

29th March 2022

Chairperson
Joint Committee on Transport and Communications



Via email: jctc@oireachtas.ie

Dear Chairperson -

As CEO of daa, which operates both Dublin and Cork Airports, I appreciate the opportunity to (i) provide you with clarity on the challenges that Dublin Airport is currently facing with respect to delays for departing passengers, and (ii) provide reassurance regarding the urgent, concerted action that daa is currently taking to address these challenges as quickly as possible.

As widely reported in the media, passengers at Dublin Airport experienced lengthy delays at the airport over the last weekend (March 25th to 27th), resulting in a number of passengers missing flights. I would like to begin by apologising unreservedly to all of our passengers that were affected as a result of these delays. I appreciate that this was extremely stressful and frustrating for everyone concerned, and deeply regret that our customers had this experience. Please be assured that our business is now taking immediate action to address these challenges.

Similar to other airports across Europe, Dublin Airport is currently working extremely hard to ramp-up operations following the collapse of international travel over the past two years. As a result of the Covid pandemic, and the financial challenges it created for our business, more than 1,000 staff left Dublin Airport under a voluntary severance scheme. As passenger numbers now recover, our business therefore needs to hire and train staff for a wide range of critical roles, in order to meet demand (including within our security team).

However, the process of recruiting and training these new team members is far from immediate, particularly given the current climate and labour market. The speed of daa's recruitment efforts have also been significantly impacted by the introduction of new compulsory background security checks for all staff working at an international airport from January 2022 - which take a number of additional weeks to complete.

Since the start of 2022, more than 100 new security staff have been recruited at the airport. However, there have been considerable delays in bringing many more urgently required new staff into the operation as a result of the above factors. Thankfully, this log jam is now easing, and we hope more new staff can begin working on the frontline in the coming weeks. Regrettably, however, the reality is that further delays are likely to continue to be experienced at Dublin Airport during the coming weeks, until all of the required team members

are brought on board. As daa CEO, I can assure that we are doing everything in our power to recruit and train these new team members as quickly as can be possibly achieved.

Further, this urgent need to recruit is coming at a time when passenger numbers are growing quickly at Dublin Airport, and while COVID-related absences are high due to the national rise in case numbers. These factors combined are further impacting staffing levels at the airport, and consequently increasing the length of time it is taking passengers to get through security, particularly during peak hours.

In addition, our business is also taking a range of immediate, short-term actions to mitigate these impacts as fully as possible. These actions include the redeployment of staff from other areas of the business, the implementation of a senior management task force, the continual review of staffing arrangements at security points in our terminals, and the issuing of revised passenger advice. We are also exploring the option of keeping security open 24/7 as a short-term measure to avoid the build-up of queues in advance of early morning departures when the airport is at its busiest.

Once again, we apologise to all of our passengers who have been impacted by delays at the airport, and we very much appreciate their patience and understanding as we work to restore customer service levels to what were the norm at Dublin Airport prior to the COVID pandemic.

I hope the above addresses your query, and I very much look forward to welcoming both you and the Committee to Dublin Airport on Monday 4 April. Please do not hesitate to contact me again should you require any further information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dalton Philips', followed by a comma.

Dalton Philips
Chief Executive