

Bedfordshire Group - Transcript

Meeting #7 - Details

Date: Wednesday 7 December 2022

Time: 7:00-9:00 PM

Type of meeting: Virtual meeting (Zoom)

Attendees:

EWR Co attendees

- Hannah Staunton, EWR Co Lead
- Caroline Eglinton, Accessibility and Inclusion Subject Matter Expert
- Robbie Gibb, Active Travel and First Mile Last Mile Subject Matter Expert
- EWR Co production and support team

Parish Council representatives

- Cllr Paul Cain, Milton Ernest Parish Council
- Cllr Justin Griffiths, Roxton Parish Council
- Cllr Gordon Johnston, Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden Parish Council
- Cllr Paula Brazier, Brickhill Parish Council
- Cllr Graham Pendrey, Great Barford Parish Council
- Cllr Nicola Gribble, Renhold Parish Council
- Cllr Guido Liguori, Renhold Parish Council advisor

Apologies

- Biddenham Parish Council
- Bolnhurst and Keysoe Parish Council
- Brickhill Parish Council
- Bromham Parish Council
- Cardington Parish Council
- Clapham Parish Council
- Colmworth Parish Council
- Cople Parish Council
- Milton Ernest Parish Council
- Ravensden Parish Council
- Shortstown Parish Council
- Staploe Parish Council
- Stevington Parish Council

- Thurleigh Parish Council
- Turvey Parish Council
- Wilden Parish Council
- Willington Parish Council
- Cllr Wendy Rider, Brickhill in Bedford
- Cllr Charles Royden, Brickhill in Bedford
- 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 Stephen Moon - Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr James Weir - Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Jonathan Abbott – Oakley, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Doug McMurdo – Riseley, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Tom Wootton – Sharnbrook, Bedford Borough Council
- Cllr Phillipa Martin-Moran-Bryant, Great Barford, Bedford Borough Council

Documents discussed in this meeting

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

- Agenda
- Slides

Key points, actions and outcomes

The recording was started following the delivery of the agenda.

01. Welcome and today's agenda

02. Review of actions from previous meetings

Slide 6 – Outstanding Actions

[0:00:38]

Hannah Staunton (HS): Well, that's a very timely technical problem wasn't it, just as I was talking about technical problems.

Gordon Johnston (GJ): That was a quick footstop wasn't it hey?

HS: oh very odd. Actually, before we go forward then just a reminder this is the LRG that gets recorded so there is only one of our LRGs that gets recorded, this is it. We did say though however we did say at the beginning of every meeting we would just check with everyone that they were comfortable with that and if anyone has any objection to that please just sort of do raise it now and let us know, so we can sort of take action accordingly.

[0:01:09]

[...] No one is screaming, so I will assume that we have permission to continue. Okay, cool. So, yes, the action there to consider if it's better hosted on Teams or Zoom. But there was the suggestion in the room and most people now are quite comfortable with Teams. And when we first started this, perhaps we weren't using previous information for people that are more comfortable with Zoom so we are considering that in the round. And we will update you on that as we go forward. And we also took an action to review whether the meeting should be free virtual or hybrid rather than a hybrid meeting.

[00:01:40]

[...] So whether, what we move would move into. I don't think we came to a conclusion on this. This was just something that we agreed we'd sort of talk about a little bit further because we haven't really come to it. Obviously, we are now working fully virtual because we have a lot of notes from people saying that they are more comfortable taking this one from home. I think the weather probably plays a big part in in that to be perfectly honest. So, I just wanted to open it up for a little bit of a discussion in the room and see if anyone has any strong views about that at the moment because we never really closed that one out for this group if I'm honest. Nicky?

[00:02:15]

Nicola Gribble (GJ): Thank you. I just like to say that I always prefer a face to face. I like talking to people, I like judging reactions. And I think it sparks a much better debate and I think our last face to face at Wyboston was particularly good. I would have been... I would have come in person today but I just had a shocking cold, and I didn't want to turn out so I certainly would prefer face to face. I know Peter prefers face to face as well.

[00:02:47]

Gudio Liguori (GL): My two pennies worth is I'm the opposite, I'd much prefer virtual.

GJ: I prefer face to face, it's only the fact that I've got a chest infection I didn't come out tonight.

HS: I wonder if a suggestion is that we play these by ear and just agree that we sort of have an agreement that we need quorum in person for it to be a sensible use of sort of people's time and bluntly public funds as well and all that sort of stuff. So I wonder if we play the

next one, do a poll in advance and then make an agreement in advance, but I think the view that we've always taken is sort of three people is this really the minimum we should set up a meeting for. Are we comfortable moving on and we'll sort of close the section for now but revisit it at some future point?

[00:03:35]

[...] Good stuff, okay.

[00:03:36]

Justin Griffiths (JG): Sorry Hannah, I think your idea of polling, four weeks out or three weeks out of the date is possibly a good one because yes there are advantages to virtual but there are other strong advantages to face to face.

HS: Yeah, and I think there was a suggestion with maybe having one a year where we all make a concerted effort. And maybe judging from this week, doing that in a month where there aren't coughs and colds going would probably be quite sensible...but the other one that, yeah I think a poll feels like a helpful addition for this.

JG: Fairly simple thing to do.

HS: Yeah, I think that's right.

[00:04:21]

HS: I will sort of caveat that very slightly by saying that the availability of our subject matter experts is sometimes dependent on the travel times, so there may be occasions where we make a recommendation that one of our experts is virtual, or something similar, even if meeting itself in person. But I think I think we're getting into a good place with sort of hybrid now, with most people are kind of comfortable with it.

[00:04:41]

[...] And then, the final one, again, looking to the technical difficulties that sort of not wholly relevant to this meeting, but we have been working in the background because I think there was a question mark over whether it was the tech that we were using. We think we have resolved the issues we had last time by sort of looking at tech. Time will tell that would have been something we tested today. In you know... in action, but we're not doing that. So I think that is something we will pick up next time we have a hybrid.

[00:05:10]

[...] Also, I've just had a reminder through that the Terms of Reference went out today and people have until the 21st of December to make any comments on the Terms of Reference today. So it's not it's not strictly an action, but it was something that we spoke about, so just a slight change in the Terms of Reference. We spoke about what the changes will be last

week, last time we met and they are quite limited. So I don't feel they impact the meat of the subjects. It's just catching up with some agreements that we've had in the room.

[00:05:44]

[...] Any thoughts, or questions, or comments, on anything that I've gone through in the slide? Just for completeness nope, excellent. Next slide, please.

Slide 7 – Responses to meeting format survey

[00:05:57]

[...] Um, we've also we also sent out a survey to talk about the meeting format. We've talked already about the hybrid sort of action of that, but the frequency of the LRG meetings is something that's just quite interesting. We've only actually received three responses to this. And interestingly, the only person that said that they'd like more frequent meetings is someone who has in fact, never been to a meeting. So we're not entirely sure what to do with the three data points that we have, because that's quite a limited amount of information to be working with. So, if you have any, if you want to fill this out, please do. The team will I'm sure resend it and make the link available. But I think it's helpful for us to understand if there are actually strong feelings about this or if we've got it right.

[00:06:47]

JG: I must have missed that so sorry if you could resend that would be great

HS: Yes sure, that's not a problem. I think everyone's inbox just get fit to burst don't they. Um. Next slide please.

03. Topic – Active Travel and First Mile Last Mile

Slide 8 – Active Travel and First Mile Last Mile

[00:07:03]

HS: Without further ado, can I just say I put those icons on because I think they're adorable. So sorry if they are a bit twee. But without further ado, I'm gonna hand over to Robbie, who's going to talk about our topic for today, one of our two topics of today, of active travel and First Mile Last Mile. Go ahead Robbie.

