

# Movers & Shakers Rail Leadership Snapshot

---

A data-led snapshot of senior leadership appointments and market trends across the rail sector



# Contents

---

Introduction	3	Leadership Trends (Rail)	7
Leadership Appointments by Sector	4	Internal vs External Appointments	8
Leadership Appointments by Company Type	5	Diversity	9
Leadership Trends (All Sectors)	6	Methodology	10



# Introduction

---

As the UK rail sector continues to evolve, leadership movement remains a strong indicator of where organisations are concentrating investment, operational focus, and long-term delivery priorities.

Across 2025 and into early 2026, the market has remained highly active at senior level, reflecting sustained investment across rail infrastructure, network modernisation, operational performance, and major capital delivery programmes.

Rail continues to represent one of the UK's largest and most strategically important infrastructure markets, supported by significant long-term government investment. Network Rail's current Control Period 7 (CP7) programme includes approximately £43.1bn of funding between 2024 and 2029, focused on maintaining, renewing, and enhancing the national rail network.

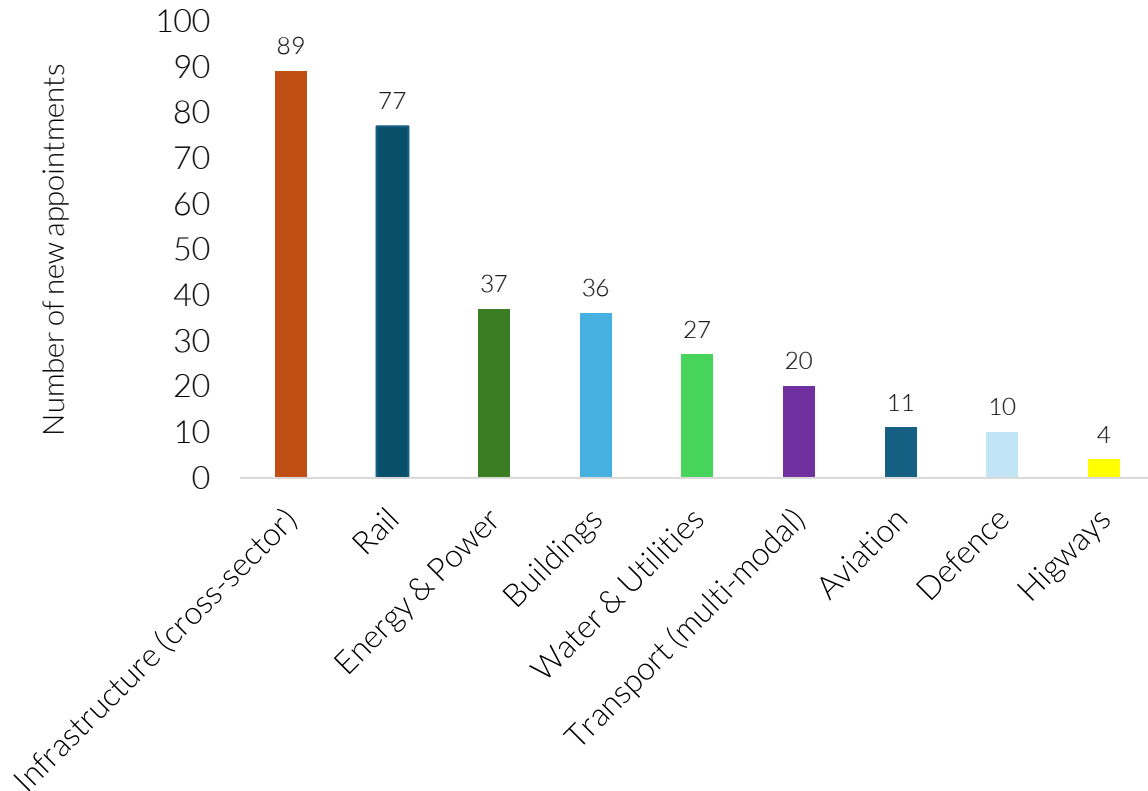
This includes investment in infrastructure resilience, digital signalling, electrification, asset renewals, climate adaptation, and operational performance improvements across the UK rail system. However, outside of HS2, the current control period is expected to see a more constrained level of enhancement investment across parts of the UK rail market, reflecting wider funding pressures and shifting government priorities. Despite this, several nationally significant programmes continue to progress, including the TransPennine Route Upgrade, East West Rail, and elements of Northern Powerhouse Rail, alongside targeted investment in station upgrades, digital railway initiatives, rolling stock modernisation, and regional connectivity improvements across both passenger and freight networks.

