
An Coimisiún
Sábháilteachta
Iarnróid

Railway
Safety
Commission



**Railway Safety Commission
Statement of Strategy
2006-2008**

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1. Foreword by the Railway Safety Commissioner

This is the first Strategy Statement of the Railway Safety Commission. It identifies our strategic direction for the period 2006 to 2008, providing both our organisation and external stakeholders with a clear guide to our goals and business objectives. In carrying out our responsibilities, we will be guided by this Statement of Strategy.

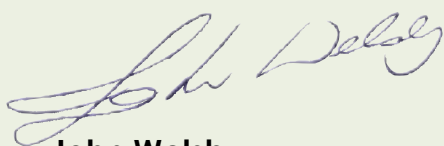
The establishment of the Commission, on 1st January 2006, comes at a significant time for the industry. Railways are seeing unparalleled levels of growth and development and the roll-out of new technologies and systems. For regulators, too, this is a time of transition to common structures and methods for validating and measuring safety across the European Union. Effective management of this change is critical to railway safety.

The Commission regulates those railways that provide public services or that otherwise interface with the public. These include Iarnród Éireann, Veolia who operate the LUAS, and a number of heritage railways throughout the Country. We are committed to working with these and other stakeholders to ensure that each meets its statutory obligations with regard to railway safety. To facilitate this, we will continue to provide guidance while ensuring that this does not compromise the independence that our role demands.

We have developed our strategy to enable us to meet duty-holder and stakeholder needs effectively. We will endeavor to ensure that the process of safety regulatory oversight does not compromise our customers' ability to meet their wider business objectives.

In its work prior to the establishment of the Commission, our team has accrued extensive knowledge and experience. Our strategy builds on this asset, while recognising the demands of a new and evolving regulatory environment.

On behalf of the Commission team, I am pleased to introduce our first Statement of Strategy. We look forward to continuing to work with our industry colleagues and the wider stakeholder community to achieve the common goal of safe railways.



John Welsby
Railway Safety Commissioner

2. Mandate of the Railway Safety Commission

Introduction

The mandate of the Railway Safety Commission is embodied in the Railway Safety Act 2005. Its purpose and the means of achieving it are expressed in the mission statement.

Mission Statement

The Commission will assure, through education, guidance and balanced regulation, the safety of railway services and affected persons.



3. The Railway Safety Commission

Introduction

The Railway Safety Commission was established under the Railway Safety Act 2005.

The Commission has responsibility for regulating the safety of railway systems carrying fare-paying passengers and commercial freight, and of other railways where they interface with public roads.

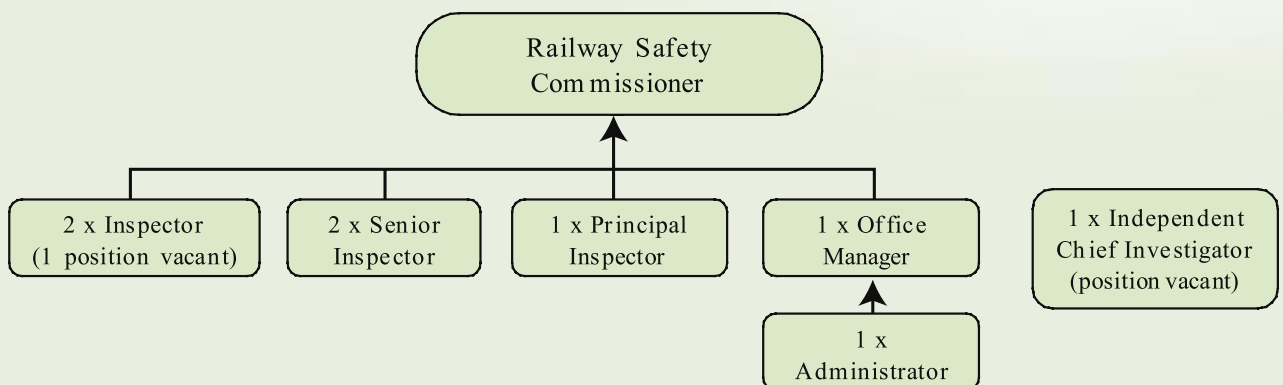
The Commission also has responsibility for safety approval of new and modified passenger carrying cable railways, cable cars and drag lifts.

