

George Best Belfast City Airport

Record of Decision on Delayed Aircraft after 9.30pm

Date Information Supplied: 31/07/2026

Months Covered: May and June 2026

Was information adequate to assess compliance? Yes

Was any clarification required? No.

Consideration of Reasons for Delayed Aircraft

Types of reasons

There were 78 extensions over the two months, 29 in May and 49 in June. 86% or 67 of the extensions were arrivals and 14% or 11 were departures after 9.30pm.

Explanations for the extensions included issues such as fuelling problems, aircraft damaged on push back and aircraft rotation. 76 of the extensions were recorded as reactionary, i.e. due to aircraft rotation. These earlier delays were caused by a range of issues including air traffic control issues, slot restrictions, technical issues, bad weather, aircraft swaps, knock on delays and crew rotations. There were 32 delays recorded without a secondary reason provided.

There were 18 delays on the Manchester route, 14 delays on the Edinburgh route, 11 delays on the London Heathrow route, 10 delays on the route from Southampton, 9 on the Birmingham route, the Leeds Bradford route had 6 delays, 4 delays on the London City route, the Glasgow route had 3 delays, London Gatwick had 2 delays and there was 1 delay recorded on the Palma route. 60 of these delays were from Aer Lingus/Emerald Airlines, 16 of these were from British Airways and 2 of the delays were from EasyJet.

46 (59%) of extensions occurred before 22:00 and between 22:00 and 23:00 there were 26 (33.3%). 6 (7.7%) flights operated after 23:00 and before 23:59. In the months of March and April there were 5 flights diverted/refused.

These figures are higher than the number of extensions experienced in the same months in 2025 (19 in May and 32 in June). Extensions represented 1.4% of movements compared with 1.02% last year. The average extension length was 35 minutes (increase from last year, 29 minutes); 59% of extensions were less than 30 minutes (55.9% last year). There were extensions on 60.7% of nights (37 out of 61) compared with 56% (34 out of 61) last year.

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

Yes – these delays relate to aircraft rotation, weather, 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.

Numbers of extensions on the Edinburgh and Manchester routes remain high, as do the total numbers of extensions during these months and the number of extensions without a secondary reason. The Department has recently written the Airport regarding these issues and received a response.

The Airport has stated that delays codes and descriptions are determined by airline operations and ground handling agents and are not always available to them. This has also been communicated to the Department on previous occasions.

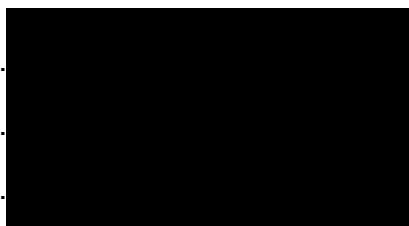
The Airport also acknowledged a modest increase in the number of extensions related to an increase in overall movements and state that they continue to refuse late flights when necessary.

The Airport has referred to the Edinburgh, Manchester and Birmingham routes as proving most challenging and stated that they will continue to work with the operator to highlight these and aim for steady improvement where at all possible within their control.

Is there a need for further action? No

Signed:

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Date: 14/09/2026