



Department for
**Regional
Development**

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Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy

May 2014

Ministerial Foreword

In the last few years, there has been a significant upturn in rail passenger growth in Northern Ireland. Passenger numbers have almost doubled since 2002. Whilst our railway service is not extensive, its role is increasing as a travel mode of choice in our transportation network.

In 2013, I published a consultation paper inviting views on what should be the priorities for future investment in our railways network. This attracted a wide variety of informed responses from which I have developed this Strategy setting out a vision and strategic direction for future railways investment over the next 20 years and beyond.

It will be important, in the present period of public expenditure restraint, to use whatever resources are available to sustain and make best use of the current railway system. However, I am convinced that rail travel can offer a safe, comfortable and efficient option, particularly for commuters and inter-city passengers. As and when additional resources become available, we should be ready to develop our rail network where there is the greatest potential for further passenger growth. This Strategy offers such a robust approach.

I am particularly keen to extend the option of rail travel to commuters from mid-Ulster and to populations in the south and west within the catchments of Armagh and Dungannon. However, progress will depend on the amount of funding that can be made available from the Executive's budget and, where possible, from European grant programmes.

If delivered, this ambitious Strategy would allow for a significant enhancement of existing rail capacity, preparation for the future electrification of the network and the first major extensions to the railway since the closing of lines following the Benson Report in 1963.

Danny Kennedy MLA

Minister for Regional Development

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RAILWAY INVESTMENT PRIORITISATION STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. During 2013, the Department for Regional Development (“The Department”) carried out a public consultation on how we should take forward and prioritise future investment in the Northern Ireland railway network up to 2035. Following consideration of the consultation responses, this paper sets out:
 - a strategic direction for future railway investment over the next 20 years; and
 - high level initiatives to be delivered in support of that strategic direction.
- ii. An overview of the priority themes and associated key projects is set out in table 1 below.¹
- iii. In considering future investment, it must be acknowledged that while Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) owns and operates the network, rail does not generate surplus revenue. NIR is therefore dependent upon railways capital grant from the Executive to maintain and improve the track, rolling stock and other assets. For that reason, progress in delivering this strategy will depend upon the amount of funding that can be made available from the Executive’s budget.
- iv. In the current budget period, the Executive is providing railways capital grant at an average rate of £44 million per annum. If this level of investment in our railways is maintained over the 20 years following 2015, that would equate to a potential expenditure of £880 million at today’s prices. Whilst there are no guarantees in the present period of public expenditure restraint that this rate of investment can be maintained, it is important to note that it is estimated that some £620 million could be required just to maintain the current track network and rolling stock fleet. That would limit the resources that could be made available for enhancement or expansion.

¹ When reference is made to specific railway projects within the strategy, this does not indicate a firm commitment to budget support by the Department. Each project will require completion of a satisfactory economic appraisal/business case before funding approval can be given.

- v. While recognising the constraints on public funding, the initiatives identified in this paper have the potential to transform our rail network. The measures and strategic direction set out in this paper would significantly increase the capacity of our rail network, lay the foundations for its future electrification and facilitate the first significant expansion in that network for over 50 years.

TABLE 1 OVERVIEW OF THE PRIORITY THEMES AND ASSOCIATED KEY PROJECTS

<p>Priority 1: To maintain and improve passenger capacity of the existing track network, rolling stock and other assets.</p> <p>Projects will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay • Track relays between Coleraine and Antrim and at Lurgan station • A rolling programme of track rehabilitation and signalling upgrades • Refurbishment of the Enterprise rolling stock • A programme of refurbishment of the Class 3000 and 4000 trains • Refurbishing stations and halts including Adelaide, Ballymena, Londonderry and Lurgan • Purchase of up to 60 extra carriages • A programme of new park and ride facilities • Development of new halts, particularly where linked to park and ride facilities • Passenger information and ticketing projects <p>Projects will be delivered to allow for eventual electrification of the network in the longer term.</p>
<p>Priority 2: To remove bottlenecks to service improvements and to assist development along the TEN-T Core Network Corridor.</p> <p>Projects will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third track from Adelaide to Great Victoria Street to serve the new Transport Hub • Dualling of Dargan viaduct and Donegall Quay halt • Third line from Lagan Junction to Central Station
<p>Priority 3: To enhance or extend the TEN-T Comprehensive Network.²</p> <p>Projects will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of the Northern Line between Bleach Green and Antrim • Feasibility studies into longer term extensions of the network on following routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - along the A6 corridor between Antrim and Castledawson roundabout - along M1/A4 or A3/A29 corridors towards Dungannon/Armagh - to serve Belfast International Airport

