



Britain must not “be afraid” of starting major construction projects because of environmental concerns, Owen Paterson said today.

The Environment Secretary told the conference that major infrastructure schemes like Crossrail can in fact have benefits for the environment.

He told how Crossrail will be used to create a major 1,500-acre wetland habitat for tens of thousands of migratory birds.

Mr Paterson said: “We must not be afraid of major infrastructure projects which improve the economy.”

Campaigners have hit out at recent projects such as the HS2 railway line over environmental concerns.

But Mr Paterson today insisted that the building projects needed to stimulate the UK economy can also be used to benefit the environment.

“At Wallasea Island in Essex, I saw how 4.5million tonnes of soil from excavations for Crossrail will be used to transform 1,500 acres of land into a valuable wetland habitat,” he said.

"A habitat which will attract tens of thousands of migratory birds and up to 100,000 visitors a year.

"The partnership between the RSPB and Crossrail shows how huge infrastructure projects can help to generate economic growth as well as helping wildlife."

He added: "We can have a healthy environment and a healthy economy. The two are not mutually exclusive."