NetworkRail

The Greener Railway Strategy

Our Environment and Sustainability Strategy

2025 - 2050

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Welcome from our Chief Executive

Millions of people and goods make their journeys across our railway network every year and we want to continue to deliver the greenest, cleanest form of travel.

Since launching our first Environmental Sustainability Strategy four years ago, we have taken significant strides towards creating a greener railway. We became the first railway organisation in the world to set science based carbon emissions targets, aligning with a 1.5°C warming scenario. In the last four years, we have achieved zero non-hazardous waste to landfill, and we have begun transitioning our fleet to zero-emission vehicles.

We have also started the next steps towards a greener railway, by improving the way we will work and operate. For example, we have signed an agreement with EDF Renewables UK which will see enough solar energy to power 15 % of our electricity supply used in offices, depots and railway stations across the country. We have developed a process to reuse our ballast, which will save large amounts of virgin ballast over the next year. We will continue the electrification of our railway through the TransPennine route upgrade.

I am proud to share our refreshed Greener Railway Strategy, which sets our direction for this control period, and beyond 2030. As we celebrate the 200th year of the modern railway, we have reviewed our strategy to reflect on our progress and future goals.

At the heart of this strategy is our commitment to creating a railway that is fit for the future, that cares for our environment and that helps the communities around us to thrive. To do this, we need to foster a culture of sustainability, making it an integral part of our working DNA.

Our strategic aims are ambitious – we will support the delivery of net zero, the transition to a circular economy, adapt to climate change, protect our land, air and water, support nature's recovery, create an inclusive and accessible railway, improve the wellbeing of communities, and support local economies.

This strategy is essential to achieving our strategic objectives, whether it is delivering a safe railway or one that serves our customers and communities. This update highlights the connections between the other strategic priorities of Network Rail, to show how a greener railway is also a simpler and better one.

We've also aligned our strategy to the industry blueprint, so we are working together across the industry to achieve our goals.

With the backdrop of change in our industry as we move towards Great British Railways, this strategy is an opportunity to reflect on where we have been and where to want to go to. Together, we can leave a positive legacy for generations to come and help Great Britain to achieve its sustainability goals.

Andew Haines
Chief Executive

"At the heart of this strategy is our commitment to creating a railway that is fit for the future, that cares for our environment and that helps the communities around us to thrive."

Endorsement from across the business

Martin Frobisher
Group Safety & Engineering Director

Rail is the cleanest, greenest, form of mass transport. We are genuinely very proud of our green credentials but there's always more to do. This strategy sets out our future plans. We manage a vast range of different sustainability issues from the biodiversity of all the precious creatures which live on the railway lineside to the decarbonisation of our major capital projects. We create social value across the communities we serve. This strategy brings together all our sustainability plans into one clear and transparent document. The successful delivery of this strategy will make a massive difference to delivering a greener railway.

Jo Lewington
Chief Environment & Sustainability Officer

Our Greener Railway strategy develops our plans for our journey to Net Zero, demonstrating a clear commitment to minimising the UK railway's environmental footprint. We know that the railway has the potential to deliver significant positive impacts for the planet and for future generations.

We will integrate innovative technologies and collaborative partnerships to achieve these ambitious goals and we urge our stakeholders to embrace our vision for a truly sustainable railway.

Nick Millington
Route Director

I fully support the Greener Railway Strategy as a strategy that focuses on making a low carbon transportation system even lower, demonstrating a strong commitment to reducing our carbon footprint. By caring for the environment in which we operate, the strategy ensures that our natural surroundings are preserved and protected for future generations.

Additionally, the strategy emphasises the importance of sustainable development, ensuring that our actions today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This holistic approach not only benefits the environment but also supports the wellbeing of communities and future generations.

Ellie Burrows
Regional Managing Director

I'm incredibly pleased to support The Greener Railway Strategy, which is vital to ensuring we deliver a sustainable railway that is fit for the future and positively benefits our local environment and communities.

Embedding our sustainability plan in Eastern region will not only minimise our carbon emissions and negative environmental impacts, but will also ensure we adapt to climate change and continue to run a safe and resilient railway for generations to come.

On a personal level, I'm committed to working to protect our planet to improve access to green spaces for people and wildlife.

Steve Welsh
Regional Finance Director

I am committed to embedding the Greener Railway ambitions within NW&C because it will not only help us meet our environmental sustainability commitments but also deliver financial efficiencies that we can use to invest into the railway.

To me, sustainable growth of the railway has to balance the impacts that our railway makes, both positive and negative, on our natural environment, communities that we serve and the economic contribution the railway makes to the country.

Tracey Williamson
Group Commercial & Procurement Director

The Greener Railway Strategy is a pivotal milestone in our quest for a sustainable railway. By integrating the Greener Railway ambitions into our Commercial & Procurement activities, we will not only reduce our environmental footprint but also support the railway's longevity by delivering our sustainability goals with our supply chain partners.

On a personal level, committing to sustainability means fostering a healthier planet and enhancing the quality of life for ourselves and future generations.

Mark Killick
Director, Engineering and Asset Management

The Greener Railway Strategy is essential to delivering a sustainable railway, and is a vital part of the Southern region's Engineering and Asset Management plan which commits to "delivering for today and building a better, more sustainable tomorrow".

My team is responsible for the safe and sustainable management of thousands of assets across the Southern region including over 500 stations, 3,300 miles of track and 7,000 hectares of land; through this we have a huge opportunity to significantly reduce carbon, remove waste, enhance biodiversity, and increase our climate resilience and wider social value.

I am incredibly passionate about embedding our sustainability goals into the way we design, build and maintain our assets, delivering a sustainable railway that will still be fit for purpose in another 200 years.

Anit Chandarana
Director, System Operator

As the System Operator, our role is crucial in delivering the Greener Railway Strategy by ensuring the railway network is resilient, sustainable, and prepared for the future. We are addressing the impact of weather on train performance and safety, adapting the railway to climate change, and leading the weather risk task force.

