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By email: [action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk](mailto:action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk)

6 July 2021

Dear Chancellor

### **Aviation to remain in lockdown: nose-dive towards another bleak winter begins**

As you will know from Government figures, aviation has been the hardest hit sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will soon celebrate the macabre milestone of 18 months of heavy losses and, with the Prime Minister signalling an end to mandatory restrictions on 19 July, will be the only sector to remain in lockdown, operating under stringent restrictions.

These restrictions, including on market access and freedom of movement, the cost of testing and passenger perception of safety, all point to a very bleak winter for the sector. It is with this in mind that we must restate to you the importance of furlough to workers in aviation and ask, in the strongest possible terms, for an extension to the furlough scheme for this sector. It has been a lifeline for so many during the turbulence of the pandemic, and whilst every other sector of the economy will shortly have all restrictions removed, aviation will not. It therefore must be an exception when furlough support comes to an end in just a matter of weeks.

The furlough scheme has been vital in retaining much of the UK's aviation workforce, who have specialist skills and training that would be very difficult to replace if lost. If aviation is not made an exception for the furlough scheme, we risk losing wholesale the expertise and experience that keep one of the UK's most productive sectors moving in a safe and secure way, even during the last loss making year.

When we wrote to you earlier this year about the Global Travel Taskforce we had strong expectations of a summer without such tight restrictions and a resulting return to profitability for airlines. This clearly has not happened, and although minor additions to the green list were welcome, the lack of a profitable summer period now means that any substantive recovery will be pushed back to summer 2022. Aviation employees must be supported beyond the Autumn.

The new Secretary of State for Health declared the UK's vaccine progress "phenomenal success" in the first few days of starting the role, yet the continued restrictions are putting pilots' jobs at risk. With Europe still several months behind the UK on vaccines, some countries are closing their borders to UK travellers due to the Delta variant in the UK. This only compounds the likelihood of no return to profitability until Summer 2022.

On 17 March 2020 you said: *“Some sectors are facing particularly acute challenges. In the coming days, my colleague the Secretary of State for Transport and I will discuss a potential support package for specifically airlines and airports.... we will do whatever it takes.”*<sup>1</sup>

This deeply challenging period of our history will one day be behind us, and aviation will once again reconnect families and businesses. Please recognise the unique position that the sector - and those that work in it - are still in, and that it will remain this way longer than other sectors. The time has come to demonstrate this if you want to see the British aviation sector survive and thrive.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Strutton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Brian Strutton  
**BALPA Acting General Secretary**

cc: Jim McMahon MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport  
Lord Balfe, BALPA Honorary President  
Lord Whitty, BALPA Honorary Vice-President

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-chancellor-rishi-sunak-provides-an-updated-statement-on-coronavirus>