

## **Procedure for Train Driver Moving from a GB Train Operating Company to a Northern Ireland Train Operating Company - Translink NI Railways (NIR)**

When a qualified train driver relocates from Great Britain (GB) to work for a Train Operating Company (TOC) in Northern Ireland the process is governed by the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 (as amended) (TDLCR) and guidance from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

The Department for Infrastructure (The Department) acts as the Rail Safety Authority (RSA) and Train Driving Licensing Authority for Northern Ireland and is responsible for ensuring railway operators' compliance with TDLCR.

All train drivers driving on the mainline railway must have by law a Licence and Certificate to drive trains on the NI mainline rail network. The procedure involves both Licence and Certification processes plus mandatory NI-specific professional competence training.

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## 1. Recognition of the GB Train Driving Licence

NIR are responsible for verifying the authenticity and validity of the GB train driving licence by collecting documentation in relation to identification, medical reports, psychological assessments and employment records.

A train driver who already holds a GB train driving licence issued by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has two options when moving to NI.

### **Option A** – NI recognises the GB Licence Directly

Northern Ireland continues to recognise a GB-issued licence for use on the NI network. This recognition is explicitly confirmed by the Department's regulated professions guidance ([link provided](#)).

### **Option B** – Exchange the GB Licence for an NI Licence

Instead of simple recognition, the driver may choose to exchange their GB licence for an NI issued licence. NIR can apply to the Department's Rail Safety Authority on the driver's behalf.

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## 2. Requirement to Obtain Northern Ireland - Specific Professional Competence

Even after recognition/exchange, the driver is not automatically authorised to drive trains in NI. The driver must obtain NI-specific professional competence. Training and Examination is provided by NIR. This involves:

- **Route Knowledge Training**
  - NI networks differ from GB infrastructure, signalling, operational rules, and geography.
  - NIR will deliver structured route learning.
- **Traction Knowledge Training**
  - The driver must learn the specific rolling stock used by the NI TOC.
  - Competence is examined and recorded by NIR.
- **Operational Rules & Safety Procedures**
  - NI use some different rules and procedures to that of GB.

- Training is delivered by qualified and recognised Trainers and Examiners operating under NI regulations.
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### **3. Employer Responsibilities in Northern Ireland**

NIR must ensure the driver meets NI-specific:

- **Medical requirements**

Physical health including vision, hearing, cardiovascular and motor functions aligned with safety standards

Medical examinations are required every three years up to the age of 55, then every year thereafter.

- **Occupational Psychological requirements**

Psychological fitness evaluation covers attention, stress management, cognitive processing and driving suitability.

These requirements fall under Parts 3–5 of the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2010 (as amended)

#### **Safety and Audit Support**

NIR incorporates the driver into its normal Safety Management System, ongoing assessments and monitoring programmes. This verification ensures regulatory compliance, operational safety and supports internal safety audits and assurance.

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### **4. Issuance of a Northern Ireland Train Driving Certificate**

Unlike the licence (which is personal), the certificate is issued by the employer, NIR after verifying the driver's competence and completed training. The Certificate outlines the:

- Rolling stock the driver may operate.
  - Infrastructure/routes the driver is authorised for on the NI rail network.
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## 5. What happens to the GB Licence

- A licence (GB or NI) remains valid even when the driver changes employer because a licence is the driver's personal property.
  - Only the Certificate is employer-specific and must be reissued by the new NI employer, NIR.
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## 6. Summary of the Full Procedure (see attached Flowchart)

### Step-by-Step

1. Driver accepts employment with NI TOC, NIR
2. NIR requests recognition or exchange of the existing GB Licence (driver may continue using the GB licence during assessment)
3. Driver undergoes:
  - NI Route Knowledge Training
  - NI Traction Knowledge Training
  - NI Operational Rules and Safety System Induction
4. Driver is examined and certified for NI network competence
5. NIR issues a new Train Driving Certificate
6. Driver is then authorised to drive trains in NI. NIR sets up systems for periodic medical checks, psychological checks and competence re-assessments to ensure safety. Continuous monitoring reduces risks and ensures regulatory compliance.

Driver resigns from a GB TOC



Driver is hired by NIR  
Licence is verified



NIR recognises GB Licence

GB Licence is exchanged for an NI Licence



Driver to complete NI specific assessments



Medical Fitness

Psychological Fitness

Professional Competence  
Route & Traction  
Knowledge, Operational  
Rules and Safety



NIR issues Train Driving Certificate confirming Driver's competence



Driver is authorised to drive trains in NI.  
Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment

## **Useful Links**

[The Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)

<https://www.regulated-professions.service.gov.uk/professions/train-driver>

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/train-driver-licensing-certification-and-regulatory-enforcement>