



NATS



A night-time photograph of an air traffic control tower. The tower is illuminated with blue lights, and its top section has red lights. In the background, there are airport buildings and a tall light pole. The sky is dark blue, and several curved lines of red and blue lights represent flight paths or radar tracks.

Airport Factsheets

Facts & figures about our Tower Services

Overview

We are the UK's leading provider of air traffic control services. In a normal year (pre-Covid) we handle 2.5 million flights and 250 million passengers travelling in UK airspace.

We provided Air Traffic Control (ATC) services at 15 UK airports.

Here you can find a series of factsheets covering different aspects of our operation.

We update these annually (or more frequently) so that they are kept up-to-date and accurate.

If you would like information about our operation not provided here, please contact the Press Office.



Contents

- 3 Airports
- 4 Aberdeen Airport
- 6 Belfast International Airport
- 8 Bristol Airport
- 10 Cardiff Airport
- 12 Farnborough Airport
- 14 Gatwick Airport
- 16 George Best Belfast City Airport
- 18 Glasgow Airport
- 20 Heathrow Airport
- 22 London City Airport
- 24 London Luton Airport
- 26 Manchester Airport
- 28 Southampton Airport
- 30 Stansted Airport

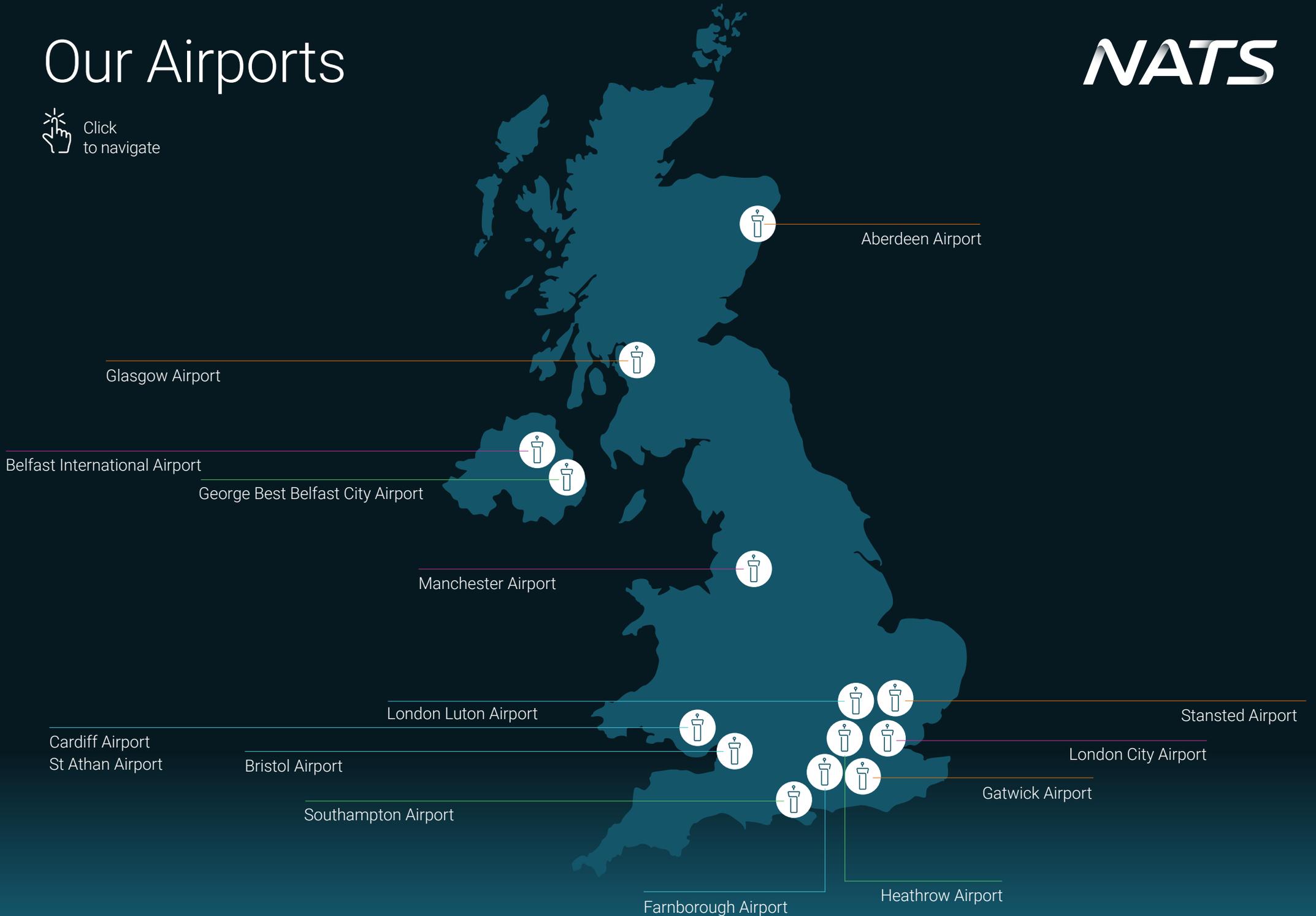


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to navigate

Our Airports

NATS

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Aberdeen Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided in and around the airport. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to help aircraft taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

This is a radar based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 55 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

Offshore

Offshore ATC services to helicopters operating in support of the North Sea oil and gas industry, across 100,000 sq. miles of airspace, at levels generally below 10,000ft. An Approach Radar service is also provided for Sumburgh Airport on Shetland.

The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The current tower was opened in 1977. NATS has been providing an ATC service at Aberdeen airport since 1972.

- > **Flights:** 62,986
- > **Passengers:** 1.07m
- > **Busiest ranking:** 6th UK's busiest airport (flights)

Annual flight movements (historical)



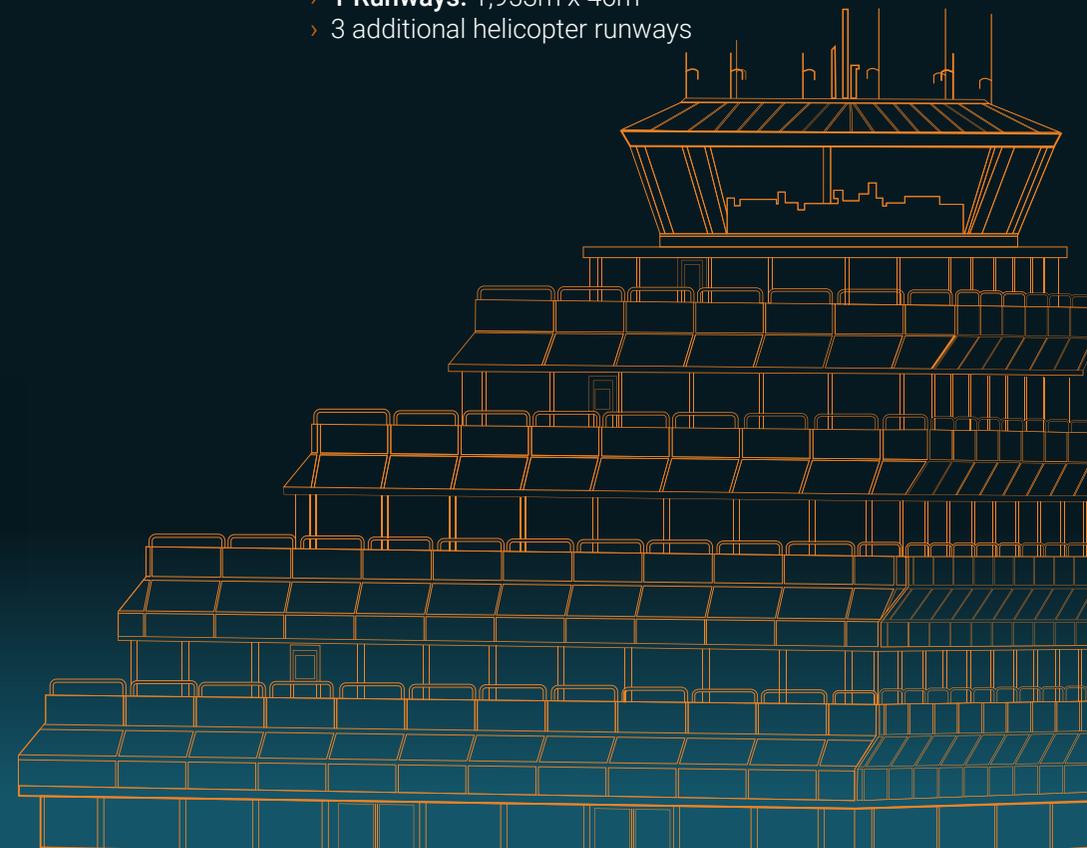
The Airport

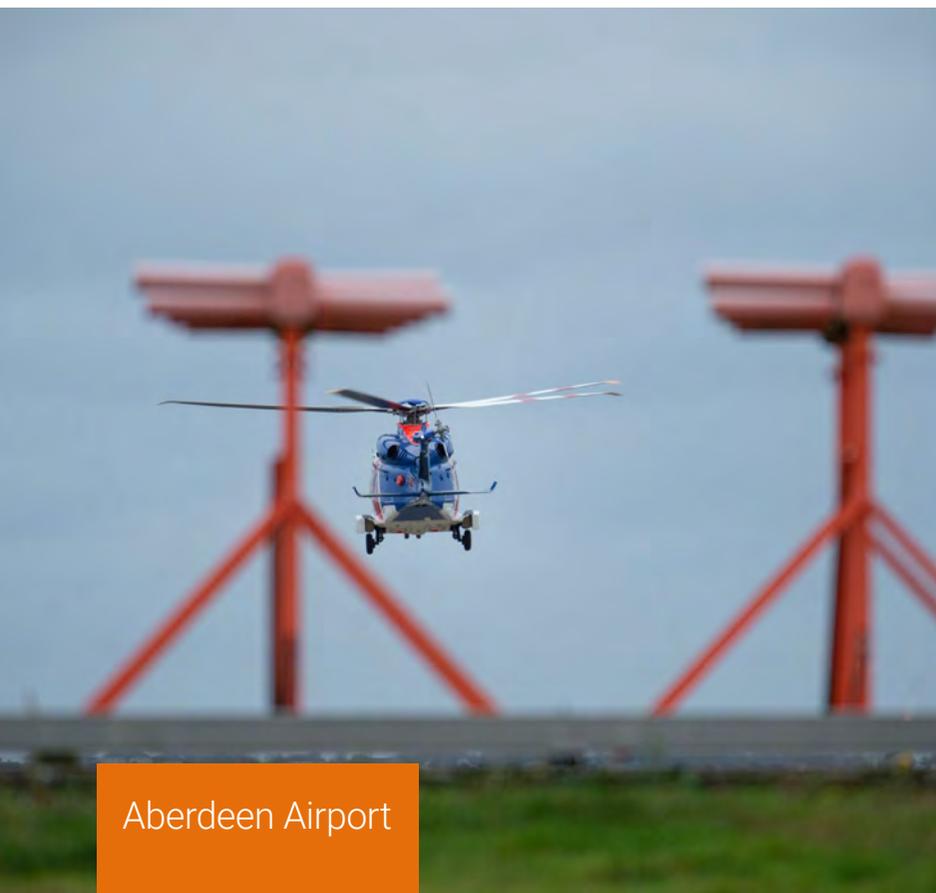
Aberdeen, the world's busiest commercial heliport, it became the first air traffic control unit in the UK to be using ADS-B only to provide radar services.

