

**16th March 2021
10:00 – 12:30**

MINUTES

Of meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Cllr Nick Naylor	(Chair) Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Sue Clark	Central Bedfordshire 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 Jennifer Wilson-Marklew	Milton Keynes Council
Cllr Ian Stutely	Norwich City Council
Cllr Paul Castleman	Luton Borough Council
Cllr Derrick Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Angela Macpherson	Buckinghamshire Council

EWR Consortium Secretariat:

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

Also In Attendance:

Andrew Summers	Transport East
Steve Lakin	Central Bedfordshire Council
James Gagg	Oxfordshire County Council
David Rawson	Oxfordshire County Council
Michael Newsham	Ipswich Borough Council
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Pip Hoskins	Network Rail
Will Gallagher	East West Rail Company
Sara Noonan	West Suffolk Council
Mark James	East West Rail Alliance
Kerry Allen	Suffolk County Council
Tony Jones	Norwich City Council
Matthew Randall	Cambridgeshire County Council
Paul Frainer	Cambridgeshire County Council
Chris Poultney	Cambridgeshire County Council
Lewis Boudville	East Suffolk Council

**EAST WEST RAIL CONSORTIUM
STRATEGIC BOARD**



James Povey
John Shortland
John Disley
Joan Hancox
Laura Leech

Milton Keynes Council
Bedford Borough Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Council

Apologies:

Cllr Ian Bates
Cllr Yvonne Constance
Cllr Martin Wilby
Cllr Norman Brooks
Cllr Alexander Nicoll
Cllr Aidan Van de Weyer
Louise Wicks
Trevor Mason
Jordi Beascoechea
Lee Carvell
Melanie Macleod
Louise Symes
Rajesh Kungur
Jez Baldock
Stuart Morris
Hilary Chipping
Chris Winfield
Andrew Preston
Adam Wood

Cambridgeshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
South Norfolk Council
East Suffolk Council
Suffolk County Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
East West Rail Company
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council
Bedford Borough Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
Milton Keynes Council
East West Rail Alliance
South Cambridgeshire District Council
SEMLEP
Network Rail
Cambridgeshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council

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Item		Action
1	<p>Introductions and Apologies</p> <p>Martin Tugwell opened the meeting, which noted apologies. The virtual meeting protocol was discussed and observed.</p>	
2	<p>Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2021/22</p> <p>Martin Tugwell invited nominations for the Chair.</p> <p>Sue Clark announced that she would step down as Chair and nominated Nick Naylor: Paul Castleman seconded the proposal. The meeting agreed Nick Naylor as the Chair for 2021/22.</p>	

	Nick Naylor, as Chair, proposed Sue Clark for Vice-Chair; Michael Headley seconded the proposal. The meeting agreed that Sue Clark be the Vice-Chair for 2021/22.	
3	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting – including updated Action List</p> <p>Philip Smart asked for the minutes to correct the spelling of Andrew Summers’ name: this was agreed.</p> <p>Sue Clark asked for the minutes to be corrected so as to reflect that she had set out that residents in the Marston Vale might have concerns regarding the updated proposals: this correction was agreed.</p>	
4	<p>Responding to Consultations</p> <p>Martin Tugwell introduced the item noting that the Consortium had previously agreed its approach to preparing a response to the forthcoming consultation. Martin explained that an initial meeting with the officer group had taken place and that the group would be used to develop a draft response which will be brought to the Consortium for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Martin also highlighted the need for the Consortium to respond to proposals relating to the Marston Vale Line and noted that the Consortium team would again work with colleagues in the individual authorities.</p> <p>Martin explained that work to set out the longer-term ambition for EWR Main Line is on-going and suggested that when the Consortium consider its responses to the consultations they should be framed in the context of that longer-term ambition.</p> <p>The meeting noted that depending on the timing of the consultation there may be a need to reschedule the date of the next Consortium meeting (currently scheduled for 9th June). This would be considered by the Chair and Vice Chair.</p> <p>[POST MEETING NOTE: the date of the next meeting does not need to be changed]</p> <p>Michael Headley proposed that as part of its response, the Consortium may wish to consider including a section around ‘lessons learnt’ from the current construction works. The meeting agreed with this suggestion.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED to:</p> <p>a) endorse the approach as set out in this paper for preparing responses to the expected rounds of public engagement</p> <p>b) note the timing of the next Consortium meeting will be reviewed once the timings of the engagement have been confirmed</p>	

