**MANCHESTER AIRPORT DELIVERS MAJOR BOOST TO NORTH WITH NEW MUMBAI CONNECTION**

**Route will unlock £400m of economic benefits over next five years**

* **Huge trade and investment benefits from direct connection as businesses and organisations across the Northern Powerhouse welcome route**
* **Tourism benefit predicted for the North as UK is the second most popular long-haul destination for Indian visitors**
* **130,000 passengers a year set to benefit from direct route, with 500,000 people of Indian origin living in Manchester Airport’s catchment area**
* **Inaugural flight jets off to Mumbai ahead of Diwali celebrations**
* **Aviation Minister says route is key to Britain’s economic future**

The launch of new direct flights to Mumbai, India’s economic capital, is set to deliver a £400m boost to the North.

Jet Airways’ five-times-a-week service takes off for the first time this morning, at a celebration attended by **Aviation Minister, Baroness Liz Sugg** and hundreds of guests from across the region.

The route will unlock hundreds of millions of pounds of trade, investment and tourism benefits, according to a report released to coincide with the launch.

It follows a sustained push from Manchester Airport and regional partners to establish the first ever link between the North of England and Mumbai, driven by the increasing economic ties between the two regions and increasingly strong demand to travel between them.

The study, called *The Northern Powerhouse and India: Unlocking the Opportunity,* predicts an economic boost to the North of at least £400m in the next five years.

It describes the North as the “ideal collaborator” with India, with its strengths in areas like digital, advanced manufacturing and energy perfectly aligning with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s economic priorities.

**Aviation Minister, Baroness Liz Sugg said**: “Connections like the one being launched today are key to Britain’s economic future and will help to drive economic growth and trade both here in Manchester and right across the North. Co-operation, trade and tourism with India is set to grow over the coming years, and we are committed to helping build the linkswe need now, so that all areas of the UK can be well placed to make the most of that growing relationship”.

Jet Airways will fly from Manchester to Mumbai on a Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday and will operate on an A330-200, with 254 seats across Première (business) and economy classes.

India is the UK’s seventh largest trade partner in goods outside of Europe and third largest exporter of services to the UK.

Its current economic growth (7-8% per annum) has seen foreign direct investment into the UK create around 6,000 new jobs. That is why securing a direct service was a long-term priority for both Manchester Airport and the region, leading to the formation of an award-winning public/private body, the Manchester India Partnership (MIP), earlier this year.

The MIP was launched in both the UK and India earlier this year and is chaired by **Manchester Airport CEO Andrew Cowan, who said**: “The launch of this service is an important moment for Manchester Airport and the wider region.

“India is one of the world’s most important markets and this route will unlock huge opportunities for economic and cultural collaboration with the North.

“It underlines the importance of direct connectivity, which helps businesses export their goods and services, attracts investors to the UK and encourages tourism in both directions.

“I want to take this opportunity to thank Jet Airways and all those involved with the Manchester India Partnership for making this long-held ambition a reality.”

**Naresh Goyal, Chairman of Jet Airways, said:**

“We are happy to be the first airline to offer a non-stop, premium service between Mumbai and Manchester.  The UK is a very important destination for Jet Airways and with the addition of Manchester we hope to make a further contribution to boosting tourism and trade between the two countries.”

Jet announced its Manchester-Mumbai route in May as a four-times-a-week service. Demand has been so strong, the airline increased its frequency to five-times-a-week before it had even launched, with the first flights leaving Manchester fully occupied.

This reflects the powerful role the service will play in facilitating trade, investment and other economic activity between the two locations.

The Unlocking the Opportunity report, published by the Manchester India Partnership, said the route will enable at least £300m of trade and investment benefits, as more Northern businesses start exporting and a raft of fast-growing Indian firms are encouraged to set up bases here, creating more than 2,000 jobs in the process.

The report’s findings were welcomed by **Dr Liam Fox MP, Secretary of State for International Trade, who said:**

“As we look to build a balanced and globally competitive UK economy, our links with high growth markets like India will be critical.

 “That is why direct connectivity provided through routes like Jet Airways’ Manchester-Mumbai service are so important. The service will help us attract more visitors and investors to the UK, as well as opening up trade and collaboration opportunities for businesses and universities across the North.

“My international economic department has a range of support available to businesses looking to make the most of the new flight route, including finance through our award-winning export credit agency, UK Export Finance, and market advice from our in-country HM Trade Commissioner, Crispin Simon.”

**Northern Powerhouse Minister, Jake Berry MP, added:**

“The first direct flights from Manchester to Mumbai are fantastic news for the Northern Powerhouse. This new gateway between the North of England and India will deepen relations worth £18bn between our two countries and open up the Northern Powerhouse to millions of tourists. This new direct route connects the North to one of the fastest growing and most dynamic economies on the planet, enriching ties between two international cities. It also supports our vision for a super-connected global North bringing the Northern Powerhouse to the world and the world to the Northern Powerhouse.”

The Manchester-Mumbai link was welcomed by business groups in both the UK and India.

