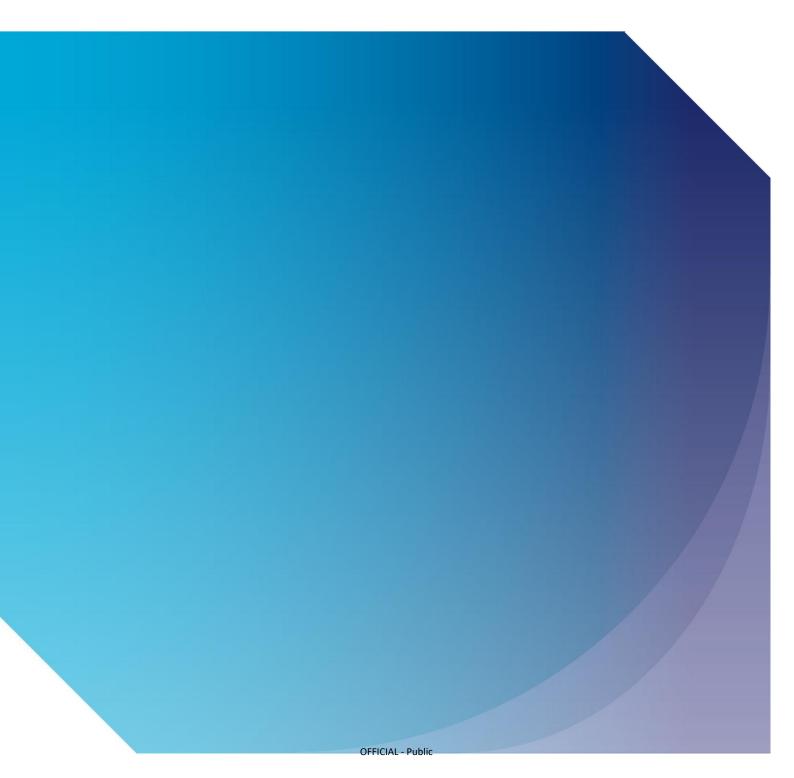


Consultation on the requirement to publish information on mishandled mobility aids

CAP 3088



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Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to:
consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk

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Contents

Contents	3
Introduction	4
Background	6
Legal requirements and powers	8
Review of information available on mobility aid transportation and damage	10
Methodology for recording mobility aid loss, delay or damage	10
CAA request for airline information on wheelchair transportation and damage	10
Analysis of airline information: Insights and findings	12
Information available outside the UK	13
Approach going forwards	13
Consultation on information requirements	15
Considerations in arriving at our proposals	15
Proposals for a requirement for airlines to publish information on the loss, of damage to mobility aids:	delay or 16
Impact assessment	17
Consultation questions	18
Next steps	19

CAP 3088 Introduction

Introduction

- 1. The UK Civil Aviation Authority ('CAA') is responsible for the enforcement of Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1107/2006 ('the Regulation') concerning the rights of disabled and less mobile persons when travelling by air. This applies to all flights from the UK and flights to the UK when they are made on UK and Community air carriers¹. This legislation is intended to ensure that those who need assistance when they travel have the same opportunities for air travel as others, in particular that they have the same rights to fly, freedom of choice and are not discriminated against.
- The CAA is frequently made aware of issues that passengers face when travelling by air. One such issue is the loss, delay or damage of mobility aids while being transported.
- 3. The loss, delay or damage of a mobility aid can have a profound impact on an individual's independence, particularly if they are unable to use their mobility aid for an extended period. In addition to the personal consequences, such loss, delay or damage may result in significant direct (repair or replacement) costs and consequential financial loss.
- 4. Furthermore, reports of loss, delay or damage, such as in the media, may create heightened anxiety among individuals travelling with mobility aids, due to the perceived risk of personally experiencing loss, delay or damage. This may impact the general willingness of passengers who rely on mobility aids to travel by air.
- 5. Mobility aid users and charities tell the CAA that it would be helpful to have information on the incidence of mobility aid loss, delay or damage, to inform passengers ahead of making decisions about travelling by air.
- 6. The CAA agrees that being able to access this information would be beneficial to consumers, empowering consumers to make an informed choice about travelling with their mobility aid. More transparency would also give airlines/airports the ability to monitor the volume of mishandled mobility aids and to compare their data to others. This may incentivise them to make improvements in the handling of mobility aids.
- 7. The CAA also considers that information on the carriage of mobility aids, and the extent of loss, delay or damage when carrying these items, should already be