<p>5</p>	<p>Western Section: Lessons Learnt</p> <p>Laura Leech introduced the item noting that Buckinghamshire has been long term supporters of EWR, although objections were made in relation to TWAO due to concerns around the traffic and transport assessments associated with the draft order.</p> <p>Within the TWAO there are 15 conditions including 6 pre-commencement conditions that need to be addressed. All parties are committed to ensure the impact of construction is minimised, however there are several issues where there have been challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor communications had been highlighted by the Parish Councils as an issue: a particular concern being the disconnect between information held by Alliance comms teams and the technical teams.• Information was sometimes being shared with residents regarding proposed road closures before speaking to the Council which did not help. In addition, there were too many instances where the justification for the extent and duration of proposed closures was not being set out.• There were other instances where work was begun on the highway without appropriate or adequate safety provision.• Inconsiderate driving on the part of contractors/sub-contractors is also an issue. <p>Laura noted that whilst some incidents are unforeseeable – such as a broken-down vehicle blocking a road – it is essential that the processes for securing the appropriate approvals/permissions from the Council must be followed so that the Council and communities can be informed.</p> <p>From an external perspective, Laura stated that the main issue is the lack of visibility both in ensuring compliance and demonstrating zero tolerance in relation to contractor compliance.</p> <p>The importance of addressing these issues becomes all the more pertinent if the Council is to be able to facilitate the street works and road closures required: residents require access to emergency services, communities and businesses need to have access. Laura noted that the level of complaints was very significant and runs the risk of undermining support for the project locally which would be unfortunate given its importance in the longer-term.</p> <p>Angela Macpherson introduced herself as Deputy Leader of Buckinghamshire Council and as a local Member.</p> <p>Angela noted that her area is hugely impacted by HS2 and EWR where both lines converge. Angela explained that she had come</p>	
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from a meeting involving Parish Councils, Greg Smith MP (Buckingham) and the EWR Company: she was concerned that the MP was having to convene such a meeting and was extremely disappointed at the extent to which lessons learnt from the delivery of Oxford to Bicester are not being applied to the current work.

Angela continued by noting that the issues are manifold: there is a lack of grip when it comes to the operations of contractors and sub-contractors and a lack of effective and timely communications. As a local councillor, Angela explained that she would not like to see similar impacts on communities in subsequent stages of EWR.

EWR Company/EWR Alliance had made a commitment to prepare and implement an action plan which addresses the issues raised. Angela concluded by highlighting the importance of having clarity as to who is responsible/accountable for what in terms of dealing with issues – local communities and Councillors need this clarity in order to manage issues as they might arise.

Sue Clark asked Angela to clarify if her concerns related to the East West Rail Company or EWR/Network Rail Alliance. Angela explained that on the ground, it is the East West Rail Alliance that Buckinghamshire Council is dealing with as the contractor.

Joan Hancox commented that what is happening is that the Alliance is delivering a program designed to maximise efficiencies from a construction perspective: greater account needs to be given to the impact on the local communities.

Joan suggested that moving forward the specification of works for future sections needs to give greater emphasis to minimising the impact on local communities, and that the design of the works needs to be based on this principle. The issue of ensuring contractor compliance with agreed ways of working is likewise an issue for the specification.

Pip Hoskins commented that from a Network Rail perspective she wanted to reassure the meeting that mitigating the impact as much as possible is a priority for the Alliance.

Pip requested the opportunity for the EWR/NR Alliance to respond to the concerns raised at the next meeting: this was agreed by the Chair.

Susan Glossop flagged the importance of keeping local MPs sighted on concerns. Laura Leech responded by stating that Greg Smith MP is highly active in helping to address issues locally: Angela Macpherson noted that the works should be being delivered in such a way as to not require such a high level of MP intervention.

