



Irish Maritime
Development Office



Foras na Mara
Marine Institute

UNITISED TRAFFIC REPORT Q1 2026

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ABOUT THE IMDO

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) operates within, and is part of, the Marine Institute. The IMDO provides development, promotional and marketing support to the shipping and shipping services sector. It is the aim of the IMDO to be the focal point for national and international maritime businesses in Ireland. The IMDO provides government and industry with a range of information and reporting across the sector and works with international businesses to help them set up or expand in Ireland.

The IMDO Economics team provide quarterly economic analysis, academic research, and regular policy advice to the Department of Transport relating to the Irish shipping market, ports and Irish trade. The IMDO is centrally involved in the review of National Ports Policy in 2026. The IMDO produces an annual statistical bulletin on the Irish shipping market; The Irish Maritime Transport Economist. This is Ireland's most comprehensive source of national maritime traffic data. Past editions of the Irish Maritime Transport Economist are available from the IMDO [website](#).



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NOTES

1. **RoRo (Roll-on Roll-off):** RoRo involves vessels designed to carry wheeled cargo, such as cars, trucks, semi-trailer trucks, trailers, etc., that can be driven on and off the ship on their own wheels, or using a platform vehicle, such as a self-propelled modular transporter.
2. **LoLo (Lift-on Lift-off):** LoLo involves a specific ship that engages in the transportation of containerized freight, that is loaded and unloaded by ship-to-shore cranes.
3. **TEU:** The twenty-foot equivalent unit (often TEU or teu) is a unit of cargo often used to describe the capacity of container ships and container terminals.
4. **RoPax:** The sector that uses vessels capable of carrying passengers, passenger vehicles, and RoRo freight
5. **Pax:** RoRo passengers
6. **Ireland / ROI / Irish:** Republic of Ireland
7. **NI:** Northern Ireland
8. **GB:** Great Britain
9. **ROI – EU:** RoRo services operating between Dublin, Cork or Rosslare Europort, and a mainland European Port that is inside the European Union
10. **ROI – GB:** RoRo services operating between Dublin, Cork or Rosslare Europort, and a port in Great Britain.
11. For **Data requests**, please contact the IMDO team.
12. This report has been updated following a review of the underlying data in June 2026. The revisions relate to selected Q1 2025 and Q1 2026 traffic figures and associated percentage changes. These amendments do not alter the overall interpretation of unitised traffic trends in Q1 2026.

UNITISED TRAFFIC GROWTH Q1 2026 (Vs Q1 2025)



ROI RORO: +2%
NI RORO: -2%



ROI LOLO: +1%
NI LOLO: +7%



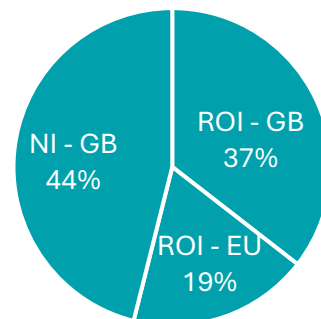
ROI Pax: +9%
NI Pax: -8%



ROI – EU
RoRo: +1%

ROI – GB
RoRo: +3%

All Island RoRo Share



Comment

Unitised traffic on the island of Ireland remained stable in the first quarter of 2026. RoRo volumes in the Republic of Ireland increased by 2% year-on-year. In Northern Ireland, RoRo throughput declined by 2% to 222,837 units.

ROI - GB and ROI-EU RoRo volumes increased in the first quarter. Traffic on ROI - GB routes increased by 3% year-on-year. In January 2025, the Port of Holyhead closed due to damage from Storm Darragh. As this key port remained closed for a period in January 2025, a more relevant comparison is with Q1 2024, when ROI - GB RoRo volumes were broadly flat: 190,891 units in Q1 2026 compared with 191,554 units in Q1 2024.

LoLo traffic continued its upward trajectory in Q1 2026¹. ROI ports handled 310,692 TEU in Q1, a 1% increase relative to the same quarter last year. When viewed over a longer horizon, first quarter LoLo volumes have risen from approximately 284,000 TEU in Q1 2022 to almost 311,000 TEU in Q1 2026. This is the highest Q1 LoLo total recorded by the IMDO and reflects a consistent multi-year expansion rather than a sudden shift. In Northern Ireland, Belfast port recorded robust LoLo growth of 7% (+3,595 TEU).

