

Beth West takes top job at East West Railway Company

March 31, 2022



Beth West is now CEO of East West Railway Company (EWR Co).

She has been appointed to take the helm from Simon Blanchflower, who retired on 31 March.

EWR Co noted a range of strengths that Beth is bringing to the role, including a successful track record in innovative construction in transport and infrastructure, experience of working together with communities and strategic partners, and a passionate commitment to using infrastructure to deliver real improvements for local people and businesses.

The new East West Rail line, currently under construction, promises new connections for communities between Oxford and Cambridge including Bedford, Milton Keynes, Bletchley and Bicester. The ambition is for the line to provide reliable public transport in the area – the lack of which, EWR Co says, is holding people back from enjoying their region, restricts access to good jobs and has created bubbles of inaccessible, expensive housing.

Beth joins after a period of consulting, having previously been the Regional South managing director at

Balfour Beatty where she had responsibility for a wide array of civil engineering and building projects. Beth has a rich knowledge of the transport sector, strong commercial acumen, and a long track record in driving construction innovation. Her previous positions include being commercial director for HS2, head of development for Landsec, and spending nine years in several roles at Transport for London.

Beth's drive for innovation has resulted in significant transformations in the industry. At Landsec, she worked on The Forge, constructed using a platform-led approach to design and construction, resulting in large reductions in material usage and waste. Another of her projects – Timber Square – was designed from the outset to simultaneously address the climate emergency and have a positive impact on people's quality of life, through the choice of materials and approach to construction.

Beth is a fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers; the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply; and is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

Neil Sachdev, chair of EWR Co, said: "On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Simon for his dedication to EWR and his lifetime of service to the rail industry. As EWR Co's first CEO, Simon has established strong foundations that will enable us to address the lack of east – west connections in the area and look to the future with confidence."

"I am delighted that someone of Beth's calibre will be taking the helm at EWR. Beth is an accomplished leader, combining strong industry experience with an ability to inspire and drive positive change. EWR Co has always set out to do things differently, moving away from the traditional rail model and Beth is a natural fit to continue this new approach. I am looking forward to working with her and I am confident she will bring fresh insight to the role of CEO."

Wendy Morton, rail minister, said: "I'd like to thank Simon for his commitment to East West Rail, driving forward the project and setting the groundwork to bring together communities across the region."

"Beth joins the team with a wealth of experience, enthusiasm and fresh ideas and I look forward to working with her on this vital project."

Beth West, said: "I am honoured to have the opportunity to lead EWR Co. The organisation has ambitious plans to make a significant and positive difference to the lives of communities and businesses along the route. Delivering a new, sustainable connection between Oxford and Cambridge will be good for businesses, create more jobs for local people, help attract investment to the area and increase prosperity. I intend to see EWR at the forefront of innovation, exploring new and better ways to plan, build and run rail in the UK. I am really looking forward to working with local communities, as well as the EWR Co team and our partners, and a wealth of other stakeholders to deliver East West Rail."