

9th December 2020

10:00 – 12:30

MINUTES

Of meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Cllr Sue Clark	(Chair) Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Nick Naylor	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Philip Smart	Ipswich Borough Council
Cllr Michael Headley	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Susan Glossop	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Paul Clark	North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr Ian Bates	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Jennifer Wilson-Marklew	Milton Keynes Council
Cllr Ian Stutely	Norwich City Council

EWR Consortium Secretariat:

Martin Tugwell	England's Economic Heartland
Beth Dormer	England's Economic Heartland

Also In Attendance:

Andrew Summers	Transport East
Steve Lakin	Central Bedfordshire Council
James Gagg	Oxfordshire County Council
Louise Wicks	Oxfordshire County Council
Michael Newsham	Ipswich Borough Council
Trevor Mason	Hertfordshire County Council
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Pip Hoskins	Network Rail
Will Gallagher	East West Rail Company
Jordi Beascochea	East West Rail Company
Sara Noonan	West Suffolk Council
Lee Carvell	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council
Melanie Macleod	Bedford Borough Council
Mark James	East West Rail Alliance
Kerry Allen	Suffolk County Council
Tony Jones	Norwich City Council
Matthew Randall	Cambridgeshire County Council
Chris Poultney	Cambridgeshire County Council
Lewis Boudville	East Suffolk Council

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James Povey

Milton Keynes Council

Apologies:

Cllr Martin Wilby

South Norfolk Council

Cllr Yvonne Constance

Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Paul Castleman

Luton Borough Council

Cllr Norman Brooks

East Suffolk Council

Cllr Alexander Nicoll

Suffolk County Council

Cllr Aidan Van de Weyer

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Cllr Derrick Ashley

Hertfordshire County Council

Louise Symes

North Hertfordshire District Council

Rajesh Kungur

Milton Keynes Council

Jez Baldock

East West Rail Alliance

Stuart Morris

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Laura Leech

Buckinghamshire Council

Hilary Chipping

SEMLEP

John Shortland

Bedford Borough Council

Chris Winfield

Network Rail

Andrew Preston

Cambridgeshire County Council

Adam Wood

Hertfordshire County Council

Joan Hancox

Buckinghamshire Council

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Item		Action
1	<p>Introductions and Apologies</p> <p>Cllr Sue Clark introduced the meeting and noted apologies. The virtual meeting protocol was discussed and observed.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting – including updated Action List</p> <p>Philip Smart highlighted an inaccuracy in the previous minutes: Andrew Summers should be recorded as representing Transport East not Suffolk Country Council. It was agreed that this would be corrected.</p> <p>Sue Clark highlighted that point she made regarding Lidlington Level Crossing and a point raised by James Povey on Woburn Sands Level Crossing were not recorded in the minutes of the previous meeting. It was agreed that these two points would be added to the previous minutes.</p>	

	<p>James Povey and Sue Clark noted that they had not had any feedback from Network Rail with regards to the Woburn Sands Level Crossing and the Lidlington Level Crossing. Pip Hoskin agreed to highlight the outstanding action with Network Rail colleagues and report back.</p>	<p>Pip Hoskin</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>East West Railway Company – Update</p> <p>Will Gallagher provided an update on the progress with delivery of the project. He noted that the Spending Review outcome represented major progress with Government making a commitment to the project and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc in the National Infrastructure Strategy.</p> <p>Will anticipated that the Company would shortly award the main construction works contract for the next phase of the Western Section. Will shared that the Company was focused on developing an integrated plan for its delivery one that is particularly focused on: minimising disruption to local communities, ensuring a reliable service, and providing the best value to the taxpayer.</p> <p>The Company was starting to view delivery of East West Rail in three connection stages, Oxford to Milton Keynes, Oxford to Bedford and Oxford to Cambridge. Will reiterated that the ambition is to begin running trains by 2025, with the December 2024 timetable change its focus. However there remains an ambition to improve upon this deadline if possible.</p> <p>Will noted that there may be a need to run services from Oxford through to Bletchley initially, and extend to Milton Keynes as soon as the Company is satisfied that the service is a reliable one.</p> <p>Will informed the meeting that the Company remains focused on developing a cost-efficient plan that will enable the Aylesbury to Milton Keynes service to be delivered.</p> <p>Will reminded the meeting that the preferred route option for the full Oxford to Cambridge service was announced earlier in 2020 and will be going out to public consultation in early 2021. Will clarified that the 2021 Spending Review will determine future funding and it's essential that the project is a priority and secures the funding needed at the appropriate time to continue to progress with delivery.</p> <p>Summarising the item, Will noted that the Spending Review proved to be positive for the progress of the program with over £1b of investment confirmed for the next stage of construction as well as a more integrated plan for connecting Oxford to Cambridge and for connection options further East. Will shared a short video with the meeting to further summarise the update given on the work of the Company.</p>	

