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## **ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH AIRWAYS PENSIONERS**

**Newsbrief No. 117, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

### ***Notes from the Chair***

We find ourselves in quite unprecedented circumstances since the last Newsbrief. No.116. I hope you're all keeping safe and well in the current Corona Virus emergency. I apologise for the recent lack of communications but we are working to rectify that. Be assured that ABAP is alive and functioning but as might be expected in the current circumstances we are experiencing some difficulties and limitations which will be explained below.

Our thoughts must go to colleagues still working at BA. During our careers, we faced and got through many difficult periods. This current worldwide pandemic is by far and away the biggest issue our industry has ever had to cope with. The affects on airlines, airports and the travel industry generally will be far-reaching, inevitably carrying on for some time after the crisis recedes.

What's helped us through these situations is the knowledge and dedication of staff which I believe still exists in the company, so let's look forward in hope to better times.

**Mark Fielder**  
**Chairman**

### ***Covid-19 Corona Virus***

First and foremost, please take all the necessary steps to stay safe and free from infection. Follow the NHS recommendations. There is a lot of false and even dangerous misinformation being passed around on the internet and by word-of-mouth. Many members (including your committee) will find themselves in the high-risk group so following the NHS advice is doubly important for us. Up-to-date NHS information on the virus can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Please also be alert for any fraudsters attempting to take advantage of the situation. Coronavirus-related fraud reports increased by 400% in March.

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## ***BA Pensions & Corona Virus***

As a result of the current situation BA Pensions have found it necessary to temporarily close their telephone service. They ask that instead members use the online "Contact Us" facility instead. ABAP encourages as many members as possible to sign up for online communications from BA Pensions. It's a fast and efficient way to keep in touch.

APS Contact - <https://www.mybapension.com/aps/contact-us>

NAPS Contact - <https://www.mybapension.com/naps/contact-us>

One reason for the closure of the telephone service was a heavy demand from members asking about the situation of their pensions. Recognising this, BA Pensions are providing regular updates for APS & NAPS in the "Latest News" section of their website.

APS can be found here - <https://www.mybapension.com/aps/news/latest-news>

NAPS can be found here - <https://www.mybapension.com/aps/news/latest-news>

These are worrying times so we all hope for a return to better prospects as soon as possible. The seasonal bulletins for APS & NAPS are recommended reading.

APS - [https://www.mybapension.com/aps/news/trustee\\_seasonal\\_bulletin](https://www.mybapension.com/aps/news/trustee_seasonal_bulletin)

NAPS - [https://www.mybapension.com/naps/news/trustee\\_seasonal\\_bulletin](https://www.mybapension.com/naps/news/trustee_seasonal_bulletin)

BA Pensions have closed their offices at Waterside and staff are remaining at home, many being able to work remotely. This will remain in place until the guidance from the Government changes in order to allow people to return to their offices.

As a result, BA Pensions are operating a reduced service, giving priority to essential services - processing existing pension payments on time, managing new retirements and making any payments due following the deaths of members and pensioners.

All other queries, including new retirement quotes, general scheme enquiries, and transfer out quotations, may take longer than usual. BA Pensions assure members that they are working as quickly as they can and would ask that people do not chase up enquiries as this will slow the team down during an extremely challenging time.

## ***APS Trustee Board Changes***

The latest APS Trustee Seasonal Bulletin mentioned a forthcoming reduction in board members from 12 down to 8. The reason is to enable the board to operate more efficiently. ABAP and members of the Trustee board have been meeting to discuss the changes and possible ways to implement them.

Today, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, BA Pensions have written and emailed to APS members outlining the changes and how they will be achieved, by way of an election. ABAP will be communicating separately in more detail to our members who are in APS.

The communication can be found in the APS Latest News section.

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## ***ABAP Activity***

As mentioned at the AGM last October, we have moved our database and admin systems from Asendia to Credit Union Solutions. The transfer has thrown up a few problems which we are steadily working through, so we apologise for any hiccups you may have had either renewing or joining since October 2019.

If you have renewed or joined since 31st October 2019 and not received a membership card, please be assured that we have your details on file, you are a member of ABAP. We will issue membership cards as soon as we can.

The effects of the current corona virus emergency are highly likely to cause some disruption for us. The restrictions of what is and isn't an essential job may limit what Credit Union Solutions can achieve in the next few weeks. The safety and well-being of their staff must come first.

We are also uncertain about our ability to get paper mailings out to members as we use a commercial mailing service. They will also be subject to the same working restrictions. This newsbrief is being sent out by two independent email facilities to reach the widest possible grouping. There may be some overlap in the mailing lists so please accept our apologies if you receive the email twice.

If you're in touch with other ABAP members, it would be helpful if you could pass this newsbrief onto them if they haven't received it.

Committee meetings have been postponed for the duration but committee business continues aided by whatever technology is suitable.

Please note we have a new postal address, shown at the bottom of the page.

## ***ABAP Committee Vacancies***

Also mentioned at the AGM, we are looking for members to join the committee. Specifically, we need a new secretary and a new treasurer. However we would welcome any member who wishes to take an interest in the running of the Association.

The demographics of a pensioner organisation are inescapable and in due course, some of the current members of the committee will want to step down for a well-deserved rest.

If you would like to take up this opportunity or to find out more, please contact [chair@abaponline.org](mailto:chair@abaponline.org)

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## ***RPI Consultation***

On Budget Day, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Government launched a 6-week consultation on the future of RPI (retail price index). It now looks inevitable that RPI will be aligned with CPIH (consumer price index + housing costs). The debate will revolve around when that should happen and what steps should be taken to protect the many financial interests that are based around an assumption of RPI.

ABAP will be making a submission to the consultation, assisted by leading actuaries. We will also be providing a briefing for members who can also make their individual submissions and also contact their MPs, to alert them to the implications of this change.

We know from the government's Budget and other announcements that problems arise in any switch from RPI to any lesser indexing basis. In particular, that pension schemes such as ours have accepted contributions on the reasonable expectation (and in our case, an unconditional promise) of an RPI-linked pension. Many pension schemes' investments are RPI linked - the fall in those investments' future values may be greater than net levels of pensions paid to beneficiaries, which could harm the viabilities of some schemes. ABAP is making representations that any such future reductions in pension payments must be compensated, and seeking to publicise this.

While this may seem a trivial matter in the context of current national and world events, the effects of aligning RPI with CPIH are long lasting and will be with us for many years subsequently.