Air traffic controllers working from Aberdeen Airport look after a piece of airspace larger than the UK's entire landmass.

Standing 21m tall, the control tower has become an iconic landmark at the airport and has even featured in an airport tower exhibition at Smithsonian Aerospace Museum in Washington thanks to its unique shape.

- > **Height of tower:** 21m
- > **1 Runways:** 1,953m x 46m
- > 3 additional helicopter runways





Aberdeen Airport

Belfast International Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service for airport runways and taxiways, as well as the airspace in the immediate vicinity of the airport, provided from the Visual Control Room (VCR) at the very top of the control tower.

Approach

This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

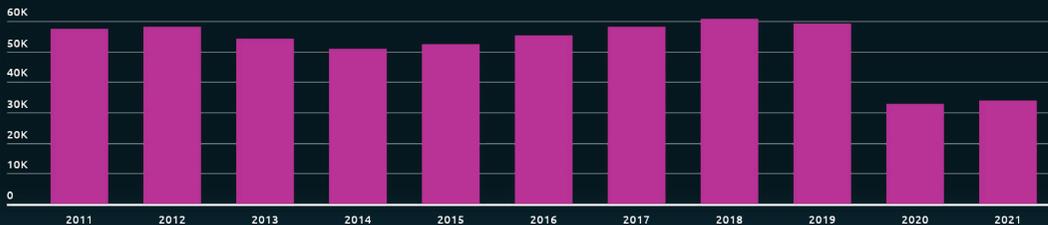
The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The current tower has evolved from a WW2 building. NATS has been providing an ATC service since the company's inception.

- > **Flights:** 33,964
- > **Passengers:** 812,424
- > **Busiest ranking:** 18th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

Annual flight movements (historical)



The Airport

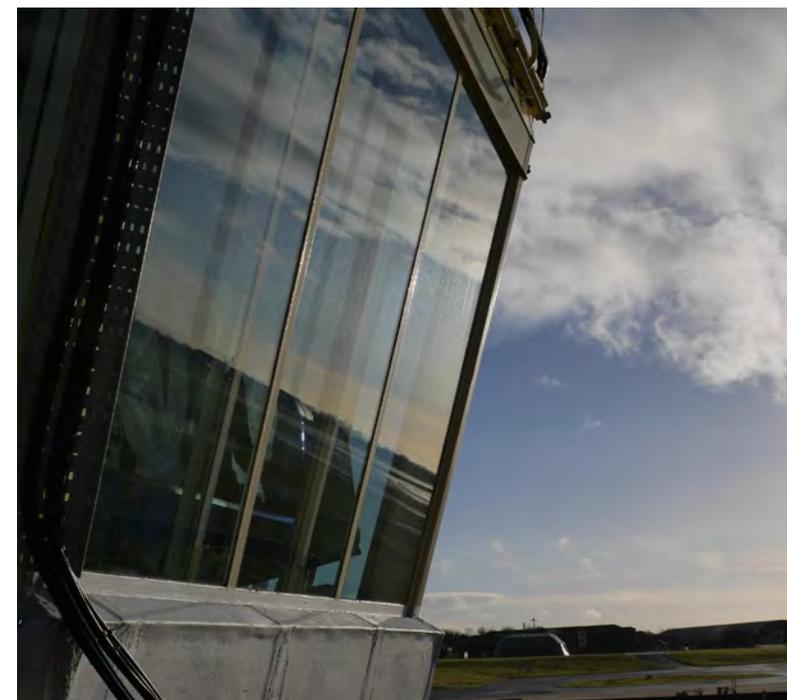
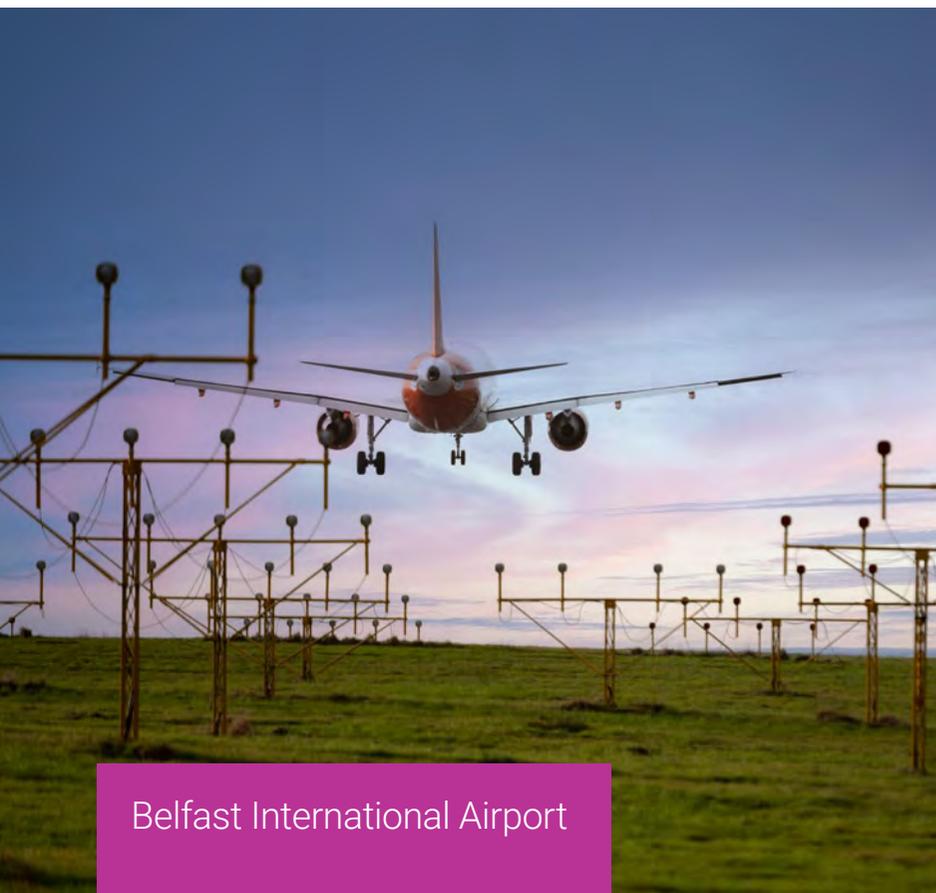
There are some special residents that make BIA a unique airport, with around 60 Irish hares living on the airfield. BIA operate a long grass policy to deter the birds, however the hares love it.

- > **Height of tower:** 85m
- > **2 Runways:**
 - 1,891m X 45m north-south runway
 - 2,780m X 45m east-west runway





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Belfast International Airport

Bristol Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

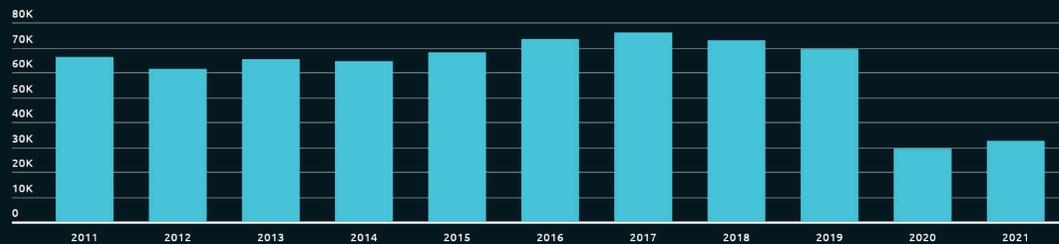
The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The tower was opened in 2001. NATS has been providing an ATC service since 2005.

- > **Flights:** 32,278
- > **Passengers:** 2,087,772
- > **Busiest ranking:** 19th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

Annual flight movements (historical)



The Airport

The airport has one of the shortest international airport runways in the country at just 2,011m.

- > **Height of tower:** 28m
- > **1 Runways:** 2,011m x 46m





Bristol Airport

Cardiff Airport (Maes Awyr Caerdydd)

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

LARS

LARS - Lower Airspace Radar Service for aircraft flying outside controlled airspace or wishing to transit controlled airspace.

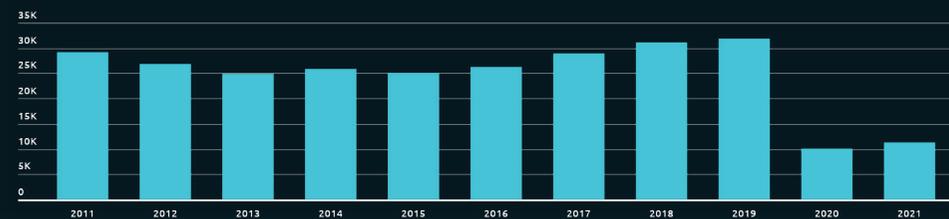
The Operation: 2021

The current tower opened in 1942.

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

- > **Flights:** 11,236
- > **Passengers:** 123,825
- > **Busiest ranking:** 42nd—UK's busiest airport (flights)

Annual flight movements (historical)

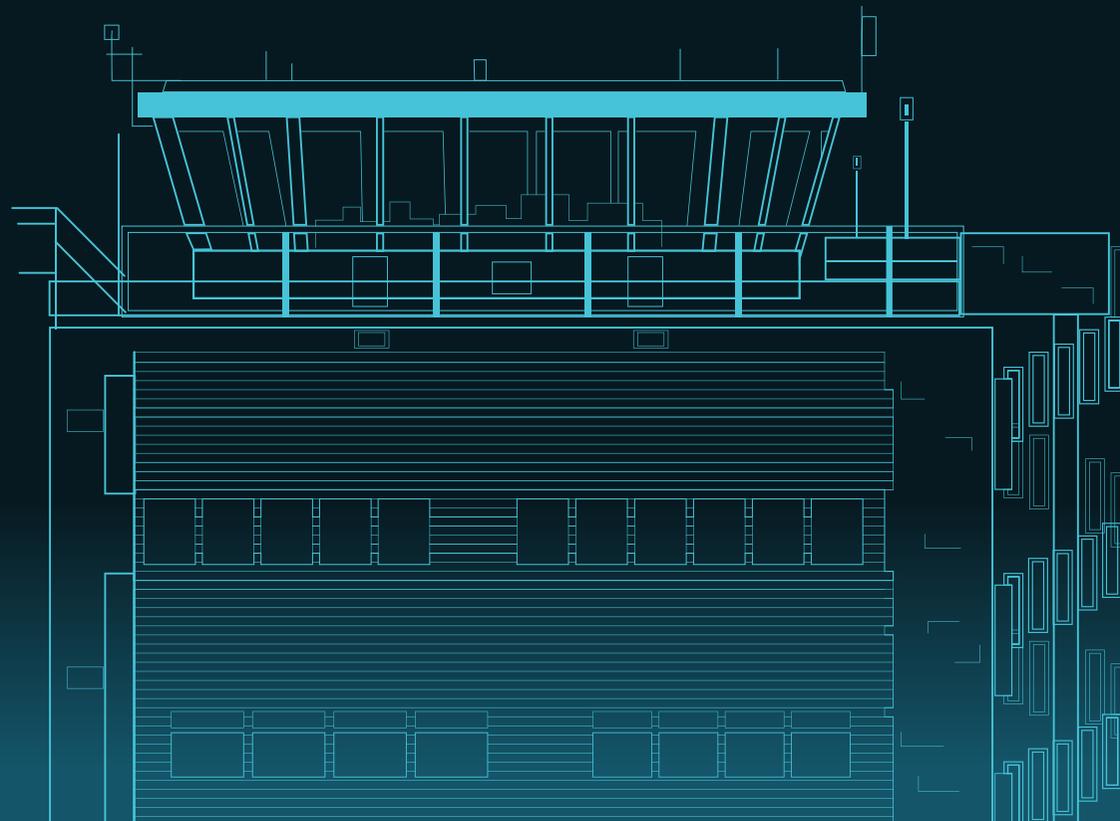


The Airport

Since 2003, Cardiff has twice been voted one of the Top 10 Best UK Airports in the Telegraph Travel Awards.