<p>Sue Clark congratulated Will and the Company on securing the funding</p> <p>Kerry Allen asked whether the work being done by the Company is going to provide capacity for freight or just passenger rail services. Will confirmed that all existing freight paths are being protected and work is being done with the DfT, Network Rail and EEH to ensure that a freight capable railway is being constructed.</p> <p>Kerry also highlighted that on the Eastern section, work is being done to drive forward an interim Strategic Outline Business Case and would welcome some further meetings with the Company. Will welcomed the suggestion to schedule future meetings.</p> <p>Ian Bates made the meeting aware that Lord Robert Mair is now the Chairman of the Cambridge Autonomous Metro and emphasised the importance of joining up thinking on East West Rail with the CAM.</p> <p>Michael Headley expressed his disappointed that the Bletchley to Bedford section is not yet funded. Taking into consideration that the next announcement of funding will be in 2021, Michael asked how this will feed into the different options for the Marston Vale Line and is there any risk that neither will receive funding. Will expressed confidence that the funding made to date in delivering East West Rail represented a significant commitment by Government and should provide some reassurance.</p> <p>Nick Naylor set out his concerns that North Buckinghamshire is experiencing considerable disruption as the works for both HS2 and EWR taking place in that area. Nick stressed the importance of addressing this concerns as a matter of some urgency. Nick requested that the next meeting included a discussion around 'lessons learnt' from the current works. As the project moves from West to East, Nick suggested it prudent to share experiences so that other areas can do what they can to minimising disruption to residents. Will was supportive of this proposal and noted that the Company is conducting research around communities that have been affected by major infrastructure projects as they are committed to developing a positive relationship with the communities it works within</p> <p>James Povey emphasised the importance of having clarity on the level of detail in the forthcoming public consultation at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>James Gagg made a point around assessment of services on stage one and how this is being reviewed, particularly in the context of Oxford Station phase 2 and what this will enable in terms of services. James asked when this work will be completed and consulted on. Will explained that the Company is working with Network Rail because</p>	
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	<p>capacity at Oxford is important and various scenarios are being modelled to demonstrate how extending services from Bletchley to Milton Keynes can be made reliable and the Company is looking at the impact of Oxford Phase 2 will have on this.</p> <p>Sara Noonan discussed the significant challenges at Cambridge Station and requested the involvement of the Eastern Section in the ongoing conversation. Will recognised that the situation at Cambridge is a complicated one and that lessons learned from Oxford are being taken to influence the approach taken at Cambridge.</p> <p>Sue Clark shared her concerns towards the reaction of residents, what future proposals might be around the Marston Vale Line and any further upgrades the Company might consider a requirement. Sue requested that communication be carefully and well managed and that the three local authorities are aware of what’s going to happen and when so that they can support and inform their communities. Will noted and agreed with the comments made by Sue.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Autumn Announcements</p> <p>Martin Tugwell introduced the item and, in reflection of the conversation thus far, suggested that the Consortium may want to consider writing to the Company and the DfT welcoming the commitment of funding to Bletchley. This would provide an opportunity for the meeting to restate the ambition of the Consortium and to state the commitment of the Consortium to continue to work with both the Company and the DfT to get the project to a position where funding decisions can be taken as part of the Spending Review.</p> <p>The meeting agreed that this approach is the correct one.</p> <p>Ian Bates and Susan Glossop both requested that the letter include Norfolk and Suffolk. Furthermore, Susan suggested that a copy of that letter be sent to all local MPs to ensure that they are on board.</p> <p>Laura Leech requested that the letter must include the twin-tracking down to Aylesbury.</p> <p>The Consortium concurred with the points raised.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED to write to the EWR Company and the DfT reiterating the commitment of the Consortium and its ongoing commitment to work with both parties on the EWR project. The letter is to be drafted, reviewed and sent before Christmas.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>East West Main Line – Realising the Longer-Term Potential</p>	

