



Letter from the Irish community to the “Friends of Ireland” Caucus

Support for Norwegian Air International’s application to commence new Ireland/USA air routes

May 11th 2016

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
U.S House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20527
USA

Dear Mr. DeFazio,

As a member of the Friends of Ireland we are writing to you to voice **our strong support for the recent decision by the US Department of Transportation (DOT) to tentatively grant Norwegian Air International (NAI) a foreign air carrier permit.** We are keenly aware of the ongoing debate in the U.S. Congress surrounding NAI. To our dismay, opponents of NAI have repeatedly and maliciously impugned Ireland’s aviation safety oversight, regulatory structures and labor protections, and labeled Ireland as a mere “flag of convenience.” **This is deeply inaccurate, misleading and simply NOT TRUE.**

The opponents have also misinterpreted provisions of the US-EU Open Skies Agreement in a way that directly contradicts the joint and carefully considered views of the Departments of Transportation, State, and Justice. We trust that you, an important member of the Friends of Ireland, will not be swayed by misinformation and false facts. It is our hope that you will also help us to stop these allegations from being further perpetuated.

Ireland has a rigorous regulatory regime for safety oversight that is ranked amongst the best in the world by the International Civil Aviation Organization. Now pending final approval by the U.S. Department of Transportation, is the application for a foreign air carrier permit of NAI, an Irish airline affiliated with the Europe-wide Norwegian Group.

In February 2014, after a rigorous and thorough assessment to verify that NAI met fully all EU and Irish regulatory criteria, the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) issued NAI its Air Operator Certificate and the Irish Commission for Aviation Regulation issued NAI with an Air Carrier Operating License. DOT tentatively approved NAI’s application on 15th April 2016. Subject to receiving comments in the regulatory docket, DOT is expected to render a final decision in early summer. Approval of NAI is a matter of great importance to Ireland, the Irish economy and Ireland’s strong reputation as a global leader in aviation.

NAI is an Irish company, with its principal place of business in Dublin. All safety accountable officers responsible for ensuring the safe operation of NAI are based in Dublin. NAI now has 37 aircraft registered in Ireland, which are operating throughout Europe, with safety oversight provided by one of the most respected and competent aviation safety regulatory authorities in the world. NAI employs approximately 1,400 pilots, cabin crew and operational management staff who are all based in Ireland, Finland, UK and Spain.

The opponents of NAI have misleadingly claimed that NAI do not operate from Ireland to the United States. **This is currently true since NAI are prohibited from legally selling tickets or commencing commercial operations from Ireland until they secure the necessary DOT permit applied for well over two years ago.** Once approved NAI are committed to commencing operations on two new routes from Cork to Boston in 2016 and Cork to New York in 2017. Routes from other Irish airports are also planned, e.g. from Shannon. The Cork-Boston route was due to commence in May and has had to be postponed. This is a highly unfortunate development for our economies and **a missed opportunity for US and Irish consumers to enjoy additional connectivity between our Nations.**

NAI have also guaranteed that all crews operating on transatlantic services will be citizens of the US or the EU. No other airline has ever made such a strong commitment and this ensures that NAI crews will be subject to the highest labor standards in the world. **NAI do not have any employees contracted under any Asian jurisdiction.**

You can have confidence in knowing that NAI not only meets all EU and Irish labor regulatory requirements, but that only US and European pilots and crew will be flying transatlantic routes. NAI have 37 aircraft in Ireland presently, under an order of 149 Boeing aircraft totaling \$18.5 billion.

As you well know, Ireland, being one of the most open economies in the EU, has strong existing trade links to the United States. The relationship has been mutually beneficial for citizens of both countries, with goods and services flowing in each direction. Irish imports from the US totaled circa \$38 billion in 2015, while exports were nearly \$35 billion. Irish firms continue to invest heavily in the US, and vice versa. Irish owned businesses employ over 100,000 people in the US; similar in scale to the level of employment provided by US owned firms based in Ireland. **The trading and investment relationship between our two countries is therefore extensive and positive for both economies.**

Air transport connectivity between the United States and Ireland is a key component to vibrant economic development between our two great Nations. In the case of NAI's brand new Cork-Boston route, the ultimate beneficiaries of this air access will be the Irish and US citizens in those regions as well as the wider economy.

We, the undersigned, strongly support DOT's tentative approval of NAI's application and look forward to full approval in the near future. We ask that you support NAI's request on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of American and Irish consumers and business people who will benefit from new, accessible, and affordable flights between our two countries and Europe.

Yours Sincerely,

The Irish community



Eamonn Brennan
Chief Executive
Irish Aviation Authority

Michael Cawley
Chairman
Fáilte Ireland

Deirdre Clune MEP
Member of the European Parliament
Constituency of Ireland South

Kevin Toland
Chief Executive
daa (owner of Cork and Dublin Airports)

Conor Healy
Chief Executive
Cork Chamber of Commerce

Niall McCarthy
Managing Director
Cork Airport

Michael O'Leary
Chief Executive Officer
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Ian Talbot
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The Chambers of Commerce of Ireland



Rose Hynes
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Shannon Group plc.

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