

Bedfordshire Group - Meeting summary

Meeting #3 - Details

Date: 7 June 2022

Time: 6:15 pm

Type of meeting: Hybrid meeting: Woodlands Event Centre, Wyboston Lakes/ Zoom

Attendees:

EWR Co attendees

Hannah Staunton (HS), EWR Co Lead

Vanessa Ralph (VR), EWR Co Specialist – Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC)

EWR Co production and support team

Deanna Gray (DG), EWR Interim Engagement Manager

Mark Williams (MW), EWR Senior Support

Tabitha, EWR Support

Charlotte, EWR Support

Parish Council representatives

Cllr Eric Cooper (EC) – Clapham Parish Council

Cllr Bernadette Russell, Chair (BR) – Ravensden Parish Council

Cllr Nicola Gribble (NG) – Renhold Parish Council

Peter Norris (PN) – subject matter expert for Renhold Parish Council

Cllr Andy Lockwood, Vice Chairman (AL) – Stevington Parish Council

Cllr Michael Thompson (MT) – Thurleigh Parish Council

Cllr Jan Lewandowski (JL) - Willington Parish Council

Cllr Gordon Johnston (GJ) – Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden Parish Council

Apologies

Biddenham Parish Council

Bolnhurst and Keysoe Parish Council

Brickhill Parish Council

Bromham Parish Council

Cardington Parish Council

Colmworth Parish Council

Couple Parish Council

Great Barford Parish Council

Milton Ernest Parish Council

Oakley Parish Council
Roxton Parish Council
Shortstown Parish Council
Staploe Parish Council
Turvey Parish Council
Wilden Parish Council
Cllr Wendy Rider - Brickhill, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Charles Royden – Brickhill, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Jonathan Gambold – Bromham and Biddenham, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Roger Rigby – Bromham and Biddenham, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Jane Walker – Clapham, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Sarah Gallagher – Eastcotts, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant – Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Stephen Moon - Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr James Weir - Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Jonathan Abbott – Kempston Rural, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Martin Towler- Oakley, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Doug McMurdo – Riseley, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Tom Wootton – Sharnbrook, Bedford Borough Council

Documents discussed in this meeting

The following documents were discussed during the meeting these are available on the Group's dedicated Community Hub site – [here](#):
Slides

NB The recording was started part way through this meeting following running through the agenda and housekeeping rules.

2 – Housekeeping and Meeting Note Discussion

Slide 7 – Meeting Note Discussion

[00:06]

Hannah Staunton (HS): Thank you so much, before we go. On our first tiny bit on that side, as you, as I said, we've got some colleagues here today joining us from my team. I want to get them to introduce themselves and I'll just give you a heads up about slight change on my end as well. So shall we just go round in a little circle?

Charlotte EWR: Hi, I'm Charlotte and I'm just supporting at this event and looking after the slides.

[00.31]

Tabitha EWR: Hi I'm Tabitha, and I'm just managing the Zoom and checking that anyone's got any problems on email.

Deanna Gray (DG): I'm Deanna Gray interim stakeholder engagement manager, which I think Hannah will talk more about in a minute.

Mark Williams (MW): So guys, I'm not Jordi. Can confirm. Mark Williams, Associate Director at AECOM and supporting EWR.

HS: Wonderful and then we've got Jordi and Deanna on the line, sorry Vanessa, on the line as well.

[01:05]

[...] The change that we just going to talk through really quickly is that Jordi set these meetings up and put structure in place but he's now going to look at some different activity looking at other elected representatives. So, he's going to be working with Local Authorities and those kinds of areas. We have got a role, a specific role in my team looking entirely at the Local Representative Groups (LRG) so you have a dedicated person looking at the LRGs internally.

[01:39]

[...] We are hiring for that at the moment, so if you know of anyone who would be good in that space then please let me know. In the meantime, we have Deanna here who is interim in that space and will be joining us for a little while. So, there will be a little shift in who you get your communications for the next few months. But as I say there will be a change in who you get your communications from but we aim to settle it soon because as I say that's a live job description on our site at the moment, but thank you so much Deanna for everything you've done so far.

[2:07]

DG: No problem, nice to meet you.

HS: Any thoughts around that at the moment?

Peter Norris (PN): Is that Deanna?

HS: D-E-A-N-N-A, yep.

DG: Like Durbin, Deanna Durbin. She was a very glamorous film star from the 50s, so everyone knows Deanna from that.

[02:34]

HS: Oh, is she, there you go. Then we will move on to a conversation about the meeting notes that went around last time. I think we only have one set of comments and that was from Peter. Thank you very much for that, that was very helpful. So, I just wondered if we could just open the discussion about whether we felt we could do our meeting notes were better this time around? I know previously we had some thoughts about how we could improve, so I'm just, are there any views on the meeting notes that were sent around?

[03:09]

PN: I thought I thought they were yes. Mostly, easier to get on with compared with the first meeting. Um. I was a bit concerned at first look because although there were quite a number of inputs made, they weren't all included. But in actual fact, reading through carefully and studying the transcript?

HS: Transcript yep.

[03:35]

PN: Um, I found them quite satisfactory. Good.

HS: Yeah, excellent, thank you. That's really helpful. Thank you.

Gordon Johnston (GJ): They were a considerable improvement on the previous lot.

HS: That's really helpful to know. Does anyone online have anything they'd like to add around these notes?

Nicola Gribble (NG): No, I'm actually struggling to hear you particularly clearly. It's really echoey and, and, it doesn't seem to help even if I turn it up or turn it down.

[04:07]

HS: We had a speaker here before, where's the speaker gone? We had two, but there's just one now. I tell you what, let's just move this one between us here.

Tabitha EWR: I can also turn the volume up here, so let's just see if that does anything as well?

[04:37]

HS: Is that any better Nicky? Nicky, is that any better?

NG: Uh, maybe slightly.

Tabitha EWR: If I just.

NG: Yeah, I think it possibly is, I think it is a little bit.

HS: OK, well we'll try this for a second and we'll see what happens, I'll try and enunciate as well as I can.

[05:00]

HS: Oh sorry, I think you were Gordon you were saying, oh, you've finished, I apologize. We've gone to the virtual, so were there any comments virtually about the last set of meeting notes either in style or in content?

MW: Hannah just to let you know Jan Lewandowski has just joined virtually.

HS: Jan welcome very much to the meeting good to have you here. I don't think you've missed a huge amount so far, so we'll crack on.

[05:30]

HS: OK, so it is also worth noting that one of the comments that we had back was around the ease of finding meeting notes on the website, so we've made some tweaks to the website now, so hopefully the notes will be easier to find. So again, if there's anything else like that that we

can do, just please let me know and I'll make sure we action those quite quickly. That was actually quite a quick one for us to action.

GJ: Yep, good.

HS: I'm just checking there's no updates on that bit, that would be helpful.

[06:00]

PN: Can I ask you about the action tracker?

HS: Of course.

PN: Is that something that gets presented at the meeting or something that?

HS: Its actually the next item, so should we see if that's?

PN: Yes, that's fine.

3 – Review of actions from meeting #2, deep dive topics for future meetings

Slide 8 – Review of Actions from Meeting #2, deep dive topics for future meetings

HS: Oh great, OK. That's good. We've split the actions into two sides, so we have completed actions and outstanding actions and I felt that we could probably do completed actions by exception, so we just talk about the completed actions that seem as though they need a review in some way.

Slide 9 – Completed Actions

[06:34]

[...] The so we've completed these, this set. The options for holding the Group's next meeting at Bedford Council Chambers is probably the one just to bring up. Because we held the meeting at Wyboston at the suggestion of the group from last time and the other suggestion that we had was to go to Bedford. We've had a lot of challenge actually getting through and getting a booking made at Bedford, so I think we're still open to suggestion for future meetings, still open for comment on whether this is a good location, the right location.

[07:09]

[...] We obviously, we've only got three people in person, which is fine if we want to continue hybrid. So, I just sort of wanted to crack that open slightly while we've got everyone here and see how we feel about the location and whether it's worth pursuing Bedford or indeed any other location?

[07:26]

PN: I think it's quite a good location. There's a lot of scope here. Different places to go to. And the facilities. Well, I don't know, I mean, if I can be heard by the people who are watching from afar, that's fine. I personally prefer to see people actually physically present for a meeting.

Bernadette Russell (BR): You're not likely to get that if you're here, it is really out in the sticks and it's a rush trying to get here because it's a poor place, actually. Lovely facilities, but there's only 3 of us here, it's ridiculous. I think you could get more if you were in Bedford.

[08:10]

PN: There's one point about getting here on time, because it is out of the way and you've got to get through the black cat system and it's the tail end of rush hour. It's difficult for a person who works during the day, and then drives home, to get themselves in a position where they can actually get here. So, the call upon six start time is actually quite early.

[08:35]

HS: Interestingly, we've had that comment from other people about the timing. Again, I think both the location and the timing was something we agreed at the first meeting with the view to coming back to them later to see if they were working.

GJ: Yep.

HS: And I think perhaps there's a, it seems there's a mix of opinion about Wyboston Lakes, but maybe there's a consensus that later will be better? I'm not sure. I wonder if anyone on the call?