	<p>Martin Tugwell introduced the item and noted that the Consortium set out the components of this proposition at the previous meeting.</p> <p>Philip Smart welcomed the paper. He noted the importance of works at Cambridge Station helping to unlock opportunities for improvements in services East of Cambridge. Furthermore, Philip advised that there is an opportunity to expand the platform capacity at Norwich and Ipswich</p> <p>Philip informed the meeting that consultation on Ely is currently live and highlighted the importance of strengthening the argument that the East/West pattern of services through to Norwich must be at the forefront of thinking. Responding to the paper further, he cautioned against considering issues relating to fares and argued that this must only be considered at a national level. Philip stated that he believes it appropriate to consider and comment on the structural composition of future rail concessions and noted that there is an important opportunity to align more closely with regional concessions more closely. Additionally, Philip agreed that is it appropriate to consider the implications of East West Main Line in relationship to London, particularly considering the pausing of Cross Rail 2. With regards to whether it is appropriate for the proposition to comment on its role in supporting delivery of planned growth, Philip argued that yes it but recognised that growth is not. welcome by everyone.</p> <p>With regards to the longer-term potential for the East West Main Line Susan Glossop suggests that the Consortium be very ambitious with its approach.</p> <p>Sue Clark also cautioned being involved in fares and suggested that the group maintain focus on strategic infrastructure in keeping with the Consortium’s original purpose.</p> <p>Martin Tugwell thanked the meeting for the additional information and summarised that the main points made were around ambition, clarifying the desired strategic outcomes and focusing on a program of activity that allows the meeting to achieve those outcomes. Martin informed the meeting that work will be done with Andrew Summers and the wider Transport East team to ensure that work is being used on both STB’s Transport Strategy’s. Furthermore, Martin reassured the meeting that lots of work is being done around the strategic case that is part of the interim SOBC for the Eastern Section.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>London Road, Bicester: Update</p>	

	<p>James Gagg introduced the item informing the meeting that the supporting paper for this item updates on London Road Bicester’s stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (OAR) which is being undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council using funds from the Consortium.</p> <p>James informed the meeting that London Road is one of the key routes into Bicester Town Centre and is adjacent to Bicester Village. The London Road level crossing is due to have increased barrier down time as East West Rail train frequencies increase. The OAR looks at the longer term to identify options for investment to enable continued transport accessibility.</p> <p>In particular, James explained that the OAR assists with assessing the relative benefits of a direct highway intervention against other highway measures, including packages of sustainable transport improvements based on the recently agreed walking and cycling infrastructure plan for Bicester. James stated that work is moving towards completion with the aim for the final report to indicate the likely transport investment packages needed for Bicester in the context of East West Rail.</p> <p>Philip Smart expressed the view that, from a delivery point of view, the Company should be the vehicle for this type of work moving forward. Will Gallagher agreed that the majority of the technical work will be done by the Company however this is an area where joint working is constructive and will lead to a better outcome in the consultation in 2021.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED to:</p> <p>a) Note the progress of the Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report for London Road, Bicester</p> <p>b) Agree the importance of identifying and promoting an investment package that addresses London Road, Bicester level crossing in order to enable the longer-term potential of East West Rail</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Work Programme: Update</p> <p>Martin Tugwell introduced the item by reminding the Consortium that the Consortium’s previous meeting had discussed its approach to responding to the forthcoming engagement on the Central Section.</p> <p>Martin highlighted that EEH is co-commissioning with the Company a piece of work to look at the local connectivity required to support East West Rail in the Marston Vale.</p>	

