

Whitestone Chambers

Chambers of Lawrence Power
4 King's Bench Walk,
Temple, London, EC4Y 7DL
Tel: 02078228822 Fax: 02078228844

Flybe to be rebranded as Virgin Connect

After 40 years as the largest independent regional airline in Europe, Flybe has been acquired by the Connect Airways consortium. The Connect Airways consortium was created in December 2018 and consists of 40% ownership by Cyprus Capital, 30% by the Stobart Group, and 30% by Virgin Atlantic Limited.

The proposed merger of the consortium received approval from the European Commission on 5 July 2019 [1] on condition that full compliance is met by Connect Airways as to the commitments [2] that it offered, to ensure that it complies fully with competition law. Following the merger in July 2019, Flybe was acquired by Connect Airways and in the near future, the Flybe name will be changed to 'Virgin Connect'. Switching from the current purple colour schemes, Flybe's fleet of 76 aircrafts will be rebranded to match the distinctive red of the Virgin Group companies.

Based in Exeter, and with hubs at Birmingham and Manchester airport, Flybe currently carries 8 million passengers per year between 81 airports throughout the UK and the rest of Europe. Flybe has over 210 routes across 15 countries, and a number of codeshares permitting connections to long-haul flights from several airports including London Heathrow, Paris CDG and Amsterdam. These capabilities will be used by Virgin Connect to build upon the existing Virgin brand, and to offer a wider range of services.

The CEO of the newly branded Virgin Connect, Mark Anderson said: "We are hugely excited by this milestone in our airline's 40-year history. We will remain true to our heritage and reason for being, which is offering essential regional connectivity to local communities. "At its heart, Virgin Connect will be passionately focused on becoming Europe's most loved and successful regional airline. It will offer travel that is simple and convenient with the personal touch. Our customers will naturally expect the same exceptional travel experience as they do with other Virgin-related brands. Whatever their reason for flying, we want our customers to feel loved and know we will always put their needs first in every decision we take.

Customers are advised that their bookings will not be affected and that they may continue to visit www.flybe.com to book flights, check in and manage their booking. For those passengers concerned about Brexit, they can have their fears alleviated. In place is EU Regulation 2019/502 that provides for common rules ensuring basic air connectivity with regards to Brexit, allowing Virgin Connect to fly to European destinations until 24 October 2020.

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_3790

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/additional_data/m9287_881_5.pdf