



The Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers

Dr Luis Barbero
President and CEO, GATCO
4 St Mary's Road, Bingham
Nottingham, NG13 8DW

30 June 2020

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport

Dear Mr Shapps,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers (GATCO) **calling on your government to open a forum discussion, including all relevant stakeholders, about the future funding of Air Navigation Services (ANS) as a critical UK infrastructure.**

The current pandemic has highlighted the role of ANS as a critical UK infrastructure. Air traffic controllers up and down the country, supported by key Air Traffic Management (ATM) personnel, have continued to provide air traffic services during this pandemic in challenging personal, professional and social circumstances, to ensure much-needed medical, cargo and repatriation flights operated without disruption.

Unfortunately, any statement by the Department for Transport (DfT) about supporting aviation has been, almost exclusively, about airlines, making no reference to the key role Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) play in the aviation industry. It was particularly concerning to observe that during your intervention in front of the Transport Committee on the 24 June 2020, the challenges faced by ANSPs were not mentioned at all.

ANSPs in the UK are facing unprecedented financial difficulties. Air traffic has reduced by 85-90% during this pandemic compared to the same period in 2019. While discussions have taken place at European level to look at possible changes to the funding mechanisms of ANSPs, the UK no longer takes part in those discussions, even if their outcomes could still apply to the UK.

If the aviation industry is to continue to play its leading role in the UK economy in a sustainable and efficient manner after the current pandemic, and outside of the European Union, it is of the highest importance that the UK Government, the DfT and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) recognise the seriousness of the ensuing situation and that discussions take place with all stakeholders about the measures that need to be taken to ensure the continuity and financial sustainability of ANS in the UK. It is imperative that GATCO, as an independent ATM professional organisation, is included in those discussions.

I thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Luis Barbero