THE UK RAIL REPORT 2020
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- Development

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## 15. REFERENCES
**Government**

The railway is managed and operated by NI Railways, a subsidiary Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC). NITHC is a public corporation established under the Transport Act (NI) 1967 to oversee the provision of public transport in Northern Ireland and is also the holding company for Metro (formerly Citybus) and Ulsterbus. Collectively the three operating companies are branded Translink ([www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)).

The Department for Infrastructure provides capital grants to Translink for Northern Ireland Railways to operate rail services. The funding helps maintain and develop the rail infrastructure and rolling stock. The Public Transport Services Division of the Department with a body called Transport NI approves and monitors the capital grants allocated to Translink.

In October 2015 Translink commenced a five-year contract to provide public transport services in Northern Ireland, the first time such a contract has been placed.

**NI Railways**
Website: [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

**Organisation**
Unlike the railway in Great Britain, NI Railways is vertically integrated, responsible both for infrastructure and operations. Its track is of the broader 1,600 mm gauge in common with the network of the neighbouring Irish Republic, with which it connects south of Newry. NI Railways is diesel-operated and carries mainly passenger traffic, with just occasional freight services between Belfast and the Republic. NI Railways works closely with its counterpart in the Republic, Iarnród Éireann, notably on the joint operation of the high-frequency 'Enterprise' express service linking Belfast and Dublin. Passenger traffic overall has grown steadily, reflecting the economic growth that resulted from an improved political environment and investments in the network.

The recent increases in rail passenger numbers have continued, with passenger journeys during the year reaching 15.8 million, the highest in NI Railways’ 50-year history, representing growth of 11.3% over two years.

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<td>Passenger journeys (million)</td>
<td>13.2</td>
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**Railways Passenger Usage**

![Graph showing passenger journeys over years](image_url)
Development

A significant recent development was the introduction in 2011-12 of 20 three-car C4K DMUs supplied by the Spanish company CAF against a £105 million contract under Translink’s ‘New Trains 2’ programme. They replaced 13 older units, increasing service frequencies and capacity in the greater Belfast area and on the Belfast-Londonderry line. CAF had earlier supplied 23 similar three-car C3K DMUs. There is an option with CAF, exercisable up to 2018, to procure additional intermediate cars under the ‘New Trains 3’ proposal.

Infrastructure projects include the second phase of the renewal of the 33½-mile Coleraine-Derry-Londonderry section, provision of a passing loop and resignalling. Work on the £30 million first phase of this scheme was completed in 2013. Subsequent phases will see completion of the project, costed at around £75 million overall, by 2021. In 2015 Babcock Rail was awarded a second phase contract valued at £30 million to provide signalling and telecommunications systems for the line.

Rolling stock expenditure is mainly focused on overhauls of the Class 3000 and 4000 CAF-built DMUs. In December 2018, Northern Ireland Railways announced that 21 additional carriages would be purchased from CAF at the cost of £50m, via an option in the existing Class 4000 train procurement contract. They are scheduled to be delivered during 2021, with all the sets in service by autumn 2022.

Other longer-term plans and aspirations include upgrading signalling, ongoing work to create a Belfast Transport Hub to raise capacity, more track renewals and reopening the (Lisburn)-Knockmore-Antrim line, which is currently out of use.