

WARRENPOINT PORT ENTERS A NEW AND AMBITIOUS ERA



**WARRENPOINT
PORT**

As the second largest port in Northern Ireland and the fifth biggest on the island of Ireland, Warrenpoint Port is entering an exciting and challenging new era, with the first female Chief Executive Officer of any port on the island of Ireland, Clare Guinness, at the helm. Export & Freight's David Stokes has been finding out more.

"My message is that we are open for business and are keen to attract new customers," declares Clare, who succeeded Peter Conway just six months ago. "I inherited a very mature and stable business. We are extremely ambitious and are investing heavily for the future in plant, equipment and port infrastructure."

Having delivered record breaking tonnages over the last couple of years, a trend that is set to continue, Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, which was created as a Trust Port by legislation in 1971, has embarked on a 25 year Masterplan that will see major redevelopment on its 53 acre site.

"We are the second largest port in terms of volume of traffic and goods handled in Northern Ireland and fifth on the island of Ireland. This Masterplan is designed to strengthen the Port's position as a major trading hub for the Island's economy," commented Chairman Stan McIlvenny OBE when introducing the Masterplan which has five core objectives.

Those are: to improve transportation and circulation; to improve capacity, operations and facilities; to maintain and grow a diverse customer base; to develop and improve linkages with the town; and to develop a long-term strategy for expansion.

With a geographic position halfway on the main Belfast to Dublin economic corridor which constitutes a major strategic advantage, trading over the past few years has been and today continues to be buoyant at the port.

It has excellent facilities to handle a broad spectrum of goods such as grain, timber, steel and cement and a full range of services including container and freight – and it anticipates a significant increase in trade over the coming decades with core roll on, roll off, freight operated by Seatruck Ferries, expected to rise by up to 80% by 2040.

In 2017, the value of goods moving through the port was £6.2 billion, £164 million of which was direct international trade. It handled 3.48 million tonnes of cargo in 2016 increasing to 3.56 million tonnes in 2017.

"Our next target is to reach 4 million tonnes a year" reveals Clare, who previously held the position of Director of Corporate Services at the Fane Valley Group where she played an instrumental role in the sale of the dairy to Lakeland and the joint ventures between Slaney, Linden Foods and ABP. She has also held senior roles during 17 years with the Bank of Ireland,



Warrenpoint Port Chief Executive Officer, Clare Guinness

working within the Real Estate and Business Banking divisions across Belfast, Dublin and London, all of which makes her ideally qualified to take Warrenpoint Port to the next level.

"I am delighted to be playing a part in developing the port and building on its increasingly important contribution to the local economy in the years ahead," says Clare, her passion and energy for the task at hand clearly evident.

"The Board are very supportive of everything that we are planning, and the team around me are enthusiastic, loyal and fully focused on the future; these are exciting times for Warrenpoint."

Diversification

Never a port to rest on its laurels, it wants to grow its break bulk and general cargo

volumes and is handling increasing volumes of project cargoes, having recently secured a significant wind turbine contract.

"Our aim is to have even more diversified cargoes. For example, we propose to construct a specialist storage facility that will enable us to become the CO2 distribution hub for the whole of Ireland; it's a project we have been working on for some time and hope to sign it off in the near future." Big users here of liquid carbon dioxide include companies such as Coca Cola and Moypark.

While the port employs 67 staff directly, the vast majority of them living within close proximity to the town, more than 200 people work at the harbour every day. In addition to serving

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the markets in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, the port deals with imports and exports from countries and regions across the world including to Spain, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Ukraine and the Americas.

Moving Ahead

“We have ambitious capital expenditure plans to become more efficient in what we do, to create more jobs, to revitalise, relocate and transform some buildings and better utilise the facilities on what is a very busy site, together with enhancing our health & safety procedures and raising our environmental and sustainability targets.”

Among those capital expenditure plans is a £3 million investment in the purchase of a new crane and the refurbishment of two

further cranes at the harbour to substantially improve efficiency and increase capacity.

“This will enable us to maintain our already high standards of service to customers and bring us closer to our targeted growth over the coming years,” says Clare.