	<p>Sue Clark sought reassurance from the EWR Company that the issues were being addressed and lessons learnt being applied to future stages. Will Gallagher agreed that the issues being experienced are not acceptable and offered his apologies on behalf of the Company. He reassured the meeting that the EWR Company and EWR/NR Alliance is focused on getting these issues resolved quickly.</p> <p>He confirmed that the EWR Company has committed that by the end of March 2021 they will have an agreed action plan. Will commented that it is important to recognise that we are trying to achieve a big cultural shift in the construction industry which isn't easy and not confined to East West Rail. Looking forward to CS2 and CS3, Will noted that the Company will ensure the lessons learnt are applied. Furthermore, the Company is undertaking its own piece of work to better understand the customer experience during construction so that the delivery of subsequent stages is better.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED to:</p> <p>a) Invite EWR/NR Alliance to respond to the issues raised at the next meeting</p> <p>b) Ensure the 'lessons learnt' are included in the Consortium's response to the next round of engagement</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Rebranding the Consortium</p> <p>Adam King introduced the item stating that the East West Rail Consortium was established in 1995 to make the case for establishing a strategic rail line from East Anglia across central and southern England.</p> <p>Adam noted that with the existence of the EWR Alliance and EWR Company, there is (understandably) some confusion amongst interested parties as to who does what – all the more so with three organisations all with East West Rail in the name. Increasingly the term 'East West Rail' was associated in many minds as relating to the Oxford – Cambridge section.</p> <p>He noted that the Consortium continues to see EWR as including the improvements on the Eastern Section as being integral to the whole project. Moreover, the Consortium has consistently seen the wider, longer-term potential of the East West Mainline. Adam noted the Consortium's wider ambition is consistent with the Government's Union Connectivity Review.</p> <p>Given this context, the paper before the meeting proposed renaming the Consortium – potentially as 'The East West Main Line Partnership'. Such a change would reflect the ambition of Consortium partners and provide differentiation from the EWR Company. The addition of a strapline to the new name would act as a mission statement for the Partnership.</p>	

The rebranding of the Consortium would also offer opportunities to highlight the potential for linkages west of Oxford.

If agreed by the Consortium the publication of the 'proposition' would afford the opportunity to launch the rebranding.

Paul Castleman suggested the new name include reference to stakeholders - 'The East West Mainline Stakeholder Partnership'.

Michael Headley supported the idea to rebrand and the revised proposition. Michael emphasised the proposition needed to be specific in terms of the proposals it contains and the importance of the Consortium having the opportunity to comment on it.

Philip Smart noted that he is in favour of keeping titles and straplines as short as possible and using terminology that the public readily relate to. Philip noted that 'stakeholder' is a technical term and supported the suggestion of 'The East West Main Line Partnership'. Applying the same rule of economy of words to straplines, Philip argued that we avoid repeating the words 'east', 'west' and 'mainline'. Philip wondered whether the strapline could embrace the thoughts around economic growth and environmental sustainability as well as making it personal to the people. Philip also raised the point that this project may stretch through to South Wales so it may be best to avoid using 'England's'. Philip suggested using 'Your New Railway Enabling Sustainable Growth'. With regards to the logo, Philip suggested using something similar to the current design to ensure that it is recognisable.

Sue Clark asked for further consideration as to the implications of using the term 'Mainline': would this have implications in terms of what is understood about freight usage.

Sue stated her support for changing the name of the Consortium but argued that 'The East West Main Line Partnership' may not sufficiently differentiate between the Consortium and the Company. Sue stated that the Consortium is an organisation promoting a strategic ambition and this should be reflected in the strapline.

Martin Tugwell thanked the meeting for their thoughts and contributions. These would be taken away and used to shape a revised proposal for consideration at the next meeting.

Martin reassured the meeting that they would have time to consider the ideas discussed today around rebranding and that no decisions needed to be made today. Martin also propose that the Consortium invite the Western Gateway to share their views on the rebranding of the Consortium.

The meeting AGREED to:

a) Receive a revised proposal at its next meeting

	<p>b) Invite the Western Gateway STB and/or local authorities in the west of England to become involved in the work of the Consortium</p> <p>c) The proposed budgets for rebranding the Consortium and the preparation of the proposition</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>London Road Crossing, Bicester</p> <p>James Gagg introduced the item noting that the paper provided an update on the Options Appraisal Report and summarises the final outcomes of the work undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council and its traffic modelling consultants, funded by the Consortium.</p> <p>James reminded the meeting that the London Road Crossing is in the centre of Bicester adjacent to Bicester Station and crosses over the EWR line at a gated level crossing. The barrier downtime at the crossing will increase gradually as more services operate through the area following the introduction of services to Bletchley and Milton Keynes.</p> <p>With the introduction of services through to Cambridge it is anticipated that the crossing will effectively be down the majority of the time. The work summarised in the supporting paper looks to identify options for investment required to enable continued transport accessibility in Bicester in the context of a planned higher frequency train service on East West Rail line.</p> <p>The paper summaries the outputs of the work including the results of the modelling work, assessment of the options against the study objectives and the assessment using the DfT East Appraisal Sifting Tool. James noted that in summary the results indicate sustainable transport options, i.e. delivery of many of the measures in the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, generally perform better in terms of impact on traffic and also the East assessment against the direct highway options. James explained that within the highway options considered the wider highway improvements generally perform better than a direct highway intervention at London Road.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED:</p> <p>a) To note the outcomes of the Options Appraisal Report for London Road, Bicester as set out below</p> <p>b) That the preferred options identified should inform further development of investment options as part of a place-based and multi-modal solution for Bicester that will also help enable the longer-term potential for East West Rail services, in particular supporting the planned Development Consent Order process for Connection Stage 3 over the next year</p>	