- > **1 Runways:** 2,354m x 45m

As part of our contract with Cardiff Airport we also provide air traffic services for neighbouring St Athan Airfield.





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Cardiff Airport

Farnborough Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Engineering

This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

Radar

LARS - Lower Airspace Radar Service for aircraft flying outside controlled airspace or wishing to transit controlled airspace.

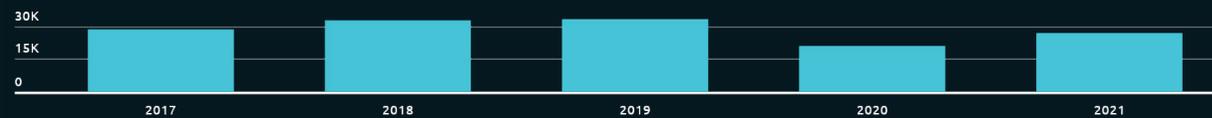
The Operation: 2021

The current tower was opened in 2002. NATS has been providing an ATC service at Farnborough since 2003. It does not report on passenger numbers.

Flight statistics are provided by Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee Farnborough Airport Information Report.

› **Flights:** 26,910

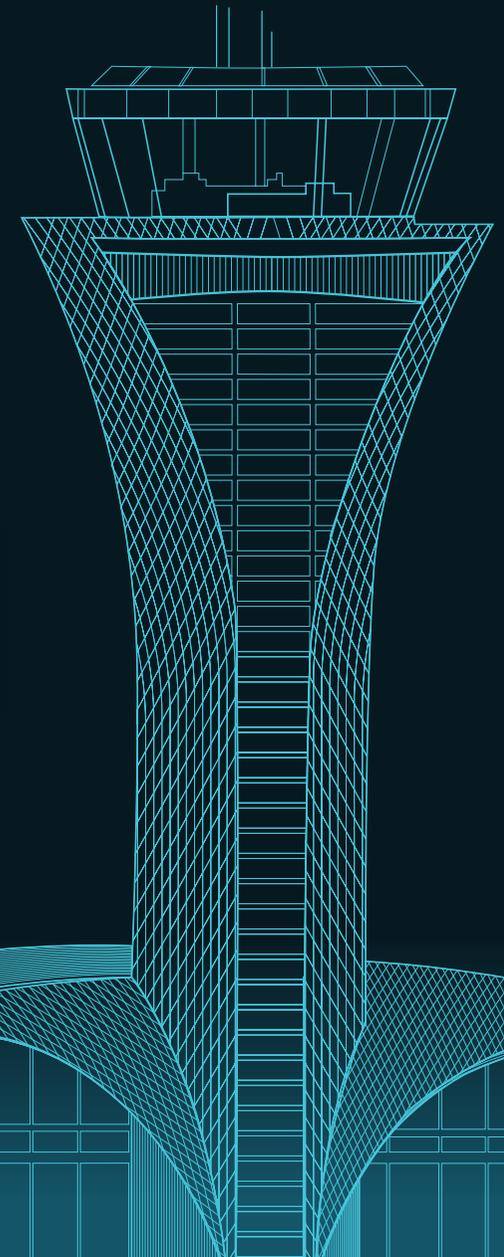
Annual flight movements (historical)

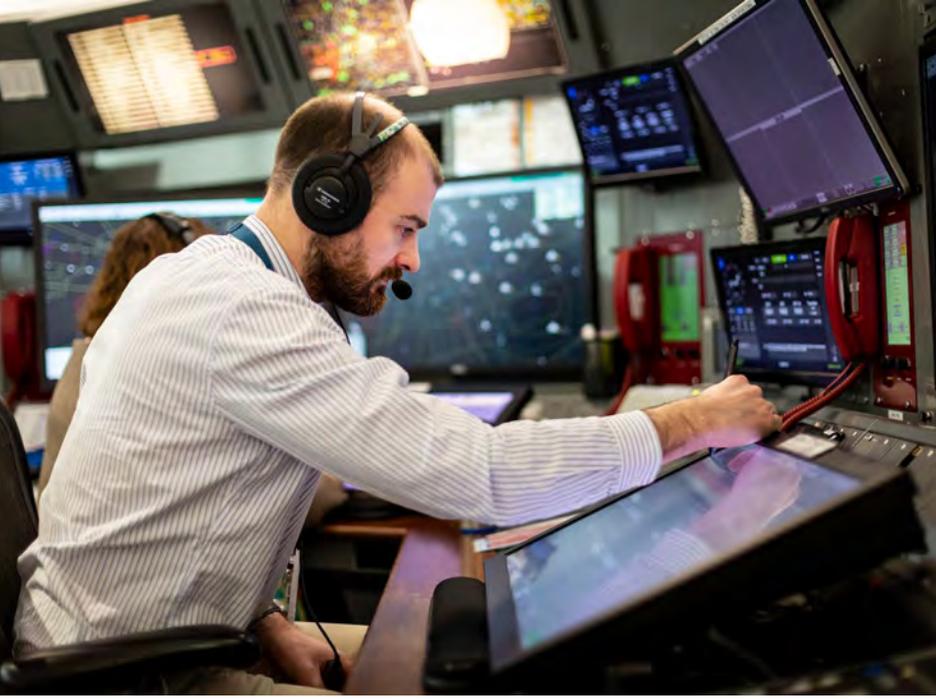


The Airport

The airport is home to the Farnborough International Airshow which takes place every two years. The airport was featured in films such as 'The Quantum of Solace' and 'Inception'.

- › **Height of tower:** 34m
- › **1 Runway:** 2,440m x 45m





Farnborough Airport



Gatwick Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

Approach services for the five major London airports are handled at our Swanwick Control Centre by London Terminal Control.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

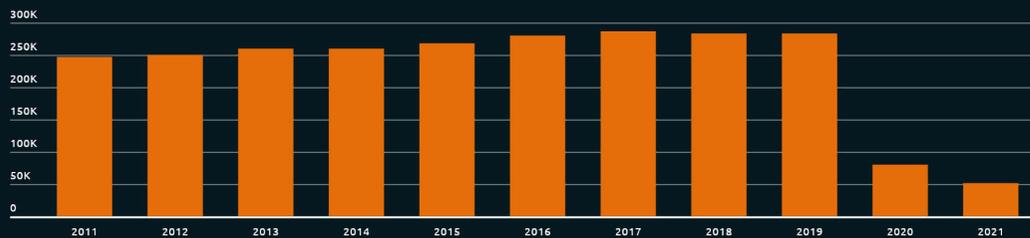
The Operation: 2021

NATS returned to Gatwick as it's air traffic service provider in 2022 after a break of six years.

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

- > **Flights:** 52,000
- > **Passengers:** 6.2m
- > **Busiest ranking:** 3rd—UK's busiest airport (flights)

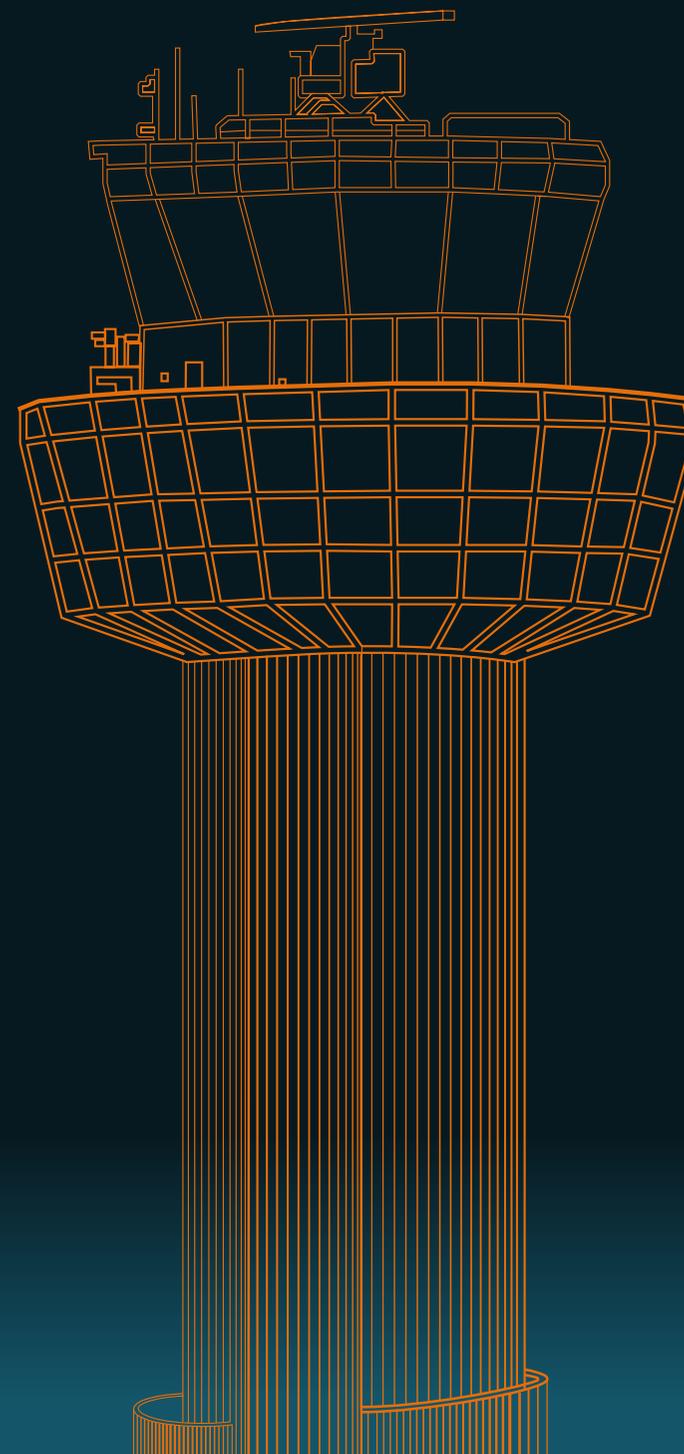
Annual flight movements (historical)



The Airport

Gatwick opened as an aerodrome in the late 1920s; it has been in use for commercial flights since 1933

Main runway length: 3,316m





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Gatwick Airport

George Best Belfast City Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

This is a radar based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 55 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The current tower opened in 1994 and NATS has been providing an ATC service since 2016.