Our commitment to net zero emissions involves strategic planning for traction decarbonisation and promoting a modal shift from road to rail. We must anticipate long-term challenges and opportunities, integrating future-oriented thinking into our strategic planning. By focusing on these critical areas, we aim to create a resilient, reliable, high-performing, and sustainable railway system for current and future users.

Endorsement from across the business

Innis Keith
Director, Health, Safety & Environment

As Health, Safety and Environment Director for Scotland's Railway, I am pleased to endorse the national Greener Railway Strategy, which aligns with our commitment to protecting people and the planet while driving sustainable business performance.

We cannot run a safe railway without taking climate action, and this strategy not only puts us on track to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our people and communities but also strengthens our long-term operational resilience to the changing climate.

Jeff Davies

Rail Investment Centre of Excellence Director

The Greener Railway Strategy is a crucial step in our journey to a more sustainable railway. Embedding the Greener Railway ambitions within our industry's capital investment portfolio will not only minimise our environmental impact but also secure a long-term future for the railway system.

On a personal level, embracing sustainability means supporting local communities, contributing to a healthier planet and securing a better quality of life now and for future generations.

Stuart Calvert
Capital Delivery Director

The Greener Railway Strategy is vital to our plans for managing, renewing, and enhancing the nations rail network. Our railway plays an important role in providing environmentally sustainable transport links for freight and passengers, supporting local communities and national economic growth.

We are neighbours with so many people across the nation and our care for the environment is essential. With billions spent on engineering investment, our capital project teams have a key role in ensuring we take these responsibilities seriously. Whether it's the choices we make in the materials we source, or the way we build things, considering the impact on our neighbours, or investing in projects that reflect climate change and provide accessibility for all, our greener railway strategy clearly sets out our approach.

I am committed to this strategy ensuring our project teams and our suppliers place the communities we serve at the heart of our investment plans, delivering sustainable investment in a railway fit for the future.

Martin Jones
Chief Engineer

The Greener Railway Strategy is an essential milestone in our path towards a more sustainable railway. Embedding the Greener Railway ambitions within engineering and asset management will not only minimise our environmental impact but also secure a long-term future for the railway system. I personally believe that adopting sustainable practices helps create a healthier planet and improve wellbeing for ourselves and future generations.

Our journey so far

We have come a long way since we launched our first Environmental Sustainability Strategy late in 2020. This was in the middle of one of our five-year funding periods, which we know as Control Period 6. This meant that while we had set our aspirations for a more environmentally sustainable railway, we did not always have the plans in place or the funding we needed to make improvements. This hasn't stopped us from making huge progress over the last five years, and some of our successes to be proud of include:

1. Being the first railway organisation in the world to set ambitious science-based carbon emissions targets from our own operations, limiting us to a 1.5°C warming scenario, in 2020.
2. Continuing to progress electrification through major projects such as the TransPennine route upgrade, which will electrify over 200 km of railway.
3. Agreeing a corporate power purchase agreement (CoPPA), that will see 49.9 megawatts (MW) of clean renewable energy generated, enough to power around 15 % of Network Rail's annual non-traction energy consumption – that is the energy we use to power our offices, depots and stations.
4. Working to improve air quality at our managed stations. This includes putting monitoring in place to understand our station air quality levels and creating air quality improvement plans at those stations where current levels are not good enough. We have also trialled technology such as air purifying totems at Birmingham New Street.
5. Beginning to transition our road fleet to zero emissions vehicles (ZEV). This has included achieving the initial target to transition 25 % of our car fleet to ultra low emissions vehicles (ULEVs) by December 2022 before beginning the full fleet transition to ZEVs. We have also achieved the goal of providing electrical vehicle charging facilities at 10 % of the car parking bays available for passengers as part of our decarbonisation commitments with central government in 2020.

6. Mapping and prioritising our key infrastructure materials to improve circularity and reduce carbon. This work contributed to the development of a process for reusing our ballast, which is now being rolled out over the network and is set to avoid the use of a large amount of virgin ballast in the next year alone.
7. By the end of Control Period 6 we were able to demonstrate zero non-hazardous waste to landfill.
8. Undertaking a comprehensive assessment of physical climate change risks to our assets and using the results during development of our adaptation plans and within the updates of asset management standards.
9. Using satellite technology, we have been able to estimate the amount of biodiversity found on the rail network, creating a baseline in 2020. We are repeating this exercise every year to begin to understand the impact our work has on plants and animals. We publish the findings in annual state of nature reports alongside case studies of the positive schemes we carry out to support nature's recovery in Britain.
10. We launched the Network Rail Social Value Framework in 2021, setting out the four key social value priorities for the business of economic prosperity, equal opportunity, wellbeing and Covid-19 recovery. This part of our journey has led us to this new refreshed strategy, where for the first time we bring the full, holistic view of sustainability together by including not only environmental and economic ambitions but ambitions to help the communities we serve.
11. We have worked with industry partners and the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) to develop and launch the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT). We are embedding through the business to help us measure and evaluate the social value of our projects and operations.
12. We have established an internal Green Network, enabling our people to become more engaged in sustainability topics, both inside and outside of work, and to share their success stories where they have been able to make positive change.
13. We have been able to integrate sustainability into business planning for the current and future control periods meaning that sustainability is now planned for and funded as part of our wider business objectives.