[09:00]

NG: Hi Hannah, sorry I have put my hand up and Peter has just actually spoken for me. Uhm yeah. I mean I've been at work today. I'd much prefer face to face meetings, and so it was just I wouldn't have been able to get there today. From both, you know, having to work all day then negotiating the Black Cat (roundabout) and trying to get to you for 6:15. It's just it's a little bit early. I'm fine with Wyboston by the way.

[09:27]

HS: Well, tell you what next time we put one of these things out. Uh, we'll also do a little poll about timing as well and just see what time suits everyone. Because I'm aware that we're for one putting everyone a bit on the spot to some extent and to another, not everyone's here and it might be that there's a reason that not everyone's here this time around. So, we, uh, will come back and ask that that again. Shall I take that as a new action and I think. Tell you what, let's pursue Bedford next time, so we've got a view of each venue and then we can have the group decide when we get there.

[10:03]

[...] When we have one at each. Does that feel about right? So thanks.

NG: Perfect

PN: What's the parking like at Bedford?

BR: The county borders and a car park.

HS: Yes, there is a car park.

PN: Yes, there is a car park if you can find a parking spot or not.

BR: It would hopefully have calmed down by then.

PN: That's on the other side of the barrier actually.

BR: The staff car park which is not far from...

[10:31]

HS: I tell you what, let's make sure that we've got parking instructions on the invite for the meeting next time and we'll just try it at Bedford and see what happens.

PN: The other thing about Bedford is I think there's only the one room, one conference room, which ticks all the right boxes, in other words it's got the AV support in it.

HS: Oh okay, so it might be limited as to dates available?

PN: Because that could impinge on your choice of three dates. You might find it difficult to get three in a week using that place.

[11:03]

HS: OK, let's have a go and see what we can do and we'll come back with some options for the next time. Brilliant, OK, so then you can see I think the other completed actions that we had a

lot of those were to do with the public drop in events that we had and certainly some of them are, so thank you very much for that. Let's move on to the outstanding actions. So, we can just see what's going on with those.

Slide 10 – Outstanding Actions

[11:31]

[...] The agreed agenda of what would be covered during the environment, environmental impact assessments, and carbon deep dive session. Uhm, so that's outstanding, because obviously that will happen in advance of the next meeting, which is when we will have that discussion. So, you will get that with the agenda for the next time. The other, we decided to split these into two actions to 3A and 3B because they were slightly different. The second was to provide an overview of the process that's being undertaken to develop our net zero carbon target, so that will go out as part of the next meeting as well, so that will be in the next meeting rather than in advance of the next meeting.

[12:09]

PN: I see yes.

MW: Just to note Eric from Clapham Parish Council has just joined online.

HS: Oh sorry. Brilliant, Eric welcome.

Eric Cooper (EC): Thank you.

PN: Evening Eric

[12:26]

HS: Then action 6 is to present the group with options for an independent facilitator, and so that's an item that we got later on the agenda for today, so we'll come to that shortly. And to provide a timeframe and details of the length of the statutory consultation when this information is available in due course.

[12:54]

[...] So firstly, I think it's important to say that the decision has not yet been made on the timing and length of the statutory consultation, so that's the status of it. We will address that as soon as we're able to, but having had a chat with Vanessa earlier this week, it's you know, the normal length of these things is 12 weeks and I don't think there's any great secret in the fact that the

normal length of a statutory consultation is 12 weeks, but as you as the actual expert Vanessa, could you back me up on that or not?

[13:24]

Vanessa Ralph (VR): Yeah, absolutely. I meant that is not a requirement, but it's an appropriate length of time in our view for the statutory consultation, given the nature and size and so on of the project.

BR: We're more interested in the time of it rather than the length, I think.

HS: Oh, sorry we had that as length. I mean the timing, actually we don't know, we don't have it yet because we're still working through the program at the moment. So, when we have it, that will make sure that that's probably communicated.

[13:59]

PN: That's fine. We're gonna talk about a bit more about that one when you get to the SOCC yes?

Slide 11 – Update on Community Engagement

HS: Yes, Vanessa will. Certainly. She's certainly the right person to have that conversation with. Uhm, then we thought it would be good because we also wanted to give an update on the drop in events that we had previously a couple of weeks ago. We had 350 people across the two events which is probably a little less than you would expect at, say, a formal consultation event, but still pretty busy I think I saw I, I think all three of you came at various points to those, so I think you saw how busy certainly the first one was.

[14:37]

PN: I got counted twice.

HS: Sorry?

PN: We got counted twice.

HS: Oh right, I will check for you.

BR: How many were there at each event?

HS: I'm trying to remember which way round it was.

[15:00]

PN: I well, I certainly got an impression that the first event here was quite crowded.

HS: Really, yeah.

PN: The one in Bedford was disappointing.

BR: That surprised me.

PN: Yeah, it was really surprising.

HS: I think perhaps our view was that a lot of the people who um, at the Bedford event certainly a lot of the people who you might have expected to come, we had already spoken to in the preceding weeks, because we were having one to one event, so it might be that there's sort of a reduced number of people who were interested. It was interesting because they were publicized the same way they would get the same prominence, so it was quite interesting.

[15:41]

GJ: There were quite a number of people also from the St Neots, Cambridge area that came to Wyboston.

HS: Yes, that's absolutely true. That is absolutely true. We did get some people coming from the sort of Marston Vale line side coming here which is interesting as well because it hadn't technically it had sort of been publicized as an event for Marston Vale. We are doing an event there.

[16:04]

[...] Uhm, so as you know, because you came, we had experts from a variety of people across the business to explain things in a, you know, conversational way. Overall, the feedback we had was that people really value the opportunity, but we definitely recognize there's still a bit of frustration around that no new information was available at those events. Yes, so I think that's from our perspective, that that seems to be to what we were expecting at those events made sense to us.

[16:33]

[...] We will be announcing more dates and locations quite soon. I think we've got a press release in my inbox to sign off so that will be going up quite soon. There will be events for other areas across the route, just so you're aware those are happening as well. And we're also looking into how we can hold more of these kinds of events and do them in a way that, you know, that people find helpful and useful. As I said, some people really did just want to come along and

have quite a broad chat, some people were hoping that there would be additional information which, you know, we aren't able to share right now.

[17:06]

GJ: That had been made clear - that there would be no new information to us in the Local Group. It was made quite plain that there would be no new information.

HS: Exactly, and I think it was it was very interesting to us - certainly because, of those people that had heard the news through their parishes and through other people that came across very, very clearly, but I think where perhaps they've been, perhaps where the events have come to them via media, you know it wasn't quite as thorough or read and maybe they're expecting more things to come in. So, I think we will work more closely with other people to understand how we can - how we can manage expectations.

[17:45]

PN: It's a natural expectation that as time goes on there will be more information available. It's logical, isn't it?

HS: I would desperately love to give more information.

[17:56]

PN: I mean, you're not all analyzing the questionnaires from the consultation?

HS: Yeah, yeah.

PN: Everybody? So, there's no one left to actually work more on developing the individual solutions.

HS: Well, I think the point is that when you get information in you look at...we've had how many thousands and suggestions, ideas, lines to go through, the rest of it? You can't just do one in isolation. Someone says, if someone came up with a wonderful idea, so [for example] moving everything 100 miles north and someone else came for a wonderful solution for moving everything 100 miles South. The two don't marry together. You have to, it has to be a holistic view, so, yes, although there are some things that have been considered you have to consider everything in a holistic view.

[18:38]

[...] So, it would be incredibly premature to talk about the conclusions in one area without knowing what the conclusions might be in another area as well, because it's, like you know, it's a connected line, so it's it I completely understand, you know.

GJ: Can we quote you on that - that it would be a wonderful idea to move it 100 miles north?

HS: I said someone might say that honestly Gordon.

[19:01]

[..] The only other thing I would just like to point out and it's a small point, but obviously we laid on a community bus and it was relatively small pickup as well and that's fine. We can carry on doing that, but it might be the next time we think about other ways we should get to it, maybe by taxi on demand or something. Just because we, you know, we, we're just not entirely sure why there wasn't massive pick up there so that. It actually would be really helpful to us to understand if you have a view of why there wasn't massive pick up with that. I don't know if anyone on the call has any thoughts?

[19:30]

PN: I mean, you don't have to do it now but would you like to share the numbers that you recorded that use the actual, each route. Because I mean, I mean, we're fighting for the communities to get buses laid on, but if only three people use the particular service, then we need to know that.

Tabitha EWR: Only four people used the bus route in total.

BR: Really?

GJ: Across all three routes?

HS: Oh yeah, only four used the bus.

BR: Oh, that's awful.

GJ: Ridiculous.

BR: Very, very expensive.

[20:04]

HS: Well yeah, and as I say we need to make sure the events are accessible, so I don't begrudge that in the least. But I would say that it probably is particularly, from a public funding

perspective, something we need to just be really careful of. So, if there's another way we can do that, if there's something else we can, you know another suggestion we can have next time?

BR: All I'll say is the reason I didn't use it was because I didn't know how long it would take to get there and when it would turn up. So, I think people were a bit worried they'd be stuck in Bedford - you know?

[20:34]

HS: I I'd be really grateful if everyone, those on the call as well, can have a chat with their...you know just to see if there's an interest there or not? Because you know, I think as you know, you know you asked for it and we did it. We're quite keen to carry on if there's interest

Tabitha EWR: All four were on the central route.

