

# HEATHROW AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

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## **Response by the Passenger Services Subcommittee (PSSC) of the Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee (HACC) to the CAA's Q6 Policy Update Document**

### **General**

The PSSC has seen areas of real improvement in the service provided by Heathrow Airport. To some extent this has been the result of the introduction of the SQR regime. However, the cooperation between the airport and the airlines in responding to the Begg report, and the agreement on the importance of a common message going out to passengers in times of disruption also bodes well for the future.

We consider that only two of the questions posed within the consultation paper are directly relevant to PSSC and HACC, and they are answered below as originally numbered.

### **Response to Selected Questions**

#### *2. How can the CAA ensure that its review of economic regulation is passenger-focused?*

We agree with the approach outlined in the document. In addition, we advocate some engagement with the bodies involved with passenger travel services, such as ABTA and the Consumer's Association. We recommend that CAA establishes regular contact with the ACCs of the regulated airports. Such contacts should help validate the conclusions reached in the passenger interest. Sharing as many data sources as possible should do much to focus regulatory activity on areas relevant to passengers at any given time. We feel that there should be some flexibility in the regulatory processes agreed, particularly in any SQR system, in order that they can be varied to meet changing priorities outside the 5 year review cycle.

#### *3. How can the regulatory incentives towards service quality be improved?*

It is completely understood that the CAA's role relates to the performance of the airport operator. However, as the document itself makes clear, many of the services experienced by a passenger in the airport are provided by airlines and other third parties. Therefore, passenger opinion could be influenced by factors well outside the control of the airport operator. The SQR system seems to have worked well so far. Although everyone would prefer to see 100% efficiency in all airport services, the levels currently agreed seem to be acceptable when achieved. It may well be that retention of these levels, but with a reduction in their costs because of greater efficiency, would be welcomed by passengers, but only if the savings were reflected in reduced fares. The (usual) increase in air fares, many resulting from factors outside the airlines' control, such as fuel costs and Government taxes, does not seem to have stunted recent demand for air travel. Therefore, it seems likely that any reasonable increases or reductions in the cost of airport services, when applied to the air fare, might have as little effect.