

Aviation Council – First Meeting
10:00 – 11:15, Wednesday 1st February 2023
The Department for Transport, Great Minster House, London

Attendees

Chairs

- The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport.
- Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Aviation, Maritime and Security), Aviation Council Chair, (*Hereafter* 'Minister for Aviation').
- Stewart Wingate, CEO Gatwick Airport, Aviation Council Co-Chair.

Aviation Council Membership

- Alberto Martin, CEO, London Luton Airport.
- Amanda Francis, CEO, Association of International Courier & Express Services (AICES).
- Andy Cliffe, CEO, AGS Airports.
- Chris Gadsden (*deputising for Johan Lundgren*), Director of Government Affairs, EasyJet.
- Dale Keller, Chief Executive, Board of Airline Representatives UK (BAR UK).
- Corneel Koster (*deputising for Shai Weiss*), Chief Customer and Operating Officer, Virgin Atlantic.
- Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Airport.
- Karen Dee, Chief Executive, Airport Operators Association (AOA).
- Ken O'Toole, Deputy Chief Executive, Manchester Airports Group (MAG).
- Kevin Craven, Chief Executive, ADS Group.
- Mark Tanzer, Chief Executive, ABTA.
- Martin Rolfe, CEO, NATS.
- Michael O'Leary, CEO, Ryanair.
- Mike Pearson, General Aviation Advocate, Department for Transport.
- Neil Pakey, Chairman, Regional & Business Airports Group (RABA).
- Nigel Milton (*deputising for John Holland-Kaye*), Chief of Staff and Carbon, Heathrow Airport.
- Richard Moriarty, CEO, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
- Sean Doyle, Chairman and CEO, British Airways.
- Simon McNamara, Area Manager for UK and Ireland, International Air Transport Association (IATA).
- Steve Heapy, CEO, Jet2.com.
- Tim Alderslade, CEO, Airlines UK.

Associate Members

- Emma Gilthorpe, Chair of the Jet Zero Council, Jet Zero Council.

Department for Transport Officials

- Director General, Aviation, Maritime and Security Group.
- Director of Aviation.
- Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Transport
- Deputy Director Airspace, Noise, and Resilience.
- Head of Aviation Strategy and Commercial Policy.
- Aviation Council Secretariat.

Other Government Department Representatives

- Head of Aerospace, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- Director, Industry Partnerships, Border Force, the Home Office.
- Director General, Exports and UK Trade, Department for International Trade.

- Director, Art, Heritage and Tourism, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

Representatives of Devolved Administrations

- Director of Aviation, Maritime, Freight and Canals, Transport Scotland.
- Deputy Director, National & International Connectivity, Welsh Government.
- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland Executive.

Apologies

- Johan Lundgren, CEO, Easyjet.
- John Holland-Kaye, CEO, Heathrow Airport.
- Shai Weiss, CEO, Virgin Atlantic.

Actions

- **Action (AC001-001):** The Aviation Council Secretariat to liaise with the Jet Zero Council to establish associate memberships on the Jet Zero Council for Aviation Council members.
- **Action (AC001-002):** The Aviation Council Secretariat to contact members with the date, time, and location of the next Aviation Council.

Summary of Meeting

- The Secretary of State for Transport, The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, formally launched the Aviation Council and introduced the Chair, Baroness Vere of Norbiton, the Minister for Aviation, and Co-Chair, Stewart Wingate, CEO of Gatwick Airport.
- Stewart Wingate, Co-Chair, provided an overview of summer 2023 preparedness and members provided an update on preparations to ensure a successful summer schedule.
- The Minister for Aviation provided a summary of the Aviation Council's proposed work in 2023 and invited the membership to outline key sectoral priorities for 2023.

Minutes

1. Introductions

- 1.1. The Secretary of State for Transport welcomed members to the first Aviation Council and introduced the Chair and Co-Chair of the Aviation Council.
- 1.2. Continuing, he said that aviation continued to be one of the United Kingdom's (UK) greatest economic assets. He said that he recognised the recovery within the sector following COVID-19 and was pleased with the support the Government had provided to the sector.
- 1.3. Continuing, he said that the *Flightpath to the Future* Strategy would be important to ensure that the UK retained its position as one of the leading global aviation nations. He said that the Aviation Council would bring together industry, Government, and Devolved Administrations and would maximise the opportunities presented over the next ten years.
- 1.4. Continuing, he said that the publishing of the Passenger Charter, delivery of the Future of Freight Strategy, reaching an agreement on long-term global aspirational goals at the International Civil Aviation Organisation, and commencement of the Civil Aviation Authority Review, demonstrated that progress had been made on commitments in the *Flightpath to the Future*.

