

Ms Sarah Perring
Airports Commission Secretariat
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

18 October 2013

Dear Ms Perring

OPERATIONAL FREEDOMS TRIAL AT HEATHROW AIRPORT

The South East Airports Taskforce recommended a package of proposals to address punctuality, delay and resilience issues, part of which was to explore the scope for allowing airports to deploy certain tactical measures known as 'operational freedoms'. The CAA was asked by the Minister of State for Transport to provide independent oversight of the Operational Freedoms Trial at Heathrow.

I am writing to you today enclosing the CAA report (CAP 1117) containing our independent analysis on the conduct and effects of the trial. Our report supplements the more detailed Final Report on the trial by Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL) itself. The scope of our report does not extend to HAL's additional report about the future application of operational freedoms, as HAL has produced this independently.

The trial was in two phases. The first phase ran from 1 November 2011 until 29 February 2012, and the second phase ran from 1 July 2012 until 28 February 2013.

The hypothesis being tested by the trial was that granting additional operational freedoms at Heathrow could potentially deliver:

- significant benefits for passengers by improving the resilience and reliability of the airport, and
- environmental benefits, with fewer unscheduled night flights, lower emissions and less stacking.

Our report finds that despite extensive collection of data, analysis of the effects of the trial has been inconclusive. The CAA would agree with HAL that it is possible that the freedoms trialled did benefit airport operations. Intuitively, greater operational flexibility should help

Civil Aviation Authority

CAA House Fourth floor 45-59 Kingsway London WC2B 6TE www.caa.co.uk
Telephone 020 7453 6200 Fax 020 7453 6244 iain.osborne@caa.co.uk

air traffic controllers to get the airport back on schedule. But the benefits claimed in the HAL report have not been statistically proven.

Any operational benefits of operational freedoms are offset by some redistribution of aircraft noise among local communities, and preliminary work suggests some detrimental impact. Communities below the westerly approach paths have their respite period interrupted by aircraft arriving on the runway usually used for departures, while others are affected by vectoring off the established departure routes.

A lot was learnt from the trial, which the CAA believes:

- could be joined up with the wider package of ongoing change to enhance operations at Heathrow, and
- has led to HAL adopting a more inclusive approach to engaging with the community about the impact that the airport has on them.

The CAA has set out a number of 'insights' built up during the trial. We are recommending that the Government consults stakeholders on these insights as well as the overall value of the freedoms to Heathrow before it takes a decision on any more permanent application of the freedoms.

I hope that you find the report useful.

I am copying this letter to Tim Hardy at HAL and Patricia Hayes at the Department for Transport.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Osborne', written over a faint, light-colored grid background.

Iain Osborne
Group Director, Regulatory Policy