31th July 2017

**STENA LINE SAYS *‘NI HAO’* TO RISING NUMBER OF CHINESE CUSTOMERS**

***Ferry company first in Europe to receive the Chinese Tourist Welcome Certification***

Leading ferry company, Stena Line, has become the first passenger ferry company in Europe to achieve the *Chinese Tourist Welcome* (CTW) *Certification* which is officially recognised by tour operators in China and Europe.

The CTW Chinese Tourist Welcome Training Programme certifies staff members and organisations as quality hosts of Chinese visitors and is recommended by the ETC European Travel Commission, has been endorsed by PATA Pacific Asia Travel Association and has been awarded the GREAT China Welcome Charter Mark of Visit Britain.

Orla Noonan, Stena Line’s Travel Commercial Manager (Irish Sea North) said: “We’re extremely proud that we have been able to achieve this unique service standard on our Cairnryan – Belfast route. The number of Chinese visitors we have been welcoming onboard our Stena Superfast VII and VIII vessels has been growing significantly in recent years so it’s important that we do all we can to make our guests feel welcome and valued.”

Orla added: “We made a number of changes onboard including updating our current services, products and communications to ensure that we were ‘China Ready’ and focused on providing a special welcome to all of our Chinese passengers. We already welcome around 40,000 Chinese tourists annually on our Cairnryan – Belfast route and our latest certification means we are now recognised as the first in Europe to ensure that Chinese guests are treated to the best possible standards.”

The training programme was delivered by *China Outbound Tourism Research Institute* (COTRI), the world’s leading independent research institute for Chinese outbound tourism, and the *Centre for Competitiveness* (Ireland).

Dr Tony Lenehan, Executive Director of the Centre for Competitiveness and COTRI (Ireland) said: “The commitment to ensuring that a special and focused welcome from the crew onboard and ashore from the Stena Line team in Belfast and Cairnryan awaits the Chinese Tourist is a great example of the professionalism and dedication to excellence which is synonymous with Stena Line as a major tourism and travel operator.”

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Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland, said: “Congratulations to Stena Line on becoming the first passenger ferry company in Europe to achieve the Chinese Welcome Certification. Stena Line has taken part in several of Tourism Ireland’s sales missions to China in recent years – so it’s really great to see the result of those promotions and the significant growth in the number of Chinese visitors travelling on Stena Line vessels.

“The potential of the Chinese outbound travel market is significant, with Chinese travellers expected to take some 200 million trips overseas by 2020. Currently, 4 million Chinese travel to Europe annually and Tourism Ireland is working hard to win a greater share of that business for the island of Ireland.”

For more information on Stena Line visit [www.stenaline.co.uk](http://www.stenaline.co.uk)

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