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Judge Won't Step Down

The tensions of the long-running Corrib Gas dispute resurfaced in the Belmullet courthouse last week, as Judge Mary Devins was forced to leave the courtroom when numerous defendants argued that she should excuse herself from the proceedings as they allege she will not act impartially.

Three defendants asked her to excuse herself, citing comprehensive arguments why they believed she should not hear their case, which they are fully entitled to do, but in each case Judge Devins refused to step down, stating that her "impartiality cannot be impugned" and that "any

analysis by any interested person, other than those with a colourful agenda, would show her obvious impartiality".

However, many of those gathered in the courtroom were not in total agreement with the judge, and loudly voiced their support for the defendants following their legal submission.

Niall Harnett, a long-time Shell to Sea activist, who is facing public order and criminal damage charges, made the first case for the judge to step down. After he had stated his reasons, the court erupted in applause and cheers, before Judge Devins declined to excuse herself from the case. Eoin Ó Leidhin and Pat

O'Donnell, two others who oppose the current Corrib development subsequently attempted to make their arguments, but were interrupted as again Judge Devins declined to accede to their requests.

To the amazement of those gathered in the courtroom, a number of Garda evicted one of the defendants from the courtroom. It was unclear whose instruction the Gardai were following in evicting the defendant, and is unprecedented that they would do so without instruction from the sitting judge, but a spokesperson for Judge Devins later stated that she had not requested or directed Mr.

Harnett's removal. In a statement issued to the Mayo Echo, the spokesperson stated, "In fact at no point ... did the presiding judge order or request that this person or any other to be removed from the District Court in Belmullet".

Judge Devins chose to suspend the court on two occasions during the proceedings, and finally set dates for next month for the full hearings of the cases. There is no doubt that with the long list of hearings coming up in the months ahead, involving those opposed to the Ballinaboy gas refinery, there will be many more calls for a Judge other than Judge Mary Devins.

Knock to London Service Launched

Ireland West Airport Knock has welcomed the return of Aer Lingus to the airport following the commencement of its daily London Gatwick service. The new flights will provide the West and North West region of Ireland with easy access to central London and the south east UK counties as well as interlining capabilities connecting business interests and tourism traffic in both directions to seven European destinations on the Aer Lingus network, including Malaga, Faro, Munich, Nice, Vienna, Zurich and Dublin.

The new service increases the number of available seat connections to London via Ireland West Knock to over 1,200 seats per day this summer and is expected to generate an additional 100,000 passengers using the airport annually.

It is estimated that the region will benefit from an increase of around 35,000 tourists which is expected to inject almost €12 million in tourism spend and almost 200,000 bednights into the Western regional economy annually.



Pictured (left to right): John O'Mahony TD, Frank Feighan TD, Enda Corneille (Director of Corporate Affairs, Aer Lingus), Cllr Gerry Murray, Cllr. Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, Cllr Michael Carty, and John Caulfield. Sitting left to right: Lorraine Irwin (Aer Lingus cabin crew), Cllr Joe Mellett (Cathaoirleach, Mayo County Council) and Ciara Power (Aer Lingus cabin crew).

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