

the new facilities at new-look Cork Airport



The check-in area of the new terminal at Cork Airport which will have thirty desks available for use.

Picture: Larry Cummins

New building caters for 5m passengers

CORK Airport's new terminal building is the centrepiece and final element of a major redevelopment of the overall airport; required to upgrade a range of facilities — many of which were originally constructed in the Fifties. The building has been designed for a capacity of over five million passengers and can be expanded when, and if, the need arises. The terminal itself is a state-of-the-art, 28,000 sq. metre split-level building. It accommodates separate arrival and departures levels, space for over 30 common user check-in desks and self-service kiosks and the very latest in safety and environmental control features, designed to optimise the comfort of those who travel through the

building and work in it. The new terminal also features new baggage carousels with six times the capacity of the existing terminal and up to 3,000 sq metres of retail, catering and bar facilities.

The overall development of Cork Airport also included the construction of a new fire station, short-term multi-storey car park and the upgrading of long-term car parking to accommodate a total of 4,600 vehicles. The development also saw the replacement or upgrading of all essential utilities — including power, gas, water and communications networks, while all existing internal roads have been expanded from single lane to dual carriageway.

Debt controversy rages

WHILE the opening of the terminal represents the beginning of an exciting era for Cork, there is much unfinished business surrounding the costs of its construction.

Controversy still rages about who is to pay for the €200 million debt.

Comments from senior

Government sources recently claimed that the Cork Airport Authority (CAA) will be saddled with some level of debt, that is despite a 2003 Government pledge that it would be debt free after the break-up of Aer Rianta.

Details of a report that examined the debt issue

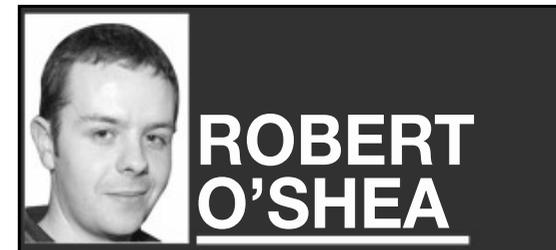
will not be known for another few weeks. Speaking in Cork recently, Minister for Transport Martin Cullen said a decision would be made in autumn.

Should Cork have to carry major levels of debt, it would have serious repercussions for the economic viability of its existence.



Signs inside the new terminal at the airport.

Picture: Larry Cummins



ROBERT O'SHEA

Why all the fuss about these SSIA's?

WHAT would you do if you won the Lotto?

I hate this question. If I were to hazard a guess I would say this question, or variations of this question — what would you buy first? Where would you go? What children would you disinherit? What colleague would you pay a hired killer to gun down? — has been the starting point, or more often than not, rescuing point, in more than 500 conversations in which I have participated.

A few people are always willing to take the bait. 'Whooo,' they say, pondering the difficult brainteaser, 'first of all, I wouldn't want to win too much. Just enough to keep me comfortable. And kill Tom.'

If I am ever forced to give an answer, I pretend to mull it over (frowning forehead, crinkling eyebrows, picking nose, examining mucus) before answering, as honestly as I can, that the first thing I would probably do is give up doing the Lotto.

This brings me to these SSIA articles that have taken over acres of newspaper these past few months.

The gist of them is they explain the options open to you now that you have benefited from a financial windfall. They tell how you can invest in your home, other property, take foreign holidays, play stocks and shares, and so on.

Every major newspaper has devoted reams of pages to advise their readership on how to spend this money.

If, a millennium and a half from now, our descendants are to dig up something from a bog, it will more likely be full-colour pullout supplement on buying luxury boats, rather than a book of psalms.

It is my hypothesis that the reason for all these articles is simply down to lazy hacks who would prefer to be shooting pool or playing cards to enlightening their readers on the major news topics of the day.

Am I wrong here, or is not an amazing amount of any PAYE worker's free time spent thinking about

what they could do, if only they had a bit more money?

Isn't it a tremendous waste of time and space to print "stories" that basically tell people that once they get some more money, they will be able to buy things. It reminds me of every so often when actual male doctors come out in the press and say that men should examine their testes for lumps every month or so, as if this isn't the part of their body that men are most familiar with.

I spend a couple of minutes every waking hour thinking about what I am going to do when I get my loolah next year. When anything bad happens in life, or I make some major mistake or faux pas (like when someone recently told me it's not pronounced "fox pass"), well, I just think of that SSIA money coming my way next year, even if I'm still no closer to finding out what SSIA stands for.

And one thought that struck me last week was that, not only will I be receiving an unprecedented cash lump sum next year, but also, I won't have to keep up the monthly payments I have contributed these last four years. I almost cried when I realised this. It's like finding a €20 note in an old coat pocket, except it's €250, it's monthly and you don't have to walk around in an unfashionable old coat.

What I think I dislike the most about these articles though, is that they exclude that significant percentage of the population who aren't lucky enough to hold an SSIA account.

Here we are, going on about what we are going to spend our extra cash on, and they are looking on, thinking what smug gits we are.

"But", I hear you say, "Robert, haven't you devoted your entire output this week to discussing the SSIA subject, when that is exactly what you are decrying in the above text?"

Yes, I see where you are coming from. This could very well be a sacking offence.

"Don't worry about it. Just deal the cards."