

# SHANNONTOWN

By RON KIRWAN

# Shannon reels from knock on effect of tax status loss

BY PADDY MORONEY

SHANNON is still trying to come to grips with this week's shock revelation that Knock Airport is to become the freight hub, worth an estimated 2,000 jobs initially, that Shannon had hoped to become.

Local representatives have hit out at Government ministers for the Limerick region.

The widespread anger follows a Government decision taken this Tuesday evening to grant Knock the same tax-free status as Shannon.

This puts Knock into the lead position to secure a company, Alliance Interna-

tional, closely linked with Texas-based multi-millionaire Ross Perot, a former American presidential candidate, which had been proposed originally for Shannon.

Alliance International is a freight-forwarding company, and it will use Knock as a bridgehead into Europe. It plans to develop the Knock Airport area into an industrial model on the lines of Fort Worth Alliance Airport in Texas.

It would be worth 2,000 jobs within three years, but the real blow is that other projects which would have gone to Shannon could now go to Knock, partly because of the prestige attaching to Ross Perot but mainly because it give Knock a new standing.

The chairman of Shannon Town Commission, Cmmr Peter Flannigan, has con-

demned the decision: "It is another case of the Government undermining the airport and the Shannon region.

"We had been hoping that this project would come to Shannon — the 2,000 jobs are badly needed here."

Cllr Patricia McCarthy, also a member of the Shannon Town Commission, described the decision as disgraceful.

"It is disgraceful that this project has been hijacked out of this area," she declared.

"But I think what is even more disgraceful is that our public representatives in this whole area, and not just Clare, were not aware of what was happening.

"There was an office open in Mayo for the past five months by the Alliance Corporation and no alarm bells were sounded in this area."

She said such decisions boiled down to whoever politicians were pulling the strings the longest and the hardest, and whoever had clout. She pointed out that Enda Kenny, the Minister for Tourism and Transport who had made the announcement, had his constituency in the Knock area.

"There are six sitting TDs, in two three-seat constituencies," she said. "Enda

Kenny is Minister and Jim Higgins is chief whip of the Fine Gael party. Micheal Ring is also another government TD there.

"They are amalgamating the two constituencies, so one seat has to go."

She said that she was going to try to see if she could get answers, "but the first line of defence is out public representatives who are paid to do their job".

Cllr Sean Hillery, also a Commission member, said he found it incomprehensible that Knock should be put into direct competition with Shannon.

He said that Shannon was the established international airport, and the only effect of granting the same status to Knock or other regional airports was to put them in competition with Shannon, rather than generate new business.

"I would like to have a logical explanation," he said, pointing to the fact that there was only a short few minutes difference between Knock and Shannon in terms of flying times to destinations, and that Knock did not have the aircraft handling facilities that Shannon had.

"It has come as an awful shock," he said. "It is a complete body-blow to the whole Limerick Region."

He pointed out that there was no proper infrastructure of roads in Mayo, and he queried what would happen such roads under heavy traffic.

## First batch of overseas ATCs at airport

## Licence endorsed

MARTINA Mulcahy, Castlematrix, Rathkeale, was fined £300, with her



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