² Although listed as Priority 3, the Department will be progressing the case for feasibility studies recognising the importance of new railway links felt by many people

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 ***Future Railway Investment: A Consultation Paper*** was published on 14th January 2013.³ This put forward a number of options for railways investment and sought the views of the public and various stakeholders on the prioritisation of that and any other strategic direction of investment in future budget rounds over the period 2015 – 2035. The consultation closed on 12th April 2013.
- 1.2 A summary of responses received was published in July 2013.⁴ The majority of respondents considered that the most important spending priority should be to maintain existing tracks and services, followed by measures to improve passenger capacity on the existing internal networks and work to move potential bottlenecks, thereby increasing network capacity and accommodating more trains.
- 1.3 There was a measure of support to enhance the cross –border Enterprise Service but also a view that electrification and development of a high speed intercity service should be deferred. Indeed, whilst there was recognition that electrification of the entire network is a desirable aim, in terms of operating efficiency and environmental benefits, most respondents regarded it as a longer term ambition due to the significant costs involved.
- 1.4 Beyond that, the consultation yielded a variety of suggestions for line extensions and new stations or halts. However, there was no widespread consensus of support for a prioritisation of these over the preferred options outlined above in 1.2.
- 1.5 Since the consultation there have key developments in relation to passenger growth and decisions on the TEN-T Network⁵. These are set out below.

³ *“Future Railway Investment: a consultation paper”* Department for Regional Development January 2013.
<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/publications-details.htm?docid=8604>

⁴ *“Future Railway Investment: a summary of consultation responses”* Department for Regional Development, July 2013.
http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/sustainable_transport_branch/future-railway-investment-consultation.htm

⁵ Trans European Network (Transport) TEN-T (Annex B)

- 1.6 The “Future Railway Investment” consultation included projections of passenger growth to the Northern Ireland network to reach 14.5 million per annum by 2035 from a baseline of 11.4 million in 2011/12 (Annex A: Figure 2). It noted that a further network enhancement could push usage above this level, within a tolerance limit of +/- 10%.
- 1.7 In the last few years there has been a significant upturn in the rate of passenger growth on internal services and, in 2013/14, NIR has carried a record 13.2 million passengers. Annex A provides statistics on the rate of passenger growth and includes a graph of trends in usage of each line on the network between 2001 and 2014.
- 1.8 Should the upturn in the growth rate since 2011/12 continue beyond 2015/16, instead of easing to the more moderate level forecast in the consultation paper, the long term passenger forecasts for the network will need revision. There will be an opportunity for a review of the forecasts in NIR’s planned “Network Utilisation Strategy”, which will be prepared in support of the Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy and in line with EU requirements.
- 1.9 The implications of faster growth would not impact on the broad priorities for investment as set out in the Department’s Strategy. However, it could have a bearing on the timing of projects from the purchase of new rolling stock or tackling bottlenecks to the operation of longer and more frequent trains.
- 1.10 The Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) Regulations confirmed the railway line from Belfast to Cork as part of the European core network. The lines from Belfast to Londonderry and Belfast to Larne were confirmed as part of the European comprehensive network. (see Annex B)
- 1.11 Within the negotiations that led to the adoption of TEN-T and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Regulations, the Department for Regional Development won important exemptions pertaining to infrastructure requirements for our rail network. The most significant of these is the securing of Isolated Rail Network status. This status exempts Northern Ireland from otherwise mandatory

compliance with requirements aimed at standardising infrastructure connections across mainland Europe. The CEF budget for 2014-20 provides a total of €26.25 billion for the transport sector, although a significant portion of this is reserved for cohesion countries⁶ and will not, therefore, be open to Northern Ireland funding bids.

⁶ Cohesion countries are defined as *those Member States whose GNI per capita, measured in PPS and calculated on the basis of Union figures for the period 2008 - 2010, is less than 90 % of the average GNI per capita of the EU-27 for the same reference period.* <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303>

