



***DROP THE DROP  
OFF FEES***

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# 01

# About the BTA

The BTA is the representative body for the UK business travel industry and Travel Management Companies (TMCs). BTA member TMCs account for over 90% of all business travel booked in the UK.

Our members and partners represent the entirety of the business travel sector ranging from TMCs, airlines, railway operators, car rental companies, hotels, technology providers and financial solution organisations.



# 02

# Welcome from Clive



Dear Reader,

**The business travel industry has shown remarkable resilience and has recovered well in 2023, but there are clear steps that need to be taken to improve the business traveller experience going forward in 2024.**

UK airport drop-off and pick-up fees aren't just a thorn in the side of business travellers and travel industry professionals. These charges hit everyone, from families visiting loved ones to holiday makers seeking new experiences. The impact is widespread, affecting every passenger who uses air travel in the UK. For some UK airports, fees have risen by as much as 25% in recent years. Currently, for example, it costs £17 to drop off and pick up a passenger at London Stansted Airport.

Airports claim that the higher drop-off and pick-up fees lead to more sustainable travel decisions by passengers, but, at the same time, they heavily promote discounted longer term parking on site for customers - encouraging car journeys! Also, in most cases, no incentive is offered by the airports for the use of electric cars by making it free or lower cost to drop off or pick up in an electric car. This only serves to fuel suspicions that the drop-off and pick-up Fees are a revenue raising measure rather than a green one.

I conducted a LinkedIn poll on this issue recently, and the results were overwhelming. Out of the 466 respondents, 88% of them said that airport drop-off and pick-up fees should be abolished, 9% said that they were too expensive, and only 3% said that they agreed with them.

These fees are not only a financial burden, but also a source of frustration and stress for travellers and their friends, families and business colleagues. They ruin what should be a simple and smooth start to a trip, also making goodbyes with loved ones harder and more stressful than they need to be.

Moreover, these fees are unfair and unpredictable, because they depend on factors that are beyond the control of travellers. The nature and procedures of air travel make it impossible to know how long it will take to enter and exit an airport and this varies from one airport to another in the UK. It is for this reason that most major airports outside of the UK offer free drop off and pick up, making us an outlier! UK Business travellers are being penalised and forced to pay unreasonable prices for something that they can't control.

As a leader in the business travel industry, the BTA feel that it is our duty to question the rationale and necessity for these fees. We want to raise awareness and highlight the impact of these fees for different groups of people, especially those who travel frequently for work. This is why we are urging the Government to launch a review into the principle and price of airport fees and to encourage airports to drop the charges altogether.

Best wishes,  
Clive Wratten  
CEO of the Business Travel Association (BTA)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Wratten', located below the typed name and title.

# 03

## Introduction to Drop-off and Pick-up fees

### DROP-OFF FEES

or 'kiss and fly' fees as they've been called in the news recently - are the charges that apply to cars entering an airport's designated drop-off zone

### PICK-UP FEES

are the costs people are forced into paying when waiting in a short stay car park for their loved ones or colleagues - whilst they arrive and pass through border control, baggage reclaim and customs checks

**This charging system was introduced by the majority of UK airports between 2009-2012, when the economy was still struggling from the effects of the global recession.**

**These fees are now the norm at most major UK airports.**

Passengers at UK airports are feeling the pinch as these fees rise. While some suspect pure profit-seeking to recover pandemic losses, airports argue that the increases are necessary to pay for vital investments, to improve the environment and to aid operational efficiency.

Airports state that drop-off and pick-up fees are designed to reduce congestion and emissions, encouraging travellers to use public transport.

But their failure to offer discounts for electric vehicles reveals a clear contradiction in their environmental aims.



UK airports rake in an estimated:

**£300 million/year**

from **drop-off** and **pick-up fees**.

**So, where are the visible improvements justifying the financial squeeze on travellers?**

This white paper sheds light on the true impact of airport drop-off and pick-up charges by exploring the experiences and perspectives of travellers themselves.

Through insightful interviews and accounts, we hear directly from passengers to understand how these fees affect their journeys.

## Fees table (as of present)

AIRPORT ✈️	DROP-OFF FEE	PICK-UP FEE	TOTAL DROP-OFF/ PICK-UP FEE
London Heathrow	£5	£7.50	£12.50
London Gatwick	£6	£6	£12
London Stansted	£7	£10	£17
London Luton	£5	£5	£10
London Southend	£5	£5	£10
London City	Free	£4.50	£4.50
Manchester	£5	£6	£11
Newcastle	£4	£4	£8
Liverpool	£5	£5	£10
Leeds Bradford	£6	£6	£12
Birmingham	Free up to 10 mins	£7.50	£7.50
East Midlands	£5	£6	£11
Bristol	£6	£6	£12
Exeter	£5	£5	£10
Edinburgh	£5	£5	£10
Glasgow	£5.50	£5.50	£11
Aberdeen	£4	£4	£8



### UK airports stand out in Europe for their high airport drop-off charges.

Unlike continental counterparts such as Amsterdam Schipol, Hamburg, Cologne Bonn, Geneva and Paris Charles De Gaulle - which all provide free short term drop-off zones for passengers.