September 2025 Page 4

¹ 'Community air carrier' means an air carrier with a valid operating licence granted by a Member State in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No 2407/92 of 23 July 1992 on licensing of air carriers (7)

- collected to comply with existing regulation. We believe it should be relatively straightforward for airlines to collate this information in a form which is comparable across airlines and/or airports.
- 8. Therefore, the CAA is proposing to introduce a requirement on airlines to publish information on mobility aid transportation, and the incidence of mobility aid loss, delay and damage when being transported by air.
- 9. This document is structured as follows:

CAP 3088

- Chapter one sets out the background to this issue;
- Chapter two sets out the legal requirements and powers that are relevant to our proposals;
- Chapter three sets out the information that airlines currently hold using their existing reporting capabilities;
- Chapter four sets out our proposals and the consultation questions on which the CAA is seeking views from stakeholders.
- 10. Responses to this consultation document should be submitted via the Consultations page. If you are unable to use the Consultations page, or if you have any questions about the document, please send them to consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk. Alternatively, you can write to: Consumer Protection, Consumer & Markets Group, Civil Aviation Authority, 11 Westferry Circus London E14 4HD. If you are unable to submit your response via the Consultation page or through one of the other channels provided, you can also submit your response by calling 0330 236 0198.

Background

- 11. Passengers encounter various challenges during their journeys. One significant concern that is frequently highlighted to the CAA via our regular engagement with passengers with lived experience is the loss, delay or damage of mobility equipment whilst in the care of airlines. This issue is also a frequent point of discussion on social media and in traditional media channels.
- 12. In August 2024, the CAA introduced its Airline Accessibility Guidance², which sets out the CAA's views on the practices which must be undertaken by airlines to meet their obligations under the Regulation. Ahead of publishing this guidance, the CAA consulted on its introduction³. This consultation included questions covering the carriage of mobility equipment, where we asked 'Do you have views on airlines reporting incidents of lost, delayed, and damaged mobility equipment?'⁴
- 13. Responses to this question were received from both airlines and consumers. Airlines advised us that they collate and hold this information. Consumers commented that this information should be published, with two adding that publishing this data should be mandatory. One disability organisation also stated that the need for this information to be reported should be set out in regulations.
- 14. The UK Government also sought views on this topic as part of their 2022 consultation on reforming aviation consumer policy⁵. The Government consultation specifically asked 'What, if any, steps could be taken, beyond special declarations, to provide sufficient compensation for wheelchairs and mobility equipment damaged during transit on a domestic UK flight?'⁶ Stakeholder's responses⁷ included the need for better data to be collected to understand the scale of the problem. This view was further reinforced by responses to the question 'What else could be done to protect wheelchairs and mobility equipment during carriage? What would the impact on the individual and

² CAP 2990: Airline Accessibility Guidance

³ CAP 2486: Performance framework for airline accessibility and CAP 2486A: Performance framework for airline accessibility: Summary of responses and decision document

⁴ Question 33 of the CAA's Consultation

⁵ Aviation Consumer Policy Reform consultation

⁶ Question 26 of the Government's Consultation

⁷ Response to the aviation consumer policy reform consultation - GOV.UK

- the airline be?'8, where stakeholders suggested mandatory reporting of cases of damage to provide data and act as an incentive for better handling.
- 15. To begin building a better understanding of the extent to which passengers are impacted by damage to mobility aids when travelling by air, in August 2024 the CAA requested information from 13 airlines on the transportation of wheelchairs. Chapter three provides a summary of responses received. We have relied on this information in formulating the proposals in this consultation.

⁸ Question 28 of the Government's Consultation

Legal requirements and powers

- There is a clear legal requirement for aviation businesses to provide access to air travel for disabled and less mobile persons. Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1107/2006⁹ ('the Regulation') is the primary vehicle setting out these legal rights. Article 12 of the Regulation sets out that 'where wheelchairs or other mobility equipment or assistive devices are lost or damaged whilst being handled at the airport or transported on board the aircraft, the passenger to whom the equipment belongs shall be compensated, in accordance with rules of international law and the law of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.'
- 17. International law on compensation for loss, delay or damage to mobility aids is set out within the Montreal and Warsaw Conventions¹⁰. This sets limits on air carriers' liability for lost, delayed or damaged items, including mobility aids:
 - The Montreal Convention sets out liability limits in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), which is a unit of account defined by the International Monetary Fund. Currently, the maximum liability set out in the Montreal Convention for the 'destruction, loss, damage or delay' is 1,519 SDRs¹¹, equivalent to around £1,544 (as of 08th August 2025).
 - A passenger may make a 'special declaration of interest'¹² to amend this liability limit. In making a 'special declaration of interest', in the event of loss, delay or damage, the airline will then be liable to pay the passenger an amount up to that declared in the special declaration of interest. In practice it is very unusual for a passenger to make this special declaration of interest.
 - Under Article 25 of the Montreal Convention 'a carrier may stipulate that the contract of carriage shall be subject to higher limits of liability than those provided for in this Convention or to no limits of liability whatsoever'.
- 18. The CAA's Airline Accessibility Guidance (<u>CAP 2990</u>) encourages airlines to consider voluntary arrangements which provide compensation that fully covers the cost to the passenger of any loss, delay or damage to mobility aids. The

