

UNITE BLUEPRINT FOR AVIATION



UK aviation

flying into the future



URGENT UPDATE

Unite's blueprint for aviation "*Flying into the Future*" was first developed in March 2020, and widely promoted at every opportunity, as the reality of Covid-19 began to devastatingly impact aviation. It was further developed and launched in Parliament in May 2020 in a major online call with MPs. To download Unite's aviation blueprint go to: <https://bit.ly/307ySFA>

Today, Unite's blueprint remains the roadmap we need to follow. The overall approach is widely supported¹. This summer update sets out what now needs to happen.

Unite represents people who work throughout aviation – in airlines, airports and the supply chain: ground-handling, catering, cleaning, refuelling, as well as the related aerospace industry. The threat to thousands of jobs in the sector as well as to pay, terms and conditions is a daily reality Unite is dealing with. Unite is uniquely placed to identify key issues facing the entire sector and related sectors, as well as having direct links with aviation unions and the TUC, sector bodies and the wide range of aviation employers across the UK, throughout Europe and globally, including the ETF² and ITF³, all of which has informed the development of Unite's blueprint for aviation and this update.

Aviation has suffered a devastating impact from Covid-19, with tens of thousands of workers furloughed on the job retention scheme (JRS) that Unite successfully campaigned for, and with additions to government minimum standards negotiated by Unite wherever possible.

While Unite is strenuously representing our members still at work in aviation and ensuring protections for both passengers' and aviation workers' safety and security, it is the threat to jobs and incomes in aviation that needs immediate action.

Unite is clear that the sector urgently needs a plan for a post Covid-19 lockdown and for the months and years ahead, which actively includes environmental concerns and developments in automation and digitalisation⁴. Government support needs to be there with clear pre-conditions to protect decent jobs and treatment for everyone working in aviation, and to ensure the future of the entire sector and related sectors.

Unite recognises that we are in a period of severe financial pressure in aviation but is equally clear that this requires ALL to play their part. It is not acceptable for aviation workers to be expected to pay the price in the short, medium and long-term. Temporary solutions developed on a joint basis, are possible and receive workers' support. Imposition and threats will not achieve the way forward the sector needs.

Unite is therefore calling for government too to play its part to strategically support aviation infrastructure, as well as decent treatment of aviation workers, through the following coordinated strategy and approach. **Developing a bespoke package of support for aviation, through an established aviation task force where all parts of aviation can come together, with unions fairly and effectively represented and 'at the table', is vital.**

1. RESTORING CONFIDENCE

As long as a vaccine is not available for Covid-19, fear will be a key element in a post lockdown aviation world. In order to support people to fly again, **the industry must implement new standards and operational models globally and throughout 'the passenger journey', with regular risk assessments**, respecting social distancing, ensuring personal protective equipment and face coverings, and minimising direct contact with and between passengers, while protecting the safety of all working in aviation. Unite is playing its part in setting the standards to restore confidence and ensure safety.



2. PROVIDING STABILITY DURING A TIME OF EXTREME VOLATILITY

Government measures (both domestic and global) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic have suppressed air travel, dramatically impacting on the sector and its revenue streams at a critical time in the cyclical seasonal nature of aviation.

Industry predictions identify that passenger demand and revenue streams will gradually rebuild, with increasing numbers of skilled, experienced aviation workers being required in all parts of the sector. However, aviation workers and aviation as a whole are facing the immediate threat to tens of thousands of jobs, to extensive skills and experience, and to the very existence of some airports and parts of the supply chain.

As Unite's blueprint for aviation sets out, **we need strategic bespoke support for aviation, with clear pre-conditions to any companies receiving government loans and support, that not only protects aviation workers and all parts of aviation between now and Spring 2021, but also ensures that the sector is in the strongest position to rebuild more sustainably into the future.**

In addition there should be no extension of slot usage alleviation for winter 2020/21 in order to ensure a schedule that passengers and consumers can have confidence in, employers can plan to and employees be certain of.

3. ALL MUST PLAY THEIR PART IN SUPPORTING THE FUTURE FOR AVIATION

Unite and other unions are currently negotiating with employers for the very future of the aviation sector. This has included reaching agreements in these very difficult times to safeguard jobs through agreeing redundancy mitigation measures, such as temporary pay reductions, and agreed 'pools' of workers on set proportions of their pay, available to return as the sector rebuilds.

