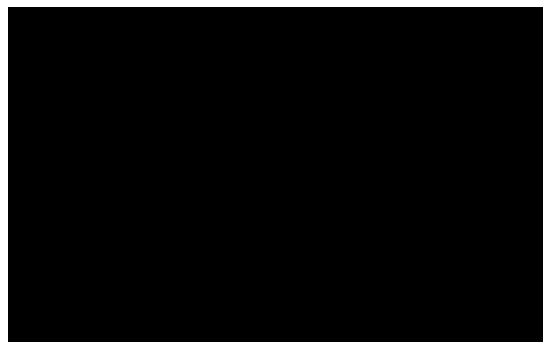




Letterkenny
Chamber
Advancing business together

Submission

New Regional Airports Programme 2020 - 2024



Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this public consultation.

Of interest to the Chamber and its members is Donegal Airport. Located just an hour away from Letterkenny it is important to members of the business community in affording air access directly to Dublin and then further afield across Europe and the US. The recent Aer Lingus direct access via Dublin with the US is having a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality sector as the number of US visitors grows. The US visitor spends significantly more in the local economy so the regional airport and the direct access it provides is invaluable currently in the development of the region.

We are responding to this consultation under the questions framed in Appendix 1.

Q1. What category of Stakeholder do you represent?

Letterkenny Chamber is a membership organisation based in Donegal representing over 250 businesses. The membership includes the largest employers in the County and very many SMEs across the sectors.

We are the only full time Chamber of Commerce in Donegal affiliated to Chambers Ireland and have been working to improve the business environment in Donegal for over 55years.

Q2. What are your views on the effectiveness of the current Regional Airports Programme?

Investment by Government in the Regional airports over the years demonstrates the value of these airports to regional development and is instrumental in assisting businesses and development agencies to maintain and attract business to this peripheral North West Region.

Donegal is now seeing an increase in tourism spend and a significant increase in investment in tourism infrastructure all year round to meet demand. The regional airport is more important than ever to this business sector and we can only see this traffic increase year on year.

Q3. What, if any , changes would you like to see reflected in the new programme and why?

Continuation of funding supports is essential to these airports in meeting their capital and operational costs to ensure the highest level of operational standards and safety are maintained.

Q5. What are your views on the PSO Scheme, the air service routes currently being supported and the need for a continuation of the scheme beyond 2022?

The continuation of the PSO service to provide a twice daily link to the capital Dublin from Donegal is critical to the future of this airport and to its value to the region. Access to the North West Region has always been difficult. There is no rail network and the road network accessing Dublin is not fit for purpose. Air access has therefore become a critical in addressing this regional imbalance. As we face into Brexit this will increase in importance because of its inevitable negative impact on this border region.

Our members and the wider business community view access and infrastructure as the most important aspect of their investment decisions. Time and again it is the No.1 issue that needs to be addressed.

While the roads infrastructure is starting to be addressed there is no chance of it being completed before 2022 and those businesses and people located in the west of the County will still need that vital link to Dublin for many years to come.

We are seeing an increase in remote working and there are several Digital hubs being developed in rural areas close to Donegal Airport. While these will enable people to work globally and live locally there is still the need to travel to base and the airport provides that vital link.