



New port, New route, New ships between Scotland and Northern Ireland

Stena Line is currently putting the finishing touches to its new state-of-the-art port and terminal facility at Cairnryan on Loch Ryan which is scheduled to open in November following years of planning and investment. The new port heralds the launch of a new route for Stena Line which will also accommodate two new ships for its Scotland to Northern Ireland service as part of a £200m investment programme.

For the best part of the last two years, Stena Line has been working on developing the 25 acre site seven miles north of its current port location in Stranraer, constructing a purpose-built port and terminal facility, with the ferry company relocating to Cairnryan and establishing a brand new route between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The investment also includes the addition of two new identical 'sister' ships, Superfast VII and Superfast VIII ferries, the biggest ships ever to operate on the route, which will cater for both freight and passenger traffic.

The new port will complement the modern facilities already in place at Stena Line's Belfast terminal and with a shorter crossing time will help further strengthen the transport links to and from Scotland and the island of Ireland for freight customers.

Frank Nieuwenhuys, freight commercial manager, UK & Ireland said: "Since the successful opening of our £37m port at VT4 in Belfast, all eyes have been fixed on the Scottish side of our service and obviously to maximise the route we needed to provide our freight



and passenger customers with an equally impressive facility there.

"The new facilities in Cairnryan are truly world class and I believe set a benchmark for the ferry industry in the UK. Furthermore, we are currently refurbishing two Superfast vessels specifically with the needs of this route in mind. There is a significant amount of freight traffic on this route and to help our customers increase their efficiency, there will be no deck height restrictions so we can accommodate virtually any load required.

"In addition, since the ships are designed to meet the needs of the logistics industry where speed and efficiency are paramount, we will be fitting state-of-the-art semi-automatic mooring systems to each vessel to help improve and optimise turnaround times in each port. Investments of this magnitude take courage and commitment and demonstrate that Stena Line takes a long term view of market conditions. The freight business and export industry must be able to deliver world class products on a highly competitive stage. Through long-term planning and unequalled continuous investment Stena Line is at the vanguard of this industry, putting the blocks in place to assure that exporters are never disadvantaged by geographical or service constraints. We believe that the new port and ships will provide our freight customers with an even more efficient way to cross the Irish Sea," Frank concluded.

At present, Stena Line has set a target date of 21st November 2011 to start commercial operations on its new Cairnryan to Belfast route.





The Superfasts

Each ship can carry up to 1,200 passengers, around 110 freight vehicles or 660 cars and will be able to complete the journey between Scotland and Northern Ireland in just 2 hours 15 minutes. They each have a gross tonnage of 30,285 and with deck-heights being raised to above 5 meters are capable of carrying all types of freight vehicles. The vessels will have a range of excellent onboard facilities including truckers' lounge, restaurants and shops which will

ensure that drivers can relax in comfort as they travel. When the service starts in November there will be up to 12 daily departures between Cairnryan and Belfast.

Currently the Superfast ships are undergoing a multi-million pound refurbishment programme at the Remontowa shipyard in Poland and when complete they will be the most modern, comfortable and best designed ferries ever to ply the Irish Sea. Stena Line has brought in

the assistance of a specialist cruise ship fit-out company to ensure that the new ships provide its customers and importantly its freight drivers with a unique top quality ferry travel experience.



A complete overhaul...

“From the outside the ship looks ‘ready to go’ but this is a ship for the future which means a massive internal refurbishment is necessary to bring it up to Stena standards and make it fit for purpose. Before the internal rebuild can begin the existing accommodation and public areas must be removed. The internal design for the new ship will create a bright, modern atmosphere and includes a completely new truck drivers’ restaurant and relaxation area. The new truck drivers’ restaurant will have 110 seats plus an additional 27 recliners in the quiet / relaxation area and there will be drivers’ showers and separate female driver showers adjacent to this zone.”





Linkspan Installed at Loch Ryan Port

The Linkspan has been delivered from Croatia by TTS and installed at Loch Ryan Port as the pictures above show.

This is a major milestone in the construction of the port with the majority of the land-based works already completed.

The Linkspan is 8.5 metres wide and weighs 750 tonnes. Alan Gordon, Project Director, Loch Ryan Port stated "In the design of Loch Ryan Port one of our key objectives was to significantly reduce turnaround times. Currently the vessels berth bow in at Stranraer with one vehicle coming off the top ramp and one vehicle coming off the bottom ramp. Early in the design process it was decided to have vessels berthing stern in at Loch Ryan Port which means that 3 RoRo vehicles can discharge from bottom deck and two cars from the top deck. This will significantly reduce the in-port times at Loch Ryan Port when the new Belfast-Cairnryan Route opens."

“One of the biggest challenges for all of us is that it isn't just one ship we're transforming but two”

Neil Whittaker, Senior Master gives us an update from the shipyard where the Superfast's are refitted. The ships will operate the "new" route Belfast-Cairnryan from the end of November.

We are now at Day 14 in the shipyard and all work is progressing well and on schedule. We are working to a completion date for the Superfast VII of 30th Oct and 6th Nov for Superfast VIII.

The vessels are currently afloat but will enter dry-dock early in October to fit modified propeller blades for improved operational efficiency. The application of the Stena Line livery will take place at this time.

It will be a three day sea passage from Gdansk to the Irish Sea after which training and familiarisation of operating crews will take place prior to commencing service on 21st November.

At present, the removal of all the existing internal Deck 7 & 8 passenger accommodation structure and fabrication is just about complete and the new installation

process is starting to get underway, starting with structural modifications, electrical cabling, pipe work, ventilation system and structural steel. The removal included the dismantling of 128 passenger cabins per vessel to transform the vessel from a night ferry to a day ferry. The passenger accommodation block forming Deck 6 has now been removed in its entirety from both vessels to improve the vehicle deck space at the forward end of Deck 5. Clear height on the upper vehicle deck is to be increased to 5.05m from existing 4.80m which will involve the fitting of 60 pillars on this deck.

One of the biggest challenges for all of us is that it isn't just the one ship we're transforming but two and the deadline is not up for negotiation! Confidence is high and we're really focused on making the target date.





Loch Ryan

An aerial view from start to finish!

Lough Ryan Port at Cairnryan is due to be officially opened by the CEO of Stena Line - Dan Sten Olsen along with the First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond on the 25th November 2011.

Area before the work started



The wilderness



Dec 2010

December 2010 - 50% of jetty work is now completed



Mar 2011

March 2011 - beginning to look like a port

Mar 2010



March 2010 - after enabling works have begun



June 2011

June 2011 - surfacing work well underway

June 2010



June 2010 - following reclamation at the southern end of the site



July 2011

July 2011 - jetty structure completed

Sept 2010



September 2010 - starting to take shape



Aug 2011

August 2011 - only snagging left to do!