

PUBLICATION VERSION



UK CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF THE 585TH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 2024, 11:00
AVIATION HOUSE & TEAMS

Present:

Sir Stephen Hillier	Chair
Rob Bishton	CEO
Selina Chadha	Group Director, Consumers & Markets
Katherine Corich	Senior Independent Director
Anne Lambert	Non-Exec Director
Manny Lewis	Non-Exec Director
Tracey Martin	Chief Financial and Operations Officer

Apologies:

Jane Hanson
 AVM Suraya Marshall

In Attendance:

Dave King	Independent Safety Adviser
Tim Johnson	Communications, Strategy & Policy Director & Chief of Staff
Tendai Mutambirwa	Interim Group Director, Safety & Airspace Regulation
Jonathan Spence	General Counsel & Secretary
Briar Mulholland	Head of Office of Chair and CEO, Deputy Chief of Staff
Graeme Paterson	Corporate Governance & Secretariat Lead

David Silk (DFT)	Item 5	James Bell	Item 8
Lucy Robbins	Item 6	Nic Stevenson	Item 8
Caroline Chalk	Item 7	Sophie O'Sullivan	Item 9
John Dobbe	Item 7	Jon Round	Item 9
Laura Madden	Item 7		

I. APOLOGIES & CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

1. The Board welcomed Selina Chadha to her first meeting as the new CMG Director.
2. Apologies had been received from Jane Hanson and AVM Marshall.
3. The Board was advised that Katherine Corich would recuse herself from any discussions related to ongoing regulatory hearings.

II. BOARD APPROVED MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

4. *Minutes* – The minutes of the July Board meeting were noted, having been approved out of committee.
5. *Actions* – In respect of action 260, this would be discussed under agenda item six. Actions 261, 262 and 263 would remain open pending further updates at future Board meetings.

III. CHAIR'S REPORT (BRD-2024-046) BY SIR STEPHEN HILLIER

6. The Board noted the paper.

IV. CEO REPORT (BRD-2024-047) BY ROB BISHTON

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7. *Approvals* – The Board was asked to approve an authorisation document which would allow the CEO to delegate certain airspace and airspace design functions to named individuals within the Airspace, Air Traffic Management & Aerodromes (AAA) team within SARG. It was noted that the authorisation document would remain effective after a new SARG Director had taken up post.

DECISION: The Board approved the authorisation document.

8. *Internal Business Timetable* – The Board was updated on progress to prepare the Scheme of Charges and target budget for the 2025/26 financial year. It was noted that this would also be affected by potential changes to government grant funding as a result of the Government’s ongoing spending review.
9. The Board was also reminded that as part of the new Framework Document and CAA’s need now to comply with the Managing Public Money framework, the Scheme of Charges would also need to be approved by HM Treasury, with associated potential time delay in decision-making. A contingency plan would be developed in the event that approval of the charges was not provided before the start of the new financial year.

V. CAA/DFT UPDATE

10. The Board welcomed David Silk from the Department for Transport to the meeting. The Board was reminded that following the arm’s-length body review and new Framework Document, an attendee from DfT would join for parts of two CAA Board meetings annually. This would enable greater engagement between the CAA and DfT, whilst ensuring that the CAA maintained its position as an independent regulator.
11. The Board was provided with an update on the new Government’s priorities, and the overlap that the CAA’s responsibilities would have with these. The Board noted particular areas of ministerial interest around consumer and passenger rights, and airspace modernisation.
12. The Board was asked to consider whether the additional responsibilities it had taken on in recent years were appropriate for the organisation. The Board confirmed that activities such as Future of Flight, space regulation and state of design were all matters that the CAA needed to be closely involved in, given the need to integrate new users into the aerospace system.
13. The Board noted that in having taken on additional responsibilities, it was key that the CAA maintain its focus on identifying and avoiding the risks associated with regulatory capture.
14. The Board welcomed the update and highlighted the importance of a close and effective working relationship with DfT.

