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**CENTRAL OFFICE**

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Mr Alex Cruz CEO  
British Airways plc  
P.O.Box 365  
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8 May 2019

Dear Alex Cruz,

I am writing to you on behalf of the thousands of uniformed Unite members at British Airways who are soon to wear the newly designed Ozwald Boateng uniform. They have raised with me their serious concern that as it stands, the reveal of the new uniform will be as much of a surprise to those wearing it as to customers, which cannot be right.

Members are concerned about their elected Unite representatives having no direct input into the design of the new uniform. As a union, Unite takes very seriously the relevant factors to consider, other than style and "glamour", such as health and safety, and equally importantly, practical functionality of working attire. There are many health and well-being conditions where body temperature is a vital consideration and a professional uniform should be cool and comfortable to wear. Whilst understanding the need for a smart appearance and maintaining a corporate identity, the elements of the uniform should be interchangeable and varied offering employees choice and flexibility as well as the opportunity to feel good about what they are wearing.

Our women members report that the current uniform blouse is too transparent and I have been particularly concerned to learn that our members on Mixed Fleet have been subjected to the indignity of being managed for wearing the "wrong colour or type of bra." This is something described to me as "an outrage" - in the 21st century, it is clearly neither appropriate nor acceptable that women should be put in a situation at work where they can be demeaned for their choice of undergarments. A bra is a really important item of clothing particularly when women are wearing it for long periods and are active whilst on duty. It necessitates support, comfort and ease of movement, something which male staff do not have to consider. I have been advised that men are not told what underwear to put on or how tight or baggy it should be. There are clearly serious issues here of health, safety, dignity, respect and equality.

I have also had raised with me concern about the sexualisation of the uniform and the gender stereotyped image that persists for women. A few years ago, female colleagues on Mixed Fleet had to submit a collective grievance just for the right to wear trousers.

Presently many female cabin crew need to wear a hat and carry extra shoes which men in the same role do not. At the other end of the scale, women members working in Cargo have to wear a men's uniform because nothing designed for women is available. It is entirely inappropriate and upsetting as well as potentially hazardous for them to do that. Unite stands firmly for equality for all and we believe that equality should underpin everything we do. These practices are clearly viewed as sex discrimination.

A recent survey by BASSA of their 7,500 cabin crew members found that 86% of them do not want a hat as part of the new uniform. They consider that a hat is simply outdated, serves no purpose and has absolutely no function of any value. It is experienced as hot and impractical to wear whilst serving drinks and closing heavy overhead lockers and it simply does not comfortably fit either the crew or the context into which it is being placed. Concern over poor aircraft air conditioning is also identified as having an adverse impact in relation to wearing a hat. It has been suggested that the uniform hat can perhaps only occupy a relevant position in the armed forces, which they are not, and our members have confirmed to me that they cannot "buy in" to the new design if a hat is included against their explicit wishes.

I am told that "Listen and Make Things Better Now" is a corporate BA hallmark and it would be of immense relief to our crew and ground staff community if you would rule out the provision of a hat in the new uniform immediately.

I have also had raised with me serious concern about the onerous conditions stipulated in British Airways Uniform Guidelines which appear to be inconsistent across departments, restrictive and outdated. I have been shocked to learn that a woman should have to ask a senior crew member (often a man) for permission to remove her jacket if overheated, and that is the reality the cabin crew face every day and that reality is unacceptable. There is an over emphasis on everyone "looking the same," regardless of their role or whether they are desk based or performing physical work onboard.

Your centenary is to be celebrated and your history recognised, but British Airways also used to be known as a trendsetter in the airline industry. It is high time to relegate expectations of makeup, heel length and buttoned up jackets to the history books. Please - empower and consult your staff to make the necessary decisions about the uniform they wear.

This is a wonderful opportunity to engage your loyal staff and make them feel valued but comfortable and professional at work. I urge you to consult with my Unite representatives across the airline to ensure Mr Boateng is fully aware of their desires and interests. There is simply no point spending money on a uniform that no one wants to wear or is not fit for purpose.

I believe another one of your corporate hallmarks is to "Share What You Know When It Helps". I know that my elected representatives and members feel passionately about this issue and I hope you will be able to provide them with reassurances about the project and that you are actively listening to them.

I look forward to hearing from you, but in the absence of a reply I shall not hesitate to make my next approach directly to Mr Boateng.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Holland" with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Diana Holland**  
**Assistant General Secretary**  
**Transport – Equalities**  
**Food & Agriculture**

cc Oliver Richardson, Unite National Officer Civil Air Transport  
Iain Croker, BASSA Equalities Officer