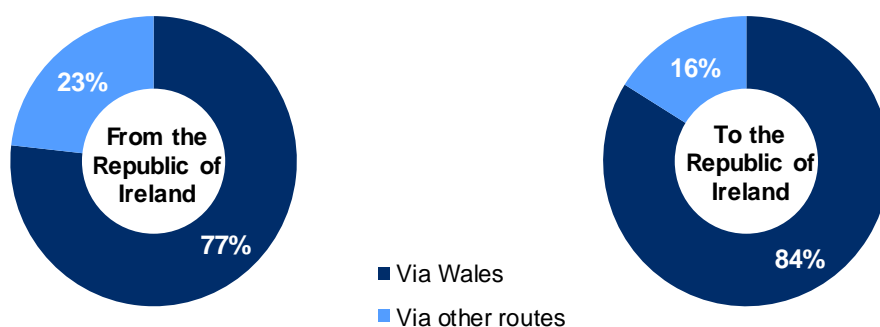# Sea Transport, 2016

Key points

Total freight traffic at ports in Wales declined in 2016, reaching its lowest level since 2004 (53.5 million tonnes or Mt).

- Of traffic at major ports in Wales, 86 per cent was foreign traffic with 64 per cent being foreign imports. The majority of foreign imports and exports consisted of bulk traffic (see StatsWales).

Welsh ports also act as the gateway between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe.

- 80 per cent of goods carried on Irish registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) between the Republic of Ireland and Europe passed through Welsh ports. Two thirds of this traffic passed through ports in North Wales.

Chart 1: Percentage of goods carried between the Republic of Ireland and Europe on Irish registered HGVs, via Wales or other routes in 2016

From the Republic of Ireland: 23% Via other routes, 77% Via Wales

To the Republic of Ireland: 16% Via other routes, 84% Via Wales

■ Via Wales
■ Via other routes

Source: Central Statistical Office Ireland

Over the long term, total sea passenger movement between the Republic of Ireland and Wales has declined.

- Since the removal of the Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire route in 2015, passenger traffic on the Holyhead to Dublin route has increased. 75% of passengers travelling between the Republic of Ireland and Wales in 2016 used the route between Holyhead and Dublin.

About this bulletin

This annual statistical bulletin sets out information about ports in Wales for 2016. It covers the freight traffic through these ports; passengers and freight traffic between Wales and the Republic of Ireland; and ship arrivals at Welsh ports. This bulletin provides key analysis with tables of underlying data available on the StatsWales website.

In this bulletin

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The main ports in Wales

The three most important ports in Wales meet specialised shipping needs:

- Milford Haven handles mainly crude oil, oil products and liquefied natural gas;

- Port Talbot imports iron ore and coal mostly for the adjacent steelworks;

- Holyhead is the main port for freight and sea passenger transport with the Irish Republic.

The other major ports include Fishguard, Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport and there are also a number of minor ports (i.e. handling less than 0.8 Mt a year) in Wales: Barry, Mostyn, Neath, Llanddulas, Port Penrhyn and Burry Port.

Milford Haven is the largest port in Wales and, in 2016, the fourth largest port in the UK, predominantly through oil and gas traffic. It handled 34.8 Mt of traffic in 2016, which was 7.2 per cent of the UK total for 2016. When compared to 2015 figures, freight traffic at Milford Haven had decreased by 2.9 Mt (7.7 per cent) (see StatsWales).

In Wales during 2015 total freight traffic through Welsh ports was 56.4 million tonnes (Mt); of this, 40.4 Mt were goods inwards and 15.9 Mt were goods outwards. Welsh ports accounted for 11 per cent of the total United Kingdom (UK) port traffic of 496.7 Mt. The largest components of these flows were:

- Oil products, with total traffic of 17.6 Mt; of which nearly 10.7 Mt was goods outwards, with 7.1 Mt exported to the rest of the world and 3.6 Mt sent to destinations elsewhere in the UK. The remaining 6.9 Mt were goods inwards from both UK and foreign sources.

- Crude oil, with total traffic of 10.6 Mt; most of which was inwards, with 2.2 Mt from the rest of the UK and 8.3 Mt imported from elsewhere in the world.