[00:07:22]

Slide 9 – Whole journey management

Robbie Gibb (RG): Thank you Hannah. Hi, everyone, so I love the icons by the way. I think I'll keep them in there. So, First Mile Last Mile and active travel, what's it about for EWR? I've just put this slide up first because actually it's about a whole journey management approach for us.

[00:07:46]

[...] And what that means it is what it says on the tin. It's thinking about the end to end journey from the moment someone decides to make a journey in their house or in the office, wherever it might be. And then how they plan and kind of execute go on the journey all the way through to the other end.

[00:08:07]

[...] So while you know we're a railway, we're building a railway here. Our approach is very much about the inclusive end to end journey that someone might want to make and how we can develop some solutions and work closely with other people, other providers, with the communities and stakeholders, so that we can deliver something that is far more than just a rail journey.

Slide 10 – Our 'First Mile Last Mile' proposition

[00:08:36]

[...] So our First Mile Last Mile proposition, as I said, it's about a seamless door to door experience where we can integrate public transport modes, facilitate and promote active travel, so walking, wheeling... which gives a real choice, so a compelling choice for customers at the start and end of the journeys but also really gives a really compelling choice when it comes to us versus the car for example.

[00:09:10]

[...] So, if we can make it easy for people to get to and from railway stations, then actually it starts to make rail travel become far more attractive. And, you know, our golden threads around this particular proposition, we recognize that technology plays a big part, and we will talk that in a bit more about that in a moment or two. But we're trying to be ambitious about what we do.

[00:09:37]

[...] You know, we're working at the moment in the approach to us operating the services between Oxford and Milton Keynes. So some of the solutions that were that we're looking at the moment will by the time we start operating further to Bedford and Cambridge, they would have matured and what we're looking at is making sure that the way we support our customers and our communities is through making sure that we're innovative and that we're continuously reviewing what it is that you provide to make sure it's inclusive, that it suits everybody's personal needs.

[00:10:15]

[...] So the personalization section, and that ultimately, the reason I'm here, looking at First Mile and Last Mile, is that the environment that the environment is a huge driver for us here at East West Rail. We want to take more cars off the road, we want to be able to provide sustainable solutions and really attractive solutions.

[00:10:45]

[...] and you guys and people that will work within local authorities and councils and other operators, bus operators, in the future I daresay, taxi operators, micro mobility, I don't know autonomous cars, maybe even in the future. They're all stakeholders that are really... that are really important to us as we as we kind of embark on this journey.

[00:11:09]

[...] So the whole thing for us really in summary there is moving away from being a rail operator who kind of just kind of just touches, you know, make sure there was a bus stop at the station or make sure that some cycle racks, to really move into an end to end journey proposition.

Slide 11 – Potential solutions

[00:11:30]

[...] So, the next couple of slides I just want to go through some of our potential solutions. So, the things that we're looking at at the moment. We know that as, you know, as a rail operator or rail constructor at the moment, but operator in the future, we can't deliver everything. But what we can do is start to work on how we can get some of those blockers out of the way and how we can start to create the relationships with people like local authorities, with private enterprise, digital companies, so that we can so that we can design solutions that actually really work for customers.

[00:12:15]

[...] So, two of the strands here is around, as I've said, connecting customers to our stations and using digital applications. I'll start with the connecting customers to our stations piece.

[00:12:28]

[...] So, we're working with local authorities, we start working with local authorities at the western end of the route and we're spreading our wings ever further east as we as we kind of mature our work and operators as well, so, when we say operators here, predominantly we're talking about bus operators so that we can start to create local transport plans with those with those communities, with those councils and operators that improve the public transport connectivity. So, my view is that every rail station should be a hub for connectivity... a you know a public transport hub, an active travel hub, but it should be an enabler for people to get in and out of their communities.

[00:13:20]

[...] Um and by working with the local communities, the local authorities will be far better able to do that.

[00:13:28]

[...] Integrating tickets and timetables, so what does that mean? Well, at the moment, I guess you look at, you get on a train, you get off, you hope a bus is going to be there. What we're talking about here is really locking timetables together so that when you get off the train, the bus is timed to arrive and depart in such time that it's very seamless for you to get from a train to a bus and that the fare that you pay is a joined-up fair. You don't have to worry about getting a bus ticket separately or train tickets separately.

[00:14:08]

[...] Or even in its in its kind of most extreme, we'd really like to be able to say you can have something that will allow you to hire a bike, get on a bus get on our train, and it's all in one transaction, which is in essence what you know what we refer to as mobility as a service.

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[...] We are looking at demand responsive transport and I think part of the reason that demand responsive transport is really coming to the fore at the moment is around issues with conventional bus networks. So, you know, we're more than aware that there are bus network issues across the Arc. So, a lot of the operators have since COVID recognized that, or come to the decision I should say, that some of their services are no longer commercially viable.

[00:15:01]

[...] So that's led to a lot of either reduction in service or even in some cases withdrawal of service. I travelled through Bedford myself to get to and from the office at Milton Keynes, so I can attest to the fact that most of the buses I travel on now don't operate half as frequently as they used to. So, it's, it really is something that is going to have to it's going to take a lot of consideration both from ourselves and other stakeholders such as local authorities.

[00:15:31]

[...] But transport, but demand responsive transport really come to the fore at the moment because I think as these commercial services start to become less attractive to bus operators, demand responsive transport might be the answer not saying it definitely is but it may be the answer, where we can operate smaller services, which are more in tune with actual needs of customers and all the evidence so far suggests that they may be commercially a bit more viable depending on the model that you go for.

[00:16:07]

[...] So, we're really investigating those models, seeing where they work, seeing where they haven't worked and understanding why so that we can, so that we can start working with stakeholders to see if there's something that we can do to bring together something that meets customer demand, rather than just running conventional buses which as I said, can often be cut back.

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[...] So all of that is part of us trying to provide this multimodal transport hub to and from our stations, includes taxi hire and of course, at the end of the day, we acknowledge that people still want to travel to stations by car. So you know, we will provide that, you know, we'll provide those facilities because for us, if we can get somebody to travel by car to the station rather than traveling the whole route by car then that's still part of the part of a win.

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[...] Harnessing the power of digital applications. So what this means for us is we can we can provide all these new ways of connecting to the station, transport hubs, but actually as we see the prevalence of digital technology, you know, a lot of us have smartphones now when we rely upon apps for to understand the news, the weather, how to get about, you know, Apple Maps and Google Maps or you know, really important parts of my life for sure.

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[...] We want to create a way of getting all these pieces of information into the hands of our customers in a way which allows them to do things in a more seamless way. So I guess you know, we've got in journey info navigation, alternative route alerts and localized weather. If I was to kind of draw a picture, if we could do it. You'd have an app, the mobile app, which allows you to plan your journey, book your train tickets or your bus tickets, or all of it all in one.

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[...] It will tell you how to get to the station, give you options for whether you want to cycle or whether you want to catch a bus, navigate you there. Tell you about things that have changed along the journey. So if you're if you're traveling by bus, perhaps your bus is running late, you get a you get a notification saying you don't need to leave the house so quickly. The bus is five minutes late, something like that.

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[...] Other information could be incorporated such as weather so if you're traveling home and we can tell you the weather's nice today, perhaps you might want to cycle there's a

number of cycles available at cycle rack so that kind of that kind of choice that we can deliver through digital. Is a really important is a really important thing for us at the moment.

