



The Voice of UK Airlines

Media Release

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For Immediate Use**

BATA Comment Following Constructive Meeting With Home Secretary on Border Queues

The British Air Transport Association (BATA) is the trade body representing UK airlines. Following our meeting with the Home Secretary today (3rd May), we make the following statement:

EFFICIENT BORDER CONTROLS AND MANAGEMENT OF QUEUES

- Robust border controls are essential for the safety and security of the State and its citizens.
- BATA members have supported the Home Office and UK Border Agency in this objective for many years, investing millions in a wide range of initiatives to “export the border” such as the e-borders programme which harnesses technology to deliver advance passenger information (APIS) to the control authorities.
- In so doing, this provides for more efficient and speedier throughput of legitimate travellers through UK border controls while maintaining border security.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Over the past few years, staff levels at UKBA have been reduced and procedures have been streamlined in line with technological capability.
- The current passenger experience of frequent and excessive delays is unacceptable for legitimate travellers.
- BATA and its members want to see a Border Force with the resources and flexibility to support robust border security checks and deliver a good passenger experience at the same time.
- Airlines do not accept that a secure border and a good standard of service offering minimal delays to passengers are incompatible objectives.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

- Existing target average delays at the border of 25 minutes for EEA passengers and 45 minutes for non-EEA passengers is not demanding enough.

- Airlines want to see target average delays replaced by target maximum delays and see times brought down.
- It is essential that airlines are part of that discussion and have made this offer to the Home Secretary.

SHORT TERM FIX

- In the short term, the problem may be eased by pumping in temporary additional resources – but as the Home Secretary acknowledges a sticking plaster solution is not the answer.

LONG TERM FIX

- For the longer term, airlines have offered to work with Border Force to maintain the integrity of the border while taking a balanced approach, involving the greater use of technology as an aid to the screening of passengers prior to arrival at the border control point.
- We were pleased the Home Secretary accepted the value of working together.

NEED FOR ADEQUATE RESOURCING

- It is essential that best use is made of available and flexible resources and that they are matched to demand in a way that can be sustained over the longer term in terms of maintaining robust border controls while delivering a good passenger experience.

WHAT IF ADDITIONAL FUNDS ARE NEEDED?

- Unlike with public transport, aviation infrastructure is privately funded.
- Airlines do not believe they should be expected to pay for additional resources for Border Force. Instead, any additional funds should be drawn from the £2.9 billion of Air Passenger Duty paid by air passengers this year. This tax on flying is the highest such tax in the world and using some of this money to pay for additional staff resources for Border Force would be an effective and appropriate use of a fraction of this otherwise punitive tax on air travellers.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- BATA is the trade body for UK-registered airlines, with members representing all sectors of the industry.
- In 2011, BATA members employed 73,000 people, operated four-fifths of the UK commercial aircraft fleet and were responsible for some 96% of UK airline output, carrying 129 million passengers and 1.1 million tonnes of cargo.
- The eleven BATA member airlines are: bmi, British Airways, DHL, easyJet, flybe, Jet2.com, Monarch, Thomas Cook, Thomson Airways, Titan Airways and Virgin Atlantic.

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