

George Best Belfast City Airport

Record of Decision on Delayed Aircraft after 9.30pm

Date Information Supplied: 29/05/2026

Months Covered: March and April 2026

Was information adequate to assess compliance? No

Was any clarification required? No.

Consideration of Reasons for Delayed Aircraft

Types of reasons

There were 56 extensions over the two months, 30 in March and 26 in April. 89% or 50 of the extensions were arrivals and 11% or 6 were departures after 9.30pm.

Explanations for the extensions included issues such as a medical emergency on board, aircraft defects, aircraft change and aircraft rotation. 52 of the extensions were recorded as reactionary, i.e. due to aircraft rotation. These earlier delays were caused by a range of issues including slot restrictions, technical issues, airport facilities at Manchester, Weather issues, knock on delays and flight deck crew shortages. There were 5 delays recorded without a secondary reason provided.

There were 7 delays on the Birmingham route, 16 delays on the Edinburgh route, 14 delays on the Manchester route, 9 delays on the route from Southampton, 5 on the Leeds Bradford route, the London City route had 3 delays, 1 delay on the London Heathrow route and London Gatwick had 1 delay. 49 of these delays were from Aer Lingus/Emerald Airlines, 4 of these were from British Airways and 3 of the delays were from EasyJet.

25 (44.6%) of extensions occurred before 22:00 and between 22:00 and 23:00 there were 22 (39.3%). 9 (16.1%) flights operated after 23:00 and before 23:59. In the months of March and April there were 4 flights diverted/refused.

These figures are higher than the number of extensions experienced in the same months in 2025 (11 in March and 20 in April). Extensions represented 1.1% of movements compared with 0.64% last year. The average extension length was 46.5 minutes (increase from last year, 41.5 minutes); 44.6% of extensions were less than 30 minutes (54.8% last year). There were extensions on 46% of nights (28 out of 61) compared with 30% (18 out of 61) last year.

Do These Reasons Meet the Exceptional Circumstances Test and the Department Guidance?

Yes – these delays relate to, aircraft rotation, technical issues and operational problems at other airports and with airlines and reactionary delays beyond the airport's control. They are considered exceptional in accordance with the Department's guidance.

The Department wrote to GBBCA on 18 March 2026 raising several issues, including the number of flights on specific routes, late flights without a secondary explanation for the rotational delay and the increasing number of flights after 23:00. No response has been received. It is recommended that the Department writes again seeking a written response as these issues remain prevalent.

Is there a need for further action? Yes

Signed:

1. [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED]

Date: 24/06/2026

Discussed and above record agreed at RPP&C group meeting