

Office of the Chair



Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department of Transport
5/13, Great Minister House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

25 January 2021

Dear Secretary of State

Priorities for the CAA

In my letter dated 8 December 2020, I undertook to provide a more detailed response to the Government's priorities for the Civil Aviation Authority, set out in your letter of 1 December 2020.

The Government's priorities for the CAA are an essential part of shaping our strategic objectives, supporting our role as an independent regulator committed to the dual functions of protecting the safety, security and consumer interests of the public, whilst also playing our full part in shaping the future direction of the aviation and aerospace sectors.

Even before Covid-19, the aviation and aerospace sectors were at an inflection point in terms of addressing the environmental impacts of aviation, the pace of innovation, and the changes to the UK's relationship with the EU. The effects of the pandemic have compounded and accelerated the need for the aviation and aerospace industries to adapt to the changing world, with both the regulator and the Government playing their full roles. This letter sets out in more detail our current plans against your priorities; where we have ambitions to go further; and where the support of others, including Government, will be required to meet those ambitions.

Enabling safe recovery and growth from Covid-19

Covid-19 has self-evidently brought unparalleled disruption to the UK aviation and aerospace sectors over the last 12 months. The CAA has worked tirelessly to support consumers, Government, and industry throughout the crisis, retaining our primary focus on maintaining safety, security and consumer protection standards whilst being as proportionate and flexible in their application as possible.

Given the strategically important role that aviation and aerospace will play in the UK's recovery from Covid and the Government's levelling-up agenda, Covid will remain our key area of focus during 2021, and undoubtedly for some time beyond. The risk profile during the recovery phase will be different from previous normal operations, and potentially will challenge us, requiring both the sector and the regulator to remain diligent and focused on maintaining

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standards. In doing so, we will also take account of economic growth, and remain committed to continued close engagement with Government and the sector.

An internationally influential regulator

We are committed to sustaining and growing our position as an internationally respected and influential regulator, so that we can better secure improved outcomes for the public and industry and play our role in supporting the Government's wider Global Britain agenda.

We have already started deepening our relationships with strategically important and like-minded aviation partners, such as our equivalent authorities in the US, Canada, Brazil, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore: in many cases we have already put in place formal arrangements for improved mutual recognition. In parallel, we continue to build our international presence, including furthering UK policy objectives, through being a prominent participant in ICAO, which remains of fundamental importance. We have, for example, recently led as a regulatory contributor to the creation of ICAO's guidance on Covid-security, and we have helped arrange that to be tested in the UK, as a critical element of building consumer confidence in travelling again.

We will also be working hard to retain close and effective working relationships with our European partners, with whom the UK aviation and aerospace sectors remain geographically and industrially closely connected. In all our international relationships, we will be building the confidence of our partners in the UK's aviation regulation capabilities, an important step to delivering agreed and then more ambitious levels of mutual recognition. And we need to prepare fully and successfully for the ICAO audit of the UK's aviation sector framework for security and safety in 2021 and 2022 respectively. We will work closely with the UK Government and seek your support in all these international endeavours.

Post EU aviation framework

Prior to the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, much of the CAA's work had been to support the Government in agreeing the EU-UK Trade Agreement for aviation, and to inform the sector about the preparations needed for the new arrangements. In parallel, we made extensive changes to CAA internal processes and teams, to prepare for successful operation outside the EU aviation regulation system.

Now looking forward, we need to work closely with Government to help establish our ambitions for the future UK aviation regulation framework, and to identify where our collective energies for reform should be focussed to deliver maximum benefit, consistent with safety, security and consumer interests. In some areas, there will be benefits in remaining broadly aligned with the existing international framework, for example for UK commercial aviation and aerospace businesses that are often part of larger international groups. In other areas there will be opportunities for reform which will deliver greater benefits. We have already concluded a consultation on potential areas of reform for General Aviation and will be sharing our proposals with Government at the end of March 2021. In other areas, such as the integration of new technology into the UK airspace system and more sustainable aviation, the regulatory framework is currently immature, which therefore gives us an opportunity to lead and help shape the future approach. We are aiming to agree these strategic areas of focus with the Government by summer 2021.

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