
EasyJet Stelios offers £5m for help to scupper Airbus order

Simon Goodley

The easyJet founder, Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, is offering £5m to any “whistleblower” providing him with information that scuppers the budget airline’s 107-plane order from Airbus.

Haji-Ioannou has been attempting to force easyJet’s board to cancel the order for months and says the £4.5bn deal will leave the carrier without enough cash to survive the coronavirus crisis.

In an open letter the entrepreneur,

who owns a third of the budget airline, said: “EasyJet is currently run by certain directors that I can only regard as ‘scoundrels’. That remains my honest opinion. The scoundrels want to maintain the Airbus contract despite the fact that there is plenty of evidence that this obligation to pay Airbus will drive easyJet into insolvency by December 2020.”

He added that he was “willing to offer a reward of up to £5m in cash out of his own money to any whistleblower who provides useful information”.

Haji-Ioannou has repeatedly lobbied for easyJet to cancel its order for



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new planes, with coronavirus lockdowns expected to wipe out months of revenues.

He has called a shareholder meeting to remove four of easyJet's directors - chairman, John Barton; chief executive, Johan Lundgren; finance director, Andrew Findlay; and independent non-executive director, Andreas Bierwirth - if the airline does not cancel the orders to reduce its planned £4.5bn in spending up to 2023.

An extraordinary general meeting has been set for 22 May, at which shareholders will vote on his proposals.

Yesterday easyJet hit back and said that major advisory agencies ISS, Glass Lewis and PIRC had all told shareholders to vote against Haji-Ioannou's proposals.

Last week shareholders Invesco, Phoenix Asset Management, and

Ninety One, which together own about 15% of the airline, said they would vote against the measures.

An easyJet spokeswoman said: "As we have previously stated, the board firmly rejects any insinuation that easyJet was involved in any impropriety. EasyJet has maintained the highest standards of governance and scrutiny in respect of its aircraft procurement processes.

"Given the significance of the potential transaction, easyJet appointed external independent accountants BDO to carry out an ongoing review of the controls surrounding the fleet selection process which culminated in the 2013 Airbus contract. The audit report confirmed that robust procurement, project management and governance processes were in place and had been followed."