Organisation

The Commission is a small, professional organisation with a flat reporting structure. This structure encourages and facilitates free-flow of information and ideas, which promotes consultation and creative thinking. This complements our purpose of promoting excellence in railway safety. It also provides us with the flexibility we need to respond effectively to immediate and unpredictable work demands, and to accomplish the structured tasks within our business plan.

The Commission has a budget of €2 million for the year 2006. Based on medium-term workload projections made in 2002, we have approval for nine full-time staff, of which seven are technical and two are administrative. This includes the Commissioner and Chief Investigator, who are appointed by the Minister of Transport.

The functional reporting structure of the Commission is illustrated in the organisation chart below:



Functions

The Commission's main functions are: to foster and encourage the safety of the working railway and of affected persons; to enforce railway safety legislation, and to investigate and report on accidents.

The Commission may arrange for an appropriate person to perform some of its functions, and may also arrange to perform agreed functions relating to railway safety on behalf of the Health and Safety Authority or other statutory bodies.

Role and Duties

The role of the Commission is defined by the spirit of European and national railway safety legislation. We will encourage good industry practice, and we will also encourage and foster activities and measures promoting railway safety.

We recognise that railway undertakings in general have sufficient expertise and motivation to operate safely. Therefore, we will seek to guide, rather than direct, the railways in their approach to managing safety. We have produced formal guidance documentation on rolling stock and infrastructure design, and guidance on the production of a railway safety case. We will also seek to promote, sponsor, evaluate and publish the results of research, surveys and studies relating to railway safety.

To fulfil its duties under the Railway Safety Act 2005, the Commission will have regard to railway operating matters which might affect the safety of persons. In particular, we will:

- Approve new rolling stock, new infrastructure, and operating safety cases that are safety compliant;
- Monitor and inspect existing operations, investigate safety concerns and audit safety management systems;
- Investigate and report on specified accidents and incidents;
- Enforce the law by taking whatever action is necessary, including enforcement action against a railway undertaking that did not carry out its duties;
- Make regulations as necessary for specific aspects of railway safety;
- Advise the Minister, on request, in relation to railway safety matters.

Response

The railway industry operates around the clock, and the Commission's work is not restricted to normal office hours. The ability to respond promptly is an important factor in the investigation of accidents and incidents. The Commission operates an on call roster ensuring the availability of at least one inspector at all times. We will maintain and periodically review this arrangement to ensure that it continues to meet our investigation and wider business needs.

Critical Success Factors

The following factors are critical, in order for us to achieve our goals and objectives and implement the programs outlined in this strategy statement:

- Goodwill and co-operation of railway undertakings;
- Effective communication between the Commission, railway undertakings and other stakeholders;
- Public credibility and trust;
- The motivation, commitment and calibre of our staff.



4. The Railway Incident Investigation Unit

Introduction

The European Railway Safety Directive requires each member state to appoint an independent body to investigate railway accidents and incidents. To meet this requirement, the Railway Safety Act 2005 provides for the establishment of a Railway Incident Investigation Unit. The investigation unit resides within the Commission, but they are functionally independent of each other.

Organisation

To direct its work, the Investigation Unit will have a full-time Chief Investigator, appointed by and reporting to the Minister. The Chief Investigator may seek to appoint staff to assist him or her, and may engage a suitably qualified person, including an Inspector of the Commission, to undertake an investigation. Arrangements will be made for co-operative or joint investigation of any incident concerning an international service.

Function

The function of the Investigation Unit is to independently and objectively investigate specified railway accidents, and to publish its report on the results. The investigation will establish the causes of an incident and make recommendations to avoid incidents or to improve railway safety, but will not to attribute blame or liability.

Role and Duties

The Railway Incident Investigation Unit will form part of Commission and will be resourced by it. However, the Investigation Unit will carry out its functions independent from the other functions of the Commission. Its independence will be guaranteed by a code of conduct.

Critical Success Factors

The Investigation Unit is governed by the same critical success factors as the Commission in general. It is also obliged to report on its investigations in a timely manner, so that the lessons learned can be applied to help prevent a recurrence.

5. Corporate governance

Introduction

Corporate Governance comprises the systems and procedures by which enterprises are directed and controlled. In this, the Commission is guided by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State bodies, as published by the Department of Finance.

Code of Conduct

We are producing a Code of Business Conduct for both the Commissioner and employees of the Commission. This code will include such matters as the employee's duty to the State body, avoidance of conflict of interest, limits on outside activities, acceptance of gifts and honesty in dealings. The code will be published on our website: www.rsc.ie.