- Liquefied gas, with total traffic of 9.6 Mt.

Quarterly imports and exports

When compared with data between 2000 and 2009, imports to Milford Haven been higher since 2010. In 2016, Milford Haven experienced a high of 6.36 Mt imports (quarter 2) and a low of 4.86 Mt imports (quarter 4). Exports from Milford Haven have fluctuated in recent years with a 2016 high of 2.97 Mt exports (quarter 4) and a low of 2.70 Mt exports (quarter 3).

Imports to Cardiff during 2016 remained unchanged, when compared to 2015, whilst Newport imports increased. The total exports for both Cardiff and Newport decreased slightly from 2015 figures to 2016 figures. The total imports and exports to Swansea showed little change in comparison to 2015, whereas the total imports and exports for Holyhead were higher in 2016.

Imports through Port Talbot depend on the production levels in the adjoining steel plant. For the UK as a whole, steel production has declined from 12,030 kilo-tonnes in 2014 to 7,640 kilo-tonnes in 2016 (provisional data)[1]. Part of this decrease in production came from Port Talbot and the import figures for the port similarly show a reflective decrease over that time.

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[1] See Welsh Government StatsWales website

Chart 2: Trends in the quarterly imports and exports from 2000 to 2016
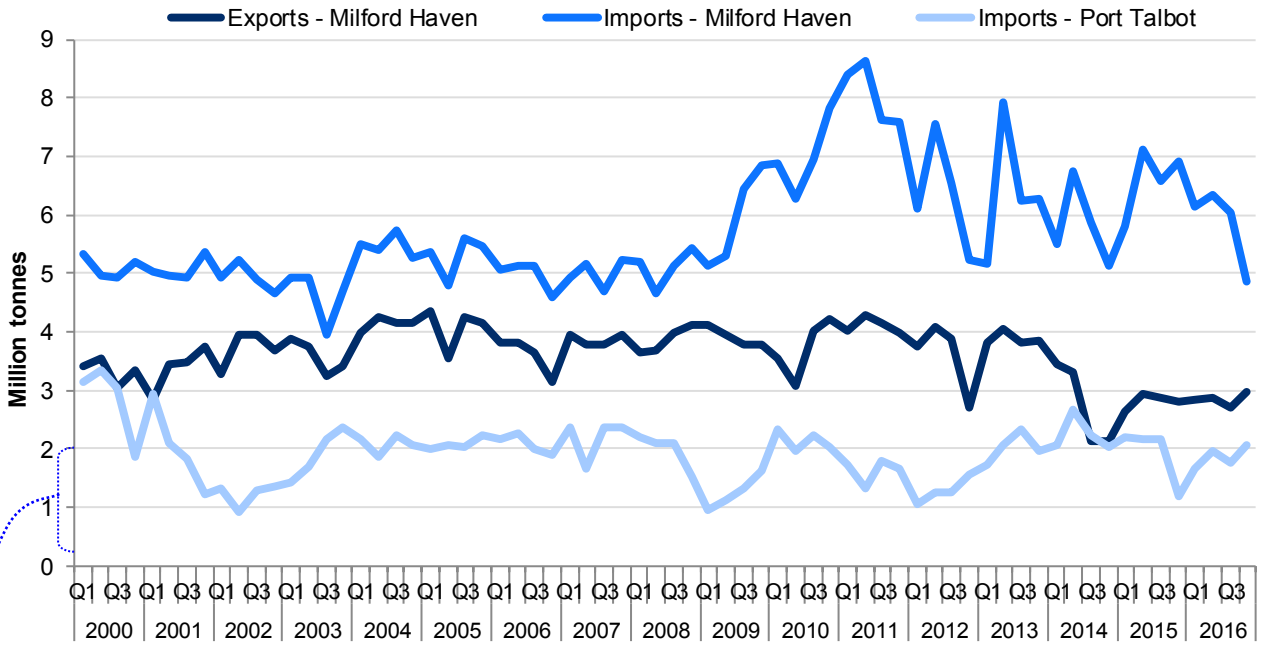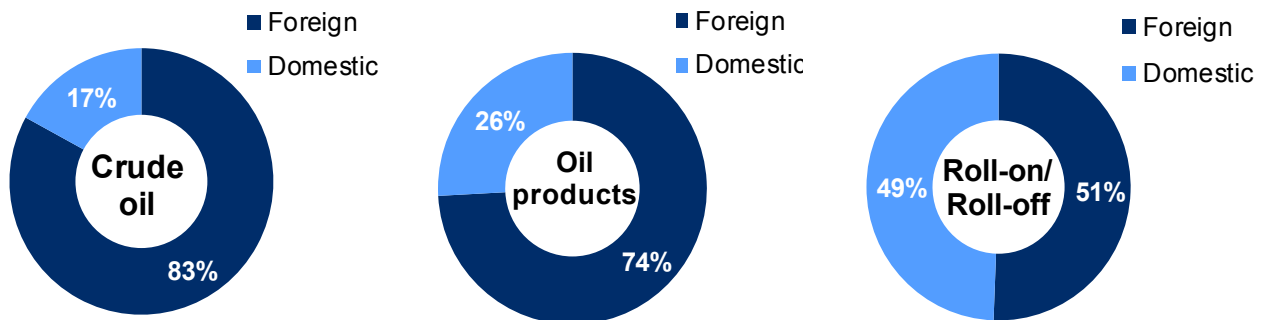