**Carolyn Fairbairn, CBI Director-General, said:** “It’s fantastic that Manchester Airport is expanding its route network by adding this direct service to the vibrant economic powerhouse that is Mumbai. Expanding our aviation capacity, and creating new flight routes to rapidly growing markets, is mission critical to ensuring Britain can compete on the post-Brexit world stage.

“These new air links will unlock growth and help create jobs at home, and enable more businesses – especially our many innovative and ambitious small and medium-sized ones – to export their goods and services to booming markets.”

**Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), said:** “The newly launched direct flight connection from Mumbai to Manchester is only the beginning of a new era in increased business opportunities between India and the North of England.

“The publication of this report not only highlights, but confirms our longstanding confidence in the strength of the UK India economic relationship. The time is opportune for the two countries to encourage this partnership and grow together.”

Visitor attractions across the North are set to benefit to the tune of £12m a year, with tens of thousands of Indian tourists set to travel into the region on the service.

**VisitBritain Director Patricia Yates said:**“Inbound tourism is one of Britain’s most valuable export industries and we want to provide a world-class experience to the millions of visitors who travel here every year, more than 70% of whom arrive by air.

“Increasing airline route connectivity and seat capacity into Manchester, the north’s global gateway, is a crucial part of our competitive tourism offer. We saw record visits from India last year and the new direct route from Mumbai into Manchester will help build on this growth, making it easier for visitors to travel, to explore more and to boost growth from tourism across the country.”

Jet Airways’ flight 9W 130 will depart from Mumbai at 0230 hrs (Local time) and will arrive in Manchester’s Terminal Two at 0755 hrs (Local time). The return flight, 9W 129 will depart from Manchester at 0935 hrs (Local time) and arrive in Mumbai’s Terminal Two at 0040 hrs (Local time).

The inaugural celebrations included Indian dancing, the airport choir and a multi-faith traditional Indian blessing. They were attended by public and private sector leaders from across the North.

**Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council, said:** "Mumbai is a thriving, lively city and the launch of Manchester's first direct route there is a hugely significant development, which will see the the city and wider region grow its links with India’s financial powerhouse. The better connected Manchester and the North is nationally and internationally, the better placed we will be to compete on a world stage, attracting jobs, investment and visitors. This announcement further strengthens Manchester Airport's status and Manchester's position as a global hub."

Return fares including taxes start from: £391 (economy) and £1,458 (business class).

For more information – [www.manchesterairport.co.uk](http://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/) / [www.jetairways.com](http://www.jetairways.com/)

Supportive quotes/case studies:

**Director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership Henri Murison said:**

“The announcement of a direct route to Mumbai from Manchester is a fantastic shot in the arm for the Northern Powerhouse and a major boost to drive the ambitions of people in the North.

“Forging closer links between India and the Northern Powerhouse is crucial to increasing the contribution the North makes to the economy, and reinforces the role of Manchester as the global gateway to the North – brining investment, growth and skilled jobs to the region.

“This link, and others including to the US and China, is not simply about connecting the people of Greater Manchester to the world. It is a chance for all of the North’s 15 million people to create new opportunities for them and their families.”

**Jo Ahmed, Partner at Deloitte and on the Board of the Manchester India Partnership:**

“The direct flight between Manchester and Mumbai will provide easier access to one of our most important international markets.  With the regular rotation of staff between Deloitte offices in Manchester and India, this flight has a direct benefit to our business as well as the clear benefit this direct route will bring to the wider North West economy by opening up a direct trade and investment route.”

**Sheona Southern, Managing Director of Marketing Manchester, said:**

“Known throughout the world as the birthplace of the industrial revolution, Manchester has a proud history in science, politics, music, arts and sport. Today the city combines this heritage with a progressive vision to be a globally minded, open and collaborative world city; a compelling place to visit, invest, study and live.

“Thanks to the new non-stop route from Mumbai with Jet Airways, now is a better time than ever for the Indian market to discover everything Manchester and the north of England’s has to offer as a culturally rich visitor destination, growing investment hub and diverse academic network.

“India has, for a long time, been one of our key international markets of focus. A recent report found that Indian tourists deem Manchester as the second most familiar city in the UK, which is evidenced by the 13,000 Indian citizens who visited in 2017 – but Marketing Manchester is committed to building significantly on this.

“Our campaign to promote Manchester as the gateway to the North of England has already achieved immense success and is part of a long-term strategy for 9% year-on-year growth for Greater Manchester’s visitor economy and for the development of greater value and volume across the north of England as a whole.”

**Professor Steve Flint, Associate Vice-President for Internationalisation, The University of Manchester, said:**

“This is great news for the University as we have strong and growing links with India and Mumbai. Our research and business links include health care, advanced materials, energy, water quality and smart cities, including a major UK-India project on air pollution.  And of course we have hundreds of Indian students and staff, for whom this new non-stop route will be extremely important.”

