

Former head of RAF to be appointed chair of the UK Civil Aviation Authority

- Sir Stephen Hillier announced as new chair of the UK Civil Aviation Authority
- Hillier to support the government in leading the aviation industry through COVID-19 and future challenges presented by the virus
- Hillier will also support the government's vision to decarbonise and modernise the industry, and to inspire young people into aviation careers

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (7 May 2020) announced the former head of the Royal Air Force, Sir Stephen Hillier, as his preferred candidate to become the new chair of the UK Civil Aviation Authority.

Following an open competition, Sir Stephen was selected by the Transport Secretary as the candidate best suited to lead the Civil Aviation Authority through the COVID-19 response and recovery. He will balance airlines' immediate needs resulting from reduced passenger demand, with consumer issues such as the refund backlog due to cancelled services.

Sir Stephen will oversee the enhancement of the Civil Aviation Authority's reputation as a leading aviation regulator, as the UK leaves the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). This will include preparing the organisation to certify the design of new aviation products and formulating proposals for new aviation safety legislation.

Hillier will also build on the government's vision to innovate and modernise the aviation industry, making flying greener and more efficient, as well as driving cutting-edge technologies to ensure the UK maintains its position as a world leader in aviation.

The government has invested in STEM based programmes co-ordinated through general aviation organisations to inspire the next generation of pilots and engineers into the industry. Sir Stephen will help progress this work to ensure general aviation continues to be the grassroots driving force behind the entire aviation sector, with many of the UK's top aviation specialists and pilots having experienced their first taste of aviation at their local airfield.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

This is an extremely challenging time for the aviation industry, unlike anything we have faced, so the need for an inspiring and experienced leader is vital. I'd like to thank Dame Deirdre Hutton for her support and leadership over the last 11 years and to

welcome Sir Stephen Hillier.

Sir Stephen's incredible knowledge and experience in aviation will be invaluable during this period and I'm confident he will excel addressing the challenges presented by COVID-19. I am also excited to work with him and support the Civil Aviation Authority's new vision once the industry is back on its feet.

Hillier's primary task will be working to ensure the UK maintains its excellent aviation safety and security record. He was the head of the RAF from 2016 to 2019, having served in the RAF for almost 40 years. He is a qualified pilot and flying instructor, and has significant experience in managing multiple agencies and suppliers as part of an earlier role as the Ministry of Defence's principal military customer for equipment and infrastructure. He will take up his post as Non-executive Chair of the Civil Aviation Authority, starting on 1 August 2020.

Sir Stephen Hillier said:

I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to help lead the Civil Aviation Authority through the enormous challenges which lie ahead: maintaining our excellent safety record and promoting the UK's world-leading aviation sector, while dealing with the consequences of COVID-19 and guiding us through our departure from EASA.

Dame Deirdre Hutton, Chair of the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said:

It has been a great privilege and an honour to chair the UK Civil Aviation Authority board for the past 11 years.

It has been an extraordinary period starting with the closure of pan-European airspace due to the Icelandic volcano and ending with the current challenges of COVID-19.

The organisation's ability to deal with crisis situations is exemplary and I am deeply grateful to all my colleagues for their focus and determination.

The organisation has changed immeasurably, and I am proud of the way we have revolutionised our approach to safety regulation, launched a world leading innovation hub and put consumers at the heart of what we do.

It has been immensely rewarding and I am delighted that I pass the chair to someone who will undoubtedly successfully steer the organisation through the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Sir Stephen replaces Dame Deirdre Hutton DBE, who steps down after 11 years as the chair. During this period, Dame Deirdre has overseen a period of significant change at the Civil Aviation Authority, notably the introduction of risk-based safety regulation and putting consumers and the heart of the organisation. Dame Deirdre has also guided the organisation through many crisis situations including the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull, the Icelandic volcano that led to the closure of pan-European airspace and the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of UK travellers following the collapse of both Monarch Airlines and Thomas Cook.

This role is subject to a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing by the Transport Select Committee, which will take place later this year. The final confirmation of the appointment will follow that hearing, and Sir Stephen is expected to start work as Chair on 1 August 2020.