

East West Railway Company celebrates 3rd birthday

September 30, 2021



The East West Railway Company (EWR Co) is celebrating its third anniversary after the Company started work in September 2018 to deliver a new railway that aims to connect communities between Oxford, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

EWR Co was set an ambitious challenge by the then Secretary of State for Transport to accelerate the delivery of East West Rail (EWR) with customers and communities at its core. The new railway aims to provide safer, cheaper and quicker transport that is better for the customer; delivered quicker than before; greener for the environment; and better value for the taxpayer.

The last three years has seen the EWR Project progress at pace. In that time, EWR Co has:

- Held **two** non-statutory public consultations with communities and stakeholders on emerging proposals for EWR, generating around **16,800** combined responses. The first was held in 2019 and consulted on five route options for the section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge. The second was held in 2021 and covered customer experience and railway operations and infrastructure proposals between Oxford and Cambridge. A statutory consultation is planned for 2022.

- Announced a **preferred route option** in January 2020 for the section of East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge. Feedback from communities and stakeholders during the 2019 consultation was central to the decision.

- Received a **£760m Government investment** for the section of East West Rail between Oxford and Bletchley/Milton Keynes which has enabled construction on that part of the route to begin.

- Brought together different sections of the project in three 'connection stages' with the aim of getting the best results for all communities right the way along the Oxford to Cambridge route.

- Grown from a small start-up with a handful of staff to a fully-fledged business with **175 employees** that is now based on the East West Rail route at offices in Milton Keynes

Carried out **2,300** environmental survey visits along the route, including ecology, biodiversity, traffic and public rights of way surveys

- Responded to **over 12,000** comments and questions from local residents, communities and other stakeholders.

Simon Blanchflower, CBE, Chief Executive of East West Railway Company said:

"When EWR Co was created in 2018 we were set specific challenges by the then Secretary of State for Transport and I am proud of the progress we've made in such a short space of time. These achievements would not have been possible without the participation of local communities and stakeholders in the process; we are grateful to the thousands of people who have taken the time to share their views on our emerging recommendations and proposals. This feedback is shaping the future of East West Rail and we look forward to sharing more detailed proposals in a statutory public consultation next year."

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is home to leading universities, life sciences companies and a manufacturing cluster known for high-performance technology and motorsport engineering, but the area has historically had limited rail connections, with the vast majority of journeys having to be made by road. East West Rail intends to offer an affordable and sustainable public transport alternative, linking communities to job opportunities and access to new homes across the region.

Responses to the 2021 non-statutory consultation, alongside ongoing technical, financial and environmental studies, are currently being analysed and will be used to help shape the next stages of design. EWR Co will publish a report summarising the consultation feedback as well as information on how the feedback has been used to inform plans for the railway. People will then have further opportunities to comment on the proposals at the statutory consultation which is planned for 2022 following which EWR Co expects to submit a formal application for a Development Consent Order to the Secretary of State for permission to construct and operate the railway.

To stay connected with news and updates on the next stages of East West Rail, sign up to the newsletter or visit eastwestrail.co.uk.