

**East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board
Meeting held on 11th June 2019
Bedford Borough Council**

Present:

Cllr Mark Shaw	(Chair) Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Sue Clark	(Vice Chair) Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Carol Paternoster	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Gerald Brewster	Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils
Cllr Michael Headley	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Derrick Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Phil Smart	Ipswich Borough Council
Cllr Phil Larratt	Northampton Borough Council
Cllr Paul Clark	North Herts District Council
Cllr Mike Stonard	Norwich City Council
Cllr Alan Turner	Wycombe District Council

EWR Consortium Secretariat:

Martin Tugwell	England's Economic Heartland
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council
James Gagg	Oxfordshire County Council

Also In Attendance

Chris Winfield	Network Rail
Will Gallagher	East West Railway Company
Andy Kirkham	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Melanie MacCleod	Bedford Borough Council
Jeremy Smith	Cambridgeshire County Council
Michael Newsham	Ipswich Borough Council
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Ishwer Gohil	Milton Keynes Council
Paul Everard	Northampton Borough Council
Louise Symes	North Hertfordshire District Council
Tony Jones	Norwich City Council
Kerry Allen	Suffolk County Council

Apologies:

Fiorella Mugari	Buckinghamshire County Council (Treasurer)
Adam King	England's Economic Heartland (Comms)
Dave Sexton	Department for Transport
Raiska Anantharaman	Department for Transport
Simon Blanchflower	East West Railway Company

Andy Kirkham
Jon Shortland
Cllr Paul Irwin
Andy Preston
Cllr James Jamieson
Jodie Colclough
Cllr Barry Wood
Andrew Bowe
Dr Carolyn Barnes
Cllr Martin Gowans
Steve Hayes
Cllr Yvonne Constance
Cllr David Johncock
John Callaghan
Hilary Chipping
Ellen Goodwin

Aylesbury Vale District Council
Bedford Borough Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Cherwell District Council
Cherwell District Council
East Suffolk Council
Milton Keynes Council
Milton Keynes Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Wycombe District Council
Wycombe District Council
SEMLEP
New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

1. Introductions and Apologies

- 1.1 Mark Shaw welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies previously advised were noted.

2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting (the AGM) had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.
- 2.2 Martin Tugwell advised that the proposed ‘task and finish’ member group on reviewing how the consortium works/supports the activities of Sub-national Transport Bodies would be taken forward in the early autumn.
- 2.3 The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3. Western Section

- 3.1 Chris Winfield, Senior Sponsor at Network Rail, provided the meeting with an update on progress with the delivery of the Western Section (copy of slides are attached to these minutes).

- 3.2 Key points noted during the presentation were:

- Of the objections received prior to the TWAO Inquiry and remaining to be resolved, approximately half are associated with concerns regarding the proposed closure of the crossing at Woburn Sands
- Proposals to address the concerns raised at Lidlington continue to be developed – Network Rail is hopeful that a solution can be identified
- Work is on-going to agree a Statement of Common Grounds with Natural England – the key outstanding issue relates to bats, but both sides anticipate that this will be resolved allowing the Statement of Common Ground to be completed

- Compounds established for the construction phase will be dismantled shortly after completion unless required to deal with residual matters – it was anticipated that one may be required until 2026.
- Work continues on the train service specification – this has yet to be agreed but good progress is being made
- Amongst the potential risks to delivery, ones noted by the meeting were:
 - The process once the Inspector's report from the TWAO Inquiry is received
 - The likelihood that there will be a requirement to acquire land (104 plots of land are likely to need to be acquired)
 - The interaction with HS2 delivery – in particular noting that HS2 is delivering the 'Calvert box' section and so delivery of the link to Aylesbury is interconnected with delivery of HS2
- As the EWR Alliance ramp up activity on-site they are putting in place 5 Community Engagement Officers – these will be active within the local communities and will become the first point of contact for queries during the construction phase

3.3 Points touched on in the ensuing discussion included:

- The Inspector's report will be handed over to the Government shortly – it will become public once the Secretary of State has made his determination and (all being well) the Order confirmed
- Opportunities to use the delivery of Western Section as a catalyst to improve connectivity with Northampton (and beyond) should be explored: it was noted that this forms part of the wider linkages work that the Consortium members have identified as a priority for their work programme
- In a similar vein the meeting restated its ambition for delivery of the Western Section to be a catalyst for developing the north-south axis south of Aylesbury, through Princes Risborough and southwards to High Wycombe and Old Oak Common
- There was considerable concern that delivery of parts of the Western Section could be delayed as a consequence of delays with HS2's programme: the meeting was clear that measures needed to be identified that avoided any delay arising as a consequence of delays to HS2

3.4 Martin Tugwell introduced the supporting paper for this item, which set out before the meeting the key strategic issues arising from the update provided by Network Rail.