September 2025 Page 8

⁹ Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1107/2006

¹⁰ https://www.iata.org/contentassets/fb1137ff561a4819a2d38f3db7308758/mc99-full-text.pdf

¹¹ The Carriage by Air (Revision of Limits of Liability under the Montreal Convention) Order 2025

¹² Under Article 22(2) of the Montreal Convention or under Article 22(2) of the Warsaw Convention

- guidance also recommends that the airline's policy should be stated on their website.
- 19. The CAA's view is that in order to meet their obligations both under Article 12 of the Regulation and under the Montreal Convention, airlines should collect information on each incidence of loss, delay or damage to a mobility aid to ensure that affected passengers receive compensation.
- 20. <u>Section 83</u> of the Civil Aviation Act 2012 'Information for benefit of users of air transport services' sets out the following:
 - '(1) The CAA must publish, or arrange for the publication of, such information and advice as it considers appropriate for the purpose of assisting users of air transport services to compare—
 - a. air transport services provided to or from a civil airport;
 - b. services and facilities provided at a civil airport in the United Kingdom;
 - c. services and facilities provided elsewhere in the United Kingdom and used, or likely to be used, in connection with the use of air transport services provided to or from a civil airport.

.

- (6) Information and advice published under subsection (1) by persons other than the CAA must be published in such form and manner as the CAA considers appropriate.'
- 21. The Civil Aviation Authority's policy for carrying out its information duties under the Civil Aviation Act 2012 is set out in <u>CAP 1143</u>. This statement of policy has guided the proposals set out in this consultation.

Review of information available on mobility aid transportation and damage

Methodology for recording mobility aid loss, delay or damage

- When a passenger arrives at an airport and finds that their mobility aid is lost, delayed or damaged, the current process is that the passenger should report this to airport staff, who will then create a 'Property Irregularity Report' ('PIR') using existing systems that also capture other passenger property that may be lost, delayed or damaged, such as baggage. This method is used by most airlines on a global basis to capture when incidents occur and to facilitate recovery of lost or delayed items promptly. The existence of this system suggests that there is a process to capture the extent of loss, delay or damage on arrival across UK airports. In some cases, a passenger may not be able to report the incident at the airport because, for example, it is late at night when they arrived and the relevant desk was closed. The CAA understands that in these circumstances it is possible for the airline to create the PIR at a later point once the passenger submits a claim to the airline.
- 23. While this information is collected at airports, this process does not always identify the point in the transportation journey at which the mobility aid was lost, delayed or damaged. There are multiple points of the journey when this may occur: loading onto the aircraft, during the journey, when being unloaded from the aircraft, or when being transported from the aircraft back to the passenger.

CAA request for airline information on wheelchair transportation and damage

- 24. In order to build a better understanding of the volume of passengers that are impacted by damage to their mobility aids when travelling by air, including what information airlines are currently able to access, the CAA requested information from airlines on the number of wheelchairs damaged on flights, the nature of the damage and the remedy provided.
- 25. Whilst appreciating that wheelchairs represent just one type of mobility aid, this focus on wheelchairs was based on an understanding that airlines should be able to obtain this information using their existing reporting tools. The CAA understands that most wheelchairs are checked-in as single items and transported in hold compartments. Airlines plan the load factor and weight distribution of hold compartments of aircrafts using existing baggage management systems, which also capture wheelchair carriage. Although wheelchairs are stored in the hold of an aircraft together with baggage, this is not

