

# Network Rail pledges 16 acres of Norfolk reedbed to nature

November 23, 2022



An area of reedbed near Haddiscoe station will be left to do its own thing after the landowner, Network Rail Anglia, pledged it to the WildEast movement.

The land will be allowed to grow and thrive as a great place to live for lots of different animals, birds and insects. It also helps with drainage, reducing the risk of flooding on the railway line.





Network Rail is following Greater Anglia in signing up to the WildEast movement, with the train operator having pledged all 56 of its station gardens.

Mark Walker, Network Rail Anglia route infrastructure engineer, said: "As one of Britain's biggest landowners, we have a significant role to play in protecting habitats and species. We aim to do this through our everyday work, as well as by creating partnerships with pioneering organisations like WildEast.

"We're proud to have joined Greater Anglia in pledging land to nature and to be working with Somerleyton Primary School, whose students really impressed us with their wildlife knowledge and passion for the environment. Together we're building a greener railway for Anglia."

Through a multi-sector alliance, WildEast wants to return 20% of the land in the east of England to nature. The aim is to create a wetter, wilder, woodier future by reversing the decline in biodiversity over the last 50 years.

Hugh Somerleyton, WildEast co-founder, said: "WildEast are excited to be partnering and collaborating with Network Rail on our 'wilder by the sum of our parts' initiative. It is essential that all sectors come together to respond to the massive declines in nature across our region and across the UK.

"Not only do we need to give more space to nature, we also need to connect these spaces and connect with each other to respond to this challenge. We hope that the Network Rail land pledge will inspire more of our regional transport and utility providers to make a pledge to nature on the WildEast Map of Dreams."

At the launch on 17 November, the sign at Haddiscoe station was unveiled by Hugh Somerleyton, along with representatives of Network Rail, Greater Anglia and the Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership. Also at the event were three of Greater Anglia's station adopters, who play an important role in maintaining and improving platforms, gardens and facilities.

Later the same day, two of Network Rail Anglia's senior engineers visited nearby Somerleyton Primary School to explain more about the pledge. They also discussed the importance of protecting biodiversity in the local area and how the railway works. The children had been specially chosen for the talk after winning a competition to create posters inspired by the Network Rail and WildEast partnership.

Oliver Clifford, head of Somerleyton Primary School, said: "The pupils have loved being part of the rewilding project at Haddiscoe station. Our curriculum celebrates the amazing biodiversity we have within our school's geography - having a new site to visit and inspire our pupils is a fantastic initiative."

Animals and insects that live on the area of reedbed pledged by Network Rail include water voles, water shrews, grey herons, great bitterns, marsh harriers, reed warblers and reed leopard moths.

WildEast is encouraging everyone to pledge land in order to return 250,000 hectares to nature. Pledges can be made at [wildeast.co.uk](https://wildeast.co.uk), where current pledges can also be seen on a "Map of Dreams".

Juliette Maxam, Greater Anglia senior media and public relations manager, said: "Protecting biodiversity is an important action we can all take to combat the effects of climate change. WildEast's Map of Dreams makes taking this step achievable for every one of us."

"We are proud to play our part - we care about the communities we serve. By pledging all our station gardens, which are caringly tended by our station adopters, to WildEast we are helping to protect the environment in those communities. It's brilliant that Network Rail has joined us in pledging their land too, making the land around the railway a vital haven for both flora and fauna."