

Heather Cooke

From: Stephen Purcell <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 23 January 2019 16:57
To: RSES
Cc: Ciaran O'Sullivan
Subject: Weston Airport submission to EMRA Draft RSES
Attachments: 2-061 RPT Weston Airport_Submission to EMRA Draft RSES_v1.0.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Mr. Jim Conway
Director
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
3rd Floor North
Ballymun Civic Centre
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Dublin
D09 C8P5

Good afternoon Jim,

I trust you are keeping well.

On behalf of Weston Airport (Mr. Brian Conneely, CEO, Weston Airport, Backweston, Leixlip), Future Analytics Consulting (23 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin 2), Chartered Town Planning and Development Consultants, wish to submit the attached submission. The submission relates to the public consultation of the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region published by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA).

The submission demonstrates the strategic importance of this regional asset of Weston Airport, which has an important regional role in South Dublin and Kildare and the regional economy. The airport plays a very important role in terms of international connectivity for executive aviation (C-suite management in FDI, equine visitors, and so much more), but has also evolved and diversified to utilise its large area and hangar space for the purposes of film production and major corporate events. This is an area of huge potential and Weston Airport can play a key role given the dearth of suitable properties along the east coast of Ireland (the only corridor international film productions are willing to consider in Ireland). A series of sectoral letters reinforce the importance of this sector to Ireland in the global economy.

We look forward to an acknowledgement receipt relating to this submission.

Given the important role that Weston Airport can and does play in the future of South Dublin, Kildare and the Eastern Region, should EMRA find it beneficial to meet with Weston Airport to discuss their ambitions for the massive facility and how its potential can be truly capitalised upon in a plan-led manner, please do not hesitate to make contact with me.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen

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Submission to the

Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Submitted to the Eastern
and Midland Regional Assembly

