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August 8th, 2024

Deputy Darren O'Rourke,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dáil Question 161:

To ask the Minister for Transport if he is satisfied that the flight paths at the north runway at Dublin Airport were appropriately environmentally assessed, including, but not limited to, the International Civil Aviation Organisation Guidance Material - Environmental Assessment of Proposed Air Traffic Management Operational Changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Rourke,

The North Runway Relevant Action planning application (Fingal County Council Planning Reference: F20A/0668) proposes a change to permitted runway operations at Dublin Airport.

If permitted, it will update conditions 3(d) and 5 of the original North Runway Planning Permission (ABP Ref. PL 06F.217429), introducing a Noise Quota Count System for the management of nighttime noise and changing the permitted hours of operation of the North Runway during the shoulder hours. The NRRRA application was submitted to Fingal County Council in December 2020 and was granted by FCC/ANCA in August 2022. This decision was later appealed, and is currently under consideration by An Bord Pleanála (Case Reference: PL06F.314485). The ABP appeal decision is expected soon.

The NRRRA is accompanied by comprehensive assessments which have been updated several times over the course of the planning process for the NRRRA, most recently in September 2023. The extensive assessment of the proposal is covered in detail within the planning application. It should be noted that the planning system does not have responsibility for flight paths, however the planning application appropriately assesses the effects of the proposed runway operations, which are influenced by the flight paths. The process included several rounds of public consultation to ensure the public's views were assessed and follows strict criteria as set out in European and domestic legislation, regulations, and guidelines.

The ICAO document "Environmental Assessment of Proposed Air Traffic Management Operational Changes" referenced in the PQ is high level in nature, with our use of more detailed guidance set out in the application being appropriate. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations. While it develops international Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), contained in 19 technical Annexes to the Chicago Convention (the foundational treaty of international civil aviation), the guidance issued by the ICAO generally isn't mandatory. ICAO SARPs cover a wide range of aviation areas, like safety, air traffic management, and environmental protection. Member states (including Ireland) are expected to comply with these SARPs, but they aren't legally binding. The IAA, which regulates air traffic within Irish airspace, would typically be responsible for applying ICAO's guidance on environmental assessments. We can confirm that the flight paths (as assessed in the NRRRA) were approved by the IAA after considering a variety of factors including safety and operational performance.

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For binding requirements, one must refer to national laws and regulations in each country, which often integrate or reference ICAO SARPs and guidance materials. While we do not wish to pre-empt the output of the ABP determination, we can have every confidence that ABP, as the competent authority will ensure that all necessary assessments have been taken into account to inform a decision on the NRRRA.

Kind regards,



Rebecca Troy,
daa plc

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