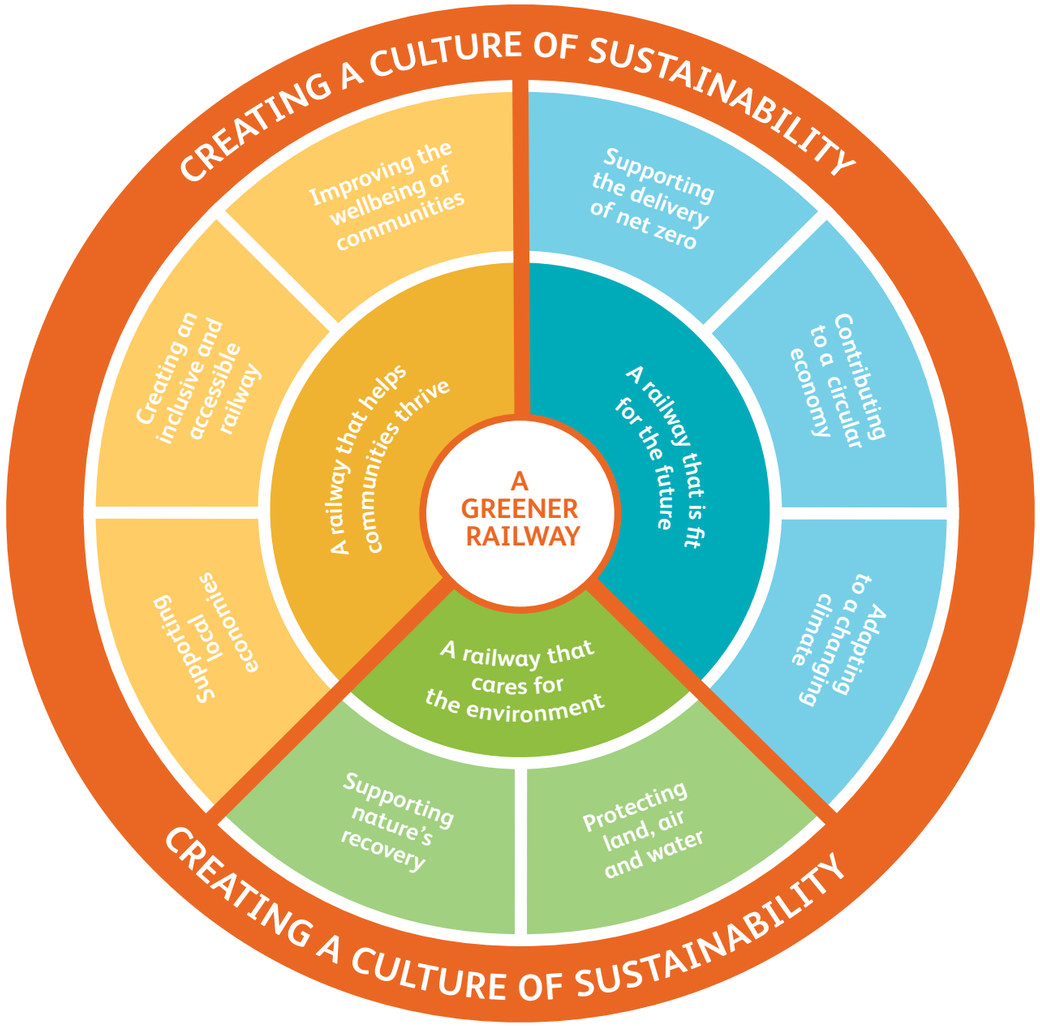
Our partners

Alongside our internal successes, we have worked with partners across the rail industry on the launch of the Sustainable Rail Blueprint (SRB) in 2023. The SRB is the industry-wide blueprint for realising sustainable rail and is made up of 11 priority areas. Network Rail are committed to supporting the achievement of the SRB and throughout this document you will see icons where our ambitions and priorities align to the SRB. We also remain committed to supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and you will also see icons demonstrating how our ambitions and priorities align with these.

The Sustainable Rail Blueprint

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Delivering a greener railway



Network Rail's purpose is to connect people and goods with where they need to be, to support our country's economic prosperity and contribute to the objectives of the UK and Scottish Governments. As the rail network marks its 200th birthday, we recognise that we do not just want to connect people and goods with where they need to be today. We want to be able to continue to do this for generations to come so that the country can continue to have the rail network at its heart, and we can continue to mark significant milestones in the history of rail.

Our role is to run a safe, reliable, efficient rail network with a vision to deliver a simpler, better, greener railway for our customers and communities. To achieve this, we must put sustainability at the core of how we do business and for this reason our refreshed strategic ambitions are to have:

- **A railway that is fit for the future**
- **A railway that cares for the environment**
- **A railway that helps communities thrive**

To achieve these strategic ambitions, we have identified eight priority areas for us to focus on, each with their own objectives and targets to achieve. By focusing our efforts on these eight priority areas we will be able to maximise the benefits to achieve our three strategic ambitions and deliver our vision of…

"A railway that connects people and moves goods for generations to come"

As before, successful delivery of this strategy will rely on integrating sustainability into everything we do. For this reason, we have also created a supporting ambition to build a **culture of sustainability** in our organisation.

A railway fit for the future.

As one of the greenest forms of mass transport, rail is a key mechanism for the delivery of net zero in the UK. It plays a pivotal role in connecting people and has a huge amount of history behind it. As we reach the 200th anniversary of the modern railway in 2025, we want the railway to be here, and going from strength to strength, in another 200 years. This means we must think about what we need to do differently, from thinking about energy security, material scarcity or adapting to a changing climate, to keep people and goods moving.

We will deliver this through the following priority areas:

1. Supporting the delivery of net zero
2. Contributing to a circular economy
3. Adapting to a changing climate

1. Supporting the delivery of net zero

Our strategic objective is to contribute to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2045 (Scotland) and 2050 (England and Wales).

Although rail is one of the lowest-carbon, greenest ways to travel, only contributing 1.4 % to total UK transport emissions, we can still make a big difference. As well as reducing our own emissions we can also encourage passengers and freight away from more carbon-intensive methods of travel like road and air onto the railway.

It is crucial that we do everything we can as a business to minimise our reliance on fossil fuels, and transition to an industry powered by green, renewable, low-carbon energy to play our part in tackling the global climate crisis.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Net Zero Rail Journeys

We want to reduce the emissions of rail journeys themselves by minimising our reliance on fossil fuels, and powering the network using green, renewable, low-carbon energy.

Net Zero Value Chain

We want to work collaboratively with our supply chain to reduce our whole-life carbon through our entire value chain. Neither one of us can achieve the UK net zero targets on our own. We will consider our carbon emissions from tender all the way through procurement, contract award and into design and delivery.

