

02/11/04 16126

Constituency Office
3a Rashee Road
Ballyclare
Co. Antrim BT39 9HJ

Tel: 028 9332 4461
Fax: 028 9332 4462
e-mail: jim.Wilson.co@niassembly.gov.uk



Website
www.jimwilsonaup.org.uk

Stormont Office
Room 304
Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1292
Fax: 028 9052 1291
e-mail: jim.Wilson@niassembly.gov.uk

Contact: Isobel Scott

Contact: Sharon Francey

Jim Wilson, Member for South Antrim

Monday, November 29, 2004

PRIVATE OFFICE

Minister for the Environment
Angela Smith MP
Department of the Environment
Clarence Court
10 - 18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB

017 2034
BDE

Dear Minister,

I am writing to formally make a submission on foot of the Consultation Process you announced last week with regard to Belfast City Airport.

I have a number of observations to make about the timing of the process, the wider context within which this issue is being considered and the adverse implications that could arise as a result of a decision in favour of Belfast City Airport.

In the first instance, I contend that an eight-week Consultation running over the Christmas and New Year holiday period is wholly inadequate given the seriousness of the issue and the number of interested parties directly and indirectly involved.

My second concern is that you are progressing with this issue at a time when Northern Ireland airports, in their entirety, are the subject of an exhaustive and in-depth Inquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. To proceed on a planning matter that is clearly and evidently so germane to the work of the Westminster Committee is at best discourteous and at worst contemptuous of the work that is underway. In my view, your Department would have been better served delaying any review until after the committee had completed its Inquiry and published its report. The route that your Department is taking is high-handed and a none-too-subtle attempt to pre-empt or stymie the Committee's well-meaning attempts to examine what is the best approach for the aviation sector in Northern Ireland, and by association, the economic competitiveness of the region.

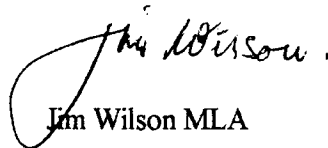
I am opposed to the lifting of the passenger restriction at Belfast City Airport for the following reasons:

1. Greater passenger throughput at BCA will dilute and fragment the market, posing a threat to existing passenger services at Belfast International Airport which is the major employer in my constituency;
2. Greater usage at BCA will not lead to increased competition, but rather the loss of air routes (53 scheduled routes lost from Belfast airports in the past 10 years compared with approximately 15 from Dublin where a much more 'joined-up' approach is taken to airport development within the context of the wider economy);
3. Physical limitations at BCA;
4. Inordinate strain on surface infrastructure at peak times to and from BCA;
5. Safety and noise pollution.

Doubtless, you will consider these and other factors when you come to the point of reaching a decision by mid January. I strongly urge you to come down in favour of a Public Inquiry because of the sheer scale of what is involved and the need that exists for full public transparency and accountability.

Thank you for considering this submission, a copy of which is being forwarded to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Wilson MLA