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Mr Gordon Dewar  
Chief Executive  
Edinburgh Airport

Mr Sandy Smart  
Regional Officer  
Unite the Union

[REDACTED]

28 July 2020

Dear Gordon and Sandy

Thank you for your joint letter of 14 July 2020 to the First Minister regarding jobs in the aviation sector and specifically at Edinburgh Airport. I am responding to your letter given my responsibility for aviation in my role as Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

The unprecedented scale of potential job losses as a consequence of the global downturn in the aviation sector is of huge concern. Not least in terms of the impact of redundancy on individual employees and their families. But also in terms the impact on the sector's ability to retain skills to allow it to react with agility to future increases in passenger volumes. I am acutely aware of the impact of job losses on the aviation industry itself, and the wider impact to Scotland's economy which relies upon sustainable international connectivity.

I fully recognise that the aviation industry faces one of the longest recovery periods given the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on route networks. With airlines reducing their fleets and scaling back operations in response to lower demand, the re-establishment of previous routes will not be straightforward nor will their return be certain. This is a global challenge. Through our ongoing direct engagement, I have a clear understanding that the sector's recovery relies upon visibility around future volumes. Short term cash flow relief, such as that provided through our non-domestic rates relief for the aviation sector, has been of assistance, but cannot of itself deliver the certainty that employers require to retain their current workforces. The most meaningful action that the Scottish Government can take to mitigate against the number of job losses which you have described, is to lobby the UK Government to either extend the Job Retention Scheme or to introduce an alternative scheme which is bespoke to the needs of the aviation industry. I have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make that requirement clear.

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I note your continued concern around the requirement for some international travellers to quarantine upon arrival in Scotland. We are continuously keeping the position under review and where there is clear evidence that it is safe to do so, we will exempt further countries. Conversely, any significant increase in the prevalence of the virus could result in the requirements being reinstated. That is the case with Spain where the most recent data means that reintroducing the requirement on passengers arriving from Spain is required to safeguard public health and suppress transmission of the virus. We do not take these decisions lightly. But as we have discussed previously, they do represent necessary and proportionate action to prevent importation of the virus to Scotland. For those travelling from exempt countries the existing requirement to complete a passenger locator form remains in place.

We are working to support the aviation sector back to growth with an overall aim of returning to 2019 levels of connectivity as quickly as possible. We have committed to work with airports on a route recovery strategy, to ensure that Scotland and its workforce is well placed to benefit from increased volumes. We are also establishing a number of targeted group discussions to take forward initiatives where the Scottish Government can provide such support. Officials will provide further details in due course. I appreciate and welcome your offer to work together to identify potential solutions. I look forward to our continued dialogue on these important matters.

[REDACTED]

**MICHAEL MATHESON**

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## Executive Restructure

31 July 2020

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I hope this letter reaches you well given the difficult few months that we have all encountered. It has been a testing time for all of us and one I hope we never see again.

Unfortunately, I write to you with sad but not unexpected news as Edinburgh Airport confirms redundancies due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Today we have confirmed that we will lose colleagues from our business through no fault of their own but due to the impact that this dreadful virus has had on us as a business and on our wider industry.

We have issued redundancy notices to 30% of staff. The airport directly employs 750 people and the redundancy process will begin today, covering all areas including frontline staff, management and support functions. The restructuring includes compulsory and voluntary redundancies across the business.

It is a bitterly sad day for us because we are losing people who have been integral to our success over the past few years but despite that growth, we are not immune to impact of Covid-19.

In 2019 we handled 14.7 million passengers and we are resourced to handle those numbers but, regrettably, these levels will not be seen again at Edinburgh for a number of years. This year we will be lucky to be at a third of that number, and the most optimistic scenario will only see us return to 60% of our passenger numbers in 2021. We expect to lose £80m or more in 2020, which lays bare the situation we find ourselves in.

We have to right size our business to prepare for the recovery before us so our costs must be managed tightly. This requires this restructure from the Executive team down to the shop floor. We have been consulting with our teams and unions since March on how to try to cut costs and retain as many jobs as we can. Our shared focus has been finding a size of team that keeps the airport viable for 2020 and 2021. We have striven to be fair, compassionate and seek an outcome that protects as many people as possible and we hope we have achieved that.

We have used the very welcome Job Retention Scheme to allow us to take our time in making this decision, but it is still a decision we must make.