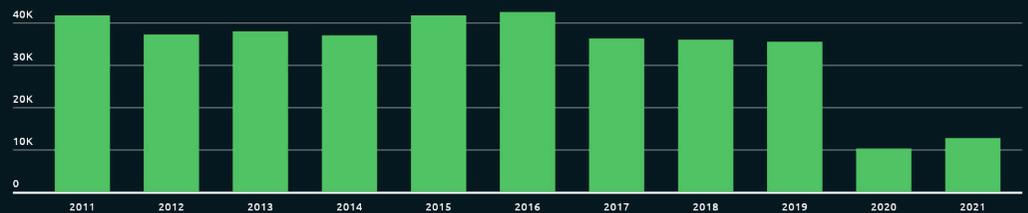
- > **Flights:** 12,819
- > **Passengers:** 812,424
- > **Busiest ranking:** 39th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

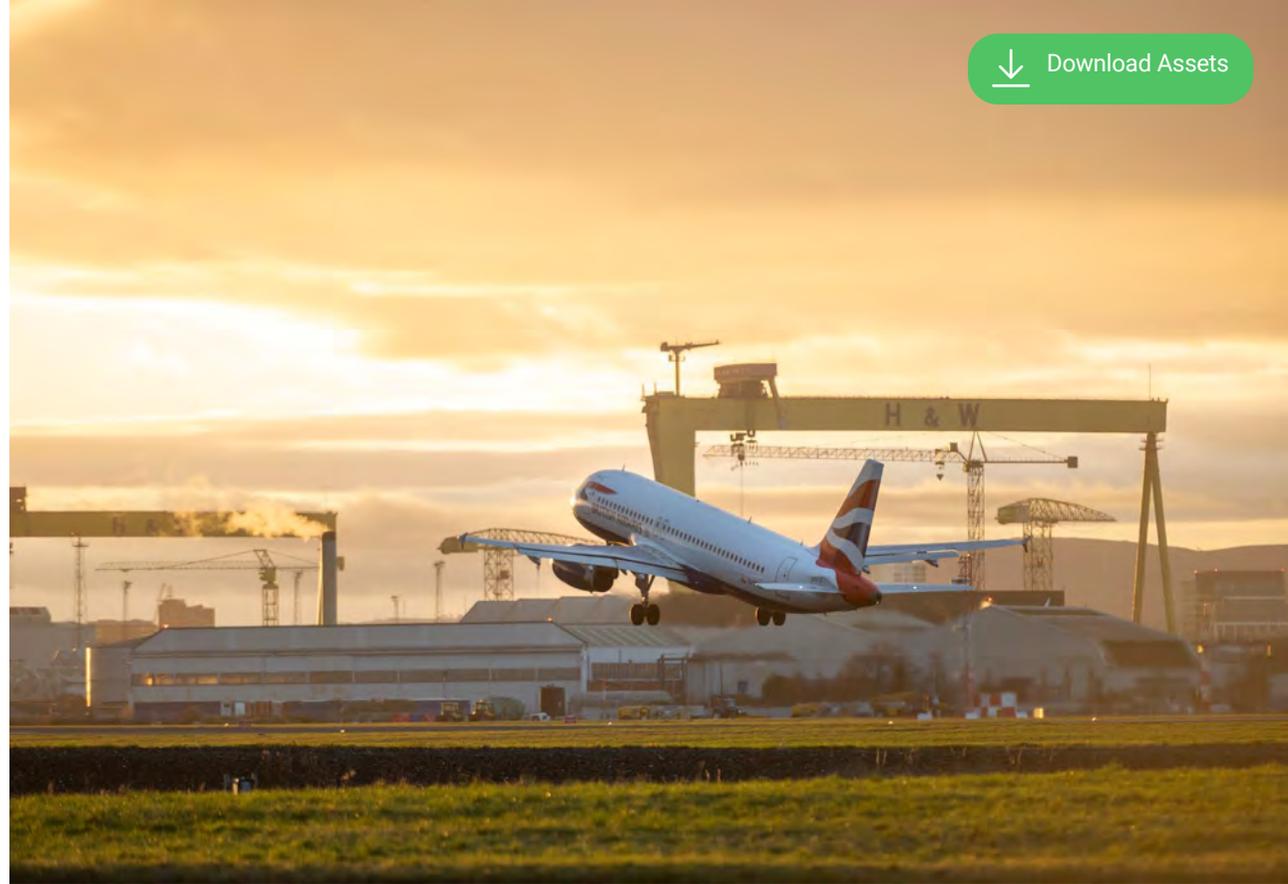
The Airport

The airport was known as "Belfast City Airport" until it was renamed in 2006 in memory of George Best, the professional footballer from Belfast, best known for his time with Manchester United.

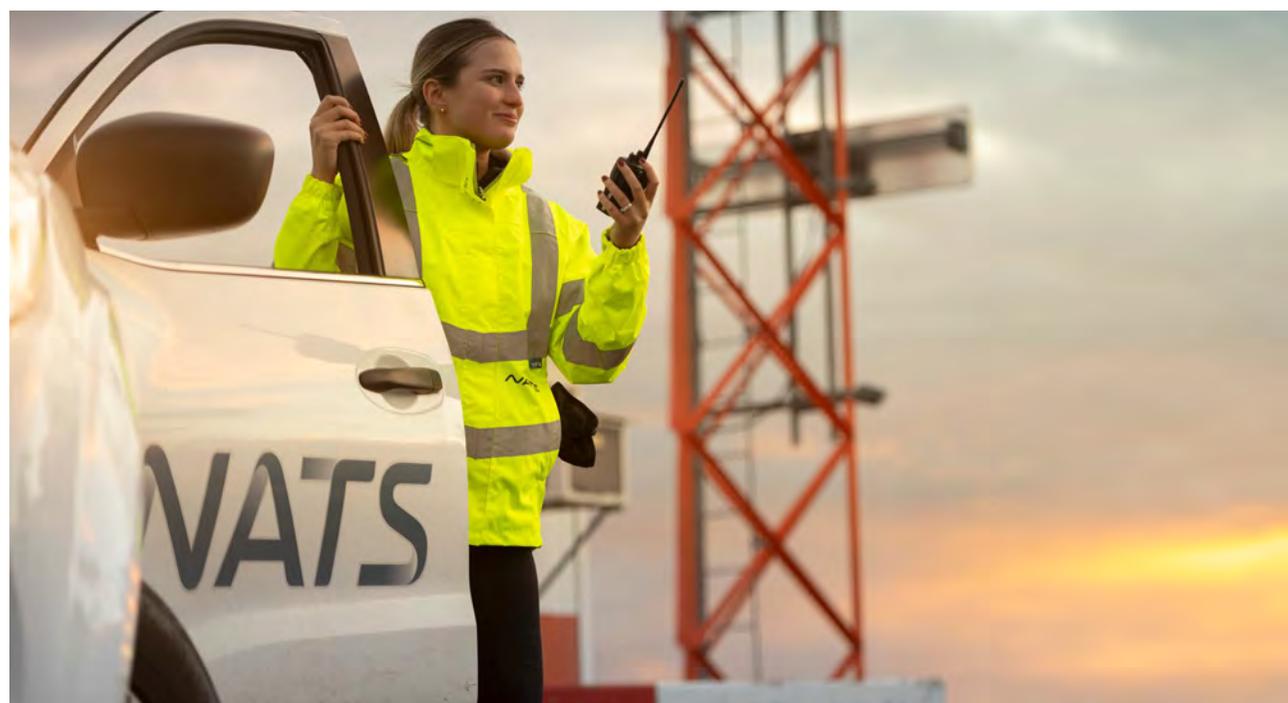
- > **Height of tower:** 65.5m
- > **Runway:** 2,160m x 46m

Annual flight movements (historical)





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George Best Belfast City Airport

Glasgow Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

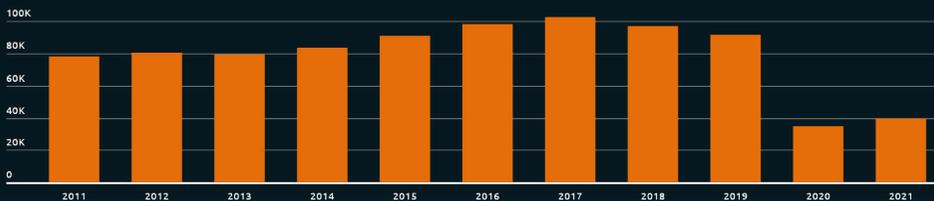
The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The current tower opened in 1966. CAA provided service then NATS once it became a separate entity.

- > **Flights:** 39,713
- > **Passengers:** 2.1m
- > **Busiest ranking:** 12th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

Annual flight movements (historical)