GJ: What's the central route?

Tabitha EWR: The one that went in a circuit.

BR: Right, right. Well at least someone used it. Oh dear.

[21:05]

HS: So, OK, before we move off this slide, then I wonder if there's just any other comments on the community engagement we had.

NG: Yeah, Hannah, if I could sorry if I could just jump in. Firstly, thank you very much for actually putting on the bus listening to some route suggestions and changing the route that's, that's really great, and it's really disappointing that only four people have actually used it. Uhm, I'm quite interested also to know how did you know 350 people attended? Because people I've spoken to didn't have to sign in or anything.

[21:36]

HS: No, so we had a reception that there was one way in for each event so they were just counting people as they came in.

GJ: Yeah, they had a clicker, they got a clicker.

HS: OK well.

GJ: Actually, I came in and out two or three times and I did note that they did not miscount me.

[21:59]

HS: Right no, no, because we do want to know, there's no bonus to us inflating or deflating the numbers, it's good to have accurate data. Is that alright Nicky, is there anything else?

NG: Yeah, yeah no, that's fine. Unfortunately, well, not unfortunately, I was actually on holiday for the for the event, so I couldn't actually make it. But I think one well, a few comments that I've had and have been along the same lines, uhm. It was kind of felt that the EWR representatives were quite junior and were maybe put in the firing line of some quite irate people, and people maybe felt, I'm not going to say sorry for them, but, uh, we're a little concerned that that these you know guys and girls who maybe didn't have the full information were sort of used as a bit of cannon fodder.

[22:56]

HS: OK, so that is a shame that that was the view and I think everyone in that room was either a generalist who can answer general questions on the scheme in a broad sense, or they have a particular specialism. It might be that some of the specialists weren't, sort of, comfortable saying that's not my area. You know, and putting them towards someone whose area we would have been able to answer the question because we did have people there who were who were experts across, you know, in their in their specific fields. So, I think that's actually very helpful feedback Nicky, and I and I will say you're not the only person that's mentioned that. It might just be that they're not used to talking to people having had two years inside. I don't know.

[23:38]

GJ: Yeah, they were still at school.

HS: I think they just need a bit more confidence?

NG: Yeah, maybe. But you could also, you know, you could also flip it round to the people asking the questions aren't actually getting the answers they want as well?

HS: Yeah, that's fair.

NG: But anyway, it wasn't just one or two comments, it was a few, uhm. So anyway, you said you've heard it as well, you know, from other people.

[24:02]

HS: Yeah, I have heard that and I think it's interesting, isn't it? To make sure that we've got the right people in the room. It's something that we do sort of struggle with, you know, making sure that we've got people sort of anticipating what the questions are going to be before

people come, so that we've got the right people in the room to talk them through, but it's...I. No, I definitely take the point on that, so I think we can take that away as a lesson learnt

[24:24].

PN: Did you change the balance of people between the two meetings? Did you increase the weight at the second occasion?

HS: The weight? We fed them up?

PN: No there seemed to be a higher level of representation, higher up the chain.

HS: So, there's a couple of things really. When we put the events in, I think we've got to be very realistic about the fact that our particularly senior team, you know their diaries are blocked out months and months and months in advance.

[25:00]

[...] So sometimes, we do have to take a call on whether or not we think the expertise in the room, you know, are going to be enough. I think with the second meeting we were slightly luckier we had Vanessa, for example, in the room, who's a Director.

PN: I agree, yep, yep.

HS: But actually, I think we still, I would still feel that the first event had the right knowledge in the room. It might just be that the team didn't quite feel confident in some specific areas, but I don't think there was a significant difference in the seniority of aside from Vanessa. Is that right Vanessa?

[25:36]

HS: Oh, you weren't at the first one, haha.

GJ: No, she wasn't.

HS: Of course, how can you judge something you didn't attend.

PN: So yes, the center of gravity was raised. Yeah, I think. Anyway, I thought your team were quite forthcoming. They would - they would move forward to see if they could help you. And providing they realized a point of which they had to look around for, maybe, someone else that had a higher understanding of if the question is different. I thought the second one was better than the first.

[26:12]

[...] But that might be because the crowd density was lower.

HS: I think that's it as well the crowd. The crowd density was a lot lower, so we were able to have conversations to really say, actually, I don't know, but I can see that our environmental experts aren't free, whereas I think in the first one it was much harder - it was much harder to find the right people.

GJ: I think that this staff were bit overwhelmed.

[26:30]

MW: So, I double checked and it was 84 at the first session and 287 at the second.

GJ: Yeah, we'd agree with that.

HS: So, I think there's definitely something there about the, like I say, I think we all expected the second event to be busier. So, it's another thing about having to get the crystal ball out and trying to work out what we need to put where. But we learn lessons all the time. We learn lessons all the time.

[27:05]

PN: I think it's a matter of how closely this project is impacting people, and where they live, for the majority of people in Bedford, it means nothing unless their house is under threat. In which case, obviously, they're going to get involved. Across the countryside, in the rural area, uhm, there's a lot more people there that are identifying themselves with the strange thing that's coming through virgin rule countryside.

[27:38]

[...] So, you will. I think you'll - you'll get a bigger representation from the Countryside, country folk.

HS: I think that's true, but also, I think as to just play back to the conversation we're having earlier about whether Wyboston or Bedford is easier for people to get to. There's clearly a split even within this group.

[28:00]

[...] And I think we felt that it was likely that on balance, people might prefer to be going somewhere where they wouldn't necessarily have to take a special bus, because transport into Bedford is easily reversed. So, I think, as I say, I think hindsight is fantastic and we can learn a lot of lessons over that kind of stuff. But nevertheless, it was fantastic to see that many people

come out and you know be able to talk to people. Are there any other comments from online?
No?

[28:32]

PN: I'm finding it quite difficult to perceive how many people are actually online, 'cause all I can see is 1,2,3 - 3 pictures.

Tabitha EWR: We've currently got four people.

PN: That's all we have?

HS: So I think, you could you slightly reorder this to take people away or move people around?
So, take away the top left and take away Jordi?

Charlotte EWR: So that would stop sharing the recording of the room.

HS: Oh no never mind then, tell you what, crack on and see if you can come up with a better view?

PN: If there aren't any more, there aren't any more.

[29:06]

HS: We've got Andy, we've got Nicky, we've got Eric and...

Tabitha EWR: Eric, Andy and Nicky yep.

BR: Can I just look at the last point, the regular meeting you're proposing, presumably not before the consultation when are the alignments announced? You're not going have any more are you?

[29:29]

HS: I think we need to see really? I think we need to see what the appetite for it is really?

BR: But then you'd have even less to say - wouldn't you?

HS: So sure, but I think we do know that, as I said, there was - there were some people who would have liked something? You know, some new stuff, but there are also other people who did quite like the opportunity to come and talk to us about existing stuff. And I think we need to, in the round, once we finish the set of events, have a look again at what benefit we think we can bring into the community versus, you know, the resource and everything that goes into it and see if there's value in doing more of them. Then it may well be that there is value in doing more of them. Or it may be that, as you say, it's difficult to do without further information. So

again, I think if that's something you have a view on that would be really helpful. But we're just quite keen to make sure that if people do want talk to us, we're here.

[30:18]

BR: We just hope that different people would turn up then there's no point in the same people turning up.

HS: Well, I mean if you want to talk to us that's absolutely fine, if people want to come to every meeting that's fine too, there's no limit. So, you know, some people are quite interested and well, want to come and have those conversations and other people as soon as they've got the piece of information they want or the [answer to] the question they had, they don't want to talk to us again and there's quite a spectrum, I'd say.

[30:40]

PN: Have we got any ward councillors on board this evening?

Tabitha EWR: No

PN: We don't?

Tabitha EWR: Jon Abbott was going to join virtually, but he hasn't made it.

PN: Yeah, because there weren't any at meeting #2 either.

HS: Some we did have some ward councillors, probably not in your area.

[31:01]

NG: We haven't, Peter.

PN: Sorry?

NG: No, it's none.

GJ: As Nicky said, there are none.

PN: Well, there's none tonight.

GJ: No and there weren't any on the second.

NG: No, there's no ward councillors at the meeting tonight.

PN: Yes, yes, I know that Nicky, we've established that. Why do? Why do you think they're not coming? Because there's no counter interaction within the, within the Borough Council this evening. It's a free evening.

[31:32]

HS: I don't think that's something that I would comment on, really. I think that if there's, if you feel underrepresented or whatever, then that's probably a conversation to have. But I don't think that's necessarily something that I would comment on. We invite them, you know, they have exactly the same materials, exactly the same opportunities, so we'll follow up with them in the same way.

PN: That's OK.

HS: But no, I don't have any specific insight on why people come or don't?

Slide 12 – Topics for Future Discussion

[32:08]

HS: So, shall we move onto the next slide of the agenda, topics for future discussion? So, we have agreed, or we agreed last meeting, that the meeting on the 27th of July we would talk about the EIS, which we already covered earlier in the meeting and that meeting 5 we talk about active travel, which is that, sort of, the first mile last mile - how you actually get to stations, that kind of thing. Uh, which we thought would be quite helpful.

