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Isle of Man Aviation Conference
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The Isle of Man Aviation Conference Highlights 2025



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Business Aviation Updates Richard Koe

Richard Koe explored Europe's business aviation landscape with Paris and Nice being positioned as key hubs. He determined that growth is being driven by major operators like NetJets, VistaJet, and FlexJet, who leverage scale and efficiency. Despite a resilient demand for leisure travel and short-haul sectors, business travel remains subdued, especially in Germany and Central/Eastern Europe, while the Mediterranean and Southeast show strength.

European activity accounts for just 12% of global business jet movements, with minimal growth since 2019. Globally, business jet activity has surged 30% above pre-COVID levels, doubling the previous five-year CAGR.

A significant wealth transfer of \$83 trillion among UHNWIs is fuelling demand, particularly in the Super Mid and Ultra Long Range segments. However, challenges persist: talent shortages, economic headwinds, ESG-driven tax risks, and fragmented charter competition. Fractional ownership models are thriving, but regulatory inertia - especially post-Brexit - risks shifting investment away from the UK and EU towards more agile regions like the Middle East.

Smarter, safer, and efficient use of technology Chris Bigwood

Chris Bigwood reflected on 60 years since the first commercial Autoland system was introduced on the Trident aircraft in 1965. Today, Autoland is activated globally every three seconds, underscoring its critical role in aviation safety. However, runway incursions have increased three to fourfold in recent years, prompting innovation from companies like Garmin and Collins.

He highlighted cutting-edge developments aimed at enhancing pilot safety, flight operations, and communications—particularly in response to human limitations like drowsiness. Technologies such as "Surfa," expected to be certified by year-end, and autonomous helicopters for frontline logistics, are pushing boundaries. Additionally, Chris discussed the likelihood of non-piloted aircraft becoming a reality within our lifetimes, expressing confidence that it's on the horizon.

Overall, the session showcased the immense technological potential in business aviation, driven by robust R&D and a commitment to safer, smarter skies.

The Gold Standard

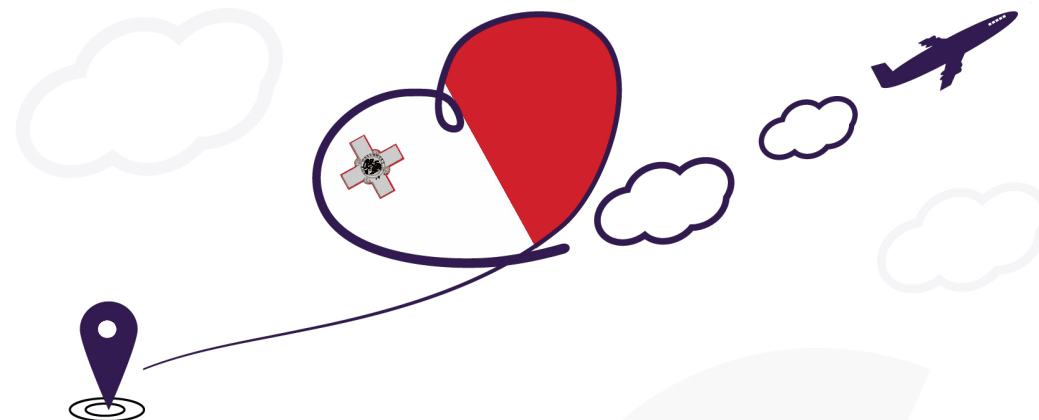
Aoife O'Sullivan, Paul Doherty, Simon Williams,
Warren Lovell, Andrew Pethen

The panel on defining the gold standard in business aviation agreed that while the term is subjective, integrity, consistency, and transparency are universally essential. Simon Williams emphasised the importance of responsive, tech-driven registries like IOMAR, which lead in safety and digital innovation. He warned that depreciation, often overlooked, can be mitigated through top-tier maintenance. Aoife O'Sullivan highlighted the value of experienced advisors and fair pricing, cautioning against a race to the bottom in fees. Aoife stressed that integrity is vital in navigating complex legal and regulatory landscapes, especially post-Brexit. Warren Lovell likened successful transactions to a well-coordinated flight crew, underscoring the need for trusted advisors early in the process. Paul Doherty noted that while fractional ownership is growing due to cost and availability, it lacks the flexibility of full ownership. Andrew Pethen concluded that the gold standard is defined by the client, built on trust, choice, and enduring relationships.

