

Submission on Waterford Airport



The South East accounts for almost 11 percent of the population of the state and generates 8 percent of national GDP. Manufacturing, agriculture and services, tourism, fishing and aquaculture are the mainstays of the region's economy. The Agrifood sector accounts for a sizeable proportion of production and employment. In recent years, however, there has been more of a shift towards services. Foreign direct investment in the region is mainly in electronics and precision engineering, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, as well as internationally traded services.

In order for the south east to continue to develop, it needs a viable regional airport. We need the investment in order to extend the runway and by doing so bring much-needed jobs and infrastructure to Waterford and the south-east. The runway needs to be extended to 2,280 metres on order to accommodate large commercial passenger aircraft such as Boeing 737's and Airbus A.320's. This is essential to support to support economic growth in the south-east.

The local authorities of the south-east, as well as certain business interests, have agreed to participate on the basis that the Minister will release €5m for the project. The reason why there have not been any flights from Waterford Airport in three years is because it is well-nigh impossible to attract carriers to use the Airport in its present condition.

This has to be a priority for the Minister and government. We cannot continue to see the south-east downgraded by officials in Dublin with little or no idea of the needs of the region. Both local business and regional authorities have shown their commitment to the Airport. We need the Minister to act quickly and follow up his announcement as a matter of urgency.