[32:32]

[...] What we should probably have a talk about though is where we think the business case now is best sat, because we could expand meeting #4 to cover EIS and business case. That would be quite a long meeting, especially for starting later. I don't think, just talking about resourcing again and making sure there's the right people in the room, I don't think we're able to put in an additional meeting, so we have to slide it into one of the other meetings somewhere, did you have a view? It would be helpful if we left this up to you.

[33:08]

BR: For the meeting in September could we have this one instead of first mile last mile and then have another meeting, say October, perhaps or November? I mean is that doable? I think it is a very important issue, it deserves a whole meeting really

NG: I mean, the business case hasn't been presented though, yet has it?

GJ: Yeah, sure, it should have been tonight.

[33:31]

HS: It was to go through the process by which business cases are created to give some background and sort of explain why there isn't, you know, a document that sort of is this "thing", because I think it is quite a complicated and involved area, which is why I'm definitely not going to be giving slides that we put together because it's quite complicated.

BR: I think we're very anxious as a group that we'd like to have this meeting. So, I think earlier on rather than later.

HS: We could move the EIS? And have the business case in July and move the EIS out to September.

[34:07]

BR: Just move everything down? I think that would work.

GJ: Is meeting 5 the active travel first mile last mile? Is that relevant until such time as an alignment is announced because nobody is going to have a clue?

HS: I think Mike particularly was quite interested in whether that's something that we're actively thinking about - where our thoughts are and I think a lot of this stuff, until there is a very clear view from the Secretary of State, I think the conversations we had, some of the conversation we just had generally are - it's just helpful to know how we're thinking, what the, what direction, and what things were thinking about.

[34:45]

[...] So, I think it was with a view to that really not with the view of presenting some fait accompli, but with the view to saying these are the things that we're thinking about in that area, and I think Mike - that previous meetings are certainly said and in the public meetings we had were about, you know, how will this impact sort of local roads and that kind of stuff and what thinking we're doing in that area? So, I agree with you, there's no conclusion that we expect to have by meeting 5, but there were some conversation points that would be helpful to bring up. So to that regard, as you say, it's your meeting, so if you feel that we could just put them all down one that seems logical to me. Is there any reason why that might be difficult from our perspective?

[35:28]

Tabitha EWR: So, all I'll say is that the EIA team are lined up for the 27th of July, so it might be easier to do the Business Case after that in September and then move Active Travel down.

HS: Well, why don't we have a look at the availability of the environment team and go from there?

Tabitha EWR: Well, the environment team are definitely free on the 27th of July I know that.

[35:57]

PN: As I understand it, the topic and the Business Case is just the principle of the Business Case.

HS: Yes.

PN: And it's what commonly goes towards constructing a Business Case - the various stages it might go through in producing, but it won't be the EWR business case as its presented to the government.

HS: Yeah, no, it was just to talk through the process.

PN: It's just the process?

BR: Yes, but then you may well have questions on what are the advantages and disadvantages to say, having a station in Bedford. You know that - that's a really valid question that we would talk about.

[36:38]

HS: That I think, I think that's, that's very helpful. I think that then two distinct points I think that are coming out of it. One is, and this is something I've said before, Business Case in terms of 'this is why it's a really complicated area' because Business Case in the way we talk about it in government terms is a very specific sequence of activities you go through. But much like the DCO process, that's a very specific process.

[37:11]

[...] Uhm, in normal business a Business Case, is something more or less prescribed, I suppose. So, it is something where you can go this is our Business Case, boom, and walk away and you can do that in an afternoon or something if you're going at it really fast.

[37:30]

[...] What I think we need to do then is to think about how we better articulate the benefits of EWR.

BR: That's exactly what we need.

HS: And then the second point, and separate that from the normal culture business case because for us a business case has to mean something very specific prescribed, whereas the question around the benefits to your specific community and to the area as a whole. I tell you what then, let's, uh, we'll take that away as two separate splits and I think we'll maybe play back a suggestion of whether or not we can do certainly some of the benefits piece in the first meeting, if we've got the right person in the room to be able to talk to that in more detail, because I know that you know, there might be some dialing down that would be helpful.

[38:15]

[...] Or whether we put those together in Business Case section because they are both two fairly chunky items. Can we take that away and come back with a suggestion in the meeting notes then? Is that okay? Good, good, phew! I'm just relieved I don't have to talk you through the Business Case because Chris was definitely your man for that I have to admit.

[38:37]

[...] So, I think really. Just to say, then, that feels like we've probably got the topics future discussions for the next three meetings laid out. But again, we can always keep that under review on a rolling basis and make sure that we've got the right ones in the diary and then I think we have a conversation to have around independent facilitator?

4 – Independent Facilitator

Slide 13 – Independent Facilitator

Slide 14 – Independent Facilitator, Our Proposal

[39:00]

HS: Again, lots of housekeeping today. But my understanding is there's still a little bit of not quite being 100% about whether or not we want an independent facilitator. Just a little bit of questioning around that - as we've always said, we're very happy to do that. I think the key thing for us, if we do go down that route, is to understand exactly what in this context we want that independent facilitator to do for the Group and to really scope that out very, very carefully so that we're going into this, you know, in a control-balanced way and that we have a very clear recruitment process and blah blah blah.

[39:35]

[...] So, you don't feel as though we're sort of bouncing you into our choice, uh, because I don't think that would be in the spirits of why we would have an independent facilitator actually. But fundamentally I think I would really appreciate just a conversation now around whether or not we still feel an independent facilitator is the right way to go and it is then popping in a little workshop to just go through those five questions that we've got there. So, does anyone have a view at the moment?

[40:03]

GJ: My view is that the independent facilitator was almost a necessary requirement at the start because of certain members of your company being in the meeting... Will? Whether he means to or not, I think he sort of uhm, antagonizes the situation.

[40:37]

[...] And I think that was one of the well, from my point of view, that was one of the driving issues for an independent facilitator. Well, whether that is still the case because we're having far more frank and open discussion now without him

PN: Yeah, I think the idea of considering it's an independent facilitator came from both sides?

[41:14]

HS: Oh no it was ours originally. We asked if it was something you would like us to explore right at the beginning. It was - it was a suggestion we put out and you were one of the groups I think that thought, I'm kind of interested in that, we'll talk about it for a bit.

MW: Nicky Gribble has her hand up.

HS: Nicky?

[41:30]

NG: Yeah, so as much fun as it was to wind Will up, we were not getting anywhere and it wasn't - it wasn't, it wasn't a productive meeting. Uhm, it seems already far more productive today and certainly our meeting last week with Beth was the most productive and frank meeting I have attended with East West Rail so if we can carry on along these lines in an open, honest and, uh, civilized manner, I would be quite happy to be how we are you know, as we are.

[42:10]

GJ: Yeah

PN: Yeah

HS: Great. Anything else?

BR: I mean, could it be revisited if we brought it to you again?

HS: You know I was just gonna say that should we pop it in the agenda for next time as well

BR: I think that there needs to be more people for a start.

HS: Should we publish the agenda for next time and just see if there are any other views?

BR: Yep

GJ: Yep

HS: Is there any other views from you? Online gang?

[42:40]

HS: Anyone?

MW: Andy's got his hand up.

HS: I can't see. I'm so sorry Andy.

Andy Lockwood (AL): I was just going to say the same thing. I don't think, to be honest, we need one at the moment, but it could be an option for the future maybe, but at the moment it seems fine to me.

HS: That's really helpful, thank you.

[42:58]

GJ: Excuse me, where is Andy Lockwood from? Is he one of yours?

HS: No, he's not actually.

GJ: Can he identify himself parish wise?

AL: Stevington Parish Council.

GJ: Excuse me?

MW: Stevington.

GJ: Thank you.

[43:33]

HS: That was very naughty I didn't have my list up in front of me. Must do better...Eric you've got your hand up?

EC: I yeah, I thought I better say something...I'm sitting here in silence.

GJ: That's a first.

EC: Yeah, absolutely. I apologize for being a bit late to attend. I didn't realize it was quarter past six.

[43:59]

[...] Just going say I would agree everything people said about the facilitator. The only thing is if we if we put in the agenda in July and then we decide to have one and then you've got your workshop to do it, by the time you have one, you're almost splurging into the statutory consultation period. And then, is there any point? Or is the intention for the facilitator to be available through the statutory consultation process?

[44:26]

HS: I think to be honest, once we've agreed a position, and I think that's probably the point of the workshop is to agree what we think facilitator would be delivering for the groups. So, if as a group, you decide you want the facilitator to be at every meeting we can accommodate that no problem. If you decide you only want for outside of consultation activity, that's fine too, and I think we probably just need to have that workshop.

[44:49]

[...] I would also say that, you know, if so we throughout this process, throughout the pre consultation, during consultation post consultation, you then go through the DCO process that we went through in previous meetings which will take us through a public examination via PINS (blah blah blah)- this, this isn't a process that stops at the beginning of the public consultation and I think we need to be very clear that what we're trying to build is quite a long-term group, in quite a long- term relationship. So, I mean, you know it takes a couple of meetings to get a facilitator and I think, if that's something you want to do, we would still value it, that would be my view.

[45:36]

EC: Well, I know you're just coming back on that so I hear we say I don't disagree so if it's a feeling is a good idea well why don't we just and do those five questions get that sorted and

then if the group want to draw on it, the person (he or she) would then be available. You know it may be worth doing, and it may even be worth yourselves answering those questions, putting forward a draft for comments, and there might be a quicker way of actually getting that agreed, I don't, I don't know, just some thoughts.

