

Response to Draft Decision on Winter 2026 Coordination Parameters at Dublin Airport

2026-04-XX

Submitted by: North Runway Technical Group (NRTG) Contact: Gareth O'Brien BE (Civil) MSc Email: gareth.obrien@dublin-north-runway.com Web: www.dublin-north-runway.com

Date: [to be inserted]

Dear IAA Consultation Team,

We write in response to the Draft Decision on Winter 2026 Coordination Parameters at Dublin Airport, published 8 April 2026, with a response deadline of 22 April 2026.

NRTG is a voluntary group of qualified aviation professionals and affected residents in County Meath whose homes are directly overflown by departures from Runway 28R. We have proceedings before the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee and a formal complaint before the European Commission (ref: CPLT(2026)00881, DG Environment lead) concerning the environmental governance of Dublin Airport. This submission will form part of the evidence base in those proceedings.

Our central point is this: planning conditions and environmental constraints are not the same thing. The Draft Decision treats the environmental limb of Article 6(1) of the Slot Regulation as though it means only legally enforceable planning conditions, and, finding those conditions currently unenforceable or uncertain, proceeds as though no environmental constraints exist. The underlying environmental reality, noise exposure affecting thousands of residents, does not depend on the enforceability of any planning condition. Article 6(1) requires the IAA to take account of the environmental constraint itself, not merely to ask whether a particular legal instrument compelling it to do so is currently in force.

We address two matters below: the treatment of environmental constraints in the Draft Decision, and the night-time parameter freeze.

1. Environmental constraints under the Slot Regulation

Article 2(m) of Council Regulation (EEC) No 95/93, as amended (the Slot Regulation), defines "coordination parameters" as:

“the expression in operational terms of all the capacity available for slot allocation at an airport during each coordination period, reflecting all technical, operational and environmental factors that affect the performance of the airport infrastructure and its different sub-systems”

Article 6(1) requires the Member State to ensure the determination of the parameters:

“while taking account of all relevant technical, operational and environmental constraints as well as any changes thereto”

Article 3(3) requires the underlying capacity analysis to be:

“based on commonly recognised methods, [and] shall determine any shortfall in capacity, taking into account environmental constraints at the airport in question”

These provisions establish three mandatory limbs for any parameter determination: technical, operational, and environmental.

The Draft Decision contains extensive analysis of the technical and operational limbs. The To70 and ARUP modelling, taxi time analysis, runway throughput assessment, and terminal processing capacity review together span the majority of the document. This work appears thorough and professionally conducted.

We can find no equivalent analysis of the environmental limb. The Draft Decision does not:

- Identify what environmental constraints exist at Dublin Airport
- Reference Dublin Airport’s strategic noise maps under Directive 2002/49/EC (the Environmental Noise Directive)
- Reference Dublin Airport’s Noise Action Plan 2024-2028, published by Fingal County Council in December 2024, which is the current END action plan for the airport
- Assess whether the proposed increase of 32 movements per day would affect noise exposure levels (Lden or Lnight) at the airport or in surrounding communities
- Reference any input from the Aircraft Noise Competent Authority (ANCA) on the environmental implications of the proposed capacity increase
- Explain how the proposed parameters “reflect all ... environmental factors” as required by Article 2(m)

The Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 contains data directly relevant to the environmental limb. The supplementary noise mapping for 2023 (based on 240,638 annual movements) shows:

- Population exposed above 55 dB Lnight increased from 1,533 in 2019 to 4,465 in 2023: a 191% increase. The Noise Abatement Objective requires this number to be reduced below 2019 levels.
- Population exposed above 65 dB Lden increased from 285 in 2019 to 323 in 2023, also above the 2019 baseline the NAO requires to be reduced.
- Dwellings in the 55-59.9 dB Lden band more than doubled, from 4,333 in 2021 to 9,233 in 2023.

- The NAP states (Section 8.1) that “the management of the aircraft noise climate around Dublin Airport remains challenging” and that noise exposure above END reporting thresholds “has increased up to 2023 with respect to noise exposure above the reporting thresholds set by the Regulations for both the Lden and Lnight metrics.”

This is the environmental situation into which the IAA proposes to add 32 movements per day. The Noise Action Plan exists, is current, contains the Lden and Lnight data that Article 6(1) requires the IAA to take into account, and is not referenced anywhere in the Draft Decision.

The Draft Decision discusses planning conditions (Condition 5, the Noise Quota Scheme, and the 32mppa conditions) in Sections 3.23 to 3.29 and 4.6 to 4.15. This discussion addresses only whether those conditions are currently legally enforceable. It does not address the environmental reality those conditions were designed to manage. The noise exposure does not cease to be a constraint because the planning condition is under appeal.

