

UK's busiest airport back at pre-pandemic levels

The number of people that passed through the UK's busiest airport returned to pre-pandemic levels last month.

[Heathrow](#) reported 5.4 million people travelled through it in January, making it the busiest start to a year since 2020, before [COVID-19](#) was declared a pandemic.

The vast majority of the travellers – 1.6 million – were from the EU, followed by people from North America – 1.2 million.

Increased passenger numbers and industrial action by Heathrow passport control staff in late December and early January did not cause the kind of [travel disruption](#) experienced by air travellers last summer, Heathrow's announcement suggests.

Overall passenger satisfaction is now at or above pre-pandemic levels and last month 98% of passengers waited less than 10 minutes for security, the airport said in its traffic announcement.

Border Force, the unit within the Home Office responsible for frontline border control operations, "successfully managed recent strike action", the announcement added.

Further Border Force strike action has been announced by the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS). A one-day strike involving 100,000 members will take place on 15 March 15, to coincide with the 2023 budget day.

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Meanwhile, use of electronic passport scanners is being trialled for children aged 10 and 11 in Terminal 5 over half-term this week. Currently, anyone aged 12 and older can use the gates.

The school holidays half-term peak period “has been going very

well”, Heathrow added.

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In the period from February last year to January 2023, 64 million passengers travelled through the airport.

Those numbers are likely to rise as China has [reopened to the world](#) following nearly three years of COVID-19 lockdown.

That move, and airlines’ responses, were explicitly welcome by the airport’s chief executive.

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“We welcome the announcement by British Airways and Virgin Atlantic on restarting ticket sales to China, reopening a key market for British exports once more,” John Holland-Kaye said.

Also announced last month was the [resignation of Mr Holland-Kaye](#) after nine years in the role.