numbers falling in certain areas, but we would be very hopeful that Doncaster will be a strong performer into the future.

2.14.6 Deputy S. Power:

Could the Assistant Minister confirm whether British Midland have expressed any concern about a 58 per cent load factor and whether they have expressed any concern about the amount of freight they have carried?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

I am not aware of any concerns. I mean, clearly airlines are wanting to increase the load factor although it is an interesting balance because some while ago there were conversations held with airlines where we were trying to get the load factors increased but when they get to a certain level they are very happy. It is all about net return. It is not necessarily having aircraft absolutely full. Clearly from B.M.I's perspective they are keen to develop the business element of the loads and they have been working quite hard in terms of marketing to that particular market segment and I believe they are achieving some success in that regard. Thank you.