

To Whom it may Concern,

I wish to submit my views on regional airport funding as follows.

It has been noted that there is a decline in traffic through some regional airports following the improvement of motorway infrastructure in the last decade or so. The financial crisis and its effects on both the travelling public and the airline industry itself have also played a part in this; one noticeable effect on this was the decision to Aer Lingus to either repurpose or sell slots at LHR with Cork Airport losing out.

Regional airports are expensive and complex assets to run and I agree with the general trend of public opinion that there should be some return on public investment. However, as someone who travels primarily for business purposes, I disagree entirely with the sentiment that the motorway network has dispensed with the need for airports other than Dublin.

My proposal would be for the runway and terminal at Waterford to be upgraded and landing slots offered at significant discounts to low-cost and charter carriers, much in the same way as is done in continental Europe and beyond. There is already a direct rail link from Waterford city to Dublin, which could be supplemented by non-stop coach services to Dublin City centre and Cork City. Waterford Airport should not aim to compete with Dublin or indeed Cork, but to add capacity - there is certainly a demand for increased movements through Dublin.

Promoting Waterford as a satellite airport for Dublin (as opposed to a regional independent operation) would also attract more tourists into the south east and have a positive effect on local businesses. Focusing future airport development away from Dublin would help allay local concerns about noise abatement, air quality, increased road traffic etc. It may also take the focus off Dublin as the primary tourist destination on the island, helping the housing market to self regulate as the demand for tourist accommodation drops off. Finally, I believe that increased options for business travel would encourage multinationals to places like Waterford, generating employment and economic growth and reducing the number of people commuting to Dublin from the south east.

All of the above is possible with a) sufficient funding, b) strong leadership and planning as multiple agencies, departments and private interests will need to be fully involved and in agreement and c) the ability to effectively "sell" the ideas to carriers and the general public.

The regional airports are also significant strategic assets for both the military and the organisations such as the coast guard, civil defence etc.

I do hope the state recognises the potential of the regional airports to provide the benefits outlined above. I believe the investment is worthwhile and necessary and will have far reaching effects for people all over Ireland.

Yours Sincerely,