2. Summer Preparedness

- 2.1. The Aviation Council Co-Chair said that there would be significant focus across the sector on the upcoming summer season to ensure the successful delivery of the schedule and to minimise the disruption experienced in 2022.
- 2.2. Member Updates

- 2.2.1. Chris Gadsden (easyJet) said that easyJet had recruited staff earlier than in previous years and had worked with suppliers to ensure staffing resilience. He requested flexibility from the Government on visas, wet leases, and borders. He said that it would be important to provide a proportionate and graded response to problems and assess whether they were specific or systematic.
- 2.2.2. Ken O'Toole (Manchester Airport Group, MAG) said that 2023 operations were operating normally. He said that MAG is confident of an effective summer 2023 season, had a robust resilience and response plan, and had increased ground handling resilience.
- 2.2.3. Martin Rolfe (NATS) said that NATS is confident that UK Air Traffic Control would operate effectively in summer 2023. He said that international Air Traffic Control would face challenges connected to industrial action, staffing, and technology.
- 2.2.4. Sean Doyle (British Airways) said that the engineer labour market could be a concern for the following year. He said that it would be important to reduce the time taken for skilled engineers to become accredited as Licenced Aircraft Engineers in the UK. He said that Original Equipment Manufacturer supply-chain pressures could compound issues with engineer labour markets.
- 2.2.5. Steve Heapy (Jet2) said that it would be important to resolve wet leasing arrangements quickly.
- 2.2.5.1. The Secretary of State said that wet leasing had been raised with the Minister for Immigration and that it would have commercial, business, and consumer impacts were it not to be resolved. He said the Department for Transport would work with the Home Office to find a solution.
- 2.2.6. Michael O'Leary (Ryanair) said that it would be important for Government to protect overflights, to reduce the cost of skilled-worker visas, and to consider security alleviation, as they had last summer. He said that it would be important that NATS staffing levels were to match demand in summer 2023. He said that it would be important for Border Force-processing of European Union citizens to improve.
- 2.2.6.1. Martin Rolfe said that NATS staffing would be sufficient to manage the summer 2023 peak season.
- 2.2.6.2. The Secretary of State for Transport said that it would be important to balance future challenges with impacts on the economy and livelihoods. He said that the proportionate, and time-limited, COVID-19 measures put in place for passengers arriving from China, in addition to the reopening of the UK aviation sector the previous year, demonstrated the Government's commitment to minimise negative impacts on both public confidence in the sector and on the aviation sector more widely.
- 2.2.6.3. Continuing, he said that border checks would take place at the border, that it would be important to ensure the effective operation of e-gates, and that the Government would not compromise on UK Security.
- 2.2.6.4. Continuing, he said that it was important that the UK would develop a larger pool of skilled workers.
- 2.2.6.5. The Minister for Aviation said that the Aviation Council would provide certainty for the industry. She said that last year's security alleviations had been reviewed by the Government, that decisions had been taken with UK security in mind, and that decisions had been communicated to the sector. She said that a priority for Government would be conveying ground handlers and airports so that processes for obtaining airside passes would be as efficient as possible while maintaining security.

- 2.2.6.6. The representative for the Border Force said that during the previous summer's peak period, 92 percent of the travelling public crossed the border in 30 minutes or fewer and in December 2022, it was 95 percent. He said that during the summer peak 6.3 million people had used the e-gates and in August 2022, passenger satisfaction for Border Force services had been at 88 percent. He said that cooperation between the Government and the industry was at its peak at a national and local level.
- 2.2.7. Simon McNamara (IATA) said that overseas carriers were confident in successfully delivering the summer schedule. He said that the present-year demand was expected to be at 97 percent of 2019 levels, and summer demand was expected to be higher. He said that the 5 percent slot hand-back option would be useful. He said that there were concerns about the labour market, with security staffing, and with handling Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM).
- 2.2.8. Corneel Koster (Virgin Atlantic) said that Virgin Atlantic were prepared for the summer 2023 period and that the 5 percent slot alleviation would be welcomed. He said that there remained a challenging labour market and it would be important to shorten the process of onboarding airport security staff.
- 2.2.9. Nigel Milton (Heathrow Airport) said that Heathrow Airport is prepared for summer 2023. He said that it would be important for industry to share and collect data effectively to benefit the consumer, especially for PRM. He said that punctuality the previous summer had been impacted by resources being out of position and it would be important to plan for similar disruptions. He said that it would be important to improve the staff onboarding process. He requested that some of the processes introduced last summer for background checks are made permanent. He also encouraged greater use of digital processes in the sector.
- 2.2.10. Alberto Martin (Luton Airport) said that there had been an un-favourable report from the CAA on Luton Airport's handling of PRMs the previous year, however, it had provided assurances that it was fully compliant, and that it is confident of its preparation for the 2023 summer season. He said that punctuality would be a focus in summer 2023, as this would impact on PRM delivery, and said that the passenger experience would also be a priority. He said that the relationship between airport, airline, and ground handlers needed to be more aligned.
- 2.2.10.1. The Minister for Aviation said that that HMG would continue to convene industry so that processes were as efficient as possible and consider how processes introduced last summer to help industry conduct their background checks could be extended.
- 2.2.11. Richard Moriarty (Civil Aviation Authority) said that the industry would be better positioned than the previous summer but that issues could still occur. He said that it would be important to focus on consumer rights and refunds. He said that advance resource-planning would be essential, especially for PRMs, and that sharing resource information would provide added resilience to the industry.
- 2.3. The Secretary of State said that the Aviation Council would be a delivery-focused body where industry would raise issues, and the Government and industry would find solutions or outline why a solution could not be found.
- 2.4. Continuing, he said that he recognised that timescales were tight ahead of the summer period and recognised the challenges posed by moving from paper-based systems.