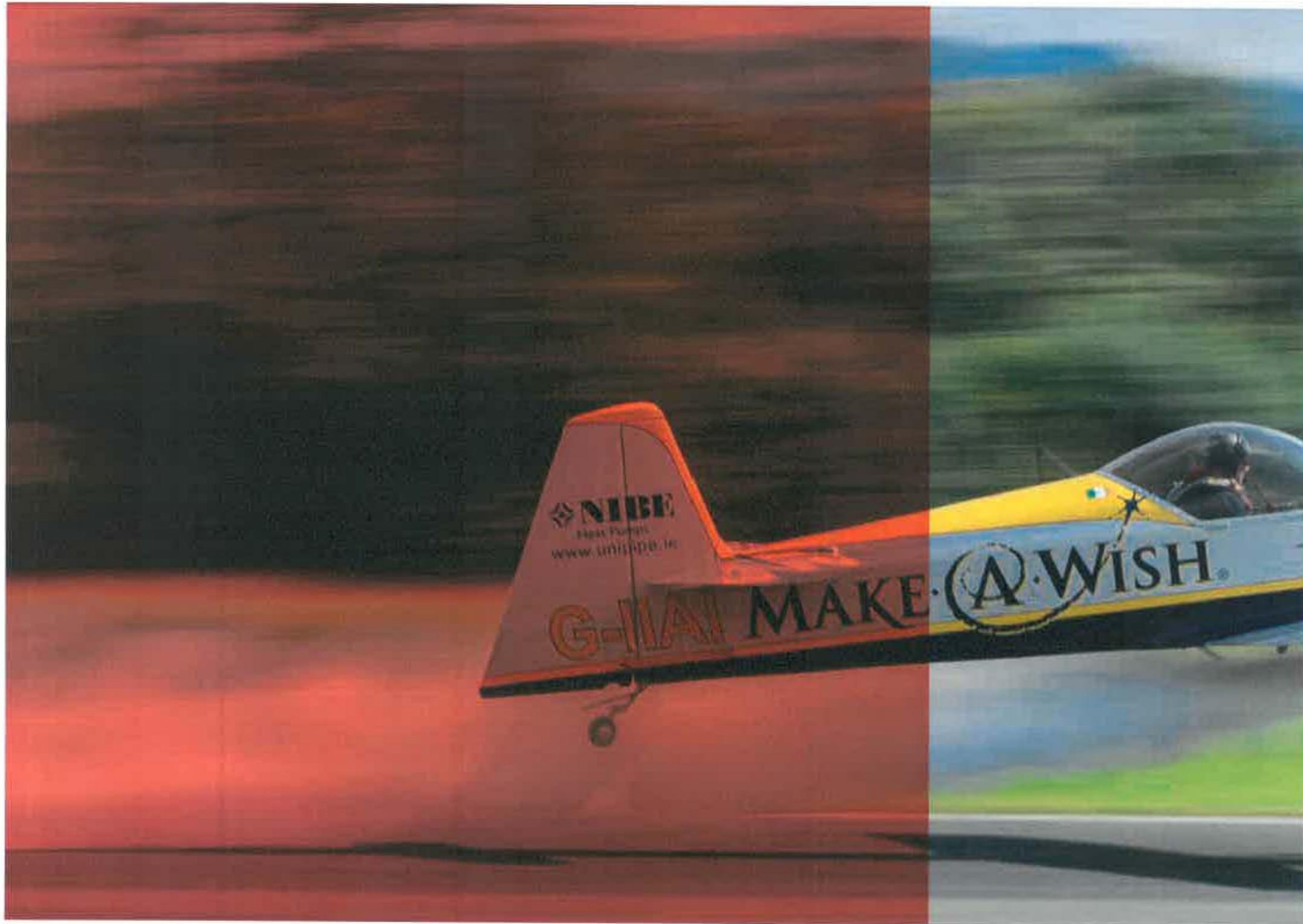
January 2019

Prepared on behalf of:



Prepared by







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“It is believed that the Weston Airport is an underutilised asset with untapped potential, as aviation is certainly considered a growing sector within the national economy, which acts as a gateway for inbound capital investment and a facilitator of economic growth, trends that are of significance to the Eastern and Midland economy

Future Analytics Consulting Limited (FAC), Chartered Town Planners, were appointed by Weston Aviation Academy Limited, owners of Weston Airport, to prepare a submission in accordance with the public consultation for the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region (EMRA).

When finalising the strategy, it is considered that the significance of Weston Airport, Event Centre and Film Studios and the potential for a multitude of socio-economic benefits to the region, should not be overlooked. *It is believed that the Weston Airport is an underutilised asset with untapped potential, as aviation is certainly considered a growing sector within the national economy, which acts as a gateway for inbound capital investment and a facilitator of economic growth, trends that are of significance to the Eastern and Midland economy.* The airport has the capacity to deliver direct local employment opportunities, as well as wider benefits to both established and newly emerging sectors of the regional economy, particularly in the areas of business travel including the equine industry, but also, sports tourism, events and the film industry.

The National Planning Framework sets out national strategic outcomes and priorities of the National Development Plan and within this, airport and ports have been designated as one of ten strategic investment priorities. The intention being to reinforce Ireland's international connectivity, fundamental to the country's international competitiveness, trading performance in both goods and services and enhancing its attractiveness to foreign direct investment. Such considerations are also of vital importance to the success of the RSES, especially in the context of the UK's exit from the EU this year, which provides both challenges and opportunities for the region to address. Central to the strategy is that Dublin is to be promoted as a global city region and the metropolitan area as a global gateway. It is therefore considered that Weston Airport has a significant role to play within such a strategic vision, considering its ideal location with provision for immediate access to the capital and its metropolitan area, whilst also situated in a central location within the region.



An Executive Aviation Offer – A Key Strategic Opportunity for the Region

Of most significance is the fact that Weston Airport provides quality aviation services, notably executive and business travel together with training services which are considered a key growth sectors in the aviation industry and has certainly provided substantial contribution to creating a competitive business environment. Chapter 6 of the draft EMRA RSES sets out objectives as regards economy and employment. Most relevant is section 6.4, which focuses on the region's economic engines and their sectoral opportunities. The role Weston Airport can provide in facilitating access to international markets, and the provision of a well serviced landbank conducive to new business formation is undoubtedly in line with such criteria.

It is evident that the airport has a role to play in improving the productivity of business and in attracting economic activities such as inward investment and inbound tourism. The executive aviation market is expanding and the presence of an airport which has the facilities to cater

to this market will bring about substantial economic and employment benefits to the region. Evidently, Dublin airport is key to the region's aviation strategy, which has experienced an ongoing increase in passenger numbers leading to the proposed development of an additional

terminal and runway. Additionally, the potential for further increases in passenger numbers due to post Brexit scenarios should not be disregarded. As an alternative to the UK, Dublin airport may also benefit from US air passengers in search of the quickest and easiest route into Europe. Given the potential outcomes, the country's principle airport is at risk of reaching saturation levels and exceeding capacity. Consequently, this could lead to a delay in services, with detrimental effect to the region's executive aviation offering. However, with a view to a wider strategic approach to aviation in the region, there appears to be significant potential in transforming a challenge into an opportunity, by encouraging and diverging executive jet operators through the readily available facilities at Weston Airport.