VI. CAA PEOPLE & CULTURE DISCUSSION (BRD-2024-049) BY JONATHAN SPENCE & LUCY ROBBINS

VII. CAA REPORTING & FEEDBACK CHANNELS (BRD-2024-050, 051 & 052) BY TIM JOHNSON & JONATHAN SPENCE

15. Following previous discussions regarding the Post Office and the Horizon Inquiry, the Board was invited to consider the reports and feedback that the CAA receives through different mechanisms.
16. *External Whistleblowing Report* – The Board was reminded that it received annual updates on whistleblowing activity. It was noted that the volume of reports was at pre-Covid levels. It was also noted that there were no atypical trends within the data.
17. It was explained that in respect of remotely piloted aerial system (RPAS) operations, the number of reports had reduced. It was possible that the reduction could be due to more reports being provided directly to police. However, further engagement with police forces on this matter would be necessary.

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18. It was noted that the CAA was considering how it might highlight the whistleblowing process more widely, and in respect of RPAS operations, take action to educate organisers of, and operators at, events in instances where drones might be used in swarms or for aerial footage.
19. The Board was advised of the process by which whistleblowing reports were triaged and assigned for investigation. It was noted that this process had been enhanced in recent months. It was also explained that categorisation of the seriousness of reports could usually only be done once the investigative process had commenced.
20. In respect of the CAA's prosecution powers, the Board was updated on the process by which reports would be assessed by different teams to determine whether formal prosecution action would be taken forward. Updates on prosecution action would be included in future whistleblowing reports. However, it was noted that the CAA would typically undertake fewer than 10 prosecutions per year.
21. The Board noted that a significant process failure had occurred in respect of the external whistleblowing framework, and sought assurance that corrective measures had been put in place. It was confirmed that the process failure had been addressed and enduring mitigations had been put into effect.
22. *Correspondence Insights* – It was advised that this was the first report on correspondence that had been shared with the Board. The Board noted the volume of feedback and correspondence received by the Communications and Engagement Department, but was advised that the volumes only reflect a part of the correspondence received by the CAA.
23. In future updates, the Board suggested that data on trends over time be provided.
24. *Internal Confidential Reporting* – As with the Correspondence item, this was the first dedicated report on Internal Confidential Reporting that the Board had been provided with.
25. The Board welcomed the opportunity to review the three papers together, and was assured that there were effective measures in place to receive, review and act upon feedback from external parties and internal colleagues.
26. The Board was also assured that despite the processes having separate ExCo owners, it was clear how each worked, and where accountability rested.

VIII. CAA STRATEGY FOR AI (BRD-2024-053) BY TIM JOHNSON

27. The Board was reminded that the AI Strategy had been subject to discussion at ExCo and in PIE sessions. Although the Strategy had been developing well, it had been decided not to seek formal Board approval at this stage, as budgeting and prioritisation decisions still needed to be made.
28. The Board was advised that the Strategy was intended to provide a high-level framework to enable the CAA to support industry in its use of AI; and to guide the CAA's use of AI internally.
29. In discussion, the Board was supportive of the Strategy, but recommended that when it was eventually published, clear examples be provided on how AI might be utilised.
30. Noting that discussions were still due to take place at ExCo regarding budgeting and prioritisation, the Board was invited to provide its views on how the CAA might wish to take the Strategy forward.

IX. SARG REPORT (BRD-2024-054) BY TENDAI MUTAMBIKWA

31. *Part 1* – The Board was presented with the top aviation safety risks. This was the first time the risks had been updated since the Board had agreed to being provided with quarterly updates.

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32. *Part 2 – AAA Update* – The Board was updated on the aerodromes and air traffic management aspects of AAA's work.
33. The Board was advised of shortages within industry of qualified air traffic control officers (ATCOs). It was noted that training programmes run by NATS and other providers were working to address this. However, the combination of a shortage of ATCOs and increased salaries had meant that some smaller aerodromes had had to move away from having air traffic control facilities on site.
34. It was also noted that there could potentially be a shortage of engineers able to maintain existing air traffic control systems.

X. DRAFT OCTOBER BOARD & FORWARD AGENDA

35. The Board noted the draft agenda.

XI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

36. No other business was raised.