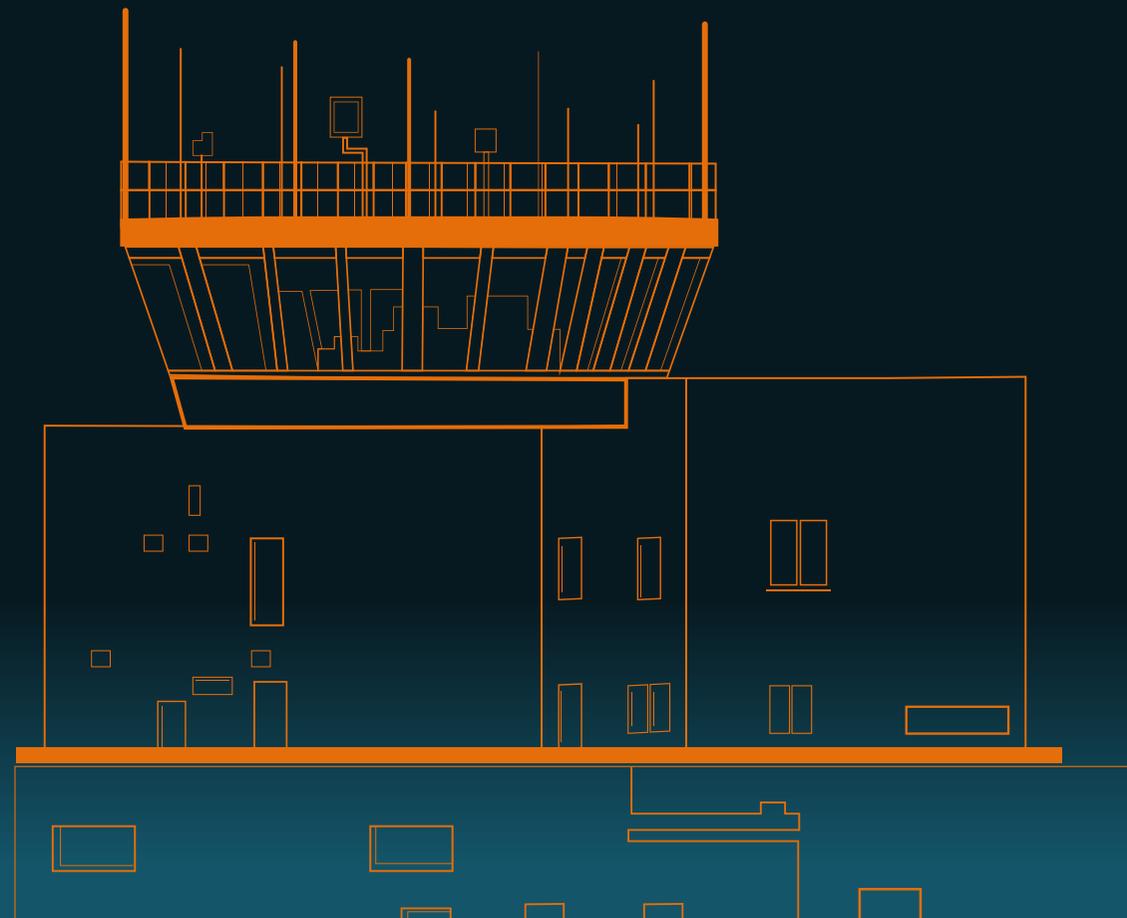


The Airport

The tower building at Glasgow is supposedly haunted. Staff have reported to have experienced strange noises and lights turning themselves on and off before.

The airport enlisted the help of GLAdys (the UK's first humanoid robot airport ambassador), to assist with customer service in 2016 and 2017.

- > **Height of tower:** 15m
- > **1 Runway:** 2,665m x 45m





Glasgow Airport

Heathrow Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The current tower was opened in 2007. It was designed by architect firm Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners (formerly the Richard Rogers Partnership).

- › **Flights:** 195,336
- › **Passengers:** 19.4m
- › **Busiest ranking:** 1st—UK's busiest airport (flights)

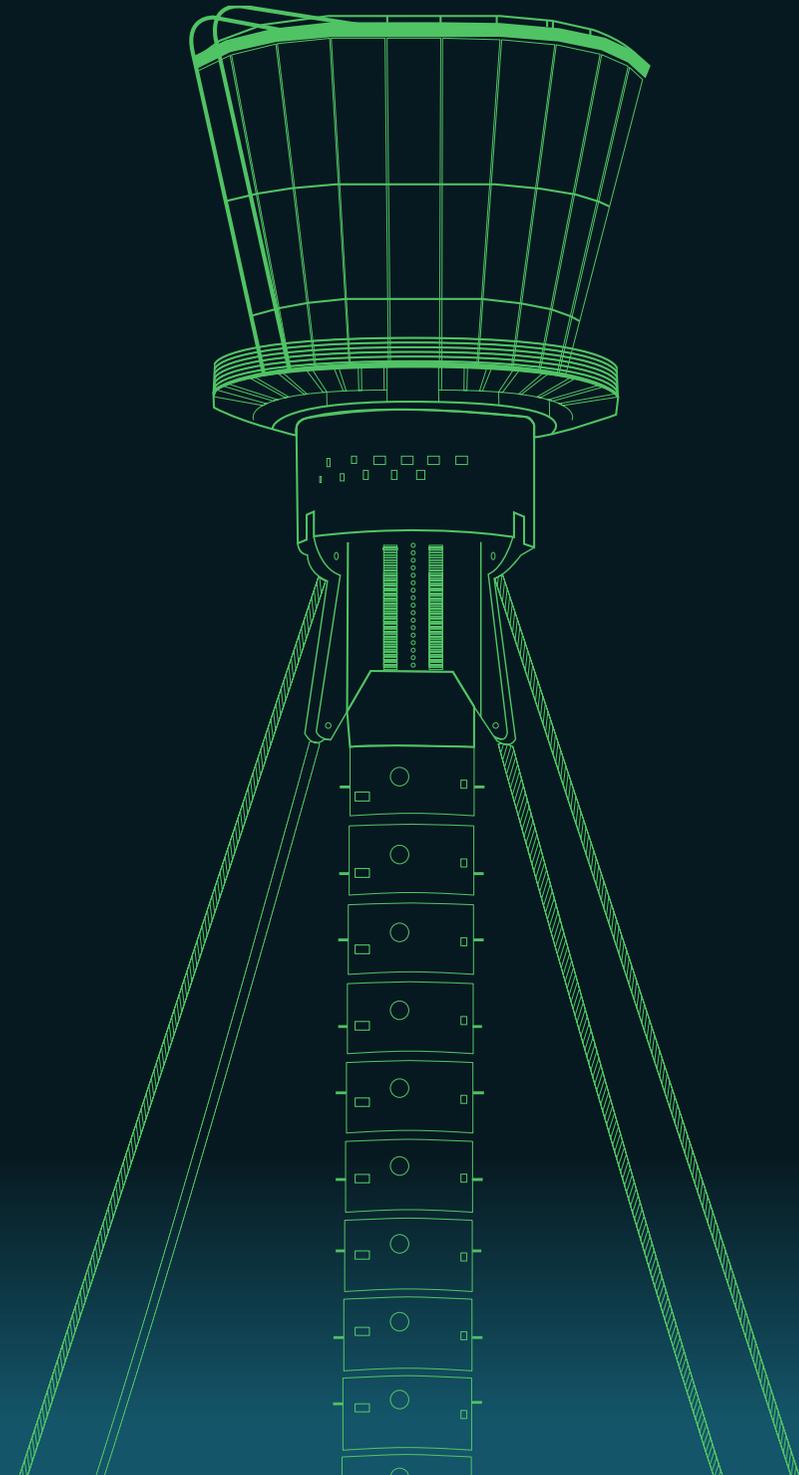
Annual flight movements (historical)



The Airport

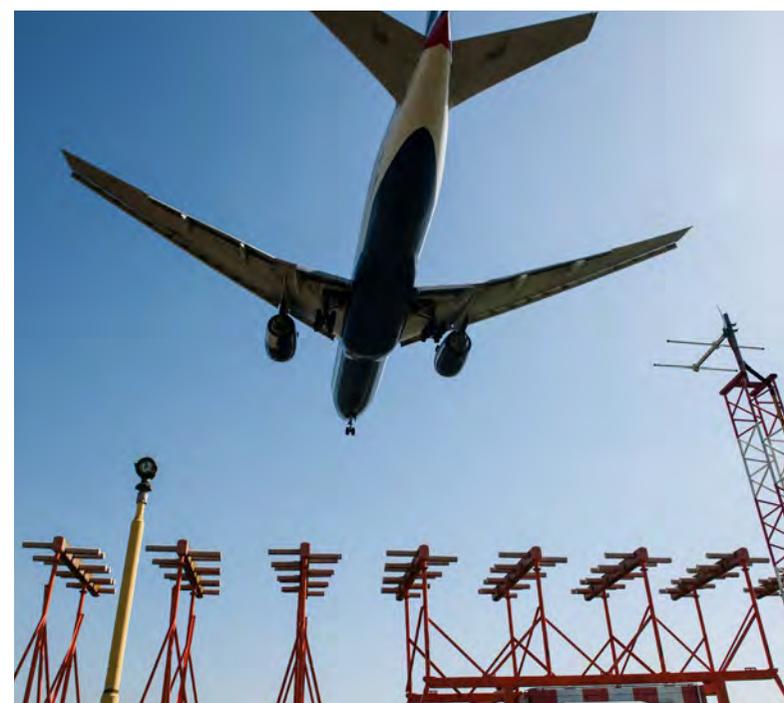
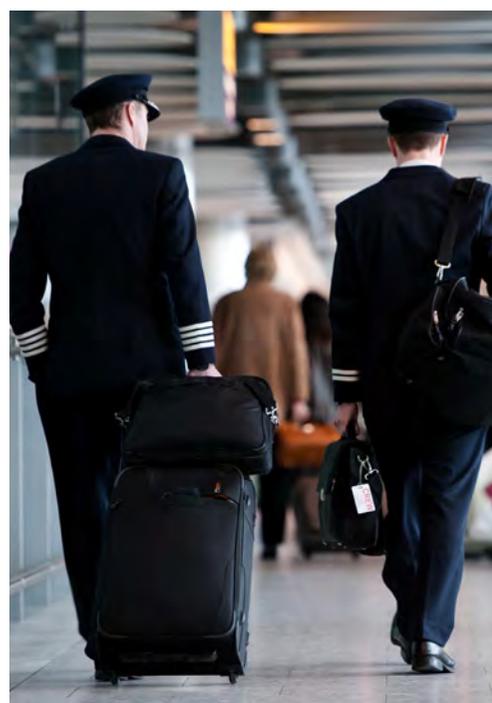
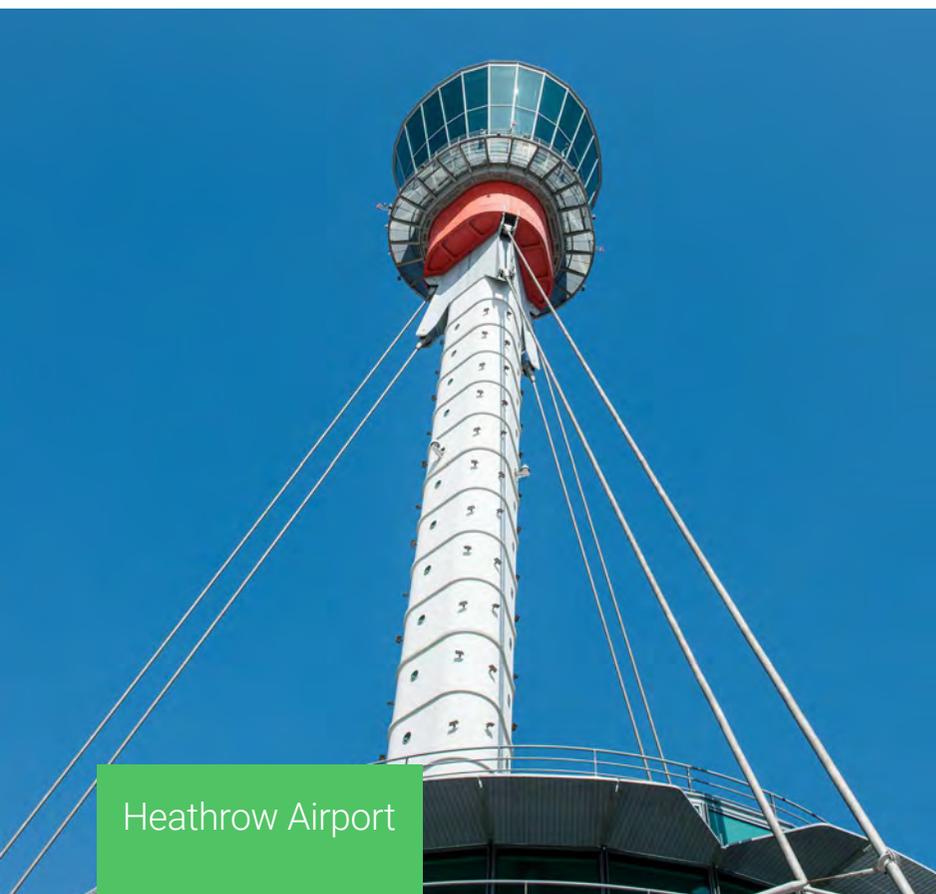
The tower also houses the NATS Digital Tower Laboratory, a facilities for designing and deploying the latest digital ATC tools.

