

Mr Darren Jones MP
Chair
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

22 June 2022

Dear Mr Jones,

On behalf of the Airport Operators Association (AOA), I am writing following my recent appearance at the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee on 14 June. Ruth Cadbury MP asked me to write to the Committee regarding the HMRC checks and security alleviations given to industry.

I welcomed the opportunity to give evidence at the Committee and I wanted to reiterate that while security checks remain a challenge for some recruits and airports, overall, the waiting times for security clearance have improved and the alleviations we have worked on with officials remain helpful in bringing people more quickly from recruitment to training and ultimately deployment.

It is a positive step that HMRC have allowed candidates to access their employment record and provide that to their prospective employer as confirmation of employment history. However, the onus remains on the candidate to apply for such a confirmation letter. In a very competitive labour market, even such a small action on a candidate can be enough for them to withdraw from the recruitment process and choose alternative employment. That is why airports have asked that, with the permission of candidates, the employer/pass issuing authority should be allowed to establish direct contact with HMRC to be provided with the relevant employment data.

The Committee requested information regarding security alleviations given to the industry. These are security alleviations at airports, which are issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) and are linked to the Single Consolidated Direction (SCD), and as such, the handling advice the AOA have been given is that we are not permitted to share them directly – instead the Committee should contact DfT directly for further advice. However, I would point the Committee to the Transport Select Committee's Fifth Report *UK aviation: reform for take-off* (HC683) as its recommendations include a helpful indication of the kind of alleviations I referred to, including:

- The Government should prioritise the timely processing of checks for applicants for positions at airports;
- Allow applicants for airport positions to start supervised classroom training, when their initial security checks are complete;

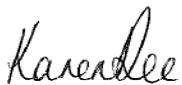
- Review whether the number of trainees compared with supervising security officers can be increased from the current 3:1 ratio.

The second recommendation required legislative change, which was achieved through the Aviation Security (Amendment) Regulations 2022. The AOA has asked government that the alleviations are extended for a further period of time.

Finally, we have heard at the Committee the support given by Government to the industry, with the Aviation Minister giving the figure of £8bn. It is important to note that the majority of the £8bn was in the form of loans and export guarantees for the aerospace industry. A smaller proportion went to aviation, with airlines accounting for the lion's share of that. Only a small proportion of the £8bn, around £130m, went to airports in England, through the Airport & Ground Operations Support Scheme. To put that into context, UK airports lost £10bn in revenue since the first lockdown in March 2020 and have taken on more than £4bn in debt. Phase 1 of AGOSS in financial year 2020/21 provided only enough support to cover 13 days of losses for airports. Government support was insufficient for our industry through the pandemic in a way that would enable a quick recovery, as we wrote to the Secretary of State and Ministers repeatedly over the course of 2020 and 2021.

We hope you will find this useful and please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information or assistance with your inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Dee', with a stylized, cursive script.

Karen Dee
Chief Executive