

WILLIE WALSH

Willie Walsh became chief executive of International Airlines Group (IAG) in January 2011, joining from British Airways where he was chief executive from October 2005.

IAG is the parent company of British Airways and Iberia. It is one of the world's largest airline groups with more than 400 aircraft flying to 200 destinations and carrying more than 55 million passengers each year.

At British Airways, Willie guided the company to its first-ever 10 per cent operating margin in 2007 and introduced permanent changes across the airline to bring it through the worst recession in aviation history in 2008/9. He secured the airline's long-term strategic objective to establish a transatlantic joint business with American Airlines and Iberia and set up the merger with Iberia that led to the formation of IAG.

Prior to joining British Airways, he was chief executive at Aer Lingus, a position he was appointed to in the aftermath of 9/11. Faced with bankruptcy and heavy losses, Willie radically restructured the airline and this culminated in it posting an €107 million profit in 2004, making Aer Lingus the most profitable state-owned airline in the western world.

Born in Dublin in 1961, Willie joined Aer Lingus in 1979 as a cadet pilot and worked his way through the ranks to become a captain in 1990. He began his move to management in 1989 where he fulfilled various roles in the flight operations department. He completed a Master of Science in Management and Business Administration at Dublin's Trinity College in 1992.

His managerial skills led him to being appointed chief executive of Futura, Aer Lingus' Spanish charter airline in 1998. He returned to Dublin with Aer Lingus in 2000 where he took up the role of chief operating officer and was subsequently appointed as chief executive in October 2001.

Willie is married with one daughter. He enjoys all sports, especially football and golf.