It would be remiss of me not to explain other issues which have contributed, such as the decision by the UK and Scottish Governments to introduce a blanket quarantine policy which was ill-thought out and unworkable. It has hit confidence in airlines, confidence in passengers and confidence in aviation, and has undoubtedly impacted on jobs. I do not say this as a 'told you so moment', but to highlight that our warnings came from knowing our business and industry. Despite offering this expertise, the level of engagement at all turns has been lacking as has the response to our call for support and clarity of policy making. At a time of national crisis, it has surprised me that this industry has effectively been left to fend for itself.

I know these job losses will be felt in your constituencies and it pains me to say that more may follow. We are losing a third of our workforce and through our close work with unions, we know that figure may be replicated across the campus – up to 2,5000 jobs in total. Aviation jobs rely on connectivity, flights and passengers – without them, those jobs are unsustainable and will be lost. That should be a worrying thing for all of us as we know the aviation industry will play a key role in Scotland's economic recovery by reconnecting businesses, forging new trading relationships and bringing investment. We must act now to be ready for that.

This has been one of the toughest days in my time as Chief Executive of Edinburgh Airport. We are losing valued and talented colleagues and people we call friends. We will do what we can to help them find employment and I would ask that you keep these people in mind when you are talking to local businesses and employers who are in the lucky position to be recruiting.

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We will be more than happy to advertise employment opportunities to our staff and signpost firms who are recruiting, so please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you are aware of such situations.

As ever, if you would like to discuss further then I would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area.

**Gordon Dewar**  
**Chief Executive**

Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister of Scotland  
The Scottish Government  
KY12 8DF

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03 August 2020

Dear First Minister,

First of all, I'd like to say I appreciated your words last week as we regrettably confirmed redundancies at Edinburgh Airport. It was one of the most difficult decisions I have ever had to make in my career, made even harder knowing that colleagues are losing their jobs through no fault of their own.

One area where I did disagree with you was your assertion that we have a fundamental disagreement about the need for quarantine. We don't. I have always favoured a risk-based approach rather than a blanket policy, but we have also been clear that we need to find alternatives to quarantine to avoid further catastrophic damage to the aviation sector and all that rely upon it.

My views of this have crystallised over the past week as I personally find myself impacted and spending time in quarantine after spending three days in Spain and receiving four hours' notice of the change in regulations that meant I was not able to return before the deadline. My experience will be similar if not identical to lots of people who have returned home and are following the guidelines as laid out by the Government, and it as an example of where I think we need to identify alternatives as quickly as possible.

On day four of my quarantine, I made use of the UK Government COVID-19 test centre located at Edinburgh Airport (a valid reason to leave home according to the advice and where I travelled alone in my car to avoid any contact). I received the all-clear test result that same evening. I chose day four to have my test as all medical advice I have researched (including public comments from your advisors) state that days 1-3 of infection may not be detectable and that tests conducted in this period are more susceptible to false negatives. I followed this up with a test on day eight and that has also confirmed a negative result, yet I will still have to spend another six days in quarantine despite double confirmation that I am not carrying the virus.

I think this is a clear demonstration of both the incredibly restrictive nature of quarantine as well as the key role that testing could play in shortening the period or removing the need for quarantine, which is essentially a travel ban. By introducing effective testing, it could provide reassurance to those who wish to travel to see family and friends for the first time

in months, those business people who are looking to invest and those airlines wishing to come to and continue operating in Scotland.

The policy around testing is one that continues to cause confusion, and I think this also shows confusion in the approach when it is compared to those returning to work, sometimes in environments such as care homes with vulnerable people. I would like to understand the difference in accepting testing for staff who work in such environments and passing them fit to return to work, but not for people who have returned home from abroad and cannot go outside to exercise or shop. A robust testing regime will allow people to visit Scotland at the same time as keeping people safe.

We are committed to working with government to seek viable alternatives to quarantine and improve safety and health security. All the industry is, particularly in light of recent developments that suggest we will have this health challenge for many months to come.

I urge you to prioritise the exploration of testing strategies that may offer similar or better levels of safety to quarantine without the massive economic damage currently being imposed as this will be a vital step forward in the recovery of the aviation industry, the tourism industry and Scotland's economy

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

**Gordon Dewar**  
**Chief Executive**

Michael Matheson MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity  
The Scottish Government

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04 August 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Thank you for your response, on behalf of the First Minister to our joint letter with Unite. I'm afraid I will have to adopt a blunt tone in this reply as I feel we have wasted too much time as it is.

