



Press Release

East West Rail Consortium

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Options for bridging 'the missing link' revisited

The East West Rail Consortium has today published a discussion paper re-examining the route options for the East West Rail link between Bedford and Cambridge.

With the East of England Regional Assembly and the Government Office for the East of England developing an implementation plan for the regional spatial strategy and regional economic strategy, the Consortium decided last year it had to review the preferred route option that it last looked at almost a decade ago.

A number of factors have had to be considered, including the planned housing and economic growth in the M11 corridor and across the East of England, expansion of Luton and Stansted airports and the granting of planning permission for a rowing lake east of Bedford that bisects the current favoured route.

The latest discussion paper identifies a number of alternative routes and comments are being invited from local and regional stakeholders, as well as the Department for Transport and Network Rail.

The Consortium will review all the comments it receives before March 31st with the intention of identifying a preferred route during the summer.

The main aim of the Consortium is to seek the reopening of a railway between Oxford and Cambridge to provide a strategic orbital rail link between the East of England and Central Southern England, avoiding the need to travel through London and connecting with the 'core' radial routes out of London. Once complete, the rail link would support the Oxford to Cambridge high-technology arc by connecting major areas of housing and employment growth across the South East and Eastern regions.

In recent years efforts have been focused on the western section from Oxford and Aylesbury to Milton Keynes and Bedford where there is a good business case to reinstate the railway. Work is underway to prepare an outline engineering design for this phase of the project by December this year, with the prospect of trains being re-

introduced from 2013.

Notes:

East West Rail Consortium is a group of local authorities and government agencies with an objective of securing a new rail route from East Anglia to Oxford via the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area.

More news on the project can be found online at www.eastwestrail.org.uk.

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