

Supply chain spotlight: Air cargo & passenger travel, making the connection

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The news that America is to relax its travel rules to allow border entry to vaccinated passengers from the UK and EU has been welcomed by the airfreight sector.

While many may view passenger travel and air cargo as separate sectors within the air industry, they are in fact directly, and indirectly intertwined.

With cargo often transported via the bellyhold of passenger aircraft, prior to the pandemic, the air cargo industry typically represented about 12% of airline revenues on average.

It is also worth remembering that passenger opportunities for short and long-haul help to fund essential air services, which then facilitates increased freight movements.

Freighters benefit from a cargo-led hub at East Midlands airport, but also operate services at Stansted airport, which is shared with low-cost airlines.

Prior to the easing of restrictions announcement made in September, the Airport Operators Association (AOA) and Airlines UK called for restriction-free travel for fully vaccinated people.

In a submission to the Global Travel Taskforce, the groups highlighted the need to rebuild passenger confidence, urging clear communication on vaccination status and greater certainty and predictability so that travellers are not wary of rule changes, disruption or significant unexpected costs.

The businesses explained that while the rest of the economy had been able to reopen without restrictions, complex rules remained in place for aviation, including the high cost of testing, and highlighted the unique position of aviation having a 'worse summer' this year than last.

In 2019, the US was ranked as the world's largest importer, so it is critical that capacity returns to pre-pandemic levels as swiftly as possible.

Following the more recent announcement regarding the easing of restrictions, internet searches for flights between the two countries has taken off; British Airways Holidays saw an increase of nearly 700% for searches to destinations including New York, Los Angeles, and Miami.

This is encouraging for both sectors whose growth is so interlinked; air travel is a key enabler of trade between the two countries which in 2019 was worth an estimated £196bn.

Overall, while passenger travel is vital and the easing of restrictions is much welcomed news for the wider aviation industry, wider society also plays an essential role in the growth of airfreight.

It is important for the air industry to gain societal permission to grow, which will subsequently help the growth of air cargo.

To do this, aviation must become sustainable; Logistics UK therefore supports government's Jet Zero strategy which sets out its proposed approach and principles to reach net zero aviation by 2050. To find out more about this, please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)