

[REDACTED]

8 December 2017
Reference: F0003441

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing in respect of your request of 9 October 2017, for the release of information held by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your request:

In relation to the repatriation flight to the UK on 4th October 2017, substituting for the Monarch flight to London Gatwick, ZB 7015, I wish to have sight of all relevant correspondence relating to the background to the decision to reallocate some passengers to a flight from Rhodes to Athens and then being flown back to the UK but to Manchester, not Gatwick. I wish to see and understand precisely the criteria used to reallocate the passengers concerned, notwithstanding that the CAA have fulfilled their obligation to return passengers to Country of origin.

Our response:

Having considered your request in line with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), we are able to provide the information below.

The Monarch Group consisted of a number of companies including tour operators and an airline, Monarch Airlines Ltd, that were regulated by the CAA. On Monday 2 October 2017 at 04:00, most of the Group ceased trading and entered administration.

We have a duty to consumers to ensure that we can manage any eventuality and we take this responsibility very seriously. Once the CAA was made aware of the Monarch directors' concerns that they may need to take the airline into administration, we activated our extensive contingency plans that include a range of activities including securing aircraft to work with us on the repatriation exercise, activating customer call centres to support affected passengers and coordinating with relevant domestic and international airports.

Normally, only ATOL protected customers would be guaranteed free of charge flights back to the UK following an airline failure. With 110,000 customers thought to be overseas at the time Monarch Airlines entered administration, and nowhere near enough spare capacity in the airline market to absorb this number of people all at once, the Government took the

Civil Aviation Authority

Aviation House Gatwick Airport South Gatwick RH6 0YR. www.caa.co.uk

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extraordinary decision to bring back to the UK all of Monarch's customers, whether or not they were ATOL protected, for a period of two weeks.

After the company's directors made the decision to take Monarch Airlines into administration, the 24/7 CAA operation saw more than 60 aircraft, from 27 global airlines involved in the programme. During the operation, almost 85,000 people flew to six airports in the UK, from more than 30 destinations in 14 countries across the Mediterranean and beyond.

In relation to your specific request, we do not hold correspondence *relating to the background to the decision to reallocate some passengers to a flight from Rhodes to Athens and then being flown back to the UK but to Manchester, not Gatwick*. However, we can provide an explanation of the general decision making process that was followed when arranging flights and how decisions as to when it was necessary to re-route passengers to alternative airports in the UK, or to re-book them on scheduled flights, were made.

Arranging the daily flying programme

Once the CAA was made aware of the Monarch directors' concerns that they may need to take the airline into administration, we activated our extensive contingency plans that include securing aircraft to work with us on the repatriation exercise. The fleet included both wide-bodied and narrow-bodied aircraft, in a variety of different seating and cabin configurations. Aircraft were deployed to Monarch's overseas destinations based on the volumes of passengers requiring repatriation from those airports. It was not possible to replicate exactly Monarch's own fleet or schedule, meaning that some flights would be consolidated, or combined, on to one bigger aircraft. Or, in the case of a smaller aircraft being deployed, some customers had tickets arranged for them to fly home on a scheduled airline's flight.

During the two week flying programme, we planned flights on a daily basis. Our charter partner, Titan Airways, produced what was called a Consolidated Flying Programme for every day of the operation. This showed us the flights, times, routes and expected passenger numbers of every UK bound flight that Monarch would have operated that day. This was created by a bespoke software system which uploaded data from Monarch's records.

The day's flight programme was then determined by considering how to operate the flights as efficiently as possible using the pre-secured fleet within various operational constraints that we faced. These included:

- The pre-secured aircraft ranged in size from aircraft that could accommodate 130 to 527 passengers.
- Aircraft had to operate from their pre-designated UK bases for both the morning and afternoon flights as that was where each airline's crew were temporarily based.
- Not all aircraft could operate to all of Monarch's destination airports - some airports could not accept larger aircraft for a variety of reasons including the length and strength of their runways or they simply may not be equipped with the right steps to load and off-load passengers or baggage.
- In some destinations we were limited to carriers which could secure the necessary permits to operate flights there.

Where possible decisions to consolidate flights involved similarly timed flights and/or flights to airports in close proximity. Every possible effort was taken to minimise disruption and to repatriate consumers as close to their original schedule as possible.

Monarch flight ZB 7015, Rhodes to Gatwick on 4 October 2017

Our records show that the number of booked passengers on this flight was 196. The aircraft based at Gatwick were either large capacity 747 aircraft, or aircraft with 144 or 165 seats. A 165 seat aircraft was used, resulting in 31 passengers that had to be re-booked on scheduled flights.

Process to decide which passengers travelled on which flights

The limitations of the booking data that we were able to obtain from Monarch meant that the driving factors for selecting those passengers that would be booked on scheduled flights were whether we had contact details for them (many were missing), whether there were any Persons of Reduced Mobility or very elderly passengers that may need assistance, and keeping groups together.

To book scheduled flights, we also needed a first name for all passengers, and a date of birth for any children/infants, so that tended to determine who could be re-booked on scheduled flights. Availability on scheduled flights was also very limited – bookings were being made the day before flights, demand was high in the wake of Monarch going into administration, and some leisure routes don't have many direct scheduled flights to the UK. Because of that limited availability most passengers booked on scheduled flights were in groups of one or two so that groups were kept together.

I hope that the above explains how such decisions were made. If you are not satisfied with how we have dealt with your request in the first instance you should approach the CAA in writing at:-

Caroline Chalk
Head of External Information Services
Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
Gatwick
RH6 0YR

caroline.chalk@caa.co.uk

The CAA has a formal internal review process for dealing with appeals or complaints in connection with Freedom of Information requests. The key steps in this process are set in the attachment.

Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you have a right under Section 50 of the FOIA to appeal against the decision by contacting the Information Commissioner at:-

Information Commissioner's Office
FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF
<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

If you wish to request further information from the CAA, please use the form on the CAA website at <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=24>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Stevens'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'M' being particularly large and stylized.

Mark Stevens
External Response Manager

CAA INTERNAL REVIEW & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- The original case to which the appeal or complaint relates is identified and the case file is made available;
- The appeal or complaint is allocated to an Appeal Manager, the appeal is acknowledged and the details of the Appeal Manager are provided to the applicant;
- The Appeal Manager reviews the case to understand the nature of the appeal or complaint, reviews the actions and decisions taken in connection with the original case and takes account of any new information that may have been received. This will typically require contact with those persons involved in the original case and consultation with the CAA Legal Department;
- The Appeal Manager concludes the review and, after consultation with those involved with the case, and with the CAA Legal Department, agrees on the course of action to be taken;
- The Appeal Manager prepares the necessary response and collates any information to be provided to the applicant;
- The response and any necessary information is sent to the applicant, together with information about further rights of appeal to the Information Commissioners Office, including full contact details.