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[...] Now I guess the best way to kind of the best way not to sell it but the best way to describe that ability is that if we can if we can offer that ability to people who are able to use apps and able to use digital technology. It will make journeys more seamless for those people. For people who can't, we will still have we'll still have people at stations on board trains and available on the end of the phone so that we can so that we essentially provide that equity in travel so that if you want to travel you can travel your way. And digital is a key component of that.

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[...] So, I'm going to go on to a bit about active travel and our approach to travel. But I just wonder if there's any questions before I do that?

[00:20:09]

GL: Yeah, I have a couple of questions, if I may. I should say before starting my current role, I was also part of the Heathrow Community Engagement Board dealing with the expansion at Heathrow Airport. So a lot of what you say kind of echoes what I heard Heathrow say. So picking up on the left hand side of your screen. So it's more about connecting customers to the station. I kind of hear a lot that seems to be aspirational rather than anything that will actually make things better for those people living in Bedford. I should also say I'm not anti-railway I haven't quite made my mind that yet as to whether I'm pro railway but I'm certainly not anti, I'm kind of in favour of sustainable developments.

[00:20:55]

[...]: So looking at Bedford Station as a whole, there is really no room for development. So in terms of having buses, taxis, um cycle paths, and so on and so forth, it doesn't appear to be the room to do that. So I'd be interested to know what your plans for Bedford in that respect will be given the lack of real estate?

[00:21:21]

[...] And also what point did the benefits kick in because usually when these projects, developers leave everything that enhances the commuter experiences until the very end. Some developers then find they have no more money and then don't do anything, so to what.... what's the timetable for delivering the benefits to the consumers before the railway is finished? And also, to what extent is East West Railway supporting local authorities in terms of helping them with finance because there's going to be a lot of pressures on councils and their finances going forward.

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[...] So some of the things you're talking about depend on say Bedford Council having the money to do things and if they haven't, things might not get done. Is there a contingency for that? And also, it'd be really good if, and I'm sure East West Railway will be thinking along these lines, but you think beyond the obvious, so for instance, for people who travel and mobility scooters, for instance, and whether it's going to be any provision for them to be able to leave those at the station before they make an onward journey and so on and so forth.

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[...] And you mentioned buses, and the bus service in Bedford is terrible. So is East West Railway actually going to be able to do anything about that? Or is it again, aspirational because it's all well and good having presentations and the work that you guys put into it, which is clearly quite a substantial amount of work. But if at the end of it, there's no product, the residents of Bedford are going to feel hard done by. So I'd be interested to hear what the aspirational, versus the reality is, as far as your project for Bedford is concerned.

[00:23:00]

RG: Sure, I think the first bit on aspirational. Yes, I mean, all plans are ambitious and, you know, we want to develop something that will be beneficial across the entire route. With regards to Bedford specifically, we're, we are at a very early stage of design and of engagement for Bedford.

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[...] And that's partly because we as you may know we have three connection stages, so the first connection stage is Oxford to Milton Keynes, then onto Bedford, and then on to Cambridge. So, a lot of the focus naturally at the moment is on the development and delivery now, because we're in the delivery phase, of Oxford to Milton Keynes.

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[...] So a lot of work that I'm doing at the moment for that phase of the project, will in some cases some of it will be replicated when we when we move forward but tailored for Marston Vale, Bedford onwards. But the key thing for us, and I get what you're saying about aspirational, but what we're doing with the with the Oxford Milton Keynes bit is actually turning some of that aspirational stuff into tangible, tangible results. So, we're working you know, we're working with the county councils across that area, we're working with local stakeholders, we're developing travel plans in tandem. Yes, we are supporting on active travel.

[00:24:44]

[...] We're making sure that the facilities that we have to offer customers from day one of the operation are there to give benefits. So when you when you talk about benefits realisation, I've been around the railway for 20 odd years now and I have seen exactly what you talk about, we build things and we don't build in everything that we need to do, we don't build in the processes or the or the systems that are needed and then we have to retrofit it and customers get half the benefits that they thought that we're going to get at the beginning and then have to wait years down the line.

[00:25:25]

[...] So part of the experience that I've had and understand and many of us within our team is driving us to make sure that we're connecting with the right people at the right times to start to start designing those elements. Funding wise, you know we're yet to understand the full funding envelope. You know we're keen to be able to provide funding where we can. Obviously our main our main funding envelope is around building the railway. But we you know, we know that it's important that the peripheral parts as I spoke about, you know, working with others to create a sustainable transport network essentially, is really important to us. It's really important to our stakeholders at the DFT.

[00:26:23]

[...] So I would say people keep an eye on this one. We're working hard on it. We continue to work hard on it. And one thing that Caroline will come on to a little bit later on. We're launching this Advisory Panel for Accessibility. We'll also be launching an Advisory Panel for Active Travel and First Mile Last Mile or door to door as you could call it. Which is aimed at us making sure that we really recognize the needs of all of our communities, early doors, so that when we go into that design phase, as you say we can recognize the constraints around Bedford, understand what the situation is with bus operators, etc. at that time,

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[...] Because yeah we're quite, we're a few years off we don't really know for certain what will happen in a few years. Will Stage Coach still be the dominant operator, or would they have sold up by then? So we don't really know that right now, but it's all stuff that's on the horizon and we're building a very clear project plan to make sure that we that we deal with those issues as we get closer to the time.

[00:27:30]

[...] But the Advisory Panel will be taken into effect early next year. And I'll be looking for, I'll be looking to build a panel of members across the Arc for that, so that we can start to look at the short term 2024 operation of Oxford to Milton Keynes, as well as the longer-term operations for further down the line.

GL: Thank you.

RG: I hope that answers some of your questions there.

[00:27:59]

GL: Yeah, it would be good to revisit this in a couple of years' time.

RG: Oh, certainly. But yeah, as I said, the Advisory Panel lecture will we'll be looking across the route from there on in. Justin?

[00:28:11]

JG: Hi Robbie. I was... a similar question in and around to what Guido just mentioned with a slightly different geographic focus. So this is on the eastern end, around Roxton and Wyboston. So on the assumption that there'll be a new station, whether it's St Neots South or Tempsford North, you've got two existing communities who are potentially your first tranche of customers. There are obviously the housing plans which have been longer term. Does your, does the breadth of your search include trying to connect those existing communities to potential stations, that's my first part.

[00:28:53]

[...] The second question I had building on what you just said about what you've done so far, to give this group some confidence that we may actually see something, perhaps a takeaway for today will be to send us examples of what you've delivered under the banner of active, sustainable connections on the lines that you're delivering now.

[00:29:21]

RG: Yeah sure. So I guess, the first bit around the communities. Now, obviously, we're still a little bit of a way off around route announcements etc. So that has to be the big caveat here. Ultimately, whichever route we're taking, wherever stations are going to be situated, the idea is always that we will connect those communities in the in the conurbation to the station and that's why I say it's really important that as we kind of move further down over the years to come, that we're able to work closely with the likes of Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire so, so that we're that we're building those relationships, understanding the needs and understanding what they've got in store

[00:30:20]

[...] So you, if we're building a station, near St Neots for example, well what is it that Huntingdonshire are doing at the time to connect the local community around there and what can we do to supplement that? So wherever we're building, it will always be a consideration of how we can bring communities closer.

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[...] With regards to what we're doing at the moment. Yes, we, I think it will be in the new year, but as we get into the new year, we'll be able to share a lot more around what we've been able to do to date. And what we will be delivering in the run up to December in December 2024, which is when the services start operating on the route between Oxford and Milton Keynes.

[00:31:10]

JG: And if that could take the form of something which is detailed, whether it's a map drawings or whatever showing we've funded a footpath linking this community to our stations. Those sorts of things if we see that evidence of you delivering what you're currently gives us coming down, excuse the pun, down the track as you build the section from Bedford to Cambridge, some idea of what you've already delivered to those communities. We rightly or wrongly will assume the same if not better.