- to say that they are treated the same way as baggage by airlines and their ground handling staff.
- 26. Smaller pieces of mobility equipment (such as walkers, canes or crutches) are often taken onboard the aircraft and stored in the overhead compartment, or a passenger may decide to store these inside their checked baggage. As airlines generally do not inventory baggage or the contents of overhead compartments, airlines would not be able to produce information on the carriage of mobility aids which are not checked in as separate items.
- 27. The CAA selected airlines to request information from based on passenger numbers: targeting the largest airlines operating to/from the UK, alongside taking into account regional reliance across the UK. In total, the CAA requested information from 13 airlines, which covered 95% of domestic UK passengers and 77% of international passengers at the time the information request was made.
- 28. The CAA asked airlines to provide the below information for flights that departed from and arrived in the UK for the calendar years 2022 and 2023:
 - the total number of wheelchairs carried;
 - total number of wheelchairs damaged on flights, including during boarding and disembarkation;
 - additional information, if available, on the nature of the damage and remedy provided.
- 29. In asking for this, the CAA wanted to understand both the incidence of damage and also how airlines collect and store this information.
- 30. The CAA received information from all 13 airlines on the number of wheelchairs transported. Not all airlines were able to provide information on the number of wheelchairs damaged.
- 31. The type and quality of information provided to the CAA varied across airlines:
 - Five airlines were able to provide information on the number of wheelchairs damaged using information captured within their own reporting systems;

- Five airlines provided information on claims received directly from consumers for damage to wheelchairs. Whilst the provision of claims information as an alternative to using internal PIR reporting systems provides some insight into the incidence of damage to wheelchairs, the CAA is aware that not every consumer will make a claim with the relevant airline. Some individuals may choose to recover the expense of repairs through their insurance company or will pay for repair themselves, meaning that the total number of damaged wheelchairs is likely to be higher;
- Three airlines did not provide the CAA with any information on the number of wheelchairs damaged. These three airlines made up 0.001% of domestic UK passengers and 5% of international passengers;
- Due to limited reporting capabilities, the information that the CAA received from airlines did not differentiate between different types of wheelchairs (for example manual powered wheelchairs, electric powered wheelchairs or mobility scooters).

Analysis of airline information: Insights and findings

- 32. Across the 13 airlines, 230,171 wheelchairs were transported in 2022, and 282,947 wheelchairs in 2023¹³.
- 33. The information for the 10 airlines that supplied the CAA with damaged wheelchair information, based either on their internal reporting or using claims data, identified that:
 - in 2022 an average of 0.44% of transported wheelchairs were damaged; and
 - in 2023 an average of 0.43% of transported wheelchairs were damaged.
- Only three airlines provided the CAA with information on the remedy awarded to consumers. As the details were provided on different bases and as the sample size was very small, the CAA was unable to draw any conclusions from this information.
- 35. In reference to the request by the CAA for information on amounts paid to passengers to reimburse expenses incurred for repair of damage, a number of airlines volunteered information on their internal policies:

September 2025 Page 12

¹³ One airline provided the total number of wheelchairs carried on flights that arrived in the UK across 2022 and 2023 and the total number of wheelchairs that were transported on flights that departed from the UK across 2022 and 2023. For this airline the CAA split the totals across both years evenly.

- Three airlines stated that they assess each claim on a case-by-case basis and settle passenger claims for damaged wheelchairs above the maximum value set out in the Montreal Convention;
- One airline did not explicitly state that they offer reimbursements above the limits set out in the Montreal Convention but stated that they will pay the cost of repair and, if the wheelchair is damaged beyond repair, the airline will pay the full cost of replacing the wheelchair for the same model (or, if unavailable, an equivalent model);
- Another airline advised that they offer replacement parts or repairs in line with the Montreal Convention and that in the small number of cases where the wheelchair is irreparable, they offer a replacement.

Information available outside the UK

- The United States collects and publishes comparable information on the transportation of wheelchairs. The requirements set by the U.S. Department of Transport ('DOT') requires all U.S. airlines with at least 0.5% of total domestic scheduled-service passenger revenues as well as any branded codeshare partner airlines to report 'mishandled' wheelchair and scooter data.
- 37. The DOT's definition of 'mishandled' is a 'loss, delay, damage or pilferage as reported to a carrier by or on behalf of a passenger' (14 CFR 234.1). This applies to baggage and the transportation of wheelchairs.
- 38. The information on mishandled wheelchairs is published on a monthly basis by the DOT in their <u>Air Travel Consumer Reports</u>, with rates for 2022 and 2023 at 1.48% and 1.38% respectively.