The new crane will be built and supplied by Finnish manufacturer Konecranes at its site in Dusseldorf, Germany. It will have the capacity to lift loads up to 100 tonnes to a height of 42m above quay level.

“It will significantly boost operations at Warrenpoint by allowing for the speedier loading and unloading of goods, as well as reducing downtime. We are also investing significant capital to refurbish two of our existing cranes at the port to ensure they will continue to serve our customers for many years to come.”

Brexit Opportunities

But how will Brexit impact on that progressive and enterprising strategy? “Our position is that we support frictionless and seamless trade; we don’t want a border in the Irish Sea and we don’t want a land border, either.

“However, if there was a hard Brexit there may well be opportunities for the port to handle different cargos that currently go through Dublin; it may make more financial sense for customers to bring goods straight into Northern Ireland if tariffs were to be introduced.

“Presently, there is evidence more goods that go into Dublin comes north than what is sent south, so there may be opportunities to be explored and exploited. Nobody really knows at this stage what Brexit will eventually bring, but whatever it will be, we have contingencies and plans in place to cope.”



Design concept illustrating proposals to redevelop the Town Dock.

Southern Relief Road

Instrumental to the success of the port's future will be the building of the much talked about Newry southern relief road, linking the A2 Warrenpoint Road and the A1 Belfast/Dublin Key Transport Corridor, a subject that features prominently in the 25 Year Masterplan. "No matter what we invest in the port it simply cannot grow without improved infrastructure; we need that vital link, which would give the whole area a terrific economic boost," says Clare.

That 'economic boost' is exactly what a Feasibility Study Report, published in August 2009, concluded. It stated: "The provision of a new road link between the A1 Belfast / Dublin and A2 Warrenpoint Road is feasible and would be expected to provide significant economic benefits."

The proposed project has now been included in Transport NI's Forward Planning Schedule, with several route options having been highlighted and with the necessary funding in place, Stage 2 of the process to identify a preferred route should be completed sometime this summer.

"Not only would such a link alleviate traffic congestion the city of Newry itself, it would speed up the supply chain, so it is something all of our customers and hauliers would be very supportive of," says Clare. "It would also open up the whole of the Eastern side of the city to further development, perhaps as a distribution hub given its location creating jobs and prosperity. It is absolutely essential."

Social Impacts

On the social side, the port has worked hard to become a focal point of the local community and will continue to do so. It has invested time and money in local sporting, educational and environmental projects over the last decade. "We have a great relationship with the town



and its people where most of our staff live, but it can be better and we are constantly working to improve it," says Clare. "We are very aware of our role as a custodian of the lough and its environment, and have already invested heavily in the likes of dust suppression systems to minimise the impact of operations on our surroundings."

The port is also working towards helping to extend the Town Dock marina facilities which currently provides berths for around 20 boats and to that end has engaged with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council pledging its full support to contribute what it can to make that happen.

In addition, plans are well advanced to relocate the Harbour Offices to an extended gatehouse at the Town Dock, a move designed to enhance the vitality of the Town Square, with consideration also being given to softening its boundary at the Town Dock to allow public access to the water's edge and enable the Town Square to have a more vibrant connection to the marina.

Underpinning its involvement with the local community and renewed emphasis on the wider port environment, 60 volunteers connected with the port including staff, customers and their family and friends, recently collected more than 25 bags of rubbish from beaches between Narrow Water and Cole's Corner which were then removed from the sites.

Items including plastic and glass bottles, fast food cartons, tyres and even a discarded vacuum cleaner were among the rubbish collected during the clean-up.

"It was a tremendous pleasure to join with dozens of other volunteers from the port in the clean-up of the many wonderful beaches across the Warrenpoint area," comments Clare. "We made a positive difference evidenced by the volume of rubbish we collected. Everyone gave of their free time to assist with the preservation of Carlingford Lough and help to maintain the wider port environment for current and future generations."



Some of the volunteers who took part in the beach clean-up.



Alistair Eagles, Chief Executive of Seatruck Ferries, with Clare Guinness, Chief Executive of Warrenpoint Port.

