



## Office of the Chair

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP  
Secretary of State for Transport

Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP  
Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology

Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP  
Secretary of State for Business and Trade

9 February 2026

Dear Secretaries of State,

### Enabling Safe AI-Driven Innovation in UK Aviation

Thank you for your letter of 28 January setting out the Government's priorities for enabling growth through the safe and proportionate adoption of artificial intelligence (AI). I welcome the clarity of ambition you have provided and fully agree that regulators have a central role to play in ensuring that AI can be deployed in ways that command public confidence while supporting productivity, innovation and investment.

The Civil Aviation Authority has, over recent years, deliberately laid strong foundations to enable AI adoption across the aerospace sector. We have done so in a way that is aligned with the Government's pro-innovation approach to regulation, and is consistent with our statutory duties on safety, security, and consumer protection. Looking ahead, we have made enabling AI in aerospace a strategic priority for 26/27 to underpin our commitment to delivering this approach and to support the government's ambition of AI-driven innovation.

#### A clear strategic framework for AI

We recognise the importance of having a clear plan of how we intended to enable safe AI-powered innovation, working in close collaboration with key Government departments including DfT and DSIT. The CAA published a comprehensive strategy for artificial intelligence in December 2024, setting out our plan to regulate AI in aerospace (alongside how we use it responsibly as a regulatory and business tool ourselves). This was accompanied by an initial Technology Landscape report summarising the sector's ambitions relating to AI. This framework provides clarity for industry, establishes a common language for AI, and sets out principles for proportionate, risk-based regulation that enable innovation while maintaining trust. All the CAA's publications on AI can be found here: [Artificial Intelligence | UK Civil Aviation Authority](#)

Our AI strategy was internally reviewed in December 2025, and in response to government's commission, the CAA Board agreed in January to make enabling aerospace adoption of AI a strategic priority for the year. We are committed to engaging closely with colleagues at DfT and DSIT as we build on our plan, in particular to share best practice and enhance our approach.

#### Civil Aviation Authority

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## **Guidance and regulatory clarity**

Over the past 50 years, aerospace has been at the forefront of regulatory adaptation, as advances in technology have made automation central to the modern aerospace system. We have begun to explain how our existing rules apply to AI-enabled systems, including those that rely on machine learning or increasing degrees of autonomy. Our approach is to apply outcome-based regulation in a transparent and proportionate way, supported by AI-specific guidance to reduce uncertainty for innovators while maintaining high standards of safety, security and consumer protection.

Aviation and aerospace are fundamentally international sectors, and our approach must sit within the international regulatory framework to effectively support the sector. To facilitate that, we are working closely with colleagues in our National Aviation Authorities Network (the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), as well as the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), on shared approaches and best practice in enabling safe AI innovation.

## **Processes to support innovation**

Through our Innovation Hub, including regulatory advisory services and sandboxes, we have established ways to enable early engagement with innovators. This engagement exposes the regulatory gaps and novel risks that result from innovations, while informing the development of requirements and clarification of regulatory pathways. We look forward to continuing and growing this capability to enable and support industry's adoption of AI.

## **Adopting AI to enhance our own regulation**

Alongside enabling aerospace, we are also enhancing our own regulation and efficiency via adoption of AI tools. We have a series of programmes currently delivering new AI tools within the CAA, focusing on high-volume services and activities. For example, the CAA currently receives tens of thousands of Mandatory Occurrence Reports (MORs) each year (60k in 2024) – these reports cover many different types of 'occurrence' but most will highlight a potential risk to flight safety if left uncorrected. We are working to use AI to analyse these reports, enabling us to identify and act on emerging safety trends more quickly and consistently, that may not be apparent through manual analysis alone.

With the CAA providing licences across key parts of the aerospace sector, from pilots and engineers to air traffic controllers, airlines and spaceflight operators, we are also harnessing AI to enhance our exam question banks so they remain current, robust, and fully aligned with the needs of future license applicants.

## **Building on these foundations in 2026/27**

Looking ahead with our prioritised focus on enabling AI innovation, we have already started to engage the sector (via surveys, forums and bi-lateral meetings) to enable an update to our AI technology landscape, ensuring that we understand industry's appetite and focus. We will also be engaging regulatory peers to ensure we can provide our sector with a simple, clear, and consistent picture of regulatory oversight. This work will conclude in September 2026. We intend this to take the form of proportionate initial regulatory guidance to be published early in 2027 for each of the CAA's functions as appropriate, building on existing robust frameworks to support industry adoption.

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We will also continue to report annually on how our regulatory approach has enabled AI-driven innovation and growth. We published an initial update on delivery of our AI strategy in our 2024/25 Annual Report, alongside our Annual Growth Duty report. We will update this in Summer 2026.

The CAA is committed to being a forward-looking and enabling regulator. AI presents a significant opportunity for UK aerospace, and we are determined to build on the strong foundations already in place in close partnership with Government, industry and international peers.

We look forward to working with DfT, DBT and DSIT to ensure that our AI strategy, ambitions and timelines are further clarified and published by the May 2026 target date.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Hillier', with a horizontal line underneath.

Sir Stephen Hillier, GCB CBE DFC  
**CHAIR**