



Almost 10,000 Older People Have Already Declared Interest In New All-Ireland Free Travel Scheme

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan TD, today announced that almost 10,000 older people have already declared their interest in obtaining Senior Smartpass cards for the new unrestricted All-Ireland Free Travel scheme which began from last Monday (2nd April).

Over 7,000 senior citizens in the Republic have submitted completed application forms for the electronic cards and almost 3,000 have requested application forms in recent days.

Under the new scheme, travel in the Republic will be facilitated for Northern Ireland customers using their current Senior Smartpass as a flash-pass. Customers from the Republic wishing to avail of the free travel concession in the North require a similar electronic Senior Smartpass which must be applied for through the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The All-Ireland Free Travel initiative offers for the first time a seamless all-island, North and South, scheme that opens-up unrestricted travel opportunities for tens of thousands of older people in every part of Ireland. The new scheme will allow seniors (those aged 66 and over) resident in the Republic of Ireland to travel free of charge on all bus and rail services in Northern Ireland. Likewise, seniors (over 65) in Northern Ireland will travel free on bus, rail, air and ferry services participating in the Free Travel scheme in the Republic of Ireland.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

In the Republic, more than 430,000 of the 600,000 customers who are in receipt of free travel are aged 66 or over. Current annual expenditure on the scheme is more than €58 million. In the North, some 200,000 senior citizens qualify under the Concessionary Fares Scheme.

Minister Brennan said: "The numbers applying within such a short space of time clearly reflects the popularity of the all-island scheme which is now finally underway after many years of negotiations and discussions. It is an initiative that will help to build new understandings and friendships throughout the island. In many ways it is about more than just new unrestricted travel arrangements, it is a facility that will allow the older people of the island to gain a deeper understanding of each other's part of the country. It is also a recognition, and a gesture of gratitude, to all of our older people who have contributed so much over so many years to the building and shaping of the modern, progressive island we have today".

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