2. RAILWAY INVESTMENT PRIORITY THEMES

- 2.1 The consultation paper set out 8 investment options or packages. Having considered the responses to the public consultation, the Department has adopted the following strategy for the prioritisation of its investment in railways capital grant over the 20 year period to 2035.
- 2.2 The first priority will be to **maintain, and improve passenger capacity of, the existing track network, rolling stock and other assets**. An on-going programme of maintenance will reduce the potential for speed restrictions and avoid delays and reductions in the level of service on the existing timetable. It will also extend the operating life of rolling stock and other assets. Measures to improve passenger capacity of the existing network will enable NIR to respond to any further increases in passenger demand and it is anticipated that a range of projects will come forward over the 20 years.
- 2.3 The second priority will be **to remove bottlenecks to service improvements and to assist development along the TEN-T Core Network corridor** ⁷from Belfast to the border. In addition to meeting the commitment to improve the Core Network between Belfast and Cork, measures will also benefit further development of the TEN-T Comprehensive Network due to the linkage of those local commuter lines with the Core Network.
- 2.4 In addition, should available funding permit, the Department would support projects **to enhance or extend the Comprehensive Network**, focusing on those transportation corridors where there are the most favourable opportunities for passenger growth.
- 2.5 The strategy does not envisage **electrification** of the Northern Ireland network within its timeframe. However, in step with GB and European railway services, the Department recognises the efficiency and environmental benefits which a move to electrification could bring. The strategy, therefore, expects that

⁷ Trans European Network (Transport) TEN-T (Annex B)

investment in priority projects will make provision for eventual electrification of the network in the longer term.

- 2.6 The strategy does not envisage a demand for the development of rail freight facilities or new rail links to the ports within the time frame. Whilst moving freight on to rail and off road is a key objective of EU and UK Transport Policy, it is recognised that rail freight only becomes commercially viable when transporting large volume of goods over longer distances, usually greater than 400 kilometres.
- 2.7 This is possibly reflected in the fact that, since 2003, no freight has been carried on the NIR Network and there has been little interest demonstrated by business investors in developing freight services.
- 2.8 The following section considers each of the priority areas in more detail.

3 OVERVIEW OF PRIORITY THEMES

PRIORITY 1: MAINTAIN, AND IMPROVE PASSENGER CAPACITY OF, THE EXISTING NETWORK

- 3.1 The first priority of the strategy is to maintain and improve the passenger capacity of the existing track network, rolling stock and other assets. Where an ageing track infrastructure is not properly maintained, this can lead to the imposition for safety reasons of speed restrictions with consequences for timetabling, journey times and the quality of service. Failure to maintain infrastructure and services to at least a minimum standard would also impact on the delivery of improvements sought by other priority projects.
- 3.2 If a spending programme to maintain the existing rail network over the next 20 years can be underpinned, a joint priority will be to improve the capacity of services on that network to stimulate passenger demand and encourage modal shift. A range of measures was suggested in the consultation document as to how such enhancement might be achieved to make best use of existing assets.
- 3.3 Paragraphs 3.4 to 3.10 list the maintenance projects identified by NIR and paragraphs 3.11 to 3.19 set out the potential enhancement measures.

Track Maintenance

- 3.4 NIR has advised that the following track works will be necessary during the 20 year timeframe of the strategy to ensure maintenance of the existing network.
- Completion of the Coleraine to Londonderry relay
 - Relay of the track between Coleraine and Antrim
 - Relay of the track through Lurgan station
 - Track rehabilitation of the following lines:
 - Knockmore to Lurgan
 - Yorkgate to Bleach Green
 - Portadown to the border
 - Belfast to Bangor

- Belfast to Lisburn
 - Bleach Green to Kilroot
 - Bleach Green to Monkstown and
 - Coleraine to Portrush
- Safety improvement to User Worked Level Crossings
 - Upgrading signalling infrastructure and establishing a centralised control
 - Renewal of track laying and maintenance equipment.

3.5 To determine the required expenditure profile for a track maintenance budget over the 20 years, it will be necessary for NIR to bring forward a phased and costed programme for the works listed. It is expected that this will be developed in connection with the proposed Network Utilisation Strategy.

Rolling Stock

3.6 The coaches and locomotives for the cross border Enterprise Service are jointly provided by NIR and Irish Rail. Each company owns two 7 car sets. The Enterprise trains are now 17 years old and a refurbishment programme has already begun. An overhaul of the mechanical system and interiors of the rolling stock was completed in 2009.

3.7 A further phase is planned and the companies have secured funding from the EU Interreg Programme with a view to completing refurbishment early in the strategy period. It is planned that the interior works will meet the requirement for passengers with disabilities, update safety and modernise passenger comfort to create a new train effect for the remainder of the operating life.

3.8 The design life of the Enterprise rolling stock is around 30 years. Decisions will need to be taken jointly between the railway companies and the two Governments about replacement within a long term plan to upgrade the Belfast-Dublin line, which is likely to involve electrification. During the strategy period, it is likely that the railway companies will seek European funding to carry out a feasibility study of longer term options.

