

Airline says City airport will be start of new trend

By Harvey Elliott, Air Correspondent

Airline chiefs seeking to fly from London's new City Airport are optimistic it will trigger a demand throughout Europe for airport facilities reserved exclusively for businessmen.

Plans are being considered in Paris and Brussels for terminals within existing main airports catering specially for club class passengers prepared to pay higher prices for the privilege of being isolated from holiday-makers.

London City Airport, built on the former Royal group of docks, which is due to open in October, is the first airport in the world dedicated to providing city centre to city centre services for business travellers.

It is expected that well over 80 per cent of travellers will have their tickets paid for by companies and will want quick, trouble-free boarding arrangements.

Mr Charles Stuart, chairman of Brymon Airways which is bidding for licences to fly from the airport, revealed at a seminar on the new airport held by the London Chamber of Commerce yesterday that he has held talks with airport authorities at Brussels airport about a new terminal solely for businessmen.

Because the airport is only six miles from the Bank of England it is believed that by travelling to Docklands rather than to Heathrow for a flight

to Paris a businessman working in the City will save at least 25 minutes on his total journey time.

● Manchester Airport has complained that a mistake by the Department of Transport has resulted in the the loss of business worth millions of pounds.

Because of the alleged Whitehall oversight, Manchester Airport has been excluded from international flight agreements between Britain and other countries although it is designated as a category A gateway airport.

Foreign airlines wishing to operate services from Manchester can do so only if they obtain a temporary licence or sacrifice established routes at Heathrow and Gatwick.

North-west MPs have raised the issue in the Commons and airport board members and Mr Gil Thompson, the airport's chief executive, met Department of Transport officials on Monday.

Mr Thompson said: "As things stand now the Government is just paying lip service to its declared intention of more fairly distributing the nation's wealth by channelling some of the 98 per cent of foreign tourists arriving in London each year to other parts of the country".

This week officials at the airport are negotiating a no-strike agreement with unions in the wake of the two-week strike which cost the airport £120,000 a day.