



The Met Office have been working closely with Thomson Airways and their ski tour operators to improve the efficiency of their operations. By working in partnership, we have been able to deliver a bespoke service relevant to Thomson's operations.

Challenge

Getting passengers into remote, mountainous locations often means operating into smaller airports tucked into steep-sided gullies or in fog prone valley floors. Some have strict safety thresholds because of the aircraft's steep approach between high mountains, meaning they are very sensitive to cloud base, visibility and strong winds.

The smaller airports don't have the capacity to manage several aircraft arriving at once, such as what happens when aircraft have been waiting for fog to clear. This delays passengers getting through the airport to their transfer by coach to the ski resort. Snow and ice on the roads can also create further delays.

With local forecasts for airports often not available until a few hours before a flight is due to take off, any plans made often need to change. After a few discussions with Thomson Airways before the ski season started it was clear which areas caused the most concern. Our meteorologists were able to focus on supporting planning by offering confidence and clarity around weather impacts where it really mattered to Thomson Airways's operation. By being engaged in Thomson Airways's weekly operational meeting, forecaster's advice was continually refined as the ski season developed.



Solution

A MetInsight® briefing was delivered throughout the ski season directly in to Thomson Airways's operations team across their ski network. Easily adapting to current operations schedules, this briefing became a core feature of the existing team meeting in place to discuss vital operational decisions.

A dedicated team of meteorologists based at the Met Office's HQ in Exeter participated in virtual weekly briefing meetings, providing a bespoke weather forecast for the upcoming busy weekend period followed by an interactive Q&A session to discuss areas of concern or additional clarification. In addition to this, a mid-week briefing pack was provided and circulated to Thomson Airways's operations team to highlight potential areas of disruption.

Our meteorologists were specifically looking for:

- **Risk of disruptive snowfall** - Assessing the elevations at which precipitation would fall as snow, and forecasting snowfall accumulations to pre-empt any disruption caused, be it at airport level or on the road network between airport and resort.
- **Chance of low cloud and/or poor visibilities at prone airfields** - Forecasting visibility and cloud base or ceiling to assess whether conditions were likely to be below approach and take-off limits for airfields for estimated time of arrival and departure.
- **Strong winds** - Forecasting strong winds and analysing the cross-wind component at individual airfields, which might make approach or take-off difficult and disrupt the days flying programme.

Benefits

- The MetInsight® service created additional support for Thomson Airways's operations, allowing for contingency planning across their network. Meteorologists were able to help identify which airfields were most at risk of disruption allowing Operations Managers to pro-actively choose alternate airfields for diversion and ensure that the whole team are aware of the plan ahead of time.

Other benefits included:

- Proactive decision making, highlighting options to delay flights out of the UK if there was a strong possibility that fog at destination sites will not clear in time for estimated time of arrival.
- Helped to identify specific flights that would benefit from taking extra fuel for holding, ensuring the programme was as resilient as possible.
- Meteorologists were able to help identify when cold weather might impact overnight hubs, alerting operations staff and allowing them to check the necessary precautions were in place. For example, sufficient staff levels, de-icing equipment, ample availability of de-icing fluid or for the transportation team to stay at the resort to avoid delays.
- Meteorologists were also able to provide some detail on the weather conditions expected at the airfields up to two days ahead, providing forecast information beyond the time of the TAF, and giving advance warning of any hazardous weather to allow for forward planning.
- Liaising directly with the Customer Operations Team to explain how the weather situation will impact on operations, provided a useful understanding that can be shared with passengers and resort representatives.



To find out more:

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