

€3m Ten-T funding round validates credibility of plans for developing Shannon Estuary into major economic hub

Funding will advance rail link regeneration and jetty infill project

Tuesday, 28 July 2015: The funding of €3million grant aid by the EU of two key Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) projects is a major validation of plans to transform the Shannon Estuary into a national economic corridor, the company CEO stated.



The successful SFPC application has seen the company receive €2.2m funding for its East Jetty Infill Programme at Foynes Port and a further €800,000 for its feasibility study for the regeneration of the rail link between Limerick and the port. The funding round is the first that SFPC will receive under the EU's Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) programme for transport infrastructure projects.

SFPC CEO Pat Keating said that the grant aid not alone provides key funding for two major projects essential for the delivery of the company's long-term masterplan Vision 2041, but is the most significant acknowledgement yet of the credibility of that plan and potential for advancing a major hub of economic activity along the estuary. He also said that progress must be maintained on the N69 upgrade, another key pillar of the company's masterplan.

Just one in three applications for the latest round of Ten-T funding was successful and SFPC also received the maximum level of funding allowed – 20% of jetty works total costs and 50% for feasibility studies - for each project, another significant indicator of confidence in the company's long-term plans for the estuary, said the CEO.

“Our Vision 2041 master-plan is all about capitalising on the unique advantage we have here on the estuary because of its unrivalled deep waters. Securing this funding is validation of Vision 2041 as a credible and achievable plan and clear acknowledgement by the EU authorities that the development of Foynes and the wider estuary is not just in the national but European strategic interest. The potential we have here on the Estuary is truly on a European scale.”

He continued, “Now that we have this recognition from the EU of the strategic importance of the Shannon Estuary and our ports, we must keep the momentum going. A key focus must be advancing the N69 project as to retain our Ten-T status in the long term we need to have a suitable road network and the N69, as it stands, is not fit for purpose.

“We have the deep water, are developing the quay-side infrastructure, are very confident about the rail link and the last piece in the jigsaw will be the N69 upgrade. All these pieces coming together would create a ready-made solution ripe for indigenous and foreign direct investment.”

The Ten-T programme is focussed on connecting member states through transport networks, removing bottle necks that hamper the smooth functioning of the internal market, overcoming technical barriers such as incompatible standards for railway traffic and promotes and strengthens seamless transport chains for passenger and freight.

The East Jetty Infill Project was launched by Minister for Transport and Tourism Paschal Donohoe at Foynes in January and work is already well advanced and due for completion next spring. It is the first phase in a seven year programme of quayside infrastructure development that will add over 35,000m² of additional berthage. The east-jetty redevelopment will enable the company berth 40,000 ton vessels directly alongside the quay, leading to faster turnaround times for customers and, in turn, creating significant opportunities for growing cargo handling on the jetty in line with those projected in Vision 2041.



SFPC has also advanced the feasibility study for the Limerick to Foynes rail link regeneration. The €1.6m study includes site surveys of 83 structures on the line – including level crossings, bridges, underpasses – and 25miles of track.

The study is due for completion in early 2017 and, subject to a

positive outcome, it is envisaged that work would commence later in the year and be completed by the end of 2018. SFPC envisages the rail servicing specific niche markets but it is clear that road will be the primary hinterland connection due to origin/destination distances to the port.

Mr Keating added: “This successful application has been a great outcome for us as it very clearly says we are on the right track. Our team put six exhaustive months into getting the application together and we look forward now on putting this grant aid to good work and making sure this is by no means the last round of Ten-T funding we secure. We have had a lot of support along the way and would like to thank and acknowledge, in particular, the commitment of the Minister for Transport Tourism & Sport Paschal Donohoe and his officials and everyone else who assisted us with these funding applications.”