

By email to rapconsultation@dtas.gov.ie

30 September 2019

Preparation of new Regional Airports Programme (RAP) 2020-24.

Dear RAP Team,

Ibec, the group that represents Irish business, wishes to offer the following observations on the issues raised in the DTTAS consultation paper dated 30 August.

The National Aviation Policy commits DTTAS to continual and careful monitoring of the business development of all four airports, against clear business plans to achieve the RAP's stated objectives. It is noteworthy, however, that a recent review of the Programme by DPER's IGEES team has recommended the collection of more significant data on the profiles of passengers using these airports. At Kerry Airport, for example, no formal survey of passengers has been carried out in recent years. For Donegal, the most recent passenger survey appears to have been six years ago. Knowing the profile (business, leisure, tourism) is helpful to evaluating the regional economic impact of the airport. This will be especially relevant for Waterford Airport following its proposed runway upgrade, given that the co-investors will require periodic progress reports against agreed performance metrics.

In part because of this data gap, members of the Ibec Transport & Infrastructure Council are struggling to reach a common view on how effective the existing grant schemes have been in promoting economically efficient regional air connectivity under the NAP. There is, however, broad acceptance that the airports currently availing of support under the 2015-19 RAP do have the potential to contribute to regional development through tourism and attracting business investment, including FDI, if efficiency targets are achieved. It is also clear that without these historic supports, each of the four airports would have faced serious financial challenges in continuing to serve the business and domestic populations of their respective regions.

Finally, in the interests of equity, Ibec considers that Irish airports serving less than three million passenger journeys per annum, regardless of ownership, should be allowed to avail of State Aid for safety and security investment, proportionate to their respective funding gaps.

Yours sincerely

