

Green light for Interferry conference following COVID review

Interferry directors have given the green light for the global trade association's 2021 annual conference to go ahead as planned in Santander, Spain, this October. Delegate registration will open on June 1.

The decision came at a virtual board meeting held today (20 May 2021) after detailed consideration of current and forecast advances in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome was fully supported by Interferry chairman and president Christophe Mathieu, the CEO of event host Brittany Ferries.

In line with the customary long-term planning of such events, Santander was confirmed as the venue in February 2019 - a full year before the coronavirus outbreak – but a decision on whether or not to proceed has been on hold for months while worldwide counter-measures were monitored by Interferry, which has a membership of 260 operators and suppliers in 40 countries.

CEO Mike Corrigan comments: "Last year we were due to convene in Hobart, Australia, but the pandemic forced us to cancel for the first time in our 45-year history. Hobart will now host the 2023 event. Meanwhile there is pent-up demand from industry professionals to reconnect at what is the ferry community's longest established conference. We have to balance that with the obvious priority of safety first, but the outlook is now so much better that we feel increasingly comfortable with our intention to stage this year's event."

On COVID issues, Interferry has been encouraged by the vaccination rate in the developed world, which is on track to approach herd immunity levels in the coming months. The inoculation programme is well under way in Spain and the country is already poised for the imminent return of international visitors. In particular, Santander is the capital of Cantabria, a region on Spain's north coast where cases of infection have been markedly low, and conference sessions will take place in the impressive Santander Convention Centre, where safety protocols include ample social distancing space.

A further factor behind Interferry's decision is the European Union's proposed Digital Green Certificate, which is scheduled for adoption by June, and similar initiatives to facilitate safe international travel. The voluntary, free of charge certificate will prove that travellers have been vaccinated against COVID-19, or received a negative test result or recovered from the disease, making travel procedures far easier for those with the documentation.

Organisational activity is now in full swing for the 45th annual edition of what is universally regarded as a must-attend conference, networking and social events agenda.

Themed as 'The Future is Ferries', the two-day speakers' programme will be at the heart of an event running from October 2-6, with featured sessions on GHG emissions reductions, ship design innovations, safety issues, attracting tomorrow's customers and supply chain logistics.

Brittany Ferries – which has served Santander since 1978 - operates two UK-Santander routes via Portsmouth and Plymouth, which are among an extensive service network connecting multiple ports in the UK, Republic of Ireland, France and northern Spain.

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