I'm disappointed that like all other previous Scottish Government letters during this pandemic, it offered nothing more than sympathy and platitudes. We laid out clear and precise concerns about support for the aviation sector and warned of redundancies. We were told the government would be in touch in due course. It's now far too late for those people who are unfortunately losing their jobs through no fault of their own.

Cabinet Secretary, we need decisive action now. Aviation is continuing to be hit as airlines report losses and expected redundancies and yet we still wait to find out what the Scottish Government's plans are. We are also in a situation where current policies and statements point to there being no focus on this industry's recovery - even worse, they seem to be actively advocating against aviation by encouraging people not to go abroad.

Our concerns over quarantine are well documented and I have since written to the First Minister (letter attached) to document my own experience of quarantine and why I feel we need to urgently look at alternatives to quarantine, such as a robust testing regime that protects public health and provides reassurance and confidence to the travelling public, businesses and airlines. This is even more important when we consider we will face the Covid-19 issue for many months to come. Failure to do so will mean extended periods of quarantine which risks destroying demand for travel and the wide and long-term value associated with travel.

We have consistently expressed our desire to work collaboratively with the Government. That position has become a difficult and lonely one in the face of the Government's lack of engagement, its policy making decisions and what appears to be active briefing against a whole industry, one that feeds into other areas such as business, tourism, culture and education. We urgently need to know what support will be open to aviation. An extension of the UK Government's very welcome and useful Jobs Retention Scheme is not the catch-all solution to our and our partners' issues and we must look at other market stimulation approaches such as APD holidays, extended business rates holidays and future promotion of tourism and other reasons to travel. Rightsizing is happening across the sector, we face a long recovery and unfortunately jobs will not always be sustainable – there must be additional support which goes over and above the current interventions.

Cabinet Secretary, aviation is not too big to fail. We face issues like every other sector and unfortunately, we will feel the brunt longer than some others will. The time has come and gone for words of sympathy, so I reiterate my earlier point that we need decisive action now. I strongly urge you to set out a path of recovery and additional support for the next 12 months that will run in tandem with the Government working with industry to explore alternatives to quarantine, a travel ban in all but name. Such a move will show commitment to our industry and the country's recovery.

As ever, I am happy to discuss this with you but I stress any conversation must be more than warm words, it must be one that sets out your thoughts on the support you will commit to support this industry which will play an important part in any economic recovery.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

**Gordon Dewar**  
**Chief Executive**



Extract email from Cabinet Secretary to Edinburgh 12<sup>th</sup> August

From: [REDACTED] On Behalf Of Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity  
Sent: 12 August 2020 14:57  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Letter from Michael Matheson MSP

Good afternoon,

Please find attached letter from Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] | Deputy Private Secretary to Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity  
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Mr Gordon Dewar  
Chief Executive  
Edinburgh Airport

[REDACTED]

12 August 2020

Dear Gordon,

Thank you for your note of 31 July, your letter of 4 August and also your letter to the First Minister on 3 August. My response today covers the matters you raise in these three pieces of correspondence.

I noted the update on your decision in relation to staff redundancies. I appreciate how difficult a decision this must have been for the business and my thoughts are with those members of staff whose jobs have been affected by the announcement. I know that you have been engaging directly with Unions and that you will ensure that all staff will continue to be treated fairly throughout the process.

I have previously indicated to you that we would provide support through our Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) to those staff who are unfortunately being made redundant. Four virtual PACE sessions have now been delivered and the PACE Chair has offered to provide further support if this is required.

I was disappointed to read that you feel that there has been no engagement with your sector. We have had a number of personal discussions throughout this difficult period, and I am aware that you have ongoing engagement with my officials. I know from our discussion that you are aware of my own personal commitment to assist your sector where is practical for us to do so. I welcome your ongoing constructive engagement. We will continue to consider any credible proposals that you wish to bring forward.

