# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | ***Intra Wales Air Service*** |
| **DATE**  | ***13 March 2017*** |
| **BY**  | ***Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure*** |

On Friday 24 February, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) withdrew Van Air’s Foreign Carrier Permit to fly in UK air space, following an incident on a flight between the Isle of Man and Belfast during Storm Doris. In order to ensure service continuity for the route, Van Air sub-contracted the operation of the Intra Wales Air Service to Danish airline, North Flying, which operated the route for the past two weeks.

The air service contract agreement was between Van Air and the Welsh Ministers. The contract required Van Air to provide a full range of services from safely operating the route to the provision of complementary passenger functions, including ticketing, customer services and marketing the route. Van Air contracted these functions out to its preferred supplier, Isle of Man based Citywing.

On the evening of Friday 10 March, Citywing announced it had ceased trading, noting that the decision was a direct result of Van Air losing its UK route licenses. As such, the Intra Wales Air Service could not continue to operate without replacement provision being put in place.

With the help and support of Eastern Airways, the CAA, Cardiff and Anglesey Airports and the RAF at Valley, we secured a short term deal with Eastern Airways to ensure that users of the service were not affected. I am pleased to confirm that flights operated as normal this morning (13 March) and that tickets for travel this week will be honoured by Eastern Airways.

The events of this past weekend have been difficult.  The collapse of Citywing put us in a position where we had to move fast to secure another operator.  We have now done that with Eastern Airways and agreed a rolling contract with them to ensure passengers’ planned flights can go ahead as normal.  We are using the budget that we would have used for Van Air and Citywing for that purpose, but we will now be speaking with Eastern Airways about the cost of any longer term arrangements.

As you may already be aware, last year I requested a thorough review of the intra Wales Air Service, which looked at a wide range of options from ceasing the service entirely to changing service patterns, increasing provision and upping the aircraft size. This work has now been completed and the findings are currently being analysed. Due to a range of factors, finalising the report has taken longer than expected but I anticipate the report will be completed in the coming weeks.

I will need to consider the recommendations of the review alongside the recent operator problems and aim to make an announcement shortly regarding the long term future of this air service.