



Top 5 Challenges

How The Commercial
Helicopter Industry Must
Adapt in 2020



Numerous challenges for the commercial helicopter industry have been caused by the pandemic alone, but what else is going on? From illegal chartering to climate change, this guide summarises the current challenges faced by the industry, as well as the industry's responses. See our helpful selection of sources to learn more about the topics covered.

1. Illegal Chartering

You will surely remember the tragic death of football player, Emiliano Sala, in 2019. He died in a devastating aircraft accident, and to add more sorrow, his illegal charter flight was entirely avoidable.

So, what exactly is illegal chartering? This type of fraud can take many forms, including casual agreements between an aircraft owner and another person for flight operation that exceeds regulations. Flying commercially outside the scope of the air carrier's authority is also considered as illegal charter. Many other forms of illegal charter exist ([The Risks of Flying With Illegal Charter Operators](#), National Business Aviation Association).

With this type of business increasing, websites are looking more and more legitimate - it is no surprise why some people unknowingly book illegal charters ([A Guide to Illegal Charter for Air Charter Bookers](#), Corporate Jet Investor).

Industry Response

Awareness around the issue is massively increasing, with the aim to educate people about spotting and avoiding such charters. Corporate Jet Investor have held Town Halls about the problem (["Illegal Charter Must be Watched Very Carefully": Neil Harvey](#), Corporate Jet Investor) and the Air Charter Association (ACA) are educating police forces about what [illegal chartering](#) is and how to investigate it.

The ACA actively report illegal activity and encourage members to do so too. This will help authorities spot illegal charters quicker and take action against those involved. Meetings are held at least every quarter between the ACA and the United Kingdom's CAA. The Association also has constant correspondence with the EASA, FAA and European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) and National Air Transportation Association about the problem. Behind the scenes, regulators are working on issues related to illegal charter, but nothing has been publicised yet ([Illegal Charter](#), [Air Charter Association](#)).

Many booking platforms only allow licensed aircraft holders to use their platform. When using such platforms, ensure you read through the terms and conditions and user policies before committing to any flights.



How to Avoid Illegal Chartering

1. Be Vigilant

Research the business you are working with to determine it is legitimate and exercise due diligence before doing business with an operator. Receiving multiple bills after a flight can be indicative of illegal activity.

2. Be Sure

Visit the [Civil Aviation Authority \(CAA\)](#), [Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\)](#), or [European Union Aviation Safety Agency \(EASA\)](#)'s websites to see whether the operator is authorised to conduct commercial flights in certain aircraft.

3. Be Secure

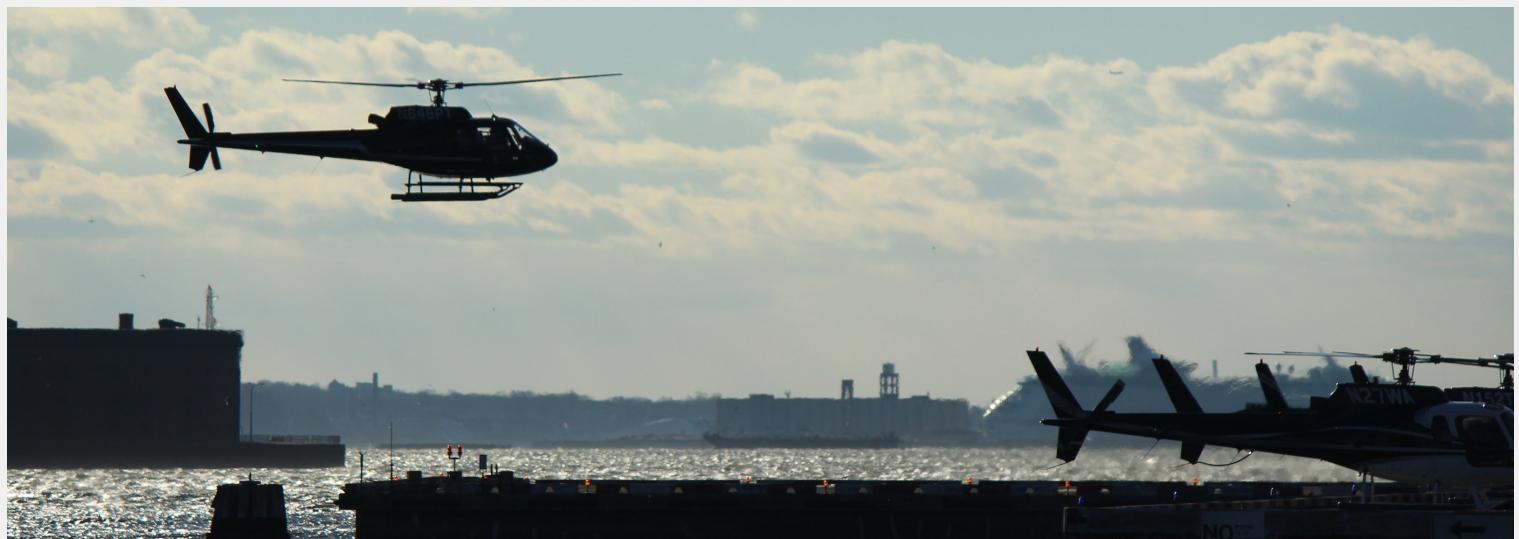
Only do business with companies who have stamps and certifications from recognised international organisations. When using booking platforms, ensure that the company has a stringent vetting process in place to assist you.

[Online Fraud Increasing in Private Jet Charter Market, Warns The ACA and EBAA](#), [Air Charter Association and European Business Aviation Association](#)

2. Leasing vs. Buying

During these uncertain times, operators are favouring leasing over buying more and more. Lessees benefit from a reduced risk to business and at a lower cost, due to flexibility should markets deteriorate ([How is Covid-19 Impacting the Helicopter Market Worldwide? June 2020](#), International Bureau of Aviation).

However, a criminal challenge is associated with this topic. Brokers and operators are losing legal charter business to illegally day leased aircraft, as these flights are often cheaper for the client. The aircraft risks having a single engine turbine, poor infrastructure and frequently is not recognised under an AOC ([Illegal Charter](#), Air Charter Association).



Industry Response

Following the bankruptcy of a large leasing company and adapting to the demand, the top 5 lessors are growing their fleets. One leasing company, Milestone, added its 79th Sikorsky-92 helicopter to its fleet in June 2019, meaning it owns more than 30% of all S-92s in the air. Nova Capital added \$75m worth of aircraft to its fleet. Together, the top 5 lessors own about 678 helicopters, approximating to a value of \$8.5bn ([Helicopter Leasing Rankings 2019](#), Helicopter Investor).

The ACA have raised concerns with the EASA and CAA about potential issues that could arise through day leasing. The Association is also working with the insurance industry to ensure they are asking the right questions when it comes to aircraft usage.

3. Covid-19

The long-lasting pandemic took many by surprise and commercial aviation was not immune to its effects. Airlines struggled and tourism declined, but does private aviation follow the same trends?

A silver lining for private aviation exists amongst the chaos caused by the turmoil. Business jet operators can be creative and flexible with spacing solutions where commercial airliners cannot, and the reduced amount of passengers make it much easier to maintain safe distances and hygiene regulations. Secluded fixed-based operators and the ability to collect clients from preferred locations are other benefits to travelling privately - no wonder that the demand for private jet flights has increased, especially with the decline in fuel prices which make it more accessible to fly privately ([Private jet travels during Coronavirus pandemic: News & Tips](#), *GlobeAir*; [Six Private Jet Trends That Are Emerging From The Covid-19 Crisis](#), *Globetrender*).



So, what about helicopters? Covid-19 is still prominent here: operators are favouring leasing over buying, there has been a reduction in demand for tourism and private transfers, and many helicopter original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) have an order backlog. The big four helicopter OEMS (Airbus, Leonardo, Bell and Sikorsky) have seen 18 month + wait times for their most popular models, including the Airbus H145 and the Leonardo AW139 ([How is Covid-19 Impacting the Helicopter Market Worldwide? June 2020](#), *International Bureau of Aviation*).

In terms of demand, it is thought that the helicopter market will not be as badly hit as the fixed wing market, based on the restrictions of tourist travel. Helicopters commonly fly within countries, where there are barely any travel restrictions, whereas commercial airlines tend to fly between countries and must abide by the rules for flying to other territories ([Will Covid-19 and Oil Price Cuts Send the Helicopter Market into a Spin?](#), *International Bureau of Aviation*).

Industry Response

An admirable response to the pandemic has been adopted by many helicopter operators. Repatriation flights, medical cargo transportation, and the transport of patients has seen the camaraderie between society reach new heights ([Helicopters Prove To Be Valuable Assets During Covid-19 Emergency](#), Leonardo Helicopters; [Adapting Helicopter Operations To The New Realities Of Covid-19](#), Royal Aeronautical Society).

Maintaining hygiene regulations is, of course, a priority for helicopter operators. Many are taking great care to implement the correct procedures like providing face masks and temperature checks for pilots and passengers. Others extensively clean cabins after each flight and some use devices to “ionise” the air of the cabin to remove the virus ([Apollo Named As UK Supplier For Aviation Clean Air's Purification Units](#), Helicopter Investor).

4. Brexit

Although not documented so heavily in the news these days, the Brexit deadline is still fast approaching. The United Kingdom is set to leave the European Union at the end of the year and changes will occur from 1st January 2021.

What does this mean for aviation? Until the end of 2020, the United Kingdom will remain within the European Common Aviation Area and will adhere to EASA safety regulations during this time ([Business aviation and Brexit](#), European Business Aviation Association; [Brexit](#), European Union Aviation Safety Agency). From January 2021, air carriers holding commercial operating licences granted by the UK will not be able to provide air transport services within the European Union. Those conducting operations between the European Union and the United Kingdom must adhere to new certification requirements in the new year ([Brexit: Getting Ready for Changes](#), European Business Aviation Association).

Many in business aviation are unprepared for a No Deal Brexit. A No Deal would make it difficult for UK-based operators to travel to European destinations, and for European-based operators to visit the UK. It appears that the aviation industry has been “lumped” in with other areas, meaning that a deal may not favour the industry. Reaching a deal appropriate for the aviation industry will be difficult ([Many in Business Aviation ‘Unprepared for Brexit No Deal’](#), *Corporate Jet Investor*).

Industry Response

Until the transition date, the EASA's mandate and role will not be altered. Within this time, the EU and UK will work together to agree on a new and fair partnership. The CAA and the industry are preparing for any scenario, whilst negotiations are still underway.

Those in the aviation and aerospace industries are encouraged to keep up to date with information and actions to be taken. The CAA has set up a [microsite](#) to help people keep track of any updates. Furthermore, the British Helicopter Association is lobbying the changes, working hard to represent the interests of the industry.

5. Climate Change

It takes a lot of power to defy gravity. The industry is under immense pressure to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions produced by engines. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the climate crisis and stress that aircraft providers deal with the issue.

Although they have a large part to play in contributing to the climate crisis, helicopters must also adapt to the impacts of changing climates on flight performance. Rotor blades produce less lift when in warmer air, as it is less dense. To account for this, loads may need to be lessened, thereby limiting the number of passengers able to fly, or reducing associated luggage loads. In more extreme conditions, hot temperatures can be unsuitable for helicopters to fly in, thus hindering operations ([The Climate Challenges Facing The Helicopter Industry](#), *Vertical Mag*).

Industry Response

Although slow to address the climate change issue, positive changes in the helicopter industry are being made. Many helicopter operators are introducing a carbon offsetting scheme. The scheme allows companies to invest in environmental projects, to balance their own carbon footprint. One operator to take part is Castle Air, which promises that 100% of its charter flights are carbon neutral.

As older helicopters are replaced with newer models, more fuel-efficient engines will be in operation. The [Airbus H160](#) has recently been approved by the EASA and entry into service is planned for 2020. The remarkable helicopter ensures a 15% reduction in fuel consumption compared to engines for the same operations in a previous class, helping to reduce the environmental footprint. Another model, the [Leonardo AW109 GrandNew](#) has been described as “powerful but environmentally aware”.

Advances towards hybrid and electric powered models are also being made. However, problems have been faced towards providing enough power for sustained periods of time. Furthermore, the energy needed to power these dynamic aircraft will still have an environmental impact. Is the problem just being shifted?



Get Heli's Response

Whilst we cannot solve all the problems faced by the industry, we fight a strong case against many. Our users are able to:

- **Avoid illegal chartering** Get Heli has put a lot of effort in developing a high quality internal vetting process, standardised flight terms drawn-up by a top City law firm, strict code of conduct and a secure payment system. Effortlessly reach legal, vetted operators. The platform is developed and run by industry experts and the Get Heli team moderates the booking process where required.
- **Access the largest fleet of helicopters** As demand grows for private aviation due to Covid-19, we have a large & growing fleet of helicopters on our platform. Spread across various locations and gradually expanding to European destinations, you will find a wide range of aircraft suitable for a multitude of needs, including some models with lower-fuel consumption. Easily compare different helicopter specifications when reviewing quotes.
- **Find COVID-proof locations** Using a comprehensive landing site database, Get Heli enables you to find accurate landing locations all across Europe. With the ever-increasing demand for secluded locations, you can be sure to find a destination that works for your client.
- **Win more business** Reliable requests from brokers, quick and accurate quotes from operators. Get Heli's smart technology ensures relevant operators are notified when suitable requests come in from brokers. Operators supply accurate quotes and both parties interact directly with each other throughout the booking process.



Get Heli.

Get Heli is the online, trusted marketplace, connecting helicopter charter brokers and operators. Thanks to our technology, charter helicopters now have their own dedicated platform for charter business. Traditional requests and quotes meet a modern and efficient digital solution through our secure online platform.

Get in touch or request a demo to learn how Get Heli could benefit your helicopter charter booking process.

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