Passenger activity recovered in Q1 2026 from the disruption caused by the closure of the Port of Holyhead last year. RoRo passenger numbers increased by 9% in ROI ports, supported by strong numbers at Dublin. Compared with Q1 2024, ROI passenger volumes were 10% lower, a decline of approximately 35,000 passengers. Passenger vehicle volumes at Dublin were also notably higher, increasing by 25% year-on-year. As with passenger numbers, the Holyhead closure due to Storm Darragh weighed on Q1 2025 volumes, making the year-on-year comparison more pronounced.

The composition of the Irish freight market shifted in Q1 2026, as CLDN acquired Samskip's quay-to-quay and door-to-door freight business between the Continent and UK & Ireland. The IMDO will continue to monitor the impact of such changes on schedules, freight volumes and services.

The wider economic environment continues to show signs of resilience. According to the Central Bank's latest Quarterly Bulletin², Modified Domestic Demand is forecast to increase by 2.9% in 2026, reflecting underlying strength in household spending and domestic economic activity. This outlook is maintained despite elevated uncertainty stemming from the ongoing geopolitical situation in the Middle East. Employment growth is expected to ease to below 2% per annum, while unemployment remains below 5%. CPI inflation is forecast to rise, driven by higher oil and gas prices linked to the war in Iran.

Taken together, Q1 2026 continues the pattern observed in recent years: a stable RoRo market operating within a narrow range, and a steady upward trend in LoLo traffic driven by increased consumption in the Irish economy. Passenger volumes remain robust in ROI ports and the broader economic backdrop supports ongoing resilience in unitised activity. The IMDO will continue to assess these trends as part of its quarterly monitoring of Ireland's maritime sector.

¹ For more information on recent trends in Irish LoLo traffic, see [Irish Maritime Transport Economist 2026 \(Volume 23\) | IMDO Irish Maritime Development Office](#)

² [Quarterly Bulletin Q1 2026 | Central Bank of Ireland](#)

Roll-on / Roll-off (RoRo)

Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the volumes of RoRo traffic handled at ports across the island of Ireland in the first quarter of 2025 and 2026. These tables show total RoRo volume, encompassing both accompanied and unaccompanied RoRo traffic.

Table 1:

Port	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	RoRo Units	RoRo Units	%	RoRo Units
Dublin	220,831	235,655	7%	14,824
Rosslare Europort	58,603	49,933	-15%	-8,670
Cork	1,814	2,128	17%	314
Republic of Ireland	281,248	287,716	2%	6,468
Belfast	155,638	154,772	-1%	-866
Larne	43,312	42,511	-2%	-801
Warrenpoint	27,711	25,554	-8%	-2,157
Northern Ireland	226,661	222,837	-2%	-3,824
All - Island	507,909	510,553	1%	2,644

Table 2:

Port	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	RoRo Units	RoRo Units	%	RoRo Units
Accompanied	77,387	83,171	7%	5,784
Unaccompanied	203,861	204,544	0%	683
Republic of Ireland	281,248	287,716	2%	6,467
Accompanied	77,998	70,942	-9%	-7,056
Unaccompanied	148,663	151,895	2%	3,232
Northern Ireland	226,661	222,837	-2%	-3,824
Accompanied	155,385	154,113	-1%	-1,272
Unaccompanied	352,524	356,439	1%	3,915
All - Island	507,909	510,553	1%	2,643

ROI – GB RoRo

Table 3 presents RoRo volume on ROI – GB routes. ROI – GB represents ferry routes between Dublin Port/Rosslare Europort, and Great Britain ports including Holyhead, Liverpool, Heysham, Pembroke and Fishguard.

Table 3:

Route	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	RoRo Units	RoRo Units	%	RoRo Units
Dublin - GB	164,211	176,595	8%	12,384
Rosslare - GB	20,769	14,296	-31%	-6,473
ROI - GB	184,980	190,891	3%	5,911

ROI – EU RoRo

Table 4 presents RoRo volume on ROI – EU routes. ROI – EU represents direct ferry services between Dublin, Cork and Rosslare Europort, and seven mainland European ports: Bilbao, Cherbourg, Dunkirk, Roscoff, Rotterdam, Santander, Zeebrugge.