3.9 Whilst the recently purchased 23 Class 3000 and 20 Class 4000 trains have greatly enhanced the quality of service on the internal network, over the next 20 years they will require refurbishment. To plan for this and to ensure that adequate funding is available, NIR will need to develop a rolling programme that can be added to the maintenance "baseline".

Stations

3.10 NIR has early plans for station upgrades and refurbishment at Lurgan, Ballymena, Adelaide and Londonderry. These works will include accessibility and safety features. Should similar work be required at other stations and halts later in the strategy period, it is expected that a programme will come forward from work on the Network Utilisation Strategy.

Park and Ride

3.11 In recent years the number of parking spaces and park and ride sites at stations has been increased. They have attracted new passengers to travel by rail and are extensively used across the network. Adding to park and ride facilities was seen by many respondents to the consultation as a necessity to grow passenger numbers.

3.12 In line with this, NIR has plans to introduce new or additional parking spaces at the following stations:

- Bangor
- Moira
- Ballymoney
- Holywood
- Cullybackey
- Ballymena
- Portadown
- Lurgan
- Mossley West
- Whiteabbey

3.13 The phasing of these schemes will be governed by the process of land acquisitions and planning approval as well as the availability of funding. The Department will work with NIR to develop a phased programme within its wider Park and Ride Strategy. Depending on success, further sites may be added to the programme in later years.

3.14 In addition, opportunities to develop out-of-town rail based park and ride at new halts will also be explored.

New Halts

3.15 The consultation response attracted a significant number of suggestions for new halts of various locations across the network. Developing new halts where a viable passenger demand can be identified, particularly where associated with park and ride facilities can help and stimulate more rail usage. At present, NIR has plans to explore the potential for or to develop further halts at the locations below. This list may be added to where further passenger demand emerges during the Strategy period.

- Ballymartin
- Lisburn West
- Belfast, Donegall Quay
- Craigavon
- Eglinton/Ballykelly

Additional Railway Carriages

3.16 Extra network capacity to attract more passengers can be achieved by adding more carriages to existing trains or by introducing new services to the timetable. However, to achieve this will require NIR to purchase additional carriages. NIR is already experiencing standing passengers on some services throughout the day.

3.17 NIR is considering a “New Trains Three” project which would add up to 60 extra carriages to the fleet at a cost of around £100million. This could allow train capacities to be extended to up to 6 car configurations. To achieve economies of scale, NIR would prefer to deliver the project as a single procurement.

3.18 The timing of such a major procurement is a key issue for development of the Department’s railways capital grant programme. Given current rates of passenger growth, NIR is pressing for the “New Trains Three” project to be given priority in the early budget rounds of the 20 year Strategy. As a single procurement, this would be a significant budget pressure in the short term and the implications of a phased approach will need to be considered. It is noted that on some lines, the introduction of longer trains or additional services will be dependent upon the removal of certain track bottlenecks.

Passenger Information and Ticketing

3.19 As well as better station comfort, connectivity and improved stations and parking, issues such as good journey information, integrated timetables and through ticketing are just as important in attracting new passengers and making rail travel an enjoyable experience for existing passengers. A number of projects are already underway or at the planning stage. NIR has developed new journey planning facilities and passenger information through the internet and a smart phone app. Planning has begun for an Integrated Ticketing project which aims to link ticket products across all public transport modes. Further projects linked to ticketing are expected in the coming years.

PRIORITY 2: TEN-T NETWORK: REMOVING BOTTLENECKS

3.20 The railway line from Belfast to Cork, through Dublin has been designated as a “Core Network Corridor” of the European TEN-T Network. The European Commission has set aside funds to assist projects on the Core Network to:

- Remove bottlenecks;
- Build missing cross-border connections; or
- Promote modal integration and interoperability.

