

Question 1: What category of stakeholder do you represent?

Tourism body marketing County Sligo, funded by Local Authority

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?

The current Regional Airports Programme is very effective when looking at the performance of Ireland West Airport in relation to providing access for tourists to the West of Ireland and County Sligo. Passengers will exceed 80,000 for 2019, the airport serves 20+ destinations across the UK and Europe, and employs 150 staff.

During November 2018 the airport opened a Visitor Discovery centre in partnership with seven local authorities, including Sligo. Currently all Sligo Tourism's marketing material highlights Sligo's proximity to Ireland West Airport.

Research carried out by the airport during 2018 shows that 38% of visitors coming through the airport are holidaymakers and 14% of these are experiencing their first visit to Ireland. 88% of visitors stated that the reason why they use Ireland West Airport is that it provides easy access to the counties they wish to visit including Sligo. 28% of visitors using the airport travel to Sligo and 43% of these are coming to Sligo on holiday. They stay 6 nights on average and spend is €696 per day.

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

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.

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?

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 cob on 30 September 2019.