

Gareth O'Brien
North Runway Technical Group
24 White Ash Park
Ashbourne, Meath A84 H563

gobrien@yupon.com

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James Browne, TD
Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Custom House
Dublin 1, D01 W6X0
Email: minister@housing.gov.ie

Re: Public Safety Zones at Dublin Airport – Clarification of Departmental Responsibility

Dear Minister,

Much work — at taxpayers' expense — went into defining the Public Safety Zones (PSZs) around Dublin Airport, commissioned jointly by the Department of Transport and your own Department (then DoEHLG). These zones were scientifically modelled by Environmental Resources Management (ERM) between 2000 and 2003 to quantify risk to persons on the ground and to guide both land-use planning and operational safety.

However, I am informed by the Department of Transport that the PSZs are “a matter of planning permission” and therefore fall under the remit of your Department. At the same time, the Dublin Airport Authority (daa) has chosen to disregard those zones entirely when modifying the North Runway's departure track — a modification made without any valid environmental assessment or planning process.

The result is a situation where a legally defined public safety framework has been ignored, and the Departments that created it appear to disown responsibility for its enforcement.

Accordingly, I request clarification on the following:

1. Does your Department accept that oversight of Public Safety Zones, and the planning and enforcement implications thereof, now rests with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage?
2. If so, what steps are being taken to ensure that the existing ERM-defined PSZs for Dublin Airport are respected and applied in both operational planning and local development control?
3. Has Fingal County Council been instructed either
(a) to enforce the original ERM-defined PSZs in the Fingal Development Plan to ensure compliance with the planning permission; or

(b) to prepare *revised* PSZs reflecting the flight paths currently in use — despite those operations being in breach of the permission and absent any lawful environmental or planning process to authorise such a change?

It would be of grave concern if the latter were occurring, as it would amount to a retrospective legitimisation of unauthorised operations under the guise of “updating” safety data — effectively rewarding non-compliance.

Given that the PSZs were conceived as a public protection measure jointly sponsored by your Department, it is vital that they not be eroded through administrative neglect or departmental ambiguity. I would appreciate your written clarification on which Department now holds responsibility for the establishment, maintenance, and enforcement of these zones, and whether any steps have been taken to revise them without statutory approval.

Regards,

Gareth O’Brien BE (Civil) MSc
North Runway Technical Group