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Clerk to the Committee (Work Programme)
Special Committee on COVID19 Response
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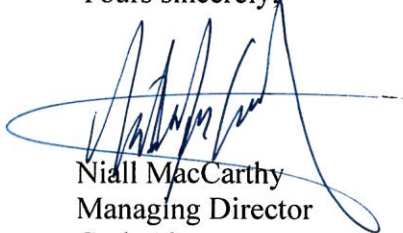
4th June, 2020

Dear Ms. Fallon,

Please find attached a copy of Cork Airport's Submission to the Special Committee on COVID19 Response for circulation to the Members of the Special Committee.

Cork Airport welcomes the opportunity to outline the impact of the global pandemic health crisis on our business and the resultant economic impact which needs to be minimised to ensure the airport and aviation sectors, as economic enablers, can help our national inbound tourism and hospitality sectors recover business as soon as is possible following the easing of restrictions in line with the Government's Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business.

Yours sincerely,



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Cork Airport Submission to the Special Committee on COVID-19 On The Topic of Travel Restrictions

INTRODUCTION

1. Thank you to the Members of the Special Committee on Covid-19 for allowing Cork Airport, the State's second busiest in terms of passengers and best-connected international airport after Dublin in terms of routes and destinations, the opportunity to submit its views on the topic of travel restrictions. Passenger numbers at Cork Airport grew from 2.4 million in 2018 to 2.6 million in 2019, an increase of 8% year-on-year. This resulted in Cork Airport being the fastest growing airport in Ireland in 2019 and the most punctual.
2. The Covid-19 public health crisis has decimated our airport business at Cork Airport. At present, passenger numbers at Cork Airport remain almost 99% lower than the corresponding period in 2019. An average of c.70 passengers per day travelled through Cork Airport last month (May 2020) versus c.7,700 per day over the corresponding month last year. These extremely low passengers are as a result of just 1-2 scheduled flight rotations per day, 5 days of the week. (We currently have no flights on a Tuesday or Saturday).
3. For 2020, latest projections indicate that passenger numbers at Cork Airport are likely to be less than c.700,000 (>75% decline on 2019). In 2021, traffic could potentially be as low as 2.1 million passengers at Cork Airport versus 2.6 million in 2019.
4. Cork Airport generated €904 million for the Irish economy in 2019, according to findings in an economic impact study released in January. The report, conducted by global management consulting firm InterVistas Consulting, revealed Cork Airport also contributed to the employment of 12,180 people in Ireland, equivalent to 10,740 full-time jobs, earning a total of €457 million.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The current 'Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business', which sets out how the COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted, doesn't specifically call out aviation or air travel. Nevertheless, many airlines are selling tickets for July, even without public clarity on the roadmap for easing or lifting of the mandatory 14-day quarantine, and even though current Government advice remains to avoid all non-essential travel overseas. **It is important therefore that clarity is provided on the Government Roadmap for Aviation as soon as possible (and specifically plans for the easing of quarantine/14-day self-isolation from specified safe countries).**
6. As part of this Roadmap, **Ireland should consider introducing bilateral agreements (travel corridors or travel bubbles) with safe countries e.g. Ireland and Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Poland and the Baltics, to start as soon as possible preferably July.** Ireland should signal intent to open travel to and from all other EU countries by mid-August, assuming the health situation and epidemiological trend is stable in both jurisdictions. Cork Airport also supports the **introduction of an electronic track and trace mobile phone-based application for passenger arrivals, rather than the current crude 14-day blanket quarantine.**



7. **Government should adopt the operational guidelines developed by EASA/ECDC in its COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol (including on a legal basis if necessary).** It should explicitly commit to paying the costs involved for airports in adopting any such measures, which are ultimately aimed at protecting public health, and ensure the appropriate bodies are responsible for their administration while addressing data protection issues.
8. Ireland should **reduce the current 2 metre social/physical distance requirement to 1 metre** in accordance with World Health Organisation advice, to remove unworkable capacity constraints in airports, restaurants and other public areas.
9. Government should announce a **comprehensive and effective state aid stimulus package for tourism and aviation (including airports)** to reboot connectivity and regrow inbound tourism markets to stimulate job creation. Easing of State aid measures will enable more innovative, effective and targeted application of the stimulus package for maximum economic impact. Cork Airport was the fastest growing airport in Ireland bar none in 2019 and was again on course to be the fastest growing airport in 2020 prior to the pandemic. Our business is now on its knees with a reduction of 99% in our traffic in the last few months. We are facing into multi million Euro losses both this year and next and our industry body, ACI (Airport Council International), estimates it will take 3 to 4 years to recover. In the meantime, some of our airline customers have ceased to trade and others have laid off staff and considerably downsized. Cork Airport represents a viable opportunity for the Government to stimulate tourism throughout the south of Ireland by investing in the financial recovery of the airport as part of the overall aviation, tourism and hospitality recovery. With the significant recession forecast to come, it is important to remember that aviation and tourism played a key part in the recovery and job creation following the last recession. Financial stimulus benefiting aviation, airports and tourism can and will drive job creation and enhance balanced regional development.

SUMMARY

10. These are very difficult times for our airport business at Cork Airport and the aviation sector in general. The economic impact on Cork Airport and the tourism and hospitality sectors has been catastrophic. Timely decisions now need to be made quickly, to enable these sectors and individual businesses within them to reopen, and to reboot and recover from this global health crisis and the resultant economic crisis that has unfolded. We look forward to playing our part in the national economic recovery with appropriate financial and policy stimulus.