Approach going forwards

- 39. The limited nature of the information provided to the CAA in response to our information request suggests that there are gaps in information collection amongst airlines. This not only presents challenges for the publication of this information for consumers but also raises concerns that businesses are not consistently monitoring their own performance and meeting their obligations to compensate for damage to mobility aids under the Regulation.
- 40. The regularity and uniformity of reporting in the U.S. shows what is possible, recognising that the U.S. authorities permitted airlines time to develop and implement the necessary technology and processes to produce robust data before first publishing this information for consumers.
- 41. We are now seeking to build on the knowledge gained from our own information gathering exercise and increased understanding of information that is published internationally. We set out in the next chapter our proposals for taking this

forward for the benefit of passengers who travel to and from the UK with a mobility aid.

Consultation on information requirements

- 42. Section 83 of the Civil Aviation Act 2012 sets out a requirement on the CAA to require publication of information where we consider this appropriate for the purpose of assisting users of air transport services to compare airlines travelling to or from a UK airport. In considering whether it is appropriate to put in place a requirement for the publication of information the CAA is mindful of the need to ensure requirements are proportionate and balance the benefits and costs.
- 43. The CAA's view, informed by engagement with users of mobility aids and charities, is that any single incidence of loss, delay or damage will have a significant impact on the individual whose mobility has been impacted and therefore the availability of information on the incidence of loss, delay and damage would offer clear benefits to users of air transport services, promoting transparency and accountability in this area and empowering consumers who rely on mobility aids to make informed decisions when making travel arrangements.
- Our understanding of the use of PIRs across airports globally suggests that there is already a single source of information which could be utilised to capture information on the incidence of loss, delay or damage to mobility aids. As such, we believe that the cost of requiring airlines to make this information available would be low if we limit any requirement to information which should already be captured in PIRs.
- 45. Airlines should already be capturing this information to meet their obligations set out in both the Regulation and the Montreal and Warsaw conventions. The information request undertaken demonstrates that the majority of the major airlines operating to and from the UK do already collect this information, although we recognise that some do not.
- 46. Considering both the benefits and costs, we believe that it is proportionate to introduce a requirement on airlines operating to and from the UK to publish information on the incidence of loss, delay and damage to mobility equipment.
- 47. We set out below our proposals for the publication of information on the incidence of loss, delay and damage to mobility equipment. We welcome views on these proposals.

Considerations in arriving at our proposals

48. As these requirements are being proposed using CAA powers under Section 83 of the Civil Aviation Act 2012, we do not consider it appropriate to restrict these proposals solely to those flights arriving into the UK which fall within the scope of Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1107/2006. However, to ensure our approach is

- proportionate, we consider it appropriate to limit the requirements to airlines who provide at least 0.5% of either domestic or international flights operating to or from the UK, as this currently covers 99.8% of domestic passengers and 89.5% of international passengers.
- 49. Our understanding is that currently, in most cases, the systems that capture PIRs only use a single definition of mobility equipment and do not break this information down between types of mobility aid. We believe that it would offer further value to mobility aid users to be provided with information which breaks down the above information to distinguish between manual powered wheelchairs and electric mobility aids. Where airlines are able to provide this breakdown, we would encourage them to do so. In time we hope PIRs will be able to differentiate between types of mobility aids. If/when this additional information becomes readily available in the information captured within a PIR, we would expect airlines to provide this further breakdown.
- 50. We consider that the requirement for information on the incidence of loss, delay and damage to be presented as a proportion of the total mobility aids carried will enable easy comparison by users of mobility aids between airlines.
- 51. To prevent duplication in the provision of information on both the carriage of, and loss, delay or damage to, mobility equipment on domestic routes we propose to require this information to only be included once in respect of departing flights.
- 52. The CAA has also considered how frequently this information should be published, taking into account the benefit to air transport users of increased frequency. The CAA proposes that this information should be published on a quarterly basis.

Proposals for a requirement for airlines to publish information on the loss, delay or damage to mobility aids:

- 53. We propose that the information set out below should be provided by all airlines operating to and from the UK where those airlines provide at least 0.5% of either domestic or international flights.
- 54. The following information should be provided on an airline's UK website (or equivalent website where this is used to inform passengers who arrive or depart from the UK) on a quarterly basis:
 - (1) For international flights:
 - (a) Total number of mobility aids carried:
 - (i) broken down between those carried inbound and outbound from the UK; and

- (ii) for inbound carriage: a further breakdown by the UK airport into which the mobility aid was carried; and
- (iii) for outbound carriage: a further breakdown by the UK airport from which the mobility aid departed.
- (b) Total proportion of mobility aids lost, delayed or damaged, as recorded on a PIR:
 - broken down between those carried inbound and outbound from the UK, noting that for outbound carriage the PIR will have been completed at the arrival airport; and
 - (ii) for inbound carriage: a further breakdown by the UK airport into which the mobility aid was carried; and
 - (iii) for outbound carriage: a further breakdown by the UK airport from which the mobility aid departed, noting that the PIR will have been completed at the arrival airport.
- (2) For domestic flights:
 - (a) Total number of mobility aids carried broken down between the airport from which the flight departed:
 - (b) Total proportion of mobility aids lost, delayed or damaged, as recorded on a PIR, broken down between the airport from which the flight departed.

