



## **BRITISH AIRWAYS BEGINS SCHEDULED SERVICES BETWEEN BELFAST CITY AND LONDON HEATHROW**

British Airways relaunched services between Northern Ireland and London Heathrow today after an 11-year gap.

Following the acquisition of bmi by International Airlines Group (IAG), British Airways is once again operating the important air link between Belfast City Airport and London Heathrow.

Willie Walsh, International Airlines Group's CEO told guests at an event at Belfast City Airport today that British Airways was delighted that the route was again part of the airline's network and he was committed to maintaining the link.

The event marked the arrival of the first British Airways liveried aircraft to Belfast and was attended by VIPs including the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Owen Paterson, Arlene Foster, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Ald. Gavin Robinson.

Willie Walsh said: "I am delighted today to see the British Airways colours back in Belfast. I publicly committed to serving Belfast if we acquired additional runway slots at Heathrow and the acquisition of bmi has given us the perfect opportunity to make that happen.

"We recognise the importance of the Heathrow link to Northern Ireland. Belfast is now part of our global network so this is good news for the economy. It will provide much needed access to key global markets, supporting more inward investment and jobs."

British Airways is maintaining the current summer schedule on the service, with six daily return flights, but has announced it will increase frequency when it introduces its winter schedule on October 28, adding an additional flight each day, bringing the total to seven. The takeover of the route means that British Airways aircraft and crew are starting to operate the services. Business and leisure travellers can enjoy the airline's full on-board experience with complimentary refreshments and drink.

All inclusive fares are available with a generous 23kg baggage allowance, free online check-in and seat selection 24 hours before departure.

Owen Paterson, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said: "I am very pleased that British Airways has today confirmed it is committed to maintaining this route. A frequent, reliable air link between Belfast and Heathrow is essential for the Northern Ireland business community to increase trade and investment and for the tourist industry to welcome the many visitors who are discovering that Northern Ireland is the new 'must see' destination.

I am delighted to see British Airways back in Belfast today and for many years to come."

Arlene Foster, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, said: "This is great news for the City Airport and for Northern Ireland. The London-Belfast route is of vital importance to our local economy and tourism industry. British Airways return to the City Airport after more than 10 years, will further strengthen this link and deliver greater access for tourists and business travellers alike."

The resumption of British Airways services was warmly welcomed by Brian Ambrose, Chief Executive of Belfast City Airport, who said: "We are delighted to welcome British Airways back to Belfast City with an excellent frequency of services and long term commitment to Northern Ireland.

“I would like to thank the Secretary of State and the Tourism Minister for their assistance in securing the Heathrow service which is an important gateway to not only London but the rest of the world.”

**Ends**

**July 02, 2012**

**Notes to Editors**

- All-inclusive one-way fares from Belfast City Airport to Heathrow are available from £95 and tickets can be booked on [ba.com](http://ba.com)
- The airline is operating six return daily flights to and from Heathrow – increasing to seven from October 28.
- The service is operated by British Airways aircraft and crew.

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