

Welcome news for Waterford Airport

News that Waterford's air connection to London is to be restored on April 27th is the latest good news story for the city, county and region.

We felt that with given the intense competition currently being provided by Aer Lingus and Ryanair that Waterford Airport might struggle to secure a new partner to fly to the UK in the wake of FlyBe's withdrawal.

And with that in mind, great credit must go to Airport Chief Executive Desmond O'Flynn and his team for securing the restoration of services to London Luton, along with Birmingham, via the Belgian carrier, VLM.

When the Waterford-Southend service (on the east side of London) was in place, it didn't prove as popular. However, we found the Southend rail link to Liverpool Street near the City of London both quick and convenient.

The train service from Luton terminated at Kings Cross Station, which certainly has more train connections and is closer to the traditional Irish heartlands of North London.

That bookings are already being taken online for the new services to London and Birmingham is great news.

The Luton service departs Waterford at 7.30am which will be a great help to business people and gets into Luton at 9.10am, which should ensure passengers reach London before 11am.

This certainly represents a better alternative than going to Cork or Dublin for those early morning flights to London, given the convenience of having Killowen on our doorstep, and the cheaper parking rates available at Waterford Airport.

The promotion fares start at just €39 to London one way. We did a sample booking for mid-May and the fare turned out to be just over €100 for such a fare, which includes a 23kg bag included.

This is a hard price to beat and is certain to attract business. However, if you get a late booking you may well end up paying much more so be sure to organise your dates well in advance. There's value to be had so take avail of it.

VLM flies from Liege and Antwerp, primarily to the south of Europe, namely Venice, Italy and Nice in France

Founded in 1993, and with their headquarters situated in Antwerp, not far from Brussels,

its first route was from Antwerp to London City airport and this proved most successful. Using Fokker 50 aircraft, VLM also have a considerable charter business and work with tour operators and travel agents.

We would hope that the local travel trade, those intending to travel to the UK, along with businesspeople and stakeholders support Waterford Airport and ensure that the restored Luton route is successful.

In the past, the IDA stated that the absence of a London air route from Waterford when it came to attracting international investment represented a considerable obstacle. Well that obstacle has now been successfully negotiated.

Following on from recent opening of Glanbia's new plant at Belview, the south east has had a bright start to 2015, even if the consumer economy remains somewhat slow. But we appear, thankfully, to be moving in the right direction, which bodes well for the months ahead.