[46:16]

HS: I think for us it's really important that that's co-created and which is to sort of put the onus on the Group to be doing the work. It's just to make sure that any decisions we do take are very, very clearly decisions that have been taken in a in a very sort of open, collaborative fashion rather than just us. So, although I'm always delighted to be asked my opinion, I think on this one I'm going to try not to give it because I think it'll be very helpful really for the Group to shape the role of the facilitator a little bit?

[46:50]

[...] But what do we think will be the best way to move forward do you think? Because there seems to be...

BR: I think, there's only six here, I think we should defer it.

HS: Yes.

GJ: Would it be possible to come up with a questionnaire for each member of the LRG and email it out so you can give this some thought? Particular necessarily ones. And then you could get it back so you've got a better idea?

[47:25]

HS: I'm not adverse to it, but I think from my experience, those sorts of questions we're liable to get... I doubt will reach a consensus, whereas, I think the joy of having people in a room is that they're more likely to reach a consensus. I don't mind a questionnaire – it's no difficulty in doing it I'm just not sure it'll hit what we need it to?

PN: Well, there's also potentially about 25 people. Actually, counting all the ward and parish councillors the attendance rate is very low, so there's no point in quizzing everyone.

[48:00]

HS: I said, well, let's see. How about, because I think what we're discovering here is that there's a little bit of concern that there are perhaps too few people in the room to take the decision? And although we feel the point made, uh, the point made by, sorry - the point was made over the virtual thing by Eric I think was very sensible that it might do to kind of get the Ducks lined

up, but perhaps we just, because we're not necessarily in a situation to make that...Mark's suggestion was that we pop something in circulation after speaking to say that we're going to talk about it next time and reach some sort of decision. Does that feel like a good way to move forward with this?

[48:44]

HS: Because like I say I think for us, you know it's, we're very happy to accommodate an independent facilitator. I'm also very happy to continue in this vein; it's really what the group wants to do? So, I'm loathed to sort of go hard on any sort of recommendation, because it's not really my area to say.

[49:08]

PN: I think anybody involved in this process from the customer point of view - we're just after an honest open transparent, where it's possible, view of things, explanations where they can be given and, respect for each other's position in the in the exercise. As has been mentioned before, earlier when we started this when we moved to the to this type of interaction, it was coming out of an almost a war scene really, because there were difficult relationships between the customer and EWR (Co) for various reasons and at that stage an independent facilitator seemed an attractive idea, sort of referee?

[50:05]

[...] Because it was such a sparring contest, but that's not turned out to be the case with the way these meetings they get better between 1, 2 and 3. We really appreciate that. We appreciate the fact that there was, uh, expertise fronted up at the drop-in sessions which hadn't previously been accessible, and that was quite informative and really satisfying actually, yeah.

[50:45]

HS: OK, that's really good.

PN: So, I'm not pushing for an independent facilitator.

HS: So, let's bring it back at the next meeting.

PN: I think we'd spent half of the time explaining things to the facilitator before we even started.

[51:02]

HS: OK, so in that case you'll be delighted to hear, I think, this is the end of me for a while and I'm going to hand over to Vanessa, she's going to talk about the Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC).

5 – Statement of Community Consultation

Slide 15 – Statement of Community Consultation.

VR: Good evening, everyone. Good evening, yes. So, I'm Vanessa Ralph Land and Consents Director at East West Rail. I did meet a few of you at the drop-in event a couple of weeks ago, and Peter in particular and others.

[51:34]

[...] I should say, the only difficulty I have is that because I hadn't met a lot of you before or and because the camera makes everyone face is too small to distinguish who people are, in this meeting I am not able to recognize whether anyone in the room this time round other than Peter, who I've heard today and came along to the drop in event.

[51:59]

[...] So, with that point made I'll launch in, but, uhm, it's really nice to be here and to have the opportunity to talk to you in a bit more detail about the Statement of Community Consultation and how that feeds into the process generally and in particular why it may be important to you.

[52:24]

[...] So, Peter, I'll sort of address you on the basis that I know that you're there, and I know that we spoke at the drop-in session and we had a discussion at the drop-in session, essentially around uhm, the representation by Bedford Council of various parishes to the north of Bedford. And I think the nub of the issue was that in the conversation between us, we really identified that you were wanting to be able to make a better representation of yourselves in the absence of the Council doing that on your behalf.

[53:07]

[...] And one of the ways in which that can happen in relation to the next stage of planned statutory consultation is through the Statement of Community Consultation. Peter, is that a fair summary so far?

PN: It's is, yes, yes, it's quite a fine one, thank you.

[53:30]

VR: Sure, thanks and so I offered because you had taken an interest in the SOCC as it's called for short, to come to you this evening and give you a sort of 10-to-15-minute slot really just to talk you through in more detail what a SOCC is and how you can become involved in framing it and populating one. The other thing that I agreed to do during the drop-in event was to provide you with a few examples of other promoters' SOCCs.

[54:15]

[...] and we did provide three of those, and I just wanted to check as well that even if you haven't been able to look at them in detail that you have got the link through to all three of them. We weren't able to provide direct copies for copyright reasons, but we've been able to provide links.

Those are Statements of Community Consultation for you to have a look at so that you know broadly what I am sort of talking about when I talk about the SOCC...can you just confirm that you got access to those links even if you haven't been able to look through the detail? I will run through briefly what they what they do, and what they what they are as part of my presentation.

[55:00]

NG: Yes, I've got access.

EC: Yes, I have.

VR: Great OK, thanks and have you been able to and have you been able to look at any of them.

PN: Yes, I have.

NG: Just briefly.

VR: OK, fine, right, that's helpful. That's just to understand the sort of existing information in the room, as it were.

[55:25]

PN: Sorry Vanessa, I thank you very much indeed for sending those through. They were basically a major job by the National Highways on the A66 Transpennine project, National Grid wanting to refurbish the whole system of Power Distribution for green energy, and ESSO were going to put in a new pipeline or update a pipeline between Southampton and London. All fairly

large projects, but significant differences between them, and it was interesting to see how they'd approached them.

[56:03]

VR: Yeah, absolutely. I completely agree with that. Obviously, the railway's a different animal in some ways, although it is linear, so in some ways that has similar impacts and similar issues as a pipeline and but the key point. And if I could ask you to move forward to the next slide, please.

Slide 16 – What is a SOCC?

[56:24]

VR: And the key point is that they are a Statement of Community Consultation or a statutory requirement, and the relevant legislation is referred to in the slides and obviously you've got access to the slide pack, so you can have a look and I won't dwell on the legalese and the key point, and I'll just sort of refer back to the history of the Planning Act, which is the legislation that we need to use to authorize this railway and is the same legislation that's used to authorize other nationally significant infrastructure projects and part of the regime, impose on promoters a quite stringent and detailed requirement to consult on their projects, in a way that had been specified within the Planning Act.

[57:22]

[...] So although, bodies, local authorities, other promoters (and so on) carry out consultations all the time and on different bits and pieces, the key difference for this project is that within the Planning Act there is information and prescription around the way in which consultation is carried out in relation to the project, who it's carried out with and so on and in order to ensure that the local community has its say in the way in which consultation is carried out, and because clearly there is value in obtaining local communities input on that given that they know their areas and the best.

[58:12]

[...] The requirement also within the Planning Act is that promoters prepare a statement of community consultation and that that is consulted on principally with District and Borough level authorities, which is how the conversation moved on and the role that parish councils could play and there is then a formal consultation period as well as the sort of informal preparation and process.

[58:48]

[...] So just to give you a little bit more, a little bit more of a framework and the slide in front of you sets out what I've just said, which is the preparation of the statement of community consultation is a requirement on the Planning Act and essentially what it does is it sets out how an applicant will consult the people living in the vicinity of a scheme ahead of a phase of statutory consultation. So, the point to bring out there is that, and the intended next phase of our project is a statutory consultation in the terms that mean that the Statement of Community Consultation obligation applies.

[59:28]

[...] You'll appreciate that given that the railway has gone from nothing through stages to route options, potential alignments and so on, there's been a need to carry out additional consultation at an earlier stage, and we have called that non-statutory consultation, which essentially means that, that's consultation that we've carried out at our discretion, because we know that it's the right thing to do as opposed to the statutory consultation piece which we are moving forward towards.

[1:00:05]

[...] Obviously in carrying out statutory consultation our approach would be to carry out an effective and inclusive consultation and to do it in the best way we possibly can. And that is what the SOCC sets out. So, for the benefit of people who haven't been able to have a look through the precedent and sort of examples provided, what generally happens with a SOCC?

[1:00:33]

[...] And I'm just referring to one of my precedents and so bear with me while I just go through the contents list because my memory is not capable of retaining such detailed information these days. What they generally do is they will set out the purpose of the document and set out what the particular obligation is on them to carry out and prepare a SOCC, given the nature of the project they're developing.

[1:01: 04]

[...] They'll usually give a little bit of background on the project itself, what it is, and what the timeline is and so on, and then there will be a much more detailed couple of sections regarding how the promoter intends to consult, so - when it will take place, what proposals will be consulted on who will be consulted, how the promoter would consult and how the consultation arrangements will be publicized and so on.

