UK Civil Aviation Authority

CAA Review of UK Air Traffic Management Resilience, System Renewal and Future Capability – Call for Input

CAP 3323

Published by the Civil Aviation Authority 2026

Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Beehive Ring Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

You can copy and use this text but please ensure you always use the most up to date version, credit the CAA and use it in context so as not to be misleading.

First published November 2026

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

The latest version of this document is available in electronic format at: https://www.caa.co.uk/cap3323

Contents

Contents 3
Revision history 4
Chapter 1 5
Introduction 5
Background 5
Purpose of this Call for Input 6
How to Respond 6
How Responses Will Be Used 7
Confidentiality and Disclosure 7
Definitions 8
Chapter 2 10
Call for Input 10
Operational impact 10
Communications and Coordination 10
Preparedness, response and recovery arrangements 11
Future Resilience and Lessons for the Future 13
Regulatory oversight and lessons learned 14
Any other information 15

Revision history

None

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

1.1 Following the air traffic services disruption of 8 September 2026, the Secretary of State for Transport commissioned an independent review, led by the Civil Aviation Authority, in accordance with the Terms of Reference in CAP3315[1].

1.2 The Review is examining:

1.2.1 The causes and contributory factors associated with the disruption of 8 September 2026.

1.2.2 The operational and passenger impacts of the disruption of 8 September 2026 on the wider aviation system.

1.2.3 The resilience of current air traffic management systems, supporting infrastructure and operational processes.

1.2.4 NERL's approach to system renewal, investment, replacement and modernisation.

1.2.5 The effectiveness of preparedness, response and recovery arrangements across NERL and the wider aviation system.

1.2.6 The effectiveness of governance, assurance and regulatory oversight arrangements supporting NERL's Resilience, Business Continuity and Contingency capabilities.

1.2.7 Lessons identified from the disruption of 8 September 2026 and from previous incidents and reviews.

1.2.8 Actions that may strengthen the resilience of NERL and the wider aviation system in the future.

1.3 The Review Team will produce an Initial Findings Report in January 2027 and a Final Report in March 2027.

[1] CAP3315: Terms of Reference for CAA Review of UK Air Traffic Management Resilience, System Renewal and Future Capability | UK Civil Aviation Authority

Purpose of this Call for Input

1.4 This Call for Input seeks views, experiences and evidence to inform the Review's assessment of the disruption of 8 September 2026 and matters within its Terms of Reference.

1.5 The Call for Input is directed at airlines, airports and their representative bodies. These organisations were directly affected by the disruption of 8 September 2026 and played a central role in responding to and recovering from its consequences.

1.6 The Review Team is supplementing this evidence gathering through direct engagement with Air Navigation Service Providers, Flight Data Processing system providers and other relevant stakeholders. The Review also recognises the importance of understanding consumer impacts and will gather relevant consumer evidence through targeted engagement and other evidence gathering activities where relevant to the Review's Terms of Reference.

1.7 The Review Team will consider information relevant to the Review's Terms of Reference. Information relating to matters outside the scope of the Review is not expected to be considered when developing findings and recommendations.

How to Respond

1.8 Responses to this Call for Input should be submitted using Citizen Space.

1.9 A direct link to the Citizen Space questionnaire can be found here.

1.10 The Call for Input closes at 23:59 on Monday 23 November 2026.

1.11 Contributors do not need to answer every question and are encouraged to provide information on those areas where they have direct experience, expertise or evidence.

1.12 Respondents are encouraged to provide evidence, examples, operational data and lessons identified wherever possible. The Review is interested both in the immediate impacts of the disruption of 8 September 2026 and in wider observations concerning preparedness, response and recovery arrangements, as well as NERL's Resilience, Business Continuity and Contingency capabilities.

1.13 Responses should focus on matters relevant to the Review's Terms of Reference. While respondents may provide any information they consider relevant to the disruption of 8 September 2026, information that falls outside the scope of the Review is not expected to be taken account of by the Review Team when developing its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.14 Respondents are encouraged to provide concise, evidence based submissions supported by examples, operational data and practical recommendations where possible.

1.15 The Review Team recognises that not all relevant issues can be anticipated through a predefined set of questions. Respondents are therefore invited to provide any additional information, evidence or observations that they consider relevant to the Review and its Terms of Reference.

1.16 Where supporting documents are provided, respondents should clearly identify the sections of their submission to which those documents relate.

How Responses Will Be Used

1.17 Responses received through this Call for Input will be considered alongside information obtained through stakeholder workshops, interviews, technical analysis, expert advice and the Independent Challenge Panel.

1.18 The Review Team will use this evidence to identify themes, test emerging findings and support the development of its conclusions and recommendations in both the Initial Findings Report and the Final Report.

1.19 Information provided through this Call for Input may be referred to, summarised or quoted within the Review's reports and associated outputs where the Review Team considers it relevant to its findings, conclusions or recommendations. The Review Team may also draw on evidence submitted by respondents when illustrating stakeholder perspectives, operational experiences or lessons identified.

1.20 Where information is used in this way, the Review Team will have regard to any confidentiality markings provided by respondents and the arrangements set out in the Confidentiality and Disclosure section of this document.

1.21 The Review is not intended to determine legal liability or culpability. Decisions regarding regulatory or enforcement action arising from the disruption of 8 September 2026 remain subject to the CAA's established regulatory processes and sit outside the scope of the Review.

1.22 The Review Team will not consider individual compensation claims, resolve individual consumer complaints, or address matters that fall outside the Review's Terms of Reference.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

1.23 We will treat the information you provide as non-confidential unless you inform us otherwise. Any part of your response to this consultation or supporting material that is regarded as confidential should be clearly marked as such, with an explanation of why the information is confidential, and included in a separate

annex. The CAA has powers and duties with respect to the disclosure of information, including under the Transport Act 2000 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 and it may be necessary to disclose information consistent with these requirements.

Definitions

1.24 For the purposes of this Call for Input, it uses the following definitions.

The Review

1.25 The Review means the independent review commissioned by the Secretary of State for Transport following the air traffic services disruption of 8 September 2026 and undertaken in accordance with CAP3315.

Review Team

1.26 Review Team means the CAA team responsible for conducting the Review, including gathering and analysing evidence, engaging with stakeholders, developing findings and producing the Review's reports and recommendations.

Independent Challenge Panel

1.27 Independent Challenge Panel means the body established to provide independent scrutiny, challenge and expert input to the Review. The Panel operates separately from the Review Team and supports the robustness, objectivity and credibility of the Review's findings and recommendations.

NERL

1.28 NATS (En Route) Plc, referred to as NERL, is the UK licensed provider of en route air traffic control services.

Incident

1.29 Incident means a discrete event, occurrence or operational disruption affecting the provision of air traffic services. References to incidents within this document may include the disruption of 8 September 2026 and other relevant events considered by the Review for evidential, comparative or analytical purposes.

Business Continuity

1.30 Business Continuity means the capability of an Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) to continue delivery of Air Traffic Management Services at a pre agreed level of service following a disruptive event, including provision for both Resilience and Contingency.

Contingency

1.31 Contingency means the capability of an Air Navigation Service Provider to resume operation from an alternative site within a defined time period and at pre-defined levels following a catastrophic disruptive incident.

Resilience

1.32 Resilience means the capability of an Air Navigation Service Provider's assets, networks, people and procedures to anticipate, prevent, absorb and adapt to a disruptive event, with any disruption or degradation of service managed in alignment with pre agreed performance standards, and to safely and rapidly recover to normal services.

CHAPTER 2

Call for Input

Operational impact

2.1 The Review is seeking input on the operational consequences of the disruption of 8 September 2026 across the aviation sector

2.2 We invite views on:

2.2.1 The operational impacts experienced during the disruption of 8 September 2026, including effects on operations, schedules, service delivery and recovery activities.

2.2.2 The impacts on passengers, customer experience and passenger flows.

2.2.3 The consequences for airport, airline and other aviation stakeholders, including operational interfaces and dependencies.

2.2.4 The challenges encountered in managing the disruption of 8 September 2026, restoring services and returning to normal operations.

2.2.5 The most significant operational or organisational consequences for your organisation.

Question 1

Was your organisation impacted by the disruption of 8 September 2026?

Question 2

If you were impacted, what were the operational, organisational and passenger impacts of the disruption of 8 September 2026 on your organisation, including any challenges encountered during the disruption, recovery period and return to normal operations?

