

Warning that half of airport's £25m work plan may end up in county roads

A MEMBER of the Mid Western Regional Authority has warned that nearly half of the £25m earmarked for development work at Shannon Airport could be diverted into county roadworks instead of new airport buildings.

Cllr James Breen, who was speaking at the adjourned meeting of Clare County Council, warned that an external evaluator overseeing capital projects has recommended that £11m

be re-directed from airport projects into roads this year.

"Aer Rianta have been too successful and made a lot of money last year so he has said that both the airports and Moneypoint should do without the money this year. This is very dangerous for both Moneypoint and Shannon," said Cllr Breen. "The Western Commission has already painted a gloomy picture on the West coast after the year 2000 and this

new demand will probably impact on Shannon" he said.

"I can't see them taking the money from Dublin or Dick Spring's masterpiece in Kerry," added Cllr Breen.

Cllr Breen was replying to a call from Cllr Patricia McCarthy for information on the Regional Authority commissioned Shannon Airport Impact Study to be made available to Clare County Council.

The draft report was exclusively

revealed in the Limerick Leader on March 1 and warns that an open skies agreement between the EU and the US could see Shannon Airport reduced to a seasonal or feeder role within five years.

Cllr McCarthy said she is extremely concerned about the future at Shannon and very concerned that the Mid-Western Regional Authority would not send Clare County Council a copy of the nearly-completed

report.

"Neither they or SIGNAL have sent us anything and our representative on the Shannon Airport Marketing Body has not kept us informed of developments. We have allowed ourselves to be pushed out and this report concerns thousands of people's livelihoods" said Cllr McCarthy, calling for the Council's airport sub-committee to meet.

Mid-West Authority member, Cllr

Pat McMahon, told the meeting that the Dublin lobby now has its foot in the transatlantic door and warned, while the impact report has not been published that "there is no smoke without fire".

Cllr McMahon warned that Shannon could be overflowed as a result of an open skies policy and this loss in addition to the decline of Aeroflot services would probably see the airport close at night.