

Our approach to the environment

East West Rail (EWR) is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to connect people and businesses in the communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. The railway would open up new journeys, cut travel times, ease congestion on local roads and bring more jobs within reach of people living locally.

Our approach to the environment

EWR will be a new, environmentally sustainable way to travel across the region that helps take cars and lorries off local roads, resulting in cleaner air, safer roads and less congestion.

Caring for the environment is at the centre of everything we do. At each stage of planning and developing EWR

we work to ensure nature has a proper place in our plans. We want to change the environment for the better, delivering biodiversity net gain for the region.

Protecting the environment is never an afterthought – it's a fundamental part of our decision-making. We're listening to and working closely with local community groups, environmental bodies and local highway and planning authorities to assess the environmental impacts of our plans on areas such as environmentally important sites and priority habitats.

We take a proactive approach to avoid or reduce negative environmental impacts. Our aim is to become a net zero carbon railway. To achieve this, we're looking at ways to advance low carbon design and to use green energy to power our trains.

Our environmental principles

We remain fully committed to the environmental principles we outlined as part of our 2021 consultation:



Respecting important sites and locations: building and operating so we don't damage the important environmental and heritage sites in your local area.



Caring for your landscapes: enhancing the quality of landscapes and townscapes and considering how what we build can be designed to blend in with your local environment.



Sourcing responsibly: sustainably sourcing what we need and reducing our waste to get the maximum use out of everything we buy.



Protecting species: delivering biodiversity net gain by approaching development so biodiversity is left in a better state than we found it.



Protecting you from flooding: working carefully to make sure your water sources are protected, and that we don't cause any increase in flooding through our construction or operations.



Preserving your heritage: protecting your historic environment through preserving and enhancing your heritage assets.



Respecting our neighbours: effectively managing and controlling noise vibration and pollution to avoid affecting your health or quality of life.



Contributing to the fight against climate change: designing, constructing and operating in a way that helps us to be a net zero carbon railway which will mean our greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by removal of an equal amount of those gases from the atmosphere.



Protecting your farmland: protecting soil resources and agriculturally important land.

Work we've done since public consultation in 2021

We've worked hard to ensure that we focus on avoiding impacts wherever possible through the design of the potential route alignments for the new railway from Bedford to Cambridge. That's why all the alignment options we presented at the public consultation in 2021 avoid directly impacting the most important environmental and heritage sites in the area, such as listed buildings and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Since then, we've continued to consider the potential impacts on the environment and how these can be avoided. Here are some examples:

In Bedford, we found that partial reopening of the Varsity Line would be likely to result in a range of negative environmental impacts, including to designated sites. This supported continuing to favour a route to the north of Bedford.

Between Bedford and Cambridge, we've looked closely at ways we can reduce or remove embankments and viaducts www.eastwestrail.co.uk/embankments-viaducts-factsheet

Biodiversity

We're committed to delivering biodiversity net gain across EWR. Building on the progress made in Connection Stage One (the section of the railway that will connect people between Oxford and Milton Keynes via Bicester and Winslow) our commitment is to deliver 10% net gain across the Project.

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We're continuing to prioritise avoiding high value and priority habitats. For the route alignments we published in 2021, we researched ancient woodland in the area; as not all ancient woodland is mapped in the Natural England Inventory, we needed to look at historic mapping and other records to better understand if unmapped woodlands could have the potential to be ancient.

By doing this we were able to develop alignment options which not only avoided directly impacting mapped ancient woodland but also potential ancient woodland that hasn't been mapped. We'll continue to work with environmental stakeholders to share findings, listen and propose best practice and identify where we can support local and nationwide environmental objectives.

Environmental surveys and assessments

To support our biodiversity net gain ambitions and environmental commitments, we use environmental data to help us develop proposals that avoid, mitigate and compensate for potential impacts on the environment.

Since our last consultation we've continued undertaking a programme of environmental surveys in the area. The insights from this survey work help us to develop the design of the railway and reduce the potential impact of our proposals on the environment. These surveys will continue throughout 2023 and 2024 and we'll publish the findings of our

assessments in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) as part of the statutory consultation, where you'll have opportunities to review and comment on our findings.

A full environmental impact assessment will be carried out before we submit our application for a development consent order www.eastwestrail.co.uk/dco-factsheet, and the results will be presented in an Environmental Statement and associated documents that will accompany our application.

Assessment factors

We recognise that environment is one of a number of considerations, which is reflected in the Assessment Factors www.eastwestrail.co.uk/assessment-factors-factsheet that support our decision making. Where impacts remain as a result of the new railway, like those relating to landscape, we'll continue to work hard to reduce these through sensitive

design, like we have done with embankments and viaducts www.eastwestrail.co.uk/embankments-viaducts-factsheet

More detailed information on this will be shared during our statutory consultation.

You can find more information about our approach to environment and sustainability here: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/environment-factsheet

Get in touch

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