

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE REPORT

I'm pleased to present the committee's report into the key activities undertaken during 2022/23 alongside its anticipated activities for 2023/24.

Network Rail has developed a delivery plan that sets out the pathway to achieve the targets for each of the four priorities outlined in the environmental sustainability strategy (see page 4 of the [Environmental sustainability strategy 2020-2050](#) ([networkrail.co.uk](https://www.networkrail.co.uk))).

The committee assists the Board in reviewing policies, practices, targets, and performance of Network Rail against this ambitious plan. Much progress has been made in all strategy areas. There has been some public recognition of this, with the winning of two International Union of Railways (UIC) international rail awards; one for Best Green Corridor and one for Best Diversity & Inclusion Initiative for the Rough Sleeping on Rail project.

David Noyes

chair, environmental sustainability committee

13 July 2023



Committee members	Formal appointment to the committee	Number of meetings attended during the year
David Noyes	September 2020	4/4
Rob Brighthouse	September 2020	4/4
Mike Putnam	September 2020	2/4
Fiona Ross	September 2020	4/4

## Committee attendees

Internal: The chair of the Board, group safety and engineering director – Technical Authority, chief environment and sustainability officer, and head of strategic communications.

External: Representatives from the Department for Transport, the chair of the Sustainable Rail Executive (SRE) of the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and expert advisers, including Julian Glover OBE and John Varley OBE, attend periodically.

## Role and Responsibilities of the Committee

The committee oversees, supports and where appropriate, provides guidance to the executive in the implementation of the strategy, ensuring that Network Rail is keeping abreast of wider environmental issues as well as co-ordinating its programmes with wider industry environmental initiatives.

## Principal activities and challenges during the year

In 2022/2023, the committee met every quarter to review progress and explored a wide range of themes including:

- engagement with key stakeholders across all strategic areas related to Environment and Sustainability (E&S)
- the role that the committee could play in implementing the findings and recommendations from the internal audit completed in 2022.

- endorsing proposed corrective actions and mitigations to address the findings from an external environmental compliance audit of the regions and functions
- monitoring each region's progress against the delivery plan, and ensuring that the regions were adequately supported to deliver the strategy
- informing the ongoing work on the RSSB-led initiative into developing a whole industry Sustainable Rail Blueprint
- alignment of the industry on sustainability and readiness for Great British Railways
- uptake and utilisation of the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT)
- potential benefits of having a 'digital twin' of the railway system to get insight into the emission sources that could present high risks.

The Committee monitored progress against the four pillars of the environmental sustainability strategy (ESS) as follows:

#### Greener assets, healthier air

The committee reviewed:

- initiatives being rolled out to improve data collection at source and in particular, improvement in how Network Rail's estate is metered on a regional basis
- the national programme to transition to zero emission vehicles (ZEV)
- potential use of ammonia as an alternative traction fuel
- the strategy for whole life carbon reporting and the carbon emissions reduction target
- progress in the implementation of the Commercial & Procurement (C&P) strategy and how the C&P team had actively worked on rolling-out science based targets to the supply chain
- Network Rail's first Corporate Power Purchase Agreement (CoPPA1) which is due to start generating at the end of 2024
- exploring the potential to build a hydrogen powered plant.

#### Climate change adaptation

The main areas that the Committee explored under this theme were related to:

- integration of E&S principles into core processes and standards across Network Rail
- implementation of recommendations from the two commissioned reports - the Weather Advisory Task Force (WATF) report and a Review of Earthworks Management report, to tackle adverse or extreme weather to make Network Rail's infrastructure, assets and facilities sustainable and resilient
- the Third Adaptation Report to Defra and the work underway on the Weather Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation (WRCCA).

#### Improving biodiversity of plants and wildlife

The Committee considered the following topics:

- implementation of biodiversity standards and management on the railway including a deep dive into the delivery of central aspects of the Varley programme (John Varley's 2018 report on Network Rail's lineside vegetation management)
- Sustainable Land Use Strategic framework to improve the use of Network Rail's lineside estate and challenges and opportunities associated with biodiversity and sustainable land use.

#### Circular Economy

The Committee undertook a deep dive into the circular economy to consider risks, opportunities, and progress including with the priority materials of steel, concrete, ballast and sleepers. The following topics were explored:

- relaunch of Surplus App, an 'internal eBay' app, that allowed surplus or used materials to be resold internally
- post implementation review of the waste management standards
- the committee's own role in the embedding of circular economy principles across the organisation
- raising awareness and sharing best practice to stimulate culture change within Network Rail.

### Planned activities for 2023/24

In the next year, the committee will continue to monitor the delivery of the strategy, including all the key programmes listed above. Some of the planned activities include:

- a deep dive into the four pillars by rotation
- a review of the environmental sustainability strategy and how environment and sustainability principles were being embedded into the company culture and working practices
- assurance and review of CP7 resourcing in regions (to progress sustainability initiatives)
- potential solutions for the generation of rail traction energy and future freight solutions
- monitoring compliance with the environmental act and other legislation
- reviewing C&P alignment on sustainability.