

Despite the economic uncertainty, Europe Airpost confirms its presence for 2012 in the Irish leisure market

On the 17th November, Jean - François Dominiak, CEO of Europe Airpost (EAP), was in Dublin to announce the results of the leisure flights activity out of Ireland. EAP is a member of the ASL Aviation Group headquartered in Swords, Co-Dublin. The Group puts together blue chip companies centred around three main activities: Air transportation, Support services and Leasing. The ASL Aviation Group has a staff of 1,200 worldwide, a fleet of around 90 aircraft flying approximately 70,000 flight hours annually. It is an exclusive operator for La Poste (with Boeing 737s, F27s & ATRs) and an exclusive A300 freighter operator for DHL (14 x Airbus A300s). It is the largest ATR operator for FedEx outside the USA and the largest Hercules operator for United Nations.

Within the Group, EAP is a niche company, operating as it does in two distinct segments, leisure and charter flights for passengers and freight transportation for mail and express freight operators in Europe. It transports 800,000 passengers and 65,000 tons of freight annually and operates a fleet of 20 Boeing 737s, mainly 737-300s and mostly QC' or 'quick change' models allowing them to be operated as a freighter or as a passenger aircraft. It flew 23,000 flight hours last year.

For its Irish operation, EAP uses Dublin based Boeing 737-36Q, EI-STA, which is operated by Air Contractors on their Air Operators Certificate (AOC) in EAP livery supplemented by an Edinburgh based EAP aircraft at weekends. Air Contractors is Europe's leading cargo airline with bases in eight European countries and flying regularly to over 25 destinations. The company specialises in the management of air transportation, and operates a fleet of 32 aircraft. In our January 2011 issue, we outlined the history of Air Contractors and their relationship with and the history of the ASL group. This is summarised in the graphics below.

During the 2011 season, Europe Airpost's Irish operation transported 94,000 passengers flying 2,400 flight hours, of which 2,000 hours (representing 10% of the total EAP

passenger flight hours) were achieved with the Dublin based aircraft, up 43% on 2010. While these results were encouraging, and in line with the airline's objectives for 2012, the aim is to consolidate its position in the market at the 2011 level of 2,000 hours. Nevertheless, the airline plans to operate to new destinations (Dalaman, Bourgas, Rome, Milan, Keflavik and Corfu) as well as expanding to new departure bases in Ireland. Kerry will be one the new departure bases with services to Lourdes on selected Sundays while Belfast International will see services operating to Lourdes and Dubrovnik on selected Saturdays.

Monsieur Dominiak said that *"despite the economic uncertainty, the emergence of competition from scheduled airlines, we remain cautiously optimistic towards a rebound of the Irish leisure market"*. He then had an exclusive discussion on the new services with Flying in Ireland and was joined by Edmund Linton (Passenger Sales) and Eric Vincent (Sales and Programme Director).

While *"the climate is difficult"* and the market *"uncertain"* EAP remain committed to Ireland. He believes that in the 147 seat Boeing 737-300 is *"the right answer to the market's demand"* and it has proved popular with the airline's travel industry clients. He believes that they are at present in *"a low cycle in the industry"* and the market remains difficult across Europe. In France, for example the affects of the 'Arab Spring' has depressed demand in key North African markets. However, EAP is *"well prepared for a rebound"* and its strong brand recognition, particularly in France. As well as the strength of the



airline and the ASL group means it has the flexibility particularly with its QC fleet to respond to the market. In 2012, the supplementary capacity previously supplied by the Edinburgh based aircraft is "on hold". However, *"the picture is not clear"* and while there is *"strong interest"* to repeat the Bourgas route, Rome, Milan, and Corfu are *"under review"* according to Monsieur Linton. He said that EAP had received *"confirmations to fly to Keflavik and Dalaman"* and the new destinations will be served from Dublin during the weekdays. Depending on how the market develops, it still has the ability to call on EAP assets if required.

In discussions on the Irish market generally he said that the Lourdes market poses a number of challenges. Typically, it operates on a five day cycle which is difficult to integrate and there are also operational issues such as turnaround time. They and other charter airlines are also seeing *"the emergence of competition from scheduled airlines"*



Edmund Linton (Passenger Sales), Eric Vincent (Sales and Programme Director) with Jean-Francois Dominiak

which has already led to Monarch closing its Dublin base. There is also new competition such as that being provided by Czech Holidays and in a new charter operation out of Dublin in 2012 by Germania. On the positive side, the ski market is stable and Monsieur Dominiak believes that they have right sized aircraft compared to the larger aircraft used by other operators and scheduled carriers. They are always on the lookout

for opportunities and the sporting events can provide unexpected benefits. Their product is good, with good onboard service. They have built a good reputation for reliability amongst the tour operators and had only experienced what he called "a black day" of disruption.

As always Monsieur Dominiak and his colleagues were forthcoming and



Jean-Francois Dominiak, Director General of Europe Airpost

informative and **Flying in Ireland** would like to thank them for sharing the views and expectations with us.



ASL Aviation Group's Commitment to Ireland

Despite its strong international reach, the ASL Aviation Group has a strong commitment to Ireland and it demonstrates this in many ways. Earlier this year, there was simple ceremony during the opening of the Group's new 2,136sq m (23,000sq ft) five storey offices in Swords, Gavin Shiel an apprentice with Air Contractors was presented with his certificates by Hugh Flynn, ASL Aviation Group Chief Executive. Gavin was undergoing his apprenticeship with SR Technics and when the company ceased operations in Ireland, Air Contractors stepped in and assisted him in completing his apprenticeship. Flying in Ireland spoke to Gavin and the following is his story.

Since the age of 14, I always enjoyed Metal work and Engineering in Secondary School. I always had a very keen interest in aviation and my goal in life was to be a Licensed Aircraft Engineer.

In September 2006 I went through a series of interviews, aptitude tests and practical test and was delighted to take the position as an apprentice Aircraft mechanic in SR Technics. The apprenticeship itself lasts four years, and this was done through FAS and comprised of seven phases (off the job) meaning being in the classroom studying different modules from Electrics, aerodynamics, materials and hardware and jet engines etc. On the job training was carried out in the hangar or on the line and gaining 'hands on' experience to go towards your licences.

Unfortunately in April 2009 unforeseen circumstances led to the closure of SR Technics Irish operations and with the closure everyone was made unemployed. After a few months, I was



fortunate to be called for interview with Air Contractors and was delighted to be given the opportunity to complete my apprenticeship. I was based in Edinburgh in Scotland and enjoyed every minute and from the very start I was made feel very welcome and every day was a learning day and still is. At the start it was very strange adapting to a new culture and different accents and but I settled in quickly.

The experience and learning I gained from their very skilled Engineers is priceless, Everyday was something new from Landing gear, Engines, Wings, and Avionics. Now with my Apprenticeship is complete, I am delighted but that's not the end of the story I am currently going for My EASA B1 licence. It has been great to be part of this vastly growing company and I appreciate Air Contractors giving me this opportunity and I am looking forward to be considered to be a valued member of their team.



Gavin Shiel receives his certificates from Hugh Flynn