

We've Got London Back: Let's All Make Use Of It!



VLM will operate a 50-seat Fokker Aircraft from Waterford Airport to both London Luton and Birmingham.

Restoration of Waterford-Luton air route demands local support

Reasons to travel to London? Hmm, and I've only got a page to make my point? Let's see.

It's one of the most vibrant cities on the planet. Delightfully, our own Jamie Beamish and Killian Donnelly are setting stages alright both on and off the West End right now, and merit support from this side of the Irish Sea.

There's the Premier League, the lure of a Twickenham trip every second spring for Six Nations Rugby action and, if strawberries, cream and tennis floats your boat, Wimbledon.

There's Covent Garden. There's Oxford Street. Palaces and museums galore. Trafalgar Square. Piccadilly Circus. Highgate. Westminster Abbey. Saint Paul's. The parks of Hyde and Regent. And much, much more besides.

And from Monday, April 27th, Waterford's air link to London via Luton Airport will be restored, and that really is something worth cheering about.

Yet here's the thing: a great deal of us have done a lot of crowing about the need to restore the London link from Killowen.

But what we now need to do is, and I don't think this is too big an ask, is to book at least one return flight to Luton in the next six to nine months; it's the essence of a 'shop local' campaign.

I'll be practicing what I'm preaching here myself and will take at least one trip to the English capital this summer.

Given the convenience of having the Airport on our doorstep, whether one is living in Carrick-on-Suir, New Ross, Dungarvan or Knocktopher, flying from Waterford represents a more practical option than, say, travelling via Dublin or Cork Airports.

And if one is living in the city, what a gift to be, from the moment VLM's Fokker 50 aircraft leaves your local runway, less than four hours from King's Cross Railway Station.

And when one considers that a drive to the Cliffs of Moher from Waterford takes three hours, that gives you some idea of just how close we are to such a fantastic location.

Said Waterford Airport CEO Desmond O'Flynn: "With a great track record of operating charter flights and providing air services to other airlines, VLM is now growing its own scheduled route network".

"We are particularly pleased that Waterford-London Luton and Waterford-Birmingham are included in this development.

"The load factors on our UK services have always been healthy and there's every reason for optimism that VLM's Waterford-London Luton service will be a great success for the airline and for the airport."

"Air connectivity is hugely important to Waterford and the surrounding southeast region. This has been underlined time and again by inward investment and economic development agencies...

"For those from the southeast taking a city break, the great world city of London is once again readily accessible. The arrival of VLM Airlines is very significant to Waterford Airport but also to the wider community that we serve."

VLM Chief Executive Arthur White said the airline is "very confident that there is a sustainable demand for reliable and convenient air services between the south east and London and Birmingham.

"Direct air services into the UK are obviously very important to Waterford and the southeast region from a social and economic perspective. We will be working hard to promote the route for outbound and inbound passengers to Waterford and believe passengers will respond positively."

"Connectivity has always been a priority for us at Waterford Chamber and we are delighted with the news that VLM Airlines have shown confidence in Waterford Airport and the South East region," said Chamber Chief Executive Nick Donnelly.

"They will fly twice daily during the week to London Luton, which is essential in particular for the business community, while the weekend flights are sure to contribute greatly to tourism activity.

"The Waterford to Birmingham service will also operate four times a week. All of this will open up Waterford and the South East to a vast number of visitors and will directly connect us to foreign investors who may be considering opportunities locally."

Mr Donnelly added: "VLM is a very reputable airline, flying in Europe since 1993 and offering a range of services in key destinations such as Antwerp, Geneva, Nice and Venice. This connectivity can only have a positive economic effect on the region, it's a good news story and we welcome VLM Airlines to the region."

Minister of State Paudie Coffey congratulated the Waterford Airport team for diligently and successfully restoring the Waterford-London air connection.

“VLM will operate the route 12 times a week and they will also operate the route between Waterford and Birmingham four times a week. The airline is taking bookings immediately for both routes; the London-Luton Route will operate twice daily flights between Monday and Friday and a Saturday and Sunday service also.

“Passenger Numbers at Waterford Airport were up 22 per cent last year compared with 2013, showing the potential the Airport has in bringing tourists directly to the region and acting as a support for businesses operating out of the South East.”

Minister Coffey added: “The Government has always supported Waterford Airport and in 2013 and 2014 alone some €900,000 was allocated for safety and security related projects. In 2014 my colleague, Minister Paschal Donohoe allocated €1 million to Waterford Airport to assist it in its day-to-day operations.

“This is a positive (development) for Waterford and will be a major boost for the Airport as it continues to grow and expand passenger numbers. Increasing the number of passengers through Waterford Airport will undoubtedly have significant economic benefits for Waterford and the wider region.

“The Waterford to London Route is key to our connectivity as a region and I commend the CEO of Waterford Airport Desmond O’Flynn in securing this positive result.

“I want to wish VLM Airlines the very best in operating these significant and strategic routes and I hope that the relationship between Waterford and VLM will continue to flourish over the coming period.”

According to Tourism Ireland CEO Niall Gibbons: “This is good news for tourism and will certainly help boost both leisure and business travel from Britain to Waterford and the South East in 2015.

“We look forward to working closely with VLM Airlines to maximise the promotion of the new flights. As an island, the importance of convenient, direct, non-stop flights cannot be overstated – they are absolutely critical to achieving growth in inbound tourism.”

We’ve waited months for this welcome news, and now it’s up to us to turn that welcome news into bookings, steady business and genuine, tangible support for a vital transport link in and out of the south east. So let’s all do our bit and get behind Waterford Airport and VLM.

For more, visit www.flywaterford.com and <http://flyvlm.com/waterford-airport/>