

# Lift off for key HS2 and East West Rail bridge

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A new bridge that will carry direct rail services between Oxford and Cambridge has been lifted into position over the route of **HS2**, the high speed rail line under construction between London, Birmingham and the North.

Engineers working for HS2 used an enormous 600 tonne crane to lift the new bridge into position north of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

The bridge deck – which weighs the same as 25 double decker buses – will carry East West Rail services linking Oxford, Bicester, Bedford and Cambridge, largely along a route that was closed in the 1960s.

HS2 is designed to help to improve north-south rail services, boost the economy and provide zero carbon rail journeys. Construction is well under way, with more than 29,000 jobs supported by the project.

Earthworks and bridges on this short section, where the two projects cross, is being built by HS2 contractors to improve efficiency and reduce the overall disruption to local residents.

Welcoming the milestone, Beth West, EWR co CEO said: “Local communities are now one step closer to enjoying the benefits of a new faster, more sustainable and affordable way to travel between all the

communities from Oxford to Cambridge – and on across the country. East West Rail will connect thousands of people to jobs, families and friends with a reliable and safe service. The bridge installation over the Calvert cutting is a really important milestone in bringing EWR to life.

“The government recently recommitted to East West Rail and construction of the stretch of railway between Bicester and Bletchley is being delivered as planned – both on time and on budget with passenger services between Oxford and Bletchley set to be operational from 2025.”

Weighing in at over 315 tonnes, the bridge near Calvert in Buckinghamshire, was assembled on site and lifted into position by an expert team led by HS2’s main works contractor EKFB – a group made up of Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and Bam Nuttall.

Made of weathering steel, the 35m long bridge is designed to naturally age over time to a dark brown colour to help match the tone of the surrounding countryside. It was lifted into position over a two-hour period with a 600-tonne crawler crane.

HS2 Ltd’s Senior Project Manager Paul Marshall said: “HS2 will transform journeys between London, Birmingham and the major cities of the north but it’s vital that we also maintain and enable links for communities on either side of the line. That’s why we have been working closely with East West Rail to get this crucial bridge into position and I’d like to thank everyone involved in getting us to this important moment for both our projects.”

The bridge will cross one of the longest cuttings on the HS2 project. Work started on the 2.1 mile (3.4km) Calvert cutting earlier this year which will take the line south past the Buckinghamshire villages of Calvert Green and Steeple Claydon, roughly following the route of the disused Great Central Railway, which also closed in the 1960s.

Around 685,000 cubic metres of material will be excavated to create the Calvert cutting which will be up to 9.7m deep and wide enough to allow extra local railway lines to be added alongside the HS2 main line at a later date.

Around 99 per cent of the material EKFB are excavating will be being kept within the HS2 site and moved using a dedicated network of haul roads to avoid extra traffic on public roads. It will then be resided for embankments, noise barriers and landscaping. Over the last 20 months, EKFB has shifted more than 15 million cubic metres of material across the 80km between the Chilterns and South Warwickshire.

Alongside the bridge, HS2 is also delivering 650,000 cubic metres of earthworks, two smaller road bridges and a footbridge for East West Rail in the Calvert area. The first section of earthworks was handed over to East West Rail a few weeks ago.

EKFB Project Director, Dave Newcombe, said: “The Calvert area is home to an important interface between two new railway networks which will see HS2 running underneath the East West Rail line. The build of this intersection, carried out by EKFB, was clearly thought out with our local communities at the forefront of our plans.

“To reduce disruption for residents, achieve maximum delivery efficiency and reduce costs, EKFB carried out the earthworks and the build of the new bridge for East West Rail. Now, we’re pleased to be able to lift the structural steel platform onto the bridge – a great milestone for our construction programme.”

*Photo credit: HS2 Ltd*