

Clare LEADER Group Urges Minister O'Cuiv Safeguard The Future Of Regional Development

Clare, IRELAND, 18th September 2007

Clare-based Rural Resource Development Ltd. has joined a coalition of leading rural development organisations in calling on the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs to use his influence to ensure the retention of services between Shannon International Airport and London-Heathrow.

Following a meeting in Dublin this morning, representatives of 12 LEADER organisations from Clare, Limerick, Cork, Tipperary, Kerry, Mayo and Galway, warned that the future of regional development in Ireland is jeopardised by Aer Lingus's decision to withdraw the service.

In a formal submission to Minister Eamon O'Cuiv the group has highlighted that the success of their work at local level depends on the long-term provision of strategic services and direct access to global markets.

Ms. Dóirín Graham, Chief Executive Officer of Rural Resource Development stated, *"The government needs to demonstrate its commitment to the economic development of Clare by supporting the provision of key strategic services and in particular through the implementation of its own regional development policies."*

Ms. Graham continued, *"We believe in the necessity for strategically important services to be retained in rural areas, particularly those which provide access to the wider world. Rural development in Clare, for example, cannot be sustained on the local market alone. Connectivity to global markets, whether business or tourism, is without question an essential rural service."*

"If this decision is allowed to stand, then we must conclude that any other strategically important service can, in the future, be taken away from the regions, simply because it can make greater profits elsewhere. Where the government has the power to influence the outcome, this cannot be allowed to happen. The share price of a private company cannot be put before the economic prosperity of the regions", she stated.

Ms. Graham confirmed that the group of LEADER organisations has formally requested Minister O'Cuiv, as Minister for Rural Development at the cabinet table, to use his position in the months ahead to actively support the retention of the Heathrow slots for Shannon.

"In a letter to Minister O'Cuiv, we have clearly stated our belief that the Shannon-Heathrow slots are of critical importance to the economic development of the region. Efforts by some interests to downplay the significance of this route are directly contrary to the strongly held and better-informed belief of business and tourism leaders in the region. This view is supported by state bodies, the local authorities, local development organisations and community interests", concluded Ms. Graham.

The submission to Minister Eamon O'Cuiv is supported by:

The South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd,
Tuatha Chiarraí Teo (Co. Kerry);
Ballyhoura Development Ltd,
West Limerick Resources Ltd (Co. Limerick);
Tipperary LEADER Group Ltd (Co. Tipperary);
Rural Resource Development Ltd (Co. Clare);
Galway Rural Development Company Ltd (Co. Galway);
IRDA Duhallow (Cork);
South West Mayo Development Company Ltd,
Western Rural Development
Co. Ltd. (Co. Mayo);
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teo (numerous counties).

LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Development d'Economie Rurale) is an EU Community Initiative, which fosters links between actions/initiatives for the development of the rural economy and promotes a bottom up strategy for Rural Development.

LEADER in Ireland covers almost all of the Country with the exception of our major cities namely, the major urban areas of Dublin City, Cork City, Limerick City, Waterford city and Galway city.

Rural Resource Development

www.rrd.ie

Galway Rural Development

www.grd.ie