Communications and Coordination

2.3 Effective communication and coordination are essential during major operational disruptions involving multiple organisations and stakeholders. The Review wishes to understand how information was shared by NERL during the disruption of 8 September 2026 and recovery period, whether this information met stakeholder needs, and whether the scope and purpose of information provided was sufficiently clear.

2.4 We invite input on:

2.4.1 The timeliness, accuracy and usefulness of information provided by NERL during the disruption of 8 September 2026 and recovery period.

2.4.2 The effectiveness of communication and coordination arrangements between NERL, airlines, airports and other stakeholders.

2.4.3 Whether the information provided was sufficient to support operational decision making, passenger management and service recovery activities.

2.4.4 Whether it was clear what information NERL would provide, the purpose for which it was being shared, and any limitations on the information available.

2.4.5 Any lessons identified regarding information sharing, stakeholder engagement and coordination during major operational disruption.

Question 3

In your opinion, how effective were NERL's communications and coordination arrangements during the disruption of 8 September 2026 and recovery period? In your response, please comment on the timeliness, usefulness and adequacy of information provided, whether its purpose and limitations were clear, and how it supported operational decision making and passenger management.

Preparedness, response and recovery arrangements

2.5 The Review is interested in understanding how preparedness, response and recovery arrangements operated before, during and after the disruption of 8 September 2026, including how organisations coordinated with NERL and other stakeholders, managed operational impacts, supported passengers, restored services and returned to normal operations. The Review also wishes to understand the extent to which disruption and recovery arrangements were planned, tested and coordinated across the aviation sector prior to the disruption of 8 September 2026, and any factors that influenced the speed and effectiveness of recovery.

2.6 We invite views on:

2.6.1 The effectiveness of preparedness, disruption response and recovery arrangements, including whether plans were activated at the appropriate time and operated as intended.

2.6.2 The adequacy of arrangements for managing a prolonged disruption and supporting the recovery of operations.

2.6.3 How effectively operational decisions were coordinated with NERL and other stakeholders during the disruption of 8 September 2026 and recovery period.

2.6.4 Whether organisations received the information required to support timely operational decision making, recovery activities and communications with passengers.

2.6.5 The effectiveness of arrangements for supporting passengers and managing customer impacts during the disruption of 8 September 2026.

2.6.6 Any dependencies, limitations or organisational interfaces that affected the ability to manage disruption, support passengers, recover operations or restore normal services.

2.6.7 The extent to which disruption response and recovery plans were documented, exercised, tested and reviewed prior to the disruption of 8 September 2026.

2.6.8 Whether preparedness and recovery arrangements were developed, reviewed or coordinated with NERL and other industry stakeholders, and the effectiveness of any industry wide response and recovery arrangements.

2.6.9 Factors that supported or hindered the return to normal operations, including challenges relating to aircraft, crew, passenger and network recovery.

2.6.10 Lessons identified and opportunities to improve preparedness, response and recovery arrangements for future major disruptions.

Question 4

How effectively did your preparedness, response and recovery arrangements operate during the disruption of 8 September 2026 and subsequent recovery period? In your response, please identify what worked as intended, what did not, and any dependencies on NERL or other organisations that affected your response or recovery.

Question 5

To what extent were your arrangements adequate for managing operational impacts, supporting passengers, recovering operations and restoring normal services? Please describe any factors that supported or hindered recovery.

Prior to the disruption of 8 September 2026:

a. Did your organisation have documented disruption response and recovery plans for an event of this nature?
b. Were those plans regularly exercised, tested or reviewed?

c. To what extent were those plans developed, validated or coordinated with NERL, airports, airlines or other relevant stakeholders?
d. Do you consider current arrangements provide an effective basis for a coordinated industry response and recovery effort during major air traffic services disruptions?

Future Resilience and Lessons for the Future

2.7 The Review is seeking views on how the resilience of NERL and the wider aviation system can be strengthened in light of the disruption of 8 September 2026. This includes preparedness, disruption response, recovery arrangements, passenger outcomes, the renewal and replacement of air traffic management systems, and the capability to maintain services or move safely and effectively to a lower capacity mode when necessary.

