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Shannon Airport has functioned as the mainspring of economic development and growth for the Mid-West and surrounding regions for several decades. It effectively underpins thousands of jobs in industrial estates in Shannon, Limerick and throughout the region. It also facilitates access for the majority of American tourists to the West and South-West of the country-particularly to Connemara and Killarney areas.

Despite the fact that successive governments have supported balanced regional development, Dublin has continued to grow apparently uncontrollably. Both the spatial strategy and current regional policy commit the government to developing counter balances to the Dublin region. It is clear that the Shannon catchment is the main West of Ireland counter balance to the uncontrolled growth of the capital.

Regulation of the airports has the potential to support or undermine regional policy. Unless charges at Shannon Airport are substantially cheaper than those at Dublin it is inevitable that more and more airlines will choose to serve Dublin rather than Cork and Shannon. This will add to congestion and contribute further to regional imbalance. It will also increase pressure for further expensive infrastructure at Dublin Airport, while existing facilities at Cork and Shannon will remain under-utilised.

If the intention is to regulate the three airports entirely separately the potential to support the Govts. regional policy will be undermined and there will be no justification for keeping the airports together under the control of Aer Rianta. It was clear during the parliamentary debates on the legislation that many members of the Oireachtas feared that regulation could become a negative influence on national regional policy. There was also a fear that spare capacity at Shannon would remain under-utilised if the regulator did not take account of the key importance of the Airport to industrial and tourism development.

It is vitally important that the future infrastructural needs of the Airport (eg. the cross runway) are not neglected because of a policy which effectively forces all traffic growth and infrastructure into Dublin Airport. This is an inevitable outcome if the three airports are regulated entirely separately.

It is also important that the history of the development of services at Shannon


be taken account of. This is the main reason for the high staffing level per passenger at Shannon relative to Cork and Dublin. The transfer of responsibility from the Dept. of Transport & Power to Sales and Catering before the Aer Rianta take over necessitated specialised staffing in the duty free shops, the flight kitchen and mail order.

The inflight catering service at Shannon has traditionally been a positive factor in developing business. It would be a retrograde step to force this out of existence when it clearly can be both cost effective and part of the revival of the strong tradition of innovation at Shannon. Regulation should not strangle the potential for development and progress rather should it support and encourage innovation and initiative.

Aer Rianta International is one area where growth can be anticipated and regulation should not undermine its potential. Neither should a policy be dictated which forces the sale of Great Southern Hotels.

I wish to support that submissions which have been made by Clare Co. Council and the Mis West regional Authority. I would welcome an opportunity to expand on the foregoing by way of oral submission.

Yours sincerely


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