

**East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board
Meeting held on Thursday 30th January 2020
Bedford Borough Council**

Present:

Cllr Mark Shaw	(Chair) Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Sue Clark	(Vice Chair) Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Michael Headley	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Ian Bates	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Derek Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Phil Smart	Ipswich Borough Council
Cllr Paul Clark	North Herts District Council
Cllr Yvonne Constance	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Alexander Nicoll	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Alan Turner	Wycombe District Council

EWR Consortium Secretariat:

Martin Tugwell	England's Economic Heartland
Adam King	England's Economic Heartland
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council

Also In Attendance

Rob Brighthouse	East West Railway Company
Will Gallagher	East West Railway Company
Huw Edwards	East West Railway Company
Chris Winfield	Network Rail
Mark James	EWR Alliance
Gavin Dowland	Network Rail
Melanie MacLeod	Bedford Borough Council
Chris Pettifer	Bedford Borough Council
John Shorland	Bedford Borough Council
Jeremy Smith	Cambridgeshire County Council
Steve Lakin	Central Bedfordshire Council
Steve Hayes	Milton Keynes Council
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Paul Everard	Northampton Borough Council
Kerry Allen	Suffolk County Council
Sara Noonan	West Suffolk Councils
Tony Jones	Norwich City Council

Apologies:

Fiorella Mugari	Buckinghamshire County Council (Treasurer)
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Raiska Anantharaman
Cllr Carol Paternoster
Andy Kirkham
Cllr James Jamieson
Cllr Barry Wood
Andrew Bowe
Dr Carolyn Barnes
Cllr Martin Gowans
Cllr David Johncock
Hilary Chipping

Department for Transport
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Cherwell District Council
Cherwell District Council
East Suffolk Council
Milton Keynes Council
Wycombe District Council
SEMLEP

1. **Introductions and Apologies**

- 1.1 Mark Shaw welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that this meeting had been rescheduled from 10th December due to the General Election. Apologies previously advised were noted.

2. **Minutes of last meeting**

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting 17th September had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.
- 2.2 The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3. **East West Rail Update**

- 3.1 Will Gallagher briefed the meeting on the announcement made that morning by the Secretary of State in respect of the preferred route for the Central Section.
- 3.2 He set out the rationale underpinning the announcement and how this had built on the outcome of the engagement undertaken by the Company on the options last year.
- 3.3 The route selected was 'Route E' – this would see the Central Section run into/through Bedford Midland, head northwards and then east, crossing the East Coast Main Line somewhere between Sandy and St Neots, before heading towards Camborne and then Cambridge South, before Cambridge itself.
- 3.4 Will Gallagher noted that whilst this was the preferred route there was a need for more work to be done both in terms of looking at the detail of the route and also working with local partners to realise the benefits of the investment in the rail infrastructure and services.
- 3.5 The meeting heard how the preferred route both serves the maximum number of households within the Central Section and provides the maximum opportunities in terms of onward connectivity beyond it. Overall it was seen by the Company as offering the best value for money, was the most popular of the options amongst stakeholders and represented the best option for the environment.
- 3.6 Will Gallagher advised that the Company had considered very carefully the relationship between the scheme and the Wixhams (south of Bedford). They had concluded that movements associated with the Wixhams are predominantly north-

south, whereas the EWR is primarily about east-west connectivity. The Company had identified the potential for a 'EWR station' at Kempston Hardwick which residents in the Wixhams might use to access East West Rail – the local connectivity needed to achieve this would require further consideration.

3.7 Will Gallagher mapped at that the next steps included:

- Undertaking more detailed surveys along the route
- Taking forward work to develop the detail of the proposal
- A further round of engagement – in the form of a second non-statutory consultation
- Undertaking the statutory consultation in 2021/22
- Seeking the powers required to construct – through a Development Consent Order – in 2022-24
- Enabling a start of construction on site in 2025

He restated the Company's commitment to have services between Oxford and Cambridge restored by the end of the decade.

3.8 The meeting heard that the Company would be writing to local land owners over the coming days seeking their consent to undertake the surveys the Company requires.

