

APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

New Regional Airports Programme 2020-2024

Question 1: What category of stakeholder do you represent?

Responses may include airport company, airline, transport infrastructure owners or operators; state or commercial transport service providers; local authorities; environmental groups; and transport system users, amongst others.

Chamber of Commerce representing transport system users.

Question 2: Having regard to the actions on regional airports in the National Aviation Policy, what are your views on the effectiveness of the current Regional Airports Programme?

Please give your views on how effective existing grant schemes are in supporting policy objectives on regional airports.

Reasonably effective, provided grant schemes provide certainty and are not subject to delays.

Question 3: What, if any, changes would you like to see reflected in the new Programme and why?

Operating aid:

- **Permanent operating aid (i.e. no 10 years limit)** - Operating aid for airports between 200,000 – 1 million annual passengers to 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 programs** to allow deviations as long as overall aid intensity of programs stay within limits.

Question 4: How do you think the new Programme can best support Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy, having regard to policy on climate action and sustainability?

Responses should indicate potential actions or measures with justification for their consideration. Evidence for the efficacy of proposed measures or further information, such as the associated costs for implementation, may be provided to support your response.

Ireland's use of regional airports (including for perishable or high value freight as well as passengers) will cut down on road journeys to Dublin Airport thereby providing a more sustainable outcome.

Question 5: 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?

Imperative that it be maintained so as to provide economic certainty, particularly with economic change looming due to Brexit.

Additional Comments

Please feel free to add additional comments as part of your submission.

Note: The limit for all submissions is 2,000 words and the deadline for receipt of submissions is c/o on 30 September 2019.

As a key stakeholder in Ireland West Airport Knock's future, Sligo Chamber wishes to confirm the critically important role Ireland West Airport plays in delivering visitors to the North West region as one of the four main airports in the country and as a driver of economic and tourism development for the West and North West of Ireland.

2019 will be the busiest year in the airport's history with passenger numbers exceeding 800,000 for the first time. The Airport now serves 20+ destinations across the UK and Europe and is served by three of Europe's main airlines – Aer Lingus, Flybe and Ryanair. Some 28% of its passengers are from Sligo and the airport is a key driver in attracting new business to Sligo.

Tourism Impact

- The impact of Ireland West Airport passengers in 2018 was €181.9m in total output, supporting 2,901 jobs, contributing GVA of €112.6m and an Exchequer revenue of €29.4m*.

Total Economic Impact

- €216.5m total output, €130.5m GVA, 3,177 jobs, and €34.1m Exchequer revenue was generated in 2018 by the airport through its operations, capital investment and tourist spending*.

From RED C research carried out between May-September 2018 at the Airport, 47% of all passengers arriving into the Airport visited the North West (Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal) – with visitors to Donegal and Sligo most likely to be here for holidays (vs visiting friends and relatives).

The same research indicates that visitors spend an average of 5 nights in the North West with 30% staying in hotels and 20% in B&B's, taking part in a range of activities including hiking/cross country walking, shopping, visiting National Parks and attending large cultural events amongst the most popular – and spending just short of €700 on average per passenger.

Key findings*:

- **38% of overseas visitors** to the region are '**holidaymakers**'
- While the majority of departing passengers had travelled through the airport before, indicating a high level of repeat usage, **for 29% of passengers, this was their first trip** to Ireland West Airport. **For 14%, this is actually their first trip to Ireland**, quantifying the net gain for the region that Ireland West Airport delivers.
- **88% of respondents** said the 'access offered by the airport' to counties in the region 'they wanted to visit' was '**the main reason why they used the airport**'.

Sligo Chamber, as a key member of the (AEC) Atlantic Economic Corridor, actively promoted the designation of Strategic Development Zone at Ireland West Airport Knock.

Ireland West Airport Knock is a key driver of the (AEC) Atlantic Economic Corridor - centrally positioned and serving the North West region as a hub for international travel. The SDZ will further enhance the potential of the AEC in the North West and help to increase its potential to function as a cohesive model for balanced regional economic development.

Signed: _____

For: Sligo Chamber Industry Group