This report takes the data curated from our monthly Movers & Shakers updates to provide a snapshot of the infrastructure talent market, with a specific focus on the rail sector. Whilst the wider dataset spans transport and infrastructure, this version isolates rail-related activity to provide a more targeted view of leadership trends across rail operations, infrastructure delivery, asset management, rolling stock, and network performance.



# Leadership Appointments by Sectors

## Appointments by Sector



Overall, rail remains the most active sector for leadership movement within the dataset, reflecting the scale and breadth of activity across the market, as well as the high visibility of leadership changes across the sector within our tracking. Another contributing factor may be the ongoing industry transition towards Great British Railways (GBR), with some individuals choosing to leave organisations expected to merge into the future combined entity.

There is a sustained demand for senior leadership spanning infrastructure delivery, operations, rolling stock, asset management, and programme leadership. Unlike some adjacent sectors, where activity is driven by smaller numbers of major programmes, rail benefits from a pipeline of renewals, upgrades, operational change, and long-term capital investment across the wider network.

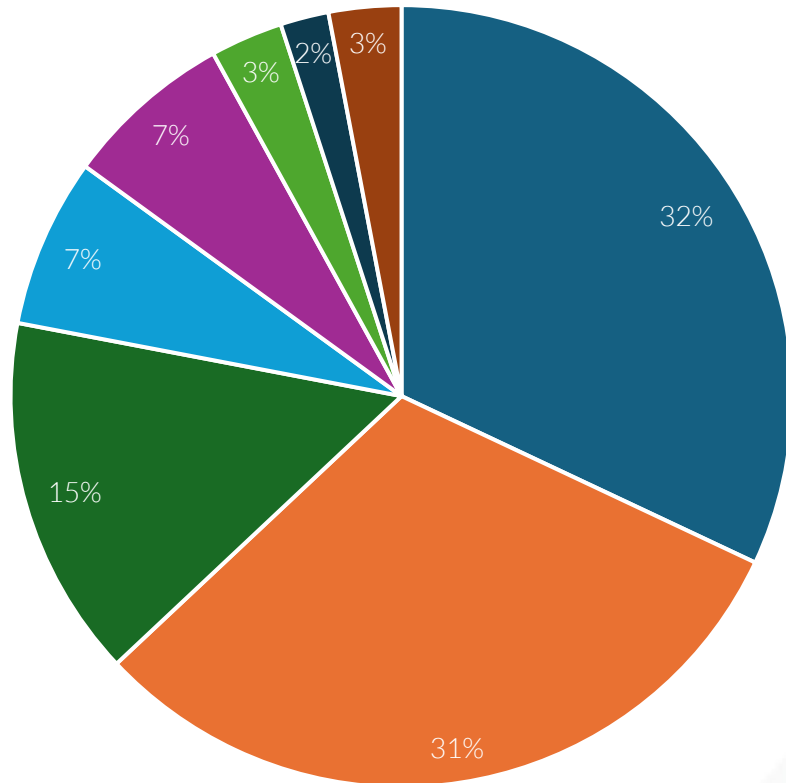
Additionally, the breadth of leadership movement within rail also reflects the complexity of the sector itself across different types of companies. Activity spans operators, asset owners, contractors, consultancies, and manufacturers, creating consistent demand for leaders capable of navigating large-scale delivery environments, operational performance challenges, and long-term transformation programmes.