Net Zero Transport System

We aim to support the modal shift to rail by working collaboratively to achieve end to end low-carbon journeys with other modes of transport, encouraging freight growth and making our network more inclusive and accessible to encourage people out of their cars and onto the railway.

Net Zero Assets

We also want to minimise reliance on fossil fuels at our stations, depots, offices and our wider property portfolio. We are also committed to transitioning our road fleet and supporting rail systems.

Embed Net Zero

To help achieve our objective we will put in place the necessary management and data systems to inform business decisions and monitor and measure our progress and supporting rail systems.

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

1. Supporting the delivery of net zero

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- Achieve PAS 2080 certification by December 2025
- Confirm our scope 3 carbon reduction targets, and make plans to achieve them, by December 2025
- We will work with the Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV) to agree our target date for transitioning **100%** of our car and van fleet to zero emissions vehicles and will update this strategy to reflect the agreed date
- Reduce carbon emissions (scope 1 and 2) by **46%** against our CP5 exit baseline by March 2029
- Have progressed with further rail electrification, and be planning to introduce new battery-powered passenger trains, in line with the recommendations of our new strategy: Long Term Planning for Rail Decarbonisation
- Mandate that no new gas assets are installed from April 2029 onwards
- Reduce diesel traction emissions by at least a quarter below our CP5 baseline by March 2029
- Increase rail freight volumes by **7.5%** by March 2029
- Increase the number of assets powered by direct wire renewable connections

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Reduce carbon emissions (scope 1 and 2) by **90%** against our CP5 exit baseline by March 2050
- Reduce infrastructure carbon in our portfolio of renewals and enhancements to cut both carbon and cost
- Reduce rail emissions by introducing new technologies and further network electrification
- Reduce diesel traction to further reduce rail emissions

This will contribute to…

- Achieving UK net zero carbon emissions by increasing use of rail by passengers and freight.
- Improving UK air quality by reducing both road and rail emissions.
- Whole-system decarbonisation through the Government's commitment in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan to achieve a net-zero railway by 2050.
- The government's aims to generate enough clean power by 2030 to meet the UK's total annual electricity demand.
- Reducing carbon associated with the supply chain, much of which is embodied in the products and services we procure.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Train service delivery**

  Ensures a secure energy supply for running passenger and freight trains. It also helps us contribute towards reducing the impact of climate change so that we minimise its impact on the rail network.
- **Efficiency**

  Reduces costs by minimizing energy usage and materials needed for railway construction and maintenance through lower carbon decisions.
- **Customers and communities**

  Improves air quality for all those who use or live near our railway.

2. Contributing to a circular economy

Our strategic objective is to be a fully circular business.

We use lots of materials to build and maintain the rail network, spending around £7bn a year on our supply chain. Our activities produce a lot of waste; more than 1.3 million tonnes in 2024/25. We must use less and manage unavoidable waste better. We have a huge opportunity to contribute to a more circular economy, where we extract fewer virgin resources from the planet, keep materials and resources in circulation for as long as possible and keep waste to an absolute minimum. These actions will also help us significantly reduce our carbon emissions. Our aim is to embed circular economy requirements throughout our procurement, design and operational processes, so operating in a circular way is part of how we do business.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Circular procurement

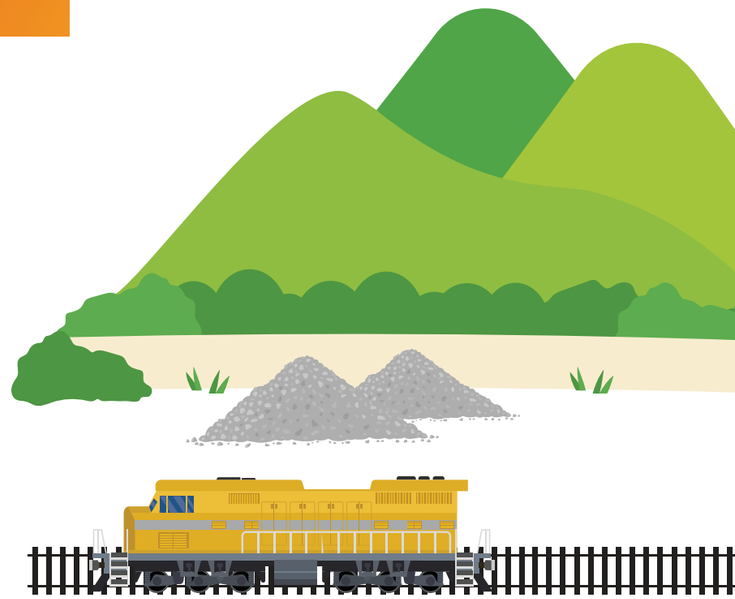
Circularity requirements are embedded in the procurement process and all material and product contracts have circularity and low carbon ambitions mandated.

Circular design

All assets, products and projects are designed with circularity embedded as standard.

Circular operations

Circularity is embedded into all operational rail decision-making – for example proactive maintenance strategies which increases asset longevity, repurposing assets to avoid the need for virgin materials, retaining/reusing resources for as long as possible and minimising water use.



