



## Department for Transport

The Lord Kirkhope  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill**  
Minister of State for Rail

Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000  
E-Mail: [lord.hendy@dft.gov.uk](mailto:lord.hendy@dft.gov.uk)

Web site: [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft)

2 December 2024

Dear Lord Kirkhope,

Thank you for your contribution in the recent debate in the House regarding the Aviation Safety (Amendment) Regulations 2024. I am writing in response to your questions relating to sufficient training facilities in the UK for pilots and extension of instrument-flight-rules.

There are approximately 137 Approved Training Organisations (ATOs) in the UK that provide commercial pilot training. These ATOs vary based on the type of courses they wish - and are approved - to conduct, and 1,132 commercial pilot licences have been issued so far this year. I am also aware there is a steady supply of passionate young people that want to pursue a career as a commercial airline pilot.

Many of the large UK ATOs will use overseas facilities for part of the flying training, mainly the earlier phases that need reliably good weather, to ensure that the crew supply chain is more robust. So, we do not currently have concerns about training capacity and supply in the UK market.

My colleague, the Minister for Aviation, will continue to engage with airlines and ATOs to monitor if this changes and if additional support is needed from the Department.

Last year the Department published independent research which suggests there may be a shortage of pilots in the next 20 years. However, this research estimated scenarios ranging from an oversupply to a large shortage so there is inherent uncertainty in these forecasts.

However, the high cost of pilot training continues to exclude many prospective pilots. I applaud airlines like British Airways and TUI who are providing salary-sacrifice training programmes and hope to continue working with airlines to encourage use of more accessible training routes, like the First Officer Apprenticeship.


This scheme would provide cost-free training for trainees and support the sector in creating a skilled and sustainable pipeline of talent ready to meet future aviation demands. The Department for Transport has also been seeking to increase the diversity of the pilot profession. Our Reach for the Sky Challenge Fund has supported outreach programmes that seek to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the sector. Our ten volunteer Aviation Ambassadors help the Department to deliver bespoke outreach events to raise the profile of the aviation sector, with a particular focus on young people and underrepresented groups.

You also asked if I could comment further on the regulations allowing general aviation to use instrument flight rules (IFR). To clarify, non-commercial operators are currently able to fly using IFR. The changes made by the regulations will introduce greater flexibility in the planning of flights using IFR for non-commercial operators, similar to that introduced for commercial operations.

Thank you once again for your contribution. If you have any further questions on this matter, please feel free to get in touch.

I am copying this letter to all Noble Lords who contributed to this debate and will place a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hendy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAIL**