

Channel Tunnel Rail Link



On May 4, 1994 the first physical link between Britain and France since the Ice Age was officially opened by the Queen and Francois Mitterrand, President of France. The historic breakthrough had been made a little over three years earlier, when the two tunnels driven from each country met 40 metres below the sea bed.

But the idea of a fixed connection had been around since Napoleon, the first leader to support the building of a tunnel. It sparked fears of invasion in Britain that continued to hold back popular and political support for a link until after World War II. Politics and technology delayed the project becoming reality for another three decades, and the financial problems continue to this day. But there is no doubting the tunnel's status as an engineering masterpiece.

The CTRL project has been defined by the scale and complexity of its engineering challenges and the unique business and financial strategy to deliver it. However, the environmental management of the project is also a remarkable story of innovation, integration and restoration.

Environmental considerations were crucial during route selection. This helped to ensure that the detrimental effects of building a new railway were avoided. Arup prepared an environmental statement for Parliamentary review, and a comprehensive list of environmental standards were agreed once the CTRL Act was passed. These covered landscape, ecological and heritage objectives, the control of noise and dust, minimizing waste, protection of water, and being a good neighbour during construction.

A key principle underlining these requirements was that the project had to be designed and constructed with environmental effects 'not environmentally worse than' those described in the environmental statement.

Some facts

- Over 60% of the CTRL Section 1 route lies within the existing transport corridors of the M20 and A2/M2.
- Over 50 environmental specialists were employed by Rail Link Engineering, the design/delivery consortium.
- Environmental management training was given to over 650 project managers, and thousands of contractor staff, their specialists and subcontractors.

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