

Mr Shane McAteer,
Committee Clerk
Committee for Finance and Personnel;
Rm 419 Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont,
BELFAST BT43XX

Ref: HM Treasury/HMRC consultation on the Reform of Air Passenger Duty and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Report on Air Passenger Duty: Implications for Northern Ireland. Response to proposals for a Legislative Consent Motion on the UK Finance Bill 2012 re devolution of NI APD for direct long-haul flights.

Dear Mr McAteer,

Many thanks for your letter of March 28, 2012 seeking our thoughts on the above subject.

After due and proper consideration Aer Lingus, as per our original reply to the initial consultation, remain supportive of the devolution of NI Air Passenger Duty as it pertains to direct long-haul flights.

For the reasons outlined in our earlier correspondence, we believe that all Air Passenger Duty in the UK, both Band A (short-haul) and Band B (long-haul), should be removed entirely as it is a direct impediment for both business and tourist air travellers. At a time of continuing economic challenge and where the UK government and the NI Executive are properly encouraging companies to export as a means to stimulating the economy, it seems incongruous to be applying a tax to their efforts. Furthermore as we rightly celebrate an important year of tourism opportunity in Northern Ireland it is similarly counter-intuitive to be increasing the cost of access to the region through APD on short-haul flights.

While we have no specific comments on the legislative proposals contained in the Finance Bill which gives effect to the devolution of powers to the NI Assembly relating to air passenger duty for Band B flights, we look forward to participating in the Assembly's consultation process concerning the level of this duty. As a continuing investor in Northern Ireland we would also welcome a debate on the devolution of APD for direct short-haul flights which are of critical importance the NI economy. In the meantime we thank you for the opportunity to respond as part of this consultation, respectfully make our submission and await the outcome with considerable interest.

Yours sincerely



Laurence Gourley
Director of Legal Services
Aer Lingus