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# T5: The Gateway to British Airways' Future

*British Airways' new Terminal 5 will help transform operations at the airline's London Heathrow hub, benefiting the airline as well as its passengers by providing more efficient facilities.*

■ By Stephani Hawkins and Lynne Bowers-Clark | *Ascend* editor and staff

**W**hen British Airways, the United Kingdom's largest international scheduled airline, opens Terminal 5, or T5, at London's Heathrow Airport, it will be able to say with certainty, "there's no place like home."

The move to a high-tech facility symbolizes the airline's forward-thinking approach to maximizing revenue, reducing costs, optimizing crew management, operating more modern aircraft and, most importantly, creating a desirable environment for customers and employees.

"Terminal 5 will open up a whole new travel experience for our customers, and it will change the landscape for 20,000 staff working for British Airways at Heathrow," said Steve Ronald, manager of T5 customer experience for BA.

T5, the biggest planning project — both in terms of physical size and financial investment — ever undertaken by BAA, the company that owns and operates Heathrow, is equivalent

to 22 football pitches and its development budget nears £3 billion (US\$5.5 billion). After 13 years of planning and the United Kingdom's longest public inquiry, lasting almost four years, the airline has finally broken ground on what will soon become its new quarters.

The new terminal, which will be exclusive to BA, will supplement Heathrow's four existing passenger terminals, improving the airport's ability to utilize existing capacity and accommodate the world's most advanced aircraft, such as the Airbus A380, as well as providing a new facility capable of serving 30 million domestic and international passengers per year — accommodating the equivalent of the United Kingdom's population every 625 days.

When T5 opens, BA operations at T1, T3 and T4 will be consolidated onto one new campus. T5, the construction of which is expected to consume 37 million man hours, will comprise

a main terminal building (T5A) and two satellites (T5B and T5C) that will be joined by an underground shuttle train. The main terminal and satellite T5B will open in March 2008, followed by the scheduled opening of satellite T5C three years later. T5A will be designed to accommodate mainly short-haul flights, specifically targeting business travelers who can't afford to spend much time at the airport, and the majority of BA's long-haul flights will be operated from the two satellites.

BA's new home, a glistening new 21st century gateway in and out of London, will be the size of the city's Hyde Park — five times the size of T4 — with 175 lifts and 131 escalators to help travelers quickly and easily navigate its five floors. Not only will the new facility support a superior travel experience for BA's customers, the grounds will be eloquently landscaped with 20,000 trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses

British Airways' move to its new state-of-the-art Terminal 5 signifies its futuristic approach to running a cost-effective, revenue-generating operation that offers a desirable environment for customers and employees.



Graphic illustrations courtesy of British Airways



Terminal 5 will be exquisitely landscaped with 20,000 trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses, offering added appeal to British Airways' passengers.



that will point travelers inside to an airy expanse with large windows that provide a scenic view.

Despite its enormity, planners have said that T5 will be a model of efficiency. Through strategic use of self-service technology, customers can check in for flights and pre-print boarding passes from the comfort of their own home. They can also bypass check-in lines by utilizing one of the terminal's many self-service check-in kiosks. Ronald believes that while the self-service culture is a key aspect to the success of Terminal 5, every stage of the process must be supported by British Airways' staff.

"We want people to be there in case things go wrong," he said. "And when we open, we will man all the acceptance points. There will always be staff around to help.

"Additionally, the exhaustive planning that has gone into T5 is designed to ensure that long queues are a thing of the past. Ideally, there will be no more than two or three people waiting to use a self-service kiosk at any one time."

Simplified airport processes are also crucial to the success of the new facility. Designers have created a facility conducive to a traveler-friendly experience that is faster, smoother and simpler, with significantly reduced connect times.

Today, passengers transferring between terminals at Heathrow can face significant connection times — up to 75 minutes if connecting between T1 and T4. When T5 is complete, travelers who have cleared security can reach even the furthest gate in the main terminal in only six minutes. Those transferring to a satellite can catch the underground train that departs every 90 seconds. While reduced connect times boost customer service, they also give BA a competitive advantage.

