

Farm Business Interviews: Everything you need to know

Over the course of the East West Rail project, we will be meeting with owners and occupiers of farm businesses along the route to help us understand how farms may be affected by the railway.

This document explains what you can expect from a Farm Business Interview and how you can get in touch with us if you have any further questions.

What is East West Rail?

East West Rail (EWR) is a proposed new rail link connecting communities from Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. EWR would unlock economic growth, and make it easier, cheaper and greener to get around the region and beyond. Further information about the project can be found at www.eastwestrail.co.uk.

What is a Farm Business Interview?

Our specialist professional team meets with farm businesses along the route to carry out Farm Business Interviews (FBI) to help us understand more about agricultural land and how it is used. FBIs enable us to discuss how land may be affected by the proposals with farmers and other agricultural businesses at an early stage. This helps us to design the proposals for East West Rail with this in mind.

Typically, we will hold two Farm Business Interviews with you. First, an initial interview is held to discuss how the land is currently used and managed. Then, a follow up interview is arranged once the design for the railway 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?

We will pay £250 to the landowner per interview 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 around one or two hours depending on the size and complexity of your holding.

Once the interview has been completed, our Land and Property team will contact you to confirm your bank details for payment.

What questions are we likely to ask?

The FBI will be carried out by a member of our specialist surveying team, who are experts in agricultural, environmental and countryside issues. We'll let you know who will be carrying out the interview when we get in touch to confirm the arrangements. They will ask questions that will help them to understand how you currently manage your land, as well as the 'baseline conditions' of your land, which include:

- The size, location and use of your farm and/or forestry holdings, including links with other farms or land in the locality.
- The 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 and drainage.

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 potential effects of our proposals on them and any wider estate holding. We'll confirm this when we get in touch to arrange the interview.

How will we use the information you give us to develop the design?

After the first interview, we'll arrange to see you again to talk about how East West Rail could affect the baseline conditions of your farming business, so that we can consider this as we design the proposals. The topics we discuss would depend on the potential impacts of the project on your land but could include how we might avoid or reduce impacts or how access to your land might be affected. We would also discuss how we would manage any disturbance to field boundaries, land drainage and soil.

This second interview usually takes around one or two hours and if you have an appointed agent working on your behalf, they would be welcome to participate in the meeting.

The information you provide during the Farm Business Interviews will be included in our assessment of the potential impacts of East West Rail on land, which we are required to report on in the Environmental Statement that will be submitted as part of the Development Consent Order. However, 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 Land and Property team will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the project or Farm Business Interviews. Please feel free to get in touch with us using the details below:

Email us: land@eastwestrail.co.uk

Message us:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk/get-in-touch

Call us: 0330 838 7583
(24/7, but our dedicated Land & Property Team are available Mon-Fri, 9am - 5pm)

Write to us: Freepost EAST WEST RAIL LAND

Sign up for project updates:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk