

UK regional airports given £17.5m funding pot

UK regional airports and airlines are being urged to bid for government funding of up to £17.5m (\$26.5m) in the next year to help launch new routes. At the same time regional tourism is also on the up, according to Visit Britain.



The so-called 'start-up aid' is being made available from the Regional Air Connectivity Fund which was announced by the government in June 2013 but only open to airports with fewer than 5m passengers per year.

According to the UK's Department for Transport, this fund has already been partly distributed to support strategic routes to London from Newquay and Dundee but is now being extended to bids for more routes.

Some £56m (\$84.8m) is available to cover three years of financial support for start-up aid, with £17.5m is for bids in 2015/16 and around £20m a year for the remaining two years.



Aviation Minister Robert Goodwill (*left*) says: "Smaller airports are vital to local economies. I want to encourage the industry to apply to expand their routes... boosting our trade links with countries all over the world."

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander adds: "This fund has already supported valuable services like Newquay's London route, which has a return of 2.5 for every pound invested, making it great value for taxpayers. I hope this further funding will help other areas sustain economically important connections too."

Guidance for airports on how to apply **can be found here**. The closing date is Wednesday 25 February and a shortlist of bids will be announced in March 2015 with successful bidders published in June.

TOURISM GOES TO THE REGIONS... SPENDING SOARS

Potentially supporting UK regional airports over the medium-term are new statistics from Visit Britain showing that tourism in 2014 spread out from its traditional bastion of London – with bigger growth to the regions than to the capital.

Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire all saw double-digit rises in tourism in the first nine months of 2014 as more international tourists travelled across the country than ever before. London grew by +6% to 13.5m visitors by comparison.

Spending also hit record levels. According to new figures from the Office for National Statistics, in the first nine months of 2014 overseas tourist spending broke records in Wales (£303m), Scotland (£1.5bn), London (£8.9bn), East of England (£693m), North West (£849m) and the South East (£1.7bn).