

SHANNONTOWN

BY RON KIRWAN

Airline defends tickets structure

THE general manager of Aer Lingus Shannon has issued an invitation to the newly-elected cathaoirleach of Shannon Town Commissioners to represent the people of Shannon on the airline's inaugural flight to Belfast this Thursday.

A question mark has been raised by an Independent member of the Commission on the constitutionality of paying the Government travel tax on the route.

Tom McNerney, Aer Lingus Shannon, was

speaking to the July meeting of Shannon Town Commission in response to a motion from Fine Gael commissioner, Marcella Murphy, on the cost of flying to London from Shannon.

In his opening remarks, he invited Cathaoirleach, Sinn Fein commissioner, Mike McKee, to represent the town on the inaugural flight into Belfast.

Turning to the cost of flying to London from Shannon, Mr McNerney said that the fare structure on the Shannon/London route is exactly the same as that on the Cork/London route, and that Dublin/London route.

The fares are slightly dif-

ferent, he said, in the same way that the fares from Shannon on transatlantic flights are cheaper.

Mr McNerney pointed out that the only other difference is the seven-day advance purchase requirement which exists from Shannon and Cork, but does not exist out of Dublin.

"That is mainly because of the amount of capacity that is available out of Dublin. We've got to compete and take on the competitors. But all the lower fares, from Dublin, Shannon and Cork, carry a requirement for a Saturday night stay. There is absolutely no bias against either Shannon or Cork. It's the same for all three stations" he said.

He told the meeting that Aer Lingus had a similar fare structure to British Midlands and Virgin.

"We operate 67 flights per week between Shannon and Heathrow, offering approximately 10,500 seats-a-week, and we are the only operator" he said.

Mr McNerney said that there is a catchment area of about 90,000 to 100,000 in this region compared to 1.2 million in Dublin.

As the only operator on the London route, and in an attempt to generate tourism in the area, this year, the company has

Cllr Sean Hillery agreed that drylining should be undertaken by the company, or that something could be pumped into the walls for insulation.

The question of the suit-



King Tuanku Ja'Far and Queen Tuanku Najihah of Malaysia at Shannon Airport with Barry O'Shea, general manager, and Harry Galvin, operations manager, when they left through the airport following a private visit to Ireland.

Commission to watch Syntex plan

SHANNON Town Commissioners are to watch out for a planning application from Syntex in Clarecastle between the July meeting and their next meeting in September.

And should the pharmaceutical company go ahead and submit plans for a caustic landfill site, Shannon Town Commission will reconvene to discuss it.

Commr Peter Flannigan

raised the matter at the July meeting of Shannon Town Commission, and said that Syntex had stated that they would apply for planning permission next month and this couldn't be ignored.

The assistant county manager told the meeting that it was not possible for the Commissioners to object legally to the plan before it was submitted to Clare County Council.

Region relies on Cabinet heavyweights

THE Mid West will be relying on its Cabinet heavyweights to stand up for Shannon Airport.

Michael Noonan and Michael Lowry will be expected to protect the West from the "grab all" tactics of tourism and other interests which has thrown the balance of tourism out of kilter.

This was stated by Fianna Fail Spokesman on Tourism, Tony Killeen.

The warning comes amid rumours that American airlines are pressing to by-pass Shannon in favour of Dublin.

Deputy Killeen declared: "The Shannon Region generally is lucky to have two top Fine Gael Ministers and the Tanaiste at the Cabinet

table to resist any moves for change in the Ireland-US air agreement of 1993 which provided protection for Shannon after the loss of its stopover".

When the stopover was ended by the last Coalition Government, a

Fianna Fail revolt in Clare, and intensive pressure throughout the region, brought Shannon a one-for-one concession that rights into Dublin will only be granted if an airline provides matching services into Shannon.

And Deputy Killeen added: "Ministers Lowry and Noonan must ensure that Shannon does not have to make any further sacrifices and pay for gains to be made for Dublin and the eastern regions".

SFADCo can't assist with ESB bills

SHANNON Development have written to the Town Commissioners telling them that they are not able to grant aid ESB bills for Tradaree flat

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previous meeting when commissioners complained of the cost of electric unit heating in the flats, and the inability of tenants to pay for this heating system.