Critically, global accessibility is a key factor for business location and success in all regions, a component that is already in place given the favourable spatial distribution of Dublin airport with respect to Weston Airport, optimally placed north and west of the metropolitan area, with Weston Airport situated in a central location offering access to both the capital city to the east and

the wider region to the west. Weston Airport is currently being utilized by executive jet operators. Due to the aforementioned and foreseen increase in volume of passengers at Dublin airport, there is potential for delays to executive jet operators and these jet operators could be better facilitated through a specialised service developed at Weston Airport. **The incorporation of the airport into a wider regional aviation strategy, provides a means to benefit from the ideal spatial distribution of the region's airport facilities, allowing for wider economic opportunity and posterity for the region, exemplary of best practice use of its assets, aviation services and offering.** The intended result of the proposed would reduce pressure on the resources of the country's main airport and consequently enhance the sustainability of both. Weston Airport would be able to at least operate as a viable alternative to Dublin airport for executive travelers and in doing so, both relieve congestion and improve the transit times for executives travelling to and from Ireland.

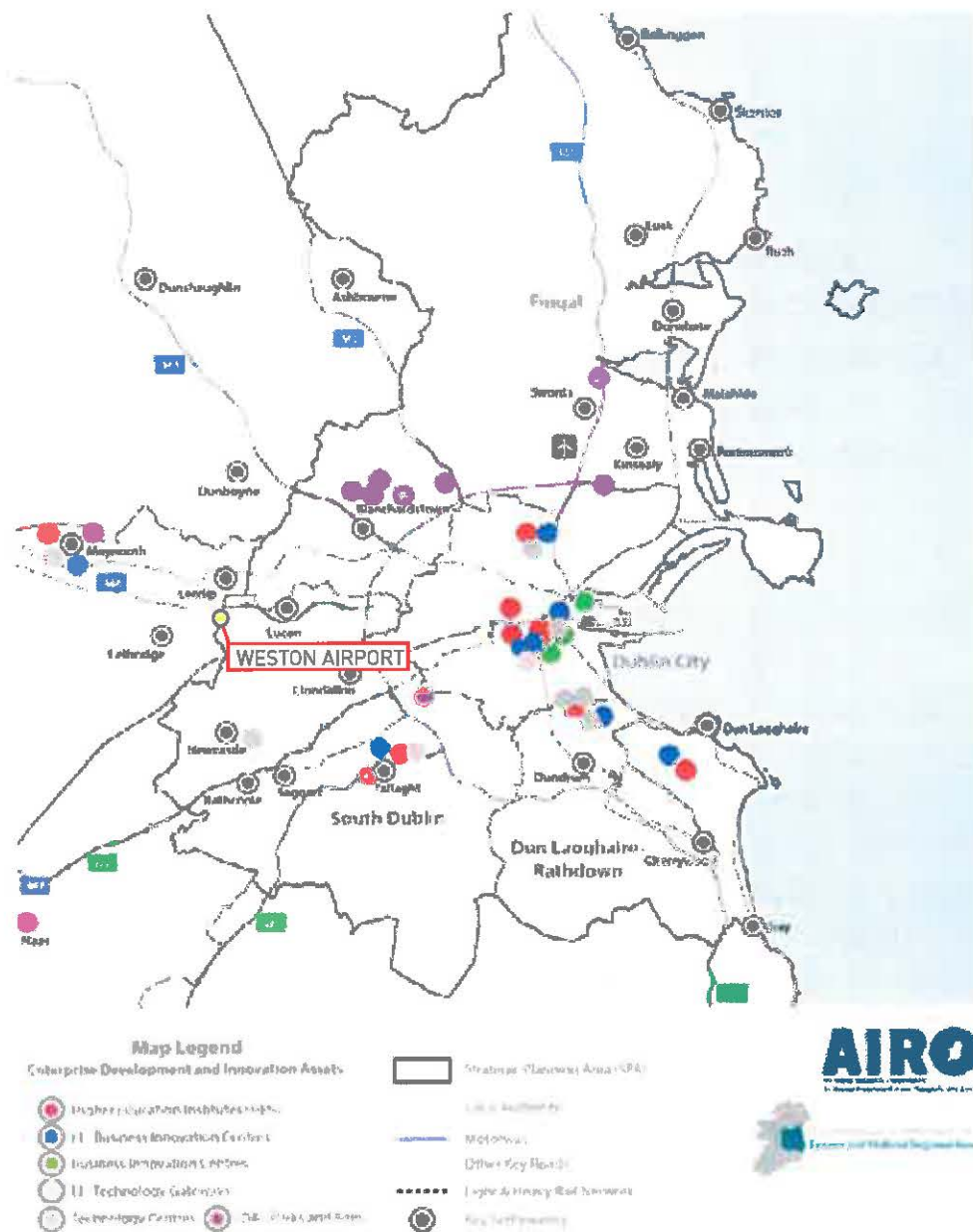


Figure 1: Weston Airport illustrated in red and yellow on the Draft EMRA's Enterprise Development and Innovation Assets Map to emphasise its potential as an asset to the region providing for spatial distribution of economic prosperity as part of a wider regional aviation strategy. (Source: Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern Midlands Regional Assembly, pp. 93)



