

Minutes of the Cross-Party Group on Aviation

Date: 28 October 2020

Time: 13:00 – 14:00

Venue: Virtual Meeting – MS Teams / Join by phone

MSPs attendees:

Jamie Hepburn MSP – Minister

John Scott MSP – Co-Convener

David Stewart – Co-convener

Graham Simpson MSP

Maurice Corry - MSP

Non MSPs attendees:

Ian Clarke – NATS

Janice Hogarth – SPAA (Scottish Passenger Agents' Association)

Roddie MacPhee – Barrhead Travel

David Butler – University of Strathclyde / NMIS

David McColm – Global Trek Aviation

Ken Doig – BAE Systems

Karen Wilson – Scottish Enterprise

Phill Rawlins – Martyn Fiddler Aviation

Michael Brown – Skylands Aviation

Greg Maxwell – Edinburgh Airport

Brian McClean – AGS Airports (Glasgow Airport)

Julie Cromarty – HITRANS

Angela Mathis – ThinkTank Maths

Steve McLaughlin – Heriot-Watt University

Claire Thomson – Thales UK

Mark Walker – Walker Precision Engineering

Allan Colquhoun – Leonardo

Francesca Hinton – Airlines UK

Rory McGregor

Scott McClelland

Emma Wade – ABTA

Sean McGovern – Newton Aerospace Management

Louise Urquhart – Mott MacDonald

Sheena MacKenzie – University of Strathclyde

Daniel Smith – AstroAgency

Gareth Williams – scdi

Nicola Spence – Spirit AeroSystems

Andy Evans – Aerossurance

Oli Melzack – AOA (Airport Operators Association)

Ali Gayward – easyJet

Warrick Malcolm – ADS Scotland

Keith Grandison – ADS Scotland

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome from Co-Convenor to CPG on Aviation

John Scott MSP welcomed everybody to the virtual Cross-Party Group on Aviation with a special thanks to the Minister Jamie Hepburn MSP. The session has also been joined by Graham Simpson MSP, Maurice Corry MSP and Co-Convenor David Stewart MSP.

Agenda Item 2 - Introductory comments from Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Enterprise, Skills and Fair Work, Scottish Government

Jamie Hepburn MSP thanked for invitation to the meeting recognising the impact of covid-19 on aviation and in a wider sense aerospace sector. The Minister welcomed the opportunity for the discussion identifying the sector growth and firm footprint in Scotland in advance of the pandemic.

In response to the pandemic and challenges facing the sector the Scottish Government has established Aerospace Response Group comprising representatives of industry, wide range of businesses represented directly, representative organisations like ADS in Scotland and Scottish Engineering , representatives of the workforce and the public sector coming together with a common purpose of trying to establish the best possible way through what is an extraordinary challenge for the industry, trying to identify ways of which we could support people on the ground – individuals who were caught up in it, made redundant – how do we support them to theme that skill set to get back into market as quickly as possible but also when aerospace bounces back looking for a way of diversification of opportunities – work like decommissioning, link to tackle climate change through renewable energy.

Additionally, on-going very close work with Minister counterparts in Welsh and Northern Ireland Governments, realising UK wide impact, discussing ways of coming together to approach UK Government of collective work and coordinate joined approach to deal with challenges.

Agenda Item 3 – Q&A

Question: Roddie MacPhee – Barrhead Travel

Roddie addressed the need for airport testing to allow the industry moving highlighting recent initiatives such as Common Pass at other airports and asked the Minister for comments in terms of where the Scottish Government isn't in the pressing ahead with this urgent need

Answer: The minister stated that all the decision is being made based on best public health, evidence that we are being provide with and right now is that the incubation period is the best approach from high risk countries. As to the testing request careful consideration is being given, working also with other administrations with an example of Global Travel Taskforce looking at this in a bit more detail and provide information about way forward.

Question: Angela Mathis – ThinkTank Maths

Angela Mathis: Do you think that Scottish businesses who are in the supply chain of space and aeronautics in order to sustain the business and grow that there is enough investment coming from UK Space and from the Aerospace Technology Institute to support and how the investment could be secured for the huge aspiration of space sector in Scotland and also for the aerospace sector as well?

Answer: The Minister stated that keen to explore through the work of Aerospace Response Group, communication with the counterparts in the UK Government as recognising that not enough investment is allocated on a geographic basis.

Greg Maxwell from Edinburgh Airport followed up on Roddie's question on testing and airport engagement with the government. Certainly positive discussions and looking for the way forward and confident can get the structure in place within weeks and like to continue the talks and hopefully get to the point where we can put something in place with confidence and reassurance to people – mitigate the risk as much as possible.

