

Public Consultation Questionnaire

New Regional Airports Programme 2020-2024

Question 1: What category of stakeholder do you represent?

Established in 1980, Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht regions in Ireland. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. The Údarás na Gaeltachta strategy focuses on innovation and enterprise, as well as cultural aims. At present Údarás na Gaeltachta supported companies employ approx. 7,500 full time workers in the Gaeltacht. A broad range of companies located in the Donegal Gaeltacht export products and services to a worldwide market place. Key resources such as tourism are also central to the Donegal Gaeltacht economy.

An tÚdarás holds a 49% equity stake in Aerfort Idirnáisiúnta Dhún na nGall (Donegal International Airport)

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?

Donegal Airport serves a region / catchment area with quite poor road networks, no rail infrastructure or services, and no motorway or high-quality dual carriageway road access to Dublin. Donegal's geographic location and distance from the capital has unfortunately resulted in reduced levels of infrastructural investment in comparison with the rest of the State in the period leading up to the economic crash.

Údarás na Gaeltachta's view is that the current Regional Airports Programme is / has been a valuable and cost-effective measure to support regional airports aligned with objectives in regional development, connectivity, sustainability, and climate impacts. The programme has ensured that air connectivity has been / can be provided to the Republic's more isolated regions. The airport is a

critical piece of infrastructure for businesses located in Donegal and is a key component in Údarás na Gaeltachta's offering to entice inward investment and sustain local enterprise in west Donegal in order to support economic development and employment in the region. Air connectivity is extremely important to this most peripheral region in Ireland to sustain existing business and for the future economic development of the entire region

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

Údarás na Gaeltachta does not seek any significant change in the new Regional Airports Programme given the success of the current Regional Airports Programme. An tÚdarás strongly supports the PSO element of the programme in particular as a critical component in ensuring the standard / level of air connectivity to the region which is key to the economic, social and cultural development of the Donegal Gaeltacht.

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?

We suggest that the new Programme can best support Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy through (continued) engagement with the Airport companies and airlines in order to influence the design of appropriate policies actions and measures

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?

The PSO Scheme is essential in order to maintain appropriate scheduled air services on routes which are vital for the economic development and sustainability of businesses in the region they serve. Donegal Airport is a vital piece of infrastructure for businesses located in Donegal and is a key component in Údarás na Gaeltachta's offering to entice inward investment to west Donegal in order to support economic development in the region. The existence of air

services to Donegal has helped to address the effects of poor infrastructure of peripherality. The existing Donegal / Dublin PSO is critical in ensuring that Donegal Airport continues to offer air connectivity to Dublin and onward to international destinations through mainline airline services.

The PSO Scheme must continue beyond 2022 to enable the severely disadvantaged and remote region it serves to continue to be provided with an alternative to expensive, slow and unattractive land transportation options.

Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development, aims to unlock the potential of Ireland's rural communities to improve the lives of those living and working in rural areas.

The key objectives of the plan are to:

- support sustainable and vibrant rural communities,
- support enterprise and employment;
- maximise our rural tourism and recreation potential;
- foster culture and creativity in rural communities; and
- improve rural infrastructure and connectivity.

We suggest that the maintenance and continued / future delivery of the PSO Scheme to Donegal Airport are central to the aims and objectives of the Action Plan for Rural Development, supporting sustainable and vibrant rural communities, supporting enterprise and employment, maximising our rural tourism and recreation potential, fostering culture and creativity in rural communities; and improving rural infrastructure and connectivity.