Compared to other infrastructure sectors, rail demonstrates a more mature and continuously active leadership market, underpinned not only by major projects, but by the ongoing operational and renewal requirements of one of the UK's most complex infrastructure systems, being significantly more active in hiring activity compared to the rest of our data pool.



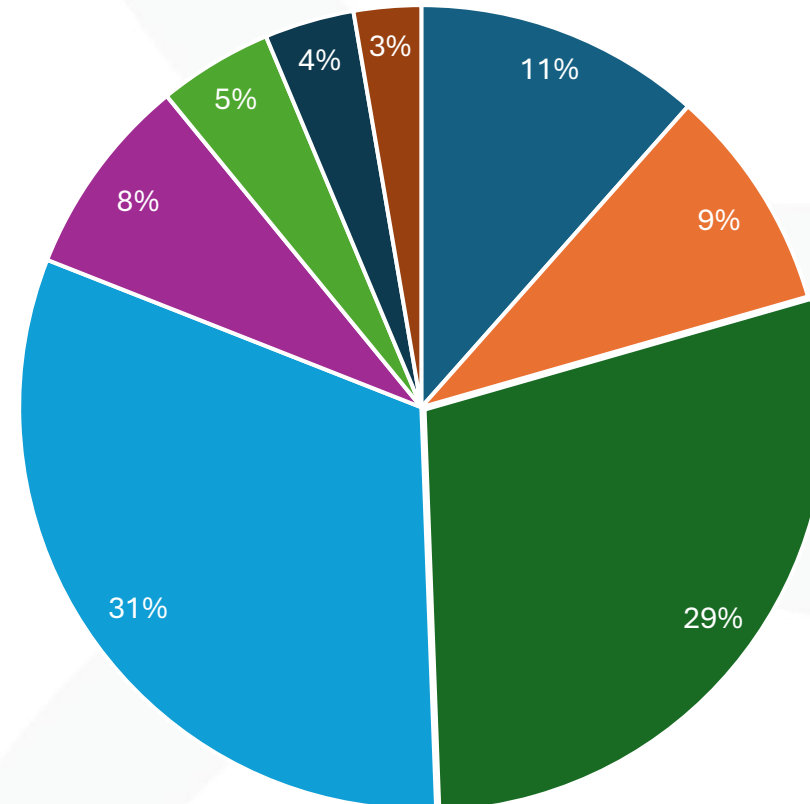
# Leadership Appointments by Company Type

Appointments by Company Type (All Sectors)



- Consultancy
- Contractor
- Operator
- Public Sector
- Asset Owner
- Manufacturer
- Investor
- Other

Appointments by Company Type (Rail)



- Consultancy
- Contractor
- Asset Owner
- Operator
- Manufacturer
- Infrastructure Investor
- Consultancy
- Other

# Leadership Trends (All Sectors)

---

14%

of appointments were  
Commercial leaders

14%

of appointments were  
Programme leaders

14%

of appointments were  
Operations leaders

58%

of appointments were  
General Management

27%

of appointments lead  
other support  
functions\*

\*Support functions include corporate functions such as Strategy, Finance, HR, Legal, IT, Procurement and Business Development.

# Leadership Trends (Rail)

---

5%

of appointments were  
Commercial leaders

14%

of appointments were  
Programme leaders

17%

of appointments were  
Operations leaders

31%

of appointments were  
General Management

33%

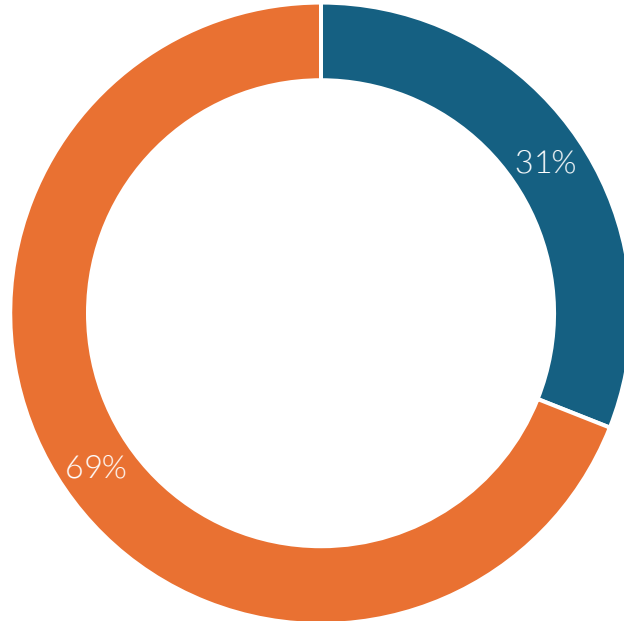
of appointments lead  
other support  
functions\*

\*Support functions include corporate functions such as Strategy, Finance, HR, Legal, IT, Procurement and Business Development.



# Internal vs External Appointments

## Hiring Movements (Rail)



■ Internal ■ External

External appointments accounted for 69% of tracked leadership moves within the rail sector, with internal promotions representing the remaining 31%.

The relatively high level of external hiring reflects the breadth and pace of activity currently taking place across the rail market, with organisations continuing to seek experienced leaders from across the wider infrastructure sector to support evolving business and delivery priorities.

This is consistent with the broader infrastructure pipeline, where sustained investment is driving both internal progression and external hiring to meet demand.

Comparatively, internal promotion is slightly higher in the water sector (45%) where there is a stable number of senior roles, compared to energy (25%), where organisations show a much greater reliance on external hiring and expanding headcount. Rail sits between the two, reflecting a balance between internal progression and the continued need to attract experienced leadership from across the wider infrastructure sector.