This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

2. Contributing to a circular economy

Our route to success…

"The Greener Railway strategy and our regional plan has really influenced the way we manage our Track assets in Southern. We have updated our asset strategy to focus on carbon reduction and the reuse of materials, with tangible changes to reusing washed ballast for track renewals, use of low-carbon concrete, reusing concrete sleepers for refurbishment, and using synthetic wood sleepers at junctions, reducing reliance on tropical hardwood and deforestation"

Ross Briddon
Asset Strategy Manager for Track

By 2030 we will:

- Maintain zero non-hazardous waste to landfill by achieving and maintaining a diversion from landfill rate of **99.5%** or greater
- Increase reuse and recycling rates to **95%** by the end of March 2029
- Embed circularity requirements into design and procurement processes

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Cut construction costs by **10%** and beyond through designing out waste, and material optimisation
- Reduce the use of potable water when operating, renewing, enhancing and maintaining the railway
- Maximise material reuse rates to reduce carbon, minimise cost and improve security of material supply to enable future operation and maintenance of the railway

This will contribute to…

- The UK circular economy by getting people and goods out of road vehicles and increasing use of rail by passengers and freight.
- Improved security of material supply and reduction in use of natural resources by increasing the reuse of products and materials and finding innovative solutions to reduce our consumption.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Train service delivery**

  Secures the supply of materials needed for railway maintenance, renewal, and enhancement, ensuring continuous train service for passengers and freight.
- **Efficiency**

  By minimising the materials we need to buy to build and maintain the railway or by finding more sustainable materials that have a longer life we can make financial savings.

3. Adapting to a changing climate

Our strategic objective is to have a well-adapted railway system that is flexible, reliable, operates safely and is responsive to a changing climate.

We are seeing an increase in disruption due to extreme weather and need to consider weather and climate resilience in everything we do, from our day-to-day activities to our long-term planning. Keeping our passengers, workers and assets safe is our priority. In some instances getting passengers and freight to their destination might not necessarily be by train (i.e. in unsafe weather conditions we may need to use alternative transport modes). We will achieve our objectives by creating a resilient operational response and resilient assets and systems.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Weather and climate change planning

Proactive planning will shape investment in the resilience of the railway system and operational response - identifying areas where we can transform the railway for the future.

By developing long-term strategies, we can enable flexible decision-making, leverage partnership opportunities and ensure the right interventions are made at the right time.

Operational weather response

Using the best available information and decision-making will help us better prepare for, respond to and recover from extreme weather events – allowing us to run trains whilst maintaining the safety of our workforce and our passengers, keeping costs low and reducing risk.

Resilient assets

Proactive investment in projects and asset renewals which enhance the resilience of operations and assets in turn bringing safety, performance and wider sustainability benefits (e.g. nature based resilience solutions could also enhance biodiversity and reduce carbon.)

Resilience in processes

By integrating and embedding weather and climate change into our core business processes and standards, we make it 'business as usual' – helping to gradually build resilience and adapt to a changing climate with everything we do.

Adaptive capability

We want everyone to understand their role in creating a resilient, well-adapted railway – improving our understanding and giving people the competence and confidence to make informed operational weather response and climate change decisions.

We will expand our Weather Academy and continue to support our colleagues with the skills, guidance and tools they need to improve decision making.

Climate intelligence

We will base decisions on the latest data, a mature understanding of assets and lessons learnt from operational experience. Technology and data allow us to better understand and manage the effects of weather and climate change, harnessing our asset understanding and operational experience to deliver a safe and reliable railway.

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

3. Adapting to a changing climate

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will…

- Deliver **90%** of regional Weather Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation Plan milestones by the end of March 2029
- Have established the first regional long-term adaptation pathways strategies based on assessment of high-priority locations by the end of March 2029
- Have Key Route Strategies for operating in extreme weather by the end of March 2029
- Routes and train operators provide integrated assurance of readiness against seasonal weather plans for infrastructure and operations by the end of March 2029

"With increasingly extreme and unprecedented weather events, it is clear that our climate is changing. Climate Adaptation Pathways are allowing us to get on the front foot and proactively prepare so we can improve the resilience of our network, and deliver a better service for passengers and freight."

Paul Critchley
Senior Network Delivery Manager

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to…

- Have **100%** of our network covered by adaptation pathway strategies to enable us to see continuous improvements in the reliability and safety of the network
- Improve customer satisfaction during adverse and extreme weather

This will contribute to…

- Future safety, reliability and performance of the railway meaning that we can continue to move people and goods for generations to come.
- UK economic growth by improving our ability to keep the railway running in adverse and extreme weather.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Safety**
  Minimises risks related to extreme and adverse weather, ensuring a safer railway for passengers and workforce.
- **Train service delivery**
  This helps us to minimise the risks to the railway of being impacted by extreme and adverse weather meaning that there is less chance of cancellations and delays.
- **Efficiency**
  This helps us to reduce costs of infrastructure damage and of getting the railway back up and running after adverse and extreme weather by creating a railway that is more resilient to these events.
- **Customers and communities**
  By keeping trains running when challenged by weather impacts and climate change, we can keep people and communities connected and goods moving to where they need to be.

A railway that cares for the environment.

We are fortunate to share our environment with a huge variety of plants, animals and habitats. As the owner of more than 52,000 hectares of land with 7 million neighbours, we can make a big difference by protecting the environment to make this a better place for people and for nature.

We will deliver this through the following priority areas:

1. Protecting land, air and water
2. Supporting nature's recovery

1. Protecting land, air and water

Our strategic objective is to reduce harm from new and historic pollution to land, air and water to minimise our environmental impact.

The land, air and water environment at our stations, our offices and on our lineside is very important to us. Our activities, such as the use of combustion engines in our road vehicles, machinery and diesel trains are key contributors to the release of pollutants into the atmosphere. We also use chemicals and oils as part of our day-to-day activities maintaining the railway, and these can all have negative impacts for our workforces, station users, neighbours and the communities we serve.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Pollution-free journeys

We want to work collaboratively with industry partners to reduce pollution and its impact from moving trains up and down our network. This includes actively working at our stations, depots and on worksites to manage air quality as well as being able to provide emergency response, where necessary, to provide and support the clean-up of pollution incidents be they to land, air or water.

Pollution-free infrastructure and assets

Infrastructure and assets used in the operation and maintenance of the rail network may emit harmful pollutants or use chemicals or oils during operation. We can minimise emissions from these assets and activities or reduce the risk of harm through various measures, from improved maintenance to buying cleaner alternatives, to being well-prepared for when things might not go as planned and require an emergency clean-up response.

