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Mr Shane Ross TD  
Minister for Transport  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
DUBLIN

05/09/2019

**Re: GALWAY AIRPORT**

Dear Minister Ross,

I refer to the recent invitation for Views Sought on Funding for Regional Airports and would make a serious plea for the reopening of Galway Airport. This is a facility very widely needed in the Galway area and which would be greatly supported right across the region. However those of us, citizens, businesses, tourists and various public representatives have all been totally stonewalled by the present owners (City & County Councils). Even overtures by such as Airbus were ignored and then dismissed! We simply have to learn to love what we have and make the best use of those facilities before it is too late.

I admit to a very personal interest in this project having been a founder member of the Galway Flying Club and having done my initial training as a pilot there in the '60s. The owner and operator of Weston Airfield lives near Galway Airport and has successfully operated it until pushed out by the Councils. He has also invested in a huge amount of equipment there. Sadly no-one seems interested to listen to what the population here are saying about their desire to be able to use this facility again, even our local representatives are fobbed off. The deaf ear seems to be ever more endemic. Our Councils are constantly complaining about a serious lack of finance yet they prefer to maintain the security etc etc on this site at enormous cost plus making a contribution to Knock Airport of €1m this year! However, even Knock Airport would welcome the opening of Galway as a feeder service for their international flights. Galway would also be the hub for flights to the Connemara airstrips which are so far unused. Infrastructure is essential, especially with the prospects of the disastrous Brexit debacle across the water.

Thank you for reading these comments.

Yours sincerely

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT  
TOURISM AND SPORT  
06 SEP 2019  
MINISTERS OFFICE

[REDACTED]

We have a facility of huge potential for Galway City and County which is now lying idle. It cost ca €3.3m to build and was bought by the City/County Councils for €1.1m and now termed by them as a site! We could never afford to put such a facility in place again and it would be an act of gross blindness and irresponsibility to let it disappear.

It is so strategically placed near the city where city to city flights in general are rising in popularity and is exactly situated next to excellent roads leading to the north, south, east and west as well as being at the gateway to Connemara. Yes we have an excellent motorway to Dublin but it is to such as England, Scotland, Wales and France that an air service is needed. We are an island and the only way in or out is by sea or air. That must be recognised as we look to the future. We are told jet aircraft cannot land in Galway. Wrong!!!

Over fifty of these 40 tonners landed at Galway during 2015 for both business and tourist users. There is also the possibility for extending the present runway for larger machines in the long run.

The Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022 recognises the strategic importance of both Knock AND Galway Airports and supports the development of both.

The Galway City Development Plan 2011 – 2017 Recognised the value of Galway Airport to secure further investment in the area and stimulate growth and tourism, particularly as access with new roads increases.

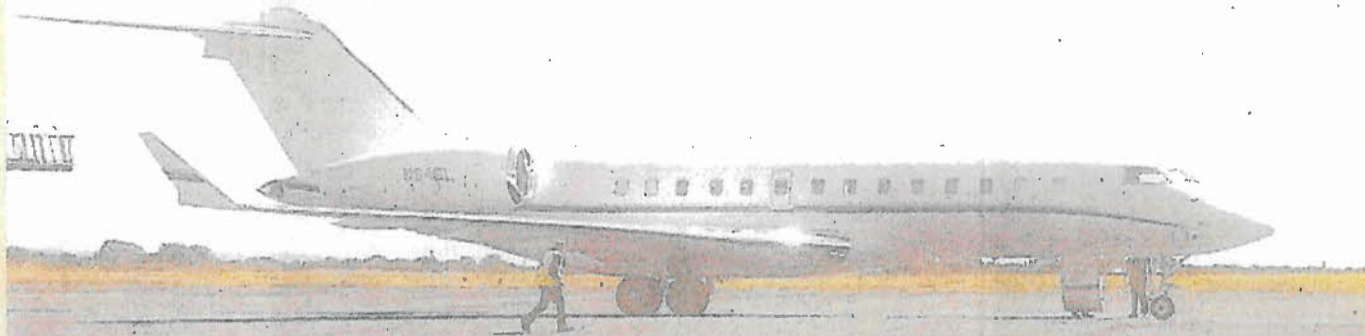
At the time when the Councils bought the property any consultation for the future of Galway Airport was not opened up to the public but restricted to the usual official bodies who appear to be a law to themselves and it was done almost behind closed doors. Outside those bodies there is however genuine interest in its continued aviation use.

It seems incredible that nowhere in the Council's costly Feasibility Study does it mention any advantage of the fact that the entire airport is already in existence and is still capable of being used. The equipment may not be totally up to date but is still serviceable.

The airport is not just a building site as reckoned by our Councils which they got very cheap. To restart this airport we need to start simply with perhaps one airline and further semi-commercial use. There continues to be plenty of interest and it was very well run under that basis up until this year.

Clare and Galway experienced visitor growth over all other western counties with 1,028,000 m, a total of a 10% increase. Galway City and County has a population of ca 339,000 with 6,555 commercial organisations with 16,815 enterprises which already provides Knock Airport with two thirds of its business, and Knock was certainly not built by the State but by a priest with vision and who cared for people!!

Galway is also the largest City in Connaught with the huge hinterland and asset of Connemara. Visitors are increasing at a higher level than elsewhere in Ireland



Galway Airport (clockwise from top left) is one of the busiest in Ireland. It is also one of the most modern in the country. The airport is owned by the Galway Chamber of Commerce.

# STILL FLYING HIGH

## Over fifty business jets use Galway Airport over the Summer months

BY DENISE McNAMARA

OVER 50 private jets have used Galway Airport since it reopened for business at the beginning of the year.

The airport, which is jointly owned by Galway City and County Councils, is being run under licence from the local authorities by the Brian Conneely group of Ballinasloe.

Business people from the multinational companies in Galway as well as tourists visiting the region for a break are among the passengers allighting at the Carnmore facility on the privately owned or leased aircraft.

Of the 50 planes which have landed, the biggest so far was the Bombardier Global 5000, an elegant business jet seating 18 which caused quite

a stir when it flew in at the weekend.

"We've had two German planes today, Race Week was very busy, in fact it's been busy June, July and August and will be until the middle of October," explained John Madden of Galway Airport.

"Air access is absolutely essential for the multinationals. What they love is the quick turnaround. They can land

and be up in Briarhill or Ballybrit or Parkmore in five minutes."

The Air Corps use the facility on average twice a week to refuel and the Coast Guard once a week, usually after a transfer to the hospital.

Both local authorities signed contracts in the past year for the €1.1 million purchase of the 115-acre site from Corrib Airport Ltd - the ma-

jority of which was controlled by the Galway Chamber of Commerce.

A feasibility study on the future of the site was expected to be published by the end of last year but has not yet materialised. As well as a possible industrial site, other ideas touted for the Carnmore complex was a film studio to attract blockbuster movies to the region.

Abbeyknockmoy native Brian Conneely, who has a licence to operate the facility until the end of the year, also owns the Weston Airport in Lucan, Dublin and a large construction business.

A flight training operation could also be on the cards for the Galway facility after an aviation training deal was signed between the airline Ethiad and Weston Airport.