3.5 **The meeting AGREED to:**

- a) Welcome the progress being made with the Western Section**
- b) Confirm with the Department for Transport and East West Railway Company:**
 - i) The critical importance to the region of ensuring that the Western Section is delivered at the earliest opportunity possible**
 - ii) The importance of actively pursuing the potential to extend EWR services through Oxford and on to Didcot Parkway**
- c) Agree that the Chair write to the Secretary of State for Transport requesting a meeting with a view to exploring what further actions are required to ensure delivery of East West Rail at the earliest opportunity.**

- 3.6 Ishwer Gohil provided the meeting with an update on progress being made in developing the proposal for a new eastern entrance at Bletchley Station.
- 3.7 Scoping work – Milton Keynes Council working with consultant Atkins – was underway: whilst progress with the work was slower than originally hoped for progress was being made. The work on the eastern entrance will take into consideration proposals for the regeneration of Bletchley.
4. **Oxfordshire Rail Study**
- 4.1 John Disley gave an update on the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study, noting that a fuller report on the study is planned to be given at the September meeting. He re-emphasised the importance of the point made in the preceding conversation as to the importance of exploring how East West Rail services connect beyond Oxford – noting in particular the importance of connecting the Science Vale area of Oxfordshire with the wider Oxford – Cambridge Arc.
- 4.2 **The meeting AGREED to:**
- a) **Note the progress made on Stage 1 of the study**
 - b) **Request a more detailed report to the September meeting of the Board, to consider the outcomes of Stage 1 and provide input into the Scope of Stage 2 of the work.**
 - c) **Reaffirm the Consortium’s position as to the importance of East West Rail services continuing through Oxford to maximise connectivity, including links to the Great Western Main Line**
5. **East West Railway Company Update**
- 5.1 Will Gallagher provided an update on behalf of the East West Railway Company:
- Work to ‘stand up’ the Company was continuing: the newly appointed Non-Exec Directors were getting fully acquainted with the scheme
 - The Company had recently met with the Chairman of HS2 to discuss interactions between the two projects as part of the on-going commitment to ensure that risks are managed
 - The Company are involved in the work of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study
 - Work is on-going to develop the customer focused vision for East West Rail – this will be used to shape the development of the identity and experience of East West Railway when it becomes operational. To assist in this the Company has secured support from Heather McGill (who had worked on the 2012 Olympics). The Company is working with the secretariat to organise a workshop to gain some input from the Consortium.
- 5.2 Will Gallagher provided an update on progress with the Central Section:
- Engagement period had ended in March, over 3,000 responses had been received
 - Analysis of the responses was on-going, with a focus on drawing out the key themes/issues requiring attention
 - The next stage in the process – announcement of preferred route – is anticipated towards the end of the year: a report summarising the responses will be published at that point

- The Company will look to secure the next stage of funding for scheme development at a suitable (fiscal) event

5.3 Points raised in the ensuing discussion included:

- Consortium members emphasised the importance of having clarity on the Central Section at the earliest opportunity in order to assist with their consideration of future growth options.
- The importance of linking consideration of the Central Section with the Eastern Section was emphasised – Consortium members restated the point that the Eastern Section is an integral element of the overall project for them.
- Consortium members reminded the Company that the work done to date on the Eastern Section identified the potential for it to enhance the business case for the Central Section.
- There is a need to ensure that in developing the proposal for the Central Section consideration is given as to the implications of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement – in response Will Gallagher noted that the Company was working closely with Highways England on the expressway project (including the A428 scheme)
- In response to questions as to whether there is an emerging preferred route for the Central Section, Will Gallagher noted that the engagement documentation put forward a case that any of the 5 options were potential solutions – it was too early to say whether one of the options was preferable over the others
- Again in response to questions, Will Gallagher noted that the engagement process had not identified any significant new issues, although he commented that the responses had served to emphasise the extent to which environmental considerations were important
- Will Gallagher noted that the Company had made a submission to the Williams Rail Review (as had EEH and a number of Consortium members): it was too early to say whether the review would have implications for the Company.

6. **Freight and logistics Study**

6.1 Martin Tugwell introduced the paper presenting the emerging recommendations of the EEH Freight and Logistic Study – a study to which the Consortium has provided a financial contribution.

6.2 He noted that the study had identified a number of key issues in relation to planning for freight/ logistics by rail, including potential further actions. He reminded the Consortium that the work had been taken forward as a contribution towards to the evidence base in support of the development of the overarching Transport Strategy.

6.3 Points raised in the ensuing discussion included:

- Whilst the need to plan proactively for growth in rail freight movements is supported by the Consortium, this must not be at the expense of taking away capacity from passenger services – if we want growth in rail freight then we need to invest in additional capacity
- The role that the rail sector can play in the de-carbonisation of the transport system is significant – it can be even bigger if electrification of the network was extended

- The Consortium is keen to understand how the East West Railway company's approach to designing the infrastructure plans for and takes account of the opportunity for more rail freight
 - The implications that a lack of a national port strategy were highlighted – in particular the difficulties this presents in terms of making the case for investment in capacity for rail freight.
 - Will Gallagher noted that there was currently no plans to electrify East West Rail on the basis that it is not affordable
 - The meeting noted that there are a number of 'live' planning applications for strategic rail freight interchanges in Northamptonshire – Consortium members expressed the importance of ensuring that the planning of a piece of infrastructure takes into account this wider strategic context
- 6.4 The meeting AGREED to note the report and supported the direction of travel set out within it. It also AGREED that it would be helpful to have a more substantive discussion on the way forward at a future meeting
7. **Items for Information**
- 7.1 Martin Tugwell introduced the paper which briefed the meeting on the forthcoming publication of the EEH Outline Transport Strategy. The meeting AGREED to note the paper
8. **Dates of Future Meetings**
- 17 September 2019 (Cambridge)
 - 10 December 2019 (Bedford)
 - 3 March 2020 (Cambridge) AGM

June 2019