

Network Rail joins leading railway organisations in further commitment to tackling climate change

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Network Rail has joined railway organisations from around the world in signing the International Union of Railways (UIC) Climate declaration.

The UIC Climate declaration sets out a pledge for members to communicate their support and ambition, and brings together a global community of sustainability leaders working collaboratively to cut carbon emissions and make rail travel greener.

In becoming the latest signatory, Network Rail has committed to reduce energy consumption and CO2 emissions, achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2050 and contribute to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”.

This pledge follows the company’s clear signal of its green ambitions in October last year, when it became the first railway in the world to commit to the most stretching science-based targets for reducing carbon.

Martin Frobisher OBE, director of safety, technical and engineering at Network Rail, said: “We’re delighted to be joining a number of like-minded organisations from around the world in committing to the UIC Climate declaration. It’s a great opportunity to work alongside international partners, share best practice and work collaboratively towards the common goal of decarbonising rail.

“We’re making terrific progress and of course, rail has good credentials as an emissions-friendly form of mass transport, but there is still a lot more we have to do in the coming years to leave a positive environmental legacy for future generations and enable rail to playing a leading role in driving green economic growth.”

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris, said: “Cleaner, greener railways will be an integral part of delivering net-zero transport network by 2050.

“I am proud to see Network Rail working internationally to share expertise and innovation, and ensure that the UK continues to be a world leader with our work towards carbon reduction.”

François Davenne, director general of International Union of Railways (UIC) said: “With 2021 marking UIC’s centenary, the commitment of our members to the UIC pledge becomes increasingly important and structured. Network Rail is one of the most innovative infrastructure managers and will give its full commitment to this process.

“I am struck by the fact that among our members there is an increasingly strong sense of urgency. As we know, we have 10 years to demonstrate that rail is the solution to implement a paradigm shift for a low-carbon transport sector.”

It also follows the launch of Network Rail’s ambitious Environmental Sustainability Strategy, which provides a clear path to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 in line with UK Government targets. This strategy sets out the company’s main priorities: to run a low-emission railway, to provide a reliable service to passengers that is resilient to climate change, to improve biodiversity across the network, and to ensure sustainable use of materials with minimal waste.

Alongside these commitments and strategies, Network Rail has led a cross-industry initiative working collaboratively to assess the issues and options and advise the UK government on setting the future direction of rail travel. This includes recommending a steady transition of the remaining diesel trains to electric, battery and hydrogen fuel cells in the Interim Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy, published last year.

Photo credit: Network Rail