

**East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board
Meeting held on 17th September 2019
Quy Mill Hotel and Spa, Cambridge**

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 Phil Smart	Ipswich Borough Council
Cllr Paul Castleman	Luton Borough Council
Ellen Goodwin	New Anglia LEP
Cllr Paul Clark	North Herts District Council
Cllr Paul Castleman	Luton Borough Council
Cllr Alexander Nicoll	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Paul Castleman	Luton Borough Council

EWR Consortium Secretariat:

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

Also In Attendance

Chris Winfield	Network Rail
Simon Blanchflower	East West Railway Company
Claire Britton	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Chris Pettifer	Bedford Borough Council
Jeremy Smith	Cambridgeshire County Council
Steve Lakin	Central Bedfordshire Council
Antony Swift	England's Economic Heartland
Vale Male	Hertfordshire County Council
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Paul Everard	Northampton Borough Council
Sara Noonan	West Suffolk Councils

Apologies:

Fiorella Mugari	Buckinghamshire County Council (Treasurer)
Adam King	England's Economic Heartland (Comms)
Will Gallagher	East West Railway Company
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council
Raiska Anantharaman	Department for Transport
Cllr Carol Paternoster	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Andy Kirkham	Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr James Jamieson	Central Bedfordshire Council

Cllr Barry Wood
Andrew Bowe
Dr Carolyn Barnes
Cllr Derrick Ashley
Cllr Martin Gowans
Steve Hayes
Cllr Yvonne Constance
Cllr David Johncock
Hilary Chipping

Cherwell District Council
Cherwell District Council
East Suffolk Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Milton Keynes Council
Milton Keynes Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Wycombe District Council
SEMLEP

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 11th June had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.
2.2 The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3. Western Section

- 3.1 Simon Winfield, Senior Sponsor at Network Rail, provided the meeting with an update on progress with the delivery of the Western Section.

3.2 Key points noted during the presentation were:

- Work continues to be taken forward with the development of the scheme whilst awaiting the outcome of the TWAO Inquiry
- Assets on the Bletchley Flyover have been stripped off – there is now no ballast or signalling infrastructure on the structure: attention had been paid to the parapets during the recent (August) blockade on the West Coast Main Line
- Discussions continued with Natural England regarding the implications of the project for protected species.
- Work on exploring the options for the eastern entrance to Bletchley Station was on-going, facilitated by good working between Network Rail and Milton Keynes Council

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
- It was noted that the timing of the work on Wider Linkages was opportune given the progress being made with the Western Section – see later on the agenda.

4. **East West Railway Company Update (including agenda item 5 Customer Vision)**
 - 4.1 Simon Blanchflower provided the meeting with an update from the East West Railway Company. He noted that the Company had been help brief incoming Ministers on the project.
 - 4.2 The Company continued to consider and reflect on the responses received to the engagement on the route of the Central Section. Simon thanked Consortium members for their contributions and continuing engagement as the Company looked to make progress with the Central Section.
 - 4.3 Simon Blanchflower took the meeting through the work that the Company is undertaking as it develops its vision for a customer led service: in this work the Company is drawing on experience from other sectors and major events, including drawing experience gained during the London 2012 Olympics. The Company's intention is to have a product, a service that offers a high quality, attractive service to the user.
 - 4.4 In response to a question, Simon Blanchflower indicated that the Company was continuing to explore options for rolling stock: he indicated that initially services on the Western Section might be delivered using stock already in service on the network, however it was anticipated that in due course the service would be operated by rolling stock acquired by the Company.
 - 4.5 The meeting welcomed the update from the Company: and in particular welcomed the work being undertaken on the customer vision. In the ensuing discussion key points raised were:
 - The importance of providing clarity on the route for the Central Section at the earliest opportunity
 - The importance of ensuring proper consideration of the linkages to the east of Cambridge – with Eastern Section members in particular emphasising the key role that that has as part of the overall project from the Consortium's perspective.
5. **East West Railway Company Customer Vision**
 - 5.1 Included as part of the previous agenda item
6. **Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study**
 - 6.1 James Gagg introduced the paper circulated with the agenda. The Consortium has previously agreed a financial contribution towards the cost of the first stage of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study – a reflection of the strategic importance to the overall project of ensuring that Oxford Station has the capability and capacity to allow the full potential of the East West Rail project to be realised. Previous discussions at the Consortium have also identified the added value to be secured from providing direct linkages through Oxford Station for East West Rail Services.
 - 6.2 James Gagg outlined the approach adopted by the Study and in particular how it relates to planned growth along the corridor. He highlighted that whilst the first stage of the work had yet to complete it was possible to start drawing out key messages and what this might mean for future train service specifications.

