

EastWestMainLine

 Partnership

Championing the ambition for East West Rail



Introducing the East West Main Line Partnership



Membership of the East West Main Line Partnership's Strategic Board include:

Local authorities (full members)

Babergh District Council	Milton Keynes Council
Bedford Borough Council	Norfolk County Council
Buckinghamshire Council	North Hertfordshire District Council
Cambridgeshire County Council	Norwich City Council
Central Bedfordshire Council	Oxfordshire County Council
Cherwell District Council	South Cambridgeshire District Council
East Suffolk Council	Stevenage Borough Council
Hertfordshire County Council	Suffolk County Council
Ipswich Borough Council	West Suffolk Council
Luton Borough Council	West Northamptonshire Council
Mid Suffolk District Council	

Observers

Sub-national transport bodies

England's Economic Heartland
Transport East
Western Gateway

Local enterprise partnerships

Buckinghamshire LEP
Hertfordshire LEP
New Anglia LEP
South East Midlands LEP

Government and its agencies

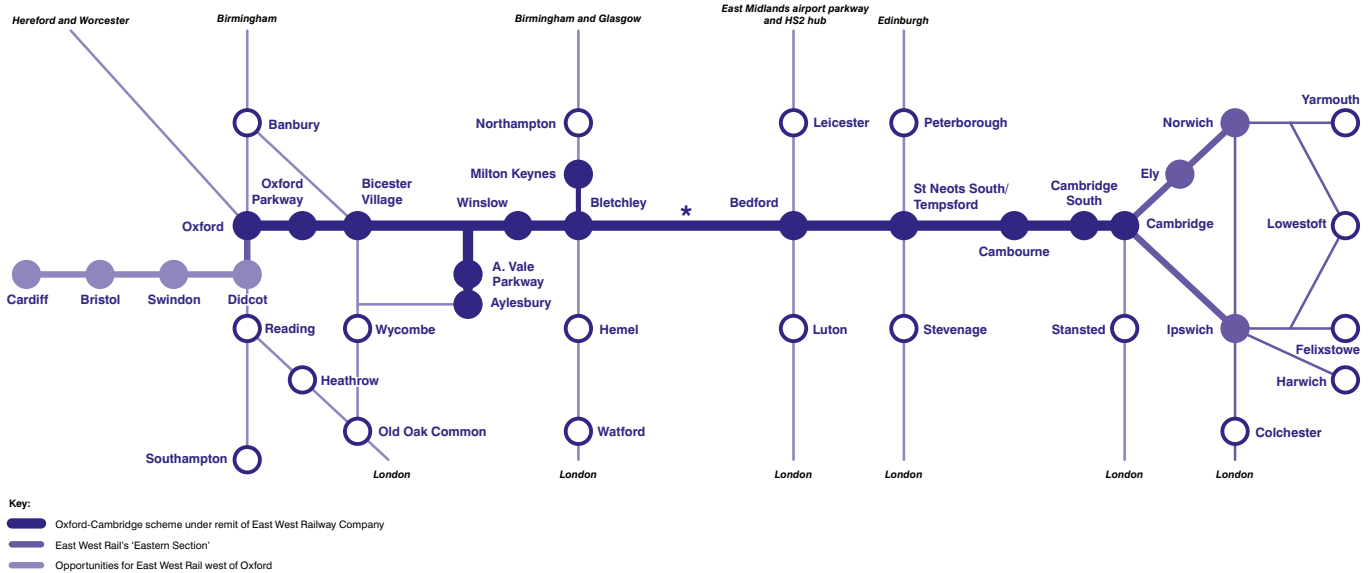
Department for Transport
East West Railway Company
East West Rail Alliance
Network Rail





Introduction

By expanding the benefits of East West Rail, the East West Main Line can have a transformational impact on the UK economy and environment.



The potential East West Main Line.

Delivery of a strategic railway connecting East Anglia, with central, southern and western England has been a strategic priority for the local authorities comprising the East West Rail Consortium for over 25 years.

The technical work commissioned by the Consortium, including feasibility studies and business cases, has played a fundamental role in establishing the initial basis for the scheme, on which subsequent work has been built.

Throughout the development and delivery of the project, the Consortium has been pivotal in ensuring a close and strong working relationship between local authorities, the Department for Transport and Network Rail. The effectiveness of the working relationship is reflected in the level of support for East West Rail across the wider community.

