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Darragh O'Brien, Minister of Transport
Department of Transport
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2, D02 TR60

cc: Gillian Toole TD, Darren O'Rourke TD, Minister Helen McEntee, Minister Thomas Byrne
Louise O'Reilly TD, Robert O'Donoghue TD, Grace Boland TD

RE: Concerns Regarding the Technical Suitability of the Board of daa plc

Dear Minister,

I write to express serious concerns about the composition and technical qualifications of the Board of Directors of daa plc, the commercial semi-State body under your aegis responsible for operating Dublin and Cork Airports.

As Minister, you hold both regulatory responsibility for civil aviation and shareholder oversight of daa. That dual role requires you to ensure that the daa board, entrusted with the management of critical national infrastructure, includes members with appropriate and demonstrable expertise in areas relevant to the safe, lawful, and environmentally responsible operation of large-scale aviation infrastructure.

Absence of Technical and Scientific Expertise on the daa Board

A review of the current board composition, as published on daa.ie, reveals a concentration of experience in business, law, finance, and public service. However, it shows **a distinct and troubling absence of directors with formal qualifications or experience in:**

- Civil or aeronautical engineering;
- Aviation safety and airspace operations;
- Environmental risk management, including soil and groundwater contamination (e.g., PFAS);
- Infrastructure development and project lifecycle governance;
- Noise and emissions modelling or regulatory compliance.

This absence is particularly alarming in light of:

- The **confirmed non-compliance** of daa's North Runway flight paths with its 2007 planning permission (as confirmed by An Bord Pleanála);

- The **335% increase in environmental noise impact** caused by unapproved operational changes;
- The **potential for PFAS-contaminated soil** on the Dublin Airport campus, a serious environmental and public health issue;
- The apparent inability of daa to rectify these breaches or engage transparently with regulators and the public.

Recommended Board Qualifications for Infrastructure Stewardship

In light of the above, it is imperative that the daa board be reconstituted or supplemented with individuals who hold the following credentials:

1. **Chartered Engineers** – with expertise in civil, structural, and/or aeronautical disciplines;
2. **Environmental Scientists** – experienced in pollution assessment, noise regulation, and soil/water remediation (specifically PFAS);
3. **Airspace and Safety Experts** – with real-world operational knowledge of Standard Instrument Departures (SIDs), missed approach procedures, and ICAO/Eurocontrol compliance;
4. **Public Health Experts** – capable of assessing the long-term impact of noise and chemical exposure on affected populations;
5. **Infrastructure Risk and Lifecycle Professionals** – to ensure rigorous planning, delivery, and mitigation standards for capital projects.

The current board composition fails to meet these standards. Commercial, legal, and financial oversight is necessary but cannot substitute for direct domain expertise, particularly when daa's activities have such complex environmental, technical, and regulatory implications.

Request for Immediate Action

I respectfully request that you:

1. **Review the current competency matrix** of the daa board against the qualifications outlined above;
2. **Publish the Department's current framework** for board appointments to daa and clarify whether technical qualifications are considered a requirement;
3. **Commit to appointing suitably qualified technical experts** to the board at the next available opportunity; and
4. **Confirm whether, in your view, the existing board has the requisite expertise** to oversee both the current regulatory crisis and the long-term infrastructure strategy for Dublin Airport.

Failure to ensure appropriate governance at daa risks further unlawful operational decisions, environmental damage, legal liability for the State, and deterioration of public trust in national aviation oversight.

I await your considered response within 21 days.

Regards,

Gareth O'Brien BE (Civil) MSc
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