Table 4:

Route	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	RoRo Units	RoRo Units	%	RoRo Units
Dublin - EU	56,620	59,060	4%	2,440
Rosslare - EU	37,834	35,638	-6%	-2,196
Cork - EU	1,814	2,128	17%	314
ROI - EU	96,268	96,826	1%	558

Lift-on / Lift-off (LoLo)

Table 5 presents the volumes of LoLo traffic handled at ports across the island of Ireland. It illustrates total LoLo volume, measured in twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), and encompasses both laden (full) and unladen (empty) LoLo volume. To see the breakdown between unladen and laden units, see Appendix.

Table 5:

Port	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	TEUs	TEUs	%	TEUs
Cork	70,689	70,145	-1%	-544
Dublin	226,380	232,186	3%	5,806
Waterford	9,513	8,361	-12%	-1,152
Republic of Ireland	306,582	310,692	1%	4,110
Belfast	54,296	57,890	7%	3,595
Warrenpoint	0	0	0%	0
Northern Ireland	54,296	57,890	7%	3,594
All-Island	360,878	368,582	2%	7,704

Passenger Market

Ferry Passengers

Table 6 illustrates the volume of RoRo ferry passengers that travelled through Irish and Northern Irish ports. In the Irish RoRo ferry market, many operators employ a RoPax model, meaning they carry not only freight traffic but passengers and passenger vehicles.

Table 6:

Passenger No.	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	No.	No.	%	No.
Cork	0	0	0%	0
Dublin	202,724	248,397	23%	45,673
Rosslare Europort	70,145	49,961	-29%	-20,184
Republic of Ireland	272,869	298,358	9%	25,489
Belfast	292,285	267,594	-8%	-24,691
Larne	65,804	62,540	-5%	-3,264
Northern Ireland	358,089	330,134	-8%	-27,955
All-Island	630,958	628,492	0%	-2,466

Passenger Vehicles

The term ‘passengers’ refers to the volume of people travelling on RoRo ferries. The volume of passenger ‘vehicles’ is also an important consideration for shipping companies. Although many maritime passengers travel on foot, the majority travel on, or with, a domestic vehicle, such as a car, bus, trailer, caravan, etc. Such vehicles share RoRo capacity with freight traffic i.e. HGVs and unaccompanied containers. Monitoring the level of demand for these vehicles is important for tracking available shipping capacity at Irish ports, which can fluctuate throughout the year.

Table 7 illustrates the volume of passenger vehicles, which includes cars, coaches, caravans, and similar tourist vehicles, that travelled through Irish and Northern Irish ports.

Table 7:

Passenger Vehicles	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
Port	No.	No.	%	No.
Cork	0	0	0%	0
Dublin	55,323	69,126	25%	13,803
Rosslare Europort	30,178	21,235	-30%	-8,943
Republic of Ireland	85,501	90,361	6%	4,860
Belfast	70,589	68,077	-4%	-2,512
Larne	15,884	12,224	-23%	-3,660
Northern Ireland	86,473	80,301	-7%	-6,172
All-Island	171,974	170,662	-1%	-1,312

Appendix

Breakdown between Laden (full) and Unladen (empty) LoLo TEUs.

Laden LoLo	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	TEUs	TEUs	%	TEUs
Cork	53,395	53,484	0%	89
Dublin	163,811	173,219	6%	9,408
Waterford	6,622	5,901	-11%	-721
Republic of Ireland	223,828	232,604	4%	8,776
Belfast	41,342	44,455	8%	3,113
Warrenpoint	0			
Northern Ireland	41,342	44,455	8%	3,113
All Island	265,170	277,059	4%	11,889

LoLo Unladen	Q1 2025	Q1 2026	% Ch	Diff
	TEUs	TEUs	%	TEUs
Cork	17,294	16,661	-4%	-633
Dublin	62,569	58,968	-6%	-3,601
Waterford	2,891	2,461	-15%	-430
Republic of Ireland	82,754	78,090	-6%	-4,664
Belfast	12,954	13,435	4%	481
Warrenpoint	0			
Northern Ireland	12,954	13,435	4%	481
All Island	95,708	91,525	-4%	-4,183