We have previously discussed your industry's frustration at the quarantine measures that have been put in place. From the outset, we have adopted a public health focussed approach to these border health measures. As we continue to suppress the virus in Scotland, the risk of importation of the virus becomes more important. The quarantine arrangements were introduced to safeguard public health. We are continuously keeping

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countries under review and where there is clear evidence that it is safe to do so, we will add further countries to the list. Likewise, if the evidence suggests an exempt country may provide increased risk, we will not hesitate to reinstate quarantine arrangements. These are not easy decisions, but are necessary and proportionate measures as we aim to suppress the virus in Scotland.

We also discussed the desire for a form of testing that can reduce or eliminate the need to quarantine and our work continues in this area. As you are aware, COVID-19 has an incubation period of 14 days. Testing negative during the incubation period provides a point of time assessment of whether someone has COVID-19, but cannot provide reassurance that a person will not go on to develop the disease. For that reason, the 14 day quarantine period is the safest way of reducing the risk of returning travellers inadvertently transmitting the disease to others.

Turning now to the other measures that you outlined in your letter 4 August; Air Passenger Duty (APD) holidays, extended non-domestic rates holidays and the promotion of tourism as well as other reasons to travel.

The introduction of Air Departure Tax (ADT) in Scotland has been deferred to allow for issues raised in relation to the Highlands and Islands exemption to be resolved. As such, the current UK APD rates and bands continue to apply in Scotland. The power to consider an APD holiday therefore sits with the UK Government, although the Scottish Government's position is that reducing ADT is no longer compatible with our new emissions reduction targets. The Scottish Government will engage with HM Treasury's forthcoming consultation on APD reform, to find a solution for aviation that remains consistent with our climate ambitions. We will want to work closely with you and with other stakeholders in doing so and take a collaborative approach in developing the future arrangements for ADT in Scotland.

Through your membership of the Tourism Taskforce that the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism chairs, you will be aware of the work being undertaken to develop recommendations to help the tourism sector recover. You will also be aware that international inbound tourism is not expected to start recovering until next year

The 100% non-domestic rates relief available for airports covers the financial year 2020/21. Given this runs until next year we have no plans at the moment to extend this beyond the period currently announced.

You are aware of the measures we have already taken including the business rates relief, we have written to the UK Government to extend the furlough scheme or provide a bespoke scheme for the aviation industry, and we are working with your team and other airports in Scotland on route recovery. We will shortly be convening a group discussion on this to which you will be invited.

Where we can, we have provided support to the industry. We will continue to do so. We have already had a number of conversations and I will listen to any further specific suggestions of how we can support the industry in its recovery. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate our desire to work collaboratively to help achieve this.

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**MICHAEL MATHESON**

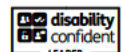
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Extract of Open letter located on Edinburgh Airport Website sent on 3<sup>rd</sup> September by Gordon Dewar, CEO Edinburgh Airport to Humza Yousaf.

## 1.1 An open letter to Humza Yousaf

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

The First Minister has said at her daily press briefings and in the Chamber that any life lost to Covid-19 is the loss of someone's loved one and should rightfully be recognised as such.

Protecting public health has rightfully been the focus of the government's strategy and we have always been clear that we understand the need to do that and have supported that work which is absolutely paramount at any time, not just during a pandemic. Airports and their process have safety at their core.

However, absolutely paramount at any time is also a strong economy, one that allows government to protect livelihoods, improve the lives of people and further Scotland's ambitions and credentials at home and abroad.

Last night (02/09/20) I listened to your comments on STV and was dismayed to hear you say that although you were concerned about the impact of Covid-19 and quarantine on the aviation industry, "*We can bring the economy back to life, we just can't bring people back to life.*"

Cabinet Secretary, I am sorry that you felt that such a comparison was appropriate. No-one in aviation has advocated trading lives for the economy, and it is unhelpful to be using anyone's loss to make a political point that side-steps or ignores our open request for engagement in seeking better policies.

In all our engagement with your Government, we have agreed that health measures must be what we build policy around. It has never been in question because business aside, we are human beings first and foremost and we know the true cost of Covid-19.

But this isn't a binary choice as you have seemed to suggest. It is not a choice between public health or the economy. It is not a choice because we need to do both if Scotland is to rebound and recover.

The First Minister's Programme for Government this week made promises on jobs, especially the jobs guarantee for young people. That is an ambitious policy planning for Scotland's future and that is to be commended but, and I'm sorry to be so blunt, you can't guarantee anyone access to jobs that don't exist. A strong economy will be key to this and is exactly why the Scottish Government needs to support businesses in sustaining and creating jobs if such promises are to come to fruition.

