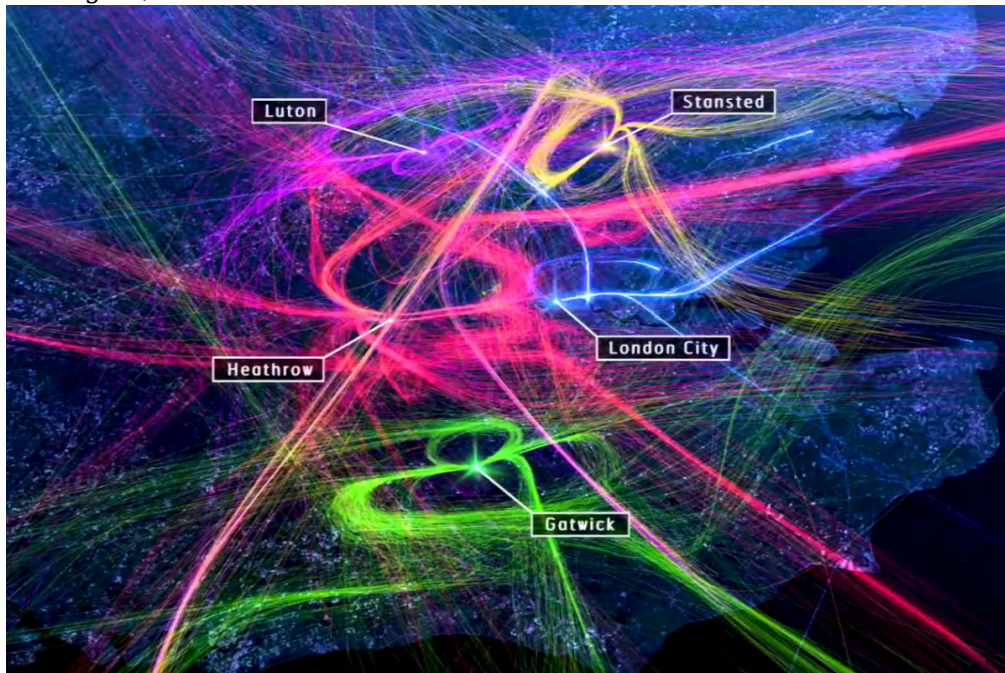


The diversion dilemma over London

OPSGROUP Team
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A few months back an Air Canada A330 suffered a hydraulic failure as it started its Atlantic crossing from France to Canada. The crew decided to turn back and wanted to divert to **EGLL/London Heathrow** - this was **denied**.

Since then, other reports have been received of other aircraft requesting similar non-emergency diversions over the UK and them being denied. We understand the “*non-acceptance of diversions*” policy is in place for **EGGW/Luton**, **EGSS/Stansted** and even as far away as **EGHH/Bournemouth**. It is important to note however that if you declare an emergency (PAN/MAYDAY) - then all bets are off and **you can divert wherever you like**.

This week we saw **EGGW/Luton** go as far as publishing a NOTAM to that effect.

A2663/18 - DIVERTS SHALL ONLY BE ACCEPTED FOR ACFT THAT HAVE DECLARED AN EMERGENCY.

So what's going on?



We understand it's a mix of things.

1. With the heavy summer traffic situation all across London (which is being compounded by the various curfew and overnight flight limitations) it seems that the major airports don't want an aircraft landing and disabling their runway.
2. We have heard specific concerns stating that there is nowhere to park overflow aircraft. One aircraft might be manageable but multiple during peak disruption maybe not so easy.
3. Some Opsgroup members have reported that the main driver of this policy at EGGW/Luton and EGSS/Stansted may be down to 'their fear of adverse publicity on social media' regarding aircraft sitting there waiting to go somewhere else and passengers tweeting away the problems with the airport and its facilities.
4. Luton also put forward the argument that they do not want to interrupt the home-based operators by allowing other operators in. However, at the same time they are automatically denying home-based operators a diversion unless you declare an emergency.
5. Border Control has also bought into the argument, especially at EGSS/Stansted, saying their manning levels can't cope with an influx of extra passengers at short notice.

There are a whole host of other factors at play which make diversions in the London area a headache, particularly at night time. Opsgroup member Diego Magrini from Jet Concierge Club sums it up nicely:

"Minor airports close early in the evening, for example EGSC/Cambridge, EGTK/Oxford, EGLF/Farnborough, EGWU/Northolt. These would all be very good alternatives, but become unavailable pretty early. Let's be honest: no business jet want to divert to EGLL/Heathrow or EGKK/Gatwick (costs, slots, friendliness, etc), and most cannot go to EGLC/London City due to training and approval. This is of course on top of Heathrow and Gatwick not accepting diversions most of the time, or not having slots available. Some airports outside London, although open and accepting traffic, do not have an FBO presence during the night, and this cannot be arranged at short notice for a diversion. Combining all of this in the very short timeframe of a diversion can be very tricky!"

There is a cool video that shows just how busy London does get on any given day....

If you have any further knowledge or recent experience to share, please **let us know!**

Extra Reading

- UK AIP - ENR 1.1 - Diversion