

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friday 23 April 2021**

## **Virgin Atlantic becomes first UK airline to begin IATA Travel Pass live trials**

- A one-month trial of the IATA Travel Pass begins today (23 April) on London Heathrow-Barbados services, supporting a frictionless customer experience for permitted trips alongside Covid-19 travel requirements
- The leading digital health pass solution offers a 'one stop shop' for customers to collect, store and verify documents on a secure smartphone app
- Effective digital proof of Covid-19 credentials, including test results and vaccinations, must be accepted at borders, with clarity needed from the UK Government ahead of international travel at scale from 17 May.

Virgin Atlantic customers can now experience how digital health passes will help streamline journeys when the skies reopen, as the first live trials of the IATA Travel Pass by a UK airline commenced today.

Customers on flight VS131, travelling for permitted reasons from London Heathrow to Barbados, were invited to download the free smartphone app and participate in the successful first trial flight, which departed just ahead of schedule at 10.24am from Terminal 2.

The IATA Travel Pass is at the forefront of digital health pass solutions being developed, allowing customers to verify that they meet the health criteria needed to travel between certain countries, locate labs and present evidence of a negative Covid-19 test to the relevant authorities. Future updates of the app will also incorporate vaccine records. Using the app to create a digital ID, comprising a profile photo and linked to passport details, Virgin Atlantic customers are able to add their negative PCR test results for Barbados, taken at a participating lab within three days of departure.

With the information and flight details already loaded on to their Travel Pass, customers' experience at Heathrow is swift and efficient, removing paper-based Covid-19 documentation with a digital 'one stop shop' to collect, store and verify documents in the secure app. When implemented more widely, digital health passes will help reduce check in times, make border checks more manageable and streamline customer journeys, with a Priority Virgin Atlantic Check In lane in place at Terminal 2 for IATA Travel Pass holders in the trial.

The one-month trial of the IATA Travel Pass is being run in close collaboration with the Government of Barbados, which is leading the way through its active involvement in the trial. Governments around the world are currently considering the Travel Pass to support the restart of international travel at scale. Virgin Atlantic continues to engage with the UK Government to enable the trial to expand and accommodate customers arriving at the UK border on Barbados-Heathrow flights.

**Corneel Koster, Chief Customer & Operating Officer, Virgin Atlantic, said:**

“Our innovative trial with the IATA Travel Pass and the Government of Barbados supports a smooth and streamlined experience, helping our customers to fly safe and well and navigate new travel requirements from the palm of their hands.

“When international restarts at scale; rapid, affordable testing and effective digital proof of Covid-19 credentials based on global common standards will make journeys easier and provide greater confidence to book. We urge the UK Government to confirm that our customers can use digital apps and that these will be accepted at the UK border. The current paper-only-based processes will not be viable as customer numbers increase.

“With its vaccination programme progressing well, there is also a clear opportunity to designate Barbados ‘green’ as part of the UK’s risk-based traffic light framework, to enable safe travel. We welcome progress towards the resumption of travel from 17 May, but consumers and industry need greater clarity on the green list timeline, criteria and countries, in order to prepare effectively.”

**Nick Careen, IATA’s Senior Vice President Airport, Passenger, Cargo, Security, said:**

“A digital solution for health credentials is essential for travel while Covid-19 remains a risk. Managing the risk of importing Covid-19 cases using paper processes will be a hassle for passengers. It will be unmanageable for airlines, airports and border authorities. And it will leave the system vulnerable to fraud.

“The IATA Travel Pass trial with Virgin Atlantic and the Government of Barbados shows that governments can efficiently manage travel requirements with complete confidence in the identity of the passenger and the veracity of the travel credentials—importantly, avoiding long queues. As we continue the trial, we will maintain our engagement with the UK Authorities to demonstrate that the solution can deliver benefits at both ends of journey.”

**Senator the Hon. Lisa Cummins, Barbados Minister of Tourism and International Transport said:**

“COVID has taught us many things about how we transact business and those lessons include the reality that disruptive digital technologies are transforming our travel and tourism industry. We have to embrace technology that not only deals with the integration of travel and public health priorities but we also have to transform the entire travel experience and our airport experiences. The IATA Travel Pass and its globalization based on the important integration of the TIMATICS platform in our view represents an important plank in COVID era travel transformation. The pass treats to our dual imperatives of clear, transparent and unambiguous travel protocols and an investment in boosting traveller and local confidence.

“Barbados has recently published new travel protocols due for implementation on 8 May and is currently leading the Americas in an aggressive inoculation programme

which has seen nearly 30% of our adult population vaccinated to date and aggressive management of COVID19. We have used geofencing technology in quarantine enforcement and online distribution of test results directly to mobile devices and this partnership with IATA is another layer of our COVID 19 management regime and we are looking forward to this trial."