Impact assessment

- 55. Impact assessments are a key component of evidence-based policy development. They enable the CAA to evaluate the potential effects of proposed measures before implementation. Impact assessments also provide transparency around the rationale for our decisions, demonstrating how we have considered our duties and strategic objectives, and how we have sought to achieve these in a manner that minimises unnecessary regulatory burden. CAP
 1143 guided the evaluation of the impact that the proposed information requirement may have on businesses.
- We expect that our proposals will deliver positive outcomes for consumers who travel with a mobility aid. We also note that these consumers are likely to be persons that share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. These positive outcomes are expected to arise through:
 - Consumers having access to transparent information which will support informed decision-making for consumers travelling with mobility aids.
 - Ensuring airlines collect the information they need to comply with the Regulation and the Montreal Convention.

- A reduction in the proportion of mobility aids which experience loss, delay or damage driven by the reputational incentives that increased transparency will place on airlines. This will result in a decrease in aggregate costs across the UK due to:
 - (a) A lower cumulative impact of such a loss on individual independence and wellbeing, particularly where mobility aids are unavailable for an extended period.
 - (b) A reduction in the direct financial costs and wider consequential losses both for individuals affected and for airlines responsible for compensating or replacing lost, delayed or damaged mobility aids.
- 57. A new requirement to publish information will also place an additional cost burden on airlines. In developing this proposal, we have sought to ensure that the information requirement is proportionate and does not impose unnecessary or excessive costs. Importantly, the relevant information can be integrated into existing operational processes, such as incident reporting tools and baggage tracking systems, without requiring entirely new systems being developed.
- The only new cost introduced by our proposal relates to the administrative costs associated with collating and publishing this information. There will likely be a need for some additional data processing and updates to external-facing webpages. However, we consider that the burden associated with this requirement can be effectively managed for the following reasons:
 - Potential for automation: The information relating to the handling of mobility aids is already being collected as part of operational processes and can be automated, reducing the need for manual intervention and ongoing administrative effort.
 - Incremental implementation: We intend to work collaboratively with industry to support implementation, including providing guidance and allowing for a reasonable implementation time. This approach is intended to help airlines integrate the information requirement into their operations without disruption.
- 59. By taking these factors into account, we consider that the proposals achieve an appropriate balance between the positive outcomes and ensuring that the associated costs and operational impacts for industry remain proportionate and manageable.

Consultation questions

60. We welcome views on these proposals and have set out below a number of questions for stakeholders. We request that stakeholders explain their views and provide evidence in their responses.

- Question 1: Do you agree that the publication of information on the transportation of mobility aids and the incidence of loss, delay and damage to those mobility aids would be beneficial to air transport users in the UK? Please explain your answer.
- Question 2: Are the proposed information metrics useful to users of air transport services? Are there other metrics which should be considered?
- Question 3: Is the CAA's proposal for airlines to publish this data appropriate? Should the CAA consider a different approach?
- Question 4: Which flights should be captured within the information requirement? Is the requirement for this to be required in respect of all airlines which provide at least 0.5% of domestic or international flights in the UK appropriate? Should this requirement be limited to flights that fall under Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 1107/2006?
- Question 5: How frequently should information be published? Should the frequency vary dependent on the airline's UK presence?
- Question 6: Is there any other information that should be published alongside the information requirement?
- Question 7: Do you have any further comments which the CAA should consider as part of this consultation?

Next steps

- 61. Following the closure of this consultation, the CAA will carefully review all the responses and views provided by stakeholders. The information gathered will be used to inform:
 - whether it is appropriate and proportionate to introduce a requirement on the publication of information on the transportation of mobility aids and the incidence of loss, delay and damage;
 - the content of any information publication requirement;
 - which organisations any publication requirement would apply to;
 - the content and frequency of any publication requirement.
- 62. The CAA will publish a summary of responses to the consultation and a decision document in due course.