2.8 We invite views on:

2.8.1 Confidence in current and planned improvements to NERL's Resilience, Business Continuity and Contingency capabilities.

2.8.2 The adequacy of actions being taken by NERL and other aviation stakeholders to reduce the likelihood and consequences of similar incidents.

2.8.3 The effectiveness of arrangements to protect available air traffic management capacity or move safely and effectively to a lower capacity mode during major disruption.

2.8.4 Opportunities to strengthen preparedness, disruption response, recovery planning and coordination across the aviation system.

2.8.5 Improvements to communication, information sharing and stakeholder coordination arrangements.

2.8.6 Areas where further work may be required to support passenger outcomes and the timely recovery of normal operations.

2.8.7 Any wider lessons arising from the disruption of 8 September 2026, including whether lessons from previous incidents or reviews remain unresolved.

2.8.8 Factors that would increase confidence in NERL's ability to maintain or restore services and in the wider aviation system's ability to manage the consequences of future major disruptions.

Question 6

Are you aware of NERL's renewal and replacement of air traffic management systems?

Question 7

Based on your experience of the disruption of 8 September 2026, what lessons do you consider should inform NERL's renewal and replacement of air traffic management systems, including arrangements to protect available capacity, support a safe and effective move to a lower capacity mode, and enable the timely recovery of normal services?

Question 8

Based on your experience of the disruption of 8 September 2026, what are your views on the measures currently planned or being implemented by NERL to improve its Resilience, Business Continuity and Contingency capabilities and reduce the impact of similar incidents?

Question 9

Are there any areas where you consider further action or improvement may be beneficial?

Based on your experience, are there any safety considerations that you consider should inform NERL's Resilience, Business Continuity and Contingency capabilities, lower capacity operations, or the renewal and replacement of air traffic management systems?

Regulatory oversight and lessons learned

2.9 The Review is interested in understanding whether there are lessons for regulators, industry participants and policymakers arising from the disruption of 8 September 2026. This includes consideration of how resilience, contingency planning, service continuity and industry preparedness could be strengthened in the future.

2.10 We invite views on:

2.10.1 Any lessons arising from the disruption of 8 September 2026 that may be relevant to future regulatory oversight, assurance activities or industry practice.

2.10.2 Whether current resilience, contingency planning and service continuity arrangements could be strengthened.

2.10.3 Opportunities to improve preparedness, coordination and recovery across the aviation system.

2.10.4 Any lessons from previous incidents, reviews or resilience activities that should be taken into account in future resilience planning and oversight arrangements.

2.10.5 Any wider observations on how regulators, NERL, airports, airlines or other stakeholders could contribute to improved resilience across the aviation system.

Question 10

Based on your experience of the disruption of 8 September 2026, are there any lessons that you consider should influence future regulatory oversight, assurance activities, industry practice or expectations relating to resilience, contingency planning and service continuity?

Question 11

In your view, were there lessons from previous incidents, reviews or resilience activities that had not been fully reflected in arrangements prior to the disruption of 8 September 2026? If so, please explain.

Question 12

Are there any findings, recommendations or lessons from previous incidents, reviews or other sectors that you consider should be taken into account when developing future resilience, contingency and service continuity arrangements?

Question 13

Based on your experience, are there any changes that the CAA should consider to strengthen the resilience of the aviation system and reduce the impact of future major disruptions?

Any other information

2.11 The Review Team recognises that not all relevant issues can be anticipated through a predefined set of questions. Respondents are therefore invited to provide any additional information, evidence, observations or recommendations that they consider relevant to the Review.

2.12 This may include information relating to any aspect of the Review's Terms of Reference, including the causes and contributory factors associated with the disruption of 8 September 2026, operational impacts, resilience, preparedness, response and recovery arrangements, system renewal and replacement, regulatory oversight, lessons identified, or opportunities for improvement.

2.13 Respondents should focus on information that is relevant to the Review's Terms of Reference and which may assist the Review Team in developing its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Question 14

Are there any additional observations, evidence, lessons identified or recommendations that you would like the Review Team to consider, and which are relevant to the Review's Terms of Reference?

Question 15

Would you like to provide any supporting documents, reports, presentations, analyses, operational data or other evidence in support of your response?