



Bizjet terminals land extra revenue streams

Around the world, hubs like Zurich, Biggin Hill and Al Bateen are showing how strategic investments in hangars, hospitality, maintenance and commercial real estate can unlock powerful new revenue streams. Paul Sillers reports.

Business jet airports, aka Fixed Base Operators (FBOs), are increasingly diversifying their revenue streams as they adapt to a changing market. Four key factors are driving this trend:

- **Declining fuel sales.** A major factor behind diversification is the decrease in fuel sales, traditionally a significant revenue source for FBOs. According to a 2024 survey, nearly 60 per cent of FBOs reported either a decrease or no change in fuel sales compared to the previous year. This shift has pushed FBOs to find alternative sources of income.
- **Demand for premium services.** As business aviation grows, particularly in the luxury and executive sectors, FBOs

are capitalising on the rising demand for exclusive lounges, concierge services and VIP amenities. High-end customer experiences have become a major revenue driver in meeting the expectations of affluent clientele.

- **Real estate and infrastructure development.** According to Technavio, the global airport non-aeronautical revenue market is expected to grow by USD 43.09 billion by 2028, largely driven by airport cities and commercial infrastructure. These developments

provide opportunities for FBOs and private terminals to lease space for hotels, retail outlets and office buildings, creating diversified income streams.

- **Building resilience.** FBOs are expanding non-aeronautical services to reduce dependence on fluctuating aviation activity. Offering MRO services, retail and event spaces helps maintain financial stability in a volatile market.

By focusing on these factors, business jet airports are not only ensuring financial resilience but also enhancing their competitive edge in a rapidly evolving aviation landscape.

DEVELOPING A DIVERSE REVENUE BASE

London Biggin Hill Airport is redefining what it means to be a business aviation hub, proving that long-term success lies beyond the runway.

Central to its growth is a strategy focused on non-flight revenue, with CEO David Winstanley calling it “central to London Biggin Hill Airport’s strategy”.

Zurich Airport is pursuing non-flight revenue opportunities.



He tells *Regional Gateway*: “We’ve focused on developing a diverse, resilient revenue base that extends beyond aircraft movements and includes over 70 aviation and engineering companies.”

Chief among these is a powerful MRO ecosystem, described by Winstanley as “the most concentrated in Europe” and anchored by tenants like Bombardier, whose 250,000 sq ft European Service Centre sits on site.

Winstanley adds: “Bombardier’s continued investment, including a new purpose-built paint facility, highlights how non-aeronautical development contributes both to the airport’s revenue and the global supply chain.”

London Biggin Hill’s success in attracting long-term commercial tenants has been a key revenue driver, with real estate and support services forming the backbone of its financial model.

It’s not all about aircraft maintenance, either. The airport has recently opened The Landing, a boutique hotel designed primarily for crew, engineers and employees of the on-site aviation businesses.

“We’ve made investments in infrastructure and customer experience,” Winstanley says. It’s all part of “building a diverse ecosystem”.

That ecosystem is delivering results, as Winstanley notes.

“Since 2012, London Biggin Hill Airport has seen an 80 per cent increase in jobs, and with future plans we have the potential to support up to 7,649 jobs



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David Winstanley, CEO, London Biggin Hill Airport

nationally and generate GBP 636 million in Gross Value Added (GVA).”

Looking ahead, Winstanley sees further opportunity in real estate.

“OEMs, MROs and aviation service providers are seeking purpose-built facilities with direct airside access and close proximity to London,” he says.

“The current surge in demand for new business jets and an active pre-owned aircraft market are driving the need for expanded and sophisticated MRO infrastructure.

“This directly translates to increased demand for hangar space, skilled services and long-term operational bases, all of which present clear revenue opportunities for airports like London Biggin Hill.”

These trends, he concludes, “are

shaping how business aviation airports think about their role – not just as transit points, but as full-service destinations.”

With GBP 200 million in GVA contributed to the UK economy in 2023 – 70 per cent of it retained locally – Winstanley believes Biggin Hill is setting the pace.