"One of the main benefits of operating from a single terminal is that we will not have to coach passengers between two buildings as we do now between T1 and T4," Ronald said. "It will cut out double handling and make our operation more flexible, while the reduced transfer times will make us more competitive. It's a much more attractive proposition for our customers."

Getting to T5 will be easier, too. It will have its own sophisticated rail station that will be located beneath Concourse A. The station will include six rail platforms: two for the London Underground Piccadilly Line extension; two for the Heathrow Express extension, and a third pair built for potential future rail expansion. In addition, a bus station and a new dedicated spur road will connect directly to the main terminal.

Consolidating its operations into a single campus at Heathrow also provides logistical advantages. Flight crews and the majority of operational staff currently stationed in the Compass Centre will be based at T5. Crews will be able to report to work, receive their briefings and board their flights in the same building,

reducing journey times, thereby minimizing possible delays. T5 will also boast two-way taxiways with no cul-de-sacs or runway crossings, a design that will minimize taxi times.

As a modern working environment, the airline will introduce more efficient ways of doing business. Working practices, which currently vary by Heathrow terminal, will be replaced with a single process, and the amount of equipment will be reduced and standardized. New procedures to improve the management of aircraft stands and the movement of ground equipment, baggage and staff

## HIGHLIGHT

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across the terminal will be implemented. For example, Terminal 5's state-of-the-art baggage system will operate on 18 kilometers of baggage belt that will transport luggage around the new terminal, and a containerized loading process will replace the current loose loading cargo system, allowing for more rapid turn times.

Ronald points out that one of the main changes at T5 will be the way passengers and baggage are checked in.

"The layout of the concourse is going to be quite different than what passengers are used to at Heathrow, and it's designed to improve and speed the process," he said. "From the self-service check-in kiosks, travelers will go straight to the baggage drop-off points and then through security.

"We want our customers to progress logically through the building, eliminating backflows and cross flows of people getting in each others' way. We will be moving people forward at every stage so they flow smoothly through the building. Check in, for example, is an obstacle to the passenger. We have to make that process as efficient as possible and put people

in control of their journey through the airport."

Another top priority for a successful T5 is helping passengers, both arriving and departing, navigate through the terminal by correctly posting signs throughout and ensuring there are ample landmarks.

"Signage is something we are working very hard on with the BAA," Ronald said. "We both want to promote our own branding, but at the same time, the 'way-finding' must be clear and simple. We want customers to be confident that they know where they want to go next.

"One of the really big changes for arriving passengers is that they will walk across a bridge and look down into the baggage hall, which is big, airy and above ground," he said. "That will help them get their bearings. They will be able to see exactly where they are, where they have to get to and, for premium passengers, where the arrivals lounge is."

Getting "Fit for 5" presents an enormous challenge for BA as it strives for a successful move to the new terminal. The first phase of Terminal 5 will be completed by September 2007, followed by six months of scrupulous systems testing, and any changes must be introduced by the end of 2006 to allow ample time for proper incorporation.

A considerable focus remains on preparing the airline's systems, processes and working practices for the transition. Work teams are already visiting the site to become familiar with the new layout, and the management of terminals 1, 3 and 4 now resides under one person, a first step in organizing the airline's personnel in one team for Terminal 5. Employees and trade unions will also be closely involved in the planning process up to the 2008 move in.

For its customers, Ronald said BA has taken a customer-centric approach to all that goes into T5 to ensure all customers' needs and expectations are met.

"We have to make sure that all our ideas work for our customers," he said. "We will take time to test everything first."

For British Airways, the move represents an exceptional opportunity to grow the airline and modernize Heathrow. The importance of T5 and what it means to the future of BA cannot be underestimated. It signifies a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and affords the airline a chance to build a new Heathrow.

"T5 will give us a superb theater from where we can deliver great customer service," said Jonathon Counsell, head of Terminal 5 development for British Airways. "It will have a fantastic impact on the traveling public and on all the people who work there." **E**

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