

RAIL FREIGHT The Way Forward in Ireland

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...Tim Casterton

At the Irish Exporters Association’s recent launch of its ‘Supply Chain Ireland’ initiative, key speaker Gerry Culligan, Commercial Director, Iarnród Éireann, outlined a bright future ahead for rail freight and explained how it can provide tangible economic and environmental benefits for Ireland.

In 2014 rail transported some 580,000 tonnes on 1,097 freight trains. Culligan explained that a growing

number of organisations are looking to make greater use of rail as part of their supply chain operations. With this in mind, Iarnród Éireann is looking to grow its market share from the current 1% to align with the pan-European trend of 4% share.

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was recorded in 2014, boosted from the recovering economy. Rail freight has performed well in the last couple of years, said Culligan, with a 97% service reliability, 92% punctuality.

THE GREEN AGENDA

Rail is able to offer a unique opportunity to move freight traffic in larger volumes. While some businesses look at rail purely from the fact that it is an economical way to move bulk loads, others, with an eye on the greener agenda, feel that it is good business sense to look to forms of transport where they can reduce their emissions profile.

It is widely acknowledged that rail is greener, with UK research confirming that it has up to one third of CO2 emissions generated compared to road haulage. So rail can play a valuable role in Ireland’s efforts to meet the agreed Kyoto level of carbon emissions.

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It was no coincidence that two of Iarnród Éireann’s biggest freight customers received awards at the Irish Logistics and Transport (ILT) Awards 2015. IWT (International Warehousing

and Transport) won the ‘Logistics Company of the Year’ award, having expanded to use rail for bulk hauls from Dublin Port to Mayo. With just two weekly services each way, IWT now utilises up to 14 trains each week on the route, loading at Dublin Port’s new rail terminal (opened in 2011) at Alexandra Basin and running through to the Ballina freight yard. This operation works well for IWT with trains able to handle efficiently all types of container traffic from ISO tanks to hi-cube 45’ boxes.

The ‘Green Mover of the Year’ award for an outstanding achievement in the reduction of environmental impact went to Coillte Woodflow, the forestry company that moves trainloads of pulpwood timber from Mayo (Westport and Ballina) to Waterford, from where it is processed at the Smartply factory and exported. At present around three trainloads