



Express Delivery

The first shipment of new carriages from Korea signals an upgrading of the national train fleet, and a new age in Irish rail. Words: EOIN MURPHY

The first brand new carriages from Iarnród Éireann's record order of trains have arrived in Dublin Port, the first step in the transformation of Irish Rail.



In the longest journey the trains will ever have to make, the first 12 carriages arrived from Rotem's factory in Changwon, Korea on March 6. Minister for Transport Martin Cullen and CIÉ Chairman Dr. John Lynch were there to welcome the latest additions to Iarnród Éireann's ever-modernising fleet. Lynch was ebullient in his summary of Irish Rail's progress.

"The transformation of our rail service is extraordinary," he said. "We have

totally rebuilt our network, we have dramatically expanded commuter capacity, and now we are completing the task of a total renewal of our Intercity fleet."

This haul, along with 67 new trains from a previous order, already operating hourly services on the Dublin-Cork route, is moving Ireland's train service further into the 21st century. In fact, by the time the last of the 183-carriage order comes in, Ireland's rail fleet will have been transformed from the oldest fleet in Europe to the newest. This makeover comes at a cost however, with the new locomotives costing €400 million. This is being funded by the Irish Government under the Transport 21 investment programme.

The new trains will begin entering service on the Sligo-Dublin route this autumn after a period of testing and commissioning. The whole fleet will be delivered and phased into service through 2007 and 2008, resulting in



a much higher quality fleet of trains, more comfort and an increased frequency, with all the major intercity routes operating hourly at peak times and two-hourly off peak.

The new intercity trains will also have a knock-on effect for commuter routes. Existing modern carriages on the Sligo and Rosslare lines can now be redeployed on the Drogheda and Maynooth commuter lines as a result of the new trains. The continued growth of commuter towns means demand is at an all time high for trains to service these satellite towns. The new trains will also mean additional capacity and comfort for longer-distance commuter services from Carlow, Athlone and

Portlaoise.

Also, the new fleet will be the greenest diesel train fleet in Europe. The EU are set to impose strict emission limits for soot and nitrous oxides, limits which will not be enforced until 2009 and 2012 respectively, standards which Ireland's new fleet already meet.

The transformation of Ireland's train service from a decaying relic to a sparkling, progressive beacon of modernity is entirely commendable. The Irish railway service is the fastest growing railway in the European Union, which shows a conscientiousness and foresight not often associated with Irish bureaucracy – rail travel is the most environmentally sustainable form of travel and that demand is growing all the time for rail services, with 43.1 million journeys made on the country's rail network last year. Credit where credit is due, we now have a rail service of which we can be truly proud.

Getting There Really Is Getting Better!

Rail travel in Northern Ireland is improving all the time, with healthy punctuality and reliability figures as well as positive feedback from passengers.



The past few years have seen considerable change in the Northern Ireland rail service, notably the introduction of the new C3K fleet and a comprehensive staff customer service programme. Passenger journeys continue to increase too – up by over 10% since last year.

The rail network is extensively used by commuters and leisure travellers alike. Promotions aimed at day-trippers and shoppers are very popular. 1/3 off day return tickets* for off-peak travel every day of the week (after 9.30am) is available across the whole NI Railways local network until further notice. An attractive Fare Choice Offer* applies on Enterprise services to Dublin. This allows passengers to choose which trains they wish to travel on from as little as £10 Day Return. The current promotion runs until 31 May 2007. Further promotions will be available from the Translink website – www.translink.co.uk

Rail Results at the HSBC Rail Business Awards

NI Railways are celebrating after scooping three top national awards at the prestigious HSBC Rail Business Awards in London. Pronounced winner of the 'Rail PR Campaign of the Year' for their rail safety communications program 'Dead Cert', they also claimed Highly Commended citations in the categories Rail Marketing Campaign of the Year and Internal Communications Excellence.

Lynda Shannon, Communications Manager, said:

"The significant recognition NI Railways has achieved this year at the rail industry's flagship awards shows the company to be successfully performing in the same league as many of the largest rail companies in the United Kingdom, including Eurostar, London Underground, First and GNER.

"It is very fitting that our 'Dead Cert' campaign won the PR Campaign of the Year. The health and safety of our passengers and staff is of paramount importance at all times and to this end we are delighted to receive national recognition for our efforts to generate awareness of the key safety issues. We are also pleased that the customer service aspects of the new rail service and overall marketing campaign have been recognized, as delivery of this project has been a real team effort.

"We will continue to invest our skills and resources across the company



securing the support of our staff to enable us to provide further improvements where possible and build upon the quality and standards we have set, that have been so positively acknowledged by the rail industry."

Disability Access Improvement Works

Station works to improve disabled access are being carried out across the local NI Railways network from April 2007. Work on the Bangor to Newry line will take place between April and December 2007. New signage, shelters, lighting and seating will be introduced to most stations as well as re-surfacing work across the network. Some halts and stations will require new steps or ramps with a couple of key

stations having lifts installed. Disabled toilet facilities and new wheel-chair friendly ticket counters will also be added to stations between Botanic and Portadown.

It is envisaged that there will be minimal disruption during the works, but we ask NI Railways and Enterprise passengers to support us in our effort to deliver a better rail service for everyone.

**Promotional Offers are subject to availability & may be withdrawn at any time.*

