



carrington west

Rail 2025 Salary Survey & Guide

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Design, Consultancy & Engineering

2024 Market Overview

2024 has been widely regarded as one of the most challenging periods in recent memory, with industry professionals conveying the prevailing sentiment was one of significant difficulty. The sector felt the compound effects of a sluggish pace from Network Rail, the general election and subsequent change of government, and the impact of a delayed budget announcement.

Many design teams, including civil, signalling, and OLE, reported redundancies. Even large firms were not immune to the downturn, and for the first time in years, highly specialised design professionals found themselves without projects to move on to. Contractors were often the first to be let go, serving as a precursor to permanent staff reductions. As a result, there has been a noticeable trend of contractors seeking to transition into permanent roles, given the lack of contract opportunities.

There has also been a substantial influx of candidates entering the market out of concern for job stability or facing the threat of redundancy. Many are actively seeking employers with a stronger project pipeline. We often have had to counsel these candidates that while we can approach firms on their behalf, their current situation is not unique. Nonetheless, those lucky enough to be with companies that still have work are reluctant to leave, preferring stability over risk.

Meanwhile, some companies have diversified into other sectors, such as buildings, nuclear, and utilities, to compensate for the lack of rail work. On the topic of workplace arrangements, companies continue to push for more in-office attendance, and remote roles remain rare. However, remote work is still a top priority for many candidates, with some refusing to consider new opportunities unless they can work from home. Companies willing to offer remote work have a unique advantage in accessing talent that remains out of reach for others – not only for candidate attraction, but also to widen the search national searches rather than having to remain local.

The absence of significant hiring has meant limited movement on salaries. Moreover, bonuses have been reduced or have become less of a priority for candidates, likely because of the lack of stability and reliability in overall earnings.

The rail industry has been closely monitoring the progress of HS2's rail systems tenders, and there is positive news as the project gains momentum. Following the transport budget announcement in October, the government confirmed that HS2 will continue through to Euston Station, marking a renewed commitment to completing this transformative infrastructure project.



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Design, Consultancy & Engineering

2024 Market Overview Continued

In November, HS2 Ltd awarded £3bn worth of rail systems contracts, marking a major milestone progress in the project's rail design phase, which aligns closely with the finalisation of civil works. These contracts cover the design and installation of approximately 280 miles of high-speed track between London and the West Midlands, alongside critical elements such as the Infrastructure Maintenance Depot at Calvert and integration with the Rolling Stock Maintenance Depot at Washwood Heath.

Colas Rail has been awarded the contract for Overhead Catenary Systems (OCS), while Siemens Mobility will deliver the Operational Telecommunications and Security Systems and implement the Command, Control, Signalling, and Traffic Management (CCS&TM) systems to enable fast and efficient services. These awards reflect the strategic importance of integrating complex rail systems to meet HS2's operational demands.

2025 Outlook

The first year of the new control period comes with allocated funds, and we expect the industry to ramp up significantly by the second year.

With the shutdown of a leg of HS2, there is growing anticipation that funding will be redirected towards regional projects, such as Northern Powerhouse Rail, aiming to bolster infrastructure development in the North. Once these projects are underway, the demand for talent will inevitably increase.

The systems aspect of HS2 is expected to progress. Whilst we have seen signalling and OLE professionals released from their roles this year, the final announcements of CP7 frameworks and HS2 packages of work will likely prompt a swift intake in hiring, absorbing much of the available talent. Given the current climate of redundancies and concerns about job security, companies have retained staff who can manage the existing workload. However, as soon as new projects start, there will be a rush to hire additional personnel.

Office attendance remains a focus, and companies are still pushing for employees to be more present on-site. The budget announcement's inclusion of train ticket price increases raises questions about whether

this will influence salary expectations. Additionally, the large-scale redundancies experienced this year could lead to reduced confidence in major firms.

We are starting to see companies secure smaller civils, assessment, and maintenance work in preparation for CP7, along with more promising leads for future projects. Many in the industry believe that by April, workloads will begin to pick up, with a surge in activity anticipated by June or July. By the third quarter, we expect funding to be fully mobilised, transforming the current vacancy shortage into a candidate shortage. This shift will likely drive salaries upward as companies compete to attract and retain skilled professionals.

The most crucial need for staff will be for the HS2 systems contracts. The contracts awarded in November 2024, along with the remaining HS2 systems tenders – including the significant High Voltage (HV) Power Systems contract – are anticipated to be awarded shortly. These contracts will play a crucial role in maintaining project momentum and ensuring the seamless integration of HS2's state-of-the-art rail infrastructure. For the industry, these developments represent a critical step forward, reinforcing confidence in the project's delivery and its transformative impact on UK rail connectivity.