3. 2023 Aviation Council Forward Look

- 3.1. The Minister for Aviation said that the purpose of the Aviation Council would be to ensure that industry and the Government work together on the challenges and opportunities that

the sector faced. She said that while it would be for industry to lead on delivery, the Government would drive forward positive change and the Council would be the forum for this.

- 3.2. Continuing, she said that security processes, airspace modernisation, regulatory reform including slots, and skills could be priorities for the Aviation Council in 2023.
- 3.3. Continuing, she said that representation from ground handlers would be considered on the Aviation Council.
- 3.4. Chris Gadsden (easyJet) said that it would be important for the Aviation Council to focus on long-term strategic issues that could threaten the growth of the sector. He said that consumer prices, taxes, and the cost of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) and next generation aircraft, would be the main challenges that would impact on the ability of the UK to remain a global leader in aviation. He said that it would be important for the Government to support the sector in these areas.
- 3.5. Tim Alderslade (Airlines UK) said that it would be important to make progress on airspace reform within the next six months. He said that it would be important to make decisions around SAFs and strategic decarbonisation considerations quickly if the UK were to meet its Net Zero ambitions. He said that he would raise this at the Jet Zero Council. He said that it would be important for the Aviation Council to focus on long-term strategic issues and in developing a mission statement for UK aviation.
- 3.6. Steve Heapy (Jet2.com) said that it would be important for the industry to have a timescale for airspace modernisation. He said that it would be important to discuss the Government's policies on airport capacity, airport expansion, and slots reform. He said that it would be important to discuss policies on sustainability, which would have significant implications for the industry and could pose an existential threat to the sector.
- 3.7. Michael O'Leary (Ryanair) said that it would be important to have timescales for airspace reform, to protect overflights, and to increase the pool of aviation workers.
- 3.8. Amanda Francis (AICES) said that it would be important for international cargo to progress on slots reform, given the importance of cargo to the UK economy, the growth agenda, and global trade ambition.
- 3.9. Ken O'Toole, (MAG) said that it would be strategically important to consider how technological advances could benefit the sector.
- 3.10. Kevin Craven (ADS) said that it would be important to prioritise increasing the labour pool in aviation and to focus on the future of flight.
- 3.11. Simon McNamara (IATA) said that it would be important to ensure the UK border functioned effectively and that the UK is prepared for future crises. He said it would be important to consider how UK slots reform worked within a global system, to consider the UK's global competitiveness, and to consider airport expansion.
- 3.12. Neil Pakey (RABA) said that it would be important to consider the modelling used for internal domestic flying. He said that it would be important ensure that remote regions have domestic air access. He said that, at present, RABA was not represented on the Jet Zero Council, and it would be important to consider regional concerns on the Jet Zero Council.
 - 3.12.1. **Action (AC001-001):** The Aviation Council Secretariat would liaise with the Jet Zero Council to establish associate memberships on the Jet Zero Council for Aviation Council members.
- 3.13. Mike Pearson (General Aviation Advocate) said that it would be important to improve the development of aviation skills and that it would be important to include a corporate General Aviation representative on the Aviation Council.

- 3.14. The Minister for Aviation said that she would review the contributions from the Aviation Council members with officials.

4. **Any Other Business and Next Meeting**

- 4.1. The Secretary of State for Transport said that he found the meeting a useful, delivery-focused forum and thanked the membership for their contributions.
- 4.2. The next meeting would be held on Tuesday April 25 and officials would contact the membership with details.
 - 4.2.1. **Action (AC001-002):** The Aviation Council Secretariat would contact members with the date, time, and location of the next Aviation Council.