

Kenya to build giant railway bridges over national park

NAIROBI: Kenya is to build huge railway bridges over the unique national park in the capital Nairobi, a move conservationists welcomed as a positive step on Tuesday, 4 August.



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The railway line, from the port city Mombasa to Nairobi, was due to cut through the 117km² (45 square mile) wilderness, where buffalo and rhino roam just seven kilometres (four miles) from the bustling high-rise city centre.

But Kenya's wildlife service, the land commission and national railways authorities have agreed to build long bridges stretching for potentially as much as nine kilometres over key parts of the park.

"We intend to build the bridge that will have an entire length of up to nine kilometres," said Paul Muya, spokesman for the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

No details have been given for when construction would begin, but KWS said the bridge will rise as high as 20 metres (66 feet) above the ground at some points, to allow animals to cross beneath. Conservation activist Paula Kahumbu, who heads the Wildlife Direct campaign group, said the bridge was the best option available.

"The elevation is a very innovative approach, that will be a solution to future developments passing through wildlife areas," she said.

Kenya launched in 2013 the construction of a Chinese-funded \$13.8bn (€10bn) flagship railway project to dramatically increase trade and boost the east African country's position as a regional economic powerhouse.

But conservationists warned it threatened the park's existence. The key transport link is eventually hoped to extend onwards to Uganda, and then connect with proposed lines to Rwanda and South Sudan.

Source: AFP