SEATRUCK TO INCREASE CAPACITY AT WARRENPOINT PORT

Seatruck Ferries, Irish Sea freight specialist, will increase capacity on Warrenpoint to Heysham route by 30%.

Seatruck will deploy two larger freight ferries on the route later this summer, in direct response to growing demand for unaccompanied trailer space and enabling the firm to carry 30,000 additional trailers annually on the key crossing.

The move will see the four-deck Seatruck Precision and Seatruck Performance replace the current three-deck vessels and operate an 11-time weekly service between the ports.

Alistair Eagles, Chief Executive of Seatruck Ferries said: "Whatever the outcome of the Brexit land border negotiations, Warrenpoint Port will continue to be a cornerstone of the Seatruck operation.

"I clearly remember watching the very first Seatruck sailing from Warrenpoint in 1996. Even back then we had a very strong belief in our business model, our service and our future strategy.

"Adding larger ships to the Warrenpoint route is the next logical step for Seatruck and I have no doubt that it will be very popular providing more unaccompanied trailer space to our growing customer base, as the industry seeks



solutions to the ongoing driver shortage.

"The larger vessels underline the need for the Southern Relief Road which will connect Warrenpoint Port directly to the main Belfast-Dublin motorway. Seatruck fully support this key piece of infrastructure."

Clare Guinness, Chief Executive of Warrenpoint Port said: "This is a significant investment by Seatruck Ferries and is a clear commitment to Warrenpoint Port and the wider Newry, Mourne and Down district, which will directly benefit from the increase in trade.

"We have a strong relationship with Seatruck and the port is supporting the company with the provision of additional terminal areas.

"Our recently launched Masterplan outlined our vision for the development of the port for benefit of the wider economy and community. Part of that strategy is to grow freight ferry volumes and this welcome announcement will assist the port in realising that vision."

The vessel switch follows exponential growth for Seatruck in recent years with unaccompanied trailer volumes rising by more than 250% since 2007.

Seatruck now operates 76 departures per week across three Irish Sea routes, moving around 20% of the total Irish Sea Roll on Roll off freight volumes.

In Heysham, Peel Ports has recently invested £10m in a new loading ramp to accommodate and improve the Seatruck Ferries operation.

The deployment of the two larger Flensburger-Schiffbau-Gesellschaft (FSG) series vessels which were built in Germany in 2012, will free up the current two 'P' series vessel built in 2008.

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Dublin

Heysham

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QUINN CEMENT POSITIONED FOR GROWTH IN UK MARKET

Quinn Cement, who have a long term deal with Warrenpoint port, have been transporting bulk cement to mainland Britain since 2012 from their Irish cement plant right on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

It is a location which is not only ideal for the sourcing of raw materials with minimum transport, given that most raw materials are sourced from directly outside the cement factory itself, but one which also screams export.

A position right on the border with Northern Ireland means that the Northern Irish and British markets are important elements of Quinn Cement's business. And then came Brexit.

The UK's imminent departure from the EU has presented a very real challenge to any EU country exporting to Britain, and Quinn Cement are no different. The challenge was to ensure the supply chain was strengthened to allow for stability and continued growth beyond Brexit.

Part of the solution to this challenge



was the creation of a new export terminal, dedicated initially to the export of bulk cement to mainland Britain. A two-year project came to fruition in 2017, with the opening of the new export hub at Warrenpoint in Northern Ireland.

The new terminal represents a ten-year deal with Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, a deal worth £2.5million. Quinn Cement ships to various ports across the UK from the new hub, and primarily to their cement terminal in Rochester

in the South-East of England.

The deal has certainly helped with the company's primary objective of strengthening the supply chain to Britain, and represents a firm commitment to the market post-Brexit. It has left Quinn Cement in a strong position to enhance competitiveness and sustainability in the longer term.

The supply to the South-East of England and greater London area has been fortified, a priority for Quinn Cement given the huge population-base and the volume of ongoing construction in the region. It's an area which seems to have escaped the negative effects of the recession on the construction industry.