Risk Management

James Moreton, Melanie Daglish, Bruce Norfolk

The panel on risk management, market trends, and the political landscape highlighted the increasingly complex environment facing business aviation. James Moreton outlined the volatility of aircraft insurance amid rising geopolitical tensions, sanctions, and no-fly zones across regions like Libya, Ukraine, and Iran. He stressed the importance of proactive risk assessment, management, and transfer, especially as political risks evolve and legal costs dominate claims. Melanie Daglish emphasised that while catastrophic events make headlines, most claims stem from everyday issues like miscommunication and poorly drafted contracts—70% of which can be legal fees. Melanie underlined the importance of managing client expectations and maintaining thorough documentation. Bruce Norfolk and others advocated for using intelligence providers to stay ahead of emerging threats. The panel endorsed a forward-looking, layered approach to risk, referencing the Swiss Cheese model to illustrate how resilience is built through proactive systems, communication, and continuous improvement—both before and after incidents occur.



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Sustainability

Patrick Edmond, Declan Fitzpatrick,
Dirk Singer, Manuel Toscano

The panel addressed the urgent need to reshape public perception of business aviation, particularly in light of a recent survey ranking aviation last among 17 industries for consumer favourability. High-profile events, like the 19 private jets attending Jeff Bezos' wedding, fuel misconceptions, overshadowing aviation's economic and societal value. Speakers stressed that business aviation is not only a luxury but a vital economic enabler—especially for countries like Ireland, where 94% of visitors arrive by air. Declan Fitzpatrick highlighted aviation's progress in noise abatement and fuel efficiency, while others pointed to innovations like Ireland's first electric flight and drone deliveries. Sustainability efforts, including SAF, electric aircraft, and route planning to avoid contrails, were discussed alongside the need for clearer public communication. The industry must lead the narrative, emphasising its role in job creation, public investment, and decarbonisation. With 8 of 10 jet manufacturers publicly owned, aviation's benefits extend far beyond its passengers.

Sailors Fly Too!

Lindsey Oliver, Andy Blundell, Ian Hughes,
Simon Davies, Adrian Parcell-Jones

The 'Sailors Fly Too!' panel explored the growing convergence between the yacht and business aviation sectors, both of which serve the same ultra high net worth individuals. Andy Blundell noted the rise in clients financing jets, yachts, and helicopters as a package, with Monaco emerging as a key hub for this cross-sector activity. Simon Davies highlighted the increasing demand for yacht financing and the need for collaborative partnerships to offer seamless, one-stop solutions. Ian Hughes emphasised the value of cross-sector legal expertise, as family offices seek continuity and efficiency across asset classes. Adrian Parcell-Jones explained the complex tax differences between yachts and jets, noting that aviation is generally more straightforward, while yacht taxation varies by jurisdiction. He also raised concerns about future tax policy shifts. Finally, Lindsey Oliver stressed the importance of talent development and knowledge-sharing between industries. The panel agreed that collaboration, shared learning, and unified messaging are essential as both sectors evolve.

Associations 'Working Together'

Marc Bailey, Robert Baltus, Dave Edwards

The “Associations Working Together” panel underscored the urgent need for unified industry collaboration, particularly in addressing the aviation talent crisis. Dave Edwards highlighted the post-COVID retirement wave and the diminishing military-to-civilian talent pipeline, noting that many aspiring pilots and engineers now rely on family support. Efforts are underway to streamline military certification transfers. Robert Baltus emphasised the EBAA’s role in lobbying for its 700 members across Europe, advocating for economic, environmental, and financial stability. He stressed the importance of active membership to influence policy. Marc Bailey discussed contrail mitigation as a climate strategy, which, while effective, requires costly rerouting and broad cooperation.

The panel also pointed to the vast potential of drone and autonomous flight, which could one day surpass traditional aviation in scale. Crucially, they agreed that business aviation’s strength lies in its unified voice—unlike the fragmented yachting sector—making coordinated advocacy essential for future progress.

Thank you Dave Edwards!

A heartfelt thank you to Dave Edwards for his outstanding work as Chair over the past three years. His dedication, insight, and steady guidance have been instrumental in shaping the Isle of Man Aviation Conference and ensuring an enjoyable day for everyone. Dave’s passion for the industry and commitment to collaboration have left a lasting impact. We’re incredibly grateful for everything he’s done.





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