- 3.21 This includes a focus on integrating nearby urban areas more closely with the core corridor and promoting more integrated and innovative transport solutions.
- 3.22 The “Future Railway Investment” consultation paper has already identified a number of bottlenecks on the network in and around Belfast which will place a limitation on enhancing timetables and services, not only on the cross-border Enterprise Service but also on services elsewhere on the network.
- 3.23 The key constraints to growth are likely to occur on the tracks within Belfast accessing Great Victoria and Central Stations and where the northern lines cross the River Lagan at Dargan Bridge to access the city centre sections.
- 3.24 The single track between Lagan Junction and York Gate Station crossing the Lagan places a restriction on the frequency of services that link both the Londonderry and Larne lines with the TEN-T Core Network. A dualling of this stretch of track would also allow accommodation of a new halt at Donegall Quay linking a relocated University of Ulster campus at York Street, a new major growth node, with the rail network.
- 3.25 Also, the current railway station and Europa Buscentre at Great Victoria Street are too small to meet current passenger demand and do not have the capability to interface with the new Belfast Rapid Transit Plan. On the site, Translink has proposed the development of a new multi modal transport interchange: the Belfast Transport Hub. It is proposed that the Belfast Transport Hub will become the Belfast terminus for the Enterprise Service operating on the TEN-T Core Network. Translink is currently considering the most beneficial way to fund development of the Hub, including private sector involvement.

Adelaide to Great Victoria Street Third Track

- 3.26 Development of the Belfast Transport Hub is likely to involve the laying of a third track on that stretch of the Belfast - Lisburn line which runs between Adelaide Halt and the current Great Victoria Street Station. This will enable additional timetabling of trains on this section of line and allow more rapid

3.27 The specific project requirements for this scheme will be established within NIR's Network Utilisation Strategy and phasing is likely to be delivered in conjunction with completion of the Belfast Transport Hub, the funding and timetable for which, have still to be determined.

Dualling of Dargan Viaduct and Donegall Quay Halt

3.28 A feasibility study has been completed for the dualling of Dargan Bridge. This has found a need to strengthen the support foundations of the viaduct and the placing of a new wider deck over the bridge to carry a second track. The track dualling is expected to coincide with the Department's plans to upgrade the Westlink - York Road - M2 road junction, also a bottleneck on the TEN-T Core Corridor. The benefits of the Dargan Viaduct dualling for improved timetabling on the Londonderry and Larne lines are interlinked with successful completion of the Belfast Transport Hub.

Lagan Junction to Central Station Third Line

3.29 A feasibility study will also examine the potential costs and benefits of providing an additional line between Lagan Junction, where the Bangor line connects with the Larne and Londonderry lines, and Central Station. This section of track is extremely heavily trafficked. Again, relief of this potential bottleneck would help with improved timetabling of services into Belfast linking with the TEN-T Core Network.

3.30 All of the above projects would appear to meet the objectives of the TEN-T Core Network initiatives and may attract grant aid from the Connecting Europe Facility.

PRIORITY 3: ENHANCING THE TEN-T COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK

3.31 Outwith the Belfast to Dublin corridor, most of the remainder of Northern Ireland's rail network, from Belfast to Londonderry and Larne is designated as part of the TEN-T Comprehensive Network.

Enhancement of the Northern Line

3.32 The consultation document identified one of the potential bottlenecks, which would limit more frequent timetabling or shortening the journey times of services on the Northern Line (Belfast to Londonderry), as the existing single track operation between Bleach Green and Antrim and Ballymena. This problem could be compounded if traffic along the corridor were to increase as a result of a line extension along the M2/A6 (see 3.41). However, there are two possible solutions:

- Dualling of the existing single line track between Bleach Green and Antrim: or
- Re-opening the Antrim to Knockmore/Lisburn line.

3.33 Whilst the dualling option would provide commuting passengers with a more direct route to and from Belfast, NIR recognise that re-opening Antrim – Knockmore could be used to decant some Northern Line services away from the Antrim – Bleach Green section and would re-establish services to stations at Crumlin, Glenavy and Ballinderry. The Antrim – Knockmore line was closed in 2003 but is maintained as a diversionary route in circumstances of an emergency or for driver training. The economic benefit of re-opening the Antrim – Knockmore line against other options for enhancing capacity between Antrim and Belfast will be considered in developing the Network Utilisation Strategy.

3.34 The re-opened Antrim to Knockmore/Lisburn line could also present an opportunity to establish a rail link to Belfast International Airport (BIA), although such investment is less likely to be economically viable until airport passengers grow to at least 10 million. Passenger throughput in 2013 was just 4 million. Given the important role of BIA as a gateway into Northern Ireland for tourism

and inward investment, a feasibility study should be undertaken to consider investment in a rail link if passenger numbers grow towards 10 million by 2030 as predicted by the airport operator.

3.35 In the context of the Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy, the extent to which measures can be supported to enhance the TEN-T Comprehensive Network will depend upon the availability of significantly greater amount of railways capital grant from the Executive's budgets over the next 20 years.