**Tim Newns, CEO of MIDAS - Manchester’s inward investment agency, said:**

“We are delighted to have reached the key milestone of securing a direct flight to India’s economic capital, which is a key market in Greater Manchester’s internationalisation strategy.

“India presents significant opportunities to the city region, being the UK’s seventh largest trade partner in goods outside of Europe as well as one of the UK’s primary sources of foreign direct investment; but following the launch of this direct route to Mumbai, Greater Manchester is primed to build on the relationships it has already developed with leading Indian businesses including HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, 42 Gears, and Hero Cycles.

“A year after launching the direct route between Manchester and Beijing, we reported a 265% increase in trade and investment, which we hope to replicate after encouraging even more high growth Indian companies to invest in Greater Manchester.”

**Mandy Lockett MIEx, International Business Director, East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, said:**

“The launch by Jet Airways of this key route between Manchester and Mumbai will be a huge boost to the north west’s thriving business community not just in terms of transporting passengers and cargo quickly and efficiently but will also further strengthen the strong ties between India and the region.”

**Chris Scholey, Chair of Sheffield City Region’s Trade and Investment Board, said:**

“The Sheffield City Region (SCR) welcomes this important development. Increasing direct connections from the North of England to fast-growing markets such as India is hugely important as we develop stronger trading relationships in post-Brexit Britain.

“India is a key target market for us at SCR. In 2015, our businesses exported £81m worth of goods to India, and it was one of the top five source markets for investment into the SCR between 2006 and 2016.

“This improved connectivity will be a real asset to us as we grow these existing trade relationships and further cement SCR’s reputation as a great place to do business.”

**Ash Pandey, Client Partner UKI- TechMahindra said:**

“TechMahindra has been operating in the North for the last few years and our teams make regular travels to Manchester. This currently adds to their overall journey and not the best experience from an end user perspective. Currently the teams are largely based in Pune so they travel a lot of time to transit to Mumbai so a direct flight from Mumbai- Manchester will be a great welcome.

“In fact our largest account in North, TalkTalk also makes few trips to India to promote collaborate working. This again is a great opportunity and example for us to leverage direct routes to expand both inward and international investment.

“TechM has recently made a 6 figure investment in North so we are very excited and looking forward to create more opportunities by working with innovate start-ups, public institutions like universities and councils. This creates a new set of opportunities to have frequent travel between Manchester and India.

“I am personally overwhelmed by the direct flight initiative from Manchester to an Indian Metro. I have lived in Manchester for last 7 years and made least 3-4 travels every year wasting quality time in transit. I am looking forward for the service to commence so this year I can travel to Mumbai directly with my family.”

**Sreeram Venkateswaran CEO Hero Cycles said:**

“Manchester operations are very significant to the Group’s overall growth objectives. With significant investments here, intend to strengthen the operations out of Manchester with close working with our Indian Operations. Connectivity is the key to this knowledge and skill exchange. Direct flights from Manchester to India will definitely help in the easier flow of talent and ideas will have significant benefits to our business.”

**Brian Holliday, Managing Director Siemens Digital Factory said:**

“Siemens is a significant employer and manufacturer in the North West and has been well served by Manchester Airport as a vital link for our customers, regional partners and supply chain. The introduction of direct flights to India is a really positive step in the region’s growth journey and in connecting our business better with our global supply chain.”

**Manish Bansal CFO & Director Welspun UK Ltd said:**

“The importance of this new, direct route cannot be underestimated. As a business with operations both in India and the North of England, this will deliver significant productivity benefits to our operations and hopefully encourage other Indian companies to establish operations here in the region.”

**Alex Marshall, Group Marketing and Compliance Director, Clarke Energy & Northern Powerhouse Export Champion, said:**

“With Clarke Energy's international headquarters in the northwest of England and our Indian headquarters in Maharashtra, this new route from Manchester to Mumbai is incredibly welcomed and has the potential to reduce transfer times and flight costs for our company.”

**Steve Brown, Managing Director at Make It York, said**

“It’s fantastic news about the new direct service from Mumbai to Manchester which will open up the Indian market into the North of England.  We’ve already had a lot of interest in filming locations and itineraries in York and Yorkshire in recent years and this will open doors to even more opportunities.”

**Jim Jones, North Wales Tourism MD, said:**

“There are an abundance of reasons that we are delighted that Manchester Airport is opening up a route direct from the great nation of India.

“We believe that North Wales can offer the inbound tourists from India a plethora of visitor experiences on Manchester Airport’s doorstep. We have the best outdoor adventure activities in the world. Thrilling mountain scenery, fascinating ancient culture and heritage wherever you turn. North Wales was the only place in Britain to make it into the Lonely Planet ‘s Best in Travel 2017.”

**Chris Brown, director of Marketing Liverpool, said:**

“The new route between Manchester and Mumbai is excellent news for the whole north of England. We’re already extremely proud to welcome so many Indian visitors, and a direct link into Manchester Airport will encourage more people to see it for themselves. I believe there will be many benefits to businesses in the north as well, making it easier to build relationships with India’s economic powerhouse.”