



Chartered Institution
of Railway Operators

ANNUAL REPORT **2024**

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our vision.

To lead, inspire and
accelerate the growth
of rail professionals,
cultivating collaboration
to support the success of
rail organisations, now
and in the future.



Membership

Committed to offering professional affiliation and recognition, as well as access to an exceptional network of rail experts, professional development opportunities, and topical events and webinars to each of our 13,500+ members.

Apprenticeships

The Chartered Institution of Railway Operators (CIRO) offers unique rail operations course contextualisation across levels 3, 4, and 5 of the apprenticeship standards, incorporating the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required and defined for today's industry.

Awarding Organisation

Raising professional standards through collaborative partnerships with industry stakeholders in the creation of Chartered qualifications and industry-specific endorsed programmes of learning.

Academic

Offering specialist higher-education courses designed to broaden understanding of railway operations, develop reflective skills, and provide students with a valuable industry-recognised qualification.

End-Point Assessment

Since 2019, CIRO's End-Point Assessment service has delivered over 2,100 EPAs, trusted by leading TOCs and FOCs. CIRO now assesses three Level 3 standards: Train Driver, Rail Infrastructure Operator, and Transport Scheduler, ensuring high-quality outcomes for apprenticeships across the rail industry.

Rail Academy

The online training hub for rail operations staff, offering up-to-the-minute rail industry course content and fully customisable interactive programmes.

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

The reporting period from October 2023 to September 2024 was one of transition and transformation for CIRO. In April 2024, we marked the departure of Fiona Tordoff after twelve years of outstanding leadership. Her legacy provided the foundation on which CIRO has continued to build. Stepping in as Interim CEO, Annette Shipley ensured continuity while injecting fresh energy, driving initiatives forward and supporting the Board in its search for a permanent Chief Executive.

Our focus during the year was on creating innovative pathways to equip rail professionals for the challenges of today and tomorrow. The launch of CIRO Connect, a new immersive training programme, provided targeted learning rooted in our Professional Operators Development framework. The Integrated Railway Operations Leadership Scheme (IROLS), including a new Level 6 Apprenticeship, marked a landmark whole-industry initiative to develop future leaders. A partnership with Keele University also reintroduced a rail-contextualised MBA pathway, broadening CIRO's offer and meeting demand for advanced leadership qualifications.

This period also saw the success of our online Rail Ops Conference 2024, our most well-attended to date, and the completion of our first Fellows Research, which is already shaping industry dialogue. We strengthened our role as a professional standards body, celebrating milestones such as the 1,000th Train Driver apprenticeship End-Point Assessment, expanded Ofqual recognition, and closer alignment of learning with membership grades.

Alongside this delivery, we began work to redefine CIRO's mission and values. Through workshops with the senior team, we established a refreshed purpose and principles to guide the organisation. This provides a strong platform for the incoming Chief Executive and will help ensure CIRO continues to grow in visibility, influence and impact.

At the same time, we increased CIRO's activity and visibility across the sector, stepping up engagement with corporate members, strengthening our digital presence, and taking a more active role at industry events. These early steps have highlighted the value we bring as the professional home of railway operations and laid the groundwork for a stronger, more visible CIRO in the years ahead.



Jim Meade
CIRO Chair
CEO, Iarnród Éireann

On behalf of the Board, I thank our members, volunteers, staff, and partners for their support and commitment. The year was one of change, but also of momentum. With new programmes, stronger collaboration, and an expanding international presence, CIRO is better placed than ever to lead, inspire and accelerate the growth of rail professionals, supporting the success of rail organisations today and shaping the railway of tomorrow.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

This reporting period marked the beginning of a new chapter for CIRO. Under the interim leadership of Annette Shipley, the Institution entered a phase of renewal and foundation-building that set a clear direction for the future. It was a year of preparation and change, in which CIRO defined its purpose, strengthened its identity and planted the seeds from which an incoming CEO could grow.

A refreshed vision and mission were developed, expressing CIRO's ambition to be indispensable to rail professionals and a trusted partner across the sector. A new set of values: member-focused, inclusive, collaborative, professional, knowledgeable and innovative – also brought clarity to how CIRO will work with members, colleagues and the wider industry.

CIRO began to step more confidently into the public sphere. The first Fellows Research project offered insight into the challenges facing rail operations, while closer engagement with corporate members and renewed activity in area councils deepened connections across the network. Our digital presence also grew, with stronger website traffic and social media engagement helping to position CIRO more visibly in industry conversations.

Strides were made in learning and development. CIRO Connect was launched, creating a new pathway aligned to our Professional Operators Development framework. Development work also advanced on the Integrated Railway Operations Leadership Scheme, including a new Level 6 Railway Operations Management Apprenticeship. Work began with Keele University to establish a contextualised Senior Leader MBA in Rail, planned for launch in early 2025. These initiatives signal CIRO's ambition to become the learning provider of choice for rail operations professionals.

The membership community also moved forward. The 2024 Rail Ops Conference reached its largest audience to date, while the launch of CIRO Collaborate created a digital space for members to connect. Partnerships became a priority, with the Railway Children collaboration marking the first step towards a more outward-looking approach in line with our commitment to collective action and industry-wide impact.

