

Joint Committee on Transport and Communications, 6th March 2024

Opening Statement, Steve Murphy, Chairperson, Iarnród Éireann

Cathaoirleach, members of the committee,

Thank you for your invitation to attend the committee today.

It is a genuine honour to have been nominated by the Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan TD to serve as the Chairperson of Iarnród Éireann, having joined the Board in August of last year. The pride I feel stems not only from my time with the company in the mid-2000s, which I'll expand on shortly, but also as the son of Irish parents from Limerick and Louth.

To open, I will give you a brief overview of my career history to date, and what I see as the priorities for the Board and I in the years ahead to support Iarnród Éireann to deliver for our customers and our stakeholders.

My railway career spans over three decades, having commenced as a British Rail Graduate trainee. I've had the privilege of serving in leadership roles with Chiltern Railways, Iarnród Éireann itself, Deutsche Bahn and London Overground, prior to becoming Managing Director of MTR Elizabeth line from 2014 to 2020, and as Chief Executive of MTR UK since October 2020.

To give you a little more detail on some of these roles, firstly as mentioned as General Manager, South and West with Iarnród Éireann from 2004 to 2007. This was a time when we introduced new fleet in the Mark IV Dublin to Cork service, expanded significantly to deliver an hourly service between the two cities, and saw both record passenger growth and improved punctuality performance.

As Managing Director London Overground Rail Operations from 2007 to 2012, I led the planning and delivery of services for London's hosting of the Olympic Games in 2012, including the critical Overground Line to Stratford and the Olympic Park.

I led MTR Elizabeth line (MTREL) as Managing Director, since its inception in 2015, achieving first place sector status for measurements as wide ranging as on time running, safety

standards, workplace diversity and customer service, and since 2020 I have led all aspects of the UK portfolio of Hong Kong-based MTR Corporation, bringing together railway operations, rail infrastructure and transport-focused property development.

As you will know from the Chief Executive's attendance at the committee in recent weeks, we are at a time of expansion, ambition and opportunity for Ireland's railways. To that end, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor as Chairperson Frank Allen, whose term concluded in December – Frank's wealth of experience was invaluable during this critical time, and I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with him on the Board during the final months of his tenure.

I also thank the entire Iarnród Éireann team led by Jim Meade as Chief Executive, who have done a brilliant job in developing our investment programmes, in putting the delivery teams together, and critically in building a consensus with stakeholders for the type of development we need for rail to be the backbone of Ireland's sustainable transport network.

With that investment programme and consensus, I see my priorities as centring around a number of key themes:

- Ensuring a focus on intelligent project and programme management. As we progress to the implementation phases of major programmes like DART+, Cork Area Commuter Rail and others, there will always be challenges and complexities. Planning for and anticipating these are essential for successful programme delivery, and to ensure we deliver on time and on budget. In particular, system integration must be a key area of focus: in the rail industry internationally, as we engage contractors across disciplines such as civil engineering, signalling and rolling stock, these systems must integrate to deliver a successful railway. Not only do we need to plan for this, but we must work collectively with suppliers, and bring them together, to ensure this is the case, and find solutions where needed.
- Programme clarity is critical also: what are our goals, what are the outcomes, how are we delivering to support sustainable development, to aid prosperity and social mobility is key. Too often, and this is an international phenomenon, we see in very

large-scale projects an absence of clear goals and outcomes. This will always bring with it enormous risk to all aspects of the planning and delivery of a programme of works, and we will therefore maintain that clarity for Iarnród Éireann projects.

- An intense focus on the customer proposition. Ultimately, from our current networks and services, to new trains, new infrastructure, new stations, coastal protection, development at Rosslare Europort: who is it all for? It is for our current and future customers. We must always ask: How do we deliver for them? What is our vision to make travelling by rail, moving goods by rail, using our port more attractive? How do we improve frequency to improve choice, how do we improve journey times to make switching to rail an easier decision? We are here to serve our customers and communities.

We also deliver as a team, and that extends to a range of critical stakeholders. Our workforce of over 4,600 across all our businesses, and our trade union colleagues, are central to this. A tremendous achievement in recent years has been to bring a new spirit of co-operation to play, which has ensured a stability to give our regulators and funders a confidence that we can deliver.

A seven-year pay and productivity agreement was achieved between Iarnród Éireann and our representative trade unions without recourse to the industrial relations machinery of the state. This did not happen in isolation. Iarnród Éireann offers its workforce not only a job, but the opportunity for a rewarding career, for progression. Our People Strategy prioritises health and wellbeing, and promotes equality and diversity. The support from across the political spectrum, from Government and the NTA gives confidence in turn to our people.

As Chairperson, I will of course work closely with the Minister for Transport, his Department officials, and ensure we align with strategies and public policy from Government, Department, and from a regulatory perspective the National Transport Authority, and Commission for Railway Regulation in all that we do. As well as the current investment programme under the National Development Plan and Project Ireland 2040, the All-Island

Strategic Rail Review will provide us with the type of framework and long-term vision essential to the development and delivery of strategic infrastructure.

I look forward to the opportunities and challenges ahead, and I am happy to take any questions you may have.