



Department
for Transport



14 June 2022

Dear Colleague,

Following the Secretary of State and Aviation Minister's meeting with you on Wednesday 1 June, we wanted to write personally to you to extend our appreciation for your efforts to support passengers through the recent travel disruption and to set out what we see as the priorities for minimising further disruption into and through the summer period.

After nearly two years of travel restrictions, it is excellent to see people travelling by air again in such strong numbers. However, we trust you share our view that the outcomes for too many consumers recently have been unacceptable. It is imperative that we see an improvement to the resilience in the system, planning and scheduling to reflect the available capacity ahead of the summer period.

We appreciate that some airports and airlines have continued to deliver a good service despite pressures and we are grateful for your efforts in this regard. We also recognise that there are a range of causes of the disruption including some of which are outside your control, for example air traffic control delays in other countries and that this is not a solely UK issue.

Nonetheless, our expectation is that you and all those involved in delivering aviation services will take all possible steps to prepare for and manage passenger demand that helps to avoid the unacceptable scenes we have recently witnessed.

We all share a common goal to de-risk the summer period but we believe more needs to be done to give us all better assurance that this goal will be delivered.

Against this backdrop we thought it would be helpful if we set out five specific expectations we have of our partners in the aviation sector:

1. **Summer Schedule** – Firstly we think it's important that each airline reviews afresh its plans for the remainder of the summer season until the end of September to develop a schedule that is deliverable. Your schedules must be based on the resources you and your contractors

expect to have available, and should be resilient for the unplanned and inevitable operational challenges that you will face. While cancellations at any time are a regrettable inconvenience to passengers, it is our view that cancellations at the earliest possibility to deliver a more robust schedule are better for consumers than late notice on the day cancellations.

- 2. Airport Partner Working Groups** - Second, we would ask that partners at the local airport level work collaboratively on resilience planning and assurance as a system and not just in isolation. **We propose that all airport CEOs take a leading role to bring together the airlines and ground handlers that operate at your airport, along with air traffic control and Border Force to create Airport Partner Working Groups.** The airport is well placed to act as the coordinator of this local planning and we know that many have already made arrangements to bring together key local partners to improve resilience. The objective should be to ensure a more coordinated strategic approach to deliver a safe and resilient operation as a system and thus improve the consumer experience, whilst respecting commercial confidentiality. The Airport Partner Working Groups will be expected to report to the Strategic Risk Group that we are establishing with CEOs from airports, airlines and ground handlers to provide assurances based on your thorough review of your collaborative plans. The Strategic Risk Group will meet weekly and be chaired by the Aviation Minister. This is in addition to the Summer Resilience Group chaired by David Silk, which shall also move from a fortnightly basis to weekly.
- 3. Consumer Rights** - Third, we expect that when there are unavoidable cancellations, delays and denied boarding cases that passengers are promptly, clearly and empathetically communicated with. This should include informing passengers of their consumer rights in relation to refund and compensation routes if applicable. Also when dealing with operational challenges, we expect you to have the processes and resources in place to keep consumers informed, such as having sufficiently staffed call centres and user friendly digital channels to ensure refunds and compensation are paid in good time. We would like to express our thanks to all those that have been doing so in recent weeks despite the challenges you have had. Many of you have increased your communications to help prepare passengers as they travel after a long period away.

As recently announced, DfT will also imminently be developing an Aviation Passenger Charter, with input from industry and consumer groups, which will further support consumer access to key information about their rights and responsibilities when travelling by air.

Consumers whose flights have been cancelled are entitled to a refund or re-routing at the earliest opportunity, and in certain circumstances compensation. When customers are trying to return home, we would encourage you to use re-routing as much as possible. If airlines cannot re-route passengers on their own services or partner airlines on the same day they should identify re-routing options on alternative airlines. It is also important that where passengers are delayed they receive suitable subsistence and, if they need to stay overnight, suitable accommodation promptly. The CAA's guidance on 're-routing' options on alternative airlines can be found here:

[https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/Re-routing%20Guidance%20\(CAP2155\).pdf](https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/Re-routing%20Guidance%20(CAP2155).pdf).

If there is evidence that an airline is systematically letting consumers down when it comes to those rights, the CAA will not hesitate to escalate matters with its enforcement role.

4. Providing assistance to disabled and less mobile passengers -

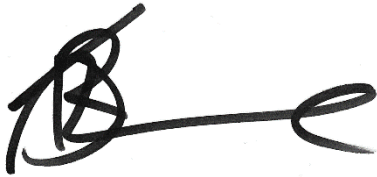
Fourth, we are aware that many of you have faced issues with the provision of assistance for disabled and less mobile passengers. As you know failure in this area is simply unacceptable and this is a key area to get right. The CAA has separately written a letter to all airports and airlines highlighting some specific concerns about the assistance service for disabled and less mobile passengers and the importance of immediate improvements.

5. Safety and Security - Fifth, safety and security must not be compromised. We stress that the sector's strong track record for ensuring the highest safety and security standards must be maintained and not weakened as you plan for, and respond to, the challenges you face over the coming weeks and months. Safety and security must never be taken for granted and we would expect you to continue to seek assurance within your organisation that this is the case given your operating challenges.

Following the many conversations we have had with industry partners, we welcome the high level of support for these five expectations. We would, however, like to understand the basis on which your businesses are gaining assurance that these five expectations will be met and more broadly how your business will be able to meet the goal of providing a resilient service over the summer period. Through the Strategic Risk and Summer Resilience Groups we will continue to work with you to identify possible interventions to further improve the resilience of the sector, mirroring the approach that the Department has taken to support the road haulage sector through its recent period of operational challenges.

We look forward to working with you to get the UK aviation system back where it belongs as a world leading, strategically important industry that we can all be very proud of. Both the Department and the CAA will play our full roles in our aim of ensuring the recovery for air travel is a success. Let's start with working together to make sure the summer is a great success for the British public.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RM', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Richard Moriarty
CAA CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Leontaridi', written in a cursive style.

Rannia Leontaridi
Director General, Aviation,
Maritime and Security, DfT