

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

SeneddClimate@senedd.wales

31 October 2025

Dear Llyr,

You wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales on 19 May about the “Proposed subsidy support for Cardiff Airport”. I was asked to respond as Cabinet Secretary with portfolio responsibility for the Airport.

I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the very considerable delay in responding to your letter. As you will be aware, I place great importance in ensuring that correspondence with Senedd Committees is dealt with as promptly as possible. However, for this particular issue it has proven challenging to respond to your questions over the preceding months. The delay is a consequence of the unique circumstances in which the Welsh Government finds itself in relation to Bristol Airport’s legal challenge against our long term investment package for Cardiff Airport. The evolution of this legal action has presented an ever-moving challenge for officials in terms of balancing my desire for the fullest possible transparency against what can be said safely on the public record in a manner that does not compromise the Welsh Government’s legal position.

I offer below a more detailed explanation of the legal challenge timeline, which I hope will offer some insight into the complexity of the process that we have faced and continue to face as a Government. However, to ensure we have captured lessons from this process, I have asked my officials to consider how they can better enable Welsh Ministers to respond to Committee questions and keep Committees informed as best as is possible in circumstances where the Welsh Government is engaged in sensitive legal proceedings. In hindsight, it would have been preferable to respond to your letter much earlier, even if that response were very limited and disappointing to Committee Members in terms of our ability to answer your questions fully.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

At the time your letter was sent, the Welsh Ministers were engaged in a formal, statutory pre-litigation process, as we were anticipating a legal challenge from potentially one or more parties against our £205.2m, ten-year investment package for Cardiff Airport. At that stage, it was not clear to us what we could safely say in response to your letter, so we adopted a precautionary approach.

My response to your letter was further delayed because on 25 June, the Welsh Ministers received a copy of a Notice of Appeal from the CAT, filed by Bristol Airport. This confirmed that Bristol Airport is legally challenging our decision to award a subsidy package to Cardiff International Airport Limited ('the Subsidy').

The CAT published a [summary of Bristol Airport's](#) appeal on 22 July. The nature and scope of the appeal may yet change, because Bristol Airport have permission to apply to the CAT to amend the Notice of Appeal. We are still waiting to see if Bristol Airport choose to do so. If their case is amended, the CAT is likely to publish an updated summary in due course.

The CAT has confirmed this week that the appeal will be heard on 9-10 February 2026. It is not known when the CAT's judgement will be provided, but it may be a number of weeks (or even months) after the hearing. The judgement will not necessarily conclude the matter, as a route of appeal exists.

In the circumstances, and until such time as the legal proceedings are concluded, it would, unfortunately, not be appropriate for me to respond to the questions raised in your letter. This accords with the substance of the Senedd's guidance on preparing written evidence. However, I offer you my commitment that, should the CAT provide a judgement before the pre-election window begins, I will write to you to provide an update on all of the questions in your May letter and to provide a view on the Government's response to the CAT outcome.

Whilst the ongoing legal action means that I cannot discuss the Airport's investment package, I am able to offer the Committee some updates on the Airport's performance over the summer, which I hope you will view as informative and positive.

Between September 2024 and September 2025 the airport served 928,000 passengers, which represents a 5.3% increase on the previous year. Flights from the Airport were busier with more seats filled on services. Ryanair had its largest ever Cardiff flight programme in Summer 2025 and Vueling has increased service frequency between Wales & Spain. The Airport now serves 38 direct routes year-round, with TUI operating over 30 routes. TUI has confirmed plans to base a fourth aircraft at the Airport, launching new routes to Faro and Hurgada, along with Fuerteventura, which is being extended into Summer 2026 after launching this winter season. KLM continues to connect Wales to 150 global destinations via Amsterdam. The new Next Generation Security scanners, which were funded by the Welsh Government, work well and have improved the passenger experience.

In terms of wider economic developments, European Cargo has a base at Cardiff Airport and Swissport has been appointed as a new cargo handling partner, investing in upgraded facilities and equipment. In addition, the Airport is investing in a new solar farm to provide more sustainable power for its operations by April 2026. Officials from the Airport and Visit Wales attended the 'Routes World' event in Hong Kong in September promoting Wales and the Airport on the world stage.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Evans.

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