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**Speech by Sir Stephen Hillier,
Chair, UK Civil Aviation Authority**



RAeS Brabazon Lecture

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Good evening everyone. President, thank you very much indeed for those kind words of welcome and introduction. It's a pleasure to be speaking again to the Royal Aeronautical Society. I find it hard to believe that nearly two years have passed since I last spoke at Hamilton Place; I would have found it even harder to believe then that when I next addressed the Society it would be as Chair of the Civil Aviation Authority; that I would be doing so whilst sitting at home; and that, most significant of all, it would be from the midst of the biggest crisis ever to strike the global aerospace enterprise.

More about the crisis later. But thank you Society for inviting me to deliver the annual Brabazon Lecture this evening. Lord Brabazon – John Moore-Brabazon - a towering figure in the early history of aviation in the United Kingdom. The first person to pilot a heavier-than-air machine in the United Kingdom: the holder of Royal Aero Club Pilot Licence serial number one, granted over 110 years ago. A pilot in the Royal Flying Corps from 1914 to 1918, earning the Military Cross for his gallantry; and one of the founding members of the Royal Air Force on April the first, 1918.

A Minister of Transport and then the Minister of Aircraft Production during a critical period of the Second World War. The post-War Chair of the Air Registration Board, the predecessor to the Civil Aviation Authority, and someone therefore who is an important part of the heritage of the organisation that I now have the privilege of helping lead. But since my Private Pilot's Licence number stretches to five digits rather than just one, I don't intend to pull on these personal threads of historical continuity too much!

I took over as Chair of the CAA on the first of August. I would like to thank publicly my predecessor, Dame Deirdre Hutton, for her 11 years of great leadership at the CAA, and for the strong legacy which I've been able to inherit. With just over 100 days elapsed since I became Chair, this Lecture has been a perfectly timed opportunity for me to reflect on the principles, values and personal priorities that are shaping my approach – that's the first section. Then in the second section I'll consider 'What Next for the CAA?' – in other words, defining the CAA we need for the future. It should all take me about 35 minutes, after which I very much look forward to the discussion.

First then, my personal motivations. You've already seen my biography, but let me underline something very important to me in the context of the Civil Aviation Authority. I

was a pilot in the Royal Air Force for a long time, but my very first flying qualification was in General Aviation and through the Private Pilot's Licence issued to me by the CAA when I was 17. Receiving that PPL from the CAA was one of the most memorable and decisive moments in my life - it was the foundation of my flying career. So, when someone pointed out to me about 14 months ago that a competition had started for the next Chair of the CAA, I liked the idea that I might now be able to give something back to an organisation which had had such a big impact on me; as well as the chance to remain at the heart of aerospace.

Now I'm frequently asked at the moment, 'but if only you'd known about Covid and its impact on aerospace, would you still have been interested?' To which my answer is simple: 'yes, and perhaps even more so'. Because I believe passionately in aerospace; I believe that the CAA has a vital role in enabling aerospace success; I, like everyone in the CAA, believe in service for the public good; and if I can contribute in some way to leading aerospace and the CAA through the greatest challenges ever faced, then frankly, 'I'm in'.

There are three headline principles that shape my thinking: independence, leadership, and inclusivity. Independence: the ability for us to analyse and make decisions impartially is the essence of our being; the foundation of our ability to retain the respect, trust and confidence of those that we regulate, and of all our stakeholders. We will always closely guard that independence. But independence does not mean isolation or remoteness. We must be - we are - constantly engaged, listening, learning, explaining; humble enough to admit that we're not always right; always willing to adapt and change.

Leadership: I strongly believe that the CAA has a vital leadership role in aerospace. I don't mean leadership in the sense that we somehow try to set the vision and run the enterprise: that would not be possible, sensible, or indeed within our remit. But I do mean leadership in the sense that we must be an exemplar of values, and that we will lead the 'just culture' by exemplifying the principles ourselves; leadership in the essential role that we play in creating the conditions and environment to help enable others' successes; leadership which leverages our convening powers to improve coherence and coalesce thinking around key issues; leadership which is about 'doing the right thing', not simply trying to find an answer which makes everyone happy, or brokering the only one that everyone can agree upon.

And finally leadership which does not rest heavily on our status as an 'authority'. Yes, we have that if we need it, but we deploy it sparingly. All of my experience, in aerospace and more widely, is that success is best achieved not by constantly and heavy-handedly telling people what to do, or by ever more regulation, but by creating the environment where people are themselves motivated to do the right thing.

Inclusivity: and I mean in the broadest sense of the word. We must be a 'CAA for All': equally for every part and person of the aerospace enterprise; and for all the consumers

that we serve. Easy to say, but how do we balance our efforts; prioritise; ensure that our decisions are not biased, or perceived to be biased, towards one set of stakeholders over another? Typically at the moment, that might be a view that our decisions favour the interests of commercial flying over recreational flying; or of airlines over consumers. And I very much sense that this is a debate likely to intensify, with the requirements and priorities of new and growing sectors, most obviously remotely piloted air systems. There is no ready-made template here, no magic formula which will solve the problem to everyone's satisfaction. But I'm clear that the CAA has only one inherent bias, and that is towards the interests of consumers and the public. And that our focus is risk – likelihood and consequence; what is proportional; what is the law and within the powers given to us.

In this, and across the board, inclusion means that we must engage and communicate as widely and as well as we can across the enormous breadth of our activities – we engage not because we have to, but because we want to. It means that we consider all perspectives equally, make decisions which are transparent, reasonable, based on evidence to the greatest extent possible, and that we explain when judgements have had to be made. Our decisions cannot be done simply by 'majority voting', and I'm acutely aware that our decisions won't make everyone happy; but then I worked in the Centre of the Ministry of Defence for well over a decade in total, so I have useful experience of that!

And inclusion means diversity and access: as an enterprise, we must be better at reflecting our society and our consumers, with everyone equally valued, respected and given opportunity. Which is at heart of the CAA Values recently agreed by the Board and which we're now rolling out. I mention them not only because they describe what we expect from each other within the CAA, and the important part they play in building our 'One CAA' mindset. But because they also summarise what stakeholders and consumers can expect when they deal with us. We will have Respect for Everyone; Do the Right Thing; Build Collaborative Relationships; and Never Stop Learning. Success is not just about what we do, but how we do it.

Needless to say, we believe that 'respect for all' applies equally to our expectations of how people will deal with our people in return. I understand that regulators may not always be popular, but I am very clear that disagreements do not justify unacceptable behaviour towards our staff, doing their very best to perform a vital public service role.

Let me now turn to my personal priorities. One, continue to be respected as a world-class regulator, with the safety and interests of consumers at our core, enjoying the trust and confidence of all stakeholders. Two, ensure we have the capability, agility and flexibility to respond and, where appropriate, lead in the many challenges and rapid change that we are experiencing in aerospace. Three, ensure that we continue to have excellent people, with the capabilities, expertise and experience to meet our current and future tasks, supported by the right leadership, organisation and culture.