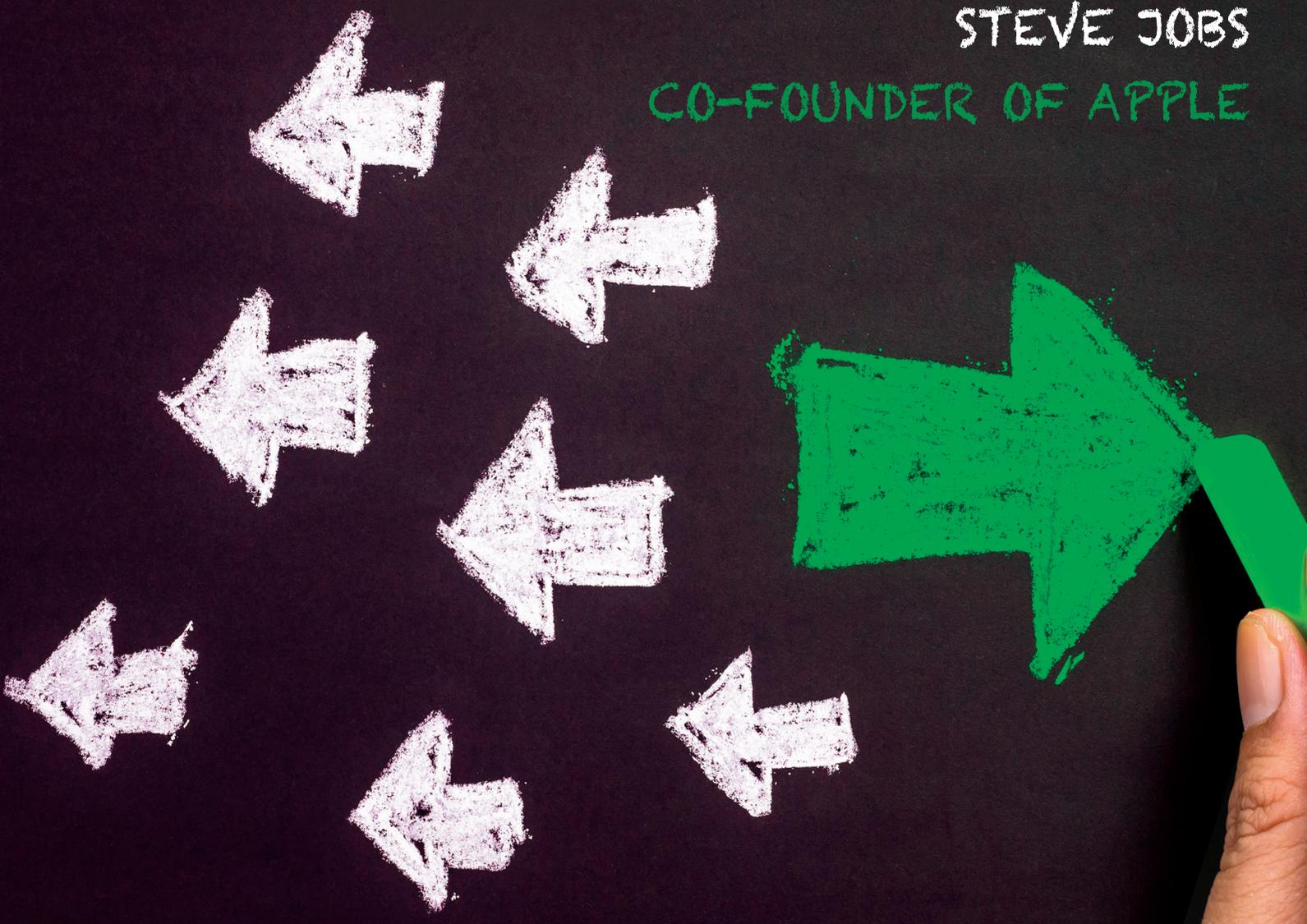
Add to this Quinn's recent expansion of their bagged cement range from one bagged product to six, and it's clear that the company is positioned for growth in the UK market, and is prepared to overcome the challenges Brexit will undoubtedly bring.

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