As an airport, we are a facilitator of many things, from business and tourism to education, research and culture, and all these things are drivers of economic activity. But we're also one business in Scotland's economy and there are many more who want to help and who want support from the government to get the recovery started.

Yes, rates relief your Government has put in place has of course been welcome, something we have said in public and in private. And yes, we know that it isn't available in England or Wales. But what is and isn't available in other parts of the UK is not our concern – saving Scotland's aviation and travel industry and rebuilding our economy is.

A quarantine policy that is a travel ban in all but name makes this incredibly difficult, if not impossible. It is ineffective and unworkable as your own figures show and it is having a damning impact on a range of industries. If this is the path the Scottish Government is to continue down then there are some incredibly dark days ahead. I only have to look at my own business to see the real impact it is having. Saying goodbye to 250 colleagues through no fault of their own was one of the toughest experiences in my career. I don't want others to have to do the same.

If we are to live with Covid-19 for months and years to come then this is simply not a sustainable approach. We need a robust testing regime that protects public health and provides confidence and reassurance to those who need and wish to travel.

We have to manage and mitigate the risk in the best way possible, and that simply has to be a dual approach with balanced attention given to health and prosperity.

Decisions taken now will have an enduring impact on the many quality jobs our industry supports up and down the country, and – if those are too cautious and short-sighted decisions, will significantly undermine the county's future connectivity and competitiveness.

We are ready, willing and able to help design better systems and processes to protect the health of passengers and staff. We and our colleagues at AGS have spoken with the National Clinical Director, Jason Leitch to explore how best to partner with the Scottish Government on testing. We're hopeful that our ideas are being listened to and we have a tentative path forward.

We have great respect for the First Minister's leadership through this health crisis. However, we urge you to make good her words in recognising that the economic emergency is of equal importance to the health crisis.

The aviation and travel industries are not too big to fail. If the Scottish Government position remains as it stands, you are putting tens of thousands of jobs at risk in aviation the next few months alone. The knock-on risks to our tourism sector are even more profound and we would hope you might reflect carefully on our concerns and respond accordingly.

We urge you to reconsider your approach and work with us to find a way to protect public health and rebuild our economy. It is in Scotland's best interest to do both.

Regards,

Gordon Dewar

Chief Executive, Edinburgh Airport

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Mr Gordon Dewar  
Chief Executive  
Edinburgh Airport

[REDACTED]

07 September 2020

Dear Gordon

In response to your open letter to me about the impact of the need to quarantine for 14 days on the travel industry, in particular on Scotland's airports, I recognise that this is a particularly challenging time for the aviation industry, globally as well as here in Scotland.

As the First Minister said at the daily briefing on 3 September, we understand industry concerns, not only about restrictions that we have had to put in place in Scotland, but about the ongoing impact Covid 19 is having on travel generally and air travel in particular. We do want to continue to explore whether there is a better balance around quarantine, and I know you are having further discussions with officials on Monday. However, at present, we are not satisfied that moving from quarantine to testing would provide enough protection to guard against importation of new cases – people in the early stages of incubation of the virus could test negative and go on to develop the virus and spread it.

We will continue to support the aviation industry and staff who have lost their jobs through our PACE initiative. As you note in your letter, our business support package, which now exceeds £2.3 billion, includes business rates relief for aviation, airports and ground-handling providers. We are also working with airports on route recovery, to help rebuild connectivity for business and tourism and win back routes and employment opportunities. I understand that Transport Scotland is directly engaged with your team on 2 specific opportunities and I can provide an assurance that we remain committed to that work to help restore connectivity.

We are also urging the UK Government to extend the Job Retention Scheme or to introduce an alternative sector-specific support for those sectors that have a much longer recovery period.

We are aware that other countries have adopted a range of approaches from testing to strict self-isolation and we will continue to consider their experiences and learn any lessons.

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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Scotland is an open and welcoming country and will remain so – the measures we have in place for international travellers are temporary and will only be in place for as long as considered necessary.

Whilst quarantine remains the safest option for the broader public health, I have encouraged officials to continue engagement and to work constructively with airports to explore with you any possible alternatives that can be considered while there remains a need to protect against importation of new cases.

[REDACTED]

**HUMZA YOUSAF**

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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Extract of email from Cabinet Secretary to Edinburgh Airport 10<sup>th</sup> September

Good Afternoon,

Please see attached correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture.