Events Centre and Film Studios – Realising Untapped Potential

It is believed that including Weston Airport within a wider regional strategy would also be supportive of the concepts set out in section 6.3 Economic Strategy: Smart Specialisation, Clustering and Orderly Growth and Placemaking. In order to develop a competitive and resilient economic base, the draft strategy seeks direction from Enterprise 2025, setting out a 'renewed sectoral cohorts' approach in order to capture the benefit of unrealised potential. The application of such an approach in context of Weston Airport and its services would certainly assist in unlocking the potential of the airport for the benefit of its business and the wider region.

“ Demand for studio space infrastructure is at a premium both in Ireland and globally, and the lack of provision of such infrastructure precludes large international productions from investing in Ireland. ”

Of significance is the recent interest from the film industry both here and abroad to locate to Weston Airport for the development of studios for both film space and series recording space. *Demand for studio space infrastructure is at a premium both in Ireland and globally, and the lack of provision of such infrastructure precludes large international productions from investing in Ireland.* As an EU and English-speaking member state, Ireland provides a desirable location for film production, however, without the provision of adequate facilities this opportunity is being missed, a gap Weston Airport can easily fill through the appropriate use and development of its ample lands and hanger space. Weston Airport provides a fast landing space for cast and crew working in the film and television industry, and as stated, is ideally positioned in close proximity to the country's capital and central to the wider region.

The presence of studios would create new opportunities and generate further economic prospect benefiting both the locality and the region as a whole. Screen Ireland for instance is endeavoring to develop long term and sustainable

relationships with Irish and International production companies, a market and area that is emerging very quickly since its decline during the economic recession. In 2016 the audiovisual and radio sectors in Ireland generated a total of 16,930 full time equivalent (FTEs) of employment¹. This included 10,560 FTEs² employed directly within the two sectors themselves (direct impact), an additional 4,770 FTEs³ generated in the supply chain (indirect impact) and 1,600⁴ induced impact⁵ FTEs. In relation to the film industry in Ireland, the reform of Section 481 has been a significant catalyst in the increase in production and since the changes in 2015 we have seen an increase in Section 481 expenditure from €118m in 2015 to €292m in 2017. Weston Airport has facilitated a major international film festival as well as provided production facilities for Virgin Media Entertainment and independent productions. (See letter of support from Screen Ireland enclosed). In terms of labour compensation the sector generated €790.3 million to the Irish economy⁶, with a total of over a €1 billion in Gross Value Added⁷. Although these figures seem promising the availability of suitable locations for business – whether studio facilities or affordable business premises – represents

a challenge for the screen sectors in Ireland. This is a lost opportunity given that facilities in the UK are regularly fully booked and Ireland could be expanding its position as an inwards production destination, an opportunity that could certainly be developed at Weston Airport, as investors are keen on a Dublin based location.



Figure 2: Aerial images of Weston Airport's sizeable landbank illustrating the opportunities for development of alternative business offerings such as audiovisual and radio. The airport can be developed into a regional asset with potential beyond that of a private airport.

¹ Olsberg SPI (2017), Economic Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland, A Report form Olsberg SPI with Nordicity.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The induced impact refers to the additional economic activity and associated employment, labour compensation and GVA that occurs when workers employed at the direct and indirect stages re-spend their earnings within the Irish economy. For example, when workers re-spend their earnings in the domestic retail sector this increases employment, labour compensation and GVA in that sector.

⁶ Olsberg SPI (2017), Economic Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland, A Report form Olsberg SPI with Nordicity.

⁷ Ibid



Accessing International Markets - Clustering Economic Opportunities

Due to the airport's accessibility, it already generates alternative direct and indirect business and associated economic return. The equine industry regularly makes use of Weston Airport's services, which sees an influx in passengers for racecourse visits. This includes both jockeys and their owners, as well as general visitors to racecourses on race days or during horse sales. The potential for further sports tourism is also evident as the airport has been used for convenient travel to the Aviva stadium and Croke Park, for International rugby and football games and key games during the GAA season. There are also surges in passengers due to visitors to local golf clubs and other sports or entertainment bookings. The airport also services the main industrial parks for business visitors and is an important link for business users living in Dublin and working in the UK.

