

Prestwick up for Sale

BAA is to sell off Prestwick Airport to a consortium of local authorities and businessmen chaired by Ayr Conservative MP George Younger. Actually it's a bit more complicated than that; BAA will sell the airport to BAe who will in turn sell the airport facilities to Ayrshire Community Airport Project, (Acap) while retaining a freehold on the runways which will be leased to Acap. Confused? So are the airport staff: 35 jobs will be axed and job-sharing, "multi-skilling" and "flexibility" are to be introduced. Last year Prestwick's revenue was £5.1 million, on which it managed to lose £4.8 million!

The revamped airport will concentrate on its charter business and is expected to make a profit in its first year of operation. Kyle and Carrick District Council are to provide £1.5 million for the airport and a stake in Acap.

Birmingham to Chicago?

The Midlands business community is pressing for a daily trans-Atlantic service from Birmingham; American Airlines is anxious to operate it, so what's the problem? Red tape, as usual. British Airways has the concession to fly from Birmingham to the US but does not believe it could make the service pay. But the company does not want to allow its American competitors to operate provincial services in Britain without getting something in return; Robert Crandall of American Airlines did not blame BA for being narrow-minded but the recession for spurring protectionism on both sides of the Atlantic. Mr Crandall would also like his company to operate a service from Stansted to Nashville. US carriers are also being given a rough ride in France and Germany.