

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action

Opening Statement Glenn Carr, Director Commercial Business Units, Iarnród Éireann / Irish Rail – Port Authority for Rosslare Europort

Firstly, thank you Chairman and to the committee for the opportunity to discuss Rosslare Europort here today.

Rosslare Europort is our second busiest RoRo / Pax port and is a key strategic port for the country which has never been more demonstrated than over the past few years.

We now handle between 18-20% of the RoRo freight traffic in the country and we forecast that over 600,000 passengers will go through the port in 2023.

Following the exit of the UK from the European Union at the end of 2020 and the changes that followed, Rosslare Europort has seen a very significant increase in shipping services and freight traffic through the port.

Weekly EU direct Ro-Ro services to and from Rosslare Europort have grown from six at the start of 2020 to thirty-six in 2023. This has resulted in EU freight growing +398% cumulatively in the last two years and positions Rosslare Europort as the number 1 port for direct EU Ro-Ro /Pax services in the country. Our UK services have remained at 56 and Rosslare now has services operating to and from the ports of Fishguard, Pembroke, Bilbao, Cherbourg, Le Havre, Dunkirk and Zeebrugge with Shipping brands, Stena Lines, Irish Ferries, Brittany Ferries, DFDS and Finnlines (part of the Grimaldi Group).

Supporting sustainable travel, a substantial increase in tourism and passenger traffic is also forecasted with the growth in shipping services at the port and year to date passenger travel is 19% ahead of pre-covid levels. Many of our new services are offering services which will see significant increases this year in traffic between Rosslare and the ports we are connected to in Spain and France. This of course provides for a much more environmental and stress-free way to travel and further strengthens the positive economic, social and other exchange benefits for the towns and regions associated and connected on these routes.

As our business continues to grow it is vital that the infrastructure both within and outside of the port be developed so that we can meet the requirements of our customers and maximise the role Rosslare Europort can play for the national economy.

Rosslare Europort is primed to play a further leading role as the gateway to Europe for freight and passenger activity, create Ireland's Off-Shore Renewable National Hub, provide the much-needed additional port capacity for the Southeast coast and alleviate the challenges facing ports like Dublin regarding future congestion.

Chairman and members of the committee, Rosslare Europort in conjunction with all our key stakeholders and community are currently embarking on the most significant infrastructure investments in the history of the port.

To support our ambitious plans very significant physical and digital infrastructure projects are underway at the port and include the following;

- Construction of T7 Border Control Facility
- Port Freight & Passenger Masterplan
- Berth Extension Program
- Purchase of Additional Lands
- Digital Port Smart Systems
- New Port Access Road
- Off-Shore Renewable Hub

I am delighted to say that we have received the required foreshore licences, planning and secured funding for most of the above projects.

For today I will concentrate on the construction of our Off-shore Renewable Hub, where I can confirm that all foreshore licence requirements have been received and we are currently well advanced in our planning and funding phases of the project.

The auction (ORESS1) results released 11th May by Eirgrid mark a very significant milestone for Ireland's offshore wind future. These projects, in excess of 3GW of capacity, represent a major step toward delivering our capacity target of 5GW of offshore wind by 2030.

This hugely positive announcement will not only benefit Irish energy consumers but is good news for Ireland as we move towards our renewable climate targets. The announcement is further evidence of what many of us have known for a long time; that Ireland can be a leading player in the growing offshore wind sector.

The huge economic benefits that this sector can bring to Ireland have yet to be fully realised. There is enough renewable energy off our coasts to not only meet Ireland's needs but to also become a major contributor to decarbonising Europe's energy supply. But we cannot stand still, Ireland must invest heavily in its port infrastructure and supporting facilities to be able to deliver these major renewable infrastructure projects.

Ports are a central part of offshore wind development. They play a vital role in local supply chains, logistics, and supporting infrastructure as major components, equipment, and wind turbines all need to be facilitated with port side staging, marshalling and assembly activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of those involved in Ireland's first offshore wind auction. The four successful wind farms can progress their projects in the knowledge that by the time construction commences, Rosslare Europort will have progressed our current plans to establish a dedicated offshore renewables hub. We have already advanced our development plans for major

infrastructure upgrades at Rosslare Europort to ensure that we are able to support these Phase One projects with the construction of their offshore assets.

