

CAA Consumer Panel

Annual Report for the year ended
31 March 2020



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About the CAA Consumer Panel

Who we are

The CAA Consumer Panel is a group of eight independent experts, who bring together deep consumer expertise and experience along with strategic thinking, applying these in a practical way to improve the aviation experience for consumers. The Panel members' biographies can be found at the end of this document.

What we do

The Panel acts as a non-statutory critical friend, giving expert advice to the CAA as policy is being developed, and making sure the consumer interest is central. The Panel's objective is to champion the interest of consumers.

The key activities of the Panel are to:

- Help the CAA to understand fully, and take account of, the interests of consumers in its policy development and decisions.
- Use existing CAA research, request the CAA undertakes new targeted research, and gather intelligence, in order to understand the aviation consumer experience.
- Provide the CAA with feedback from a consumer perspective on the effectiveness of its policies and practices.

Internally, in March 2020 the Panel moved to a new home within the CAA, along with our secretariat, from the Strategy and Policy Department to the Consumers and Markets Group. This will enable the Panel to develop a closer relationship with the area of the CAA that works most closely with and on behalf of consumers, while maintaining our independence and looking at work across the whole organisation.

Our remit

The Panel focuses on the interests of current and potential aviation consumers. Citizen or community issues, such as noise from flightpaths, do not fall under our remit.

Chair's Foreword

This Annual Report sets out the work of the CAA Consumer Panel in 2019/20 to ensure that the consumer voice was heard and addressed in key aspects of the aviation market.

However, as I write, the world is facing an exceptionally challenging time with the coronavirus, which will have a long term impact on the aviation sector and will alter the focus of our work in the months and years to come. It is changing the way we all live and work, and whilst we do not know how long the crisis will last, it is clear that the impact will be felt by airlines, airports, the CAA and consumers well into the future. It is also clear that there will be considerable impacts on consumers and the Panel will work to help ensure that these impacts are properly understood and addressed. This report focuses on the work we undertook last year and should be read in that context.

In 2019-20 a key area of focus for the Panel was current and future developments in the use of data and the impact on consumers. This will be at the heart of many developments in the years to come and we looked at both the benefits and risks of increasing use of data by industry, as well as where increased or new regulation may be needed. We had very interesting sessions with external organisations, looking at where there are opportunities to create significant benefits to consumers, but also tried to identify where there are specific gaps in regulation that affect aviation consumers. The outcome of this work has been fed into the CAA.

During the year, not long after the completion of the Airline Insolvency Review to which we contributed, Thomas Cook collapsed creating a huge amount of work for the CAA, organising the repatriation of thousands of passengers and refunding hundreds of thousands of consumers. The Panel was pleased to see how strong the consumer focus was throughout the repatriation programme, with staff from across the organisation going the extra mile to help holiday makers in very difficult times. Airline and travel operator solvency looks bleaker as a result of the lockdown. As lockdown continues the Panel will be considering the longer term impact on ATOL and the lessons learned from the repatriation and refund programmes in the coming year.



The Right Hon Jenny Willott OBE
CAA Consumer Panel Chair