The sizeable hangarage space at Weston Airport is also supportive of event organisation, which has seen bookings for large corporate events and exhibitions, as well as music festivals such as Samhain, which saw Liam Gallagher as a headline act in 2017. It has recently been cited that attendance, at the International Aviation Conferences, has increased by 300% since 2013 from 1,880 to 5,57⁹ generating €9m to the Dublin economy in January 2019 alone for these aviation conferences. Separately, two conferences in the last month hosted at Weston Airport, accommodating 3,700 attendees, have led to the generation of €5.9m for the local economy excluding hosting costs which were approx. €1m extra⁹. Failte Ireland also estimate that each international delegate attending these conferences is worth approximately €1,600 to the Irish economy¹⁰ excluding hosting costs.

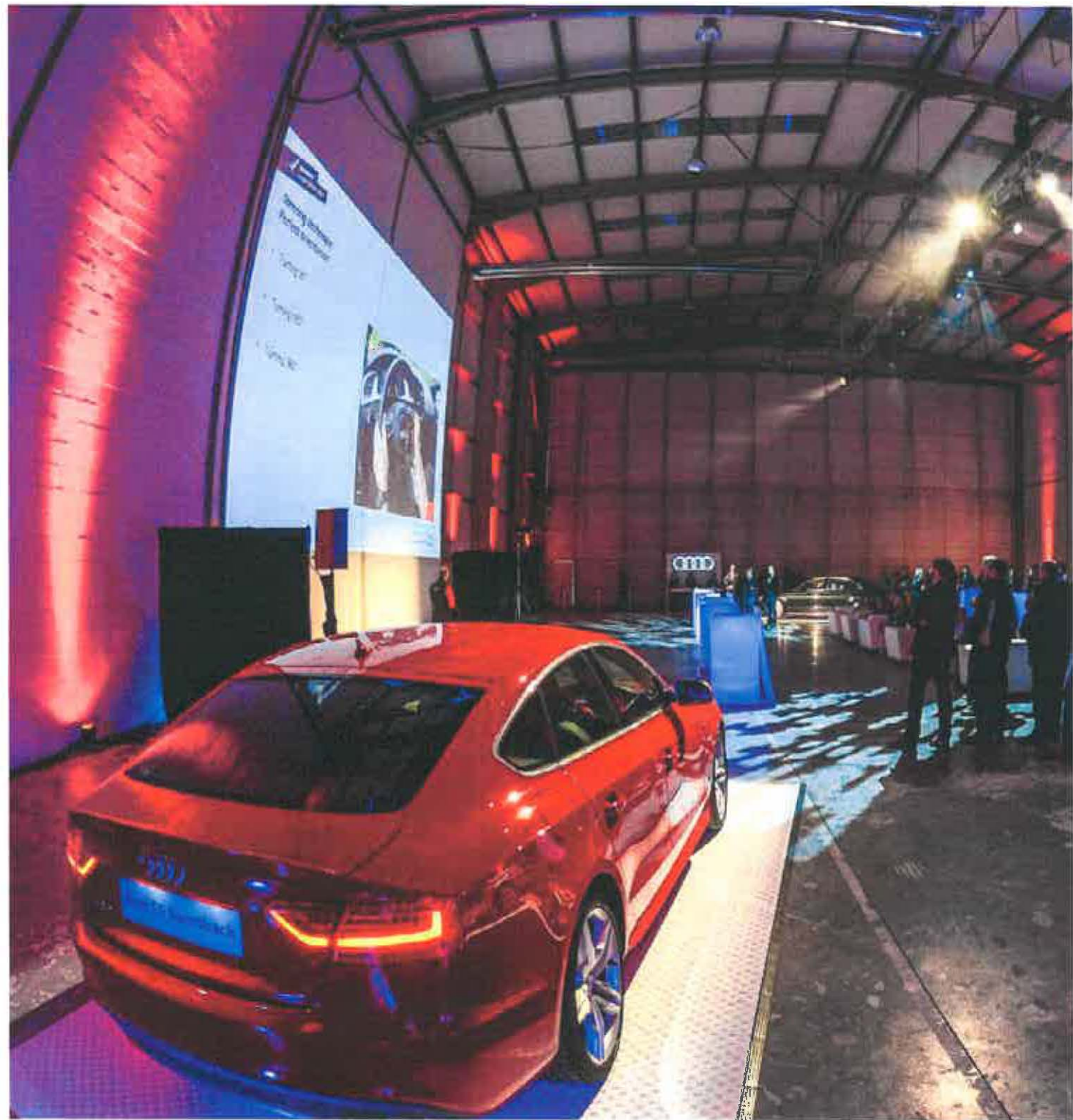
⁹ Price Waterhouse Coopers, Aircraft Leasing Ireland (2019), Contribution and Continuity of Airline Economics and Airfrance Journal Conferences.