As the committee will know significant Offshore Wind developments are planned in both the Irish and Celtic seas and Rosslare Europort is best positioned and located to be developed to meet the port infrastructure needs of this industry for the projects planned.

The Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Hub development at Rosslare Europort will be the first of its kind in a port within the Republic of Ireland. Representing a €220M investment, this world class facility will provide the ORE industry with the necessary port infrastructure to support the many Wind Farm projects planned for the Irish and Celtic Seas.

The Project at Rosslare will see the construction of: (a) two new berths that are at least 230 metres in length with a chart depth (CD) of at least -12m; (b) an approach channel of -10m CD; and (c) 20 hectares of reclaimed land to create a dedicated storage and assembly area and a management Control Centre along with offices and other O&M facilities.

Our planned new ORE facility at the port will also be designed to be multi-modal in the future, this means that once the heavy ORE activity is completed for the various projects, the facility at the port will be easily transferable for additional Ro-Ro and Con-Ro activity. This will be of strategic importance for the East coast especially given the future capacity problems that will face Dublin Port in the next decade.

The design of the facilities has been informed by discussions with ORE developers and major equipment manufacturers, as well as port and ORE engineering specialist consultants. Rosslare has now received its foreshore licence which will allow for the final surveys to be completed which are necessary to apply for planning permission. Planning permission is expected to be submitted in Q2 / Q3 2024, with a maximum 6-12 month planning period needed to follow. A 12–18-month construction schedule would see the site operational late 2026 / H1 2027.

Delivery of the Project in a timely manner will be key to maximising its value. From a commercial perspective, a delay in availability of Rosslare's port infrastructure will mean that the earliest ORE projects will need to turn elsewhere potentially outside of the Irish state to service their projects. A delay in the delivery of Rosslare's port infrastructure will also have a knock-on impact for the delivery of 2030 offshore targets and broader economic implications for Ireland.

Success in the ORESS auction is considered to be a major de-risking milestone for Phase 1 developers. Prior to auction submission, developers will have undertaken extensive engagement with suppliers but would not have had firm agreements in place at the time of bidding and will therefore have made assumptions on key supply chain elements. ORE projects that were successful in auction can now commence work to lock-in major supply chain items – including ports and installation vessels – and we look forward to continued engagement with industry in the coming months to address these issues.

Iarnród Éireann has also engaged with a number of funders to understand their key considerations in respect of structuring and overall project bankability. Funders are keen to stress their interest in working with IÉ, particularly in relation to the ORE project which would align well with their lending strategies and increasing sustainability focus. We are currently finalising our business case and funding options and it is our intention to present this to the Department of Transport in the coming weeks and discuss the options and interventions that will be required to support the delivery of the project.

We look forward to engaging further with all agencies and stakeholders in successfully completing the final milestones, and we'd like to acknowledge the collective collaboration to date between the Department of Transport, Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, DECC, Dept of Finance, TFI and Wexford Co Council.

Finally, we cannot not shy away from the importance of ensuring how a more sustainable way our ports operate can be developed.

As well as ensuring future ship to shore connectivity requirements, in the medium to longer term plans for Rosslare, we see the opportunity to further connect Rosslare by rail and in particular rail freight. We look forward to the outcome of The All-Island Strategic Rail review which will support and guide on how this might be best achieved.

As part my wider brief within Iarnród Éireann and responsibility for national Rail Freight, creating and enhancing rail connectivity to our key seaports will be essential to ensure we grow rail freight across the country and meet the real opportunities that industry and society now demands.

We have very ambitious plans for rail freight, and we must enhance and grow rail freight at Dublin and Waterford ports which are already connected. Work has commenced on the reinstatement of the Shannon Foynes line and discussions are underway with the Port of Cork regarding future rail freight connections. Rail freight is a key National and EU policy in decarbonising the transport sector and ports have a responsibility to ensure that rail-based solutions form part of their Masterplans. Connecting ports and rail will deliver sustainable alternatives and create regional balanced economic activity.

Thank you, Chairman and Committee Members.

Glenn Carr

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