“We offer a blueprint for how business aviation airports can generate revenue, support their communities, and shape the future of the industry.”

SWISS EFFICIENCY

As Zurich Airport reports record financial results, the Swiss hub is doubling down on non-flight revenue opportunities – including a new Business Aviation Terminal (BAT) that is set to transform private aviation services while supporting





Business aviation

broader commercial objectives.

"Zurich Airport Ltd's model is diversified," Bettina Kunz, Head of Corporate Communications, told *Regional Gateway*. "In addition to aviation, we generate income from commercial activities and real estate rental."

That approach is paying off. According to the company's financial reports, Zurich Airport recorded an all-time high EBITDA of CHF 733 million in 2024 and a consolidated result of CHF 327 million.

In 2024, Zurich Airport welcomed 31.2 million passengers – an eight per cent increase on 2023 and just shy of pre-pandemic levels.

Revenues rose to CHF 1,326 million, with aviation accounting for CHF 673 million and non-aviation activities close behind at CHF 653 million.

Commercial and parking income grew five per cent to CHF 276 million, while real estate revenue hit a record CHF 197 million, thanks to strong leasing demand and over 90 per cent occupancy at the Circle business complex.

Why the need to diversify? Kunz says: "Slots at Zurich Airport are limited by the shortest operating times among comparable airports in Europe. The available capacity for private aviation is

further limited by the demand of scheduled traffic. This segment is therefore not infinitely scalable."

Hence the new terminal on the west side of the airport. The facility will include 10,000 sq m of hangar space and will become a significant revenue generator for FBO handlers, the airport, and the building's owner.

"The new BAT will create new opportunities and will be located close to the existing heliport and long-term parking stands for non-revenue traffic," adds Kunz.

"Short walking distances between helicopter and jet services will reduce transfer times, making the terminal more attractive to passengers. Helicopters will be able to be parked inside the hangar, which is currently not possible.

"Additionally, the new BAT will play an important role in supporting the commercial operations of the airport."

Beyond operational benefits, the BAT will open doors for premium services, flexible hangar leasing, and enhanced real estate usage – a clear step forward in Zurich Airport's strategy to future-proof its revenue streams while elevating the travel experience for high-end clients.

BUILDING ON BIZAV GROWTH IN THE UAE

Meanwhile, 12 kilometres south east of Abu Dhabi's city centre, on Abu Dhabi Island, Al Bateen Executive Airport is reinforcing its position as a business aviation hub by anchoring a major new maintenance facility for Bombardier – part of a broader move to deepen non-flight revenue streams.

Set to open in 2026, the 120,000 sq ft facility will house a 55,000 sq ft hangar, a parts depot, and offer full MRO (maintenance, repair and overhaul) services for Bombardier's Global 7500 and upcoming Global 8000 jets.

It will also generate around 100 skilled jobs in the capital – revenue and employment that won't depend on passenger volumes or flight operations.

For Al Bateen, the value lies in long-term tenancy, technical expertise, and the wider ecosystem that grows around it.

The shift towards MRO, parts support, and OEM partnerships reflects the airport's maturing commercial model – one that treats ground operations as central to profitability.

Elena Sorlini, Managing Director and CEO of Abu Dhabi Airports, sees the partnership as a perfect fit.

She says: "This move represents a strategic alignment, given the airport's dedicated focus on business aviation and its ability to provide a seamless and efficient experience for Bombardier's clientele.

"This facility will further affirm Abu Dhabi's position as a leading aviation hub and contribute significantly to the region's economic growth."

The project builds on Al Bateen's transformation from general traffic to business aviation-only operations, supporting not just flight services but real estate leasing, support contracts, and infrastructure-led value creation.

As demand for high-end private aviation rises in the Middle East, airports like Al Bateen are positioning non-flight activities – not just take-offs – as core to long-term success. ■



Zurich Airport has diversified its revenue model to include income from real estate rental and other commercial activities.