

Contract Award: East West Railway Company appoints Arcadis as Commercial Partner

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The creation of a new railway connection directly linking Oxford and Cambridge has moved a step closer with the appointment of Arcadis as Commercial Partner to the East West Rail Company (EWR Co. Ltd), the body established by UK Government to plan and oversee delivery.

As Commercial Partner, Arcadis will be responsible for driving long-term value. The role will focus on developing the business case and submitting the application for a Development Consent Order to build the next stage of the rail link. This will include commercial management and cost planning, as well as procuring and administering contracts, with an emphasis on working with local suppliers where possible. Arcadis' supply chain partners are RLB and KPMG.

East West Rail is a complex project featuring different sections of railway connecting multiple communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. Known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, area is home to leading universities, life sciences companies and a manufacturing cluster known for high-performance technology and motorsport engineering.

Yet despite this, there are still 14 areas across Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford that number amongst

the top 10% most deprived in England, with income deprivation being paramount. One of the biggest challenges is that the area has historically been poorly served by rail connections, with the vast majority of journeys having to be made by road. The East West Railway intends to offer an affordable and sustainable public transport alternative, linking communities to job opportunities and access to new homes across the region. It would also open-up a freight route between East and South coast ports, creating further opportunities for economic growth.

Matt Kitching, Partner and Account Lead at Arcadis, said: “By connecting science parks, universities and industry, the East West Railway will support access to new opportunities that make the area more commutable, open up new job opportunities for local residents and help the economy to grow.

“As we work with the East West Rail Company to help improve journeys across the region, our role will focus on defining and improving the value that a new direct rail connection can bring. From faster journey times to lower transport costs and the easing of pressures on local roads, the new rail connection will be key to creating positive, long term industry and social legacies.”

The contract also includes a responsibility to generate positive social impacts for local communities between Oxford and Cambridge and the wider economy. This will include supporting job creation, upskilling and training and increasing awareness of career opportunities, particularly for young people.

The appointment will see Arcadis harness its existing apprenticeship programme – supported by its Cambridge office – to provide up to eight apprenticeship starts over the course of the commission (4-6 years). These opportunities will target under-represented and disadvantaged groups, with each early career apprentice expected to add a further boost to the local economy.

Other commitments include contributing 120 staff volunteer days to support local projects and charity initiatives such as the Trussell Trust, which helps to combat food poverty with a network of food banks in communities along the route. Arcadis will also visit schools across Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford, to support science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activity, provide careers and CV advice, and contribute to a reduction in the skills, diversity and gender gaps facing the construction industry.

James Norman, Corporate Services Director at East West Railway Company said: “Arcadis has an excellent track record in commercial services and will work alongside various teams at EWR Co, helping to develop the business case, validating tender prices, and managing expenditure to make sure the East West Rail project continues to provide the best value for money for taxpayers.

“At a local level, this partnership will help bring new opportunities along the route, including apprenticeships, school STEM sessions, and support for disadvantaged communities.

“I’m delighted to have them on board.”

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