This period also saw a new stage in CIRO's governance. For the first time under our Royal Charter, we held an election for places on our Board of Governors. Nine candidates stood and three were elected: Karen Duffy, Rachel Heath and David Davidson, all from Network Rail. The process was fair and transparent, and it represents the beginning of a new era of member-led governance.

Together, these achievements were about beginning anew. CIRO defined a vision, refreshed its values, strengthened its foundations and started to reposition itself for greater influence. This was a year of groundwork and renewal, where seeds were planted and the direction was set, creating the conditions for an incoming CEO to guide CIRO into growth, maturity and a more indispensable role within the rail industry.

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

Over the past year, CIRO has continued to strengthen its role as the professional home for those working in rail operations. Guided by our Chartered status and our ambition to become indispensable to the rail industry, each department has made significant contributions to building capability, credibility, and community across the sector.

Membership

The Membership Department delivered a strong year of progress, deepening engagement and strengthening CIRO's professional community. A key highlight was the successful launch of CIRO Collaborate, our new online community, which is already enabling members to connect, share knowledge and support one another. Locally, the re-establishment of the Irish Area Council and renewed leadership in Scotland have re-energised regional networks, while membership teams attended more area council events to strengthen links.

Our first Fellowship Research project provided valuable insight into industry challenges and was well received, with CIRO invited to present the findings at the NSAR conference. The inaugural Board of Governors elections marked an important milestone for member democracy, with positive engagement and a strong foundation for future participation.

Corporate engagement was enhanced through targeted outreach, 'lunch and learns', and a comprehensive review of our corporate member relationships. We also delivered our most successful Rail Ops Conference to date, with over 900 registrations and the introduction of online networking. Digital engagement grew significantly, with website traffic up 13% and strong increases in social media interaction, cementing our position as a modern, outward-facing institution.

Apprenticeships

The Apprenticeships team strengthened delivery and support for learners, achieving Good in our first full Ofsted audit. Functional skills provision was expanded to give apprentices greater choice, leading to stronger outcomes. We also developed more robust financial management and reporting processes, ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

For the first time, CIRO produced dedicated apprenticeships collateral, clearly outlining pathways at each level for employers and learners. This has supported recruitment, promoted consistency, and demonstrated the breadth of CIRO's offer.

The department also advanced work on career pathways, aligning CIRO apprenticeships to broader professional development across the rail industry. This joined-up approach has created a comprehensive roadmap that integrates apprenticeships, accredited learning and membership routes, making it easier for employers and apprentices to see progression opportunities.

Awarding Organisation

CIRO's Awarding Organisation (AO) continued to expand its portfolio, strengthening our reputation as a trusted awarding body. In partnership with Network Rail, we launched a suite of endorsed programmes covering timetable development and, in July 2024, introduced an endorsed Initial Signaller Training programme at the York Centre.

We also introduced the Chartered Approved Level 4 Certificate in Rail System Operations Management, delivered through Rail Academy, which provides a vital progression pathway within the Level 4 Passenger Transport Operations Management Apprenticeship. These new qualifications ensure rail operations professionals gain industry-relevant learning mapped directly to professional standards.

Through these developments, CIRO is building clear progression routes and equipping the workforce with the competence, confidence, and credibility needed to deliver operational excellence.

Academic

The Learning & Development team made strong progress in expanding CIRO's educational offer and building clear progression routes for rail professionals.

The Integrated Railway Operations Leadership Scheme (IROLs) advanced significantly, with the development of the new Level 6 Railway Operations Management Apprenticeship. CIRO has been invited to lead the pilot, marking a key milestone in shaping an industry-wide leadership pathway for rail operations.

Higher education partnerships also moved forward, with Keele University preparing to launch a contextualised Railway Operations MBA in February 2025. This programme incorporates specialist CIRO modules on Railway Systems Integration and Comparative Railway Operations, ensuring academic study is firmly aligned to industry needs.

The team launched the CIRO Scholarship Fund, offering seven fully funded places on our academic programme for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, widening participation and supporting equity in career development. At the same time, the first cohort of CIRO Connect, our professional development programme aligned to the POD Framework, neared completion. The 12-day programme covers topics such as operational planning, performance management, train movement and finance, and has been met with excellent learner feedback. A second cohort will begin in November 2024.

End-Point Assessment

Our End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) provision achieved major milestones in 2024. We celebrated the 1,000th remote assessment for the Train Driver Standard, underlining our position as a sector leader in remote assessment.

We also expanded our scope of recognition to include the Level 3 Transport Scheduler and Level 3 Rail Infrastructure Operator standards, reflecting growing trust in CIRO's quality assurance processes. These additions build on our recognition as the first EPAO for the Train Driver Standard and highlight our ability to support new and emerging standards across rail operations.

BOARD OF GOVERNOR ELECTIONS

In 2024 CIRO marked a major milestone in its governance journey by holding the first ever elections for the Board of Governors, as stipulated in the Institution's Royal Charter. For the first time, members were able to directly elect representatives to shape the future of their professional body.

