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To: Info

Subject: Fáilte Ireland Submission: Maximum Level of Airport Charges at Dublin Airport - 2014 Draft Determination (Commission Paper 1/2014)

To whom it may concern,

Fáilte Ireland welcomes the opportunity to make a short submission on the draft determination. The primary objective of this submission is to underscore a number of visitor and tourism industry-related issues to help inform the Commission's deliberations.

Achieving Ambitious Growth Targets

The current recovery in, and longer-term sustainability of, Irish tourism is inextricably linked to growth in competitive air access from our key source markets (countries of origin) in Europe and North America. It is well recognised that there is a correlation between affordable and suitably timed air access services from a given country and growth in tourism demand from that country.

The recently published *National Tourism Policy for Ireland* (July 2014) sets out the Government's plans to grow tourism's overseas earnings by 50% over the next ten years and to grow tourism employment by 50%. Implicit in this target is underlying annual average earnings growth of 4%.

This ambitious growth target cannot be achieved unless Ireland's ports of entry and exit are set up to accommodate ever growing passenger volumes. Key access points, such as Dublin airport, are particularly important in this regard. These points of access cannot be allowed to become limiting factors on Ireland's tourism growth. They must continue to be enablers of growth.

With this in mind and with reference to the draft determination regarding Dublin airport:

- It is vital that the range and mix of direct flights to and from Dublin airport is maintained and, over time, facilitated to improve.
- Tourism would benefit from an extension of 'reach', i.e., the range of locations which can be serviced non-stop.
- The airport's success in attracting long haul transfer passengers means that carriers are now generating greater economies of scale. In practical terms, this is leading to lower average ticket prices for long haul tourists visiting Ireland as well as a wider network of routes.

The points above may have implications for infrastructure investment and the airport's ability to accommodate larger aircraft.

Airports Services

From a service point of view, approximately 70% of overseas tourists' first and last experience of Ireland occurs at Dublin airport. The quality of this interaction impacts on their assessment of their time here. This is significant given the importance of word of mouth referrals amongst visitors to Ireland.

A number of factors influence how tourists are likely to view their airport experience, including: ease of accessing the airport; ability to get reliable information quickly; ease of check-in; queuing times; and the ability of staff to deal with unexpected complications and events.

Accordingly, every effort should be made to ensure that the highest standards of customer service are set, monitored and met insofar as they impact directly upon tourists' experience.

We are available to discuss any of the points raised. Once more, I would like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely,

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