

COMMITTEE FOR

F & P

06/04/12

Ref: Air Passenger Duty

Dear Conor,

This month Air Passenger Duty (APD) increased by 8% for flights departing UK airports, meaning that a return flight from Belfast to London will cost the airline – and consequently the paying traveller – an extra £2 compared to pre-rise prices. This will mean that the total cost of a return flight between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK will include £26 in APD charges.

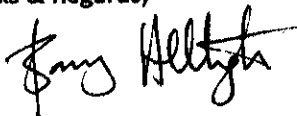
It is my belief, as someone who travels regularly between Northern Ireland and England, that this tax uniquely impacts travel to / from Northern Ireland. Domestic flight travel within Great Britain is an option, competing with bus, car and rail. To get to Northern Ireland however the only real alternative is to take the ferry, which only departs from a few west coast ports in Great Britain and getting to those departure ports will already involve significant costs and tax. In truth travelling from Enniskillen to London via road and ferry is not a viable option.

It is also unique as the Scottish Highlands and Islands have an exemption on flights departing from airports in that region, including Campbelltown, Inverness, Tiree and Wick (Section 3.7 at [http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=pageExcise\\_ShowContent&propertyType=document&id=HMCE\\_CL\\_000505#P9\\_212](http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=pageExcise_ShowContent&propertyType=document&id=HMCE_CL_000505#P9_212)). This is an exemption which does not apply to flights departing from Northern Ireland.

Given the dependency on flight travel for people and businesses in Northern Ireland to connect physically with both Great Britain as a whole and London as the United Kingdom's capital, I would like to impress upon you my desire to see Northern Ireland's representatives seek special dispensation for flights not just from Northern Ireland, but to Northern Ireland. I would like to ask you to raise this matter with the Government of the United Kingdom to see an exemption to APD for flights from and to Northern Ireland.

I appreciate your support in this matter.

Thanks & Regards,



Barry Hetherington