



# A Railway for Nature

## Our Plans

March 2024



# Introduction

**Our Railway for Nature Plan** sets out our vision for biodiversity to 2035.

Our central aim is to deliver measurable net gain in biodiversity across our estate of 165 stations and multiple maintenance depots.

The biodiversity we look after is connected by the trackside nature super highways! This helps wildlife move up from the countryside to our urban stations and depots.

We want to have a long-term positive impact on the biodiversity that we manage. We will deliver this by enhancing the natural areas around our stations and depots, work that we hope will also improve the local environment for the communities we are part of. To help us bring even greater benefits we will work alongside Network Rail to link the trackside biodiversity to our stations.

Delivering a railway for nature is an integral part of our new Sustainability Strategy, an agenda that seeks to improve how we manage the natural environment, reduce emissions, and increase social value. Our approach seeks to deliver a holistic approach to sustainable development, connecting our environment and people through a long-term programme. Our approach is part of a wider rail industry programme.

Our aim is to create wildlife friendly stations and depots. We have already achieved a lot by working with our colleagues, communities, and Network Rail. There are so many more exciting ideas we intend to develop.

To guide our work, we have set the following objectives:

1. No net loss of biodiversity across our estate by 2028
2. Biodiversity net gain across our estate by 2035
3. Southeastern is recognised as contributing to regional biodiversity objectives by 2035

We will work with our colleagues and communities to achieve measurable and lasting benefits for all. To do this, we will work with our station and depot teams and the communities we are part of to expand existing biodiversity projects, alongside developing new initiatives and opportunities for biodiversity growth.



# Biodiversity focus areas

To start with, our work will focus on improving biodiversity at 10 stations and depots that are close to important habitats for wildlife. We refer to these as our Biodiversity Focus Areas (BFAs) which are spread around our network:

1. **Swale Station:** Surrounded by The Swale, an internationally important wetland (Ramsar protected)
2. **Swanscombe Station:** Adjacent to the Swanscombe Peninsula SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
3. **Headcorn Station:** Close to the Medway and Low Weald Grassland and Wetland Biodiversity Opportunity Area
4. **Cuxton Station:** Adjacent to the Medway and North Kent Downs Biodiversity Opportunity Area
5. **Chilham Station:** Adjacent to the Lower Stour Wetlands Biodiversity Opportunity Area
6. **Tonbridge Crew Depot:** Close to River Medway, which lies within the Medway and Low Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area
7. **Ashford Depot:** Adjacent to the bank of the river Stour, which is part of the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area
8. **Dover Priory Depot:** Close to the Dover & Folkestone Cliffs and Downs Biodiversity Opportunity Area
9. **Ramsgate Depot:** Near Ellington Park and St Laurence-In-Thanel Church which contain important priority woodland habitat
10. **Gillingham Crew Depot:** Close to the Medway Estuary, a Biodiversity Opportunity Area, SSSI, Special Protection Area, and RAMSAR site.



# Our story so far

We already have many established station gardens that create welcoming environments for passengers, local communities, and of course biodiversity!

Our longstanding **Kent Community Rail Partnership (KCRP)** have enabled a wide range of biodiversity initiatives across our network. For example, KCRP carried out a 'bioblitz' at Halling Station, including surveying biodiversity. The local community was enlisted to help raise awareness.



Ladybird larvae and eggs found in the Halling bioblitz

**Elmstead Woods Station** community garden – maintained by colleagues and community volunteers. The gardening club received an award from the Coolings 'In Bloom' Competition in the 'Community Project' Category in August 2022.



Elmstead Woods garden



Bear trail at Elmstead Woods

**Sevenoaks Station** colleagues are always working hard to maintain the gorgeous planters on their platforms.



Sevenoaks personalised planter



Flowers at Sevenoaks

We partner with local schools and colleges to improve biodiversity alongside learning. For example, we partnered with **Five Acre Wood School** to clear an unkept area at **Snodland Station** and transform it into a new home for wildlife to thrive.



Before



After

# Future actions to improve biodiversity



## Southeastern in Bloom

We will fund up to 50 sites to create small gardens that are great for wildlife and people too!



## Community Gardens

We will continue to work with our Community Rail Partnerships to look after station gardens.



## Create local wildlife events

Helping our colleagues and communities find out about local wildlife like bats and birds.



We will also work with Network Rail to support **one big rail ecosystem!**

# Measuring Change: Targets and indicators

A monitoring programme will be developed to track how our actions are improving biodiversity. We will do this across 25 sites that are representative of our whole estate. Our first surveys will measure our biodiversity baseline. We will use these to help us track the positive impacts of our work across stations and depots.

We will share our progress in delivering our objectives on our website every 3 years, this will include what has worked along with what we have learnt. Our Railway for Nature Plan will be reviewed every 5 years.



## Want to find out more?

We publish case studies and updates on our website.