Source: Department for Transport

Source: Department for Transport

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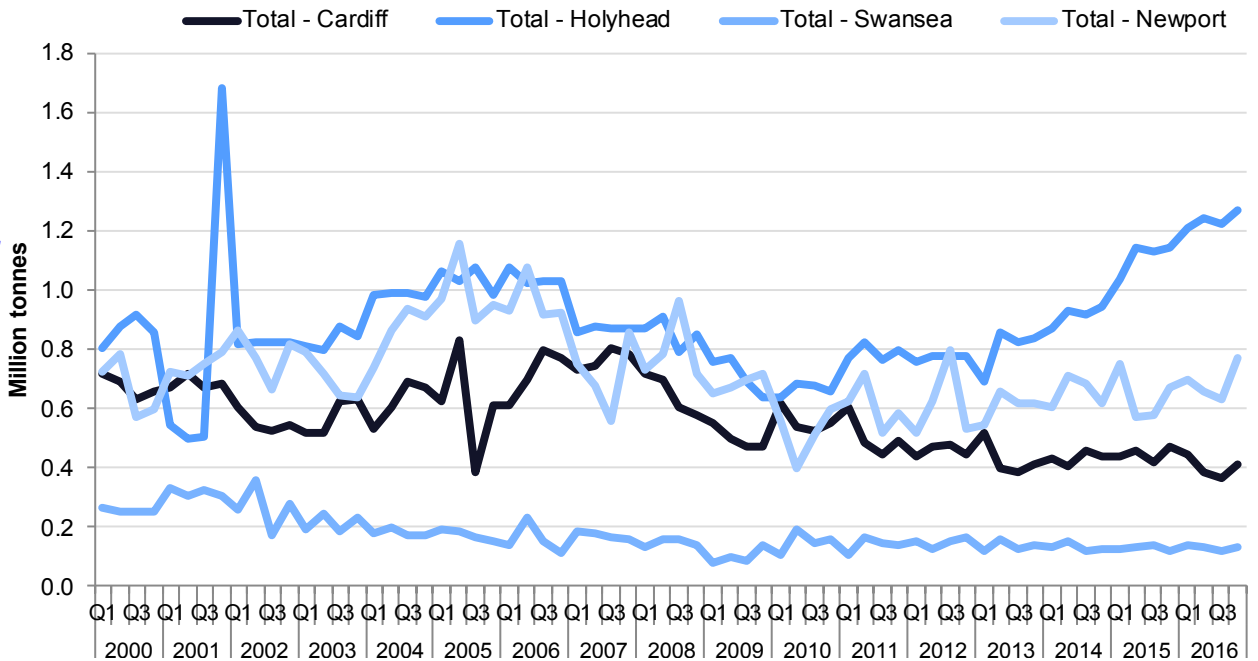
Foreign and domestic cargo and traffic

Comparing domestic and foreign traffic, the data, in chart 3, shows that:

- Over 80 per cent of crude oil traffic through the ports of Wales was for foreign imports, with a small proportion of foreign exports (2.3 per cent). The remaining 17.0 per cent consisted of domestic traffic.
- Around three quarters (74.1 per cent) of oil products traffic was foreign traffic, of which 40.3 per cent was foreign exports and 33.8 per cent was foreign imports.
- The volume of roll-on/roll-off traffic that was imported was broadly similar to the volume exported and there was no roll-on/roll-off foreign traffic.