Network Extensions

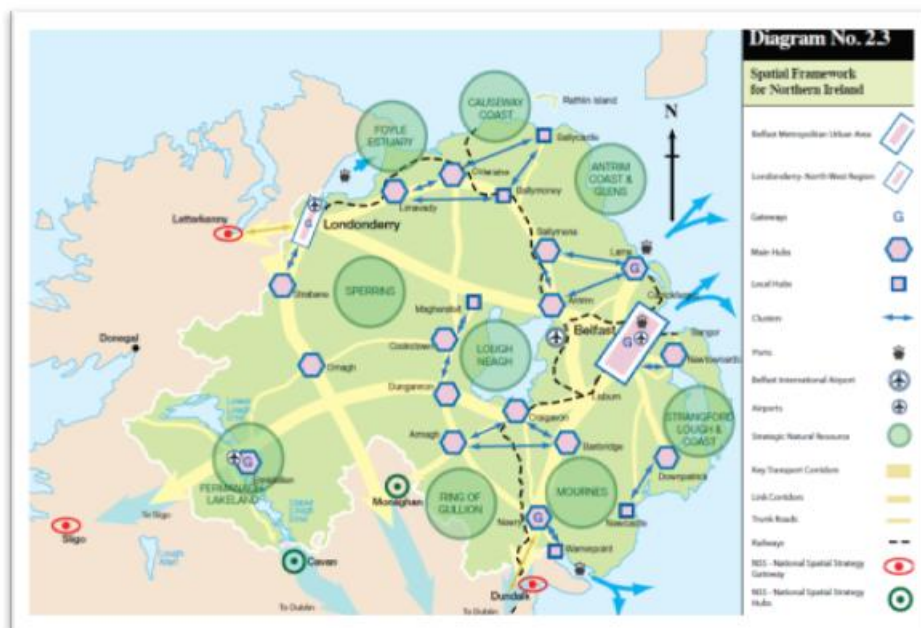
3.36 Proposals to extend the existing network attracted a significant degree of interest in the consultation response, particularly from those communities previously connected and now relatively isolated from the network. However, there was limited consensus on where priority should be accorded and on identification of the potential benefits for re-opening lines.

3.37 Re-opening lines to areas previously served in the early 20th century may not be viable for a number of reasons. Some of these areas, such as those in the west have lower population densities and it is less likely that it would be economically viable to establish new rail links and maintain services. In addition the majority of former track beds are no longer in NIR ownership and some have been built over. Re-instatement of tracks would require a land acquisition process.

3.38 Rail transport is best suited to areas of high population and for commuting between major towns. It is less sustainable in rural *settlement areas*, where population densities are lower and activity locations dispersed. However rail can provide the core part of many journeys and, where direct rail links are not sustainable, a range of multi-mode options should be considered. The creation of an integrated transport system, linking modes and enabling each mode to use its strengths to deliver the most sustainable journey, is key in achieving modal shift.

3.39 Within a more integrated transport system, there could be potential to extend the rail network to key locations such as intersections on the strategic road network. In serving a number of settlement areas, such developments could create the critical mass required to make new services viable and open up access to rail for communities not currently served by the network. Such sites are likely to be located on major commuting corridors, providing park and ride facilities and offering opportunities to integrate rail services with improved networks of local bus services.

3.40 The Regional Development Strategy sets the spatial framework for Northern Ireland, as illustrated in the map below. A key element of that is the identification of clusters and hubs, outwith the metropolitan areas of Belfast and Londonderry, which create the critical mass to attract growth and enable the delivery of services to a dispersed population. These are set out in the map alongside the strategic road and rail network. This illustrates the limited access to rail for those hubs in the west of Northern Ireland.



3.41 The costs of expanding the existing network and providing rail services directly to the Strabane, Omagh and Enniskillen hubs are likely to be prohibitive over the lifetime of this strategy. However, extensions west along the road network on the A6 in the vicinity of the Castledawson roundabout and either the M1/A4

or A3/A29 corridors in the vicinity of Dungannon and Armagh could provide more affordable and viable options, particularly given the significant number of commuters currently utilising the A6 and A4 corridors.

3.42 In line with that, the Department proposes to initiate a series of feasibility studies to determine potential passenger demand, identify optimum routes and locations of halts and to estimate the likely costs and benefits of construction on these corridors.

Stimulating economic development at key regional sites

3.43 As has been found elsewhere, the early provision of good transport links to facilitate development sites at out-of-centre locations can play a major role in stimulating economic investment and development. The Department would encourage those involved with the development of such sites to look at the potential of good rail links from the TEN-T Core Network to improve integration with the wider urban area and help to attract investment.

