

INTERVIEW

A graduate from Sheffield University in 1980, Nigel qualified as an accountant in 1983.

Following graduation, Nigel joined the retailer Hepworths, which transformed itself into Next. He then spent four years with Northern Foods, one of the major food processors within the UK, before joining bmi.

Nigel was promoted to finance director of bmi in 1994. In this role he was responsible for the entire finance and treasury function within the company. Nigel was appointed to the British Midland Airways Limited board in May 1999 and he became chief financial officer of British Midland plc group in 2002.

In 2001 – 2004 Nigel was a main board director of NATS, the air traffic control provider for UK airspace, having been involved in the purchase, by Airline Group Ltd, of a controlling interest from Her Majesty's Government.

Nigel was appointed CEO of British Midland plc in October 2004, a group with a turnover of £1bn and over 5,000 employees. In January 2008 he was re-appointed to the main board of NATS.

Q. Nigel, welcome back to Saudi Arabia, you seem to be becoming quite a regular visitor. What brings you to Riyadh on this occasion?

Firstly I was pleased to have been invited to speak at the SAGIA sponsored Global Competitiveness Forum but my visit is also to reinforce bmi's commitment to the region and Saudi Arabia in particular. Whilst I'm here I hope to see our key local agents and make sure that they are kept up-to-date with bmi product offerings.

Q. We first met when bmi stepped into the breach after 'another' British carrier pulled out claiming that the route was not commercially viable. Is bmi happy with the return on the route or does it receive some sort of government subsidy to make it happen?

Well, I can't speak for anyone else...let's just say that we could always do better but are content with the revenue we achieve on the Saudi routes...and no we don't receive any form of subsidy.

Q. The rumour mill suggests that the 'other' carrier might now want to return. Is there room for two British carriers on the same routes?

Flights between Saudi Arabia and the UK are restricted on a reciprocal basis and at present we are limited on the number of flights we can make to



Saudi Arabia to the number the Saudi carrier makes to the UK. If more opportunities to fly were to come up, bmi would hope to take the opportunity to expand its number of flights. Indeed you will know that we intend to start operating out of Dammam in March.

Q. Let's talk about Dammam for a moment; I understand that this will not be a direct service. Why not?

Initially we want to test the water, we need to assess the type of passenger load we are going to get from the Eastern Province before deciding on an alternative. bmi has a good hub at Heathrow and many of the passengers we fly in may want to take advantage of that. Having announced 17 new destinations during the winter timetable period, bmi now serve 41 destinations from Heathrow.

Q, The mention of Heathrow reminds me to ask about baggage policies. I understand there may be some changes.

Yes there are changes. Since early in January the Department for Transport lifted some of the restrictions on cabin baggage and we were able to amend our policy so that passengers boarding at Heathrow and travelling in business may now take two pieces of hand baggage plus one personal item into the cabin and passengers in economy are able to take one piece within the maximum weight and dimension allowance plus that personal item.

By personal item we mean a small handbag, purse, small briefcase, laptop or baby-change bag. Laptops in a thin satchel and slimline briefcases are considered a personal item; however, laptops in larger computer bags or larger, bulkier briefcases are counted as one piece of cabin baggage. Personal items are accepted as such at bmi's discretion. The maximum dimensions of the hand baggage piece are 55cm x 40cm x 23cm.

**Nigel Turner
CEO bmi**



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER