

## **Manchester – China**

### **A Political Development?**

It's not quite a scientific equation but visits to any country by a Chinese Prime Minister frequently equate to new air services pretty soon after. This week President Xi Jinping visits the UK, so what can we expect?

Well, Heathrow is full as we all know and perhaps the Chinese can tender for the new runway and related terminal buildings! But that will be some time away from happening.

The President is also visiting Manchester for a day; apparently a rare side trip for such State visits perhaps with hidden meaning or announcement. Manchester airport has for many years sought a direct service to China and perhaps will get their wish this week. But what can they hope for?

The current market is around 144,000\* per annum which would appear a reasonable size of which 53,000 are travelling to and from Shanghai. With additional traffic from surrounding catchment areas that currently drives to Heathrow and some market stimulation it's likely that the market could reach 200,00 per annum to China and perhaps 75,000 to Shanghai.

All of which would play well to a three or four times weekly non-stop service to Shanghai perhaps from as early as the Summer 2016 schedules. As for the airline operating, that may be a 'political' decision but with China Eastern operating over 16 million seats from the airport and providing a range of connectivity they would have to be favourites.

As always with a new service comes some threat. KLM carried over 19,000 passengers from Manchester to China in the last year; about 50 a day. Whilst BA, Air France and Lufthansa all carried over 15,000 so they will need to find alternate traffic if some of that business is lost.

So perhaps great news for Manchester this week and fingers crossed for that to occur; its been on their target list for too many years not to happen.