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

1. Protecting land, air and water

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- Begin delivering against our Air Quality Improvement Plans (AQIPs) for all managed stations with an annual average air quality (AQ) level of 40µg/m^3 or more of nitrogen dioxides from April 2025
- Have achieved **90%** of milestones in each AQIP by the end of December 2030
- Have reduced the risk of harm to our land and water environment

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Further reduce nitrogen dioxides at our managed stations to achieve an annual mean concentration 40µg/m^3
- Improve the air quality at our managed stations by reducing annual mean concentrations of other harmful air pollutants
- Aim for zero incidents that lead to environmental harm

This will contribute to…

- An enhanced environment for all, fundamental to prosperity and wellbeing in the UK.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Safety**
  Reduces the impact of harmful substances on people and surrounding communities.
- **Customers and communities**
  This helps the area around our railway to be a nicer place for our customer and communities.

2. Supporting nature's recovery

Our strategic objective is to manage our land responsibly for the benefit of nature, safety and performance.

We are already making changes to the way that we think about biodiversity and land use planning. Knowing the status of nature on our estate and in the surrounding landscape helps to deliver benefits for the railway and wildlife.

Linking management plans for railway operations with activities of our neighbours means that the right work can be done in the right place, at the right time of year for the right reason.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Nature based solutions

Our work on biodiversity is strongly linked to our other priorities. Nature-based solutions help to reduce the amount of new raw materials we use, reduce our carbon emissions, help to create a more biodiverse environment, and can increase resilience to climate change.

Habitat management plans

We are using habitats as an alternative measure of the biodiversity on the railway. By creating and following management plans, we can improve the condition of those habitats, which will, in turn improve their biodiversity.

Community tree-planting

We have to manage trees and other vegetation in order to provide a safe performing railway. The short-term impact of that management can bring us in to conflict with our neighbours – one-third of the population of Britain lives within 500 metres of a railway line. Working with organisations like the Tree Council we can support communities wanting to improve their health, wellbeing and local environment.

"I passionately believe that the long-term lineside management I undertake today, positively benefits the future integrity and sustainability of our network. We are the custodians of our natural railway environment, and we have a duty to our customers and to our neighbours to take care of our tomorrow."

Simon Threadgold
Assistant Track Maintenance Engineer

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

2. Supporting nature's recovery

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- Achieve **4%** biodiversity net gain by the end of December 2029
- **25%** of network (by area) to have completed habitat management plans (HMPs) by the end of March 2029

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Achieve **10%** biodiversity net gain (BNG) by the end of December 2035
- Have **100%** of network (by area) covered by habitat management plans (HMPs)

This will contribute to…

- Improving performance and reliability by minimising the impact of plants and animals on a safe, operational railway.
- The recovery of biodiversity through responsible land management.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Safety**

  Managing our lineside for people and nature reduces the risk of trees and vegetation causing safety issues on the railway. We can also minimise the time our teams need to spend out on the lineside to manage vegetation issues.

- **Train Service Delivery**

  By managing our lineside for people and nature we can reduce the likelihood of trees and vegetation leading to delays to passengers and freight services.

- **Customers and communities**

  This helps the area around our railway to be a nicer place for our customers and communities.

A railway that helps communities thrive.

The core purpose of running the railway is to support our country's economic prosperity by connecting people and goods. It's this purpose and our focus on people, passengers and communities that lays the foundation of our strategic ambition – 'a railway that helps communities thrive'.

We want to facilitate the creation of transport solutions that support economic growth, deliver a positive passenger experience, respond to local needs and tackle inequalities.

We will deliver this through the following priority areas:

1. Creating an inclusive and accessible railway
2. Supporting local economies
3. Improving the wellbeing of our communities

1. Creating an inclusive and accessible railway

Our strategic objective is to create an inclusive and accessible railway.

We will aim to help facilitate transport solutions that deliver a positive passenger experience for everyone and remove barriers for groups that might be excluded, marginalised or underrepresented.

We will create and maintain positive industry partnerships and engage a diverse workforce to make rail a great experience for all.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Reduce inequalities

By proactively tapping into underrepresented talent pools and championing standards for the fair treatment of all employees, we will be supporting public commitments made by the government on social mobility as well as legislation (Equality Act 2010). Network Rail is a Living Wage Foundation accredited employer, and we maintain comprehensive policies on critical issues such as modern slavery, business ethics and bribery and corruption.

Improve accessibility

Designing and operating services that everyone can use, regardless of physical abilities or socioeconomic background, ensuring that the railway does not present barriers to participation and mobility.

Increase social value competence and understanding

By increasing the understanding of social value across Network Rail operations and wider industry, we will support the government's plan for rail ambition to create a shared vision on the role of rail in society. This will ultimately increase public awareness of how rail affects communities and people's lives.

Increase collaboration

Work with community organisations to increase understanding of groups that might be excluded for rail travel and what role we play within the industry to address and remove these barriers.

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

1. Creating an inclusive and accessible railway

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- Have developed metrics to articulate the societal impact of the railway, introduced by the end of March 2029
- Have established a baseline on the wellbeing impact relating to accessibility improvements
- Have worked with community organisations to identify underrepresented, marginalised and excluded groups from rail travel

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Remove barriers to increase passenger numbers from underrepresented, marginalised and excluded groups from rail travel

This will contribute to…

- Increasing social mobility – enabling the movement of more passengers by connecting them with opportunities that they might not otherwise have had.
- Encouraging more people within our communities to choose rail travel, increasing passenger numbers.
- Enhancing accessibility for all by promoting inclusive transport solutions.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Safety**
  This helps us to support everyone to move safely around our railway.
- **Customers and communities**
  This helps us to support more people to be able to access our railway.

2. Supporting local economies

Our strategic objective is to support local economies

We will inspire tomorrow's workforce and support Britain's development by identifying opportunities to address the skills shortage and contribute to a thriving local economy through employment, educational outreach, skills development and local procurement.

We will support socio-economic growth by maximising the amount of social value created from the investment in our railways.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Create a socially responsible and diverse supply chain

By embedding the Procurement Policy Notice 002 requirements into our processes, we will increase collaboration on how social sustainability is embedded, managed and reported across our supply chains. Furthermore, we will review how accessible Network Rail is to businesses of different sizes, under-represented businesses and the third and voluntary sector.

Maximise social value

By using RSSBs Rail Social Value Tool to capture, monitor and report Network Rail's social value, via both direct impacts and through our supply chain. We will be able to demonstrate value added as part of our delivery and maximise opportunities to make a positive contribution to society.

Increase social mobility

By engaging and inspiring young people as well as attracting experienced workers to the rail industry, we will contribute towards tackling the current skills shortage. Furthermore, we will advocate for change within the industry to level the socio-economic playing field, considering existing barriers both to entry and progression within employment and creating safe spaces to promote social mobility. We will collaborate within our sector to listen, learn, present, share, and work together to enable social mobility.

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

2. Supporting local economies

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- Create £1 of social value for every £2 of supplier spend for all renewals and enhancements by the end of March 2029
- Report social value activities for **100%** of capital projects by the end of December 2030

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Create £1 of social value for every £2 of supplier spend
- Increase spend with small and medium enterprises to develop a more diverse supply chain, support innovation and get best value for money

This will contribute to…

- Playing an active part in encouraging socio-economic growth and improving the wellbeing of local communities, fostering community cohesion.
- Inspiring tomorrow's workforce through local employment, education outreach and procurement, reducing the industry skills gap.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Customers and communities**

  Provides communities around the railway with more job opportunities and economic growth.

3. Improving the wellbeing of communities

Our strategic objective is to improve the wellbeing in the communities we serve.

We will identify our social impacts and take action to care for our passengers, lineside neighbours and communities, to avoid unreasonable nuisance or distress and add value wherever possible.

We will aim to better understand community needs and priorities to target meaningful social value activities locally.

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Create positive impacts for communities

By actively engaging local communities and relevant stakeholders to promote targeted outreach activities including rolling out of Community Paybacks. We strive to keep communities safe by taking action to reduce trespassing relating to attempted suicides as well as connecting communities to the environment through the sensitive management of our lineside surroundings.

Community insights

Create a community insights map to give teams greater visibility of local needs and maximise opportunities to create meaningful social value that addresses regional inequalities.

Support our Charitable Theme

Pomote our CP7 Charitable Theme 'Mental health and Suicide Prevention working with the third sector to target preventable causes and social isolation.

Community Rail

Community Rail is a well-established grassroots movement, which delivers wide-ranging activities with social, economic and environmental benefits. The DfT's Community Rail Development Strategy recognises this movement's role in giving communities a voice on rail. Network Rail aims to develop a more consistent approach to facilitate both the number and quality of collaboration activities and improve the experience for all parties involved.

This supports the Sustainable Development Goals:

This supports the Sustainable Rail Blueprint:

This supports other areas of the Greener Railway Strategy:

3. Improving the wellbeing of communities

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- 15 % of the workforce use at least one day of volunteering leave annually by the end of March 2029
- Increase the use of our land and property assets for community use
- Measure and report social value from community rail partnerships
- Introduce community needs plans to major projects by the start of CP8

"I've done several volunteering days over the past few years including planting trees, cutting down trees, school STEM input and a few other things, but working outside and getting my hands dirty is my favourite. I recently spent a day in my local woodland park with The Conservation Volunteers, removing overgrown and dead trees and plants to clear the walking routes and encourage people to make use of the great spaces on their doorsteps."

Heather Noller
Public Affairs Manager

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Respond to the needs of our communities through the work we do by not only mitigating negative impacts, but actively creating positive ones.

This will contribute to…

- Putting the railway at the heart of its communities, building public trust.
- Encouraging more people within our communities to choose rail travel, increasing passenger numbers.

Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **Customers and communities**

  Provides additional benefits to surrounding communities, making it a better place to live and work.
- **People**

  Supports making Network Rail a great place to work.

Creating a culture of sustainability.

To achieve our vision, sustainability needs to be truly integrated into everything that we do. Our colleagues need to be empowered and enabled to consider sustainability in decision-making, on the frontline, in infrastructure projects, as well as in offices, depots and stations. We have therefore also made a commitment to create and embed our culture of sustainability in Network Rail.

To achieve this we must:

- Develop our people's knowledge and skills in sustainability
- Create simpler processes and better systems
- Collaborate within the rail industry and beyond

Our approach to achieving our objective:

Better systems

We will work with our Digital, Data and Technology Services team to deliver the Sustainability Data System project, utilising their expertise to introduce simpler and better ways of capturing, analysing and reporting environment and sustainability data. We will automate the collection and transfer of data between our systems where possible and provide a more robust system for assurance.

Increasing sustainability competence and capability

We will identify where competence and training is required across Network Rail and develop those resources. We will continue to collaborate with industry partners such as Supply Chain Sustainability School and The Institute of Sustainability and Environment Professionals to increase capability across our organisation and supply chain.

Engagement

We will embed environment and sustainability throughout the employee's journey, ensuring that the importance of a greener railway is embedded into our corporate induction, through regular communications and measured via the annual employee engagement survey. We will continue to support the ongoing development of our Green Network, for colleagues who are passionate about sustainability and want to learn more.

Simpler processes

We will work to embed sustainability into our business processes so that delivering our work sustainably becomes core to the way we do business. We will make these processes simple to understand and engage with so that we break down the barriers to delivering sustainability and give everyone the confidence that they are playing a key role in delivering a greener railway.

Creating a culture of sustainability

Our route to success…

By 2030 we will:

- Achieve **75%** national positive perception score in our employee engagement survey in response to the statement 'Network Rail is a socially & environmentally responsible organisation' by the end of March 2029
- Achieve **75%** national positive perception score in our employee engagement survey in response to the statement 'I understand how my role contributes to a more sustainable, greener railway' by the end of March 2029

"Since completing the carbon literacy training, and as part of my follow-on commitment I have developed engaging sessions with my own team and with the Route leadership team. The training gave me access and insight to some great tools and resources such as videos on the carbon cycle and how to bring to life the impacts of climate change and emissions at a local level."

