

Witness Name: Jacob Lugg

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 28 November 2024

## THE CRANSTON INQUIRY

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF JACOB LUGG

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1. I, Jacob Lugg, of Personal Data worked as an Operations Controller at 2 Excel Aviation Limited (“2Excel”) of Registered office Hall Farm 2 Sywell Aerodrome, Sywell, Northampton NN6 0BN as at the date of 24 November 2021 will say as follows:-

#### Introduction

2. I make this statement in response to a witness evidence request dated 30 July 2024.
3. I began working at 2Excel in July 2018 until May 2023. My first role was as an Operations Assistant for a period of approximately 6 months which is a probationary period. During these 6 months I underwent internal training provided by 2Excel which equipped me to become an operations controller. The training syllabus covered the day-to-day responsibilities, operations and

programmes used. I was signed off by my supervisor at the completion of my training. It was at this time that I was promoted to Operations Controller. The difference between the two roles is that an operations controller is allowed to be in the operations room unsupervised. Both these roles required you to have aviation knowledge which I had as I held a pilot's licence at this time.

4. I then began working at FR Aviation Ltd trading as Sensitive & Irrelevant in May 2023 until August 2024 where I was a First Officer Pilot.
5. I am currently employed by S&I as a First Officer Pilot and have been in this role from 2 September 2024 until present.
6. In preparing this statement I have refreshed my memory by referring to document INQ000642.

#### **My role as Operations Controller on 24 November 2021**

7. I began my shift at approximately 18:45 on 23 November 2021. My official start time was 19:00 but we typically conducted the handover 15 minutes before the shift started. My shift ended on 24 November 2021 at 7:00.
8. My functions and responsibilities as an Operations Controller on 24 November 2021 were to schedule and plan flights jointly with the pilots on shift and provide information to the pilots, for example on weather conditions and Notices To Airmen (“**NOTAMS**”) which include things such as runway works,

closures, temporary flight restrictions, hazards and changes in approaches for landings. My role also included 'flight watch' for any airborne flights and to be available to take calls and answer queries from 2Excel's customers or flight crews.

9. My role also included collating information and inputting it into a computer system which generates a package of information known as a 'flight package'. The information includes current weather conditions, forecasted weather, NOTAMS, fuel requirements etc. This information is then given to the crew, which consists of the pilot and systems operator for each aircraft. I was responsible for inputting the primary information into the programme. When doing so I followed 2Excel's standard operating procedures which outlines which information needs to be included.
  
10. When the flight package is generated, this is passed to the pilot who then reviews it and decides whether it is safe to fly.

#### **The Events of 24 November 2021**

11. The planned taskings that were scheduled to support the Coast Guard and that were cancelled during my shift on 23-24 November 2021 were as follows (INQ000642):

Aircraft	Flight Number	Date	Dep Time (UTC)	DEP Airfield	DEST Airfield	ARR Time (UTC)	Planned Block Time (HH:MM)
G-UMMI	CGD26B	23/11/2021	23:30	Doncaster Sheffield	London Southend	03:00	03:30
G-HMGB	CGD22B	24/11/2021	01:45	Doncaster Sheffield	London Southend	04:30	02:45
G-UMMI	CGD26B	24/11/2021	04:00	London Southend	East Midlands	06:15	02:15
G-HMGB	CGD22B	24/11/2021	05:15	London Southend	Doncaster Sheffield	08:45	03:30

12. I would have first become aware that Doncaster Sheffield Airport (“**DSA**”) would be closed between the hours of 03:30 and 07:30 on 24 November 2021, during the handover from the day shift that took place on 23 November 2021. The handover typically took place around 18:45. The handover is both written and verbal and includes all factors that would affect a night shift and anything notable from the dayshift.

13. The closure was due to the loading and unloading of dangerous cargo at DSA which meant that during the closure flights operated by 2Excel could not depart or land at DSA.

### Flight CGD26B and Flight CGD22B

14. During DSA's closure period it could not be used as a destination or destination alternative.
  
15. From memory, I believe myself and both crews (i.e., pilot and systems operator) were in the office on this occasion. I cannot recall if both crews were in the office at the same time, but I recall having similar discussions with both crews over the course of my shift. It is possible that the flight packages for Flight CGD26B and CGD22B had been generated by the operations controller on the day shift of 23 November 2021, but it is also possible that I generated the flight packages during my night shift.
  
