

23 December 2020

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London SW1A 2AA

Heathrow Airport Holdings Limited
The Compass Centre, Nelson Road,
Hounslow, Middlesex TW6 2GW
W: heathrow.com
T: +44 (0)208 745 9800
E: tina.temby@heathrow.com

Dear Prime Minister

Following your announcement on Saturday detailing Tier 4 restrictions for London and the South East due to the emergence of a new COVID-19, international travel out of Heathrow has effectively been stopped as around 60 countries have closed their borders to passengers from the UK.

While limited and slow progress on introducing testing for passengers has been made, the dramatic deterioration of the situation means that the Government must not delay any longer and – like many countries around the world which require pre-departures tests for aviation – the UK needs to quickly and unilaterally introduce this model, to demonstrate to the world it is serious about protecting their borders as much its own.

Whilst of course we support steps to contain this new strain, the decision to restrict international travel again will further damage the national economy and jeopardise jobs at a time when the UK is looking to rebuild and increase links with the rest of the world after Brexit. This country is a trading, island nation reliant on its doors being open to connect with markets across the world. That is why I have been calling for a pre-departures testing regime as the basis for a common international standard to safely keep borders and economies open - the choice does not have to be between public health and the economy, testing can deliver for both.

There are three priorities to getting international aviation back quickly:

1. The Government should **immediately introduce a model for pre-departure testing** – focussing on countries which have implemented travel bans on UK arrivals in order to get planes back in the air for vital cargo supplies. This should be an extraordinary measure until the travel bans have been relaxed, at which point the risk-based approach to international connections with key trading markets should be resumed, with pre-departures testing in place for 'high risk' countries.
 - A PCR test should be taken -72 hours before departure and a rapid test (LAMP or antigen) at the airport before departure (some countries already require this which demonstrates it is operationally deliverable)
2. To enable more dynamic and flexible approaches to testing models in aviation, Government should **approve the use of rapid testing technology for passengers**, along with PCR testing to add an extra layer of protection in to the testing model.
3. The Government also needs to **urgently set out a roadmap for vaccine roll-out in the UK during 2021**, so all businesses – aviation included - can plan accordingly.

Away from the immediate crisis and building on the points above, the DfT and DHSC must restart work on the next steps for testing in aviation, following the first step of Test to Release which launched last week. Whilst Test to Release is a good start it is not a long term solution to meaningfully help aviation recover – that will require industry and Government to continue to

work together on new procedures and protocols. We stand ready to play our part in this but your Government must take an urgent lead.

In the meantime, your urgent consideration of the introduction of pre-departure testing is required to demonstrate that you appreciate the role aviation plays in facilitating so much of this country's economic activity. A previously successful UK industry that was ranked third in the world is reeling with tens of thousands of jobs at stake. Please help me protect that role and those jobs.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Transport and, given the public interest in these issues, publishing it on Heathrow's website.

Yours sincerely



John Holland-Kaye
Chief Executive Officer