Chart 3: Domestic and Foreign Traffic at major Welsh ports, 2016

Source: Department for Transport

International transport of freight

When comparing foreign imports and exports, (see StatsWales):

- Imports were higher than exports with 33,557 and 11,549 thousand tonnes respectively.
- The majority of traffic was liquid bulk (28,494 thousand tonnes) and dry bulk (8,475 thousand tonnes).
- Liquid bulk imports and dry bulk imports and exports in 2016 decreased compared to 2015 figures. In comparison, liquid bulk exports increased in the same period.

Percentage change in foreign imports and exports of bulks at major ports in Wales between 2015 and 2016

Liquid bulk | Dry bulk

21,151 thousand tonnes of foreign imports — 10% ↓

7,013 thousand tonnes of foreign exports — 1% ↑

8,078 thousand tonnes of foreign imports — 5% ↓

397 thousand tonnes of foreign exports — 15% ↓

Source: Department for Transport

Ports in Wales compared with the rest of the United Kingdom

Comparing Welsh ports with those across the rest of the UK shows that Grimsby and Immingham remained the UK's leading port in 2016, handling 54.4 Mt (11.2 per cent of UK traffic). It was followed by London (2nd) with 50.4 Mt (10.4 per cent of UK traffic), Southampton (3rd) with 36.0 Mt (7.4 per cent of UK Traffic)[2]. The Welsh port of Milford Haven was the 4th largest port in the UK.

Total freight traffic through UK ports in 2016 was 484.0 million tonnes (Mt), a 2.5 per cent decrease on 2015, and 15.5 per cent below the 2004 level. Compared with 2015, inwards traffic decreased by 3.5 per cent to 303.1 Mt and outwards traffic decreased by 0.9 per cent by to 180.9 Mt.

**Table 1: All port traffic, inwards and outwards, by UK country, 2011 to 2016**

						Thousand tonnes	*Per cent*
							% change
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015 to 2016
England							
Inwards	244,164	240,144	244,545	245,894	236,319	230,656	↓ 2.4
Outwards	109,153	106,391	102,534	107,143	108,751	106,324	↓ 2.2
All	353,318	346,534	347,079	353,037	345,071	336,979	↓ 2.3
Wales							
Inwards	44,677	36,504	39,097	37,992	40,437	37,516	↓ 7.2
Outwards	20,836	18,128	19,834	15,687	15,921	16,031	↑ 0.7
All	65,513	54,631	58,931	53,679	56,358	53,547	↓ 5.0
Scotland							
Inwards	24,276	27,684	26,148	25,835	21,844	18,486	↓ 15.4
Outwards	53,137	48,454	45,844	45,546	48,125	48,486	↑ 0.8
All	77,413	76,138	71,992	71,381	69,968	66,972	↓ 4.3
Northern Ireland							
Inwards	14,465	15,158	16,115	15,742	15,573	16,474	↑ 5.8
Outwards	8,787	8,398	9,207	9,331	9,739	10,076	↑ 3.5
All	23,252	23,556	25,322	25,073	25,311	26,550	↑ 4.9
United Kingdom							
Inwards	327,582	319,489	325,905	325,464	314,172	303,130	↓ 3.5
Outwards	191,912	181,371	177,419	177,707	182,535	180,918	↓ 0.9
All	519,495	500,860	503,324	503,171	496,708	484,048	↓ 2.5

Source: Department for Transport

There was a slight downward trend between 2005 and 2009 in the volume of total sea traffic in Wales (table1 and chart 4). This coincided with a decrease in port traffic through the rest of the UK. Since 2010 the amount of traffic has fluctuated annually in both Wales and the rest of the UK. Wales saw a peak in sea transport traffic during 2011 where a total 65,513 thousand tonnes passed through Welsh ports.

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[2] See Department for Transport website

Chart 4: All port traffic through Wales and rest of UK, 2004 to 2016
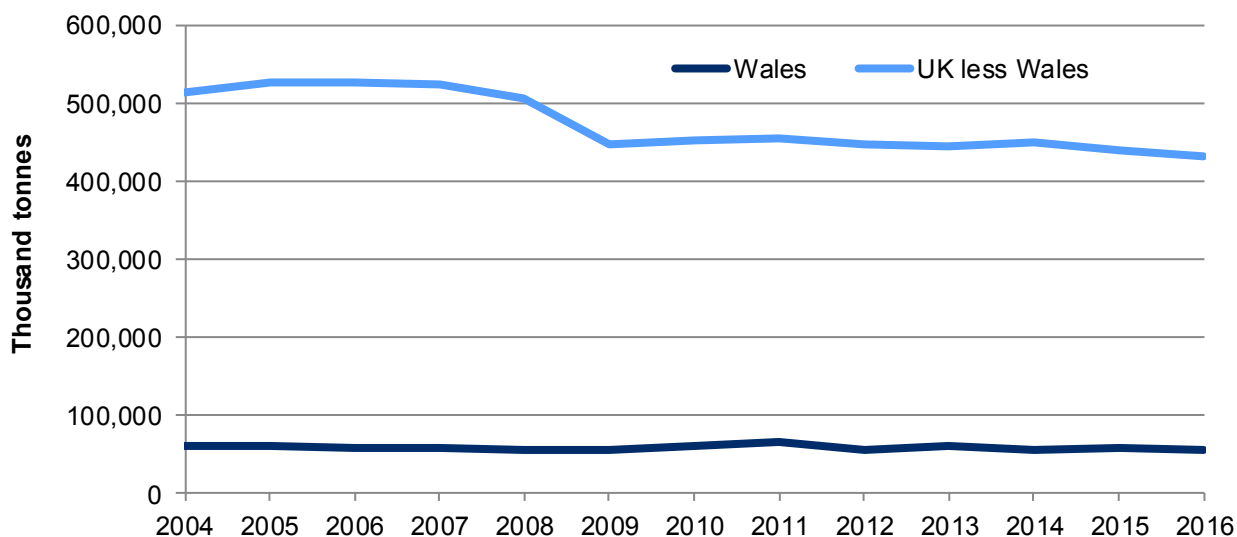
Source: Department for Transport

Freight movements to and from the Republic of Ireland through Welsh ports

Welsh ports also act as the gateway between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe with, for example, 80 per cent of goods carried on Irish registered HGVs between the Republic of Ireland and Europe passing through Wales (see StatsWales).

- Of goods carried on Irish registered Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) from the Republic of Ireland to the continent in 2016, 77.8 per cent goes through Wales.

- Of goods carried on Irish registered HGVs to Ireland from the continent, 83.8 per cent goes through Wales. The majority of this HGV traffic between Wales and the Republic of Ireland passes through Holyhead[3].

Table 2: Goods carried on Irish registered HGVs between Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, 2016

				Thousand tonnes of goods
	Via North Wales ports	Via South Wales ports	Via other routes	All
From Ireland to:				
Northern Ireland			2,963	2,963
UK ex N. Ireland	333	59	153	545
Continent	174	100	83	357
All	507	159	3,199	3,865
To Ireland from:				
Northern Ireland			1,562	1,562
UK ex N. Ireland	375	29	105	509
Continent	155	63	42	260
All	530	92	1,709	2,331

Source: Central Statistical Office Ireland

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[3] Source: Central Statistical Office Ireland

An important influence on the level of freight traffic through Welsh ports will be the level of economic activity in the Republic of Ireland.

- In 2016, 524 thousand lorries and unaccompanied trailers passed through Welsh ports to and from Ireland. Within this total, around half were from, and half to, Ireland. 81 per cent of this traffic went through Holyhead (see StatsWales);
- In addition, in 2016 there were just under 2.6 million sea passengers travelling between Wales and Ireland; 1.9 million of these passed through Holyhead with the remainder using the ports of Fishguard and Milford Haven (see StatsWales). There were also 659 thousand accompanied passenger vehicles.

Passenger movements through Welsh ports

Ferry passengers

The numbers of ferry passengers using Welsh ports peaked in 1998 and since then there has been a general decline. The decline included the removal of the Swansea – Cork service in 2007, which restarted in 2010 for two consecutive years. Passenger movements between Ireland and Welsh ferry ports have declined by 63 per cent at Fishguard, 34 per cent at Milford Haven and 31 per cent at Holyhead (from 1998 to 2016). Milford Haven was the only port to have an increase (1.2 per cent) in sea passenger traffic in 2016 when compared to 2015 data.

Table 3: Sea passenger traffic between (both to and from) Wales and the Irish Republic by port, 1998 to 2016 (a)(b)

								Thousands
	Holyhead - Dublin	Holyhead - Dun Laoghaire	Holyhead - all routes	Mostyn - Dublin	Fishguard - Rosslare	Milford Haven - Rosslare	Swansea - Cork	Total - all ports
1998	1,051	1,724	2,775	-	810	512	158	4,255
1999	1,193	1,348	2,541	-	830	495	133	3,999
2000	1,342	1,176	2,518	-	832	463	124	3,937
2001	1,316	1,064	2,380	5	687	388	122	3,582
2002	1,354	1,017	2,371	44	662	387	121	3,585
2003	1,350	984	2,333	48	645	384	118	3,528
2004	1,376	887	2,262	10	614	378	116	3,380
2005	1,327	847	2,173	.	590	321	100	3,184
2006	1,311	745	2,057	.	584	333	81	3,055
2007	1,404	734	2,138	.	597	379	-	3,114
2008	1,374	622	1,996	.	554	345	-	2,895
2009	1,598	343	1,942	.	501	315	-	2,757
2010	1,821	252	2,073	.	419	325	94	2,910
2011	1,781	238	2,020	.	410	313	59	2,802
2012	1,709	189	1,898	.	364	329	.	2,591
2013	1,766	188	1,954	.	333	328	.	2,615
2014	1,875	139	2,013	.	351	322	.	2,686
2015	1,970	.	1,970	.	327	335	.	2,632
2016	1,927	.	1,927	.	298	339	.	2,564

Notes: Source: Department for Transport
(a) Totals may not add up due to rounding.   .
(b) '-' nil or less than half the final digit shown, '.' data is not applicable

Historically, there were two routes between Holyhead and the Irish Republic (Dublin and Dun Laoghaire), however in 2015 the route to Dun Laoghaire was removed. In 1998 the busiest route through Holyhead (and Wales) was the Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire service with over 1.7 million passenger movements, however the last recorded figures for 2014 recorded only 0.14 million passengers. Alongside this, the Holyhead to Dublin route saw an overall increase in passenger numbers from just over 1 million in 1998 to nearly 2 million in 2015, an increase of 87 per cent. However, the numbers of passengers in 2016 decreased from 1,970 thousand in 2015 to 1,927 thousand (2 per cent) in 2016 (chart 5).

Chart 5: Passenger numbers on both routes from Holyhead to Dublin and Dun Laoghaire.
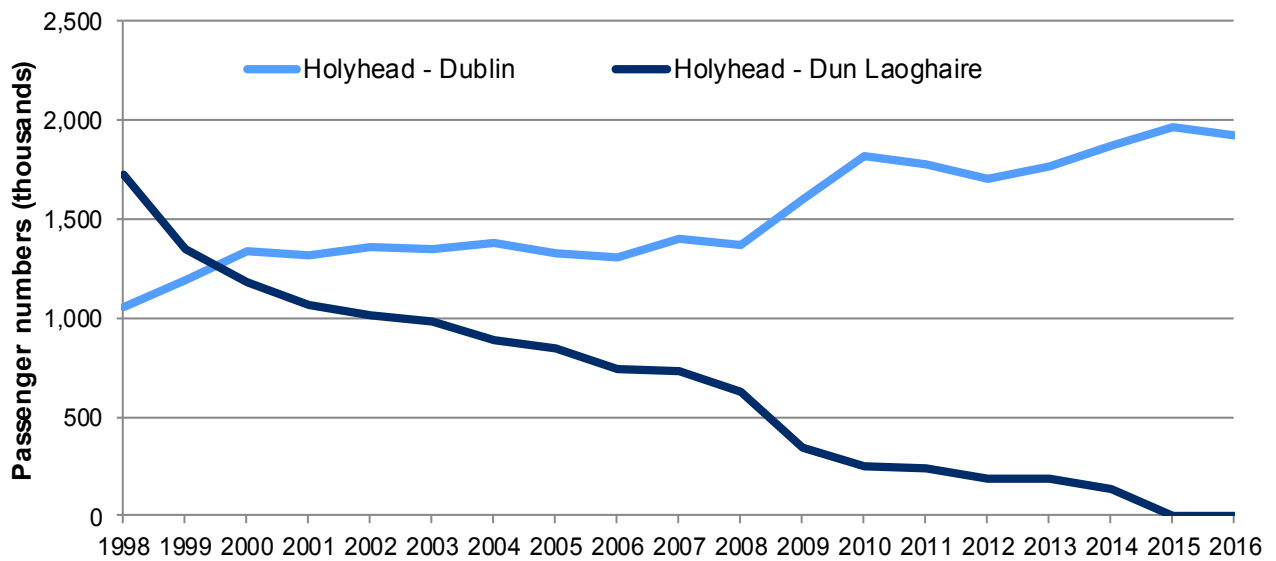
Source: Department for Transport

Key quality information

1 Context

1.1 Related publications

The Department for Transport produces a range of [statistics relating to the maritime sector](#) presenting information on domestic waterborne freight, ports, sea passengers, shipping fleets and sea farers.

Transport Scotland produce a compendium publication titled '[Scottish Transport Statistics](#)' which includes a chapter on Water Transport.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency publish an annual statistics bulletin titled ['Northern Ireland Ports Traffic'](#) providing statistics on passenger and freight traffic through Northern Ireland ports.

1.2 Symbols

In tables where figures have been rounded to the nearest final digit, there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total shown.

The following symbols have been used throughout the bulletin:

-        nil or less than half the final digit shown

.   not applicable

2. Relevance

These figures are compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT). The UK-level data, together with a full description of the sources and methods used to compile these data can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

3. Accuracy

Freight data

Source of data: Port freight traffic statistics are based on a combination of data reported to the DfT by port authorities and shipping lines or their agents. Prior to 2000 reporting was by port authorities only. The current collection arrangements for port freight traffic statistics were introduced in 1 January 2000 to meet the requirements of the EC Maritime Statistics Directive (Council Directive 95/64/EC on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods and passengers by sea, recast as Directive 2009/42/EC).

Coverage: The statistics relate to traffic to and from ports in Wales. UK-level figures do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.

Major and minor ports: Major ports are those with cargo volumes of at least 1 million tonnes annually (plus a small number of ports with less tonnage). More detailed data are collected for major ports than for the remaining 'minor' ports, and this is reflected in the statistics which can be produced.

Weights: All weights are tonnes gross, including crates and other packaging. The tare weights of containers, road goods vehicles, trailers and other items of transport equipment (i.e. the unloaded weight of the vehicle or equipment itself) are excluded.

Cargo types: Major port traffic is classified by cargo type. Cargo type is defined primarily in terms of the means by which the goods are loaded onto or off the vessel - although for some cargo types there is some further subdivision into broad commodities, the method of loading takes priority. A table of cargo types is shown below.

Category	Description	Code
Unitised traffic		
Containers	20 ft freight units	31
	40 ft freight units	32
	Freight units > 20 ft & < 40 ft	33
	Freight units > 40 ft	34
Roll-on/Roll-off (self-propelled)	Road goods vehicles with or without accompanying trailers	51
	Passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers/caravans	52
	Passenger buses	53
	Import/Export motor vehicles	54
	Live animals on the hoof	56
	Other mobile self-propelled units	59
Roll-on/Roll-off (non self- propelled)	Unaccompanied road goods trailers & semi-trailers	61
	Unaccompanied caravans and other road, agricultural and industrial vehicles	62
	Rail wagons, shipborne port to port trailers, and shipborne barges engaged in goods transport	63
	Other mobile non self-propelled units	69
Non-unitised traffic		
Liquid Bulk	Liquefied gas	11
	Crude oil	12
	Oil products	13
	Other liquid bulk products	19
Dry Bulk	Ores	21
	Coal	22
	Agricultural products	23
	Other dry bulk	29
Other general cargo	Forestry products	91
	Iron and steel products	92
	Other general cargo & containers < 20 ft	99

