

News Release

September 18, 2008

FIRST MINISTER ANNOUNCES NEW FERRY SERVICE

Scotland's only year round ferry service to Europe will be continued as the Scottish Government and Forth Ports have secured a new operator to run the Rosyth-Zeebrugge service, First Minister Alex Salmond announced today.

The First Minister was speaking at the Forth Ports ferry terminal in Rosyth this morning where he announced that Norfolkline, part of the A.P. Moller-Maersk Group, would operate the Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry route following the previous operator's withdrawal.

Norfolkline will resume operation of the route in Spring 2009 to match the sailing schedule previously provided.

The First Minister said:

"Securing the continuation of this service is a real success story and hugely important to Scotland's economy. We have worked closely with Forth Ports to ensure Scotland maintains a direct ferry link to Europe and I am delighted to announce today that Norfolkline will now operate the Rosyth-Zeebrugge route.

"Maintaining connections with major European markets is vital for Scotland at a time of global economic challenges. In the six years this route has been operating, it has carried nearly one million passengers, 4.2m tonnes of freight and in 2005 generated around £3.4 million of tourism expenditure in Scotland.

"And of course by removing 1.38m lorry miles from Scotland's roads it is an important contribution to the fight against climate change.

"I have no doubt that Norfolkline will build on the success of this established ferry route. The partnership with Forth Ports has averted the loss of this vital transport link and instead given the many passengers, tourists and businesses who use this service, the reassurance to plan ahead with confidence.

“Today’s announcement is particularly welcome as we prepare for one of our busiest times yet – our year of homecoming in 2009 when we will welcome friends and family from around the globe back to Scotland, many of whom I am sure will arrive by Norfolkline’s ferry. I wish Norfolkline, Forth Ports, freight operators and the many passengers who will sail the Rosyth-Zeebrugge route, the very best.”

Charles Hammond, Group Chief Executive, Forth Ports PLC, said:

“The Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry is of vital strategic importance to Scotland and we are delighted that Norfolkline will be providing a world-class freight and passenger service to continental Europe beginning in Spring, 2009.

“There is a significant freight market that can be serviced by the Rosyth ferry and Norfolkline’s experience coupled with the vessel’s freight capacity will help to fulfill this potential. The new vessel will also offer environmental benefits.

“I would like to thank First Minister Alex Salmond and Minister Stewart Stevenson for their support and guidance and all the local MPs, MSPs and MEP who have assisted in finding a new operator.”

Kell Robdrup, the Managing Director of Norfolkline, Ferry Division, said:

“I am very happy to be here today to announce that Norfolkline will revive the Rosyth-Zeebrugge service starting next Spring.

“Norfolkline will run a passenger and freight service with three departures from each port every week. With the introduction of a brand new ferry, we hope to provide a comfortable and environmentally friendly crossing to our customers.

“I understand the importance of this service to the Scottish Public. Linking Scotland to the Continent is a very meaningful endeavour as this brings people and business in both sides closer.

“I hope that passengers, freight customers, and industries in Scotland and the Continent will lend us their support. I believe the close cooperation with all parties will make this service a success.

“I thank the Scottish Government and Forth Ports for their continuous support.”

NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS:

1. Operators, Superfast, announced in May 2008 that they were withdrawing from the Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry route

with the last sailing being from Rosyth on 13 September 2008.

2. Norfolkline is part of the A.P.Moller Maersk Group, and currently employs more than 2,200 people in 14 countries across the European continent, operating out of 35 different locations. In 2007, more than 2.0 million passengers used Norfolkline's ferry service across the English Channel and on the Irish Sea. Norfolkline also carried over 1.3 million freight units between ports throughout Europe.

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