



Chief Executive Statement

Andrew Haines, Chief Executive

The common theme that unites the work we undertake is protecting the public and this overarching aim has driven our work during the last year.

The safety of consumers using UK aviation will always be our top priority. In the last 12 months we have reviewed again our oversight in this area, with the aim of moving towards a more performance-based approach to safety regulation. That means making sure we concentrate our efforts on ensuring that together with industry we target the key risks.

One of the major outcomes of this work was the publication of a UK Safety Plan setting out how we will address risks and enhance the UK's strong record in aviation safety. Included in this is work aimed at addressing the 'Significant 7' risks affecting aviation which we have identified in partnership with industry. This wide-ranging work aims to increase safety levels for UK citizens travelling by air throughout the world.

Working with industry we also continue to move forward with our Future Airspace Strategy (FAS). We published the strategy which provides a framework for air traffic control body NATS, airports and airlines to make airspace simpler and more flexible and to use the latest technology to allow aircraft to take more direct routes. This is a real opportunity to increase capacity, cut delays and reduce the overall environmental impact of aviation in the UK; we need the aviation industry to be fully involved in implementation plans to make this happen.



The eruption of the Grimsvotn volcano in Iceland in May 2011 was a reminder that volcanic ash still poses a major threat to aviation. The sector as a whole has learnt from past experience and, with a new regulatory approach in place, we were able to reduce disruption to passengers and costs to airlines while ensuring that safety was not compromised. Since then work has continued and a new cross-industry working group, including major airlines, is in place. From a regulatory perspective we have reached the limit of our work but there remains a risk of major disruption in the event of a future eruption. We have therefore called on the aviation industry to continue to look at the issue and undertake research to establish whether the threshold for ash tolerance could safely be lowered further.

There was progress this year for holidaymakers whose travel companies cease trading. New regulations were agreed to extend the scope of the ATOL holiday financial protection scheme. This means that holidays involving a flight and another component, such as accommodation, will be covered. We have worked hard in the last few months to ensure that all those selling holidays are aware of the changes and the positive benefits to their customers. The issue of a new, visually distinctive ATOL Certificate was also made mandatory and further primary legislation to enhance consumer protection is promised by the Government.

Meanwhile the Civil Aviation Bill proposes a new licensing regime for airports with substantial market power, in line with the practices used by UK economic regulators in other areas. This will allow regulation to be tailored to meet the circumstances of individual airports, rather than the current “one size fits all” approach.

The Bill also introduces a new primary duty for the CAA that unambiguously puts passengers’ interests first. The Bill had cross-party support and we believe these important reforms will make a real difference to consumers and for the first time provide us with powers to require the publication of information to passengers.

Work continues on the gradual harmonisation of aviation regulation across Europe. The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) faces significant challenges in this area but we have been pleased to see its commitment to adopt a more performance-based approach to regulation, which will have positive outcomes for both industry, who will not be subject to unnecessary regulation, and passengers, who will benefit from the highest levels of safety.

The two key areas of EASA harmonisation this year have been the start of the transfer of all pilots to EASA licences, which is a major task for us over the next few years, and EASA’s on-going consultation over new maximum hours for pilots through a flight time limitation scheme.

The latter has generated considerable interest from a wide range of stakeholders including industry, unions and MPs. We have worked closely with EASA as it developed the new proposals, and are satisfied that they will deliver a broadly equivalent level of safety to the current UK rules, and ensure better limits for many non-UK airlines, on which many UK citizens fly. Once EASA makes its final decision on the limits, our task will be to work with industry on implementation to ensure safety levels are maintained.

A review of the CAA’s year would not be complete if we failed to mention the build up to the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. The Games will place significant demands on the UK air transport industry and aviation infrastructure. The CAA has been working closely with Government; airspace users, including the military, airfields and air traffic control bodies; and Olympic bodies, such as the London Organising Committee of the Olympics Games. Our main priorities are to ensure airports and airlines are preparing for the increased demand and the change in passenger profile, such as higher numbers of passengers with reduced mobility using UK airports during the Paralympics; ensuring that the UK’s airspace system can safely handle the increase in demand from business jets and other corporate aviation flights; and ensuring that UK airspace users, primarily recreational pilots, are aware of the changes to UK airspace resulting from the Government’s airspace security restrictions to be introduced during the Olympics.

It has been a busy year, but one marked by real progress in our programme to modernise the CAA so that we are best placed to meet the challenges of the dynamic and fast-changing sector that we regulate.



Andrew Haines
Chief Executive, CAA
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