

Pat the Cope announces findings of Seaport Capacity Study

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Speaking at the 2006 Annual Conference of the Irish Ports Association, Mr. Pat the Cope Gallagher, T.D., Minister of State for Transport, today (Friday, 29th September 2006) announced the broad conclusions of a major seaport capacity study, commissioned by his Department. The study examines the anticipated future seaport capacity requirement for unitised trade (LoLo containers and RoRo freight trailers) to 2014 and beyond.

The study was undertaken (by Fisher Associates), to determine whether national capacity requirements could be met adequately by a combination of projects currently being planned and progressed by the ports sector. It concludes that there is currently significant available capacity for LoLo traffic at Irish ports. Current available capacity for RoRo traffic also exists, although less so than in the case of LoLo. The conclusions of the study clearly demonstrate that the projects being progressed by the ports sector have the potential to deliver adequate capacity going forward, in line with the Government's Ports Policy.

Addressing the Conference, Minister Gallagher said: "Ireland's commercial ports are vital transport arteries, carrying 99% by volume of the island's external trade. The publication of the findings of this seaport capacity study will mark another significant step in the further implementation of the Government's Ports Policy Statement, launched in 2005. I am confident that our key commercial ports are well positioned to continue to function efficiently as our economic gateways to the rest of the world.

"I have no doubt that the ports concerned will continue to make every effort to bring their respective projects to fruition within the shortest possible timeframe in line with statutory and other requirements; I envisage that the new streamlined consent process for strategic infrastructural developments provided for in the Planning & Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 will be of particular relevance in this regard.

"In addition, I might add that the consultants predict growth in unitised trade in Ireland, which is, in tonnage terms, broadly in line with three previous studies carried out for the Department. I understand that recent reports concerning the ports sector, and in particular the IBEC report of June 2006, predicts growth in excess of forecasts calculated by Fisher Associates. I am satisfied that the conclusions of Fisher Associates in this regard represent an accurate and authoritative assessment of the situation going forward."

Seven detailed project submissions from ports with unitised trade expansion plans were received and evaluated by the consultants. Six proposals for the expansion of capacity for LoLo traffic were received from the following ports: Cork, Drogheda, Dublin, Greenore, Shannon Foynes and Waterford. Proposals for increasing RoRo capacity were received from Drogheda and Rosslare.

Minister Gallagher informed the Conference that substantial progress has been made in preparing a new Harbours Bill to further support implementation of ports policy and to update existing legislation. This legislation is currently being drafted.

An Information Paper, based on the report of Fisher Associates, will be published shortly on the Department's website, www.transport.ie. The paper will contain a summary of the work undertaken by the consultants, descriptions of the project proposals and the broad conclusions reached by Fisher Associates in their study.

The main findings of the Study are:

- There is currently significant available capacity for further growth in LoLo traffic at Irish ports;
- Current available capacity for RoRo traffic also exists, although less so than in the case of LoLo;
- All proposals submitted are generally consistent with the objectives of the Government's National Spatial Strategy; and
- The port sectors in the Republic and Northern Ireland are complementary in that a RoRo capacity surplus exists in Northern Ireland and a LoLo capacity surplus in the Republic.

ENDS

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