[REDACTED]

**Deputy Private Secretary to Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop**

The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Mr Gordon Dewar  
Chief Executive  
Edinburgh Airport

[REDACTED]

10 September 2020

Dear Gordon

Thank you for sharing your insights into the challenges facing the aviation industry and your suggestions of what more government can do to support the aviation sector during this challenging time.

I understand that you had a constructive meeting with our clinicians earlier this week, where it was agreed that airports should develop some options around testing that could be piloted. I am also aware that Transport Scotland is directly engaging with you on a number of specific opportunities to rebuild connectivity and create employment opportunities.

I hope this works continues to progress well and that, through taking a partnership approach, we are able to restore the connectivity and passenger numbers which is needed to support business and tourism in Scotland.

[REDACTED]

**FIONA HYSLOP**



|

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
Sent: 04 November 2020 11:19  
To: Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity

>

[REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Subject: Meeting with Scottish Airport CEOs

Cabinet Secretary

I would like to arrange a meeting with you Gordon Dewar and Derek Provan of AGS to discuss our views on the progress of the airport testing work we've been undertaking with the Scottish Government.

We have reached the point that there is acceptance that the approach is worth pursuing but we feel that limited Scottish Government resources appear to be curtailing the pace of progress towards a full implementation in the Spring.

Can we request some of your time urgently to discuss?

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Director of Communications

Edinburgh Airport Limited  
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[REDACTED]  
Director of Communications  
Edinburgh Airport

[REDACTED]

Our ref: 2020/0004128  
2 December 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 4 November 2020 requesting a meeting with Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, to discuss the progress of airport testing.

Subject to Parliamentary business, the Cabinet Secretary would welcome the opportunity to meet with Gordon Dewar and Derek Provan to discuss airport testing. Please contact Mr Matheson's Assistant Private Secretary, [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] to make the necessary arrangements.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] PRIVATE  
SECRETARY

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Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Edinburgh Airport  
EH12 9DN  
Scotland

W: [edinburghairport.com](http://edinburghairport.com)

10 December 2020

Dear First Minister,

I wanted to reiterate to you and your ministerial colleagues Edinburgh Airport's desire to assist wherever and whenever we can in the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine across Scotland.

My frustration with a number of issues impacting aviation was not intended to undermine my central message of a desire to assist you and your colleagues, and I do want to emphasise our continued commitment to that support.

However, I cannot deny that your comments about not booking holidays next summer took us aback. I accept the need for caution, but these remarks did seem at odds with our activities with your Transport Scotland colleagues and they do send a negative message to airlines as well as undermining passenger confidence. We're focused on protecting the recovery of Scottish aviation and confidence in airlines and passengers is a vital ingredient in that effort.

Nevertheless, using of the word 'campaigning' in the heat of the moment was taken in a way other than I had intended, but I am sure you understand my frustration and that of my colleagues, as an immediate reaction to comments about summer flights and their impact on an industry already on its knees.

It is my hope that by establishing and fostering good strong channels of communication, we can avoid situations where either of us is taken by surprise and hence avoid generating an unintended reaction.

Regarding my comments on quarantine, I did not and do not profess to be a clinical or scientific expert. We understand that the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland will wish to decide who is vaccinated and when, the assurance of standards of delivery, and who delivers the vaccine. However, we are a business that designs and manages processes that involve 50,000 people a day at our peak, through intensive security measures and several complex components, much of it to standards set by Government. We can bring that expertise to bear on this issue to assist you in making sure that people in Scotland are vaccinated as quickly as possible.

In addition to the benefits to the population and to the economy, we also believe that there are wider benefits, both to the reputation of Scotland and to its competitive advantage, in driving vaccination forward urgently. There is a definite risk to the travel and tourism industries if we fall behind the other UK nations or wider European progress, and on the face of it, the current plans would not yet mitigate that risk.

We continue to believe that a very ambitious timescale is both possible and highly desirable and would welcome the opportunity to understand any rate limiting factors so that we can help to optimise the approach.

Pace of delivery must be key for both mitigating medical risks and re-starting the economy and normal life for Scotland. There would appear to be no downside to setting our nation's ambitions as high as possible.

That desire to assist, and improve if we can, was behind my passion at this morning's Committee. We remain available and ready to support where we can, and I hope that we can work together on this and other issues to ensure Scotland's recovery is as quick, strong and sustainable as it can be.