⁹ Figures recorded by Weston Aviation Academy Limited, owners of Weston Airport.

¹⁰ Price Waterhouse Coopers, Aircraft Leasing Ireland (2019), Contribution and Continuity of Airline Economics and Airfrance Journal Conferences.



Figure 3: Images of events held at Weston Airport. The ample hangarage space attracts numerous event organisers and bookings.



The development of alternative business offerings at Weston Airport would certainly be in line with the concept of clustering as defined in the draft RSES, which sensibly is considered crucial to the success of a new vision for Dublin and the wider region. In the context of the above proposals, the region would be demonstrating implementation of initiatives that create, maintain, or upgrade an economic stronghold, by strengthening linkages or facilitating collective action to improve a cluster-specific business environment. Weston Airport can provide the fundamental linkage that allows for a favourable business ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship through access to new international markets, in which new players can emerge and thus support the development of new industrial value chains and emerging industries, whilst ensuring the airport maintains its essential operation, maintenance and training functions.

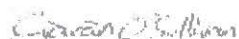
The opportunities to be gained from Weston Airport's land bank sees no end and is certainly responsive to the ever-changing global economy. For instance, other opportunities include the potential for supporting start-ups and enterprises through a business incubation unit. Collaboration with potential partners such as the Local Enterprise Office could seek to enable such businesses to mature a stage where migration to a business

or technology park elsewhere in the region becomes a viable option and thus, further enhancing the economic value of Weston Airport. Such an offering could be complimented by the opportunity to develop a Centre of Aviation Excellence at the airport. There are few locations within Ireland which currently have the capacity to offer the full range of flight training options which are necessary to produce the pilots and air crew required by European airlines. National Flight Centre, Pilot Academy, under new management, is to the forefront of pilot training and is located at Weston Airport. Pilot training is a very regulated industry and needs a facility like Weston to thrive where pilots can do aircraft training as well as simulator training and academic studies. Further development of such a specialised centre would result in the expansion of education services at the site beyond basic pilot training, and include all facets of business aviation, including aircraft maintenance and repair, ground handling, administration and air traffic control.

It is evident from the rationale provided here that Weston Airport can prove a significant asset to the Eastern and Midland region, complimentary to the successful implementation of the RSES. It is trusted that this submission and its pertinence to regional objectives will be adequately considered when finalising the strategy.



Stephen V. Jones
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Director
Future Analytics Consulting Ltd.



Garán O'Sullivan
BA MRUP
Planning Consultant
Future Analytics Consulting Ltd.



Letters of Support

Private Sky



RE WESTON AIRPORT

Private Sky the trading name of Airtek Airways Ltd is an EASA AOC (aircraft operating certificate) holder and are one of Europe's premier operators providing a complete business jet solution for individuals/companies that either own aircraft or require executive jet management services. We are Licensed by both the Irish Aviation Authority and the Commission for Aviation Regulation here in Ireland.

The key services we offer are;

Aircraft Management Service
Executive Charter Service
CAMO (Continuing Airworthiness Management Organisation) Service

We are regular users of Weston Airport and one of our Citation aircraft uses it as an operating base opposed to Dublin Airport. It's ease of access and location in Dublin suits our customer's needs

With the congestion and delays now at Dublin Airport, Weston is a viable alternative for Business Aviation owners and operators.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "D. Scully".

David Scully

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Airtek Airways Limited trading as Private Sky
Company Registration No 195348 Directors: David Scully, David O'Donnell, Aislinn Murphy, Alexander Gulestov

17th January 2019

RE: Development of Weston Studios

Dear Sirs,

Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland is the national development agency for Irish filmmaking and the Irish film, television and animation industry, investing in talent, creativity and enterprise. The agency supports and promotes the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, promotes inward investment, the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. Screen Ireland, as part of its role in promoting foreign direct investment in the areas of screen content production, continues to monitor developments in relation to the infrastructure supply in Ireland for that production.

Screen Ireland welcomes the proposed development of film studios and related facilities to secure the sustained growth of the industry. This would allow us to combine our wealth of creative filmmaking talent, our layered history of storytelling, our dynamic locations and infrastructure along with our competitive incentives to ensure the future development of the industry on a creative and economic basis. It is estimated there are more than 17,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the Irish audio-visual sector and the gross value added of the sector exceeds €1 billion annually. The reform of Section 481 has been as been a significant catalyst in the increase in production and since the changes in 2015 we have seen an increase in 481 expenditure from €118 million in 2015 to €292 million in 2017.

