

Consumer Panel Minutes

11:30 – 16:00, 19 October 2023

Wright and Teams

Attendees

Consumer Panel

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| Jenny Willott (JW) | Chair of the Consumer Panel |
| Jacqueline Minor (JM) | Panel Members |
| David Thomas (DT) | |
| Jennifer Genevieve (JG) <i>Teams</i> | |
| Carol Brennan (CB) | |
| Helen Dolphin (HD) <i>Teams</i> | |
| Rick Hill (RH) | |
| James Walker (J Walker) | |
| Vaughan Williams (VW) | |
| Miranda King (MK) | Secretariat |
| Alison Harris (AH) | Minute Taker |

Invited Guests

Paul Smith (PS)
Anna Bowles (AB)
Helen Swanbury (HS) (item 3)
Sir Stephen Hillier (SSH) (item 4) *Teams*
Simon Wells (SW) (item 6) *Teams*
Germaine Faulkner (GF) (item 8) *Teams*
Michael Lee (ML) (item 9)

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

Declaration of Interests

The register of interests, as circulated before the meeting, were taken as read. No new interests were declared.

1. Chair's Update

JW welcomed those present to the meeting. The minutes of the quarterly Panel meeting, held on 6 July 2023, were agreed. Any further comments should be emailed to MK prior to publication.

ACTION: MK to publish July Minutes

JW detailed some of the work that had been taking place since July as follows:

- JM, CB, HD and DT are having their terms extended in order to ensure term end dates are appropriately staggered during future recruitment for Panel members and to ensure stability of Panel membership.
- Airline Accessibility framework consultation – CB, HD and others participated. The aim is for the summary of responses to be published later in 2023.
- Sessions have been held on Wizz Air, a session with HR on the CAA People Strategy, and on the Aviation Consumer Survey.
- Drip pricing consultation response: JW thanked everyone for their responses which she had tweaked and submitted to MK and thanked everyone for their participation to enable this to be submitted on time.
- The confirmed sub-group structure was circulated with the meeting papers. This had been agreed at the previous meeting.
- Upcoming: session about CAA's revised strategy will come to the Panel in a few weeks. JW is going to the CAA Board meeting in January.
- A session has been arranged for December to look at enforcement powers with OGC.
- Iain Libretto will attend the January meeting on CAA risks. He provides updates to the CAA Board, which included an item on consumers. This is confidential to the CAA but will be of interest to the Panel.
- JW met with Rob Bishton on cabin safety; Jonathan Spence in OGC on powers and on ADR complaints, data, and role of CAA. Ben Alcott on PACT and progress made since the workshop and Peter Drissell in AvSec on consumers, which he sees as fundamental and wants to come to the Panel regularly. Tim Johnson on environmental information and strategy. Also met with the Chair of CAA's Environmental and Sustainability Panel, Dr Ruth Mallors-Ray, together with Bronwyn Fraser and MK who had a brainstorm of how the two Panels could work closely together. They considered that there could be some cross-Panel discussions on green-washing and environmental information and plan to hold a workshop.
- JW has a meeting with Which? and the Consumer Council of Northern Ireland (CCNI), and a further meeting with the CEO of CCNI which Panel members have been invited to. RH could attend in person in Belfast?

2. Member Updates

- JM went to the Board meeting on the Consumer Strategy in August. Questions from the Board included what was meant by 'vulnerability' and specific questions around the priority on governance and structure of what is seen by the Consumer Panel.
- Sub-group of the Panel have provided comments and support to the development of this year's Aviation Consumer Survey.
- Some of the Panel attended a session on the CAA's People Strategy with the HR team.
- Digital accessibility report: there is still work to be done by airlines to ensure services are accessible. As more services are moved online, advice for passengers who are less tech savvy will be important. In addition, accessing the internet and downloading material can be quite costly, particularly when on the move, which has implications for passengers with less disposable income.

3. Consumer Dashboard Proposals

JW welcomed HS to the meeting and thanked her for her work on the strategy and the dashboard. This session is to explore the key data the CAA Board should see on a regular basis. The paper is going to ExCo in November and will go to the Board twice a year. It was suggested that the CAA

could use RAG status, track various themes and be colour coded. The key themes should go to the CAA Board meetings on a six monthly basis to include improvements around accessibility, websites or airports. It could include trigger points to show what the CAA have been driving over the last few months. Pentana, an internal system, has key priorities and milestones with deadlines derived from monthly comments which could be put as a link to the dashboard. AB will see if there is a way she can automate this to bring an update to every Panel meeting, but this may be difficult to automate. If that is not possible, then panel will receive the dashboards which are also provided to the Board.

There was a discussion considering the experience of other regulators in monitoring and presenting this type of data, and suggestions of other regulators who may be able to share examples of best practice.

ACTION: AB to work on Pentana.

The CAA are not just thinking of what data is already held, but also what data could be used in the future. It is not easy to show quality of service and demonstrate the link to consumer demand, market share and competition between airports and airlines.

4. CAA Chair

SSH thanked the Panel for their hard work and gave an outline on the following: -

- The consumer strategy was recently published. The aim was to ensure coherence with a coordinated approach through the CAA's priorities to make it possible to judge CAA performance. He sees this as a constant iterating document designed to ensure the consumer interest is considered throughout the organisation.
- CEO transition: Rob Bishton will be invited to attend the next Panel meeting.
- Government: The two-consumer facing and economic regulation Non-Executive Directors, (Marykay Fuller and Anne Lambert) will finish on the CAA Board in the middle of next year. This also means that there will need to be a new Chair of the Air Travel Trust, which is a key role. This is a DfT led recruitment process.
- NATS review of events of 28 August: SSH provided an update on the CAA's work to establish a review. The Panel has previously provided comments on the terms of reference and will be updated/consulted as appropriate as the review progress.
- H7 – Heathrow airport price control: SSH provided an update on the outcomes of H7 and thanked the team who worked on it.
- Website: The CAA is working on a project to improve service delivery on its website by improving the most used services first.

JW thanked SSH for his update and support of the Panel.

5. CAA Update

- Wizz have now been through the and made about payments to customers as a result of underpaid claims. Wizz are now considering what lessons can be learned for the future and considering better ways to provide support to passengers during disruption, including how they can make hotels more easily available, and using the QR codes on boarding passes as meal vouchers.
- There was a brief discussion on the number of flights cancelled by some airlines recently, which seem unusually high. Many have been as a result of NATS failure and poor weather issues with a number of airlines affected. The CAA is looking at rail compensation schemes and whether EC261 payments could be made automatically.

- NR23 (the NERL price control) – is planned to be published next Thursday.¹

6. Cabin Safety Update

SW presented on the Cabin Safety team in the CAA's Safety and Airspace Regulation Group (SARG), including explaining their remit, which includes:

- Aeroplanes and helicopters, including those transferring workers to oil rigs and search and rescue helicopters
- Risk management and compliance
- Training for cabin crew, aviation medicine, and aircraft evacuation procedures.
- Ramp inspections at airports and inspections of flights.
- Consumer vulnerability under Regulation 965/2012 and Safety Regulation 965/2023, which covers operational safety requirements.

There was a discussion on passengers with wheelchairs, including their comfort on-board and the challenges for those with reduced mobility accessing window seats, as often required; the guidance relating to passengers assisting with evacuations and the implications for passengers with disabilities; those travelling with assistance animals; and those travelling with children and the guidance relating to families sitting together.

7. Consumer Environmental Information

- MK provided an update on the environmental information that could be provided to consumers when they look for and book flights following a previous presentation to the Panel in 2022 and a Call for Evidence earlier in 2023. She has recently presented to ExCo, the Sustainability Panel and DfT. The DfT are currently undertaking additional consumer research on the best ways to present consumer environmental information, which should be completed by the end of 2023/beginning of 2024. The Panel has provided comments on the presentation options to be tested in the consumer research.
- The CAA will be consulting on draft principles in spring 2024 and the Panel will be updated further as work progresses.
- The Panel provided comments on presentation options, particularly the pros and cons of traffic light systems for presentation of environmental information in aviation. VW expressed an interest in hearing more about future work with CAA Legal on the CAA's environmental information powers. The Panel expressed support for further work with the CAA's Environmental Sustainability Panel. **ACTION: MK to liaise with VW on CAA's environmental information powers**

8. Customer Strategy

- GF joined the meeting to provide an update on the progress made since she last attended. **ACTION: MK to share GF's slide pack**
- The project team has undertaken a review of crisis management processes to understand customer needs and consider how to improve processes and systems for consumers. The team consulted passengers who had experienced an ATOL failure to understand their experience and what changes would improve it. The key requirements were improving communications and availability of good quality information that would enable them to make good decisions, especially when overseas. Work continues this project and GF will provide a further update to the Panel in due course.

¹ Published online at <https://www.caa.co.uk/commercial-industry/airspace/air-traffic-management-and-air-navigational-services/air-navigation-services/nats-en-route-plc-nerl-licence/> (see drop down for NERL (NR23) Price Control Final Decision

- The next stage will include speaking with more customers and will be completed by January 2025.

9. AvSec

- ML joined the meeting and provided an update on next generation security screening, guidance on medical devices and the screening of transgender passengers. There was a discussion on the new screening technology and how they may impact passengers with medical devices, prosthetics and implants. The Panel offered to support further work in this area.

10. AOB

JW provided an update on forthcoming Panel sessions and thanked members for taking part. The next meeting is on 18 January, and it was agreed that the quarterly meetings should be in person, where diaries allow. The meeting closed at 16.00hrs.