### At LHR the number of passengers arriving by car or taxi has increased since 2012.

In 2022, 65% of people in a survey took a car or taxi to the airport, but only 34% used public transport.

Despite the claims that these fees are supposed to reduce the emissions of airports, **electric vehicles are charged at the same rate as diesel vehicles in most airports. Why is this?**



# 04 Impact on Businesses

**The businesses hit hardest by these charges are those who help to transport passengers to and from airports – taxi drivers, rideshare drivers and chauffeurs.**

They must factor in the cost of getting into the airport to drop-off and pick-up their passengers safely when calculating the total bill and this isn't always a smooth experience.

Ian, a chauffeur driver who transports business travellers to and from airports, described some of the problems that he has encountered since the hike in drop-off and pick-up fees. Due to the “unpredictable” nature of airports, drivers can find themselves waiting to pick up clients for hours, leading to a massive increase in charges.

“I’ve had multiple experiences where I’ve encountered a big fee for being there for a couple of hours” Ian told us. Issues with delayed flights, baggage claim, border control and customs can all lead to complications when collecting passengers.

**“You can’t always pass the fees on. You can pass some on. But for a lot of passengers, it’s not their fault, so how can you pass it all on?”**

**Ian**  
Greyline Chauffeur Drive

Although recouping airport fees through increased passenger charges is an option, many drivers have ethical concerns about this approach and hesitate to pass on their cost, potentially affecting their business revenue.





# 05 Impact on Travellers

## The impact on travellers, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis, has been serious.

The consensus among those we interviewed was that the worst-affected travellers are those who have little other option but to get a lift to the airport – older visitors, those with children, and those with reduced mobility.

Theoretically, many airports allow blue badge holders an exemption from these fees, but not everyone with reduced mobility qualifies for this exemption. If a passenger does qualify for a blue badge, it will need to be registered with any taxi that takes them to the airport to avoid the charge. If a passenger is unable to prearrange this with the taxi company before they are dropped off or picked up, they will find themselves paying an extra charge. This is hugely unhelpful and bureaucratic – if not discriminatory.

The process for paying for drop-off and pick-up fees can be confusing for those who are not confident in navigating online payments. Some payment systems, such as the one at Heathrow Airport, require travellers to register online and to set up a method of payment.



As Nikki Wheeler pointed out “We live in a world where we assume that everybody has a mobile phone and everybody knows how to use the internet.” These assumptions are problematic for many and can make the process even more stressful for those who are picking up and dropping off loved ones.

Airports will often give a timeframe for cars to remain in the drop-off zone at a flat rate, but when a car stays for longer, an extra charge will be added.

**“If I see a ticket and it’s £49.99, I think, great, I’ve got £50 in the bank. But the actual cost of that trip is becoming more and more muddled.”**

**Cameron Bengert**

This varies across airports, but for those with reduced mobility who may find it difficult to safely alight in the time given, they could easily find that their charge has doubled.

At Gatwick airport travellers pay £6 for ten minutes to drop off or pick up, but are then charged another pound for every extra minute they spend in the drop-off zone on top.

Our respondents agreed that it was “completely unacceptable” to enact a policy that disproportionately impacts those with more limited mobility. Those who are elderly or disabled are also more likely to be living on a reduced income, meaning these fees are much more damaging than they might be to other travellers.

“For those who are less mobile, those who are elderly,” said Cameron Bengert, “it’s just not feasible for them to take public transport. And sometimes it’s just simply not available.”



# 06

## Impact on Business Travellers



**There may be a perception that business travellers, who can expense their trips, will not mind paying more for their travel.**

However, times have changed and most business travellers now have to consider all travel costs regardless of whether or not they have to pay those costs themselves.

It is hugely frustrating to business travellers when public transport isn't an option because of unsociable travelling hours. Another factor that they have to consider is the location they are travelling to and from in order to reach the airport. Conferences and hotels that are near but not adjacent to airports also often make public transport options impossible, forcing business travellers to take taxis. As Alastair Fergus pointed out: "Business Travellers come out of the airport and their meeting or conference is in the hotel two miles away, and you simply can't get a train or a tube to it. You have to take a taxi. That's what determines your decision"

For those commuting overseas for business for multiple days, the option of taking a car and parking it in the airport is prohibitively expensive, particularly given the unpredictable nature of some overseas business.

