

## Stena Connecta arrives in Belfast Harbour

### ***Stena Line invests over £100m in expanding Belfast-Heysham freight service***

*Stena Connecta*, the latest purpose-built freight vessel commissioned by Stena Line for the Irish Sea has arrived in Belfast Harbour and is due to go into commercial service on the Belfast-Heysham route on 23rd January 2026.

The ship joins its sister vessel *Stena Futura* which went into service on the Belfast-Heysham service in October 2025 and together they offer an additional 40% freight capacity on the increasing popular trade route between Northern Ireland and Britain.

*Stena Connecta*, like *Stena Futura*, is a 'New Max' RoRo ship built for maximised freight capacity, with 2,848 lane metres across its 147-metre length. It uses a multi-hybrid propulsion system enabling the use of battery power, biofuel, and methanol. Uniquely the *Stena Futura* has two 28m x 4m Norsepower Rotor Sails™, designed to enhance energy efficiency and could deliver up to 9% fuel savings on its Irish Sea route between Belfast and Heysham. *Stena Futura* is also ready for rotor sail installation.

Paul Grant, Stena Line Irish Sea North Trade Director said: "Our significant investment in *Stena Connecta* and *Stena Futura*, more than £100m, demonstrates our strong confidence in the continued growth of the Irish Sea region and our commitment to strengthening trade and connectivity links.

In 2025 our Heysham – Belfast freight service recorded its highest volumes in the last 5 years with 113,000 units being shipped. These vessels were commissioned in response to this increasing customer demand for increased freight capacity on this route. Customer feedback on the recent introduction of *Stena Futura* has been extremely positive, and I have no doubt *Stena Connecta* will be equally well received across our customer base."

Paul Grant added: "When operational both vessels will offer a choice of up to 24 sailings per week on the increasingly popular Belfast-Heysham service. We are particularly pleased to introduce two of Stena Line's most advanced vessels to the Irish Sea region further enhancing Belfast's significance as a key network business hub.

These vessels represent the very latest in maritime technology and will not only play a crucial role in maintaining essential transport links in Ireland and the UK but also make a significant contribution to our sustainability goals of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 30 percent by 2030.”

**Michael Robinson, Port Director at Belfast Harbour said,** “We’re excited to welcome the second of Stena Line’s new hybrid vessels, *Stena Connecta*, to Belfast Harbour. Coming so soon after last year’s celebration of 30 years of Stena Line in Belfast and the launch of sister ship *Stena Futura*, this arrival underlines the strength of our partnership, which is essential for connecting people and transporting the goods we all rely on. Together with Stena Line, we’re connecting the island more reliably than ever and delivering long-term economic benefits for businesses across Northern Ireland.”

**Phillip Hall, Mersey Port Director, Peel Ports Group said:** “The additional freight capacity marks a very welcome reinforcement of the strong trade links between the UK and Ireland. The *Stena Connecta* and its sister vessel, the *Futura*, will also make the Irish Sea shipping corridor even greener. The North West of England has always played a big part in this special trade relationship, and we have recognised this with our £10m upgrade of the Port of Heysham, which we hope will continue to support Stena’s operations for years to come.”

**Heikki Pöntynen, CEO of Norsepower, commented:** “*Stena Connecta* is a strong example of how forward-looking vessel design can combine operational efficiency with tangible emissions reductions. By integrating Norsepower Rotor Sails™ alongside hybrid propulsion and alternative fuel readiness, Stena Line is demonstrating a practical, data-driven approach to decarbonising short-sea shipping. We are proud to support Stena Line and Stena RoRo in bringing scalable wind propulsion into everyday commercial operation on the Irish Sea.”

#### **Facts – Stena Connecta**

- **Length:** 147 m
- **Beam:** 26.3 m
- **Built:** 2023–2025, CMI Shipyard, Weihai, China
- **Passenger capacity:** 12
- **Crew:** 26
- **Height clearance:** 5.3 m
- **Width clearance:** 12 m

- **Freight capacity:** 2,848 lane metres
- **Route:** Belfast – Heysham (approx. 12 sailings per week)

Stena Line is the largest ferry operator on the Irish Sea, with the biggest fleet providing up to 242 weekly sailings offering the widest choice of routes including: combined passenger and freight services from Belfast to Cairnryan and Liverpool, Dublin to Holyhead, Rosslare to Fishguard, in addition to the dedicated freight only routes from Belfast to Heysham and Dublin - Liverpool.

## ENDS

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*Stena Line is one of Europe's leading ferry companies with approximately 40 vessels and 19 routes in Northern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, operating 25,700 sailings each year. Stena Line is an important part of the European logistics network and develops new intermodal freight solutions by combining transport by rail, road and sea. Stena Line also plays an important role in tourism in Europe with its extensive passenger operations. The company is family-owned, was founded in 1962 and is headquartered in Gothenburg. Stena Line has 6,200 employees and an annual turnover of 19.5 billion SEK. For more information, please visit [www.stenaline.com](http://www.stenaline.com)*