	<p>Kerry Allen noted that the Eastern Section group is working on the draft strategic case for the interim SOBC. Kerry reminded the meeting that the focus is on 3 of the business cases within the interim SOBC: the strategic, the economic and financial case. Kerry shared that work has also now commenced by Steer on the economic case.</p> <p>Andrew Summers stated that in the short term the Government are holding their call for evidence for union connectivity which is due to close at the end of December 2020. Andrew emphasised the wider UK connectivity opportunities that EWR provides and highlighted the connections from St Neots to Edinburgh, Bletchley to Glasgow and Stanstead to Northern Ireland as examples. Andrew suggested calling attention to these wider UK connections with the DfT to raise the projects profile as a major new infrastructure pieces that supports UK connectivity.</p> <p>Philip Smart noted that in light of the Consortium’s keen desire for East West Rail to have a strong freight capability, it is helpful to acknowledge the existing freight service that runs between Felixstowe and Cardiff which might well find that East West Rail is a more suitable future route.</p> <p>Kerry Allen noted that she has a upcoming meeting with the Port of Felixstowe where she will share this information to provide evidence as to how EWR will support them.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Western Section – Update</p> <p>Mark James introduced the item noting that the supporting slide deck for this item will be cascaded to the meeting.</p> <p>Mark noted that despite the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, good progress is being made with the Western Section. Mark explained that lots of devegetation works have taken place in order to clear the route to allow for the major construction elements of the work and the East West Rail Alliance have now completed all intended work before they enter back into hibernation period. Furthermore, Mark shared that the Alliance have completed large elements of the archaeological investigation works at the Bicester diversionary end of the route. Significant compounds in Bicester through to Bletchley have now been established which has resulted in the completion of approximately 30% of highways works.</p> <p>Mark continued by noting that the works in progress include fencing, highways works and refurbishment on up to 14 bridges. Mark highlighted that the road diversion/closure in Bletchley town centre is</p>	

	<p>still in place which is due to be removed by Monday 14th December and the new works will continue in 2022 in a less disruptive format. Mark assured the meeting that the forbearance of the residents of Water Eaton Road, Bletchley are of note and there have been reasonable support and acceptance with regards to the disruption of traffic. Mark commented on the good progress made on the conditions required to deliver the works and thanked the Consortium for its continued support.</p> <p>Laura Leech shared with the meeting that a 'lessons learned' session is scheduled for Tuesday 15th December to discuss the various issues that have arisen due to EWR works.</p> <p>Michael Headley recommended that the Consortium actively capture and document the lessons learned and suggested that this can feed into the Consortiums response to the next consultation.</p> <p>Mark James shared that the Alliance continue to take on board the feedback received and use these as opportunities to improve. Mark noted that he has approximately 615 notable comments and complaints since March 2020 however approximately 30% of these are positive comments about how the Alliance can improve delivery which is demonstrative of good engagement from the local communities.</p> <p>Mark shared that one of the first biggest elements to disappear in the value for money challenge was the construction of a haul road which would have enabled the Alliance to minimise some of the offline highways works and the pressure of HGV traffic. Mark advised that this is something to consider during future stages. The Alliance have reinstated as much as they can where it knows it cannot isolate or overly impact communities with heavy load traffic.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED to consider lessons learned at its next meeting</p> <p>Martin Tugwell announced that Chris Winfield had moved on to a new role within Network Rail. The Consortium passed on its thanks and good wishes to Chris.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Future meetings</p> <p>Wednesday 9th June 2021</p> <p>Wednesday 15th September 2021</p> <p>Wednesday 8th December 2021</p>	

EAST WEST RAIL CONSORTIUM STRATEGIC BOARD



	Wednesday 9 th March 2022	
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