2025 Salary Ranges

Design

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Hour/Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
Graduate Engineer	£23,000	£32,000	-	-
Engineer	£31,000	£45,000	£28 (per hour) £300 (per day)	£45 (per hour) £450 (per day)
Senior Engineer	£40,000	£60,000	£36 (per hour) £375 (per day)	£55 (per hour) £550 (per day)
Principal Engineer	£58,000	£72,000	£45 (per hour) £400 (per day)	£60 (per hour) £600 (per day)
Design CRE	£55,000	£80,000	£400 (per day)	£625 (per day)
CEM	£65,000	£100,000	£465 (per day)	£750 (per day)
Design Manager (Includes Senior)	£60,000	£93,000	£370 (per day)	£700 (per day)

CAD

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Hour/Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
CAD Tech/ Architectural Technician	£23,000	£40,000	£25 (per hour)	£45 (per hour)
Senior CAD Technician	£38,000	£60,000	£40 (per hour)	£52 (per hour)
CAD Manager/BIM Manager	£60,000	£85,000	£45 (per hour) £380 (per day)	£60 (per hour) £600 (per day)
BIM Coordinator	£45,000	£65,000	£43 (per hour) £365 (per day)	£45 (per hour) £500 (per day)

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2025 Salary Ranges

Consultancy

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
Project Controls (Includes Senior)	£44,000	£90,000	£400	£620
Risk Manager (Includes Senior)	£50,000	£91,000	£400	£750
Assistant Project Manager	£27,000	£40,000	£220	£350
Scheme Project Manager	£41,000	£58,000	£300	£350
Project Manager	£46,000	£65,000	£400	£425
Senior Project Manager	£60,500	£82,000	£435	£650
Commercial/Procurement Manager	£44,000	£65,000	£300	£500
Senior Commercial/ Procurement Manager	£63,000	£90,000	£450	£725
Estimator (Includes Senior/Lead)	£48,000	£115,000	£450	£600
P6 Planner (Includes Senior)	£45,000	£75,000	£300	£650
Planning Manager	£55,000	£95,000	£400	£700
Programme Manager	£63,000	£120,000	£600	£850

Project Delivery

2024 Market Overview

Throughout 2024, uncertainty in the rail project delivery market led candidates to demand higher salaries/day rates. Many professionals are hesitant to make career moves unless the compensation is sufficient to justify the risk of changing roles in such a volatile environment, and assumed any move was overshadowed by the fear of being “last in, first out”. Within the permanent market, companies have responded to these concerns by offering pay rises and internal promotions to retain top talent, which in turn has elevated salary expectations across the board.

Candidates have often found themselves fielding multiple opportunities, many of which extend beyond the rail industry into sectors like nuclear, water, and highways. This diversification reflects the slow start to Control Period 7 (CP7) and the delay in work bank releases for subcontractors. The prolonged uncertainty also led some professionals to consider leaving the rail industry altogether, citing frustration and fatigue from the lack of stability. An additional challenge facing the sector is an ageing workforce, compounded by difficulties in attracting younger talent due to fewer apprenticeship and graduate schemes.

2025 Outlook

Looking ahead to 2025, the market is poised for notable shifts as contractors expand beyond their traditional regions. For instance, those previously focused on the South are securing work in the Northwest and Central areas

This has led to discontent among staff who now face extended periods away from home, prompting them to seek opportunities elsewhere. Consequently, we expect to see considerable movement in the market as personnel switch between companies, essentially reshuffling the workforce.

The slow release of CP7 work means that most projects remain in the Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) or design phases. This has driven up demand for commercial staff, while broader project delivery roles are not anticipated to require significant site presence until the summer months. Furthermore, many companies have already established their senior leadership and project management teams, suggesting that there will be limited vacancies in these roles during the first year of the control period.



2025 Salary Ranges

White Collar Project Delivery

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
Site Supervisor	£38,000	£48,000	£275	£350
Site Manager	£45,000	£58,000	£330	£375
Senior Site Manager	£55,000	£65,000	£350	£450
Construction Manager	£55,000	£70,000	£350	£450
Senior Construction Manager	£70,000	£80,000	£400	£500
Project Manager	£60,000	£75,000	£450	£550
Senior Project Manager	£70,000	£90,000	£500	£650
Contracts Manager	£75,000	£90,000	£550	£650
Project Director	£100,000	£130,000	£600	£850
Assistant Quantity Surveyor	£35,000	£47,000	£300	£350
Quantity Surveyor	£50,000	£65,000	£400	£500
Senior Quantity Surveyor	£60,000	£85,000	£500	£600
Estimator	£50,000	£70,000	£430	£500
Senior Estimator	£68,000	£85,000	£550	£650
Commercial Manager	£65,000	£95,000	£550	£650
Senior Commercial Manager	£75,000	£110,000	£550	£700
P6 Planner	£45,000	£65,000	£400	£500
Senior P6 Planner	£55,000	£75,000	£430	£550
Planning Manager	£65,000	£85,000	£550	£650

Continued overleaf

2025 Salary Ranges

White Collar Project Delivery Continued

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
Construction CRE	£65,000	£90,000	£450	£600
General Foreman	£45,000	£65,000	£330	£400
Site Agent	£55,000	£75,000	£400	£500
Site Engineer	£40,000	£55,000	£330	£450
Section Engineer	£45,000	£65,000	£375	£500
SSOW Planner	£38,000	£55,000	£350	£450
Temporary Works Coordinator	£60,000	£75,000	£400	£450
Temporary Works Manager	£70,000	£80,000	£450	£550
Health & Safety Advisor	£45,000	£60,000	£350	£400
Health & Safety Manager	£55,000	£80,000	£450	£500
PWay Engineer	£50,000	£65,000	£400	£500

Rail Systems

2024 Market Overview

The market has been much slower than anticipated. The first year of CP7 saw a sluggish ramp-up in work, with CP6 projects carried over into year one being de-scoped due to a similar lack of funding. This has impacted not only new staff joining the business but also existing staff, with long-term contractors being released from their contracts after 2 to 5 years of service, and permanent staff facing redundancies.