Delivery of East West Rail is now underway and should be supported by government to continue at pace going forward. Oxford and Bicester were connected in 2015, and construction work is now underway on the Bicester to Bletchley/Milton Keynes section, due to open by 2025. Under the leadership of the East West Railway Company, Bletchley to Cambridge via Bedford is scheduled for completion by 2030, and through government support we can ensure that this timeline remains. We continue to reinforce the need for investment and delivery, at pace, of the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link which was included in the scope of the original ‘western section’.

The East West Railway Company’s scheme will enable sustainable economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, a national economic priority for government.

However, there is a need to go further in our strategic ambition for East West Rail which goes beyond the scheme currently being delivered. Indeed, delivery of the current East West Rail proposal should be just the beginning of the transformation in connectivity.



The longer-term potential of East West Rail to support planned growth and encourage further shift in both passenger and freight movements on to the rail network will require additional investment in its capacity and capability. Now is the time to champion the wider strategic ambition for East West Rail.

That's why we are promoting the concept of an East West Main Line to truly realise the transformational potential of East West Rail. And it is why the East West Rail Consortium has now become the **East West Main Line Partnership**.

The core focus for the East West Main Line is to achieve a step-change in east-west connectivity, linking Ipswich and Norwich with Cambridge, Bedford, Milton Keynes, Oxford and beyond that towards Swindon and onwards to Bristol and South Wales. However, the benefit of the East West Main Line lies not just in the improved connectivity between those areas it directly serves, but also in the opportunity created where the route crosses the radial main lines centred on London. Removing the need for rail users to travel through London will additionally provide some relief to rail services on the radial main lines to/from the capital.

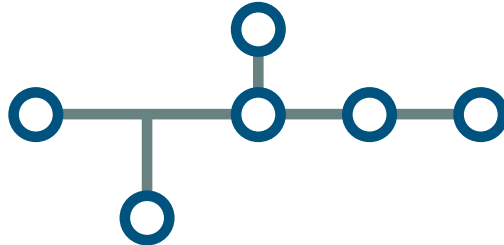
The creation of the East West Main Line will act as a catalyst for change. It is therefore important that the opportunities created by having improved access to rail services is used to shape future economic and housing growth proposals that are developed and brought through the planning system. It will also be essential that the investment in strategic connectivity is complemented by investment in improved local connectivity as part of a co-ordinated package of investment.





Our six key strategic areas of interest

The East West Main Line Partnership's approach to the East West Main Line will cover six key strategic areas of interest. Realising these opportunities will require a strongly collaborative approach, working with partners across national and local government and the private sector.



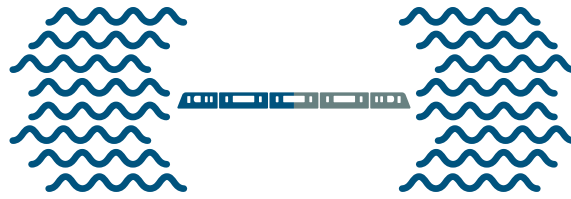
1: DELIVERY OF OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY

The Partnership will continue to work with government and the East West Railway Company to support delivery of Oxford-Cambridge at the earliest opportunity.

The government has previously set out its commitment to complete the restoration of the Oxford to Cambridge rail link (including the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link) by 2030, under the remit of the East West Railway Company. We consider it both possible and essential to the ambitions of the region that Bletchley-Bedford services are operational prior to the completion of the Bedford to Cambridge section.

Delivery of Oxford-Cambridge is vital, given the key role that East West Rail has in enabling the potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc to be realised, in a way that is consistent with the requirement to achieve net zero carbon.





2: COAST-TO-COAST CONNECTIVITY

For East West Rail to realise its full potential, direct services must extend beyond Oxford-Cambridge. Its potential should truly be ‘coast to coast’.

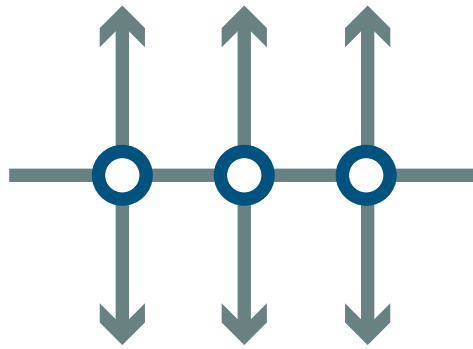
This means:

East of Cambridge: Delivering the Eastern Section between Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich is a fundamental part of the East West Main Line – indeed it was Ipswich Borough Council which originally founded the East West Rail Consortium in 1995. Our preliminary business case work on the Eastern Section so far has found there is a strong strategic and economic case for investment for direct services from Ipswich and Norwich to Oxford via Cambridge.

West of Oxford: There is potential for direct east-west services to extend as far as Cardiff, via Didcot, Swindon and Bristol. This would create a genuinely strategic route from west coast to east coast. Key to this is unlocking capacity restraints at Oxford and Didcot. To further explore the potential of services to the west of Oxford, the Partnership has recently been joined by the Western Gateway sub-national transport body, which includes Wiltshire and Bristol.

A coast-to-coast East West Main Line can support a future strategic pan-UK transport network, as outlined in the Union Connectivity Review interim report.





3. NORTH-SOUTH CONNECTIVITY

It is important to recognise that East West Rail is not just about improving east-west connectivity: it is integral to improving connectivity across the country.

The intersection of East West Rail with the historic main lines centred on London provides a unique opportunity to provide new travel opportunities that are not only more relevant to residents and businesses across the region, but which avoid the inconvenience of having to travel into/out of London.

East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge intersects radial lines including the West Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line and East Coast Main Line. East West services from Ipswich to Cardiff would further increase linkages with other radial lines.

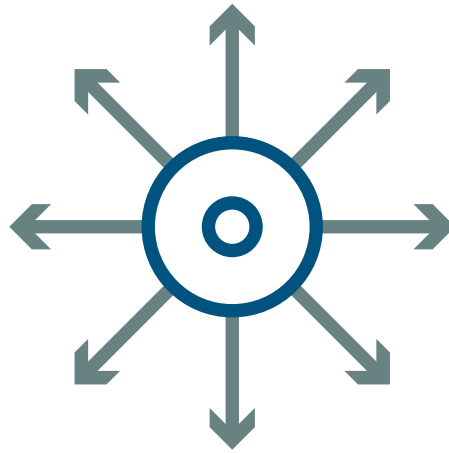
The East West Main Line therefore has the potential to significantly improve north-south connectivity, putting passengers within a single interchange of all corners of mainland Britain. It could significantly reduce the need for people to travel into London for a connecting service, resulting in time savings and economic benefits, as well as releasing capacity in the capital.

The link from Aylesbury to Milton Keynes is an integral element of the East West Main Line. It provides a key connection that will support future growth, improving connectivity in a way that reduces demand on the road network. It links the economic cluster centred on Milton Keynes with the planned growth centred on Aylesbury.

The capacity released by HS2 could unlock new direct journeys on the West Coast and Midland Main Lines in conjunction with East West Rail, notably from Northampton to Old Oak Common via Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Wycombe. There is also a case for direct services to Southampton, via Oxford, as well as from Nottingham and the East Midlands cities to Oxford and beyond.

The East West Main Line also has the potential to improve surface access to airports including Heathrow, Birmingham, Luton, East Midlands, Norwich and Stansted.

However, realising these benefits will require significant strategic planning around capacity allocation, timetabling and investment in new infrastructure. Given the long lead-in time for rail, this planning must begin now.

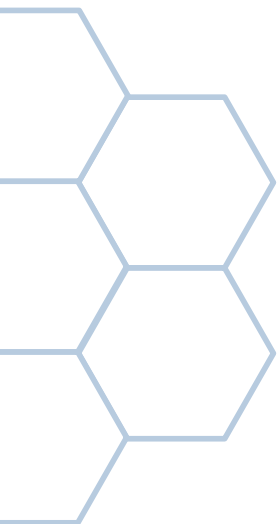


4. INTERCHANGE AND STRATEGIC TRANSPORT HUBS

The East West Main Line's potential to connect to services on other main lines is significant. But for this to be realised, our strategic transport hubs on the main line should ensure seamless interchange between rail services for all users.

Frictionless interchange not only applies not to onward rail journeys, but with other modes, including for the 'first mile, last mile' of journeys.

Several of our urban centres are currently considering or developing transformational mass rapid transit schemes. East West Rail must offer seamless interchange with these schemes.





5. A 21ST CENTURY MAIN LINE

The East West Main Line should reflect the 21st century communities it serves: a hub for science and technology innovation, with expertise in clean energy, and blessed with a unique natural, built and historic environment which must be preserved and enhanced.

