

Mr Cathal Guiomard  
Commission for Aviation Regulation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Alexandra House  
Earlsfort Terrace  
Dublin 2

6<sup>th</sup> August 2008

Dear Cathal

With reference to your letter of 9<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to Paul O'Toole, please find attached Tourism Ireland's response to the Commission's consultation on quality of service.

If you have any further comments or questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Mark Henry**  
Director of Central Marketing



## **Response to “Quality of Service at Dublin Airport” Consultation Paper, Commission Paper 3/2008, Commission for Aviation Regulation**

### **Introduction and summary**

Tourism Ireland has been invited to comment on Commission Paper 3/2008 from the Commission for Aviation Regulation. Paper 3/2008 addresses the issue of service quality at Dublin airport in terms of definition and measurement. Tourism Ireland welcomes the opportunity to reinforce the importance of service quality in all visitor environments. There is a reasonably well developed science around the definition and measurement of service quality as it impacts passengers in airports. In particular the Airport Service Quality (ASQ) benchmarking approach promoted by the Airport Council International (ACI) is widely used in destinations which compete with Ireland for visitors. Tourism Ireland believes that the adoption of a broadly-based globally robust benchmark-type measure such as the ASQ measure is both feasible and desirable.

### **Tourism Ireland role and interest in topic**

Tourism Ireland was established under the framework of the Belfast Agreement of Good Friday 1998. Tourism Ireland is jointly funded by the two governments, North and South, and is accountable to the North South Ministerial Council. Tourism Ireland has the twin goals of promoting increased tourism to the island of Ireland and supporting the tourism industry in Northern Ireland to realise its potential. We engage in strategic destination marketing on a worldwide basis to achieve these goals. Tourism Ireland also advocates on behalf of the overseas visitor.

We also influence product quality and service by providing intelligence from our research into consumer and industry trends in overseas markets. Tourism Ireland undertakes regional/product marketing and promotional activities on behalf of Fáilte Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board through its overseas markets offices. We also own and manage Tourism Brand Ireland (TBI) and its associated communications materials.

## **Destination marketing and service quality**

Available research suggests that visitors to the island of Ireland (of whom a little over five million or 54% use Dublin airport as the point of entry and/or departure) have high expectations in terms of service quality. In the spectrum of available destinations for both short and long breaks, Ireland competes on quality and good value. The image of Ireland as a quality destination is informed by all of the many ‘touch-points’ encountered by a visitor. These include advertising and promotional material (pre-visit), accommodation and attractions visited and their experiences at transport nodes including airports. The imagery of Ireland as a brand, and the perceptions of Ireland as a destination are impacted both positively and negatively by the experiences of the visitor.

### **Dublin Airport service quality and the visitor experience (Q1)**

For more than half of all our visitors the first point of contact (in Ireland) in terms of forming/reinforcing quality images of the Ireland brand is their experience of Dublin airport. Dublin airport also informs their impressions and perceptions of Ireland as they depart. Given that Dublin airport is the largest point of entry, and that the most popular tourist attraction (Guinness Storehouse) receives less than one million visitors, no other single ‘touch-point’ enjoys even half of the impact of the airport. Given the significance of Dublin airport it seems appropriate that any definition of service quality at the airport should include consumer measures.

### **Measuring quality of service (Q2)**

There is a reasonably well developed science around the definition and measurement of service quality as it impacts passengers in airports. In particular the Airport Service Quality (ASQ) benchmarking approach promoted by the Airport Council International (ACI) is widely used in destinations which compete with Ireland for visitors. This measure has the attraction of reflecting the needs/perceptions of the relevant stakeholder groups. Tourism Ireland believes that the adoption of a broadly-

based globally robust benchmark-type measure such as the ASQ measure is both feasible and desirable. One possible enhancement of the existing ACI methodology is the widening of the sample to include visitors arriving at the airport as well as departing passengers.

### **Concluding comment**

Comment has been sought on the related questions of service quality definition and measurement. Embracing a consumer-centric definition of service quality, and supporting this with a robust international benchmark measurement is very desirable. The process of defining service quality can of course be used as an opportunity to engage stakeholders, including airport and contractor staff, while promulgating a quality service ethos.

The detailed design of service quality definition and the localisation of the chosen measurement approach is clearly a task for the regulator in conjunction with the airport.

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