

Network Rail and Defra report outlines progress and challenges posed by climate change

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Network Rail has released a report outlining the risks to Britain's railway posed by climate change and the measures required to improve resilience. It has been published in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The impact of the changing climate has been increasingly evident in recent years, with the railway suffering more frequent and more severe extreme weather events. Weather trends also point towards an increased frequency of extreme drier periods followed by prolonged and extreme wet weather in the coming years. These factors accelerate deterioration of earthworks and put pressure on drainage systems and other rail infrastructure, increasing the likelihood of critical coping thresholds being exceeded.

The third Adaption Report sets out the progress made from 2016 to 2021 on climate change and resilience and identifies further actions, also providing a comprehensive quantitative risk assessment of assets and climate change risks.

For the first time, this report brings together advanced work being carried out across Network Rail, including the Weather Task Force responsible for delivery of the recommendations from Lord Robert Mair and Dame Julia Slingo in their independent reports, to provide a wide ranging, integrated and comprehensive approach.

Andrew Haines, chief executive of Network Rail, said: “Climate change is having an undeniable impact on our infrastructure and the effects are forecast to be greater still in the coming years. More infrastructure failures would mean delays for passengers and our freight partners who move thousands of tonnes of goods across the country by rail.

“As the greenest form of large-scale transport, it's critical we can continue delivering low carbon travel to customers. While there is no silver bullet to making our railway more resilient to the effect of climate change, the action plan outlined in this report demonstrates the progress we are committed to making.”

Network Rail became the first railway company in the world to set independently-verified **Science Based Targets**, backed by the United Nations, to help limit global warming to the most-ambitious target of 1.5 degrees Celsius, and has made significant strides towards bolstering rail's position as the greenest form of public transport and to transport goods across the country since unveiling its' **Environmental Sustainability Strategy** in 2020.

The report can be found [here](#).

Photo credit: Connor Mollison