

Our approach to nature

Our goal at East West Rail is to build a railway that supports wildlife and leaves lasting benefits for people and biodiversity. To achieve this, we're designing a railway that protects key features such as hedgerows, streams and woodland, and creates new routes for species to move, feed and adapt as the climate changes.

Understanding biodiversity so we can improve our design

Before making decisions, we take time to understand the existing wildlife and habitats along the route. Our specialists assess:

- Local wildlife, including bats, birds, otters, water voles, badgers and other species
- Habitats, such as hedgerows, woodlands, grassland and watercourses
- How animals move through the landscape, identifying locations where they may travel and cross the railway
- Insights from councils, environmental organisations and local communities, which help us understand local priorities
- New ways of analysing data, helping us target surveys and make more informed design choices

This evidence base helps us understand how species move through the landscape, including identifying key routes used by bats and the areas where habitats are already limited.

We are also holding forums with local stakeholders such as landowners, local council officers and governmental and non-governmental organisations to discuss our proposals. This engagement helps us to build a detailed understanding of local knowledge, concerns and opportunities, which will inform our assessment of impacts and the development of our proposals. This dialogue will continue as we continue to develop our designs.

Avoiding impacts through iterative, consultative design

Avoiding impacts on biodiversity is a key priority for us. We look for ways to:

- Keep important habitats connected
- Avoid the loss of high-value or sensitive wildlife areas
- Maintain natural watercourses and drainage

Where it isn't possible to avoid impacts, we adapt our designs to reduce impacts as far as is practically possible. Examples include:

- Moving structures to keep wildlife routes intact
- Designing culverts and underpasses so animals such as otters, water voles and badgers can move safely
- Using planting to guide wildlife towards safe crossing points along the railway

If any impacts remain after this, we will restore habitats wherever we can, with new habitat creation elsewhere to compensate for losses only as a last resort.

Designing for connectivity: a multifunctional, landscape-scale approach

We're designing the railway so it becomes part of a wider, connected natural landscape rather than a barrier to it. This means making the best use of land and structures to support wildlife.

We do this by:

- Creating places where animals can cross the railway safely
- Integrating wildlife movement within areas designed for drainage, flood management, public access and farming
- Providing links between existing habitats, newly created habitats and wider nature recovery networks

Examples of this approach include:

- Wildlife friendly culverts and underpasses with planting that encourages animals to use them
- Green bridges or enhanced overbridges to maintain habitat connectivity either side of the railway
- Planting new hedgerows and woodlands to link any fragmented habitats
- Focusing mitigation in locations where it is most effective

Delivering biodiversity net gain and long-term resilience

As part of our proposals, we're committed to delivering overall benefits to nature by achieving what is called biodiversity net gain (BNG). BNG means leaving biodiversity in a measurably better state after development than before, including creating more or better-quality habitats.

We'll identify a BNG baseline as part of the surveys we are undertaking, which will help us understand what we need to do to achieve our commitment of 10% BNG across the project.

To achieve BNG in practice, we'll design habitat creation and enhancements based on sound ecological principles. These will be determined by the area of habitat we could create or enhance, and the distinctiveness of the habitat and its strategic significance, meaning how much it would contribute to local nature conservation objectives.

We're also considering climate resilience in our designs, alongside immediate aftercare and long-term management of BNG habitats.

The habitats we aim to enhance and create will either be located within the boundary of our proposals or delivered locally through working off-site in partnership with BNG providers. To help identify and explore these opportunities, we're working with local and regional stakeholders as we continue to develop our proposals.

Working together to leave a lasting legacy

We're continuing to work with local stakeholders, councils, environmental groups and statutory bodies throughout the design process. Their knowledge and experience help us:

- Understand what matters locally
- Improve connectivity across the landscape where reasonable opportunities exist
- Make sure our proposals support long-term environmental goals

Our aim is to build a railway that strengthens nature, supports resilient ecosystems and benefits future generations.



Ecological compensation site

Get in touch

If you have any questions, please get in touch using the details below:



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