Other internal protocols are also being developed to ensure that there is clarity and consistency in the way in which we conduct our work.

Financial Management

The Commission is committed to maintaining full transparency and effective controls over our financial management. We have established a new accounting system with financial information management and expenditure review processes.

Risk Management

The Commission has conducted a business risk assessment, identifying the key threats to the organisation's reputation and to our strategic, operational and financial interests. We will incorporate a risk management programme as an integral part of our business planning process. We will strengthen existing risk management controls, and implement new controls as necessary.

Decentralisation

Under Government's decentralisation policy, the Commission is to relocate to Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. We have prepared an implementation plan designed to give effect to that policy. In preparing this plan, the business impact of relocation has been assessed, as have the various associated risks. The core requirement of the plan is that, at all times, we maintain our capacity to effectively meet our statutory remit and customer needs. The initial phase of the overall strategy is the establishment of a fully resourced and functional team working from our existing base. This is currently being addressed. The plan will be periodically reviewed, and the associated implementation timeline will be revised, as various elements are completed or inputs are clarified. The plan can be viewed on our website: www.rsc.ie.

Railway Safety Advisory Council

Under the terms of the Railway Safety Act 2005, the Minister of Transport will set up a Railway Safety Advisory Council to represent the various stakeholder organisations and groups. The Council will be an independent body and may make recommendations to the Minister or the Commission on various railway safety matters. The Commissioner may attend council meetings in an advisory capacity. The Commission will defray any expenses of the Council.

Irish Language Commitment

The Commission is committed to implementing the relevant parts of the Official Languages Act 2003. Our signage and stationery are currently in both Irish and English.

We will produce our official documents, such as the Annual Report and the Statement of Strategy, in both languages. The Irish language capability of our staff will be maintained so that any queries can be responded to in either English or Irish. We will encourage and facilitate the on-going language training of our staff.

Freedom of Information

The Commission is committed to the maintenance and development of an open culture and a transparent environment, where information is freely available and experience and knowledge is shared. We are committed to fostering and developing these conditions, which we see as essential to the effective regulation of safety.

The former Railway Inspectorate division, our forerunner under the aegis of the Department of Transport, was subject to the Freedom of Information Act. The Commission will soon be included among the organisations governed by this Act. In the meantime, we are committed to conforming to the principles of this Act.

Human Resources and Staff Development

Staffing Needs

In 2000 the Department of Transport engaged consultants to review the human resource requirements of the Railway Inspectorate division. The Commission's current organisational and salary structures are based on the recommendations of that report.

Since then, the parameters on which the review was based have changed significantly. Our responsibilities, as defined in the Railway Safety Act 2005, are now somewhat broader than anticipated in 2000, and the rate of development in the Irish rail industry has increased substantially. We also have additional responsibilities under other legislation and our input into European Union structures has increased considerably. In view of this, we are in the process of commissioning a review of current and projected staffing needs. This review will consider an anticipated increase in workload, including that generated by the Transport 21 initiative and other development programmes. It will also take account of the specialised skill sets that our team, and particularly our professional inspectors, require. These skills include a broad knowledge and understanding of railway systems and specialised knowledge of safety management.

Continuous Professional Development

The Commission is a knowledge intensive organisation, and our ability to achieve our goals and objectives is determined by the calibre of our staff. Continuous learning is a core organisational requirement, essential to our maintaining the capacity to meet our work demands in a constantly developing and evolving industry.

In this context, we foster an organisational culture which values our staff and seeks to develop their potential through continuous learning. We will continue to invest in their knowledge and skills, which will in turn add value to our work.

6. Industry analysis

Introduction

In this section, we identify the principal industry stakeholder groups, the key relationships and the main communication fora. We recognise that the demand for safety approval of new equipment and infrastructure has substantially increased.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders can be viewed as belonging to five main functional groups, namely: railway undertakings; regulators; other agencies; the general public, and those whose activity can otherwise affect railway safety.

Currently, the railway undertakings consist of the following:

- Iarnród Éireann railway operator and infrastructure manager;
- Guest operators on the IÉ network, e.g., NIR-Translink, heritage railways;
- The Dublin light railway operator and infrastructure manager, Veolia;
- Eight heritage railways operating on their own infrastructure;
- One industrial railway interfacing with public roadways.

The Commission maintains high-level liaison with State agencies concerned with safety and security, including the Health and Safety Authority, the Emergency Services and An Garda Síochána.