Unitised goods: Goods which are lifted on or off the vessel in large (20 foot or longer) shipping containers, or rolled on or off in one of a variety of self propelled or towed units are said to be unitised cargoes. For these cargo types, the number of units as well as the weight of goods is recorded. Subsets of unitised goods are main freight units consisting of all containers and those ro-ro units which are designed to carry freight (categories 51, 61 and 63 above). The purpose of the main freight unit classification is that it excludes those ro-ro units which are not freight carrying – i.e. passenger vehicles, trade vehicles, and other specialised vehicles and trailers.

Geographical classification of traffic: UK port traffic is classified geographically according to where the goods were last loaded or next unloaded at the other end of the sea journey. All traffic is either domestic or foreign.

Sea passenger data

These figures are compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT). UK-level data, together with a full description of the sources and methods used to compile these data can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Source of data: International ferry passenger statistics are collected monthly from ferry operators by DfT. They include drivers of lorries, coaches and other vehicles but exclude passengers on purely domestic routes.

Ship arrival statistics

They are compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT) and a link to the UK-level data, together with a full description of the sources and methods used to compile these data can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Source of data: The primary source used was commercially obtained vessel movement data from Lloyds List Intelligence (LLI) which is now merged with other information on ship movements obtained by DfT through the system described above for all cargo or passenger carrying movements at major ports and the sea passenger survey. The three data sources are merged at the level of individual vessels calling at each port. The maximum number of calls from any of the three sources is taken as the final estimate.

Coverage and quality: The data are considered a reasonably accurate estimate of the number of commercial shipping movements at UK ports, but are not necessarily exact, and the coverage of certain vessel or traffic types may be variable at the margins. The data are not classified as National Statistics. The table below shows the classification of ships types and the ships arrival that are not covered.

Ship type	Trading status	Vessel types included
Tankers	Trading	Oil tanker, oil-chemical tanker, chemical tanker, liquid gas tanker, other tanker
Ro-Ro vessels	Trading	Ro-Ro passenger, Ro-Ro containers, Ro-Ro other cargo
Fully cellular container vessels	Trading	Container (fully cellular)
Other dry cargo vessels	Trading	Bulk carrier, bulk-oil carrier, refrigerated cargo, specialised carrier, general cargo, general cargo-passenger
Passenger*	Trading	Passenger, cruise
Other vessels*	Non-trading	Offshore supply, dredging, bunkering tanker
Not included: Work boats which are unlikely to be carrying cargoes	Non-trading	Fish catching, other fishing, offshore (except supply), tugs or towing/pushing craft, offshore vessels other than supply ships, such as drilling vessels, pilot vessels, research ships, fishing boats, military vessels, research, other work vessels, non-seagoing ships, non-merchant ships, non-propelled vessels, non-ship structures, vessels of unknown or unrecorded type

4. Timeliness and punctuality

This bulletin reports on Sea Transport in Wales during 2016. Information covers traffic to and from ports in Wales. UK-level figures do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. This bulletin is based on annual data which is published by the Department for Transport.

Related publications are available from the Statistics and Research website.

Sea Transport statistics for Wales are available on the statswales website.

5. Accessibility and clarity

This Statistical Bulletin is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics & Research website and is accompanied by tables on our statswales website. Historically this information was released in Chapter 10 of 'Welsh Transport Statistics'.

6. Comparability and coherence

The Department for Transport produces a range of statistics relating to the maritime sector presenting information on domestic waterborne freight, ports, sea passengers, shipping fleets and sea farers.

National Statistics status

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016 and this release does not include any of the national indicators.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators

Further information on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Further details

This document is available at:

http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/sea-transport/

Next update

September 2018

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided to:
stats.transport@gov.wales

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