[00:31:46]

RG: Yeah, I think I think that's important. You know, and as I say, we will be we will, we're very keen to be able to show communities such as yours, what we're doing for the start of operations, and we'll be able to provide that. It's likely to be through the forum of the Active Travel Advisory Panel and we'll be able to show you know where we've been able to fund stuff, where we have been able to support because you know, I think there has been acknowledgement that in many cases with provision of footpaths, etc it will be where we've supported rather than where we've funded, because we may not have the funding envelope for that, but we might be able to work with local authorities like the likes of Bucks and Oxfordshire County Council to help devise their plans.

[00:32:40]

JG: Okay, well then the last thing I'd say in terms of that reporting back to us in the new year, can you just make sure that it's clearly states, what you have funded and what you have supported? And I love the modern use of language. I'd love to know the definition of supported, because I hear it all the time, and I don't really know what it means.

[00:33:04]

RG: Yeah, well I think we're built to provide that sort of information and, and a bit more definition around support.

JG: Thank you.

[00:33:14]

HS: And I think if I may interject as well. I think one of the key things to remember the fundamental difference between the section that we will call CS1 and section that is your area where we call that CS3. The planning for CS1 was not something that was led by EWR

CO. So I think what we will be looking to do is look at what has been agreed and approved in that space. We're already trying to push as hard as we can to do more where we can and it is important to remember that the planning regime under which that was consented, the TWAO, isn't something that EWR put together.

[00:34:00]

[...] Now there is a lot of work going on. I think we're all aware of what the DCO is in this group, the Development Consent Order. The DCO actually does cover not only the area you're in but also areas further west as well associated works. And that could include additional works to ensure that we deliver against some of our aspirations. And so Robbie said we're all quite ambitious in this space. So I don't think we should necessarily take that the activity being delivered under CS1 is the extent of where our ambitions are for CS1, let alone where our ambitions are for CS3 where you are.

[00:34:37]

[...] So just to slightly caveat that I think we'd be very happy to report back but I think it will be important to see that in a wider context of, you know, the strange way that the project is being sort of developed in stages which I think we can all acknowledge we were bought in to try and fix.

JG: In plain English, are you saying what you've done today, or what's been delivered to date says is the minimum and what you hope to deliver in C3 should be better?

[00:35:06]

HS: I wouldn't say it's minimum because I don't know the full extent. But I would say that our ambitions for CS1 and CS3 were you are those beyond what I believe is currently being delivered on CS1. So I think Robbie and I will take that away and work out the best way to contextualize what we've done. And by the way, I think it's entirely right that there's a lot of input and questions over this, because it's quite important how you get to the station is super important, so we should be looking to improve any project.

[00:35:38]

JG: Because the take that I'm getting from residents and parishioners is that if we have to suffer it, we want to benefit.

HS: Yes

RG: Naturally

HS: I'd think we'd absolutely agree with that

RG: Yeah definitely.

[00:35:52]

HS: Sorry for butting in there Robbie.

RG: That's alright, thank you. I'm not sure who was next. Gordon or Paul, I can see you both have your hands up. Gordon

[00:36:02]

GJ: I'll go first then. I'm fascinated by your mobile communications business. Living in a rural area that only has a school bus one in the morning, one in the in the evening and living adjacent to St Neots which is having bus services scrapped, left, right and centre. I find it quite intriguing, that an app could tell me that the bus is running a bit late so I don't need to leave home for another five minutes. Would it ping me again and say oops the train early and you've missed it?

[00:36:39]

RG: Yeah, I think there's there is, so what we've got with the apps that we're looking at, first things first, it's all technology that already exists. So right now we if you have buses going up and down your road and they're operating whatever type of service there is. There's something called bus open data. It records where the buses are, what they're doing at which times and it's up to the providers and the council's quite often as to whether they deliver that information and how they deliver it.

[00:37:10]

[...] So sometimes you go to a bus stop and it's got one of those screens that tells you your bus is due in a few minutes. So you can take that data and use it in different ways. We would take that data in an app and be able to provide information about the journey that you're taking.

[00:37:39]

[...] So for example, if you're going from, from St Neots Market Square, to Peterborough we could take the feed from the buses, to tell you where the buses running on time from the market square to the station. Equally, we'll take the feed from National Rail which tells you when your trains operating so that you can see before your journey and during your journey, the status of the services. But it's all stuff that's already there. It's just people aren't sewing it together very well at the moment.

[0:38.14]

GJ: But this the this is fine from places, you know, for people that live in the middle of St Neots, so would I have to drive to St Neots and park wait at the market square to get a bus? This is crazy.

RG: No, no, no, no, no.

GJ: You can't come up with this type of thing. It's totally impractical for anybody living in a rural area.

[0:38:37]

RG: So I think, referring to the app aside, the app can deliver information wherever you want. With regards to actually getting something from a rural area transport wise, that's where demand responsive transport comes in. So demand response transport has primarily been aimed at rural areas in the UK, there are a few cities schemes, but essentially, it's about you being able to say I want to travel from my home, in my village or wherever, to a station, it could be to a local community hub, it could be you know, it could be anywhere really within you know, within a certain radius, because they often operate in zones, and you're able to book that transport.

[0:39:25]

[...] And when you book that transport, you can do it by app, but there's a lot of services that are offer it by phone as well. That transport will come to the designated point that you select, pick you up and take you take you on the next part of the journey. So that's the reason we're looking at demand responsive transport because we're going to serve a lot of rural areas or we're going to serve a lot of places that have rural areas in their conurbation and it might well be that rather than trying to work out how we can change bus routes or bus operators working out how they can change bus routes, working out how we can provide something that's on demand, is probably better.

[0:40:07]

GJ: No, you're not going to serve those areas. You're going to serve Bedford as you want to, you're going to serve the St Neots area where the new station is going to be, then Camborne, and then Cambridge anywhere in between, It's tough bloody luck.

[0:40:29]

RG: I wouldn't say that's the case. I think I can understand that obviously, there are lots of issues with bus operators in those areas which we have no control over. But when we're talking about trying to provide a joined-up transport system, it's within our interest and the development of the railway for us to be able to connect people with that railway.

[0:40:57]

GJ: Right so when you issue any of your information, can you give us an idea of what the parking charges at the station might be? So that we can then make a decision on whether we want to go by car or rail to Cambridge.

HS: I think again, just to caution sort of where we are in the development process. I think we've been quite open about you know...what we wanted to do was to talk you through our thinking as it as it emerges. The specifics of pricing and that kind of stuff is something that's developing, so I don't want to promise something that we can't deliver.

[0:41:32]

[...] Obviously, that does come down the track, so that, if you'll pardon the pun, so that is something we'll talk about. But I think you know, fundamentally, Gordon absolutely understand this isn't cynicism here, the proof of the pudding, etc, etc. But this, as Robbie was sort of saying, this getting people to the transport in a sensible and useful way is very important to us and it always has been and what we want to continue doing is to continue having that conversation through this forum, through consultation, through other things as well to understand in specific communities what the issues are.

[0:42:05]

[...] Because you're right in Bedford a lot of the people who live in the town might be able just to walk straight to the station. We might talk to Bedford about whether or not they're walking really safe, actually, we might talk to the local to the local authorities that were that walking route allows for mobility scooters or that kind of thing. For people living outside of Bedford, of course, there are completely different concerns. So I think I think you're very right to bring that up and you're right to kind of ask for some specifics. I think at the moment, we're probably more in a sort of listening and developing stage than being able to give you specifics to come to.

