

Tritax Position Paper: Biodiversity

The issue

Biodiversity is critical to our environment, it provides resources such as such as food and raw materials, and green spaces are important for wellbeing

Biodiversity loss has accelerated to an unprecedented level. In Europe, 42% of European mammals are endangered, together with 15% of birds and 45% of butterflies and reptiles.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment showed that 60% of all global ecosystem services worldwide are in decline and species are becoming extinct at up to 1,000 times the normal rate. According to the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study 2008 report the annual welfare loss generated by loss of ecosystem services by 2050 will reach 6% of global GDP.

The construction industry is one of the most resource-intensive industries in the world, accounting for 40% of the total flow of raw materials into the global economy every year (3bn cubic tons).

Disturbance and fragmentation: Change of land use through construction can destruct, disturb, and fragment habitats. Bats, badgers, and great crested newts are species most commonly affected, along with several bird species. Division of land can separate habitats which were previously adjacent, impacts mobile species. Noise and light generated during construction processes can affect feeding and breeding behaviours, which can have negative impacts on long term population levels.

Off-site impacts on habitats: Indirect effects of development may include pollution of air and water, hydrological impacts, disturbance, fires and fly tipping, isolation or fragmentation of habitats, ancillary development, and operations (such as access roads and dredging) and the displacement of individual and populations of species leading to increased pressure on other sites.

Sourcing of materials: The materials used in construction and their processing, such as timber, gravel, sand, iron ore, rocks can impact heavily on biodiversity through their extraction and transportation.

Our approach to biodiversity

We target a net positive impact in biodiversity and for our development sites to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0.

We follow the mitigation hierarchy to avoid, minimise, rehabilitate, and restore, with offsetting as a last resort. We will not operate on World Heritage sites or IUCN Category I-V protected areas.

We conduct biodiversity assessments as part of the overall planning and development phase and work with local authorities and conservation groups to ensure that no endangered species or important biodiversity areas are disrupted.

We aim to enhance the habitats on our land by implementing measures that support pollination, the flow of species between the fragmented habitats will increase, connecting them once more.

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We do this with measures such as nesting boxes for the local species to improve the quality and support connectivity, whilst not requiring additional land with minimal on-going maintenance.

Strong habitat systems can support climate resilience. The re-use and retention of water, combined with plant species selection can reduce the water requirement, thereby supporting local water tables,

Biodiversity and nature are important for regulating our air quality and climate. We intend to plant species that support carbon sequestration and provide natural cooling and ventilation; as well as species with high leaf densities that help to improve air quality. Where appropriate we plant hedges and green walls in place of hard boundary treatments to buffer trafficked areas.

We work with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) in the communities where we hold assets to create local conservation areas in selected communities where our assets are located.