

# Independent panel to be created to review complaints against CAA decision process

- new independent panel created to enhance the decision-making work of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)
- panel will support the aviation sector in maintaining trust in the UK's high-level safety standards and global reputation in regulatory standards
- it will be made up of non-aviation experts in decision-making procedures to enhance the work of the CAA

The Department for Transport (DfT), working in collaboration with the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), has today (13 September 2021) announced its intention to create a new independent panel to strengthen transparency around decision-making and drive forward best practice regulatory processes at the CAA.

The panel will sit outside of the CAA and will be available to review complaints made by individuals about the process by which the CAA has made decisions that affect them. It will be open to individuals whose cases meet a certain threshold if they remain unsatisfied following the CAA's internal two-stage complaints processes.

Eligible complaints will cover licensing and certification decisions, such as those following an airspace infringement or the decision to suspend a licence or endorsement to an instructor or examiner.

The panel will consider whether the CAA correctly followed its processes and procedures in arriving at a decision. It will have the power to remit the case back to the CAA where it investigates and considers the CAA has not done this.

An important aspect of the UK and international aviation safety system is that the regulatory authority has the responsibility for safety-related decisions. Therefore, the CAA will remain the ultimate decision-maker.

However, in the exceptional event that the CAA chooses not to reconsider a case process in light of a recommendation to do so from the panel, it will need to explain its rationale to the complainant, the panel and the Minister for Aviation.

Aviation Minister Robert Courts said:

Our world-leading safety standards and training are what sets us apart and this new panel will provide greater strength, clarity and assurance on decisions that affect individuals working in the

aviation sector.

It's thanks to the exemplary work of our Civil Aviation Authority that we have such highly regarded standards and this panel will help bolster our shared aims around open and effective decision-making.

The DfT is responsible for setting up and recruiting the new panel. It will be made up of people with expertise in investigative processes and procedures.

To ensure it is considered truly independent, panel members will not be expected to be aviation experts and will need to be independent of both the CAA and those individuals or sectors that have an interest in the decision.

Sir Stephen Hillier, Chair of the UK CAA, said:

We welcome plans to create an independent panel to review how the CAA has made decisions that affect individuals.

As the UK's independent aviation safety regulator, we sometimes need to make tough decisions that can impact the livelihoods and interests of people across the aviation sector.

The expectation is that only a handful of cases will come before the panel following our internal processes, but having this independent channel available outside of the CAA is important.

We always strive to make decisions properly and with safety interests to the fore, but this additional layer of review will add more transparency and should build further trust between the CAA and those that we license.

The panel process will be open to eligible decisions taken after the formal establishment of the body. DfT will be publishing more details on the timescales for launching the panel, as well as the public appointment process in due course.