



16th April 2026

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

### **Guidelines on flights that may be given dispensation from night restrictions**

The guidelines for dispensing night flights in accordance with sections 78(5)(f) and 78(4) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 require the airport manager to write and publish a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport setting out the following:

- reasons why the airport has had the dispensations recorded that season
- if they see dispensations for the same reasons being required in future equivalent seasons
- if so, why these dispensations would be justified

In Winter 2025 dispensations reported at London Stansted fell into 3 broad categories:

- dispensations under a notice given by the Secretary of State
- delays encountered beyond the airport operator or airlines' control
- emergencies where there was an immediate danger to life or health

#### Dispensations under a notice given by the Secretary of State

In Winter 2025 there were 7 dispensations granted by the Secretary of State.

The Department for Transport decided that these flights were in the national interest and therefore these dispensations were consistent with the published guidance.

Though we cannot predict whether similar dispensations will be required in Summer 2026, it is likely that further dispensations will be required, and we will continue to follow advice from the Department for Transport.

#### Delays encountered beyond the airport operator or airlines' control

In Winter 2025 there were 66 dispensations applied. The principal reasons were operational delays due to weather events and Air Traffic Control (ATC) flow restrictions. In turn ATC flow restrictions resulted from ATC staffing issues, industrial action and computer problems.

It is likely that dispensation will be required in response to weather and ATC issues in Summer 2026. Airline scheduling is completed many months in advance of the operations season, and it is impossible to predict where and when weather events will occur, or when ATC issues including industrial action and short notice airspace sector closure might occur. Should they occur it is also impossible to predict how they might impact on the planned schedule.

Any dispensations granted will continue to be in accordance with the guidance published by the Secretary of State for Transport.

#### Emergencies where there was an immediate danger to life or health

In Winter 2025, dispensation was granted to 41 operations where there was an immediate danger to life or health. London Stansted is near Papworth and Addenbrooke's Hospitals, where essential NHS services, including organ transplant operations take place. The operations granted dispensation occurred at short notice and were usually transporting critically ill patients and/or their supporting medical teams.

Though we cannot predict whether similar dispensations will be required in Summer 2026, it is likely that further dispensations will be granted. Any dispensations will continue to be in accordance with the guidance published by the Secretary of State for Transport.

#### Summary of dispensations applied

Reason	Number of dispensations
ATC staffing in Europe	38
ATC staffing in UK sectors	5
Weather in European airspace	11
Weather in local LTMA airspace	10
Medical	41
Government dispensation for flights in the national interest	5
Government dispensations relating to repatriation of British nationals (Iran conflict)	2
Drone activity in Liege area, resulting in airport closure	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>

Yours Sincerely,



Gareth Powell  
**Managing Director – London Stansted Airport**