[1:01:38]

[...] And also, a section that talks about responding to the consultation: so, the proposed methods of response, how results would be presented, uhm, what further consultation might be envisaged, and so on. So that provides the sort of broad framework for what a SOCC would cover.

[1:01:58]

[...] As you'd expect, it would be supplemented by appropriate tables and figures, so you might have a project timeline, you might have contact details, you might have consultation documents, methods of making consultation documents available, as well as perhaps consultation zone maps and the list of prescribed consultees, because there are prescribed consultees under relevant sections of the legislation and within the planning and within the Planning Act.

[1:02:37]

[...] And so that explanation of what the SOCC is broadly what a SOCC would cover, and I would commend you, just to have a look at the examples that we've provided. Just because you'll find it a lot easier to visualize what I'm talking about, sort of ultimately, when it's on a piece of paper in front of you.

[1:02:57]

[...] Anyway, I'm going back to the point of this, uh, this the sort of part of the LRG discussion. The obligation is on us as the promoter to prepare a draft SOCC when the time comes and I'll come back to the programme shortly and that would be based on our knowledge to date, and that's a critical point that will come back to you. We would then share it with local authorities: so, Bedford Borough in particular informally to obtain feedback and then provide a final draft formally, to local authorities to receive a formal response within 28 days.

[1:03:39]

[...] So, you can see that the onus on us in that exchange if you like, is to deal with Borough and District level authorities because that's what the legislation says. Anyway, once it's finalized, we are required to publish the SOCC and also publish basically a notice of where the SOCC is available to look at, and so there will be newspaper notices associated with the publication of SOCC and other sorts of notices as well, uhm, that mean that you are signposted your way to looking at the final content. Could you move on to the next slide please?

[1:04:23]

Slide 17 – What Does a SOCC Cover?

VR: And this slide just covers what the SOCC does, and I've sort of given you an overview of what that is, but this slide sets it out, sorry I'm not very good at keeping things in order, I tend to talk around the slide content rather than directly to it. But you can see that this slide basically covers what I've just explained, the SOCC, sort of sort covers, and that's provides a little bit more detail. I'll just give you a sort of few seconds or a minute or two just to consider that, and I'll also ask at this stage if anyone's got any questions on what I've said so far.

[1:05:06]

[...] I can see your hand.

GJ: Yes, Gordon Johnston from Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden Parish council. As I understand it now, we are going to get an additional consultation before the statutory consultation?

[1:05:24]

VR: The programme at the moment contemplates a statutory consultation as the next of consultation. So, this discussion is directly relevant to the statutory consultation stage, but I should say that you know, of course, if you are providing and we will come on to sort of why you will be in a minute... that's covered on the next slide, and if you're providing input and feedback and helpful commentary on ways we can consult better then clearly it would make sense for us to take that into account in consulting at statutory stage or any other non-statutory consultation.

[1:06:07]

GJ: Alright.

VR: OK, any other questions at this point or I'll just move onto the next slide, please?

PN: Yeah, the next I think we're still, we're almost we're almost getting together on this, but there's still a little bit of uncertainty about this and that is why Gordon has made that - that comment.

[1:06:32]

[...] Uhm, as I understand it from reading through this and it's yes, it's a, it's a very staged process, largely prescribed and you can tell the same chapter numbers, the same wording's all the way through it, but it's just describing the sequence beginning to end.

[1:06:52]

[...] But uhm, there is and...the SOCC is describing how you're going to get comment in from the prescribed consultees and also in varying degrees from come from the communities, from individuals. And I think that is looking forward that's projecting forward to the consultation activity within the SC (Statutory consultation). Am I right in saying that?

[1:07:30]

VR: Yeah, that's right and I mean just on a on a sort of slight technicality...I would actually say that the emphasis on the SOCC, because it's the Statement of Community Consultation and it's very much on the local community and how we best consult with the local communities affected. So prescribed consultees and if I could put it this way, key stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, that sort of - that sort of entity, you know, of course are relevant, but this is very much geared towards consulting with the local communities.

[1:08:07]

[...] Therefore, you would expect to agree, and you know perhaps, broadly the same or cover a number of things in the same way, throughout all of the areas that the potential alignment would affect, but there may also be some sensitivities or variations between each area to reflect what that local community is sort of saying.

[1:08:40]

[...] But of course, as I say the key point on the sort of onus really on answers to consult with local authority at District or borough level, and the reason that I'm here tonight to talk to you, is to explain the way we would envisage that you can make your own views best heard. I can see Eric has flashed up in front of me because he's got a hand up.

[1:09:05]

EC: Hello Vanessa. Yes, Eric Cooper Clapham Parish Council and I'll own up to working for National Highways so I do have some understanding of this. I think just as an aside, I think some of the problems for the non-statutory consultation, because it's non-statutory, and there wasn't any prescribed process specifically, it's upset a lot of people at the early stages feeling they weren't consulted adequately, and I think that's caused a lot of problems.

[1:09:35]

[...] I think this is why this Local Representatives Group is welcome because it is setting a bit of formality to it. The one thing I was going to ask you...the Act, well you've just referred to it there, it talks about the draft SOCC being consulted with the Local Authorities. Do you, do you

envisage...because it's definition of local authorities: Bedford Borough is one and so are parish councils and town councils... so where are you looking to pitch that?

[1:10:04]

VR: So, without boring you with the legal detail, the Local Authority definition is basically a reference to Borough level authorities and County level authorities, but if we can go on to the next slide, please.

Slide 18 – How do we Develop a SOCC?

[1:10:22]

VR: The uhm, the way in which we develop our SOCC we would envisage would be able to capture input that, you generally - so LRG attendees, impart because we will need to prepare the draft. So, and this is what Peter and I discussed a couple of weeks ago, we envisaged that the way that you could have the influence you want to around how we consult best, uhm, by feeding in your views through the LRG.

[1:11:00]

[...] So what I was going to say was that, and we've got a sort of way of, well, next steps I'll come onto, but essentially, what we will do is develop our SOCC and approach to consultation using the information that we've already got to date, so you know, for example, and there will be comments made about the way in which we consulted last time round in the feedback to the consultation. So, we would review that and make sure that anything that it's sensible to factor in in preparing our SOCC and developing the way that we consult at the next stage, at statutory consultation, is taken into account and included.

[1:11:45]

[...] We also have various information from speaking to you already, and we have other information from other LRGs. We have lots of information that's already come to us and that all enables us to put together a draft.

[1:12:06]

[...] But what you have, the benefit you have; is having the LRG with us, which means that we can actually provide you with a pro forma, essentially, that asks questions or views that are broadly based on the National Grid version of the example SOCC that you've already seen, around how we consult when and with whom, what should we use, social media or not, newspapers?

[1:12:36]

[...] You know that kind of thing? And you can provide your input by providing our pro forma back to us with that information and that enables us to develop our draft document in a way that we can then provide it to Bedford to say “look obligation is to provide proof, is to is to talk to you”, but as you all understand, we've taken into account information that we've been provided through other channels.

[1:13:15]

PN: Having... well from what I've seen, and I have looked through the three examples that you sent out.

[1:13:26]

[...] At least at least one of the three went as far as saying that they would leaflet people in a designated zone up to 2 and a half kilometers either side of the work site, which is very, very, similar to how you develop the postcards supporting this project.

[1:13:52]

[...] And that each household would be, we will be, sent information of what was coming, uh, and you might take a wider area and just send those people a flyer on the fact that this consultation processes is ongoing and if they want to take part in it, then giving them venues and whatever... like you got on this this slide here, as to how you might do it.

[1:14:26]

[...] And it certainly seemed that there was a facility for any member of the Community to end up with a with a questionnaire to which you could fill out in paper form or do it online or send emails in... personal letters very, very similar to what the offer was in the previous consultations. Now that that, to my mind goes further than EWR pulling all the information together that they've gleaned from consultations one and two and any other sources that they've come across along the way.

[1:15:11]

[...] And saying 'yes, this is this is what we've done, this is what we found, we think we've done a pretty good job' and sending that to the Borough Council and they say 'yeah, yeah, OK, tick' and that's their job and effectively community members potentially lose out or on our ability to express a personal view at this very important stage of the SC.

[1:15:41]

VR: Sorry sorry, I might have... I don't, I don't understand the point and I might have missed a bit when you spoke, but I'm not sure I'm clear on why you think that local communities will miss out.

[1:16:06]

PN: Well, a lot did on the original consultation. Well, it's fairly well documented, but may be difficult to actually produce as an evidence pack that there were difficulties with the nature of the 2019 consultation in terms of reaching people effectively.

[1:16:38]

HS: So, I can jump in really quick, I think there's a couple of different points there. I think just for the sake of this meeting, you know, we've had those conversations before - on our 2019 consultation - and I think we're both aware of, you know, the issues there. I think what Vanessa is talking about, and perhaps what would be helpful for future consultations just to understand from our perspective...we do feel very strongly that, you know, we did as much as could be expected for where we were in consultations.

[1:17:12]

[...] Actually, particularly in the last consultation we went over and above what what's normal. I think what might be helpful for us, and it's a different issue from the SOCC in many ways, what might be helpful for us is if that if there are other things that you would like us to do, we are really happy to do them. If there are additional pieces of work you want us to do, if there's a wider consultation zone you want us to talk to, a different way of sending out information that you feel is more accessible to people - that's brilliant.

