

East West Rail thanks communities for participation as consultation closes

June 10, 2021



Right up until midnight yesterday, 9 June, people who live, work and travel in the areas between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge were sending in their responses to the 10-week consultation that covered proposals affecting the whole East West Rail route.

Launched on 31 March by East West Railway Company (EWR Co), the consultation saw thousands of people who live along the proposed East West Rail route take part in this once-in-a-generation opportunity that will help to shape the further development of their new rail link.

Simon Blanchflower CBE, Chief Executive at the East West Railway Company said: “The participation in this consultation has been extraordinary, and we’re very grateful to everyone who has taken the time to visit our virtual consultation rooms, attend a webinar or live chat event, and share their thoughts and views by sending a formal response.

“As we begin the work of analysing the feedback which will help us to further develop our plans for the new rail link, our team will continue the conversation with residents, their representatives, business groups and other stakeholders. It may be the end of this consultation but there will be further opportunities for

people to have their views heard, and help us make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to provide new, reliable, sustainable transport for communities from Oxford to Cambridge.”

Later this year, a report will be published providing information on all the issues raised in this consultation. EWR Co will carefully consider all the feedback as it continues to develop plans for the railway and will then make its recommendations to the Government. A statutory consultation is expected next year when communities will be asked to give their comments on detailed proposals.

East West Rail consultation in numbers:

- 270,000 Consultation summaries posted to residents and businesses along the East West Rail route
- 75,000 documents downloaded from the East West Rail website
- 51,000 visitors to www.eastwestrail.co.uk and 199,000 page views
- 4,800 visits to our virtual consultation rooms
- 18 online public webinars and 16 public live chat events
- 64 online meetings with local MPs, local authorities, councillors and parishes
- 32 online meetings with interested organisations including environmental, accessibility, transport industry, and business groups

Consultation responses were coming in thick and fast through a variety of online and analogue channels up until the deadline and are still being counted.

Key areas covered by the consultation include:

- How it could improve Oxford Station and its supporting infrastructure - including Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village stations
- Options for avoiding lengthy periods of delays at the London Road level crossing in Bicester
- How to ensure that communities around Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line get the most from East West Rail
- Options for new stations at Bedford, to support regeneration in the town centre, as well as at Bedford St Johns and their supporting infrastructure
- Five route alignment options for the section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge, with an emerging preference for alignments via Cambourne North
- Opportunities to improve the experience for customers such as better facilities both at stations and onboard the train

This is East West Rail’s second public consultation, looking at aspects of the design, construction and operation of the railway. The first consultation, in 2019, received thousands of responses to proposed route options for the Bedford to Cambridge section of the railway line.

About the East West Rail project

East West Rail will create a new direct connection between Oxford and Cambridge. Serving communities across the area, it will bring faster journey times and lower transport costs as well as easing pressure on

local roads.

East West Rail is being delivered in three Connection Stages:

- Connection Stage One: Oxford to Bletchley and Milton Keynes
- Connection Stage Two: Oxford to Bedford
- Connection Stage Three: Oxford to Cambridge

Network Rail was responsible for developing the first part of the East West Rail, connecting Oxford with Bicester, and is a partner in a construction alliance to deliver Connection Stage 1 of the project, where East West Railway Company (EWR Co) is acting as the Department for Transport's sponsor.

EWR Co is now developing the route to enable services to run to Cambridge via Bedford and will be seeking statutory powers under the Planning Act 2008, following a period of extensive consultation.

Photo credit: East West Rail