

Waterford-Rosslare rail line in stay of execution



Cyril Newsome of the Save The Rail (STR) group, who was unable to join his colleagues in a protest at Waterford Bus Station last Saturday due to the absence of wheelchair access on the Bus Éireann service from Rosslare Harbour to Waterford.

The apparently doomed Waterford to Rosslare railway line has been given a stay of execution, to the delight of the Save The Rail (STR) group which is lobbying for its retention.

The National Transport Authority (NTA), the ultimate arbiter with respect to the line's future, has yet to adjudicate on Iarnród Éireann's (IE) application to end the service between the Europort and the city.

On May 21st, IE stated its intention to close the line tomorrow (July 21st) but the NTA's deliberations means that the line stays open – for now.

“Therefore, the existing rail schedule will continue beyond July 21st until further notice,” reads a statement on the IE website “We will advise customers as soon as further information is available.”

In a letter to CIE Group Secretary Geraldine Finucane, fellow lobbyists Rail Users Ireland (RUI) have re-iterated “in the strongest manner possible” their opposition to the line's potential closure.

Following a meeting with IE on March 31st, RUI representatives revealed that the rail operator “was unwilling to make any effort to promote or provide through services on the site”.

The linking-up of services from Rosslare to the new Western Rail Corridor via Waterford and Limerick has been mooted by supporters of the line's retention in recent months. However, it would appear that their suggestions are falling upon deaf IE ears.

Interestingly, UK-based lobby group Rail Future, which is also a member of the European Passenger Federation, has also made a submission to the NTA.

In its contribution, Rail Future has highlighted the importance of the rail/sail option linking South Wales with the south east, a potential holiday making link which IE has paid scant attention to.

In the RUI letter to CIE, spokesperson Mark Gleeson claims that IE has failed to meet standards “as laid down in the contract between IE and the NTA” while also breaching its own customer charter.

Calling for IE’s May 21st notice to be withdrawn, Mr Gleeson states: “The NTA has not given its assent to the proposed withdrawal of service and it is understood that the earliest decision will be September 2010...”

“We are not alone in considering taking a legal challenge against this proposed closure. Such a formal legal challenge would result in an indefinite delay to closure.”

Meanwhile, the STR group, which held a protest at Waterford Bus Station on Saturday last, had to travel from Rosslare without one of its members - Cyril Newsome, who uses a wheelchair.

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