Louise Cox
Head of Route Safety, Health and Environment

Beyond 2030 we have ambitions to:

- Embed sustainable thinking throughout the organisation through a change in culture so that sustainability becomes business-as-usual

This will contribute to…

- The achievement of all the other strategic objective areas to enable us to run a railway fit for the future, that cares for the environment and helps communities thrive.

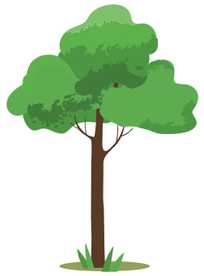
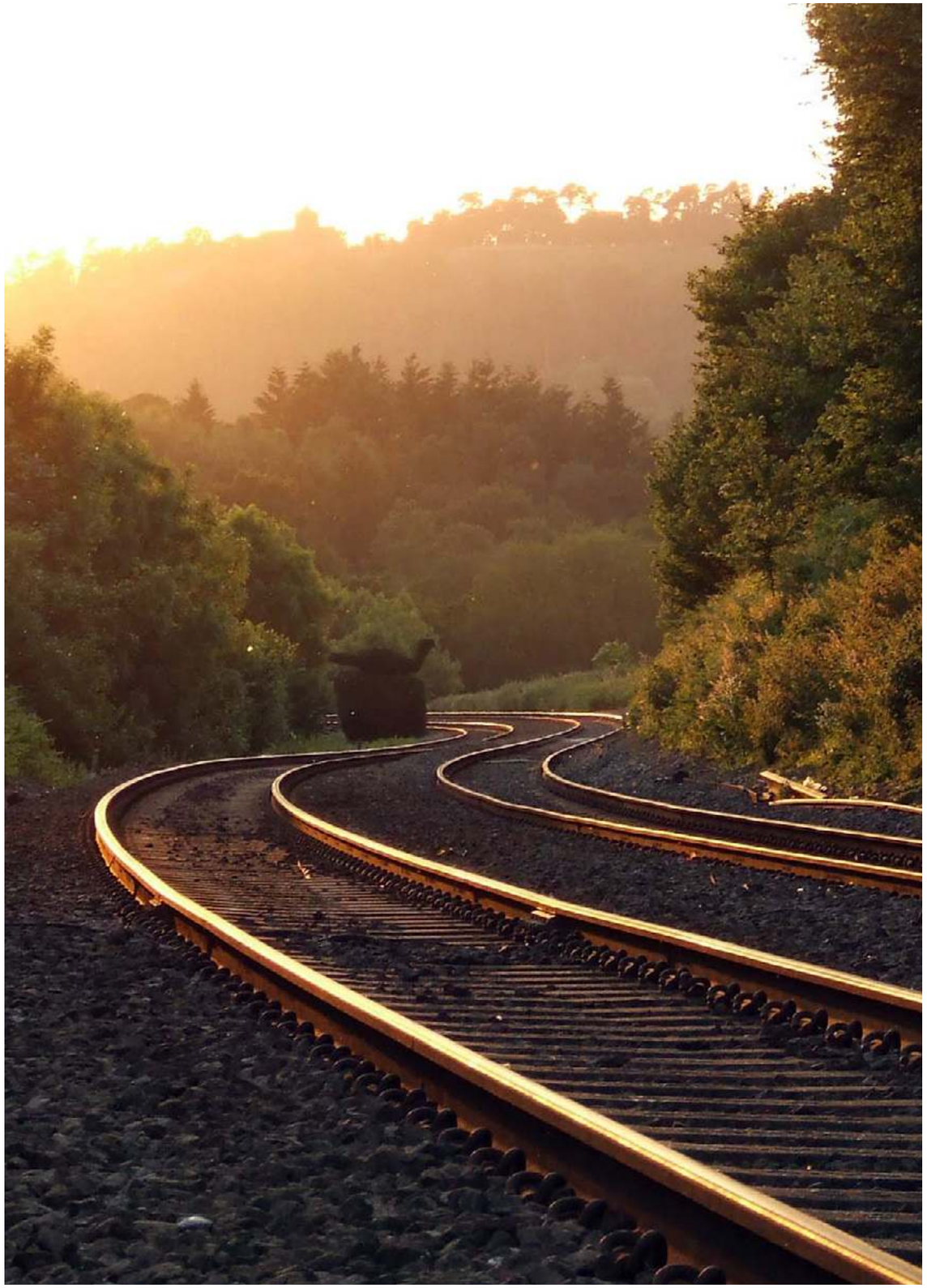
Other Network Rail strategic themes this supports:

- **People**
  Supports making Network Rail a great place to work.

Delivering the Greener Railway Strategy

This strategy takes us all the way out to our 2050 vision for a Greener Railway. It is the sustainability strategy for the whole of Network Rail, and supports us in achieving our business wide 'Sustainable Growth' strategic theme. However, as a devolved organisation working across five regions and several different business functions, we recognise that different parts of the business will play differing roles in achieving our overall vision.

For this reason, there are several different interconnected strategies that sit alongside the Greener Railway Strategy helping us to achieve a railway that is fit for the future, cares for the environment and that helps communities thrive. Some of these are regional or functional strategies that outline what the local priorities are and strengthen the commitment to delivering a Greener Railway, others are Network Rail wide strategies that support key elements of sustainability across the business.

These strategies and strategic business plans will remain under review at each of our five-year funding cycles known as Control Periods. This will enable us to stay on track to delivering our strategic commitments out to 2050 by outlining the key milestones that must be achieved in each control period to arrive at our final destination on time. Within these five-yearly plans we will also create annual delivery plans on which we will hold ourselves to account to deliver.

Whilst we are confident that we have set ourselves on the right track to 2050 we commit that ahead of creating our five-yearly control period strategic plans we will conduct a review of our overall vision and strategic ambitions to make sure that we are still heading in the right direction considering any external factors that may have changed in the previous five years.