Best wishes

Yours

[REDACTED]

Gordon Dewar  
Chief Executive

cc [REDACTED]

Extract of email from Cabinet secretary to Edinburgh Airport 18th December

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a letter from Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure & Connectivity.

Best Wishes

[REDACTED] | Assistant Private Secretary to Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity  
The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG | Web: [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

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Gordon Dewar  
Chief Executive  
Edinburgh Airport Ltd

[REDACTED]

18 December 2020

Dear Gordon,

I refer to your letter of 11 December to the First Minister and our call the same day.

As the First Minister said at her daily briefing, and has been made clear during the many conversations that we have had this year, we understand entirely the pressure your business and the wider aviation sector is under. We also understand that there is frustration that the ongoing threat posed by Covid is continuing to impact on the speed at which travel, tourism and the economy as a whole can recover. As you are well aware, decisions taken by the Scottish Government in response to the global pandemic must balance health and economic harms. I thank you for your offer of constructive engagement going forward.

We continue to make progress on options for piloting an alternative to the 10 day quarantine period for international arrivals and I am well aware of the desire to make an early decision, to advise airports and airlines of that decision then implement a pilot as quickly as possible. That said, decisions will be taken in the round in light of both public health and clinical advice, and the prospect of a pilot providing some reassurance to airlines as they take decisions about where to place capacity for summer 2021. We will be back in touch shortly to advise what has been decided. We are also conscious that decisions being taken elsewhere in Europe – most recently in Germany and in the Canary Islands – will continue to have an impact on recovery and restrictions in these markets will have a bearing on which routes should be considered for any pilot.

I was pleased that you acknowledged the role Transport Scotland continues to play in helping with your route development efforts. I am clear that, notwithstanding any differences of opinion on the detail of test to release and quarantine measures, that support will continue in earnest. I know our respective teams are working well together on some opportunities for summer 2021, to both win back suspended routes and secure new ones. Like you, our overall objective is to help restore the global connectivity we enjoyed in 2019, and help build that further. We do not underestimate the challenge of doing that but please be assured that we will continue to support Edinburgh Airport's ambition in strengthening our international connectivity even further.

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[REDACTED OUT OF SCOPE]

We will come back to you and Derek Provan as soon as we reach a decision on test to release.

[REDACTED]

**MICHAEL MATHESON**

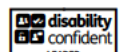
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Michael Matheson MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Wednesday 16 December 2020

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your time on Friday. As we discussed, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Scotland's aviation sector has been devastating and I know you share my concerns about the ability of the industry to emerge from this crisis.

It will take years to restore Scotland's connectivity, if in fact we are able to, and our recovery will be intensely competitive given the consolidation and contraction taking place within the market. In addition to losing thousands of staff, airlines are actively reducing their fleets and are currently making decisions on where to deploy their remaining aircraft.

The lack of a testing strategy and a reliance on a damaging and ineffective quarantine policy means Scottish aviation now risks being left behind. The UK Government has launched its test to release scheme for international travel for passengers travelling into England only. Whilst not perfect, the strategy means our counterparts in England can now start making plans to safely restart international travel. It also means airlines will opt to relocate their aircraft to the detriment of Scotland's remaining connectivity.

Following the launch of the test to release strategy, my counterparts in England are now speaking with the UK Government about moving to the second phase of international travel testing which would include pre-departure testing. The statistics issued last week regarding the cause of the second wave of coronavirus infections in Scotland not only confirmed how ineffective quarantine has been, they reinforced the absolute need to introduce an effective testing regime.

I fully appreciate the hugely difficult decisions both you and your colleagues within the Scottish Government are having to make during this crisis. I also appreciate you have requested further time to consider the joint proposal put to your officials by AGS and Edinburgh Airport, however, I would strongly urge you to work with us on the implementation of a testing pilot.

The Scottish Government moved quickly at the outset of the pandemic to provide much needed support through business rates relief and suspending police costs for a period of time. With Aberdeen and Glasgow airports facing an equally challenging 2021 without our main source of revenue, I would request the Scottish Government extends this support for 2021/22. These measures, combined with the steps we have taken as a business, will support AGS Airports as we work to find a way through this crisis.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Derek Provan  
Chief Executive  
AGS Airports Limited