3.9 The meeting welcomed the announcement of a preferred route for the Central Section.

- Yvonne Constance congratulated the Company on the announcement: she was reassured that the Company showed their understanding of the issues that the scheme need to address and their proposals for taking the work forward
- Phil Smart welcomed the news and in doing so pressed the need for the scheme to be electrified from the start and for it to have the capability and capacity to accommodate additional freight movements. He also flagged the opportunity presented by the Central Section crossing the East Coast Main Line for establishing an interchange facility

3.10 Will Gallagher advised that the Company was undertaking a piece of work in respect of the potential for freight. Martin Tugwell noted that the EEH Business Unit were linked into this work, enabling the outputs from the region's Freight and Logistics study to be fed into that work (the EWR Consortium had contributed to the cost of that study and have been briefed on its outputs previously).

3.11 Other comments from Consortium Members:

- Sue Clark was pleased to see the Central Section move to the next stage in its development, however she expressed her disappointment that the Central Section was not going to directly serve the Wixhams
- Ian Bates welcomed the clarity provided by the announcement. He strongly supported the need for the Central Section to serve Cambridge South but also noted that there are constraints at Cambridge Station itself that need to be addressed. He noted that the County Council is a major land owner along Route E. Ian Bates also highlighted difficulties encountered in ensuring that new stations are served by train operators – citing the difficulties encountered with Cambridge North station.

- Michael Headley added his congratulations to the Company on the announcement. In welcoming the fact that EWR would serve Bedford Midland station he was also keen to understand what the proposal might mean for Kempston Hardwick.
 - Alexander Nicoll welcomed the progress with the Central Section and noted that the choice ensured that eastward connectivity beyond Cambridge would be facilitated by it.
- 3.12 Responding to the points raised by Members Will Gallagher noted the points made about the need to address known capacity issues: he reinforced the Company's commitment to work with local partners to examine the issues and opportunities associated with Kempston Hardwick as a EWR station.

4. Western Section Update

- 4.1 Chris Winfield provided the Consortium with an update on progress.
- 4.2 The meeting heard that ecological mitigation measures were underway in anticipation of confirmation of the TWAO. Work on the Bletchley Viaduct was moving forward following recent surveys. All of the lineside equipment (including the track) across the viaduct has been removed ahead of removal of some of the spans at the next blockade (scheduled for early May Bank Holiday).
- 4.3 Sign-off of the TWAO is expected shortly: the expectation is that this will be to confirm the Order, this will then kick-start the next stage in the delivery of the Western Section
- 4.4 With that in mind the EWR Alliance has put in place community engagement champions that will be the first point of contact for local communities as the project moves into delivery.
- 4.5 Mark James from the EWR Alliance advised that integration with key agencies was being stepped up: Natural England have embedded environmental advisors within the team in Phoenix House (where the EWR Alliance is now based).
- 4.6 The meeting welcomed the update and expressed their continued support for the EWR Alliance as they move into delivery.

5. Eastern Section: Project Brief

- 5.1 Kerry Allen introduced the paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting. She set out the rationale for the approach being proposed and why the development of a preliminary Strategic Outline Business Case was considered the most appropriate way forward. Kerry Allen confirmed that the work would be procured by Suffolk County Council on behalf of the Consortium.
- 5.2 Ian Bates welcomed the proposal and offered Cambridgeshire County Council's support for the work
- 5.3 Phil Smart also welcomed the proposal and emphasised the importance of the constituent parts of the EWR project being seen as a single project. He also stressed the need to pursue opportunities to improve the provision for strategic rail freight services but noted that this served to emphasise the need to deliver the long-planned improvements at Ely at the earliest opportunity possible.

- 5.4 Martin Tugwell confirmed to the meeting that the Consortium had identified at its AGM in March 2019 that supporting work to develop the case for the Eastern Section was a priority for the Consortium as a whole. He also confirmed that the Consortium funds were sufficient to support a recommendation to allocate £100,000 to take forward the study.