The election was run on the principle that a portion of the Board should be elected by the membership, ensuring a strong democratic foundation. Nine members stood for election, and three were duly elected:



Karen Duffy FCIRO
Network Rail



Rachel Heath FCIRO
Network Rail



David Davidson FCIRO
Network Rail

Alongside the elected members, in February 2024 the Board invited three additional Governors to strengthen its breadth of expertise: Nick Dent – Transport for London, Mark Hopwood – Great Western Railway and Tom Desmond – Network Rail.

With these appointments, the Board of Governors in 2024 comprised:

Jim Meade FCIRO (Chair) – Irish Rail

Ellie Burrows FCIRO – Network Rail (term ending 31 December 2024)

Tom Joyner ACIRO – CrossCountry Trains (term ending 31 December 2024)

Andy Joy ACIRO – Story Contracting

Phil James FCIRO – Network Rail

Claire Mann ACIRO – Transport for London

Nick Dent ACIRO – Transport for London

Mark Hopwood FCIRO – Great Western Railway

Tom Desmond MCIRO – Network Rail

David Davidson FCIRO – Network Rail

Rachel Heath FCIRO – Network Rail

Karen Duffy FCIRO – Network Rail

2024

YEAR IN NUMBERS

2100

End-Point Assessments completed in total to date.

100%

pass rate across all three apprenticeship standards we deliver.

85

learners joining academic programmes.
28 Certificate, 17 Diploma, 40 Degree.

97.5%

overall End-Point Assessment pass rate.

52

membership events held, including the Rail Ops Conference and Academic online open evenings.

101

membership upgrades.

12,827

CIRO members at the end of September 2024.

£983k

Income £4,280,030
Overheads £3,296,549
Surplus £983,481*

*Moneys to be reinvested in members services.

DEFINING CIRO's MISSION & VALUES

In 2024, CIRO began important work to clarify its purpose and strengthen the foundations for the organisation's next chapter. Led by Interim CEO Annette Shipley, a series of workshops with the Senior Management Team provided the opportunity to step back, reflect, and set out a renewed sense of direction. This process was designed not only to give greater clarity to our stakeholders and members, but also to provide a strong launch pad for our incoming Chief Executive.

At the heart of this work is a new mission for CIRO:

"To lead, inspire and accelerate the growth of rail professionals, cultivating collaboration to support the success of rail organisations, now and in the future."

This mission captures CIRO's unique role as the professional home of rail operations — both in supporting individual career growth and in strengthening the organisations and systems that rely on skilled operational professionals. It reflects our ambition to be more visible, more influential, and more indispensable to the sector.

Supporting the mission, CIRO has also refreshed its values. These are the principles and behaviours that guide the way we work and the standards we set for ourselves. They are designed to ensure CIRO is a trusted, inclusive, and forward-looking organisation, equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of a changing railway.



Member focused – putting members at the centre of everything we do, and advocating for their success and for investment in the rail profession.



Inclusive – promoting fairness, diversity and respect, and contributing to a better, more equitable industry.



Collaborative – working across teams, with members and partners, to shape the future of rail together.



Professional and accountable – upholding ethical standards, continuous improvement, and a culture of trust.



Knowledgeable – using expertise, evidence and insight to anticipate needs and drive learning and development.



Innovative – thinking creatively, taking bold steps, and driving progress for members and the wider industry.

Together, this new mission and set of values provide clarity and purpose for CIRO, setting the standard for how we work with members and partners.

LOOKING FORWARD

It is a privilege to be preparing to take up the role of Chair of CIRO's Board of Governors. Having worked in rail operations for many years, I have seen first-hand the essential role this Institution plays in supporting the people who keep the railway moving. As I look ahead to my tenure, I do so with a strong sense of both responsibility and optimism.

The foundations laid over the past year give CIRO a clear sense of direction. With a refreshed vision, mission and values, the Institution is well placed to grow in influence and to strengthen its position as the professional home for rail operators. Our mission – to lead, inspire and accelerate the growth of rail professionals, cultivating collaboration to support the success of rail organisations, now and in the future, captures exactly the role CIRO must play in the years ahead.

The railway faces significant challenges. We must respond to digital transformation, adapt to the urgent demands of sustainability, and navigate the structural reform that comes with the creation of Great British Railways. Meeting those challenges will depend on a workforce that is confident, capable and future-ready. That is where CIRO has a unique role: providing world-class learning, acting as a thought leader, and bringing professionals together around shared standards of excellence.

I am excited about what we can achieve together. CIRO has already begun to reposition itself, but there is so much more potential to unlock: to grow our international reach, to expand our partnerships, and to collaborate more deeply with railway organisations across every part of the sector. Above all, my ambition is that every rail operator sees CIRO as their natural professional home, a place where they are supported, challenged and inspired to grow.

The work done recently has set the stage. Now it is time for us to build on that momentum and to ensure CIRO plays its full part in shaping the railway of the future.



Mark Hopwood CBE

Incoming CIRO Chair

Managing Director, Great Western Railway



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