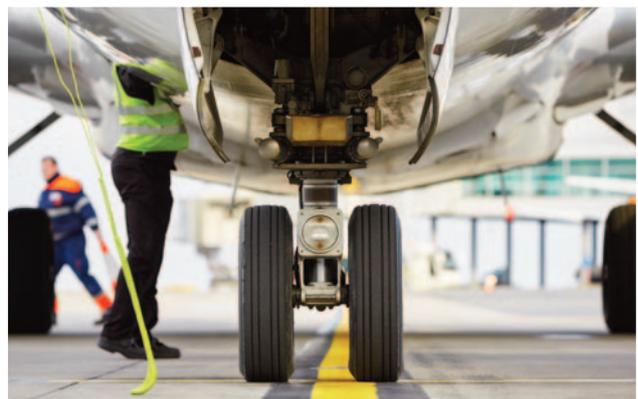
One example is at Ryanair, where the temporary tiered pay cuts mean the lowest paid proportionately contribute the least, all job losses were prevented, and the threat to airport operations from the potential closure of Ryanair's bases in the UK was averted.

A similar agreement has been reached with AlphaLSG. This is the approach Unite is seeking with other employers, but at the worst extremes, advantage is being taken of the pandemic and of government loans and job retention scheme payments being used as part of a process to permanently cut pay, terms, conditions and jobs; as at BA, where 12,000 redundancies are threatened and a further 32,000 people face 'fire and rehire' with permanent reductions and cuts imposed or forced redundancy.

Extending the climate of fear at this time of great pressure for everyone, has taken its toll, as the mental health survey of Unite BA members demonstrates⁵. **Government needs to ensure that there are clear pre-conditions to support for aviation, which protect aviation workers and the aviation sector as a whole. The crisis is temporary, not permanent and equally so should these solutions be.**

4. PROTECTING REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY – PUBLIC SERVICE OBLIGATION ROUTES

Regional connectivity is about communities being supported and linked up. The loss of Flybe means the a critical reduction of regional connectivity, threatening the future of a number of airports and further isolating and undermining communities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This part of the sector no longer has the capacity to scale up, and the margins and returns are such that without support the routes will be the last to resume. **Public Service Obligation routes need to be protected and increased as part of the overall aviation infrastructure strategy.**



5. SUPPORTING AVIATION WORKERS IN JOBS NOT UNEMPLOYMENT

Unite is calling for a **long-term extension of the coronavirus job retention scheme (JRS) for the aviation sector**, a proposal which has the backing of business, airports, the aviation supply chain, trade unions and cross-party politicians alike who recognise that this would provide some much-needed stability to the industry and would be a vital lifeline to aviation workers across the country.

The alternative to government support for job retention in aviation between now and March 2021 is immediate jobs and skills loss, making it much harder for the sector to rebuild safely and cost-effectively as demand increases, with skilled dedicated, professional aviation workers being forced to claim a range of unemployment and other benefits, and all the resulting losses to local communities and the aviation supply chain.

In addition the cost of unemployment – in terms of lost tax revenue and benefits payments – is such that supporting employees in retaining jobs has a less detrimental impact for the treasury and public finances.

6. TOGETHER WITH THE TUC AND ALL AVIATION UNIONS, UNITE IS CALLING SPECIFICALLY FOR GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION ON THE ECONOMIC AND FISCAL MEASURES NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE SECTOR INCLUDING:

- The extension of and modifications to JRS to protect employment in the aviation sector
- Suspension of APD.
- Public service obligation routes to ensure regional connectivity
- Government to meet air navigation charges/ nationalisation of NATS.
- Business rate relief for airports (as in Scotland and NI)
- Extending the period of repayment of loans to aviation companies beyond the current two year maximum
- Implementation of the airline insolvency review
- Continued suspension of the European ground handling directive – allowing for sustainable supplier operations
- Unions fully included in ESG sub-group and Jet Zero Council

Summer 2020



References

- 1: See TUC call for action to support aviation www.tuc.org.uk/news/tuc-quarantine-exemptions-alone-will-not-save-aviation-industry
See Labour Party call for support to aviation <https://labourlist.org/2020/05/condition-airline-bailouts-on-jobs-and-climate-commitments-says-labour>
See Airport Operators Association call for support for aviation www.aoa.org.uk/uk-falling-behind-major-economies-in-supporting-aviation-industry
See Airlines UK and MPs and former Aviation Ministers call for aviation support <https://airlinesuk.org/mps-former-aviation-ministers-write-to-chancellor-to-call-for-more-support-for-sector-to-deal-with-covid-19>
- 2: See ETF Covid19 call for support for European aviation www.etf-europe.org/covid-19-a-plan-for-european-aviation
- 3: See Joint ITF/IATA call for global support for aviation www.itfglobal.org/en/news/iata-and-itf-joint-statement-aviation-support
- 4: New Economics Foundation report 'Crisis support to aviation and the right to retrain' is available at <https://neweconomics.org/2020/06/crisis-support-to-aviation-and-the-right-to-retrain>
- 5: www.thesun.co.uk/news/11674051/british-airways-staff-mental-health-issues