Recognising the importance to consumers that their personal health data is protected, IATA Travel Pass give users full control over how their personal information is shared, as the data is stored locally on their phone and not in any central database. The global interoperable solution is based on open-source standards, which means it can be used as a stand-alone solution, integrated into airlines' own apps, or used in a modular way with other digital solutions, to provide passengers with a seamless travel experience.

With Covid-19 pre-departure testing requirements for international travel set to remain in place for now, in parallel to global vaccine distribution, the digital health technology gives clarity to customers to meet dynamically changing, route-specific travel restrictions and remove the guesswork to travel.

ENDS

#### Notes to editors

- The trial had been scheduled to begin on 16 April but was temporarily postponed due to the recent closure of Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados, as a result of ash fall caused by the eruption of La Soufrière volcano on the island of St Vincent. Barbados' main airport has now reopened.
- The latest version of the IATA Travel Pass app was made available on the [Apple app store](#) on 19 April, with a bespoke Virgin Atlantic code provided to customers to link Barbados flight details. An Android version is currently under development, to be added in mid-May.
- Users of the app must have an Apple iPhone 7 or above, which is NFC-enabled (Near Field Communication), and a biometric passport.
- To participate in this trial, customers must obtain their negative PCR Covid-19 test at one of several participating labs. These include Screen4 testing facilities located in Barnsley, Birmingham, Cambridge, Cirencester, Harlow, London (Hammersmith) and Manchester; and Collinson facilities at Heathrow Airport (Terminals 2 & 5), London City Airport, Gatwick Airport (APH Parking), London Stansted Airport, London Luton Airport, O2 Arena (Car Park 1), East Midlands Airport (Short Stay Car Park) and Manchester Airport (T1 Short Stay Car Park). The participating lab list will grow in the near future.
- Virgin Atlantic currently operates a twice-weekly Barbados service for essential trips, including repatriating citizens and Barbadian nationals returning home. The Caribbean country requires all arrivals to present a negative PCR test taken within 3 days of departure followed by a second PCR test following five days of quarantine in approved accommodation. Effective 8 May, fully vaccinated travellers will be able to take this second test on the day of arrival. Meanwhile

the national vaccination programme in Barbados continues at pace, with a quarter of the population having received a first dose.<sup>1</sup>

### **About Virgin Atlantic**

Virgin Atlantic was founded by entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson 36 years ago with innovation and customer service at its core. In 2021, Virgin Atlantic was voted Britain's only Global Five Star Airline by APEX for the fifth year running in the Official Airline Ratings as well as receiving Diamond status, the highest possible standard by APEX and Simplifying for delivering the highest standards of cleanliness and demonstrating an unwavering commitment to keeping our customers and teams safe.

Headquartered in London, Virgin Atlantic and its holiday business, Virgin Atlantic Holidays, employs over 5,700 people worldwide, serving 27 destinations across four continents. Sustainability remains central to the airline and in September 2019, Virgin Atlantic took delivery of its first Airbus A350-1000 aircraft - helping to transform the fleet into one of the quietest and most fuel efficient in the sky. By 2022, the airline will operate a streamlined fleet of 37 twin engine aircraft following the retirement of its 747s and A332s, and its simplified fleet will be 10% more efficient than before the Covid-19 crisis.

Alongside shareholder and Joint Venture partner Delta Air Lines, Virgin Atlantic operates a leading transatlantic network between the UK and US with onward connections to over 200 US and international cities. On 3 February 2020, Air France-KLM, Delta Air Lines and Virgin Atlantic received approval from the US DOT to launch an expanded trans-Atlantic joint venture, offering a comprehensive route network, convenient flight schedules, competitive fares and reciprocal frequent flyer benefits, including the ability to earn and redeem miles across all carriers.

For more information visit [www.virginatlantic.com](http://www.virginatlantic.com) or [www.virginholidays.co.uk](http://www.virginholidays.co.uk) or via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @virginatlantic @virginholidays

### **About IATA Travel Pass**

- IATA (International Air Transport Association) represents some 290 airlines comprising 82% of global air traffic.
- You can follow us at <https://twitter.com/iata> for announcements, policy positions, and other useful industry information
- [COVID-19 media kit](#)
- [Travel Pass news and media kit](#)
- For more information, email: [corpcomms@iata.org](mailto:corpcomms@iata.org) / Tel: +41 22 770 2967

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Government of Barbados, <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/covid-19-update-3-new-cases-16-discharged/>