Recently, Ireland's Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published the Olsberg SPI Report, which provides a strategic framework for the development of Ireland's screen industries over the next five years. Also published alongside this Report was a €200 million Audiovisual Action Plan, which comprises a robust set of initiatives based on the Report to facilitate Ireland's screen industries in unlocking potential. A recommendation as part of the report includes the creation and development of new infrastructure to support the industry's expansion. Demand for studio space is at a premium not only in Ireland but globally and this development at Weston Airport will be a welcome addition to the infrastructure in Ireland. Over the past year we have seen a dramatic increase in requests from international companies looking to locate production of feature films and episodic drama in Ireland.

Screen Ireland supports the development of this exciting new facility in Weston Airport that will enable the industry's infrastructure and talent base to grow and expand; strengthening Ireland's reputation as a key player in the global audiovisual creative economy.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Davenport
 Inward Production Manager
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Dr. Cathal MacGabháin
Larry Sells, Mark Ranton,
Katie Kelly, Rachel Smyth,
Kate McGilgan, Marian Quinn.

20/01/2019

To whom it may concern,

My name is Conor O'Carroll, and I, together with my partner Dermot Cleary, run Filmspace Providers Ltd. Filmspace was created in 2014 and specialises in the refurbishment, repurposing, management, and marketing of underutilised property assets to the film and TV industries. We are acknowledged experts in this field and our client list includes Weston Airport, Croke Park, The Nun's Quay Harbour Company, National Museums of Ireland, and numerous private land and property owners. As well as providing office, studio and workshop facilities to the indigenous Irish production environment, Filmspace also seeks to address the shortfall in studio space that precludes large international productions from investing here.

The current growth of the Irish film and television industry can be largely attributed to the very favourable production environment that exists here, which itself is attributable to our location within both the EU and the Anglosphere, our large pool of gifted and dedicated crew, our stunning filming locations, our favourable and forgiving climate, and the tax incentives that rank amongst the most attractive anywhere in the world.

Whilst there is undoubtedly much here to incentivise overseas producers to choose Ireland as a production destination, the paucity of studio facilities is a serious problem and until this problem is addressed we will not be in a position to attract the upper echelon of film and TV production, the truly large "tentpole" productions whose presence could put us on a par with our neighbours in UK as a premier production destination.

Ireland currently possesses three working studio facilities, none of which are up to snuff by global or even European standards. Ardmore Studios in Bray is a cramped and obsolescent facility without expansion potential. Ashford Studios in South Wicklow is too far away from Dublin and its hotels and airport, and Troy Studios in Limerick suffers from an almost complete absence of locally based crew, resulting in costly accommodation bills. As a result of these shortcomings with our available studios, we have seen and continue to see visiting producers favour the concept of repurposing vacant commercial or industrial space closer to Dublin, and Filmspace have more often than not been to the forefront of their endeavours to find a suitable space.

During our years of operation we have come across numerous commercial or industrial properties that have had varying degrees of studio potential but nothing we have ever previously managed has come even remotely close to Weston Airport in terms of its sheer attractiveness and suitability. It benefits from a dynamic and enthusiastic owner and a dedicated and professional staff, all of whom have embraced the studio concept and become accustomed and acclimatised to the unique needs and requirements of film and TV customers. It benefits massively from its location, being so close to the city centre and the airport and having within its 16km production radius a huge and varied range of attractive filming locations. Its hangars are vast, and possessed of the high ceiling heights so very sought after by producers. Its vast acreage has huge "back lot", stunt and non-studio filming location potential. I say without hesitation that Weston as a site surpasses any of the other sites currently being mooted as possible studio locations by some clear distance. This opinion is not unique to Filmspace, and is shared by Screen Ireland (formerly the Irish Film Board) and the many potential

customers currently enquiring as the potential availability of the site for projects commencing as early as the summer of 2019.

By way of conclusion, I would begin by making the almost certainly unnecessary but nonetheless important observation that the benefits to the local economy that accrue from the presence of a functioning film and TV studio are vast, and transcend the obvious requirements for locally sourced goods and services. Productions based in Weston will seek to undertake location filming as close to the studios as is possible, spending their location budgets locally. The presence of the studios would create a requirement for local crew and all manner of training, and development opportunities would arise. My next observation would be that County Dublin is currently completely devoid of any studio facilities whatsoever, and with the exception of the severely limited Ardmore Studios, this shortfall extends to the Greater Dublin Region.