- › **Height of tower:** 87m
- › **2 Runways:**
 - 3,902m x 50m Northern runway
 - 3,658m x 50m Southern runway





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Heathrow Airport

London City Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. All flights are now controlled in a Digital Tower by air traffic controllers 115km away at NATS' air traffic control centre in Swanwick, Hampshire using an 'enhanced reality' view.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

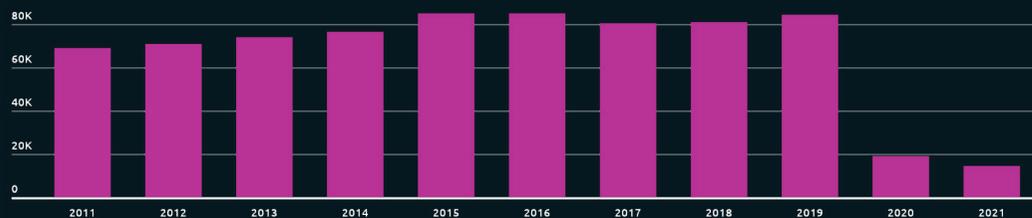
The Operation: 2021

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

The original control tower opened with the airport in 1987. The digital tower went live in 2021 in what was a first for a major, UK airport.

- > **Flights:** 14,463
- > **Passengers:** 720,580
- > **Busiest ranking:** 37th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

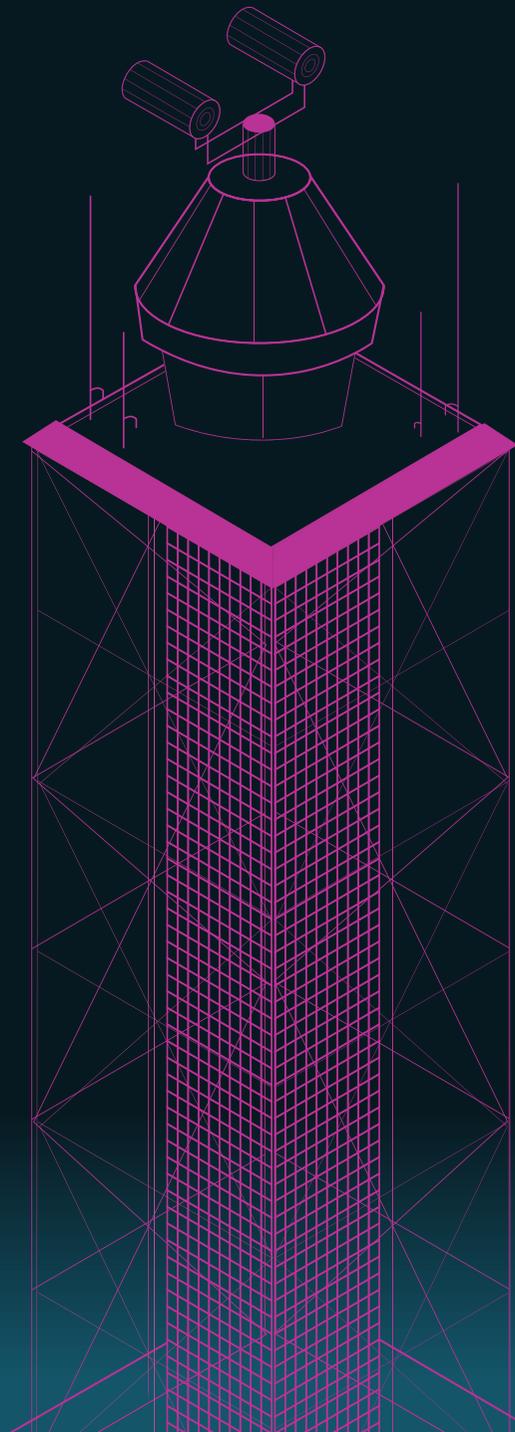
Annual flight movements (historical)

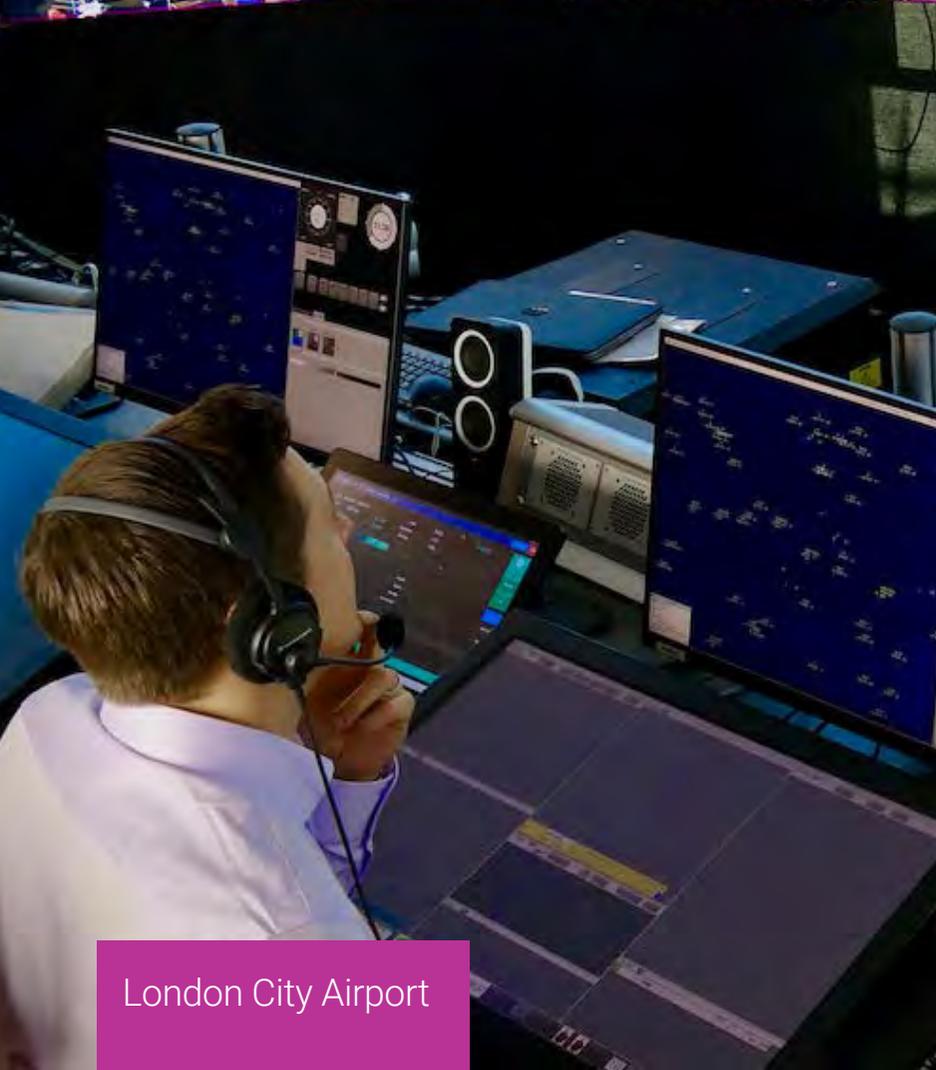


The Airport

London City Airport became the first major international airport in the world to be fully controlled by a remote digital air traffic control tower in 2021.

- > **Height of tower:** 15.5m
- > **1 Runway:** 1,199m x 30m





London City Airport

London Luton Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS). As well as monitoring things the engineering team are responsible for carrying out preventative and corrective maintenance on a daily basis.

The Operation: 2021

The tower was opened in 1995. NATS has been providing an ATC service at Luton since 2000.

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

- > **Flights:** 61,703
- > **Passengers:** 4.7m
- > **Busiest ranking:** 7th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

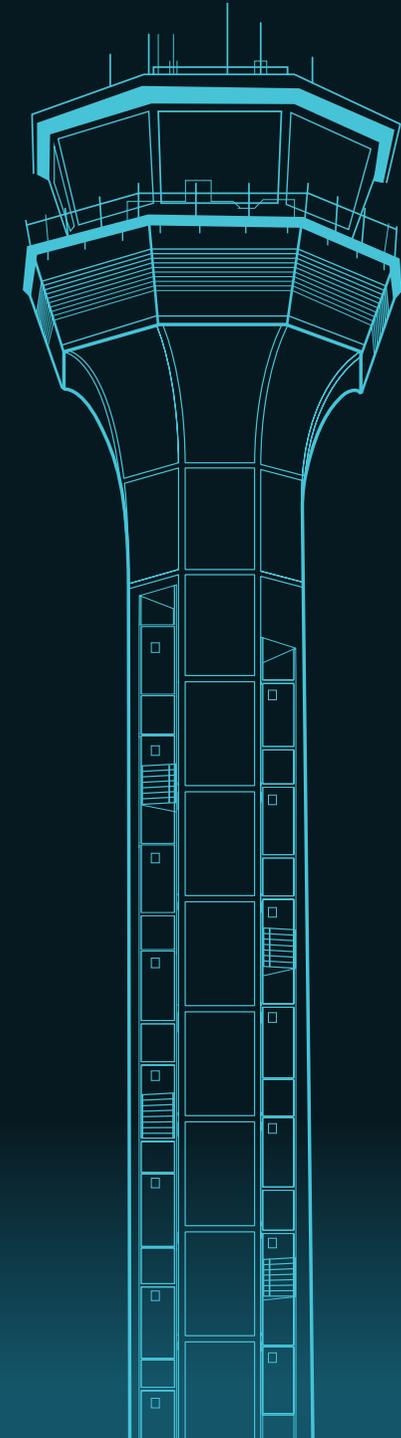
Annual flight movements (historical)