3.44 In the context of the Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy, the extent to which measures can be supported to enhance the TEN-T Comprehensive Network will depend upon the availability of significantly greater amount of railways capital grant from the Executive's budgets over the next 20 years. In addition, any extensions will only be feasible where action is taken to address the capacity constraints and bottlenecks on the existing network in advance.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This paper sets out the strategic direction and priority areas for future railway investments in Northern Ireland up to and beyond 2035. If delivered, this would allow for a significant enhancement of existing rail capacity, preparation for the future electrification of the network and the first major extensions to the network since the closure of lines following the Benson Report in 1963.
- 4.2 Progress in delivering this strategy, however, will depend upon the amount of funding that can be made available from the Executive's budget. The Executive is currently providing railways capital grant at an average rate of £44 million per annum. If this level of investment is maintained over the 20 years following 2015, that would equate to a potential expenditure of £880 million in our railways.
- 4.3 Whilst there are no guarantees in the present period of public expenditure restraint that this rate of investment can be maintained, it is important to note that it is estimated that some £620 million could be required just to maintain the current track network and rolling stock fleet. This is an essential requirement before any development or expansion of the existing network can be accommodated.
- 4.4 NIR currently is developing a "Network Utilisation Strategy." This will set out a detailed costed timetable of investment reflecting the strategic direction and priorities identified in this paper.

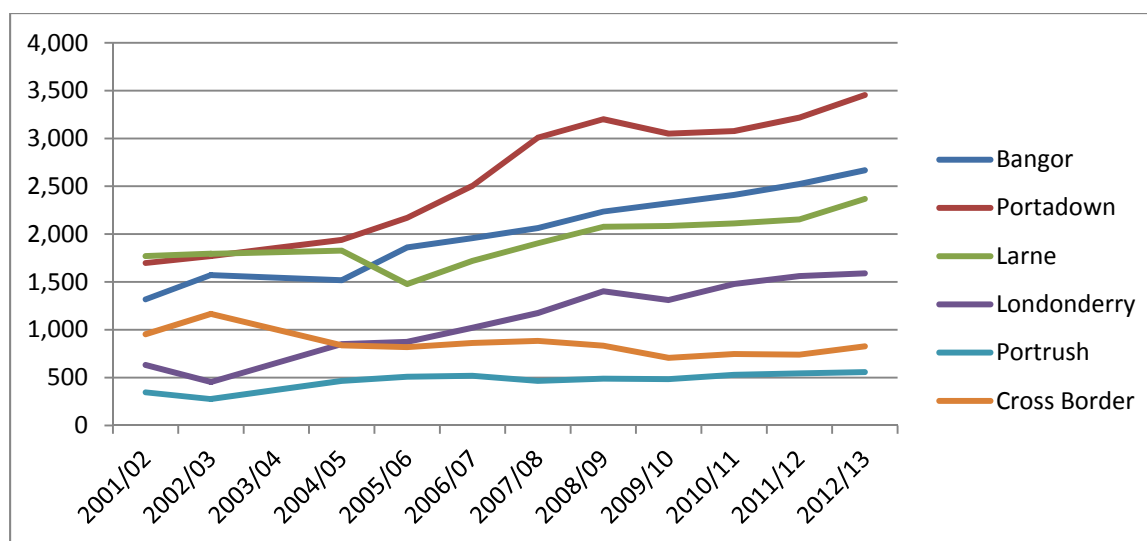
ANNEX A

TABLE 1: PASSENGER USAGE ON RAIL NETWORK

Passenger usage (000's) of each section of line 2001/02 – 2013/14

Line	2001/2002	2013/2014	% Growth
Bangor	1,317	2,937	123%
Portadown	1,698	3,820	125%
Larne	1,770	2,793	58%
Londonderry	631	2,140	239%
Portrush	345	655	90%
Cross Border	953	839	-12%
Grand Total	6,714	13,184	96%