My final point is that the potential of the Dublin region to become a leading European production environment will remain unrealised without studios. There is no doubt about this. We need them, and we don't have them. The team at Weston know this and have shown their appetite and determination to address this shortfall. The opportunity to achieve this through the development of potentially world class facilities a mere 10 miles from the GPO is clear and undeniably exciting. Filmspace are proud of their role in project so far and look forward to a bright and successful future working with Brian and his team.

Respectfully

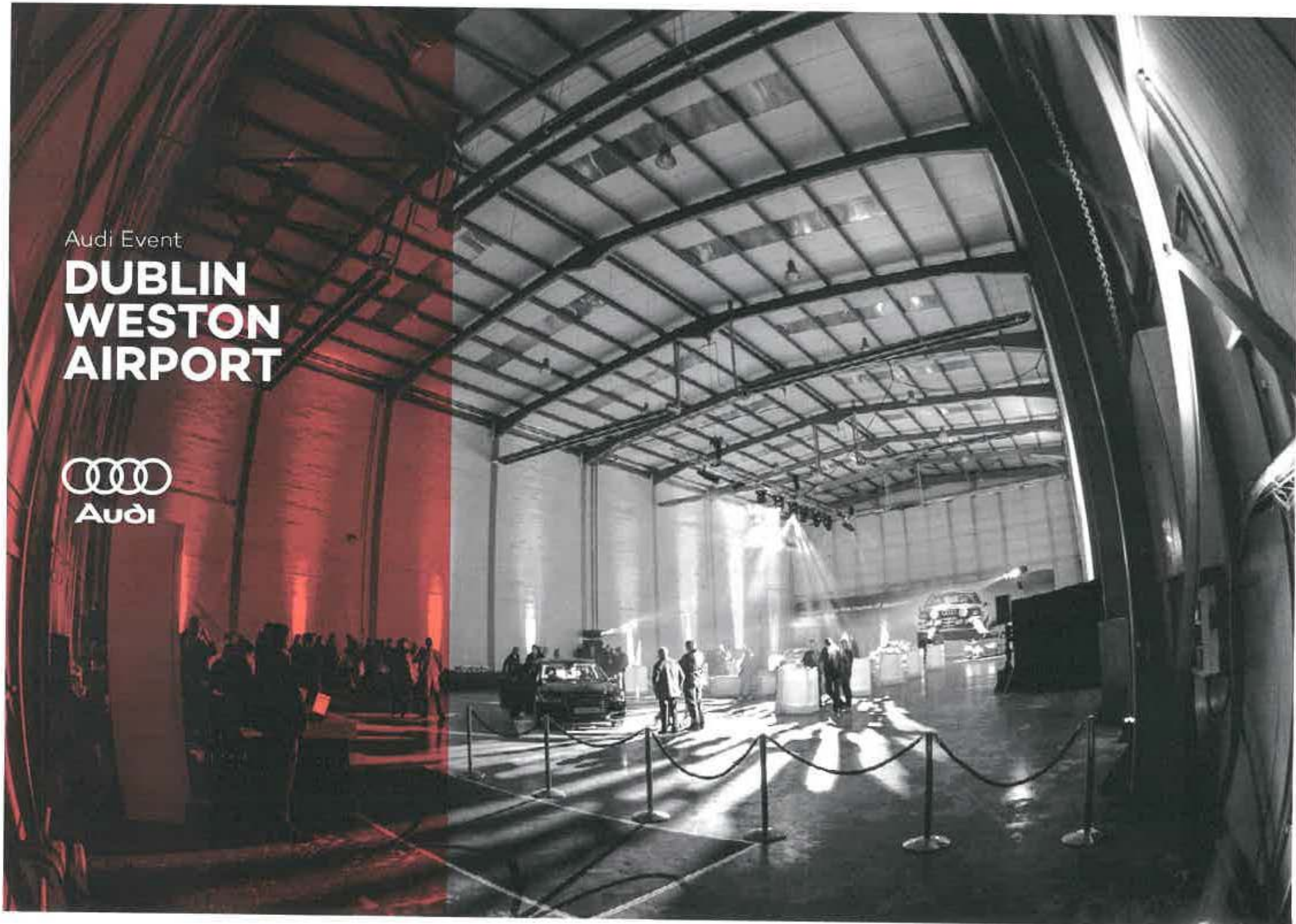
Conor O'Carroll

Filmspace Providers Ltd



Audi Event

DUBLIN WESTON AIRPORT





Special Day

DUBLIN WESTON AIRPORT





