



Department for Transport

From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

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Huw Merriman MP
Chair of the Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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1 July 2020

Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter of the 16 June, and for the ongoing work of the Transport Select Committee in responding to the unprecedented challenges that COVID-19 has presented the aviation sector.

We will provide a full response to the Committee's report in due course and in line with the usual timescales, but in the meantime I am happy to respond to the initial points on which you have requested an early reply. These were, namely, progress on our strategy for the restart and recovery of the aviation sector, and the Government's policy on health measures at the UK border.

The aviation sector is vital to our future as a global trading nation, as well as playing a critical role in local economies, and that is why we are so focused on supporting its restart. This work to restart the aviation sector does, of course, build upon the unprecedented package of measures already put in place by the Chancellor. We continue an open dialogue with the sector as we work towards our shared ambition of getting aviation up and running again in a safe and secure way, and we have already published guidance for aviation operators, as well as safer air travel guidance for passengers (www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-aviation-covid-19-guidance). This forms a vital first pillar as we seek to ensure that our aviation sector returns to its full strength as soon as possible.

My officials are working to develop options in support of the aviation sector's long-term recovery. These options will complement work to assist the sector to restart in the immediate and short term and will reflect key government priorities such as economic growth, the levelling up agenda and achieving net zero. Only recently, for example, I announced the formation of the Jet Zero Council to turbocharge progress on the latter.

We will be working closely with the industry on these recovery options and we look forward to the UK aviation sector not only recovering from the challenges of COVID-19 but setting the global agenda for an innovative, sustainable industry. I will of course continue to engage with the Transport Select Committee as this work progresses.

Turning to health measures at the border; as you know, measures were put in place to keep the number of COVID-19 transmissions in the UK as low as possible. I am glad to be able to update you that, in line with the written statement I laid on 29 June, the Government will shortly begin to ease these measures, allowing passengers to be exempted from self-isolation requirements in certain circumstances on arrival in the UK. As well as aviation, this will apply to international rail and maritime too.

This decision follows work by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, in close consultation with Public Health England and the Chief Medical Officer, to develop a categorisation of countries and territories from which it is considered sufficiently safe from a public health perspective for passengers to enter the UK, without a requirement for 14 days isolation. This has been informed by factors including the prevalence of coronavirus within the country and the numbers of new cases and potential disease trajectory in the coming weeks in that country. This categorisation will inform ministerial decisions about the future easing of the current border measures.

Further details will be announced imminently, including a list of the countries and territories from which arriving passengers will be exempted from self-isolation requirements. Separately, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is reviewing its travel advice, with details again to be announced shortly. As you are aware, throughout this process public safety has been at the heart of our decision making. We have worked closely with health and policy experts from across government to ensure the steps we are taking are gradual and will minimise the risk of new COVID-19 cases. Our approach will enable the careful reopening of our travel and tourism sectors, upon which so many of our constituents depend and from which they benefit so much.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT