**Issued on behalf of Stena Line**

**Date: 12th June 2018**

**Stena Line’s Liverpool – Belfast service in line for two new ferries**

**Stena Line has confirmed that it will be introducing two of its three new ships onto its Liverpool – Belfast service in 2020/21. The first of its new RoPax ferries currently under construction in China is planned to enter service on its Holyhead - Dublin route in early 2020.**

Stena Line has ordered the construction of six new vessels at the AVIC Shipyard in China and the plan is to locate three of these ships on its Irish Sea routes. The other three will be chartered out to external parties by Stena Line’s sister company Stena Roro.

Stena Line’s CEO Niclas Mårtensson said: “Our Irish Sea routes are strategically very important to Stena Line and our customer, with the freight market between Ireland and UK experiencing significant growth over the last five years. That’s why we have invested almost £200m in our ports and vessels across the region to improve and grow our capacity to offer a frequent, reliable and high-quality service for our freight and travel customers.   The deployment of three new vessels is a tangible example of our strategic growth plan for the Irish Sea. I’m delighted to confirm that the first of our new vessels will be deployed on the Dublin – Holyhead service planned for early 2020. Furthermore, I can also confirm that two other vessels will be assigned to our Belfast - Liverpool service planned for spring of 2020 and early 2021.”

Paul Grant, Stena Line Trade Director commented: “This is a significant boost for our popular Liverpool – Belfast service. The two new ships will be the biggest ships ever to operate on the Liverpool – Belfast service and will increase capacity for freight and travel customers as well as raising the service standards. Our onboard cabin concept will be enhanced offering comfortable and relaxing day and overnight crossing options. The ships will be ‘drive-through’ making the loading and disembarkation processes faster and smoother for vehicles.”

Paul Grant added: “This expansion programme comes on the back of the recent purchase of our Superfast ships on the Cairnryan - Belfast service which not only enables Stena Line to deliver a high-quality product for freight and travel customers now but also lays the foundation for continued future growth in the region.”

These new vessels will have capacity for 1 000 passengers, 120 cars as well as 3 100 freight lane meters.

***-ctd***

Patrick Walters, COO of Peel Ports commented: “We are delighted that Stena Line has chosen Birkenhead for further expansion and we’re working jointly to develop new port facilities that will help enable growth.   This is a significant investment in and enhancement for freight and tourism.  We look forward to welcoming the new vessels and the associated benefits they will bring. ”

The new vessels under construction are being built in line with Stena Line’s strategic business focuses on sustainability and digitilisation. The target is that the vessels will be absolute state-of-the-art in efficiency, flexibility and customer service.

“Our new RoPax ferries will be among the most energy efficient in the world with significantly lower CO2 emissions per freight unit against comparable RoPax tonnage. Our aim is to lead the shipping industry in sustainability and digital development and set new industry standards when it comes to operational performance and emissions.  The vessels will run on traditional fuel but are designed to the class notation ‘gas ready’ and are also prepared for catalytic scrubbers, thus giving us increased flexibility for the future.   We are also placing heavy emphasis on developing a range of exciting new digital features which will provide our customers with unique additional services connected with their journey as well as developing a new, integrated digital onboard experience”, said Niclas Mårtensson.

Stena Line is currently the largest ferry operator on the Irish Sea, offering the biggest fleet and the widest choice of routes between Ireland to Britain including Liverpool and Heysham to Belfast, Cairnryan to Belfast, Holyhead to Dublin and Fishguard to Rosslare routes, a total of 232 weekly sailing options between Britain and Ireland.

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**NOTE TO EDITOR: For further information please contact Lawrence Duffy of Duffy Rafferty Communications on Belfast +44 (0) 28 9073 0880**

**E-Flexer Series Ship Stats**

**Length:** 214,5 m

**Draught:** 6,4 m

**Breadth:** 27,8 m

**Capacity:** 3100 lane meter + 120 cars, 927 passengers (ex crew), 175 cabins

**No of decks:** 3 + car deck on dk 7

**Free height:** 5,2 m on dk 3+5

**Engines:** 2 x V12 4-stroke diesel

**Speed:** 22 knots