

Simon Blanchflower to retire as EWR enters next phase of development

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Simon Blanchflower has announced that he will retire from his post as CEO of East West Railway Company (EWR Co) in March 2022, having led significant growth in the organisation, and secured nearly a billion pounds of funding for the programme.

Simon joined East West Rail in 2018, having previously overseen the completion of Thameslink as Programme Director. Under Simon's leadership, EWR Co has increased in size more than five-fold, established a new base in Milton Keynes, and won awards for its ground-breaking use of technology to protect the local environment.

During Simon's tenure, the first phase of East West Rail progressed into construction, having secured £760m of funding at the last Spending Review, and EWR also featured prominently in the National Infrastructure Strategy announced by the Government last Autumn. Most recently, the company held a public consultation on the route choices between Bedford and Cambridge, and has awarded key Development Phase Partner contracts.

The company is due to announce the Preferred Route Alignment for the Bedford to Cambridge section by

early 2022.

Simon Blanchflower CBE said: “It has been an amazing few years at East West Rail. When I joined, the whole team could almost fit in one meeting room. Since then, the programme has created more than 1000 jobs, and funding for the first phase is secure. By March next year, we will have banked our first year of construction, and have chosen the alignment to complete the route from Oxford to Cambridge.

“It has been a privilege to serve as the first CEO of East West Rail. Now that the programme is moving into its next stage of development, it is the best time for me to make a smooth handover to a successor who will see that through to conclusion. I am very proud of the team I’ve built at EWR, I am hugely grateful for their hard work, and I know they will achieve great things in the future.”

Neil Sachdev, Chair of EWR Co, said, “Simon brought a wealth of know-how, past experience and most of all his values to enable East West Rail to be in a great place and ready to move to the next stage. We are grateful for his experience and dedication in getting us to where we are now, so we can look to the future with confidence.

“Simon can take immense pride not only in what he has achieved at EWR, but also in his contribution to the rail industry over a lifetime of service. Simon’s values and industry knowledge have allowed EWR to accelerate its way to where it is now. Though he is retiring, I am sure the industry will continue to benefit from his experience and insight.”

The recruitment programme for Simon’s successor will begin later in the year.

Photo credit: East West Rail