



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Minister of State
Chris Heaton-Harris MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: chris.heatonharris@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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29th July 2020

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 20 July 2020, addressed to the Secretary of State, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, concerning refunds for cancelled flights. I am responding as the Duty Minister.

I would like to thank your constituent for raising this matter. The Government recognises the challenges businesses are experiencing regarding refunds for cancelled holidays and flights. Equally we recognise the frustration consumers are feeling. Airlines have been working hard to answer the high call volumes and to process the large volumes of refunds. The Department has been clear that airlines should not deny consumers their legal right to a refund, if it is requested and this should be done in a timely manner.

Your constituent may wish to be aware that on 1 July 2020 the Civil Aviation Authority published on its website its intention to carry out a review into the refund policies of airlines during the coronavirus pandemic. They are reviewing the refund policies of all UK airlines, as well as a number of international airlines that operate flights to and from the UK. More importantly, the review is considering how airlines are handling refunds for flight-only bookings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information can be found at: www.caa.co.uk/News/UK-Civil-Aviation-Authority-update-on-airline-refunds-review/.

In addition, the Competition Markets Authority launched its COVID-19 Taskforce in April to identify, monitor and respond to competition and consumer problems arising from coronavirus and the measures taken to contain it. Where there is evidence that businesses have breached competition or consumer protection law, the CMA will take enforcement action if warranted.

The Department is keen to learn lessons from COVID-19, and will work with interested stakeholders, the regulator and consumer groups to make improvements where they are practicable, deliverable and in the consumers interest.

Thank you again for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Heaton-Harris MP

Minister of State for Transport