

VIRGIN ATLANTIC AIRWAYS RESTRUCTURING WINS IFLR1000 EUROPE RESTRUCTURING DEAL OF THE YEAR 2021

30 APRIL 2021 • AWARD



WINNER

Watson Farley & Williams

Virgin Atlantic

RESTRUCTURING DEAL OF THE YEAR

Watson Farley & Williams ("WFW") is delighted to announce that the restructuring and recapitalisation plan of Virgin Atlantic Airways, on which the firm advised the bondholder group, has won 'Restructuring Deal of the Year' at the IFLR1000 Europe Awards 2021.

IFLR1000 is one of the world's leading legal guides on financial and corporate law firms and lawyers, publishing rankings for over 19,000 lawyers across 235 different jurisdictions worldwide.

The deal, which was approved by the courts in on 2 September 2020, is one of the most significant airline restructurings to have taken place since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, and was the first to be implemented using the UK's new Part 26A of the Companies Act 2006. A critical element of the restructuring involved the upsize of the existing senior bonds secured over Virgin Atlantic's portfolio of take-off and landing slots at London Heathrow Airport, a landmark deal in itself and for which WFW originally advised the same group of bondholders on the initial issuance in 2015.

The multidisciplinary WFW London team advising the bondholders was led by Capital Markets Partner [Rob McBride](#) and Assets and Structured Finance Partner [Patrick Moore](#). They were assisted by Partners [Stephen Parker](#) and [Richard Stephens](#) on restructuring/insolvency and tax matters respectively and supported by Associates Andrew Holland and Lydia Jones. Separate WFW teams led by Singapore Partner Mehraab Nazir and London Partner [Lucy Shtenko](#) acted respectively for JOLCO creditors and an operating lessor involved in the restructuring plan.

Rob commented: "We're delighted to have guided the bondholder group, and to have worked alongside all the other stakeholders and their advisers, throughout this highly complex restructuring of one of the world's leading airlines. This award reaffirms WFW's position as a key legal adviser to the aviation industry and is testament to our team's ability to offer creative, innovative solutions for our clients".

Patrick added: "By demonstrating the potential for airlines to raise financing against their slot portfolios and the value investors place on this largely under-exploited asset class, this deal will have a lasting impact on the aviation industry. WFW has unique expertise and experience in this niche and complex asset class, having advised on each of the EU slot financing transactions to date".

WATSON FARLEY & WILLIAMS

Allen & Overy and Herbert Smith Freehills acted as co-counsel to VAA. Linklaters acted for the bond and security trustees, Clifford Chance for certain aircraft lessors to Virgin and Freshfields for revolving credit facility lenders.

WFW has also today launched its new Aviation Restructuring report (download [here](#)) which offers updated insights following on from its original launch in April 2020 and explores how the market's response to the pandemic has since developed, the trends have emerged and there some significant changes to legislation in the UK.

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