



The East West Rail

2023 Route Update Announcement

East West Rail (EWR) is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to connect people and businesses in the communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. The railway would open up new journeys, cut travel times, ease congestion on local roads and bring more jobs within reach of people living locally.

The corridor, which runs from Oxford through Milton Keynes and Bedford to Cambridge, is also an economic artery that makes the UK a global leader in life sciences, technology and innovation, with the potential to create jobs, drive growth and attract investment for the entire country. The region has huge potential but is currently constrained by poor transport connectivity – restricting people’s opportunities and holding back progress. EWR would be key in addressing this constraint, unlocking the area’s potential, and enabling sustainable growth.

What is the purpose of this Route Update Announcement?

Since the non-statutory public consultation on East West Rail in 2021, we’ve carefully reviewed your feedback and used it, alongside a strategic review of the Project www.eastwestrail.co.uk/economicandtechnicalreport to guide our developing plans to design a railway that meets the needs of communities between Oxford and Cambridge.

Following that work, we can now share a number of updates about EWR with you in our Route Update Report, which has been published alongside an announcement by the Government about the Project made on 26th May 2023.

EWR Route Update Report – May 2023

The Route Update Report describes how the proposals for EWR have developed since our second non-statutory public consultation in 2021, and what our preferred plans for certain sections of the railway are.

It provides updates on three crucial elements:

Route Preferences

Section-specific updates on plans for the railway infrastructure and how they have developed since the public consultation on alignment options in 2021. This includes the preferred route alignment between Bedford and Cambridge and the reasons why this has been chosen.

Route-wide matters

Issues that have impact across the whole of EWR such as how trains are powered, how the Project will perform environmentally and some of the ongoing considerations for freight services, embankments and viaducts. It also covers the customer service and operational issues that we consulted on in 2021.

What happens next

The next stages of the Project, as we continue to develop our plans. This includes what further decisions are needed before we can finalise our detailed proposals and submit an application for development consent to the Secretary of State.

What other information is being published?

Alongside the Route Update Report, we're publishing several other related documents, including:

- The 2021 Consultation Feedback Report, which provides an overview of our response to the feedback raised during the 2021 public consultation: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/consultationfeedbackreport
- The EWR Economic and Technical Report, providing information on the technical analysis carried out since the 2021 consultation: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/economicandtechnicalreport
- 2021 Need to Sell Consultation Feedback Report, which provides an overview of our response to the consultation on the draft Need to Sell Scheme: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/needtosell
- The guide to the Need to Sell Property Scheme, which, taking into consideration the feedback received during the 2021 consultation, sets out our scheme to support those property owners potentially impacted by EWR: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/needtosellguide
- A range of factsheets covering key elements of the Route Update Announcement: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/routeupdate
- Updated maps for the whole route and specific areas of the route: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/routeupdate

How has the Project developed since the public consultation in 2021?

In 2021 the East West Railway Company (EWR Co) consulted with the public on potential route alignment options for the proposed railway line between Bedford and Cambridge. We also wanted to understand people's views on the entire route between Oxford and Cambridge.

The quality and volume of feedback was excellent. **We received more than 9,000 responses and, within these, over 160,000 individual matters were raised.** Since the consultation closed, we've reviewed this feedback and used it to help guide our developing plans to design a railway that best meets the needs of communities across the entire region.

To help us do that, we have:

- Considered every comment received during the 2021 consultation and carried out further analysis based on what we heard. In this, we've looked again at those areas of most concern to people, including how we best serve Bedford and how the proposed new railway should approach Cambridge.
- Carefully considered the cost and affordability issues that underpin a project of this size and complexity, recognising the wider economic climate.
- Reviewed in detail the way in which our proposals can best meet the core purpose of East West Rail – connecting people and businesses and unlocking economic growth.

- Held further meetings with local residents, community groups, political representatives, local authorities, business leaders, industry peers and other stakeholders to gain an understanding of the widest possible breadth of views. In the coming months we will carry out more work on the proposals. We will then present further details as part of a statutory consultation on the proposals which we expect to take place in the first half of 2024.

Next steps

In the coming weeks we'll be in a location near you holding public information events and meeting stakeholders across the route, to answer questions about the updates or any other aspect of EWR. Details of these events will be added to our website at:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk/routeupdate

We'll continue to work on more detailed designs and proposals, which we'll present at the statutory consultation. This will be a key part of the process to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO). More information on the DCO is available here:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk/dco-factsheet

Get in touch

You can email, call or write to us

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