

Policy Supports for Regional Airports - Issues Paper for Consultation

Preparation of new Regional Airports Programme 2020 to 2024

Submission by the Farranfore Development Association.

Farranfore Development Association (FDA), is a constituted voluntary organisation established in November 2011.

The overall aims of the Development Association are the promotion of community, social, recreational and business development in the Farranfore area resulting in the improvement and enhancement of Farranfore, thus ensuring its sustainability for future generations.

A development plan for Farranfore was commissioned by FDA in 2013 to provide a blueprint for the development of Farranfore as a place to live, work and visit. A review of this plan was commissioned this year to identify what progress was made and what areas needed to be prioritised.

The initial plan and subsequent review recognised that, in order to allow Farranfore to develop in an orderly manner, it is important that:

- The proposed new Farranfore- Killarney (N22) re-alignment is developed in order to support access to Kerry airport and links to the Tralee-Killarney Hub.
- The industrial activities in Farranfore are protected and developed sustainably.
- Farranfore is promoted as a growth settlement for the Municipal District and every effort is made to achieve its population target as per the core strategy.
- Its location as a strategic transport hub is maximised and developed to its fullest potential.

The following Planning Considerations were identified within the plan:

- Farranfore will be the primary focus for the development of the surrounding rural areas. An appropriate increase in the population will be facilitated.
- The consolidation of the village settlement and the retention and improvement of local services and facilities to serve the village and surrounding rural area is encouraged. The importance of the airport and rail line must be recognised, and its further development is vital to the economy of the County and the wider region

Key Growth Areas Identified within the Development Plan

- There are opportunities to develop the village as a transport/logistics and distribution base as a consequence of its pivotal location as a transport hub.
- Kerry Airport is an important part of the county's transport infrastructure and key to the development of the Tralee/Killarney Development Hub as designated by the National Spatial Strategy.

- The airport is vital in promoting the county for both tourists and business executives. It has a key role in increasing accessibility to the county's major urban centres.
- Farranfore was targeted within The Tralee Killarney Hub Strategy and within local area plans as a location to develop light industry, warehousing and logistics business.
- The development of the 4 Park Business Park as an employment centre will only be realised if Farranfore is continued to be recognised as a transport hub attracting relevant industry.

Social and Economic Impact

- As the closest settlement to the Airport the continuation and expansion of the airport in terms of passenger numbers and onsite infrastructure has a direct economic impact on Farranfore and surrounding villages.
- The airport creates sustainable local employment.
- Passengers in and out of the airport support local businesses (shops, pub, motor garages filling station and guesthouses)
- Bus routes servicing the airport are providing access to public transport for local residents and people travelling onward by plane or train.
- The opportunities realised from an expanding airport will benefit local business and will also potentially act as a catalyst for the development of the business park.
- The economic impact on the rest of the County is important as it is a direct route for visitors to arrive in the County.
- The airport provides opportunities for Kerry based business people, to travel affordably and efficiently to Dublin and beyond. This is an attractive selling point when promoting the County as a place to establish a business or to work remotely.

State Aid

In our opinion the Public Services Obligation (PSO) Air Services Scheme, which provides financial support to airlines to operate essential air services to isolated areas – those not adequately served by alternative transport services, is essential to the viability of Co. Kerry in the absence of existing or planned improvements in road and rail infrastructure.

The number of passengers travelling on the PSO routes has been increasing steadily since the beginning of the current Programme, which outlines the value and sustainability of the routes.

We agree with the principal goals of the policy, which are to:

- Enhance Ireland's connectivity by ensuring safe, secure and competitive access responsive to the needs of business, tourism and consumers;
- Foster the growth of aviation enterprise in Ireland to support job creation and position Ireland as a recognised global leader in aviation; and
- Maximise the contribution of the aviation sector to Ireland's economic growth and development.

In addition to the State airports, the National Aviation Policy (NAP) recognises the role of smaller airports in supporting regional development and commits to encouraging airports 'to attract new business, to achieve excellence in the delivery of service and value for passengers and airlines, and to make a sustainable contribution to their respective local economies and communities.'

It is stated in the policy paper that *"While the focus of policy on regional airports is to optimise conditions for regional development and connectivity, there has been a decline in the role of regional airports from the perspective of national connectivity following the substantial development of the national road network in recent years, particularly the completion of the inter-urban motorways over the last decade"*

This has not been the case for Co. Kerry as it is not serviced by an inter-urban motorway and with uncertainty around the proposed Macroom bypass. The Proposed Adare Bypass will not directly improve access to Kerry as it is not bypassing Newcastle West or Abbeyfeale.

The State funding allocated to Kerry Airport represents value for money when an assessment of the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts resulting from visitors and business activity generating from the Airport, is undertaken.

Access to a key tourism destination within the Country is crucial. To sustain and grow visitor numbers to the County is crucial and access into the County is a key element to this.

As a peripheral county access is crucial to encourage, develop and support businesses and is key to policies to promote rural enterprise and job creation.

