
IEA Submission: Mid-Term Review of the Regional Airports Programme 2021-2025

Irish Exporters Association submission to the Department of Transport

31st January 2023

The Irish Exporters Association

The Irish Exporters Association (IEA) is the leading independent representative body and voice for exporters based in Ireland. The IEA represents exporters and supply chain operators across the country and works at regional, national, and European level, representing its members in front of legislators to create a regulatory and legislative framework that supports, drives, and fosters Irish exports.

We assist our members to grow their exports to world markets and drive the growth and development of all exporting businesses based in Ireland. We provide a set of highly relevant business services and products to assist our members with international trade.

The IEA represents the whole spectrum of companies within the export industry including SME's who are beginning to think about exporting for the first time right through to global multinational companies who are already extensively exporting from Ireland as well as the providers of key services to the sector. The IEA is the connecting force for Irish exporters, providing practical knowledge and support across the Island of Ireland and in foreign markets.

Overview

The Irish Exporters Association welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department of Transport's mid-term review of the Regional Airports Programme for 2021-2025. Ireland, as an island nation, is heavily reliant on its domestic and international air cargo transport sector, owing to its crucial role in the economy. The movement of a considerable number of products require at a minimum some element of air freight within wider multi-modal supply chains, which also include sea, road, and rail freight. The aviation sector is a key employer in communities across Ireland and make a significant contribution to the economy – bringing goods into and across Ireland, as well as supporting Irish exports.

Regional airports feed hubs and provide point-to-point connections across shorter distances than their international counterparts. As transit nodes, they are capable of enabling economic activity and expansion by connecting people, products, and services to wider markets. The IEA believe regional airports play an important part within the aviation system. They are engines of socio-economic development and improve accessibility to certain locations, in particular those that are remote or not well served by other forms of transportation.

They also have a vital role in terms of economic and social cohesion, stimulating tourism and employment, as well as facilitating access to essential services. In addition, they can help to reduce congestion at major hub airports.

Climate Action Plan and Sustainability

Under the Regional Airport Programme, funding is allocated primarily for safety and security related projects, but it also enables support for sustainability initiatives and objectives thereby assisting applicable airports to contribute towards National Climate Targets. The Government is firmly committed to ensuring climate action remains a key policy priority through the Climate Action Plan.

This plan commits to significant action to achieve a 51 per cent reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and lays the foundation to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.¹ Changes to RAP will allow airports which currently fall out of the parameters of the programme to be better equipped to meet their objectives under the Climate Action Plan.

Project Ireland 2040

The Project Ireland 2040 plan outlines the Government’s overarching strategy for the State. It details ambitions to make Ireland a more resilient and sustainable country. The importance of the State’s airports is highlighted in the document as a means of facilitating economic growth for the country.² Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of facilitating access to and from the regions. Although, we believe there is a current imbalance of the aviation landscape in Ireland, with potential passengers and businesses underutilizing the State’s regional airports, and this represents a challenge to achieving the objectives of Ireland 2040.

The RAP currently provides financial support to regional airports as defined by the Department of Transport as those that “*operate scheduled passenger services and handle less than 1 million annual average passengers*”.³ The supports of RAP should be extended by the Government to allow for greater regional development under Ireland 2040.

Conclusion

The Irish Exporters Association would like to thank the Department for the opportunity to feed into its mid-term review of the Regional Airports Programme 2021-2025. The IEA has actively and constructively worked with the Department of Transport and stands ready to continue this engagement. We look forward to expanding upon our recommendations in the interest of Irish exporters and importers and the wider business community.

On behalf of the IEA
Simon McKeever
Chief Executive

Date: 31.01.23

¹ [Climate Action Plan 2023](#)

² [Project Ireland 2040](#)

³ [Regional Airports Programme 2021 - 2025](#)