

East West Railway Company urges residents to get involved through new online hub

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East West Railway Company (EWR Co), the company responsible for delivering the new East West Rail connection between Oxford and Cambridge, has launched a new **Community Hub** on their website, encouraging local residents to get involved in how their new railway is developed.

The Community Hub provides a new platform where people can ask questions, take part in surveys and discussions, and access information relating to their local area. There are clear labels to inform Community Hub users how their information and feedback will be used. The Community Hub will host a rolling programme of activity, inspiring local communities to get involved with all aspects of developing sustainable transport in their region. It launches this week with four fantastic features, encouraging people to:

- Improve journeys for everyone by telling the EWR Co Customer Experience team their best and worst travel experiences so EWR Co can get it right from the start
- Feed into a definitive history of the Varsity Line by sharing memories about the line which once ran from Oxford to Cambridge
- Learn about Preferred Route Option between Bedford and Cambridge, by exploring the dedicated document library
- Help communities get better access to information by filling out a quick survey on what communications methods they like to use – and what doesn't work!

In its drive to put community right at the heart of the new East West Rail connection, East West Railway Company has welcomed Claire Keith-Anderson to the team, filling a new role as Community Engagement Manager. Claire will develop the new online hub and seek to connect in innovative ways with local people, particularly communities who may not have traditionally got involved with the development of the new railway so far.

She said: “We’re looking forward to welcoming residents all the way from Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, Cambridge and the communities in between, to this new online space; and we want everyone to play a part in bringing forward a new sustainable railway connection that will help to secure the future prosperity of the whole area.

“Over the past few months, due to COVID, we haven’t been able to be out and about, talking face-to-face with local people. I know this has been disappointing for our team, so we’ve invested our time and energy thinking about ways to reach out and listen to communities across the area whatever else is going on in the world. The Hub is a really innovative and exciting place for people to share information and ideas.”

The Community Hub has been set up in advance of public consultations planned for early 2021, giving communities a one-stop-shop on the East West Rail project. As well as the new online platform – communityhub.eastwestrail.co.uk – local residents can also contact East West Railway Company at any time:

Online: www.eastwestrail.co.uk

By email: contact@eastwestrail.co.uk

By phone: 0330 1340067

By post: FREEPOST East West Rail

About the East West Rail project

East West Rail is a proposed new rail link under development which would connect communities between Oxford, Cambridge, Bedford and Milton Keynes, creating new opportunities for people right across the area by;

- Making it cheaper and quicker to get around the area – connecting people to their jobs, homes and families, as well as businesses to their employees, suppliers and customers
- Supporting new housing to make it more affordable and help people's money go further – so people could afford to live and work in the area, and businesses can afford to create more jobs and increase productivity.
- As well as improving quality of life for people locally, it would help businesses to become more competitive and productive so they can take advantage of the world-class opportunities the area offers by;
- Making places more appealing for people wanting to start and grow businesses – attracting and retaining the best talent in the region, while encouraging new investment to support the economy.
- Spreading prosperity across the UK – creating growth for towns and cities outside of London. The National Infrastructure Commission estimated that creating these transport links and supporting the area between Oxford and Cambridge was worth nearly £80bn extra each year for the British economy.

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

EWR Co is now developing further sections of the route between Bletchley and 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

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