

Eluned Morgan MS

First Minister

Ken Skates

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport
and North Wales

Welsh Government

20 August 2024

International Strategy and Cardiff Wales Airport

Dear Eluned and Ken

I write in relation to the **written statement** issued on 22 July 2024, announcing planned long-term additional investment funding for Cardiff Airport across a ten-year period, subject to regulatory approval.

The statement references the Welsh Government's **International Strategy** as follows:

To improve connectivity, the Airport will seek to develop routes to those parts of the world identified in the Welsh Government's international strategy as being important for economic growth, such as:

- The Middle East and South Asia*
- The European Union - major economic and finance centres and hub airports*
- North America*

As the Committee responsible for the scrutiny of the Welsh Government's international relations activity, including its International Strategy, I would like to request more information on this significant development as outlined under the subheadings below.



Delivery of the International Strategy

You will be aware that there are two references to Cardiff Airport in the International Strategy, published in 2020. These references are in the context of describing Wales's connectivity to the rest of the world and, separately, in relation to sustainable adventure tourism and the ambition for the airport to become a UK centre for low-carbon aviation. Can you clarify the timeframe for the investment decision? Also, can you confirm which routes are being considered for development and how each route will support the delivery of the International Strategy?

The International Strategy sets out three core aims which are to:

1. raise Wales's global profile;
2. grow the economy by increasing exports and inwards investment; and
3. for Wales to be a globally responsible nation.

I would welcome detailed information on:

- how this investment contributes to each of the three core aims, as outlined; and
- what consideration was given to balancing the core aims, particularly with regards to sustainability?

I would also be grateful if you could clarify:

- whether the investment will be used to action the Airport's plans to commit to net zero targets (which was not met by March 2023), such as for a solar farm at the airport or for the purchase of electric or hybrid vehicles?
- to what extent the failure to meet this target undermines the International Strategy's aim for the airport to become a UK centre for low-carbon aviation?
- how the resumption of Qatar Airways services, if it is secured, will support the delivery of the International Strategy?

Role of overseas offices in the investment decision

Could you explain what involvement the Welsh Government's overseas offices have had in the investment decision as it relates to Wales's connectivity to the rest of the world? In addition, will the overseas offices have a role in the delivery of the airport's future plans that are linked to the International Strategy?

Budgetary implications

The scale of the investment is significant, and it does highlight budgetary implications. While the investment package is subject to regulatory approval, it could total a maximum of £206million across a ten-year period. This is substantially more than the allocated international relations budget of £8.093million for this financial year.

You note in the statement that this investment is, in part, linked to improving connections with parts of the world identified in the International Strategy as being important for economic growth. In that regard, can you explain:

- How will the investment relate to the International Relations budget?
- The Welsh Government has repeatedly told us that it faces a challenging financial situation and cannot plan beyond annual cycles, particularly in relation to other areas of our Committee's remit such as the culture sector. How has the Welsh Government made these funds available?
- On what basis was the airport investment prioritised over other financial pressures such as the financial crisis in the arts, culture and sport?

Finally, I would like to note how disappointing it was to learn of this information by written statement on the first Monday of the summer recess. There were ample opportunities to update Members during term time. For example, the former First Minister attended our scrutiny session on international relations on 19 June 2024, just four weeks before this statement was issued. During the session, the airport was not raised despite specific discussions on the Welsh Government's future international priorities, delivery of the International Strategy and activity in the regions earmarked for new flight routes.

I would be grateful for a response to this letter by no later than 17 September 2024. I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee, and the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee for their information.

Yours sincerely



Delyth Jewell MS
Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.