



The Competition Authority

An tÚdarás Iomaíochta

NEWS RELEASE

17th February 2004

Stena's proposed acquisition of P&O's assets on the Irish Sea formally withdrawn

The Competition Authority announced today (17th February) that the proposed acquisition by Stena of P&O's Dublin/Liverpool and Larne/Fleetwood routes on the Irish sea has been formally withdrawn by the parties. As part of the transaction P&O was due to close its Dublin/Mostyn service. As a result of the parties' action, the Authority will not proceed to issue a final determination on the matter.

Since 4th December 2004, the Authority has undertaken a full investigation of the proposed transaction. Based on extensive information obtained from customers, port authorities, competitors and other interested parties, a detailed Assessment was issued to the parties on 26th January 2004. The Assessment identified serious competitive concerns on the Dublin/Liverpool and Dublin/Mostyn routes. The Authority was concerned that the transaction could raise the prices of freight and transport services for goods shipped via ferry to and from Ireland to the detriment of Irish businesses and consumers.

The withdrawal of the notice to the Authority was preceded by a decision by the UK Competition Commission on 5th February 2004 that it was not allowing the transaction under similar UK merger legislation.

The Competition Authority was notified of the proposed acquisition on 7th November 2003. After a preliminary investigation lasting one month (Phase 1) the Authority was unable to conclude, without further investigation, that the transaction would not substantially lessen competition. The Competition Authority announced on 4th December that it would carry out a full investigation (Phase 2) in relation to the proposed acquisition.

ENDS

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