We ask:

1. What environmental constraints at Dublin Airport were identified and taken into account in this determination, as required by Article 6(1)?
2. If none were identified, what steps did the IAA take to obtain environmental information from ANCA or any other competent authority?
3. What are the current Lden and Lnight noise exposure levels at Dublin Airport, and how do the proposed W26 parameters relate to them?
4. Has ANCA been consulted on whether the proposed increase of 32 movements per day is consistent with the airport’s obligations under the Environmental Noise Directive?

2. Sequencing of capacity decisions and environmental assessment

ANCA intends to publish a draft regulatory decision on operating restrictions at Dublin Airport “around mid this year,” followed by a 14-week public consultation under the Aircraft Noise (Dublin Airport) Regulation Act 2019. This was stated by the Department of Transport’s Assistant Secretary for Aviation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport on 4 March 2026. ANCA has been promising this consultation since March 2024 without commencing it.

The European Commission, in Decision C(2026) 919 of 10 February 2026, found that Ireland’s process for introducing operating restrictions at Dublin Airport assessed only one pillar of the Balanced Approach under Regulation (EU) 598/2014, contrary to Articles 5(3)(a) to (c) of that Regulation.

ANCA’s forthcoming review is a regulatory decision on operating restrictions under the

2019 Act. It is not a Balanced Approach assessment under Regulation 598/2014, which remains outstanding. The Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 has been completed, but its findings on worsening noise exposure have not been integrated into any capacity decision. The environmental constraints relevant to the parameter determination under Article 6(1) of the Slot Regulation are not being assessed by any body, on any timeline, in a form that feeds into the coordination parameters.

The proposed W26 parameters would take effect from 25 October 2026. Even if ANCA's consultation commences in mid-2026, a 14-week consultation period followed by a final decision means no regulatory outcome can be expected before the W26 season begins. The capacity decision is being locked in before the environmental assessment is complete.

This matters because of the historical precedence mechanism in Article 8(2) of the Slot Regulation. Airlines that operate slots at 80% or above acquire entitlement to the same series of slots in the next equivalent scheduling period. Capacity increases embedded in coordination parameters are self-reinforcing: each season's increase becomes the baseline for the next. Any future reduction in capacity would require the displacement of historically-held slots, which is significantly more difficult than declining to increase capacity in the first place.

The Draft Decision recognises this dynamic in the context of night-time parameters. At paragraph 3.30, the IAA proposes to freeze R60 parameters in the night hours at pre-North Runway levels, on the basis that the legal status of the applicable constraint is uncertain. We support this approach. It is precautionary, proportionate, and consistent with Article 6(1).

We ask why the same logic does not apply to daytime parameters. No Balanced Approach assessment for daytime operations has been completed. ANCA's regulatory decision on operating restrictions remains outstanding. The strategic noise maps have not been updated to reflect flight paths in use since August 2022. Increasing daytime capacity by 32 movements per day in these circumstances, and locking in that increase through the historical precedence mechanism, pre-empts the environmental assessment before it has begun.

The Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 itself identifies the problem. It records that noise exposure has increased to its highest level since strategic noise mapping began in 2006, and that the NAO priority targets on Lnight and Lden are not being met. Yet this document, the current END action plan for the airport, does not appear to have been consulted in the preparation of the Draft Decision.

3. Conclusion

We do not ask the IAA to refuse all capacity increases. We ask it to discharge the environmental limb of its statutory function under the Slot Regulation with the same rigour it applies to the technical and operational limbs. At a minimum, compliance with Article 6(1) requires the Final Decision to identify the relevant environmental data, state the

current noise exposure position, and explain how the proposed parameters are consistent with that position. A determination that does not address these matters cannot be said to have “taken account of” environmental constraints.

We request that the IAA:

1. Identify, in its Final Decision, what environmental constraints were taken into account and how they are reflected in the parameters, or explain why none were identified.
2. Seek and publish ANCA's assessment of the noise implications of the proposed W26 capacity increases before finalising the decision.
3. Maintain the precautionary freeze on night-time parameters as proposed.
4. Consider whether the same precautionary approach is warranted for daytime parameters pending completion of ANCA's regulatory decision on operating restrictions and a compliant Balanced Approach assessment under Regulation 598/2014.

This submission is made in good faith and in the public interest. A copy will be provided to the European Commission in connection with complaint CPLT(2026)00881.

Yours faithfully,

Gareth O'Brien BE (Civil) MSc North Runway Technical Group gareth.obrien@dublin-north-runway.com www.dublin-north-runway.com