16. Following the pilots' review of the relevant flight packages for each respective flight, I was instructed to provide further information on whether the following airports could accept flight CGD26B and CGD22B. This may not be an exhaustive list of airports that I checked, but these are the airports I recall looking into at the time.
  - a. EGFF – Cardiff Airport
  - b. EGVN – RAF Brize Norton
  - c. EGSS – London Stansted Airport
  - d. EGGW – Luton Airport
  - e. EGLL – Heathrow Airport
  - f. EGNX – East Midlands Airport

g. EGKK – Gatwick Airport

17. The operations room has a computer system with a map which allows an operations controller to click on an airport. It then provides a colour coded report based on the current weather conditions, weather forecasts, relevant NOTAMS, availability etc.
18. Once I collated this primary information from the system for the above-mentioned airfields, I would have contacted the potential airfields directly to ascertain whether they could accept the aircrafts based on their current status (i.e., traffic, fuel availability etc.). I cannot recall which of the airfields were contacted by phone. It is possible some of the potential airfields were ruled out at the point of checking the information on the system.
19. Since the weather was below Cat1 minima, we were required, in accordance with the operations manual, to identify two designated diversion airfields. (INQ000642).
20. The challenge was locating two suitable alternative airfields to meet the legal requirements outlined in 2Excel's operations manual. Below is an extract from the manual that was followed:  
  
*'Operations Manual Part A'*  
  
*8.1.2.4.1 Destination Aerodrome. For selections as a destination meteorological reports and/or forecasts should indicate that the weather at the*

*aerodrome will be at or above the applicable planning minima for the type of approach to be flown, as specified below for +/- 1 hour of the aircraft's ETA: a. For a non-precision or circling approach, the ceiling must be at or above MDA; if the destination forecast is at or above the expected operating minima for ETA +/- 1 hour then only 1 alternate is required. If the destination weather reports or forecast is below the expected operating minima for ETA +/- 1 hour (or no meteorological information is available) then 2 alternates are required.'*  
(INQ000642)

21. The pilots would have reviewed the various reports generated by the system and information received from calls to the various airfields mentioned. They would have followed the operations manual and decided that it was not legal nor safe for them to get airborne given the weather conditions, lack of available and alternative airfields for landing and crew flight time limitations. This would have led to the flights being delayed and later cancelled. I recall it was an open forum where myself and the crews worked together to try and get each flight airborne as soon and as safely as possible. The position was being continually monitored.
  
22. I vaguely recall that I first informed the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre ("JRCC") that flight CGD26B was cancelled and flight CGD22B was delayed until 03:00, during the early hours of 24 November 2021. I cannot confirm the exact communication channel used, but I would have emailed or called the JRCC.



23. On the evening of 24 November 2021 at 02:02 I sent an email (page 9, INQ000642) to this email address [Nikki.Bhamra@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:Nikki.Bhamra@homeoffice.gov.uk), confirming that flight CGD25B was cancelled due to the weather. Reference to flight CGD25B being cancelled is supposed to say flight CGD26B. To clarify, flight CGD26B was scheduled but there were two alternative aircrafts available for this scheduled flight. One aircraft was in maintenance, and another was available, so it depended whether the aircraft was out of maintenance in time for the scheduled flight, otherwise the alternative aircraft was to be used. I cannot recall which of the two aircrafts was in maintenance.
24. The JRCC were anxious to get air support, and I recall there being back and forth conversation to try and get flight CGD22B airborne as soon as possible. The primary issue we faced in respect of this flight was finding suitable alternative airport availability due to the weather showing no improvement and the delays pushing us into the timeframe in which DSA was closed. 03:30 was a hard stop in respect of this flight as it would no longer be able to depart from DSA. This was one of the factors that led to the pilot's decision to cancel the flight. I cannot recall the exact time that flight CGD22B was cancelled nor how this was communicated but it would have been via email or phone call to the JRCC.
25. The factors for cancelling each flight were the same and consisted of weather concerns, closing times of DSA, lack of alternative airfields for landing (as per the policy outlined above) and crew flight time limitations based on the pilot's



report time. I recall that 2Excel had a policy which limited the working hours / flight time of approximately 8 hours. I assume that the delays due to weather concerns and suitable alternative airfields were restricting the pilot's flight time availability, in addition to the weather and DSA closure creating issues.

26. I have not had sight of recorded conversations so cannot confirm if any further conversations took place with the JRCC over the course of my shift. All conversations I had during my shift that were conducted on the operations department landline would have been recorded. I also used the operations mobile phone, of which I am unsure if these calls are recorded.

27. I cannot recall the details of the phone calls with Manchester or the taskings which these conversations related to.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  

Personal Data

Dated: 28/11/2024