

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Mid West Regional Authority held at 10.00 A.M. on Wednesday 14th October 2009 in the Council Chamber, Limerick City Council, City Hall Limerick.

Cllr. L. Walsh, Cathaoirleach presided.

Present:

Clare County Council:

Cllrs. G. Flynn, O. Garry, P. Keane, P.J. Kelly, B. Meaney and P. McMahon

Limerick City Council:

Cllrs. G. Fahy, M. Hourigan, J. Leddin, D. McCarthy and D. Scully.

Limerick County Council:

Cllrs. M. Donegan, N. Gleeson, S. Keary, W. O'Donnell and L. Walsh.

North Tipperary County Council:

Cllrs. G. Darcy, and M. Ryan.

Apologies: Cllrs. J. Egan, S. Hanafin, V. O'Dowd

Absent: Cllrs. P. Bugler, R. Butler, C. Crowe, K. Leddin, M. Lowry, and S. Scanlon.

Also Present.

Mr. L. Conneally, Director.

Mr. S. Treacy, Staff Officer

Apology: Mr. T. Mackey, Designated Manager.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Members present for attending a specially convened meeting to debate the proposed Aer Lingus decision to remove its US Base at Shannon Airport which would have serious implications for the Mid West region. He referred to the previous campaign to protect the Shannon Heathrow connection and called on the Members to campaign for the retention of the Aer Lingus services at Shannon Airport.

The Director stated that Shannon Airport was vital for business and tourism interests not only in the Mid West region but the entire West of Ireland. He referred to the importance to the region's business and

leisure sectors of the Transatlantic and London Heathrow links and the business opportunities that exist with the opening of the US Custom and Border Protection Facility at Shannon Airport. He also stressed the importance of the Aer Lingus base at Shannon and for the retention of jobs in the region at all costs.

There was a long discussion during which the following issues were raised by the Members:

- The purpose of the retention of the 25% stake in Aer Lingus by the Government.
- Aer Lingus biased against Shannon Airport-No Aer Lingus manager based at Shannon.
- Loss of 102 Aer Lingus jobs if service withdrawn. Workers with long loyal dedicated service given no alternative-no consultation with workers.
- Aer Lingus important to Shannon.
- Transatlantic services vital to Shannon.
- Shannon Airport single most important piece of infrastructure in Mid West Region-cited Industry based in Shannon Free Zone because of Airport.
- Lack of Autonomy of Shannon Airport constrains the Airports ability to attract new business-Controlled by Dublin Airport Authority.
- Need for National Aviation Policy with a regional focus.
- Cost of Aer Lingus fares on transatlantic routes dearer than other airlines.
- Some Aer Lingus flight departures from Shannon too late and lack integration with other flight scheduling.
- Ease of access to Shannon Airport compared to Dublin Airport should be highlighted and properly marketed.
- Failure of Aer Lingus to avail of the Custom and Border Protection facility at Shannon Airport lacks economic reason and is a scandal.
- The orchestrated downgrading of services at Shannon by Aer Lingus.

- Shannon Airport always has to take the brunt of any Aer Lingus cutbacks.

The Director referred to recent media reports that journey times from Shannon Airport to New York JFK will increase by anything up to 10 hours if Aer Lingus' plans to eliminate Shannon as a transatlantic base from the beginning of 2010 go ahead.

The following resolution was then unanimously passed by the Members:

“That the Mid West Regional Authority requests Minister Dempsey to intervene in the Aer Lingus decision to remove its US Base at Shannon in the interests of ensuring the viability and vitality of business and tourism interests in the Mid West region consistent with the Government’s policy of promoting Balanced Regional Development as stated in the National Spatial Strategy”.

It was agreed to forward the resolution to Mr. Noel Dempsey, Minister for Transport and request that the Minister meet a delegation from the Mid West Regional Authority to articulate to him the concerns of the Mid West region if Aer Lingus reduces its services at Shannon Airport.

It was agreed to invite Minister Willie O’Dea T.D., and Ministers of State Tony Killeen and Peter Power to attend the November monthly meeting to discuss the issue.

It was also agreed that the Director would contact the Mid West Jobs Task Force regarding this matter.

The Cathaoirleach was requested to convene a meeting of the Mayors/Cathaoirligh in the region and issue a statement on the Aer Lingus announcement.

This concluded the business of the meeting.