



30 September 2019

Donegal County Council is one of seven local authorities in the North West of Ireland who have collaborated in supporting Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK).

In partnership with the other Council's, we are working with IWAK to increase the passenger numbers to the region and ensure that the direct access for twenty plus destinations is built upon.

The Board of IWAK carried out research in 2018 with RED C and the results have shown that there are positive impacts for the region and in particular for County Donegal. The research has shown that over 60% of passengers travelling through the airport, coming to Donegal, is for a holiday.

This is a major benefit to our tourism sector taking into consideration that they are staying on average six nights, with an indicative spend during their stay of €697. We look forward to seeing the 12% passenger number overall continuing to grow in the coming years.

This Council will continue to work with our Council partners to promote the North West region, along with Donegal Airport and IWAK, and in seeking to increase additional economic and tourism activity to this area and directly to County Donegal.

We are therefore supporting the case proposed by IWAK for the Regional Airports Programme 2020–2024 and would ask Government to consider accepting the changes proposed within the Regional Airports Policy 2019-2024 on the areas of Operating and Investing Aid as reflected below by IWAK.

**Proposed changes to the Current Regional Airport's Programme in the context of the Regional Airports Policy 2019-2024 -** Ireland West Airport as a member of Airports Council International (ACI) is seeking the following changes to the current Regional Airport's Policy in the context of the ongoing review of the 2014 EU State Aid Guidelines.

**Operating aid:**

- Permanent operating aid (i.e. no 10 years limit) - Operating aid for airports between 200,000 – 1 million annual passengers to

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continue indefinitely, as those airports tend to have challenges to achieve significant passenger traffic growth and are unlikely to reach the threshold for operational financial viability in the medium term.

- 100% coverage intensity of operating aid to cover full airport costs, not just the financing gap - Given the economics of the market, it is not realistic to expect smaller airports to raise their airport charges to cover all costs within a 10 years transition period.

**Investment aid:**

- Those airports with less than 1 million annual passengers should be allowed to receive support to cover 100% of the cost of all capital investment projects (not a cap at 75%)
- The current limitation to safety and security capital investment is expanded to include all capital investment projects at Regional Airports
- Provision for multi-year investment programmes to allow deviations as long as overall aid intensity of programs stay within limits.

Yours Sincerely