[1:17:41]

[...] And part of that does get pulled out in the SOCC as my understanding and regardless you would have the conversations in this room anyway, I think.

VR: Yeah. Yeah, can I just respond to that? Sorry Eric, I know you're waiting. Just bear with me a second. So, I agree with Hannah I think, you know, the important point is to look to the future and the opportunity that you have within the LRG is to make representations on precisely the stuff that you've just mentioned Peter in terms of, you know, wider consultation zones and that sort of thing.

[1:18:21]

[...] All of that kind of information and your thoughts on that will help us to develop what we hope will be a consultation that meets everyone's needs and satisfies everyone. I'm sorry I can't see you now...because I've got Eric on screen because he's got his hand up, so I'm just gonna ask him to speak.

[1:18:44]

EC: Thank you Vanessa. Uhm, what I was going to say my understanding, I may have got it wrong, this LRG group was very much targeted at parish councils and town councils and it's one of the sort of oddities, uh, for Bedford.

[1:19:03]

[...] Bedford itself is not parish'ed and therefore there are some communities or groups within Bedford...I think of the Poets group you might be aware of, who are not...I may get this totally wrong, but I don't think they are represented on this LRG group and I think just to be inclusive and make sure that they are engaged through the end of the SOCC. And I said I appreciate you're going a little bit beyond by having direct engagement with the LRG. LRG?

HS: LRG, yep.

[1:19:39]

EC: And it has to be welcomed rather than the statutory definition which you gave, so that's great and I - I'm just thinking of that particular group, whether they can be drawn into the process as well somehow?

HS: No, you're entirely right, so the LRGs do have representation from their ward councillors in those meetings and over and above that we have offered meetings with everyone who could be directly impacted or sort of the next the next set of run of impacts, we've offered everyone in that situation one to one meetings with members of Vanessa's team actually.

[1:20:16]

[...] As well as that, we are talking to specific members of the Protect Poets Group which is a specific community group that we're talking to so, and I personally have been talking quite a lot to them and also encouraging them to nominate, I suppose, specific people that they want to have as their spokespeople directly with us in the same way that some of the other community groups have specific people who act as spokespeople. So, I think that Group, particularly, is fairly well served.

[1:20:51]

[...] But again, we can, you know, always take all these conversations up more. And I think that it's it is worth saying it's Vanessa said right at the beginning...I think the point of all of this, the point of all this communication is that one size really doesn't fit all. This is a conversation around what's right for communities along the route and to get out there to communities and really understand what's right.

[1:21:12]

[...] So, during the course of East West Rail we are we likely to find other people that, you know, that that need communications in a slightly different way as well. And that would be in the SOCC as well. But yeah, it's a really sensible point to make Eric and I hope that that satisfies you, but if not...

EC: Well, it's - thank you. Thank you, Hannah. And again, as Vanessa was saying, we are looking forward now to the next stage, so that's useful, the only comment I would make there, and it's always a difficulty, it applies to Parish council like any other representative group, uh, your community doesn't necessarily agree with you, potentially, and I think one of the issues with the Protect [Poets] and I'm speaking out of turn because I'm not part of the Protect Poets group.

[1:21:57]

[...] However, my understanding is, their views aren't necessarily aligned with the Ward councillor views, and then that that then creates a problem because they just feel they're not being represented. So, the fact that you are engaging and hopefully you've drawn into the SOCC process, is - it's gotta be welcomed.

[1:22:15]

HS: Yeah, I, I think that's really fair, you know, it's always going to be a balance between being able to speak to people, elected representatives who, after, or have been elected by people to represent them and, that's right, and that's why we have these groups with the elected representatives, because it's right that we should talk to elected representatives. You'd be horrified if we didn't - you should be horrified if we didn't.

[1:22:38]

[...] But also making sure that we've got the ability to talk to constituents directly, because people will have specific questions to ask. So, I think we're constantly sort of trying to strike that balance correctly.

[1:22:51]

EC: Yeah, but the, my final comment - there is just, as we know, they are really - the Poets group are really quite significantly impacted so that they almost have a special interest as opposed to other parts of Bedford where it's sort of a lesser impact.

HS: Absolutely, and that's why you know, Vanessa's team did hold several meetings... and I think we'll be doing the same in other areas too, or at least like sort of some kind of meeting with similarly impacted people.

[1:23:28]

EC: Yeah, the other reason I think it's this - this SC (Statutory Consultation) stage is important to be to be handled correctly. It's that I'm thinking back to the route consultation. The last consultation - the one in covid. Because the various options were at a fairly elementary stage of evolution, no answers - no effective answers - could be given to what a viaduct might look like, is it made out of concrete or steel and all of that.

[1:24:12]

[...] And the spot answer was, all of that will be available at the Statutory Consultation. So, I think there is an inclination that amongst all the communities that come the Statutory Consultation, there will be a fairly detailed account of how the preferred alignment is going to be produced and that will be presumably because you almost designed it then.

[1:24:41]

HS: I think I'll look to Vanessa there. But I think the detail that goes into the Statutory Consultation is, well, pretty detailed.

VR: Yes, it is. That's right. So sorry, so, at the point that you're consulting at statutory stage, you, the requirement is to consult on the proposed application, so essentially, you're consulting on what you think you're going to be applying for when you make the DCO application submission. And as a result of that the interventions, for want of a better word, in terms of, you know viaducts and that sort of detail and public rights of way - that, that sort of issue, will be provided.

[1:25:29]

PN: Yeah, and also considering it would be a fairly clear indication of how the construction of the project will be facilitated.

VR: Yes, correct.

PN: And you know the amount of land space that there will be taken for compounds and dumps of soil as the thing progresses and how the impact of that sort of activity is going to be blended in with the requirement for normal life to carry on in the area.

[1:26:10]

[...] And those of course could bring back the whole new raft of comment from the communities because they're not being presented with that level - that level of detail and for a railway, it's pretty substantial.

[1:26:30]

VR: Sorry I don't know how big the screen is you're looking at, but I'm nodding so I'm just saying that in case you can't see me.

HS: No, that's exactly right. I think you know you would expect significant feedback from such a consultation and just to say that the Statutory Consultation is like all consultations to ask peoples' views and then to use those views to shape the next stage.

PN: Right.

[1:26:54]

HS: So then if there are any changes that are made off the back of that consultation there is scope to do that. So, then the final submission is one that takes account of comments made in the Statutory Consultation.

[1:27:06]

[...] Then the submission goes to the...uh, does that make sense?

PN: Yeah. Where does the SOCC fit into this sequence? Before the statutory consultation starts?

VR: Yes, yeah, absolutely so there's a...as a sort of broad timeline, probably three to four months, before the Statutory Consultation, we would be, and even before that, we'd be thinking about the draft of it.

[1:27:34]

[...] But the draft is produced, say for argument's sake, four months beforehand and in advance of that, we have prepared it, factoring in the things that are listed in the slide that's up at the moment, so, direct engagement with groups, specific needs, having regard to Local Authorities'

Statements of Community involvement, which is how Local Authorities set out how they will engage with their communities.

[1:28:09]

[...] And then, as I say, there's an informal period of discussion around the content of the SOCC, which we would expect to have with the District, Borough level authorities and counties as well, but the focus would be on the District and Boroughs.

[1:28:26]

[...] Regarding, you know, perhaps, comments they want to come back with on an informal basis that would allow us to improve the draft. Things that we may not have covered by accident, because they would because we can't be aware of them or points that they might make that develop or augment a proposal that we've set out. So, there's an informal exchange regarding the content, and I wouldn't expect that to be more than probably one or two rounds between us and the Local Authorities.

[1:29:08]

[...] And then once we have prepared what we think the final version of the SOCC is, it's then sent to the Local Authorities again, but this time on a formal basis for them to formally respond within a 28-day period. And it's important for you to understand that this is not an approval that they are providing of the content of the SOCC.

[1:29:35]

[...] It's again an opportunity for them to provide feedback, but this document is led by us. So, if they, and you know, I won't sort of point at a particular authority or any particular entity, but if that if something is suggested, that is, for whatever reason, be it financial or other reason, that is not something that we can do for whatever reason...and that would be a justifiable reason.

[1:30:03]

[...] Then, as I say, the obligation on us is to have regards and take into account the feedback rather than to actually follow every, uh, comment, or, point made as a direction from the authority. So, as I say, it's led by us.

[1:30:29]

[...] We prepare it informally, it goes out for commentary informally, we finalize draft, it's sent to the authorities formally, they respond formally and once we've done that final piece of having regard to that formal feedback, we develop the final version, and that is then published.

[1:30:51]

[...] And that's obviously published well in advance of the, well, I say well in advance...it's published in advance, of the state of the statutory consultation commencing because clearly everyone needs to have had access to the SOCC through the paper, through online means, through social media, whatever it is, we've agreed we will do in order to understand where to go to find information about the Statutory Consultation and you know which libraries will be stocking, uh, the documents, for example, in hardcopy.

[1:31:28]

[...] But as I say, I would commend you to have a look at the examples that we've provided because they will give more shape to some of the bits and pieces and points, I've made this evening.