Question: Janice Hogarth – SPAA

Question about criteria currently being used with quarantine as research shows that you are likely to be infected here as you will be overseas and on the basis of going forward question about airlines returning back to Scotland to find out if there is a full understanding of the time required for an airline to place their aircraft and associated difficulties.

Answer: The Minister stated there is evidence of parts of the world with much higher infection rate and addressing concern of airlines coming back to Scotland – deeply aware of it , communicating with the sector, the Scottish Government with Transport for Scotland alerted the issue and engaged to make sure we are doing everything we can to have a good level of international connectivity to and from Scotland.

Question: Emma Wade – ABTA

In the Strategic Framework accompanying document international travel is labelled as a 'risk' to further COVID-19 spread, and the First Minister recently advised people “not book travel overseas for the October break if it is not essential”. If the Scottish Government is officially advising individuals against travel, then will Ministers recognise that travel businesses are in effect closed, in all but law, and should therefore be provided with appropriate tailored financial support?

Answer: The Minister highlighted useful discussion with SPAA and these issues have been actively discussed and way support could be considered.

Question: Francesca Hinton – Airlines UK

One of the big impacts from Covid-19 is expected to be on regional connectivity. As Airlines UK we recently commissioned research which showed of expected lost routes from Covid, 80% of these will be in the regions. This impact can however be mitigated through a temporary 12-month waiver of APD which would support the viability of these vital routes - is this a policy measure the Scottish Govt is discussing?

Answer: The Minister stated that we have had commitment around APD, looked at them again in terms of a wider climate change ambition and open to considering whatever measure might be required to support but also put another fiscal measure to support airports.

Question: Roddie MacPhee – Barrhead Travel

Question in relation to possibility of announcing changes to tier level announced by FM and if there will be an additional financial support for businesses forced to close

Answer: The Minister confirmed that currently actively looking at additional forms and levels of support for business in affected areas.

John Scott MSP thanked Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Enterprise, Skills and Fair Work, Scottish Government for his time joining the meeting.

The minister has left the session.

Agenda Item 4: Opportunity for CPG members to highlight current issues

Brian McLean - AGS:

The real threat now is what state Scotland going to be in once we get through the pandemic. Every aspect for both aerospace and aviation has been impacted putting real stress on regional airports and looking for a stimulus on APD and testing regime in place. It is going to take years to recover and the real concern is that it will take longer with impact to tourism, export and at UK level we've not had much support at all

Ali Gayward (easyJet) stressed the need for Scottish Government to understand the urgency and step up and sort support for the sector. Thing that need to be understand is that there are other governments in Europe and around the world who are financially supporting airlines and we see none of this in the UK and airlines assets are completely moveable so they can be moved outside UK to countries where government recognise the importance of aviation sector and without this Scottish and UK economy will have limited opportunity to recover.

ACTION: Following Jamie Hepburn's departure from the session Co-convenor has asked secretariat to capture the question not raised with the Minister in the follow up letter.

Janice Hogarth from SPAA highlighted that major hurdle to overcome is customer confidence and testing, especially on arrival, being carried out by private sector so it's actually finding and making sure that there are enough testing facilities at these need to be at reasonable level.

Greg Maxwell from Edinburgh Airport highlighted that the airport been 91% down on passenger numbers Apr – Sep compared to the same period last year. Retain connectivity being an important aspect – a lot of businesses rely on aviation not only tourism

Maurice Corry MSP informed that Covid Committee discussed testing at airports in Scotland and put that directly to Mike Russell – Cabinet Secretary to see where we can go on that.

Agenda Item 5 - CPG AGM (to include election of convenors and secretariat and approval of membership)

Election of Co -conveners

David Stewart MSP and Stewart Stevenson MSP are prepared to stand as is John Scott MSP.

Warrick Malcolm from ADS Scotland asked members for group approval in a formal way for co-conveners to continue in that role. No objection raised

John Scott asked for group approval in a formal way for the secretariat of the group to continue under ADS Scotland. David Stewart endorsed John Scott MSP comments on ADS and asked the group support for ADS to continue as the secretariat. No objection raised

Correspondence will be issued to the group to formally get membership approved again and agree new members from the industry

Agenda Item 6 - Previous Meeting Minutes approval

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved with the mistake highlighted by Roddie MacPhee (APD fund changed to ATT fund) corrected

Agenda Item 7 - Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on the 02 December and again will be held at lunch time

The meeting ends