Recommendation: The meeting AGREED to:

- a) Support the direction of work mapped out in support of the Eastern Section**
- b) Agree the scope of the work to be commissioned to prepare the Preliminary Strategic Outline Business Case (Annex 1)**
- c) Agree to allocate £100,000 of Consortium funds to enable the work to be commissioned**

6. Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study

- 6.1 John Disley introduced the paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting. He reminded the meeting that the Consortium had part funded the work, with other contributions coming from EEH and (the majority) from Oxfordshire County Council.
- 6.2 The meeting heard how the output from the first phase of the study had demonstrated the scale of the investment required in order to support the delivery of planned growth served by the rail corridor. John Disley highlighted the significant increase in capacity for services that was required, as well as the need to deliver the required investment by 2028 (some 5 years earlier than originally through necessary)
- 6.3 Martin Tugwell advised the meeting the EEH Strategic Transport Forum had considered and endorsed the recommendations from the first phase of the study.
- 6.4 John Disley advised the meeting that the output from the first phase was being considered by each of the funding partners at present but that he anticipated the next phase of work being taken forward later in the year.
- 6.5 The meeting welcomed the output from the first phase, noting that it supported the Consortium's agreed position that it is essential that in delivering EWR the need to consider the linkages beyond Oxford Station also need to be considered, and the implications this has for capacity at Oxford Station.

Recommendation: The meeting AGREED to:

- a) Welcome and endorse the recommendations of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study Phase 1**
- b) Endorse the following as regional priorities for investment:**
 - **Delivery of additional capacity at/through Oxford Station at the earliest possible opportunity**
 - **Delivery of a solution to the capacity constraint between Oxford North Junction, through Oxford and onto Didcot East Junction at the earliest possible opportunity**
 - **Re-instatement of the Cowley Branch**

- c) **Endorse the need for rail services operating to/from and through Oxford Station to be developed in a co-ordinated way in order to support the delivery of planned growth**
- d) **Endorse the need to deliver enhanced rail connectivity between Oxford and Swindon, and onwards to Bristol**
- e) **Endorse the need for enhanced rail connectivity between Oxford and the Midlands, and support the work led by Midlands Connect to develop a detailed proposal**
- f) **Support the need to promote the package of rail infrastructure investments for inclusion in the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline, with a recommendation that Government should support a Decision to Initiate as a matter of priority**
- g) **Support the need for additional and enhanced services in Oxfordshire (and beyond) to be available no later than 2028**

7. **Bicester, London Road Level Crossing**

- 7.1 John Disley introduced the paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting.
- 7.2 The previous meeting of the Consortium had agreed in principle to allocate £25,000 of Consortium funding to enable Oxfordshire County Council to take forward a piece of work specifically focused on identifying longer term options for the London Road level crossing, set in the context of the wider work Oxfordshire County Council is undertaking on the future of Bicester.
- 7.3 Martin Tugwell reaffirmed that the allocation of £25,000 of Consortium funding was consistent with agreed priorities for the Consortium and affordable.

Recommendation: The meeting AGREED to:

- a) **Welcome the progress made on scoping the next stage of work associated with London Road Level Crossing, Bicester**
- b) **Reaffirm the commitment to allocate £25,000 of Consortium funds to enable the work to be commissioned**

8. **Rail Review Update**

- 8.1 Gavin Dowland (Network Rail System Operator) provided a briefing on the work commissioned by EEH and led by Network Rail on their behalf.
- 8.2 The work forms part of the evidence base supporting the EEH draft Transport Strategy and will enable EEH to identify strategic opportunities created by the delivery of East West Rail to develop the rail offer in support of the delivery of planned growth.
- 8.3 The meeting welcomed the commissioning of the work and pleased to see the leadership being provided by Network Rail System Operator.

Recommendation: The meeting AGREED to:

- a) **Welcome the presentation from Network Rail on the Rail Review now underway as part of the EEH Transport Strategy;**
- b) **Welcome the opportunity the Rail Review provides to identify wider linkages that will be enabled by delivery of East West Rail**

9. **Digital Connectivity**

- 9.1 Martin Tugwell provided an update on the work being taken forward by EEH Business Unit to develop the business case in support of delivering the Western Section as a digitally connected corridor.
- 9.2 The meeting welcomed the work done on the business case. It noted that the work to date had been funded by EEH partners (in particular Buckinghamshire County Council). Martin Tugwell advised that further work on the business case was required and advised that the Consortium could – if it so wished – allocate a provisional sum of money to support the need for that work.

Recommendation: The meeting AGREED to:

a) Note the report

b) Allocate up to £5,000 of Consortium funding to support further business case development work if required

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

- 3 March 2020

NOTE: it was agreed that the meeting would be moved to Phoenix House, Milton Keynes – this would enable the Consortium to meet with EWR Alliance team members.

January 2019