

**EXCLUSIVE MAYO HUB BEGAN WITH ONE FLIGHT TO LOURDES**

# MAYO ROCKS

## Airport is a runway success after



**BIG PLANS:** Airport boss Liam Scollan with Geraldine Comiskey

**IT WAS built on a wing and a prayer.** Christy Moore even wrote a song about it.

But the miracle of Knock Airport is not a flight of fancy. While other small airports take a nosedive, it's chocks away for Knock this month as it celebrates 25 years as Ireland's high-flying success story, dealing with 5,000 passengers a day. Monsignor James Horan was ridiculed when he first mooted the idea of an international airport - with an 8,000-foot runway to land jumbo jets. But the high-flying cleric was light years ahead of his time. Long before the Celtic Tiger and cheap flights, he created a boom in the west. The wily priest outfoxed even Charlie Haughey, and got workmen



**CREW:** Nerys Jones, Kathleen Walsh, Sarah Rowley and Carmel McDonnell  
**BY GERALDINE COMISKEY**  
**Pics: MARK MCCORMACK**

to begin work on the runway before polling day, so the Taoiseach-in-waiting couldn't renege on his promise to pay for a runway in the wild west. "I remember when there was just one flight a day - to Lourdes," Knock marketing manager Donal Healy says. "Now we have 16, to the likes of

Lanzarote and Faro." Donal's uncle John Healy was the one who finally coaxed Haughey into delivering the €5million - which the Monsignor matched in donations from the public. People now come from all over Ireland for the comfort, convenience - and cheap hols.

**Cheaper**

Airport boss Liam Scollan points out: "It's 30 per cent cheaper than other airports when you take everything into account - including parking, which is only €35 a week. A lot of the staff have been here since the start - it's a friendly place. Twenty per cent of the car registrations are from Dublin, which says it all." Limerick lady Miriam O'Connor, her niece Aoife Carry (15), sisters Laura (25) and Sinead (17) O'Connor, and their friend Rebecca



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