<p>8</p>	<p>Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study</p> <p>John Disley introduced the item noting that the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study has been to the Consortium previously with the outcomes of the stage 1 work and noted that the proposition has not fundamentally changed.</p> <p>John emphasised the importance of East to West rail services through Oxford and leading on from this investment in the core rail corridor through Oxford supporting other national rail priorities including East West Rail. John noted that the papers shared with the meeting included visuals that remind members of the scale of opportunity. He explained that what is new as part of this second stage of work is that there is now more detailed information requirements on the interventions that are required and the cost of those interventions in order to deliver the proposed train service specification that was outlined in stage 1.</p> <p>John noted that stage 1 set out the ambition and stage 2 has been about what it would mean to bring that to reality. Through the stage 2 work, John explained that there are now some specific proposals for how they progress the program of work through the national rail pipeline under the Oxfordshire Connect Banner. Furthermore, John commented that all the information from stage 2 will be reported to the Oxfordshire Growth Board at the meeting on Monday 22nd March.</p> <p>Michael Headley requested a copy of the full document. John Disley agreed to get the necessary information to Michael.</p> <p>The meeting AGREED to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) welcome and endorse the output of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study b) endorse the need for rail services operating to, from and through Oxford Station to be pre-developed in a coordinated way to support the delivery of planned growth c) endorse the need to deliver enhanced rail connectivity between Oxford and Swindon and onwards to Bristol d) endorse the need for enhanced rail connectivity between Oxford and the Midlands e) support the Restoring Your Railway proposal in respect of the opening of Grove Station 	
<p>9</p>	<p>Western Section - Update</p> <p>Mark James introduced the update noting that he is conscious of Laura, Angela and Joan’s comments on the considerable impact that his program of work has had on the communities and assured the meeting that the EWR/NR Alliance was committed to addressing the concerns raised.</p>	

James noted that the supporting papers highlighted progress with the traffic diversion at Charbridge Lane in Bicester, a new bridge is now being built alongside what was the Eastern Perimeter level-crossing and the traffic diversion went in during January 2020 so works can continue here unabated.

James also showed an image of Station Road in Launton where bridge construction is progressing well ahead of program. Furthermore, James commented that the biggest change in landscape due to the project is at the Bletchley Flyover in terms of the complete removal of the whole structure over the mainline and also the removal of the structure over the main Buckingham Road in the town centre. Work in these areas is now complete and reconstruction is well underway.

James noted that the majority of the road closure activity required by the Alliance is linked with the requirements associated with the haul road access and/or the creation of passing bays to support the CTMP commitments made as part of the TWAO. In addition, the Alliance has had to complete a large number of utility protection activity works. This required a 17-week closure because 12 weeks are for the gas works being done by Southern Gas Networks.

Mark supported Will Gallagher's reference to a revised program of update communications and engagements in place which are all built around the needs of communities. With regards to this Mark noted that extensive efforts have been put into a newsletter which has a 12,000/13,000 readership. These newsletters are being hand delivered and delivered electronically. Additionally, Mark noted that the Alliance has moved to a 12-week proactive comms arrangement.

He acknowledged that the Alliance is not particularly integrated in its traffic management and TTRO applications and thanked Laura Leech and her team for the help they had provided. However, he accepted that there is a need for further improvement on the Alliance's part.

Mark assured the meeting that the Alliance has security patrols that monitor the road signage to make sure there are no issues with theft and displacement but they also conduct condition surveys so that they are aware of where effort needs to be focused and this is shared with the team at Buckinghamshire and can be shared with Oxfordshire too. Additionally, Mark confirmed that there are additional traffic marshalling staff in place associated with closures. The Alliance is also deploying traffic behaviour ambassadors who will monitor the flow of traffic, the way it behaviours etc.

The meeting noted the update

10	Future meetings Wednesday 9 th June 2021 Wednesday 15 th September 2021 Wednesday 8 th December 2021 Wednesday 9 th March 2022	
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