



PRESS RELEASE

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“It’s about time UK airports put the passenger first” says leading independent travel company

Leading UK independent travel company Travel Counsellors has welcomed the proposals by the Government and CAA to improve the passenger experience at UK airports.

This follows plans unveiled yesterday by Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon to put passenger needs first under new measures designed to improve air passenger experience and the economic regulation of airports.

Under the plans, the aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), will be given a new primary duty to promote the interests of passengers.

Travel Counsellors, who last year launched a campaign focusing on improving the customer experience at UK airports and set up a delay-monitoring website www.ukairportdelays.co.uk to gain a fuller picture of the situation, supports these new proposals by the Government but says they are long overdue.

“We are delighted to see that the government is finally taking action to try to improve the passenger experience at UK airports, which I believe is nothing short of shameful,” says Travel Counsellors’ Chairman and founder David Speakman, who spearheaded the campaign and lobbied to key government bodies in order to enforce a change.

“UK airports can blame declines in passenger numbers on the economic climate, but I think they should be also looking a little closer to home at the way they treat their customers. Airports should be a pleasurable experience, not a queuing and shopping obstacle course where the public are herded around like sheep. I hope the announcement brings about some long overdue action.”

Hoon announced that passengers should be at the heart of how UK airports are run. This includes measures such as more seating areas, more toilets, better flight information and more baggage carousels open at busy times.

Speakman adds; “All of us in the travel industry have an obligation, commercially and morally, to strive to get things changed. We are the people that can make a difference and we should. Let us hope the Government and CAA now follows through with the promises they have made.”

Travel Counsellors has over 700 full time professional agents in the UK and a further 300 overseas. The company firmly believes in championing the customer through initiatives such as its airport delays campaign, and as a result the company is consistently voted as one of the top companies in the world when it comes to customer satisfaction, with a world beating score of over 90%*.

For further information visit www.travelcounsellors.co.uk

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* Travel Counsellors uses the Net Promoter[®] Score system to measure customer satisfaction. Two weeks after booking all customers are sent a simple question 'How likely is it that you would recommend your Travel Counsellor to your friends and colleagues?' Customers can give us a score ranging from 1 to 10. Since Travel Counsellors started measuring our customers' responses in 2007 it has consistently achieved a world beating score of over 90%, far higher than that achieved by other travel companies and putting it among just a handful of companies worldwide that are rated so highly by their customers.

About Travel Counsellors: Travel Counsellors is the world's largest home-based travel company with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2008) of £245 million, a 16% increase year on year. Founded in 1994 it currently has over 1,000 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 240 staff at the company's UK headquarters in Bolton and overseas offices. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Australia, Canada and the US. In the UK Travel Counsellors places all customer money in a Trust account which guarantees a 100% refund in the event that a supplier collapses. Travel Counsellors was the winner of the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2003-2008, the technology category of the 2005 CBI Growing Business Awards and was voted Travel Agent of the Year by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited in 2006 & 2007.

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