We recognise that the public in general, and passengers and level crossing users in particular, are important stakeholders in railway safety. We also recognise that certain businesses and activities outside the railway can put railway safety at risk. We will produce third party guidance to help these groups to identify and manage the relevant risks.

Communications and Key Relationships

The Commission recognises the importance of maintaining formal and informal contacts with our peers and industry stakeholders. We regularly consult stakeholders on matters of railway system safety. We maintain liaison and communication with regulators both at home and abroad. We also take part in several fora at national and international level, and assist in national and European regulatory development.

National groups

The Commission chairs the Road Rail Safety Working Group and the Interdepartmental Group on Rail Emergency Planning. These informal groups represent the major stakeholder organisations. They work in a coordination and advisory capacity, but have no direct responsibility for operational matters.

The working groups:

1. Advise and encourage each body represented and raise their awareness of safety issues.
2. Exchange information regarding safety in Ireland and overseas.
3. Discuss the main risk factors which lead to accidents.
4. Facilitate good communication and cooperation between the agencies involved.

International Liaisons

The Commission has been an active participant in the International Liaison Group of Government Railway Inspectors (ILGGRI) since it was established in 1997. ILGGRI provides an informal forum for the exchange of information and experience between European railway safety regulators ([website: www.ilggri.org](http://www.ilggri.org)).

We maintain active liaisons with a number of other informal international railway regulatory groups that have similar objectives. These include the European Level Crossing Research Forum, and European safety thematic networks.

International conferences also afford a valuable opportunity for learning and the sharing of knowledge and experience. We see participation in such events as an integral part of our work and in 2006 will host the International Railway Safety Conference (www.irscdublin2006.com; www.intlrailsafety.com) and will contribute to the International Level Crossing Safety and Trespass Prevention Symposium.

Regulatory Development

The Commission will continue to maintain a close working relationship with the Department of Transport to promote, develop and improve the regulatory structure, and to provide technical advice as required.

We will continue to support Ireland's position by attending and providing input to EU meetings on railway interoperability and safety. Closer to home, the Commission will work with the regulatory authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland to ensure that a common approach to rail safety standards exists between the two states.

We have established close links with our counterparts in Europe, working towards the harmonisation of safety levels of rail transport throughout the EU. We are represented on the board of the European Railway Agency, and we contribute to regulatory development through our involvement in the agency's working groups.

Developments

In November 2005, the Government launched its Transport 21 development plan. The plan includes an integrated transport system for Dublin, the reopening of the Western Rail corridor, the introduction of 187 new rail carriages and completion of the Railway Safety Program. The work of the Commission, in terms of safety approvals and regulatory oversight, is an essential part of this plan.

7. Business Plan

Introduction

The purpose of the business plan is to define the high level goals of the Commission for 2006 and to indicate how we will achieve them. The plan identifies our objectives and the performance indicators which we use to monitor our progress.

Business Plan 2006

The Commission's Business Plan will be updated on an annual basis, and the current version may be found on the website: www.rsc.ie.

The 2006 Business Plan addresses the following key areas:

1. Safety Auditing and Monitoring
2. Safety adequacy assurance of new infrastructure and rolling stock
3. Accident monitoring, response and investigation
4. Safety Case development and approval
5. Third Party Interfaces
6. Continuous Professional Development
7. Provision of technical support
8. European Union
9. Administration of the Commission
10. Corporate Governance
11. Management



8. Key Challenges

Introduction

In conclusion, the Commission has identified three key challenges that are critical to the successful implementation of our business strategy. These challenges relate to the staff resources of the Commission, the transition to a new regulatory regime, and the development of a global approach to imported railway risk.

Resources

The market for technical professionals, particularly in the railway industry, is exceptionally buoyant, and indications are that it will remain so for the foreseeable future. This is evidenced by the difficulties that the Commission is experiencing in its recruitment of inspectors.

In the short term, necessary resources will need to be bought in. In the longer term, the barriers to recruitment of permanent staff must be identified and effectively addressed.

Regulatory Transition

The provisions of the Railway Safety Act 2005 represent a significant change from the previous regulatory framework. Considerable effort and co-operation will be needed to effect a smooth transition to a point where the new procedures are fully embedded and deliver a robust process of oversight.

Imported Risk

A large proportion of the risk to the railway is imported. The generators of this risk may not always realise how their activities impact on railway safety, and they can be difficult to identify and target.

To address the issue of imported external risk, the importance of continuing to develop a partnership approach with the industry and other stakeholder groups is recognised.