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Heavyweight Hester lands task of piloting easyJet's turnaround

AVIATION

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CITY heavyweight Stephen Hester has been called in to pilot easyJet's pandemic recovery after landing a new job that will see the former Royal Bank of Scotland boss up against the budget carrier's outspoken founder [Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou](#).

Hester succeeds John Barton, whose nine years as chairman saw him survive major shareholder Haji-Ioannou's attempt to oust him last year amid an ongoing row over the airline's £4.5 billion order for more than 100 new aircraft.

The task of smoothing relations with Haji-Ioannou will be taken on by Hester from December 1, when he officially starts in the £314,000-a-year role.

He will work alongside chief executive Johan Lundgren, with Hester's experience in regulated industries and managing turna-

Chairman's brief:

Stephen Hester, below, will have to deal with the budget carrier's outspoken founder [Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou](#)



rounds expected to benefit easyJet. The airline racked up a half-year loss of £701 million after passenger numbers slid 89% in the six months to April.

Hester ran RBS, now called NatWest, in the fall-out from the financial crisis before taking on the turnaround of RSA Insurance in 2014 until its sale for £7.2 billion this June — a deal he brokered recovering from surgery in hospital.

He was seen as a contender to be the next chairman of BT, a role last week filled by ex-ITV boss Adam Crozier.

Hester said today: "As a long-standing admirer of easyJet, and from my own experience as a customer, I am very excited to be joining the airline and look forward to playing my part in driving its continued success."

Outgoing chair John Barton said: "I am delighted that Stephen has been appointed as the next chair of easyJet."

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