

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

30th July 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

As leaders of UK aviation, we welcomed this week's announcement that fully vaccinated travellers from the EU and US will be exempt from quarantine requirements. Having fallen far behind our competitors, this is a positive step that will help close that gap, reunite families, and get businesses moving again.

However, we must now build on this momentum by adding more countries to the Green list next week and by reducing the still onerous and increasingly disproportionate burden of testing on travellers. We are increasingly concerned that the UK is not on a path to a sustainable recovery of aviation, due to the continued restrictions that are being imposed on international travel.

In the UK our 'vaccine wall' means over 70% of people are now double jabbed and nearly 90% have had a single dose. Case numbers are dropping. Vaccination patterns are similar in many of our key markets not least in the EU and US and latest data from Canada shows vaccines to be highly effective against all variants, including Beta. PHE's own data shows both the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines offer extremely high protection against hospitalisations from Delta, 75% after one dose and 94% protection after two.

The world has changed since the inception of the traffic light system, and 'Green status' should increasingly become a default, given the changing risk equation, and mirroring the approach to domestic restrictions. On this basis there is no reason why, and it is essential, that much of Europe including the key volume markets, the US, Caribbean and other major markets, cannot turn green next week in time for the remainder of the summer peak.

If the testing regime remains in place, with its cost and administrative burden, it will have a huge impact on UK aviation - acting effectively as around a £100 tax on flights, on average. It is unclear whether the government has understood this risk. We have seen no evidence that this regime is necessary for fully vaccinated travellers or those from Green countries, or that effective, cheaper rapid tests cannot be used from higher risk destinations.

We are today seeing no real recovery in customer confidence. The UK aviation recovery is far behind countries in Europe. Travel bookings in Germany are now at 60 per cent of 2019 levels. France is at 48 per cent. Here in the UK, we are booking just 16 per cent of trips compared to pre-pandemic. This is not sustainable.

Despite tentative steps forward, time is fast running out to put the UK's aviation, travel and tourism industries back on track for a sustainable recovery to protect the millions of jobs they support. We cannot afford to stand still over this vital summer period, and urge you to act.


Yours sincerely,




Tim Alderslade
Chief Executive
Airlines UK



Shai Weiss
CEO
Virgin Atlantic Limited



Johan Lundgren
Chief Executive Officer
easyJet



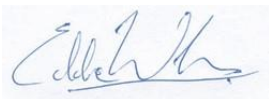
Sean Doyle
Chief Executive Officer
British Airways



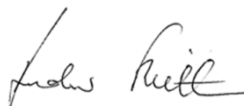
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