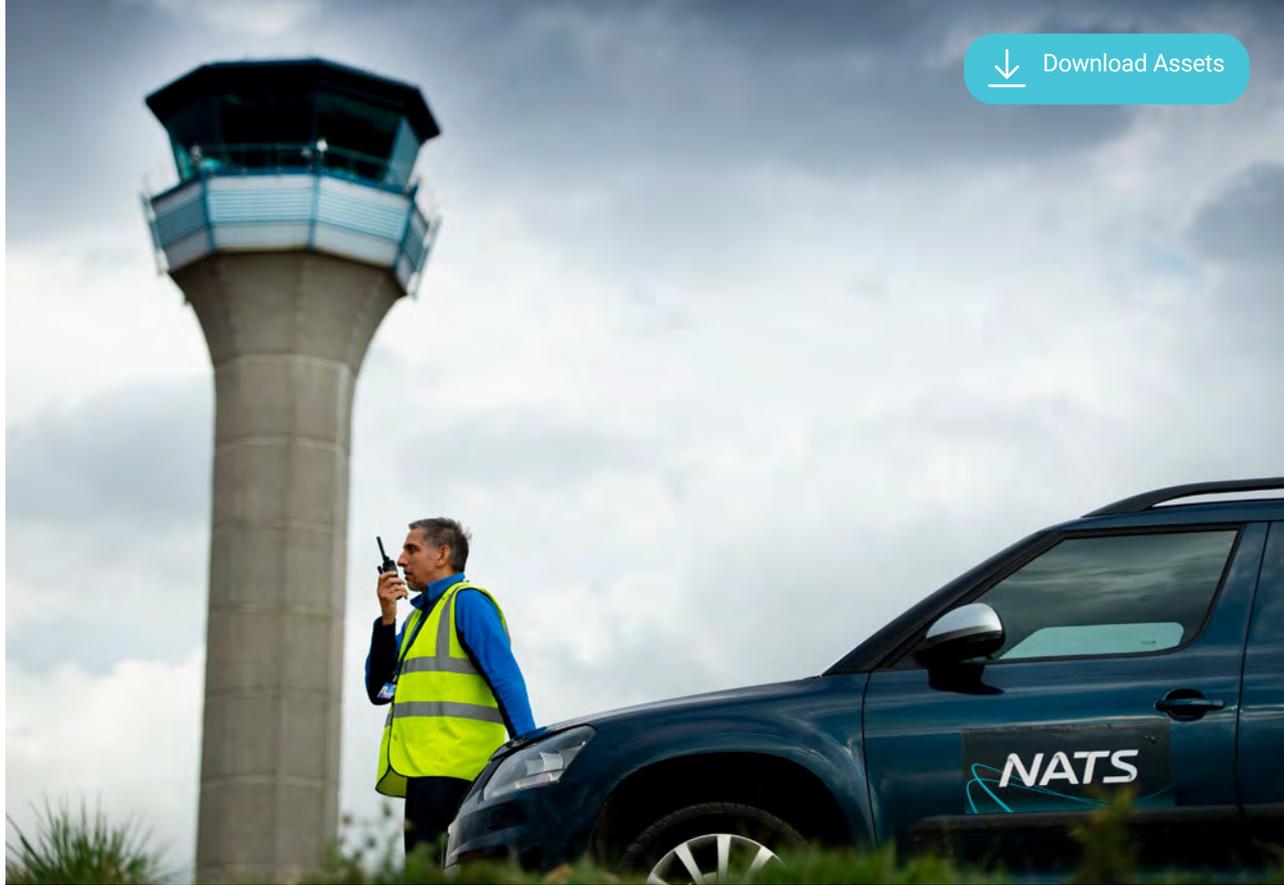


The Airport

In February 2019, the airport announced plans to expand by building a second terminal. The expansion would increase airport capacity to handle 32 million passengers per year 2039.

- > **Height of tower:** 65.5m
- > **Runway:** 2,160m x 46m





London Luton Airport

Manchester Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers look out of tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach

This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

The Operation: 2021

The current tower was opened in 2013.

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

- > **Flights:** 66,310
- > **Passengers:** 6.1m
- > **Busiest ranking:** 3rd—UK's busiest airport (flights)

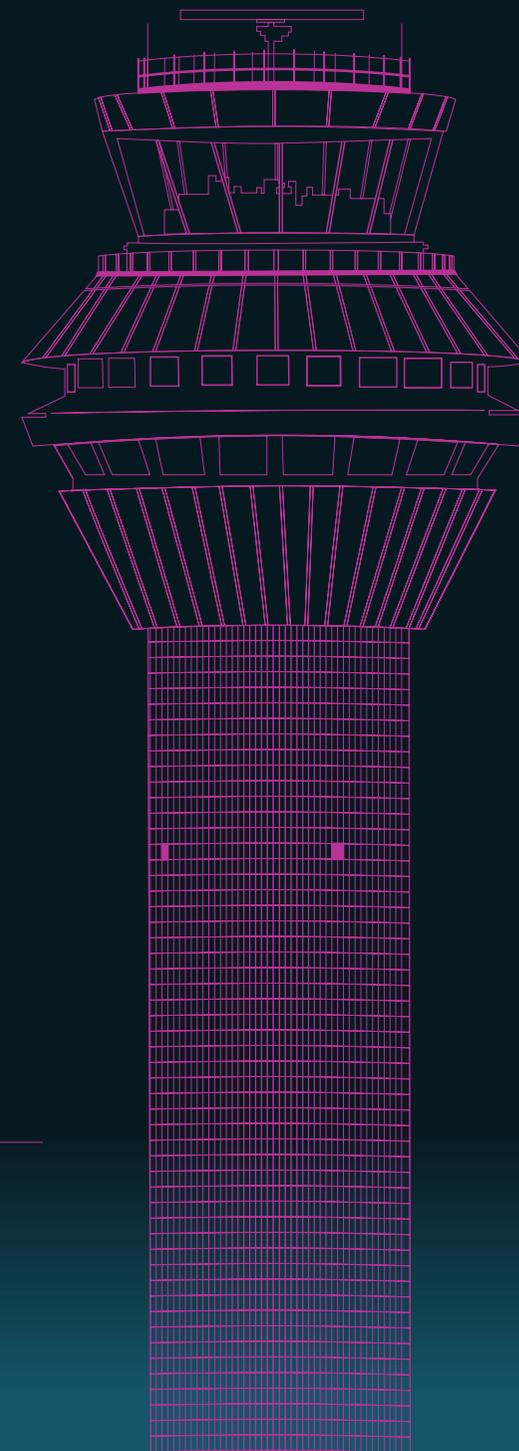
Annual flight movements (historical)



The Airport

Manchester Airport is home to Concorde in the Runway Visitor Park based on site. The tower is the second tallest tower in the UK. The concrete tower shaft was built in just 9 days. There are 350 steps to get to the top... or you can take the lift.

- > **Height of tower:** 60m
- > **Runway 1:** 3,048m x 45m
- > **Runway 2:** 3,050m x 45m





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Manchester Airport

Southampton Airport

Tower Services This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Approach This is a radar-based control service located in the lower part of the tower. Incoming aircraft are managed from approximately 40 miles away from the aerodrome, generally under 10,000ft.

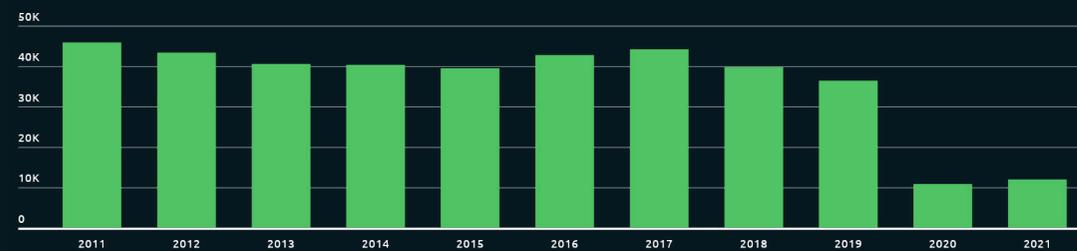
Engineering An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

The Operation: 2021 The current tower was opened in 1994.

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

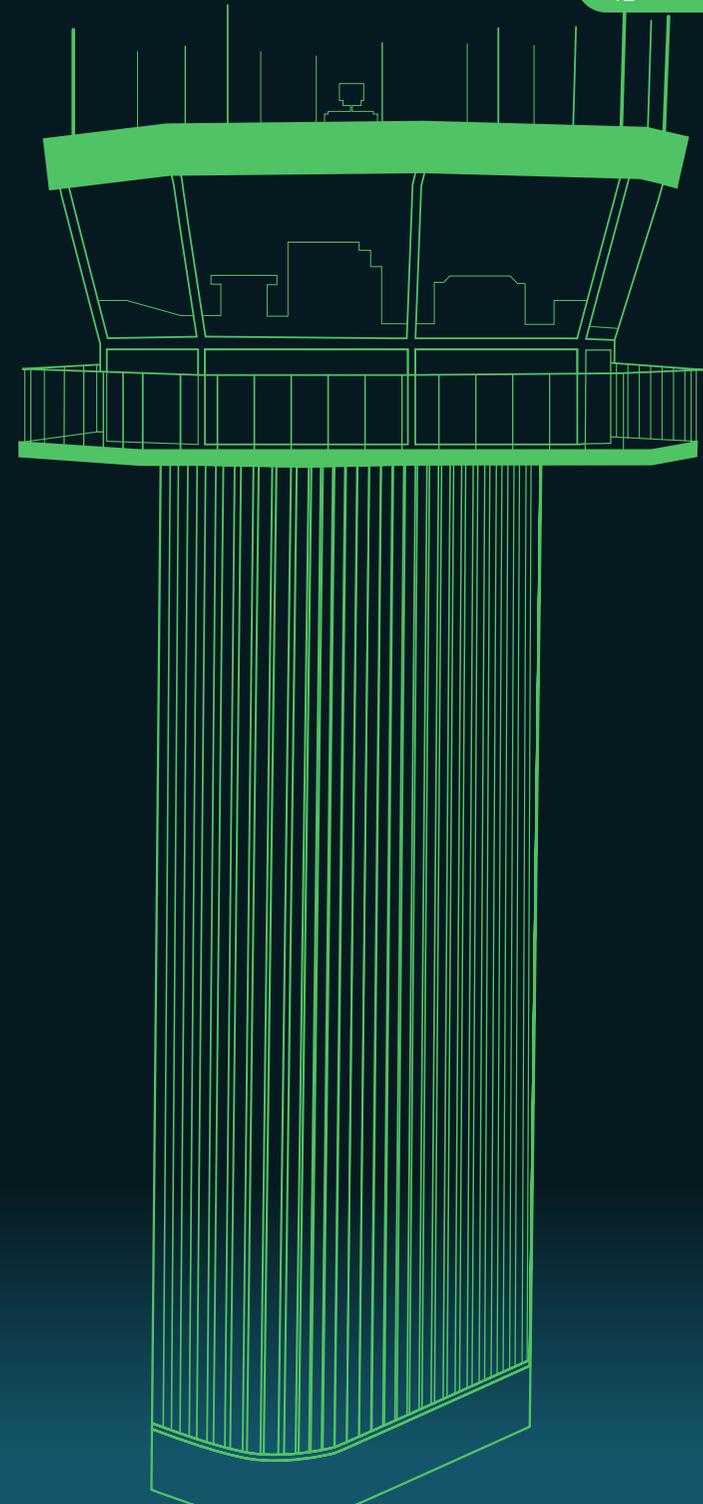
- > **Flights:** 11,910
- > **Passengers:** 263,13
- > **Busiest ranking:** 41th—UK's busiest airport (flights)