In addition to ongoing work, future projects and tenders were also affected by the slow year in the railway sector. A notable example is HS2, where the HV Power Systems tender, originally scheduled for award in April, has still not been awarded after a two-year tendering period.

External factors, particularly political and governance issues, severely impacted the market. The general election delayed critical decisions on projects such as HS2, CP7, and Network North. Fortunately, following the transport budget in October, there has been new work injected into the railway, with HS2 now continuing through to Euston Station again.

Due to the compounded effects on current and future projects, along with various external pressures, many professionals within the railway industry have chosen to explore opportunities in other sectors, such as Power, Energy, and Renewables. Permanent staff who have decided to stay in the rail industry are hesitant to seek new roles, given the ongoing uncertainty in the market.

Despite CP7's slow progress throughout the year, most frameworks have now been awarded, with companies like VolkerRail, Octavius, Keltbray, Amey, and Atkins having a clear work bank for the first half of CP7 systems work. With these awards in place, initial designs and project surveys are now underway, and construction is expected to kick off in late November or December.

For HS2's side, £3bn worth of track contracts have been announced with Colas Rail being awarded OCS works, Siemens winning Operational Telecommunications and Security Systems, Command, Control, Signalling & Traffic Management, and Engineering Management Systems.



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Rail Systems

2025 Outlook

We expect the slow start from year one to carry into the first quarter of year two, with many projects transitioning into initial construction as the new financial year begins, creating further work opportunities.

During this period, we anticipate the release of the remaining HS2 packages and the announcement of the final CP7 signalling and OLE frameworks.

By Q2 and Q3 of year two, we predict a significant rise in projects and construction activity, driven by the new financial budget for Network Rail, which will be

allocated to contractors. Additionally, we expect the remaining HS2 Systems tenders to be awarded, with HV Power Systems being the largest outstanding.

Towards the end of the year, a staff shortage is anticipated, following the turnover of personnel who have moved into other industries after the slow start to CP7. To attract these candidates back into the market, we predict an increase in both pay rates and salaries.

In summary, year two of CP7 is expected to be a marked improvement from the first year, likely resulting in a significant recruitment drive.



2025 Salary Ranges

Rail Systems

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
Site Supervisor	£40,000	£65,000	£275	£400
Site Manager	£50,000	£70,000	£300	£425
Construction Manager	£50,000	£75,000	£350	£450
Project Manager	£50,000	£70,000	£350	£500
Senior Project Manager	£65,000	£95,000	£450	£650
Project Director	£75,000	£140,000	£550	£850
Contracts Manager	£50,000	£90,000	£450	£650
Construction CRE	£60,000	£80,000	£450	£575
Testing & Commissioning Engineer	£40,000	£60,000	£300	£500
Testing & Commissioning Manager	£50,000	£75,000	£350	£550
Quality Assurance Engineer	£40,000	£60,000	£300	£500
Quality Assurance Manager	£50,000	£75,000	£350	£550
Junior Quantity Surveyor	£25,000	£45,000	£250	£350
Quantity Surveyor	£40,000	£55,000	£350	£450
Senior Quantity Surveyor	£55,000	£100,000	£450	£600
Estimator	£50,000	£60,000	£400	£500
Senior Estimator	£65,000	£100,000	£550	£650
Commercial Manager	£65,000	£80,000	£400	£500
Senior Commercial Manager	£80,000	£100,000	£500	£700

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2025 Salary Ranges

Rail Systems Continued

Job Title	Permanent Salary (Per Annum)		Contract Rates (Per Day)	
	Min. Salary	Max. Salary	Min. Rate	Max. Rate
Head of Commercial/ Commercial Director	£100,000	£140,000	£600	£900
P6 Planner	£40,000	£60,000	£350	£450
Senior P6 Planner	£55,000	£80,000	£400	£550
Planning Manager	£85,000	£130,000	£450	£600
SSOW Planner	£30,000	£55,000	£300	£400



The Carrington West 2025 Salary Survey details salary information and recruiting trends in the regions and business sectors we cover. Our information has been researched and collated with the help of our clients and candidates and from our working knowledge of the marketplace. Our consultants have extensive expertise in their practice area and the information reported is based on extensive interaction with hiring managers, HR professionals and in-house recruiters as well as data extracted from our own database and internal research resources. As with all reports that detail salary information and trends, we represent the mainstream view and we recognise there will be individual situations that fall outside the data published. This survey is therefore a guide to general movement in the sector. Please contact us for further information or for clarification on any of the compensation trends detailed in this report.

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