Shannon Development said that they maintain the heating units in an effort to reduce heat loss, but it is not their policy to grant aid ESB bills, nor do they have the funds to do so.

Commr Brigid Makowski said that she had raised the issue of ESB bills being so high in the flats, but it was in relation to heat loss.

"I can't see why the development company cannot put insulation into them. We're not expecting them to pay ESB bills, but we expect them to alleviate them. There are ways it can be done.

Drugs fears

IN two drugs related motions on the July agenda of Shannon Town Commissioners, it was alleged by Cathaoirleach, Commr Mike McKee, that pushers of Ecstasy are operating in both of Shannon's post primary schools.

And Cllr Patricia McCarthy said that the pushers are handing out drugs in Shannon just to get young people hooked.

The Commissioners were debating two drugs motions last Tuesday night.

Commr McKee proposed that the Minister for Education make it compulsory for schools to hold courses on drug abuse to make teenagers more aware of the dangers posed by their involvement in drugs.

A similar motion from Commr Brigid Makowski called on the Drugs Squad to organise an education programme in Shannon to counteract the drugs culture.

CPO move

SHANNON Town Commission is to ask Clare County Council to put a Compulsory Purchase Order on 2, Rossbracken.

The owners of the derelict house are in Libya, and the purchase offer of £7,000 from Clare County Council has not received a reply. Cllr Patricia McCarthy moved that the Council place a Compulsory Purchase Order on the site, and town manager, Tom Dowling, agreed to expedite the matter.

owned flats being let to tenants was raised by Commr Tony Mulcahy. He was under the impression that the health board or the County Council was to check them out.

Commr Makowski said that she had raised the issue before and it is the Council's responsibility to send the fire inspector.

"There are women with babies and young children in those flats in Tradaree and Cluain Airne, and I would like the county manager to look into that," she said.

It was agreed that, when the Council is processing the allocation of their housing stock, they would consider the matter, and this would be discussed when meeting with the area councillors.

Making history

CLLR Peter Considine made history this Monday when he followed in his father's footsteps by becoming chairman of Clare County Council.

His late father, Michael Considine, was a member of the Council from 1945 to his death, and was chairman up to his death on December 23, 1973, following a road accident.

Cllr Peter Considine is a Fianna Fail member of the Council and a member and past chairman of Ennis UDC.

Cllr P J Kelly, of Lissycasey, was elected leas-cathaoirleach.

Belfast flight

AER Lingus introduced their new transatlantic service from Belfast and Shannon this Thursday.

The new service, Vacations Ireland, is based on Government approval to lease a fourth Airbus A330 under favourable seven-year terms.

The 'no frills' Belfast/Shannon service will be linked to a twice weekly service via Shannon to New York and Boston. The high season fare will be a low £359 - £60 lower than the current Aer Lingus scheduled fare from Dublin or Shannon.

Fares from the US to Belfast will be pitched at \$538 - \$283 below the present fare of \$821 to Belfast via London.

the route, he said.

"Last July, we had a total of 8,180 seats at £79 or £98 on the Shannon/London route. This July we have a total of 19,353 seats at these prices, more than double last year's number on the route.

"Last July, at the £79 fare, we sold 550 seats on the Shannon/London route. This July, we've sold for the month, 5,500 seats at £79," said Mr McInerney.

There is a midweek three day fare, and this is the one that comes in for criticism, he said.

There is a £109 fare out of Dublin, and £139 out of Shannon and Cork. This, he explained is the differential between Dublin, and Shannon or Cork.

Mr McInerney went on to point out that Aer Lingus had found it necessary to withdraw ahead of schedule from the £79 Shannon/Manchester route earlier this year.

And the new Shannon/Belfast route is very poorly supported, he said, with only 115 sections sold - compared to 92 per cent of the targeted seats on the Atlantic leg.

Commr Brigid Makowski raised the issue of Government Tax on flights into Northern Ireland, saying the new flight costs £49 and not £39 as advertised.

"The £39 fare to Belfast is not £39. There's £10 extra on that and I think Aer Lingus should contact the Government because I think it's unconstitutional," she said, adding "the Constitution recognises the Six Counties as part of the island of Ireland."

Mr McInerney suggested that constitutionally he would have a difficulty in charging the £10 - but if Aer Lingus flies to Belfast they have to pay whatever the Government decides.

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