The main line must be an exemplar for its high-quality standards of design, construction and operation, by incorporating the following principles:

Electrified from the start

The imperative to decarbonise our transport system is front and centre of transport policy at national, regional and local level. Electrification of the East West Main Line offers the only realistic traction technology for high-speed, longer-distance passenger services and freight services that will operate on it.

With the West Anglian Main Line, East Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line and West Coast Main Line all electrified, the case for electrification is heightened from an operational perspective.

Experience shows that the cost of retrofitting infrastructure for electrification once a rail link is operational will be significantly higher than if the investment is made at the same time as the initial construction works.

In developing detailed proposals to deliver East West Rail as an electrified route the importance of high quality and environmentally sensitive design must be applied as a key principle underpinning all work.

Communities at its heart

Our local communities – both urban and rural – located near the East West Main Line must benefit from it. This means improving sustainable local connectivity to and from stations to nearby communities, ensuring as many people as possible can access the opportunities it unlocks. The East West Main Line is also a catalyst for regeneration opportunities for the areas around stations while supporting planned growth, including in Oxford, Bletchley, Aylesbury and Bedford. It is important that other opportunities for the main line to both benefit local communities and minimise any negative impacts are realised. This includes through improving digital connectivity for people living near the line, and sensitive design, construction and operation (see below).



Digitally enabled

The transformational benefit of the East West Main Line to the region, its residents and businesses, will be enhanced further by ensuring it is delivered as a digitally enabled corridor, one that provides improved digital connectivity for both passengers and communities close to the rail corridor.

The East West Main Line Partnership and England's Economic Heartland have worked closely with the East West Railway Company and government departments to enable the section between Bicester and Bletchley to be delivered as a digitally enabled infrastructure corridor, providing access to high quality broadband and 5G for nearby rural communities.

Future stages of the East West Main Line should be specified as digitally enabled infrastructure from the start, with the cost of that provision included within the overall cost of the scheme. The cost of providing enhanced digital connectivity as a percentage of the overall scheme cost is marginal. However, unless it is included within the specification of the works from the outset it can be difficult to secure the provision.

Contributing to net environmental benefit

The scale of the East West Main Line is significant, not just as a transformational project for the region, but in terms of the potential impact it has on the natural and built environment. It is essential that the design of proposed works makes a positive contribution towards the requirement to achieve net environmental benefit.

In addition, the proposed works need to deliver a positive impact overall on biodiversity. The design of individual elements must respect and enhance the local environment. Particular attention must be paid to ensuring the setting and amenity of local communities is respected.

Considerately constructed

Experience of the Bicester-Bletchley section shows that in some instances the impact of the works has been exacerbated by decisions taken at the design stage which ultimately served to increase the impact on the adjacent local highway network during construction.

It has also highlighted the need for a higher level of mitigation measures on the local highway network, and the need for a higher level of oversight and management of construction activity.

The Partnership will continue to work closely with its partners to ensure the impact of construction is mitigated as far as possible for communities, building on experience gained to date.





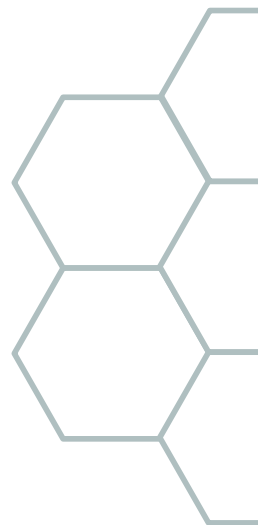
6. FREIGHT

The freight and logistics sector is one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions. Greater use of rail for freight and logistics provides additional resilience for the business community, while also acting on the need to achieve net zero.

Whilst not part of East West Rail, removing the bottlenecks on the Felixstowe to Midlands corridor remains an immediate strategic priority for three sub-national transport bodies (England's Economic Heartland, Transport East and Midlands Connect).

However, the design and operation of the East West Main Line should take into account and contribute to the delivery of the requirements of the national rail freight strategy. In due course Great British Railways will have a statutory duty to consider the needs of rail freight and to take those needs into account in planning the future of the rail network.

It is therefore important that the East West Main Line is designed and delivered with the capability of supporting rail freight services without the need for additional works. In this regard due consideration must be given to ensuring that the impact on local communities of rail freight movements is minimised.



East West Main Line Partnership
Care of Buckinghamshire Council
Walton Street
Aylesbury
Bucks
HP20 1UA

www.eastwestrail.org.uk

EastWestMainLine
 **Partnership**
Championing the ambition for East West Rail