



Head Office-4th Floor Jervis House, Jervis St, Dublin

Commission for Aviation Regulation

Dear Sir/Madam

22.12.08

Clare Network of People with a disability in Ireland is alarmed to discover that there is some dissatisfaction among the airlines with the recent changes on accessibility at Irish Airports to comply with Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006.

While the hard work to date has achieved a lot to date , they merely represent a first step in making air travel fully accessible to disabled people.

PWDI entered the consultation process on improved access facilities at Shannon and Dublin (DAA) in good faith with the management of Shannon Airport.

That good faith has been rewarded by the speed and quality of the improvements made by management at Shannon.

Briefly the improvements at Shannon are

- well signposted assistance desk in the terminal building with well-trained staff,
- adequate parking & assistance points in the short-term and long-term car parks,
- assistance points in car parks can communicate with assistance desk in the terminal building
- equipment such as wheelchairs and ambilift,
- accessible pathways and entrance to terminal,
- lifts and accessible movement within the terminal

The idea behind these improvements is that a passenger with reduced mobility can have the same access to services at an airport as people with no mobility problems.

It has angered members of Clare PWDI that there is a campaign to row back on these basic improvements.

In the spirit of that framework and in order to demonstrate good faith and a spirit of cooperation, disabled people agreed to the second preferred method of choice for wheelchair users to board an aircraft, namely the "ambulift".

This method of transfer is safe, comfortable, dignified, and efficient for service users, and fulfills all of the "business" criteria for air carriers as outlined.

It is worth noting that in all consultations with disabled people, the use of an airbridge is by far the preferred method of boarding an aircraft.

There are many further improvements needed to make full accessible air travel a reality, e.g. movable arm rests on aisle seats, accessible toilets on board large aircraft, safe storage of electric wheelchairs, seating for companion travelers etc.

Clare Network of PWDI believes that the airlines need to continue to work on improving access to air travel for disabled people, not row back on the first positive steps taken to date. We urge you and your staff to keep in mind the Disability Act 2005 and the spirits of this Bill, to ensure that all efforts to include people with disability in every day life in Ireland. This includes traveling in and out of this Country and the millions of potential travelers who may have disabilities in Europe and elsewhere.

Yours sincerely

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