[0:42:35]

[...] But I think if we can take away that that point actually, which I think is a very salient point, which is that the needs of people living in rural communities are quite different to needs of people living in urban communities and the First Mile Last Mile elements of that are quite crucial, I think, to getting this right. So I just kind of wanted to jump in there just to say that I don't think it's that we'll be able to come to the next meeting with this is how much parking charges will be, but I think it's very helpful to understand some of the context of you know that you're thinking of some of the extra things that you're thinking of.

GJ: Okay, thank you.

HS: Thanks.

[0:43:08]

RG: Paula?

Paula Brazier (PB): Hi, thank you, I've just got a couple of questions, really and some observations. I think, picking up on observations of others, we know that the bus routes

around Bedford and the surrounding environments, not just in rural areas but Bedford Town as well, those services have been cut because they're uneconomic, because they're not being used, they're not viable.

[43:36]

[...] Studies have shown that congestion in Bedford Town Center itself, it takes longer to drive from where I am in Brickhill, to the train station than it would be to get onto the 421 and drive myself. I think my question is, you know, how are these First Mile Last Miles calculated? And have we got a comparison to the same journey by car, by bus, and then also bringing in the work on the A421.. um A428 Black Cat?

[0:44:15]

[...] From where we are on this side of Bedford out to those rural communities that we have talked about, it makes no sense to drive into the congested town centre, park at an extortionate amount of car parking costs to get on a train and then arrive in Cambridge and then have to do the similar sorts of things to get off the other end, when I could be in Cambridge in 25 minutes or so in the car.

[0:44:41]

[...] So, I just go back to the question I suppose is how are you calculating these and have we got comparisons with the same journeys with buses and cars? And what are you going to do around Bedford Train Station to alleviate the quagmire that is, you know, it can take you 40 minutes to get into town of a morning and no amount of app is going to get me there quicker and catch my train.

[0:45:09]

RG: Yeah, you're right. No amount of app is gonna do that. However, I think the key thing for us, I'm not meaning to push this down the track so to speak, is that we are very early, in the process of working on you know the route that we'll that we'll be using.

[0:45:35]

[...] There is a lot of information that was taken from Non-Statutory Consultation and other studies that will feed into what we provide. So, I think as Hannah was saying, we are keen to make sure that we're providing a railway that's attractive for everyone that we can get people to and from stations and that those journey times offer a compelling alternative to the car, but the fact of the matter is right now, there is still decisions that need to be made around how...around what we're providing in terms of a route so it is still early days in terms of design.

[0:46:17]

[...] What I can tell you is yes of course we will be, you know, we'll be working with Bedford Borough Council and the other councils across route to make sure that their infrastructure or wherever we can to make sure that their infrastructure is ready for our railway, so that that proposition is compelling. But there's an acknowledgement as well, we know people won't use the railway. You know, not everyone's going to use the railway, but we have to make sure that it's as compelling as possible so that we can take people off the roads.

[0:46:52]

[...] If somebody has, if somebody lives right next to the A428 and they're gonna get on to that, they're going to get onto that road and it's gonna take them quickly down to wherever they're going in Cambridge, then clearly that that's going to be the preferred option for them. But what we want to make sure is that there's a viable alternative for people who don't live right next to that, that road and other roads. So, and that's the way we've always worked with railway planning to make sure that the options are viable and that the that they are compelling enough to attract people away from the roads wherever we possibly can.

[0:47:31]

PB: So just a follow up on that Robbie if I may, is you talk about making it compelling for people and you want to pull as many people out of cars etc. I don't disagree with that. From a sustainability point of view, I get that. But I just you know, I'm still quite quizzical over the Business Case for this and whether when the hard facts are, how do you know people are going to be using this? You know, what market research have you done?

[0:48:01]

HS: I'll jump in on the Business Case if I may.

RG: Go for it.

PB: Please because it's two years in the waiting, isn't it Hannah?

HS: Yeah sure and I think there's sort of two slightly different things going on with when people talk about Business Case that we have got some information that we put up this week, on website about the process for building the Business Case. The Business Case process is a really, really strict process that's governed by central government. The process for that is done by Green Book, got links to that on the website if you look at the factsheets that we've put up.

[0:48:33]

[...] That is a strict process that involves scrutiny from cross governmental departments, not just the Department for Transport, Treasury and I think the environmental departments and a bunch of the... the Department for...I keep forgetting what they've changed their name to,

DLUHC are now, were MHCLG some department for local government and that kind of stuff, there's a lot of different departments that go through the Business Case, that scrutinize the Business Case over a long period.

[0:49:04]

[...] Ultimately, the Business Case document is owned by the Department for Transport. It is their choice whether or not it gets published. We envisage that it probably will be, but I do have to stress that it's not our document so it's not something that we can guarantee, just again need to manage expectation on that point. However, as we go through the project, as we learn more about, as you say, traffic use or the environmental implications or long-term costs or whatever it might be, that's the kind of information that we've put in the in consultation for public scrutiny. That's the kind of information that we talked to local authorities and other expert organizations about as we go through.

[0:49:42]

[...] Graham brilliant to have you, Nicky if you're still there we hope to see you back soon. So, there is a very strict process that we go through. The Business Case, the Final Business Case won't be published for quite some time. As I say that's a strict process that we go through.

[0:49:58]

[...] However, I think more broadly, what we're saying is, is there a way that we can better articulate the benefits of East West Rail because that's a connected question but slightly different because the Business Case is a process, we're in that slipstream and bluntly, most of the business at the moment is working on that to see if there is a Business Case. If at the end of this, there is no Business Case for the chosen design, it doesn't get built, that's...the Business Case has to go through levels of scrutiny before it gets signed off, so there is, that that's the way the process is set up. We can now have a point to sort of a large benefits and over time, we will be releasing more information about the detail of those benefits and how they kind of hang together.

[0:50:36]

[...] I think one of the things that will be particularly helpful for this group is to understand the benefits for the specific communities that you all represent. I think it's really fair to say as well that some communities will have more direct benefits than others. So, there are some areas where actually the overarching benefits of the scheme are very interesting, but the specific benefits to specific communities will differ over the piece, so being able to articulate to you what exactly means for your community is something that I think we're aware that that's something that you want, something you kind of need to see.

[0:51:07]

[...] I would hope to be able to come out and talk in more detail about that fairly soon. I think you saw, most of the people in this group will see that the last budgetary announcement there was a re-affirmation of government support for the project and we've had that from successive governments. Obviously, we were hoping to give people in this group across the whole route an update much earlier. We haven't been able to do that because any major plans require scrutiny from central government and there hasn't really been that infrastructure internally set up to put the scrutiny through.

[0:51:42]

[...] Now there seems to be more stability so we are pushing as hard as we can to make sure that East West Rail is a priority and reviewing plans as a priority for the government as now is. Hope that was helpful, that was sort of a summary of three different things all in one, all in one stage.

[0:51:59]

[...] There is some information already on the website about the benefits of the scheme and we have published that and we have used that in previous consultation and previous announcements. But I think yes, you would absolutely expect us to sort of keep updating, to keep adding to that as the scheme develops. Anymore on that Paula, before we sort of move off?

[0:52:24]

PB: I just think there's still some lack of clarity about the four and six track, and the impact that it's having on communities in and around Bedford.

HS: Yep. I think...

PB: And I think also the actual impact that will have on the local infrastructure with the build works and the delays etc., that there will be a knock ons to Bedford and the greater community, are vast, and I'm just really concerned that for the entirety of the time of the build, the impact that that's going to have to what benefit at the end is just still unclear to me. Sorry.

[0:53:07]

HS: So I think that's really, really fair. And you're right, until we understand more about the exact design, so the exact alignment, four vs. six track as you were saying, these kinds of issues, until they are resolved we won't know the extent of...we won't know the full extent of the programme, we won't know the full extent of the works needed to deliver.

[0:53:27]

[...] So, we won't know the full programme of mitigation that we can put into delivery, we won't be in a position to discuss that and to ask your advice. One of the reasons we set up these groups is so that we had an established forum when the time came to be able to have those conversations. And I fully envisage later in the scheme that we'll be able to use this forum and all the other LRGs along the route to talk about those issues once we know more. But fundamentally, I absolutely take the point that our aspiration was definitely to be able to give people more certainty earlier and we've just not been able to do that. And you know, that's frustrating to people for a variety of reasons, but nevertheless, I don't take away and I fully believe that that's very frustrating.

[0:54:12]

[...] So we are, I if I can give you any reassurance, it is that we are trying to get to a resolution as soon as possible about that and we'll let you know as soon as we have any, sort of as soon as the white smoke goes up. I will just jump in and say we are running to time which I think is good, but have we got any more questions on this slide or anything we've heard so far from Robbie?

[0:54:44]

Slide 12 – Potential solutions (2)

RG: Okay, so we've got, what I will do in the interest of time, we've got a final slide here around active travel, which is more focused, and we've spoken about some of this partly through your questions and the first slide there. So, active travel for us is very much about trying to deliver a sustainable choice that isn't just around multimodal, but is you know enables people to walk to stations, to and from stations, to wheel to stations using you know whether it be cycles or scooters or other types of wheeled mobility.

[0:55:34]

[...] We're talking to local authorities on the western side the route at the moment we're looking at how we can unlock funding. So, yes, ultimately, we will have an amount of funding when we get down to the crux of it on, in, your area and on your communities, we'll have some... we'll have funding, but we don't know what that funding envelope is yet.

[0:56:04]

[...] So we can't design solutions and say we're going to we're going to build a path from a village to a station, but we know that it's important that we start to identify those needs and understand how we can how we can make those things come to reality. On the western side, we've been able to work with local authorities and we're you know we'll continue to work with local authorities to make sure that the stations that, you know, are either currently there or are going to be there, such as Winslow, are connected to the communities.

[0:56:44]

[...] We're fortunate at the moment, I would say, that Bucks County Council, who have been the main council we've dealt with so far have already implemented a lot of active travel solutions or are planning on introducing a lot of active travel solutions in and around Winslow Station.

[0:57:02]

[...] We will continue to work with them, to support them, to make sure that the infrastructure we provide at the station complements those facilities and we'll inevitably get to the stage where we have an understanding of what you know Bedfordshire can do, what Huntingdonshire are doing, what Cambridgeshire are doing around these, you know, in this particular space and how we can support, or how we can push and guide, to deliver the kinds of solutions that we want.

[0:57:33]

[...] So, you know, we want to be able to, as I said, provide these hubs, these active travel hubs, the cycle hubs. Some of it is within our gift, you know, if its something on the station, then yes, we'll, you know, we'll be doing that, we'll be making sure that the station infrastructure is built in such a way that it really supports those, you know, those ways of traveling to and from the station. And as I said, we will work with local authorities to make sure that we're, you know, where they can contribute, we're unlocking the way for them to do that.

[0:58:10]

[...] We'll make sure that everything's accessible, so, if you...if were trying to promote active travel, it's important and Caroline will explain a bit more in her presentation around this that actually everybody has the opportunity to use an active travel way to get to and from the station.

[0:58:30]

[...] The items in blue here, I guess, are just, when we talked about ambition, earlier what we see as our you know, as our ambition around active travel, is to make it attractive travel, as well. And some of that is around you know what it is that we do. So when we have a fully operational railway it's all well and good the council saying we've put a path to the station and us saying and great, we've got a magnificent cycle hub at the station, but actually when it comes down to encouraging people, and helping people to be more sustainable and healthy in their travel choices, there's more that we can do and you know the sort of ideas and solutions that we're looking at the moment are things around road shows, so we will trial road shows on CS1, see how they work.

[0:59:28]

[...] Same with, you know, when you go into a station are you met with a Costa coffee or a Pumpkin or are you met with something that offers healthy eating option at the station. We mentioned earlier on about the apps, so is it possible that we can... well certainly is possible that we can offer incentives to travel in an active travel manner to and from stations and offer bundles and packs that help do that.

[0:59:58]

[...] And then I think there's a recognition from my part certainly that actually there are guided activities that can be done, that are not just necessarily for those who use the railway to commute, but those who use it for leisure. So, the Varsity Way cycle route is something that spans our route, and you know, there's a lot of activity going on there at the moment about how that might be incorporated into the communities across the Arc.

[1:00:29]

[...] We will...we are working with them, we're working with England's Economic Heartland's on that and an understanding what the possible is and then at the same time, go down to things like commuter clubs where people cycle at the same time to the station in a safe and sustainable way. So I think, when it comes back to active travel, we're just as ambitious as we are with connecting people to the stations through public transport.

[1:01:00]

[...] And I think, as I said, you know, we'll continue to develop our solutions. These are the these are the ideas, these are the kinds of solutions that we're looking at the moment, and certainly some of them are kind of no brainers. But we'll continue working with people like the Highway Agency and local government and developers to see how we can unlock funding and infrastructure to really get these off the ground. Any questions on the active travel side of things? No. Okay, thank you. So, we're gonna go on to Caroline, who's going to talk about accessibility and inclusion.

Slide 13 – Questions

Slide 14 – Topic

Slide 15 – Accessibility and Inclusion Approach

[1:01:59]

04. Topic – Accessibility and Inclusion

Caroline Eglinton (CE): Hello, everyone. Pleasure to see you here. My name is Caroline Eglinton and I'm Head of Inclusion at East West Rail and I've come along to tell to you about

access, inclusion, and a bit about our approach at East West Rail. So, access and inclusion approach. It's been defined and set out an inclusion strategy which is called East West Rail for all because, of course, we have a unique opportunity in terms of being able to embed inclusion into the organization and to the scheme at a really early stage.

[1:02:33]

[...] A key part of that is to understand our communities and stakeholders and really consider and understand the barriers to inclusion to make East West Rail as inclusive and accessible to all, enabling everyone to participate equally, confidently, and independently. So, in order to ensure that East West Rail can be inclusive for all, the strategy has been designed to help build an inclusive organization and supply chain, but particularly, to focus on inclusive experience for our customers who engage with East West Rail throughout the consultation, the construction, and the operation of these things and allow everyone to be able to benefit from intuitive, safe, and simple transport.

[1:03:16]

[...] And of course, when services are genuinely inclusive, everyone gets a better experience. So, our ambition is to deliver something really special that exceeds the inclusion standards that we are used to in rail and to be a model for inclusion in the rail sector.

[1:03:33]

[...] And it's not just about that physical built environment, you know, the infrastructure that's there, but it's also about providing a customer experience which really creates a sense of wellbeing and belonging for our customers. And our inclusion strategy is the key resource in meeting our outcomes, of which you can see two here, which is safe and accessible, so, it's about the safeness and security of the end product and also the better for the customer outcome, so working with the customer strategy team to ensure that an inclusive customer experience vision is realized. If you could just go to the next slide Robbie.

Slide 16 – Current Activity Focus

[1:04:13]

[...] So, yeah fabulous, so our current activity focus is to bring the inclusion strategies to life by carrying out a coordinated approach to the delivery of inclusion across the organization and the program. So that's about identifying the areas across the functions of the organization where inclusion needs to be considered and considering inclusion throughout all the phases of the project, so that's planning, consultation, design, construction, and operation and integrating inclusion and understanding the interdependencies with accessibility, equality, and diversity.

[1:04:54]

[...] So in my role as head of inclusion, my role is predominantly a customer focused role ensuring that East West Rail delivers products and services that will meet the needs of our diverse customers and also that our outcomes are delivered in an inclusive way, accessible to everyone. As part of this, we are setting up an Accessibility Advisory Panel and I'll talk to you a bit more about that in a minute. And that is specifically for people with lived experience of disability from the Arc to get that local viewpoint, but I will expand on that in a moment.

[1:05:30]

[...] So another activity that we're doing is increasing knowledge and coaching. So we are producing disability quality training for specific teams within our organization including customer strategy, customer experience, communications, and people and culture. And one of the interesting things that we're doing is delivering some specific disability or equality training to our land and property team who will be doing a lot of the work on the Development Consent Order process. And using our research that we have conducted around accessibility, bringing an inclusion lens and expertise to work delivered by different parts of the business.

[1:06:06]

Slide 17 – Inclusive Design Research

[...] So for example, if your social value strategy or customer strategy, customer experience and design, and design and delivery. If you could just move on to the next slide please. So, our inclusive design research that we've already conducted has shown us that, for example, that safety and inclusion can be different for different customer demographics. One area of focus is women's safety.

[1:06:35]

[...] And a good example is that our research tells us that the impact of location can be impacted...can have an impact on people's feelings of safety. There are differences between rural and urban contexts. So, for example, people may have a heightened sense of vulnerability in a rural location particularly if it's unfamiliar and they might be feeling more anxious about getting safely to and from a station or onward travel where they're arriving at a rural station.

[1:07:06]

[...] So we're actually thinking about how we can influence that through our design as well. If you could move on to the next slide. Obviously, we're at very early stage, we're talking about the design concepts and things like that. So, if you've got any questions on our sort of general approach, I'd be happy to answer them now and then we're going to talk about, in a bit more detail, about our Accessibility Advisory Panel. Guido?

Slide 18 – Questions or comments?

[1:07:38]

GL: Thank you. So to what extent will East West Railway remodel the station at Bedford. I'm not someone who is disabled or needs additional support, but I've been at the station at peak times, it's just a crush. And that's just from the commuters coming back from London, so I've got personal experience of observing those who are in wheelchairs not being able to access for lift because it's packed full of commuters who are keen to get to the carpark 10 seconds earlier than those going by the stairs.

[1:08:23]

[...] The gangways for those people who are safe partially sighted or who might have anxieties over, crowded spaces, just don't allow space for safety. So, the kind of... I don't know from your plans, if you're going to be on the left-hand side of the station, i.e., the fast side or whether you're going to be on the left side, which is slow side.

[1:08:51]

[...] But clearly, the facilities that exist at the moment aren't doing a good job for those people who are currently using the station. So, I'd be interested to know to what extent your plans, and you may say at an early stage, but it's kind of, if you go at a peak time assuming people still using trains, you'll see what the issues are, but also in terms of the construction of say, the new platforms, to what extent are you, as in East West railway, abandoning the idea of curved platforms?

[1:09:21]

[...] I only kind of learned this today but, and I hadn't appreciated it for all the years I used to commute, but platforms are curved and there are spaces on the platform which have an even greater gap between the platform and the train edge, and also, the ability to have platforms that are closer or higher up so that they're actually more level with the train. Because research tends to suggest that we're going forward with an aging population and so more of the users of transport going forward will need help, support, and the ability to feel safe while traveling.

[1:09:59]

[...] Some kind of interesting, interested in what the plans are? And you may say it's at an early stage, but it's kind of a thing, for me, I think needs to be thought about to give reassurance to people who you want to use your railway

CE: I think it's really important. So the first one which is about how will we change the station, I don't have the detail on what is going to change about the station, but what I do know, is that any of the design developments that happen around that will absolutely

concern passenger flow and the, you know, design it in such a way that is ultimately looking at the safety, particularly for an accessibility point of view.

[1:10:44]

[...] There's lots of studies that in any railway station there's a lot of studies around passenger flow, congestion, all that kind of stuff, so it's ultimately something we'll do, but what I'll...when I will be reviewing that, you know, reports or design alongside our engineers, is we'll be looking at how do we ultimately make it the best it can be, with any sort of restrictions or things that we have to sort of factor in.

[1:11:15]

[...] So our Equality Impact Assessments will go alongside that and sort of be able to understand the impacts to disabled people, I'm disabled myself, so any impacts of disabled people will be thoroughly understood as we go through each of those processes. When it comes to the platform train interface, so, you know, platform to train, absolutely curved platforms lead to a bigger gap at certain points.

[1:11:49]

[...] I know that part of our approach is thinking about how we can have no curved platforms, but of course that's not going to be possible in every case. So, it's about having that general approach of, you know, where we can we have platforms that are that are straight, but of course we're not going to be able to do it everywhere. And I don't know what the detail is at Bedford yet, whether it's going to be able to be eliminated or whether there's going to be some, still some sort of residual issues around that.

[1:12:17]

[...] When it comes to the platform train interface whether you can step straight on to the train that assistance, we know that in the majority of railway stations in the UK you have to get a ramp onto the train if you're a wheelchair user. It's definitely part of our philosophy, is that where it can be level boarding, that it will, be but of course there's going to be restrictions around that and challenges to be met. But that's all part of East West Rail's approach is that to try and create a railway that people can use as independently as possible. And of course, to do that you need less curved platforms need a way of onboarding onto the train, so we will absolutely be having that as part of our focus.

[1:12:59]

[...] Thanks, Justin?

JG: Hi Caroline. A question in and around the designing process. So, like you said it is early days but what is East West Rail's approach to the design process for new stations and here I'm thinking of the new one, Tempsford / St Neots. I'm an architect by day so I'm very

familiar with the design process and I'm familiar how you receive a brief and you quickly get the architects going. But is this an engineers led design? Is this a person like yourself writing an integral part of a brief after a design or before a design, you know, what is the general approach to this sort of subject?

[1:13:54]

CE: Yeah well, I am not an engineer, and I'm definitely not an architect, but I do have a bit of knowledge about how we're sort of setting it up at the moment, is that we have in house architects, and we also have suppliers that do that for us. And we're kind of looking at design approaches at the moment, so what is our sort of general approach on something going to be rather than the detail design that sits underneath that?

[1:14:21]

JG: So you're there day one?

CE: Yes.

JG: Ah right okay, because that's critical.

CE: Yeah yeah, as is our architectural team as well.

JG: Right okay fine, thank you.

CE: I mean, just reflecting on your comment there, I think, I've worked in the Rail Industry for 17 years and what I have found is that there isn't enough involvement by subject matter experts early on in the process. And I think that is something that I'm seeing that's quite different at East West Rail is that we actually are very committed to getting this right and we are understanding who needs to be involved in that process, from an early stage, to be able to try and get that right. So it's definitely a personal, it's a personal want for me, but also I can see that the organization is sort of setting us up for success and getting the right people with the right kind of...

[1:15:19]

JG: Because I see it day in day out with all sorts of projects where sustainability is...and accessibility are add ons done after an event and then it's usually too late for them to be properly incorporated. Okay, alright, thank you.

CE: Thank you Justin, Paula?

PB: I was just going to ask in terms of timelines, waiting for the Environmental Impact Assessment to be done, what's the timeline for the Equality Impact Assessment?