Annual flight movements (historical)



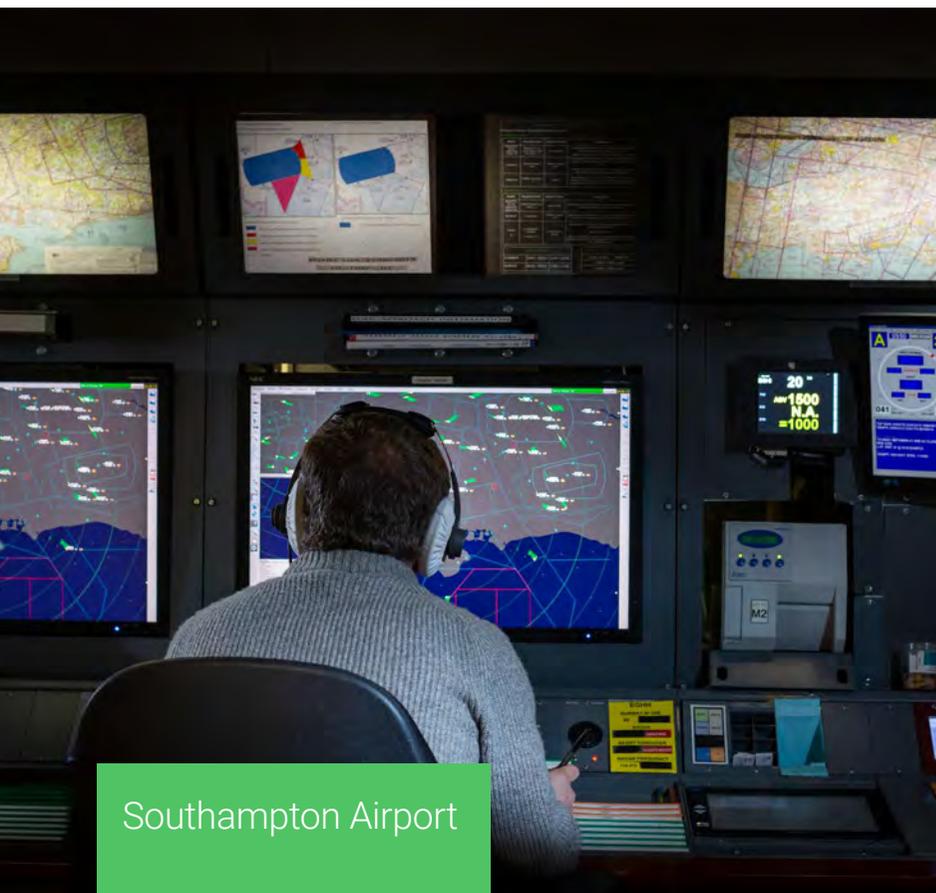
The Airport The Spitfire first took off from Southampton Airport on March 4th 1936.

- > **Height of tower:** 15m
- > **1 Runway:** 1,723m x 37m





[Download Assets](#)



Southampton Airport

Stansted Airport

Tower Services

This is an ATC service provided for the airport and surrounding airspace. The controllers will look out of the tower windows, as well as at the ATC equipment, to give aircraft clearance to taxi, take-off and land.

Engineering

An engineering team, based at the airport, are responsible for maintaining air traffic control services, such as radar and the Instrument Landing System (ILS).

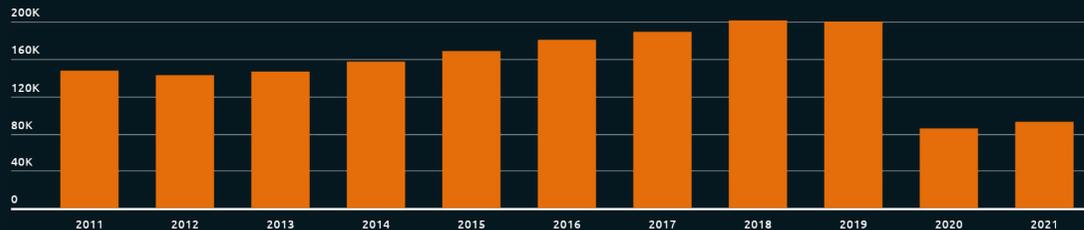
The Operation: 2019

The current tower was opened in 1996.

Operational statistics in 2021 show a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight statistics are provided by CAA.

- > **Flights:** 93,316
- > **Passengers:** 7.1m
- > **Busiest ranking:** 2nd—UK's busiest airport (flights)

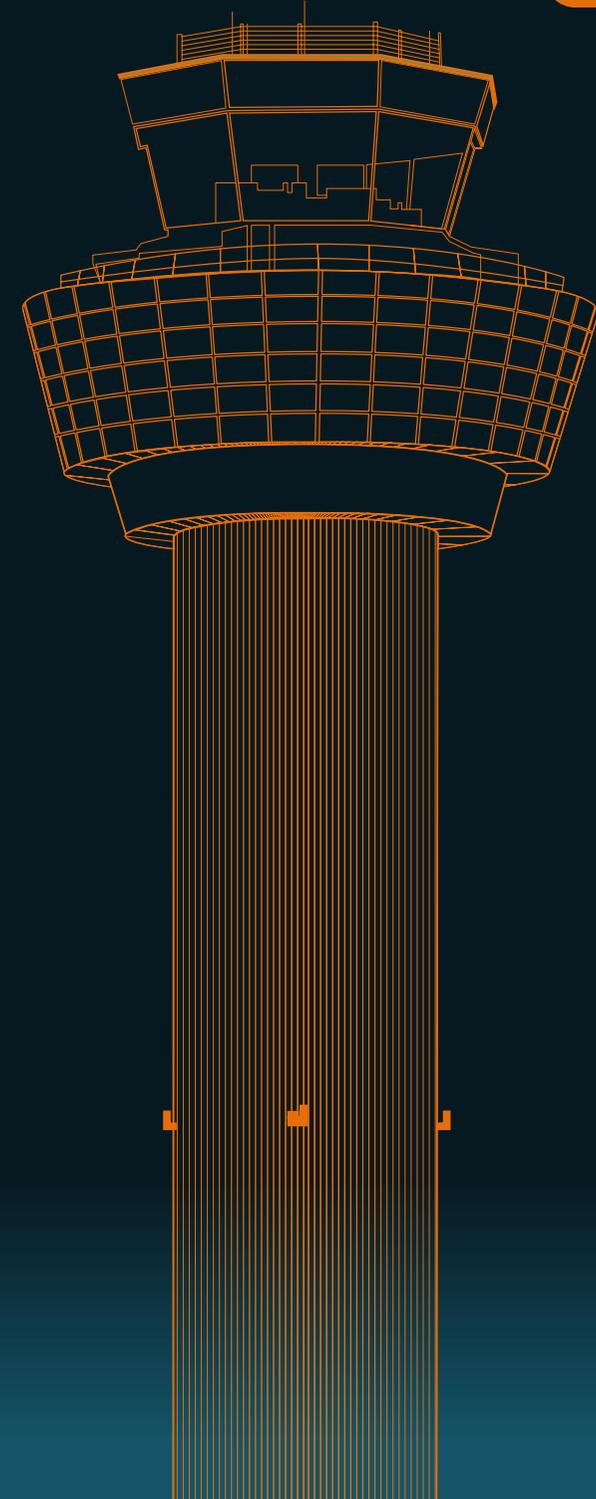
Annual flight movements (historical)

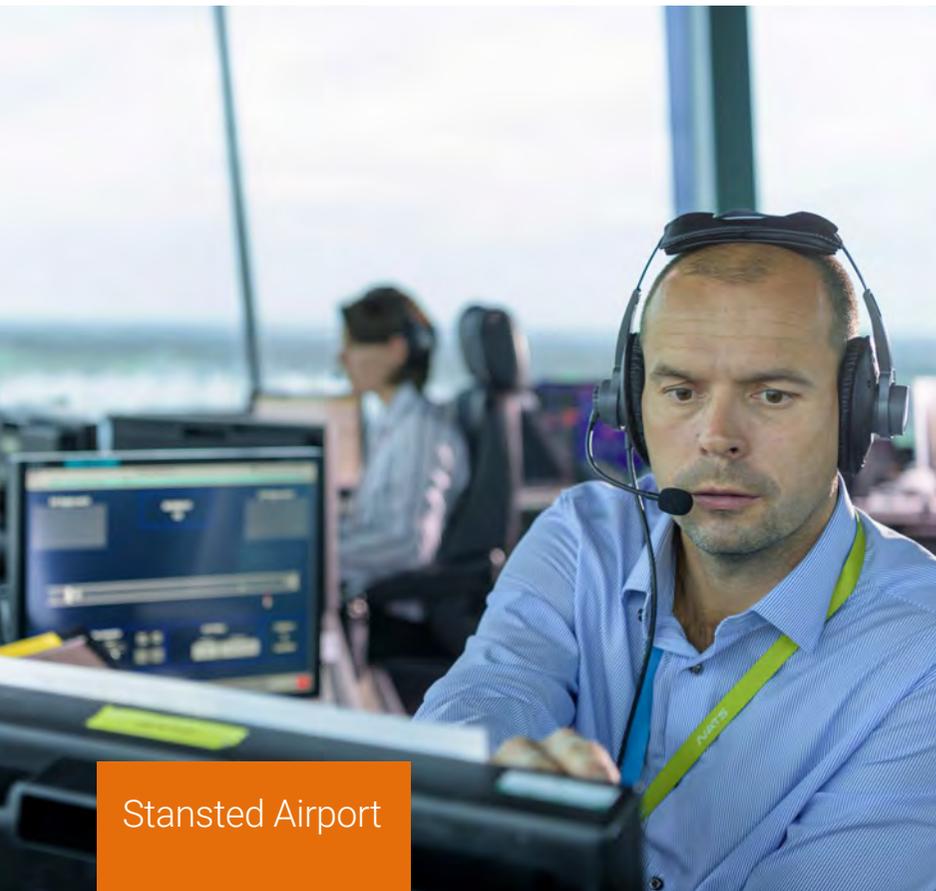


The Airport

In 2018 the control tower windows were replaced with 16 new panes of weather-proof glass using one of the tallest mobile cranes in Europe.

- > **Height of tower:** 63m
- > **1 Runway:** 3,048m x 46m





The NATS logo is displayed in a bold, white, italicized sans-serif font. The background of the entire image is a night-time aerial view of an airport tarmac, illuminated by numerous blue and red lights, with a prominent white light pole in the foreground.

For more information, please contact the Press Office
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[#nats_aero](#)
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