

Farm Business Interviews: What do you need to know?

Land and Property

Over the course of the project, we will be carrying out Farm Business Interviews with landowners and occupiers to better understand the conditions of the land in and around East West Rail.

What is East West Rail?

East West Rail is a proposed new rail link, which would connect communities between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. By making it cheaper and quicker to get around, by making it easier to develop more homes for people and by boosting local economies, the new railway line aims to create a range of opportunities for people right across the area and to help spread prosperity across the UK, by supporting opportunities for economic growth in towns and cities outside London.

The East West Railway Company (EWR Co) is responsible for developing the East West Rail Project and was created to plan a railway with customers and communities at its core. The project is being delivered in stages. Trains are already running between Oxford and Bicester, and we aim to have trains running the full length of the line between Oxford and Cambridge by the end of the decade. Further information about East West Rail can be found on our website: www.eastwestrail.co.uk.

What is a Farm Business Interview?

Farm Business Interviews (FBIs) are carried out to understand the agricultural land and practices which may be affected by the EWR proposals. FBIs allow potential impacts on individual farm holdings to be identified at an early stage. They also inform the development of the design, with the aim of avoiding or reducing these potential impacts on farm holdings.

We propose an initial interview to identify current land management practices and a follow up interview once the design is developed to a point where potential impacts can be identified and measures to avoid or reduce these can be discussed.

Will we pay for your, or your land agent's, time to undertake an FBI? How long will the FBI take?

Yes, we will pay £250. This is to cover the time required for you, or your land agent, to participate in the interview and gather relevant information. The interview will be carried out by one of our specialist agricultural surveyors in person or virtually and is likely to last up to one-two hours depending on the size and complexity of your holding.

Once the interview has been completed, the EWR Land and Property team will contact you via your preferred method of contact to confirm your bank details for payment.

What questions are they likely to ask?

The FBI will be carried out by a member of our professional survey team, who specialises in providing expertise and advice on agricultural, environmental and countryside issues. The exact details of who will be carrying out the interview will be confirmed when we make contact with you to confirm the arrangements. They will ask questions that will allow them to get an understanding of how you currently manage your land, and the pre-scheme 'baseline conditions' such as:

- Size, location and use of your farm and forestry holdings, including links with other farms or land in the locality.
- Scale and nature of your agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises based on your farm holdings.
- Details of your agri-environment schemes and other environmental land uses, as well as potential opportunities for scheme-related environmental mitigation.
- Details of your key farm infrastructure, including buildings, farm tracks, field accesses, drainage, and so on.

Who will we speak to if the land is occupied by a tenant?

Where the land is occupied by a tenant, we will want to interview the tenant to understand the day-to-day operations of the farm. However, we may in some cases also want to speak to the landowner to understand the effects of our proposals on them and any wider estate holding.

How will we use the information to develop the design?

Once the 'baseline condition' farm business interviews have been conducted and the project design is more developed, we would like to meet with you again to conduct a follow up interview and understand how the design of the scheme may affect how you manage and operate your farm.

At this meeting we would like to discuss how the proposed project changes the 'baseline conditions' of the farming business, with emphasis on how the potential impacts of the proposed scheme could potentially be avoided or reduced. The topics to be discussed will depend on the potential impacts of the scheme on your land holding. How we might avoid or reduce impacts arising from likely land-take and any changes in access to land and property are examples of likely discussion topics. We would also be able to discuss what we would do about disturbance to field boundaries, land drainage and soils, during this meeting.

We would envisage this meeting would generally take about one-two hours and if you have an appointed agent working on your behalf, they would be welcome to participate in the meeting should you wish.

This meeting provides an opportunity for you to tell us how the proposed scheme may affect the operation of your business and for EWR Co to investigate how this can be avoided or reduced. We hope that this early engagement will be able to influence the design of the scheme and develop measures that avoid or reduce the impact on agriculture.

We need to assess and report the impacts and effects of the proposed scheme on land use as part of the consent process. The information you will provide will inform the assessment reported in the Environmental Statement that will be submitted as part of the Development Consent Order. We will ensure that no personal or commercially sensitive business information will be made public in these documents.

Who should you speak to if you have any questions or concerns?

Our specialist EWR Land and Property Team are available to talk to you about our proposals, to listen to your views and to answer any questions you may have and can be contacted as follows:

- Email us at: land@eastwestrail.co.uk
- Call us on: **0330 838 7583**
- Send us a message online at: www.eastwestrail.co.uk/get-in-touch

If you have any issues, concerns or wish to make a complaint, please get in touch with us via the above details so we can work with you to investigate and quickly find a resolution.