PN: That's quite fine, yep.

BR: Can I ask, at what point will the alignment be announced then as far as this SOCC and the...obviously before the Statutory Consultation? Would it be before the SOCC comes out or when?

[1:31:59]

VR: Uhm, so the alignment, so in terms of announcements and program, I'm not really in a position to say sort of definitively anything about that because we are working with the Department for Transport, obviously on that as well. But in terms of what is in the Statutory Consultation and what I can say is that you would absolutely expect to see the proposed alignment. So, the final proposed alignment in those documents.

[1:32:35]

BR: Won't they be before that, I would have thought that we would know before that point which one would have been chosen, surely?

PN: So sorry, Vanessa, but let's say you get to the end of your consultation analysis, and you consider everything else and you come up with the winning, or the one you really prefer and you then put that through a public chain to the Secretary of State, then to give you the nod to proceed and it's after that surely, you'll start working on the SOCC and move towards the SC (Statutory Consultation)?

[1:33:07]

VR: Well, that is one way of doing it, but that's not necessarily the way - that is not necessarily the way that it would happen and as I say, I don't want to commit either way, because I'm not able to do so.

HS: In terms of in terms of pure process if I can jump in.

VR: Yeah, sure.

HS: It's so it's obviously necessary for the preferred alignment to be in the consultation otherwise...

BR: Yes obviously, actually how long though?

[1:33:33]

HS: So yeah, it's, but in terms of pure process there isn't actually anything in the DCO process that says you would have to separate out your alignment being made public and the launch of a consultation on that alignment. Because, what you could do is say "here is our alignment, what do you think of it?" Which is a perfect, sensible way of doing it.

[1:33:54]

[...] The other way of doing it is, say "here's our alignment" and then six months later, say here's all the other detail that sits behind it or a week later or 10 years later, whenever, here's all the detail that goes with it, now what do you think of it?

[1:34:10]

[...] And both of those, not those timings by the way that would obviously be insane, but in, in terms of the process side, both of those are valid ways of doing it. We are not in a position at the moment because there's still work to do with the Department (for Transport) and with other people to decide exactly what the programme looks like. I think when we are in a position to share what the programme looks like we'll be happy to. It's just that there is there are more than one way that you can do it.

[1:34:29]

BR: So, the SOCC will go ahead before we know the line?

HS: It could, it could go ahead without the line because, well, they're effectively - they could be parallel processes, or they could be sequential. So, it's not possible for us at the moment because we simply don't know what the programme will end up being. But I think when we are

in a position to share, when we have a level of certainty, you know, we'll be able to talk about that. But is that fair Vanessa?

[1:34:54]

VR: Yeah, I think that that's fair, and I mean, as you say, there's more than one way to skin a cat to coin a phrase. And you know, those are two quite likely scenarios in terms of the way that things would be done, but, and as I say, for reasons that come - for reasons that Hannah and I have both touched on, we're not able to say it will be definitely this way, or definitely that way. And you know, for the purpose of developing the SOCC, which is more about how we consult, who we consult with, where we put materials and so on, that is something that is in effect agnostic of alignment.

[1:35:40]

VR: Although I appreciate that's important to you, obviously.

HS: Yeah, and just to be incredibly reductive and boil it down into its conceptual parts. You've got, what do you think of it and how you give us that feedback and exactly what that process is, the question process, and then you've got the actual material itself. And those can be created and developed in parallel and then they come together at that point if you consult so they are sort of two processes intrinsically linked.

[1:36:09]

[...] I'm very aware that we've got according to our schedule 3 minutes left, even though we took out of quite a chunky piece actually we've got 3 minutes left to cover AOB and that. So, I just wonder if there's any urgent or anything sort of critical that we want to ask Vanessa?

VR: Sorry, I just want to add something please. So, in terms of next steps, what our proposal was to you as an LRG, was to provide, and I mentioned this briefly earlier, was to provide a pro forma that asks the questions that enables you to give us the most useful answers that we can therefore have regard to and take into account in developing our draft SOCC.

[1:36:48]

[...] So, for that reason we will model the pro forma response on the example documents that you've been provided through the links to ask those useful questions so that you can provide useful answers and also you have the benefit of knowing that it's not us, uhm, making our own making up our own way of doing this. The reason we're asking the questions is because they are questions that promoters ask and those questions need to be answered in order for any promoter to develop the best version of consultation that they can. Does that make sense?

[1:37:36]

GJ: Yeah.

PN: Yep.

VR: So, in terms of when you'll be provided with that pro forma, or assuming that, that - that's something that you'd like to participate in, and I have looked at a draft prepared by my colleague Simon Gill who's my Head of Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement in the delivery team so he has a focus on the DCO process and I'd like to introduce you to him at some point.

[1:38:08]

[...] He's prepared a pro forma, which I've had a look at and so I would hope - what day is it today, Wednesday? I would hope that we'd be able to get something across to you and end of this week, beginning of next week, for you to be able to think about the responses that you put down and then you can feed that information back to us and we can factor it in. OK, yeah, well we're happy with that?

[1:38:36]

GJ: Okay.

PN: Okay

BR: Okay.

GJ: Well, we're happy with that and there's only 3 of us here

BR: And three up there.

HS: Eric, have you got your hand up?

VR: You're on mute.

EC: Uhm, yes, I am sorry. Yeah, again that's to be welcomed. The only question I have related to that or are you gonna get, are you expecting one pro forma back from the LRG group or can there be more than one? Because there may be different parishes may have different views you see.

[1:39:15]

VR: Yep, so I think what would be helpful, would be to understand, if we can ask you to work together if that's possible, so we have a single version of what you as a collective group, would

prefer where possible? Of course, if there are deviations for parish reasons for want of a better word and or description, then we're happy to hear those as well.

[1:39:44]

[...] But really, do what suits you best, but obviously if there's commonality between you and that means we get one feedback response form rather than 17, then that's helpful to us.

EC: Fair enough, thank you.

HS: Right? Fabulous, I wonder if there are there any more burning questions for Vanessa at this point or should we move off SOCC onto AOB?

GJ: Nope

PN: No, no, that's fine, thank you Vanessa.

GJ: Thank you.

[1:40:17]

HS: Thank you, wonderful thanks so much Vanessa as ever, so interesting.

VR: No problem.

6 – AOB and Closing Remarks

Slide 19 – AOB and Closing Remarks

HS: I'm having trouble getting back to my screen, there we go. Uh, my closing remarks. I haven't got anything prepared other than just to say thanks so much, really fantastic.

[1:40:40]

GJ: Can I ask a question?

HS: Always.

GJ: Thank you. Have you had any feedback from Beth West since some of us met with her?

HS: I have actually. Yeah, I had a train journey with her Monday morning, about half an hour or so, and it was the main topic of conversation. She really enjoyed meeting everyone actually. She really, really enjoyed it.

[1:41:02]

[...] We've obviously got a follow up email that came and we had a look at this some sort of specific questions. But it's exactly the sort of thing that the minute she joined East West Rail, she asked to be doing that sort of thing, having that conversation. I think she found it really helpful, and she enjoyed it very much and I get the impression it was helpful for you as well.

GJ: Oh yes.

PN: It was, it was.

GJ: It was the most full and frank conversation we've had with anyone in EWR.

[1:41:30]

GJ: You know, I mean put Simon in a **** hat, they can put him in a trash bin really. But it was, it really was, it was good and she was honest enough to say 'I didn't know that, I wasn't aware of that', which we found refreshing to say the least.

[1:41:50]

HS: She's a, yeah, she's a very different animal I think to anyone before and she's very, very - I actually met before she joined the company and I sat down and had lunch around what her aspirations were for the company and what drives her as a person and she made it really clear to me in the conversation that she's driven by doing the right thing.

[1:42:13]

[...] And that really for me, really does come through my conversations with her. It's been absolutely run through everything she does and, I really, really like that approach and I'm not surprised that your team and your group responded well to her because I think she really understands what we're trying to do but also understands the impact that has on other people to. You know on people from the area. So, I'm glad.

[1:42:44]

GJ: But anyway, yep, very good meeting.

HS: Good, good. I'll feed that back. She'll be really pleased to hear that. Any other AOB...any other business?

GJ: 10 days.

HS: Are you sure you've got nothing else in your binder?

PN: Nope.

GJ: You've got 10 days to get paperwork out.

Slide 20 – Next Steps

[1:43:00]

HS: Wonderful, so next steps really quickly, sorry! Summary note to be circulated to attendees and slides, transcripts and whatnot will be uploaded within 10 working days. Virtual workshop, I think we've agreed to put a pin in that and come back to it at the next meeting. The next meeting, I think we agreed as well, I mean we'll double check availability but we'll probably stick with Environmental Impact Assessment just because we know we've got that team nailed down for that date and we'll rearrange the Business Case deep dive session as agreed.

[1:43:35]

Slide 21 – We're Always Here / Got a Question?

HS: Thank you so much everyone and keep talking to us you've got the local reps email and contact @. As I always say, that comes through to my team so if that doesn't get answered for any reason, let me know and I will open a can of crazy and make sure these things get answered. But I think everything is actually running quite well right now. Thank you for your time.

[1:44:00]

NG: Thank you Hannah.

VR: Thanks!

PN: Thank you.

EC: Thanks.

PN: Thank you.