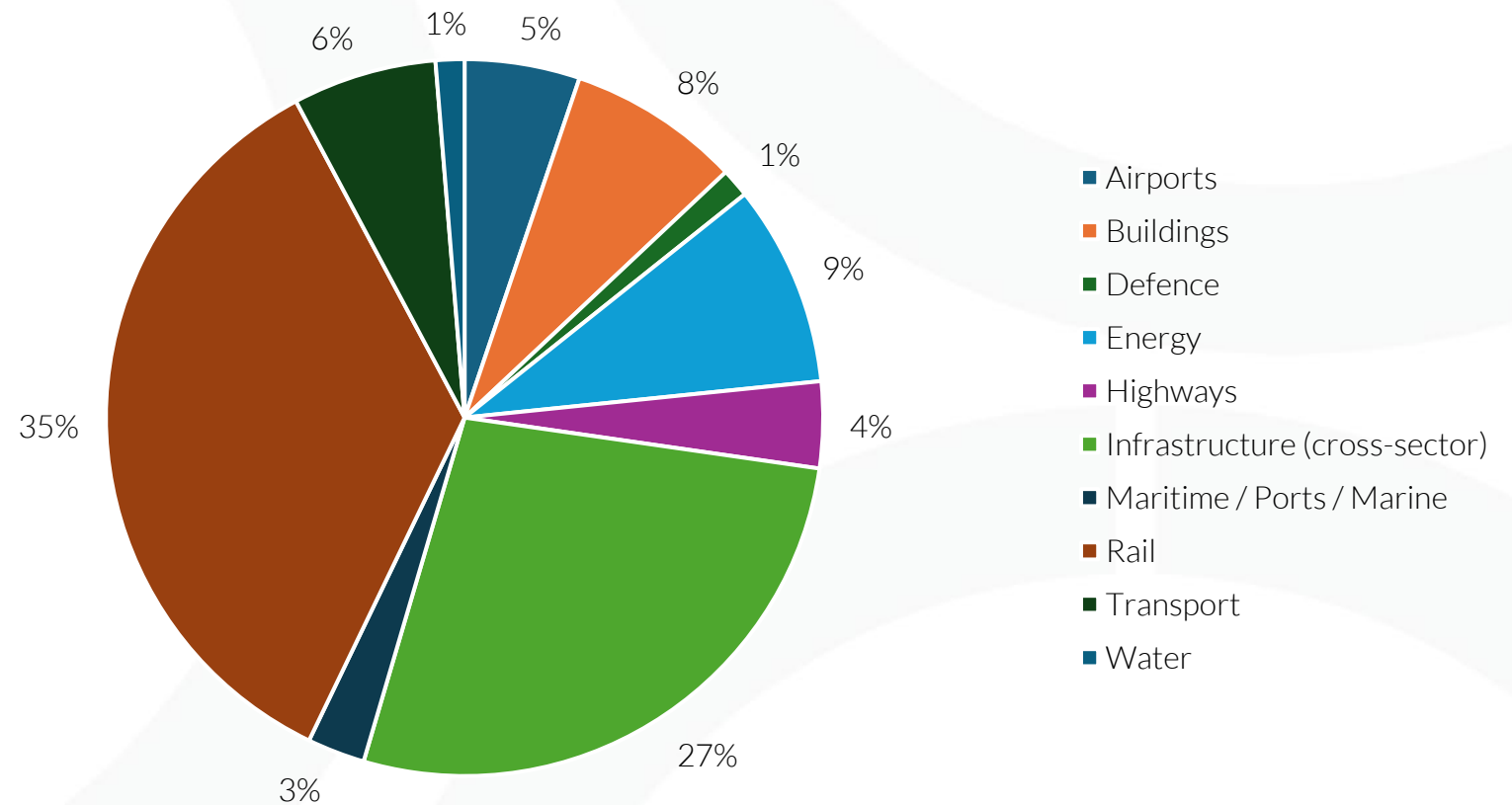
# Diversity

Women accounted for approximately 35% of tracked leadership appointments within the rail sector.

This represents one of the stronger levels of female representation across the wider infrastructure market and reflects the breadth of leadership activity taking place across rail operations, infrastructure delivery, programme management, and corporate functions.

Compared to several adjacent infrastructure sectors, rail appears to demonstrate a more established level of female leadership representation, supported by the scale and diversity of organisations operating across the market.

### Female appointments over the past year





# Methodology

---

This report is based on leadership movements tracked through our ongoing Movers & Shakers updates, compiled throughout 2025 and early 2026. Readers can access the monthly blogs here: <https://www.newsomconsulting.co.uk/blog>.

Each leadership move has been recorded and categorised across a number of dimensions, including sector, organisation type, function, role title, gender (where identifiable), and whether the appointment represents an internal move.

Individual names and job titles have been manually reviewed and coded to extract consistent data points, with roles grouped into comparable categories (e.g. Commercial Director, Project & Programme Director, Operations Director) to enable meaningful analysis across the dataset.

Sector classification has been refined using both recorded sector data and contextual information from job titles and organisations, allowing for a more accurate representation of where leadership activity is occurring. Roles spanning multiple sectors have been identified as cross-sector positions, reflecting the increasing complexity of infrastructure programmes.

Whilst the dataset is not exhaustive, it is designed to provide a representative view of senior leadership activity across the transport and infrastructure sectors.



# Contact Us

Emilia Kilburn

T +44 (0) 203 026 3874  
M +44 (0) 7537 162 034  
E [ek@newsomconsulting.co.uk](mailto:ek@newsomconsulting.co.uk)

Or for more information please visit our website  
[www.newsomconsulting.co.uk](http://www.newsomconsulting.co.uk)

210 Euston Road • London • NW1 2DA



NEWSOM  
CONSULTING