**"Had I parked my car at the airport whilst travelling for business, it would have cost me over £200 for the week."**

**Alastair Fergus**

With these difficulties in mind, many business travellers resort to taxis or lifts from family members and friends, but with the airport pick-up and drop-off charges this has become an expensive task. As Sarah Hanan recounted, her husband used to commute to Gatwick airport weekly from their home in Surrey, for his business in Europe, but confirmed that because of the level of the current fees "we would not be able to do that now."

# 07

## Public Transport

### Feasibility, delays and late arrivals

**Airports have cited “encouraging public transport use” among their list of reasons for the fees, but our respondents were particularly concerned about the practicality of public transport in some, if not many, instances.**

There are trains, trams and shuttle buses to several major UK airports. The TFL website boasts 30-minute journeys to some of the biggest airports in the UK, which would be an impressive (and economical) way of travelling, if it were also a completely reliable one.

Train strikes have impacted almost every UK traveller in some way over the past 2 years. Those who would ordinarily travel by train to Gatwick or Heathrow have found themselves scrambling for alternative routes when their flights fell on strike days.

Often, they have had no choice but to get a lift from family, friends or a taxi company. Even during these times, the pick-up and drop-off fees have remained in place.

**For some, public transport simply isn't a feasible option.**

For others, practical public transport links just don't exist. “In the area I live in, there's no direct route to Heathrow.” Ian from Greyline Chauffeur Drive pointed out – echoing similar concerns to those raised by many other travellers. “Public transport links don't always exist, and when they do, they don't always operate at the right times to match the flight schedules.”

Business travellers often find themselves travelling at unsociable hours. 6am departures and midnight arrivals aren't uncommon for those travelling abroad for meetings, and at these times it can be difficult to find public transport services that are running.





Even if they are, more vulnerable members of society might find it uncomfortable travelling alone in the early hours of the morning or late at night. Women in particular may not feel safe travelling alone late at night on public transport, leaving lifts and taxis as the only option where they feel safe. With steep pick-up fees, it can feel like a tax on safe travel.

**“When I land late in the evening, there isn’t a train. I can take one during normal operating hours, but there is no train available when my flight’s delayed and I land at 11:45pm. Also, there isn’t an alternative viable option for me as a woman travelling by myself.”**

**Sarah Hanan**

Another troubling impact of the fees is that people are resorting to dropping family and friends off outside of the designated zones to avoid them.

While this can result in a fine, if caught, many are willing to risk it to avoid paying what they perceive of as unfair fees.

This can result in travellers taking unsafe roads which were not designed for pedestrians to use to walk to and from the airport. It’s not uncommon to see people “walking on all sorts of weird roads” on the approach to airports to “avoid that annoying, irritating charge” said Ian of Greyline.

**Should we really be charging people for finding safe and secure options for their transport?**

## 08

# The BTA is calling for..



INDUSTRY-WIDE  
ACTION AGAINST  
DROP-OFF/  
PICK-UP CHARGES



UK AIRPORTS  
PRIORITISING  
THE TRAVELLER  
EXPERIENCE BY  
ELIMINATING THESE  
UNNECESSARY FEES



A GOVERNMENT  
REVIEW INTO THEIR  
FAIRNESS AND  
COST WHICH IS  
SUPPORTED AND  
HELPED BY MAYORS  
AND LOCAL  
GOVERNMENTS

**Recent price hikes at major airports like Heathrow, Gatwick, and Bristol have ignited outrage among travellers and businesses who find them excessive and unjustified.**

While individual consumers do not have the power to easily challenge these practices, the BTA must take up these urgent concerns about the impact of the increases on travel affordability and accessibility.

For business travellers, drop-off and pick-up fees are more than just an annoyance; they are a direct hit to both business costs and to ease of travel.

Companies facing constrained budgets may be forced to rethink or even cancel crucial work trips because of these additional expenses.

Ultimately, it is imperative that the travel industry should not create its own obstacles or disincentives to vital business travel, especially after the pandemic severely affected the sector's growth. Let's not build walls when we finally have a chance to rebuild bridges.

**“What I would like to see is more collaboration and more pressure coming from bodies which represent consumers.”**

**Cameron Bengert**

# Quotes From Travellers Who Pay the Fees

**"I have two young children. It isn't practical to drag all of us and our bags onto a bus to get to the airport."**

Cameron Bengert



**"Airport drop-off fees are yet another tax on an already besieged traveller"**

Paula Mellon



**"There isn't an alternative viable option for me as a woman travelling by myself."**

Sarah Hanan



**"Having gone through Covid, quite a lot of the younger generation are really keen to now get out there, travel the world."**

Nikki Wheeler



**"For that high entry/exit charge, you're getting nothing. The customer is receiving no benefit whatsoever as far as I can see."**

Alastair Fergus



**"For those who are less mobile, those who are elderly, it's just not feasible for them to take public transport. And sometimes it's just simply not available."**

Cameron Bengert

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