FIGURE 1: Change in passenger usage ('000s) by line from 2001 to 2013

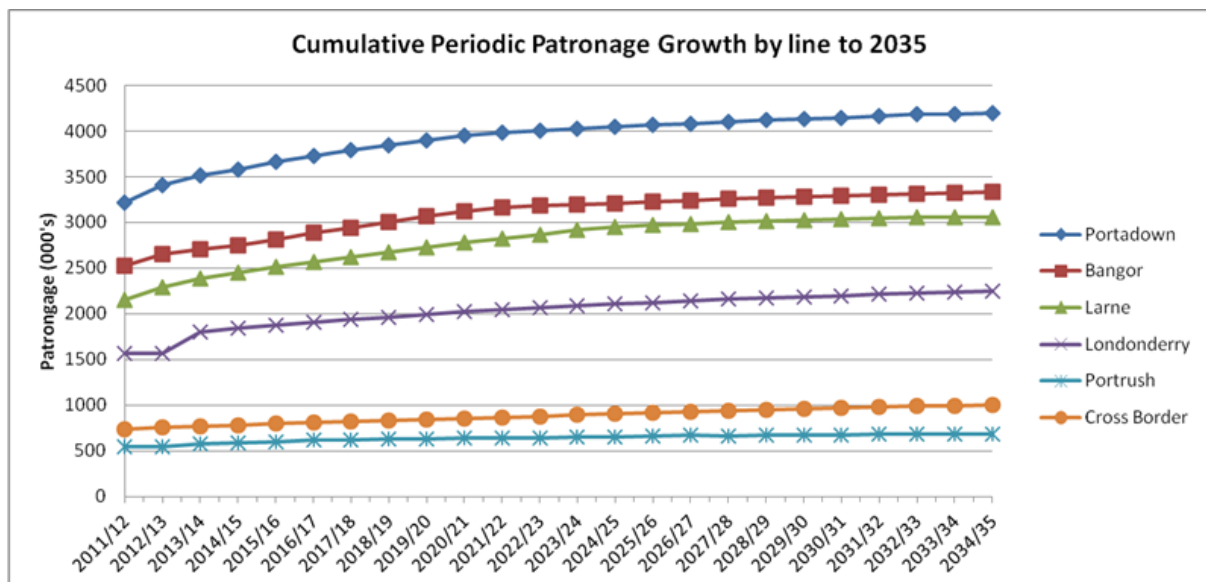


Notes:

- Although the graph shows a dip on the Londonderry line in 2009/10 this is due to the temporary closure of the Coleraine line during that period to enable work on the track.

- While passenger numbers have increased considerably on the Northern Ireland rail network cross-border passenger numbers have fallen during the same period. This may be a consequence of a number of factors including;
 - the loss of patronage due to the Malahide Bridge collapse when a bus substitution was in place between Drogheda and Dublin;
 - the recent economic conditions; and
 - the significant improvements in road infrastructure over the last several years.
- In 2012-13, the Enterprise saw passenger growth of over a tenth, with discounted online fares and benefits such as free on board wifi continuing to prove extremely popular with customers. With further improvements planned including overhaul of rolling stock, an increase in services and a reduction in journey time, this trend is expected to continue.

FIGURE 2: Predicted Passenger Growth by Line to 2035



Source: Department for Regional Development “Future Railway Investment: A Consultation Paper” January 2013.

ANNEX B

Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) as it effects NI

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Programme was established by the European Commission to support the construction and upgrade of transport infrastructure across the European Union. The TEN-T Programme has dedicated financial support towards the realisation of important transport infrastructure projects - in line with the overarching goal of European competitiveness, job creation and cohesion.

The TEN-T network is comprised of road, rail, air and water transport routes in Europe and it was created with the vision of coordinated improvements to primary roads, railways, inland waterways, airports, seaports, inland ports and traffic management systems, providing integrated and intermodal long-distance, high-speed routes

The network has two layers, a *Core* network which covers strategically important EU transport Routes (rail map below) and a *Comprehensive* network, which includes main, regional routes.

The Cork – Dublin – Belfast railway is on the Core network, whereas Belfast – Larne is on the Comprehensive network, as are the rest of NI's rail lines. Funding for all TEN-T projects is delivered through the *Connecting Europe Facility* (CEF) which is, in itself, part of the EU's Structural and Cohesion fund. The total amount of funding available to non-cohesion country member states for transport projects under the CEF is some €13billion (of which some 5% is targeted specifically at the Comprehensive network)

Within the negotiations in finalising the Ten-T and CEF Regulations, Ireland and Northern Ireland secured Isolated rail network status as defined in Regulation EU 1315/2013 thus: an 'isolated network' means the rail network of a Member State, or a part thereof, with a track gauge different from that of the European standard nominal track gauge (1 435 mm), for which certain major infrastructure investments cannot be justified in economic cost-benefit terms by virtue of the specificities of that network arising from its geographic detachment or peripheral location. **This is a**

particularly positive outcome in ensuring that substantial and unnecessary compliance related expenditure was avoided.

TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK



Comprehensive Network: Railways and airports
Core Network: Railways (passengers) and airports

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