- 6.3 The meeting welcomed the update on the study, noting the strategic importance of ensuring that the Oxfordshire rail corridor has the capability and capacity to enable East West Rail realise its full potential.

The meeting AGREED to:

- a) **Notes the progress made on Stage 1 of the Oxfordshire Rail Study**
- b) **Considers the emerging outcomes of the study and provides any comments on these for feedback to the project team**
- c) **Request a further report on the completion of Stage 1**

7. Bicester, London Road Level Crossing

- 7.1 James Gagg outlined to the meeting how the issues relating to the operation of the London Road level crossing are of strategic importance to the East West Rail project. In particular he highlighted the extent to which this was particularly relevant upon opening of the Central Section.

- 7.2 He outlined to the meeting that a draft brief for a piece of work was in preparation for consideration by the Consortium at a future meeting.

The meeting AGREED to:

- a) **Support use of £25k identified in the 2019/20 consortium work programme for taking forward work to develop the case for a scheme at London Road Bicester**

8. Eastern Section Update

- 8.1 Cllr Alexander Nicoll provided an overview of the work underway in the Eastern Section, building on the publication of the Eastern Section prospectus earlier in the year.

- 8.2 Kerry Allen provided an update on the work to develop the brief for a further piece of work in support of the Eastern Section. Originally envisaged to be presented to the Consortium this autumn it was noted that this was now likely to be towards the end of the year.

- 8.3 The meeting noted and reaffirmed the importance of the Consortium supporting the case for the Eastern Section – this having been identified as the priority for Consortium funds at the March meeting.

9. Wider Linkages

- 9.1 Martin Tugwell opened this item by providing the context for the following presentations. He noted that the Consortium had consistently identified the importance of ensuring the wider benefits of East West Rail are understood and opportunities to realise them identified and then pursued.

- 9.2 He noted that the work associated with the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study was an example of this, as well as noting that completion of the Western Section (in combination with the opening of HS2) offered opportunities to develop services on the Northampton – Milton Keynes/Bletchley – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common.

9.3 The meeting then received two presentations that further highlighted the opportunity to use East West Rail as a catalyst that enables wider linkages to be developed that deliver the strategic ambition for improved connectivity across the region.

9.4 Chris Pettifer introduced the work that Bedford Council has commissioned to identify opportunities to develop the rail offer for their businesses and residents.

The meeting AGREED to:

a) Note the importance of economic links between the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the East Midlands, and the importance of rail in supporting these.

b) Note the risks identified in paragraph 3.2 that this connectivity could get worse.

c) Endorse the “options for development” identified in section 4.

9.5 Vale Male then provided an overview of the work that Hertfordshire County Council has been doing to identify opportunities to develop their rail offer. Whilst the linkage with London is important, the presentation highlighted the need to promote wider rail connectivity across the whole of the county and with the rest of the region.

The meeting AGREED to welcome the presentation by Hertfordshire County Council

10. Rail Services Commission

10.1 Building on the discussion linked with the previous agenda item Martin Tugwell provided an update on the work to be commissioned by England’s Economic Heartland that will provide the foundation for developing the rail network serving the region.

10.2 In particular he emphasised the importance of recognising that delivery of East West Rail was truly a once-in-a-generation opportunity to consider the future shape of rail services across the region. In particular it offers the opportunity to recast services in a way that supports the strategic ambition to improve connectivity in the round, particularly connectivity by rail.

10.3 Martin Tugwell updated the meeting on the work of the Strategic Transport Forum and in particular the scope of the brief for the work that is to be commissioned. He noted that the work – once commissioned – would be taken forward in collaboration with partners in the region. He commented that the work presented to this meeting demonstrated the importance of this approach as it would enable the work to build work undertaken at the local level.

The meeting welcomed the update and requested regular updates on progress with the work, once commissioned.

11. Shared Value Policy

11.1 Martin Tugwell provided an update to the meeting of the work that England’s Economic Heartland had been doing, in partnership with a number of its partners, to address a concern in relation to the application of Network Rail’s Shared Value Policy.

11.2 He explained that a number of partners had identified instances of where the attempt to apply the Policy ran the risk of adding cost to development proposals: additional costs that they were unable to sustain. He explained further how EEH had facilitated a discussion with Network Rail and DfT that had helped unpick the issue and identified a way forward that would avoid the Policy inadvertently frustrating planned growth coming forward.

12. **Dates of Future Meetings**

- 10 December 2019 (Bedford)
- 3 March 2020 (Cambridge) AGM

September 2019