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The core of the OpenSkies dispute

BALPA has tabled amendments to Schedule K in recognition of the new regulatory environment. BA refuses to discuss these changes. The Company offers guarantees and assurances instead, specifically in relation to the OpenSkies start-up operation.

BA will try to convince you these assurances are sufficient to protect our future interests. We disagree. We need an agreement that meets the Intent of Schedule K.

“to promote employment security and career opportunities for Flight Crew on the British Airways Master Seniority List (BA Mainline Flight Crew).”

The wording in the current Schedule K is meaningless if it does not meet the basic intent of the agreement.

Our dispute is first and foremost about delivering changes to Schedule K that promote employment security and career opportunities for Mainline pilots.

OpenSkies flying should fall under the amended “Scope” clause and should be carried out by mainline pilots. This is achieved by putting OpenSkies pilots on the seniority list and allowing reciprocal access between Mainline and OpenSkies.

Willie Walsh tells us in his recent letter that seniority creates

“industrial complexity, turnover of pilots, additional training costs and the inevitability of a higher cost base.”

Changing schedule K in no way restricts BA’s ability to expand. It doesn’t limit BA’s flexibility in exploiting new opportunities. It doesn’t introduce unsustainable costs or threaten the long-term viability of OpenSkies. Master seniority for OpenSkies pilots will enhance staff retention and reduce training costs. More importantly, master seniority motivates employees and enhances loyalty particularly where early commands will be available through solid growth.

A new Schedule K and success for the BA Group are not mutually exclusive as BA would have you believe.

BA is downplaying risks, denying any intent to aggressively expand and claiming it complies with agreements. BA claims this is an over-reaction by BALPA.

BA insists OpenSkies will not divert funds from Mainline and will never present a risk to our employment security.

Our Training dictates we ‘think ahead’, continually review and share our ‘mental model’. Refusal to share the OpenSkies business plan, refusal to discuss ways BALPA can mitigate BA’s

cost fears and refusal to acknowledge our concerns whilst denying risk, feed our mental model and the resulting Threat Assessment shouts SEVERE.

We hear BA consistently citing cost as a reason for its intransigence but when asked at the recent BA forum “if BALPA were to match OpenSkies costs, would you discuss a single seniority list?” Mr. Walsh replied “No”.

We make that commitment again. We are very happy to work with BA to address any perceived cost implications. The BACC is happy to negotiate how any impact on the mainline cost base and mainline business can be managed. We are prepared to enter a binding agreement to guarantee this.

As mainline flight crew we want to be part of BA’s expansion wherever that occurs. We are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

If OpenSkies truly is a ‘speculative venture’, a ‘toe-dipping exercise with little more than a 50% chance of success’ an agreed change to Schedule K would be of no concern to the company. There is no need for blood to be spilled or even used to sign assurances. There is no need for damaging, expensive and lengthy Industrial Action.

There is every need to protect our agreements. We will continue to protect them for as long as necessary.