[1.15:48]

CE: Equality Impact Assessments are generally a very live process that we do alongside the activities, which is looking at the potential impact of protected groups. So, it's not (there isn't) ever an end, or end date for that Paula, until the design is finalized. So basically, it's sort of an ongoing process, it's quite different from the Environmental Impact Assessment process because it's generally sort of, you can do an overall Impact Assessment on an approach. But you really need to be able to get down to the nitty gritty to be able to define what specific impacts there will be to especially disabled people on the real detailed design. So, the answer is, it's an ongoing process right along. And it's never really finalized until the design is finalized. But then you've also got the construction side. So obviously, a design needs to be delivered and built. So actually, the impacts to people, particularly in an existing station, need to be understood as well so that the Equality Impact Assessment is ongoing, and not finished until the project has finished.

[1.17:06]

PB: I guess I'm just thinking, you know, we still haven't got the EIA come through. And that, you know, that's not out in the public domain for us to see. And that, is that ongoing is that how long is that taking? And I guess it's just, is this another thing that you're going to do that we'll have to wait to see? I guess is where I was coming from.

[1.17:32]

CE: I mean, the Environmental Impact Assessment is very much tied to the DCO whereas an Equality Impact Assessment is a much more fluid activity that we do. We test things as we go along, and it's not a sort of a very formal thing like the Environmental Impact Assessment is. But absolutely. It's, it's something that we would be I personally would be happy to share with you but the thing is you don't have a lot of detail to share until there are detailed designs to be able to test impacts on. But yes, absolutely.

[1.18:16]

[...] You know, if it's about the station, then that can't be put together until there is a station design. It just depends you know, we're carrying equality impacts on various subjects. But of course, there isn't going to be anything to share until there's details for us to be able to assess.

[...] Thank you, and Gordon?

[1.18:41]

GJ: Aren't we a bit premature really in having you here tonight, Caroline? Based on the meeting, not the last one, but the previous one in which we did a deep dive on the Business Case: the Economist talking to us and saying that excuse me, things were notoriously difficult to monetize. The costs on this that and the other. And he's presuming this, presuming that and then at the last meeting, where we were talking about carbon issues,

and I can't remember his name, but he put on the spot and said, which particular routes are you looking at which particular route you're looking at?

[1.19:26]

[...] And he said, we are looking at several. It means that at the moment, we are nowhere near having a definitive route or alignment. So, until that happens, you don't know whether you are going to go over the East Coast Mainline or under the East Coast Mainline. So, your accessibility issues at the moment are totally irrelevant?

[1.20:00]

CE: I mean, I would disagree. I think it's obviously important to understand what the route alignment is going to be but actually how do we develop and design something, is more about the general principle. So is going to be level boarding for example, you know, how accessible are your services going to be? How are you going to shape your customer proposition to make sure that you really think about disabled people, and older people that are going to be using the station? So I take your point that there is some unknowns at the moment, but actually, it's still worthwhile to talk about accessibility inclusion, I feel because it has to be there.

[1.20:40]

[...] It has to be developed as the project develops. And the reason that I'm here tonight is to give you some confidence that this is something that we're thinking about at this early stage but also to tell you about the Accessibility Advisory Panel, which will be a live panel from February on.

05. Update on the Accessibility Advisory Panel

Slide 19 – Update on the Accessibility Advisory Panel

[...] I mean, it's, it's, it's horses for courses, it's whether you, (there isn't anything I can tell you) in a detailed way at the moment but this is more about our approach and our overall commitment to accessibility and inclusion and to give you that confidence.

[1.21:15]

GJ: Okay

CE: And it's generally to find out what your sort of responses are on this subject. I think it's really important to think about engaging on the subject rather than leaving it to the last minute, rather than sort of bringing it up at the eleventh hour as a topic because it's a passion of mine.

[1.21:40]

GJ: I appreciate that but as we have no idea where the alignment is going to go, unless you know something we you don't, then we appreciate that, you know, I think we're all sort of sensible people and know that with the rules and regulations these days, you have to cater for all types...that would go that would happen automatically?

[1.22:09]

CE: I love your positivity in this area, that the regulations and the standards will protect us from building a railway that isn't accessible to everyone but it's really quite possible to build a railway to standard that still hasn't really thought about how you can maximize the inclusion/accessibility of it, and that's, that's particularly why we're so focused on ensuring that at EWR. We know that the research shows that even when infrastructure projects in the rail industry try and get it right, they haven't quite been able do that because the standards are, possibly could be better, they could hold the rail industry into account a bit more.

[1:22:56]

GJ: Okay.

CE: So I'm going to give you, unless there's any other questions, an update on Accessibility Advisory Panel. So if you just go to the next slide please. So basically, where we are setting up an Accessibility Advisory Panel, it will be comprised of volunteers from the Oxford Cambridge region, or the surrounding areas.

[1.23:18]

Slide 20 – Background

[...]: And we're looking for people who are disabled or have a long-term condition, our panel will be made up of eight people with different lived experiences of disability. So that's, not just wheelchair users, it's cross impairment. And our panel will meet every two months to help us understand the impact of any solutions or proposals that we have, whether that's from connection stage one in the very, very early work we're doing or through our design and development and they will help us to identify mitigations. So that's all part of our Equality Impact Assessment process under the public sector, equality, duty. So Paula, we're just picking up that Equality Impact Assessments, one of the ways that you really need to look at it is not just the assumptions about what the impacts are but to test those.

[1:24:10]

[...] And the best way to test is asking people with lived experience. And we will be asking people to give views about specific issues or problems about the sort of the work that we're doing and any solutions or proposals to help us identify mitigations. So if you could just move on to the next slide please, Robbie.

Slide 21 – Applications Process

[...] The applications are open at the moment, they are open until the 10th of January. You can apply through our website. There's a specific page on the community hub, or you can email us, or you can phone us.

[1.24:47]

[...] The applications process is basically to answer three questions which is: What is your experiences as a transport user? What do you think we need to change or improve on to make rail really accessible? And I can't remember the other question, I'm losing my mind. And so, so basically, it's really simple. We've tried to keep it as simple as possible. We've got 16 we've been open for two weeks now.

[1.25:18]

[...] We've got 16 really quality candidates so far – who've applied to be part of the panel. Although they are volunteers and the meeting happens every two months. It's paid. So you, each volunteer will be paid 50 pounds for attending the meeting, which would be a maximum of two hours to compensate them for their time. Justin?

[1.25:40]

JG: I was waiting for you to finish. You finish and then I'll ask.

CE: Cool, so if you can just move on to the next slide, please Robbie. So basically, the closing date is the 10th of January next year.

Slide 22 – Timeline

[...] We will be reviewing all of the applications like I said we've had quite a good response so far and we will invite people to interview, so that's probably a virtual interview or if they would be happy to meet on Teams for 20 minutes just to get a sense of their experience and who they are.

[1.26:16]

[...] And then we'll set up this panel and communicate the membership. And we'll launch our first meeting probably in March. So, we'll have the panel set up by the end of February. And have our first meeting in March. Talking about all of the things that we can influence now like Robbie's active travel plans. If we're going to put in a cycle storage at a station for example, how do you make sure that that's accessible? If we're you know, it's basically the sort of the great information people will be able to bring us if you wouldn't come up with yourself. So that is the last slide from me. And yeah, Justin?

06. Future Topics

[1:27:01]

JG: Just one little quick one and you've kind of half answered my other one. Could we just get a copy of those last two slides so we can publish that online and hardcopy just to promote a little bit more locally?

CE: Absolutely. And there's actually a really good page on the community website. I don't know if I can maybe drop it in the chat here actually. So I'll do that and we can maybe catch it just before you finish and you can use the link, but there is also a word application as well.

[1.27:38]

JG: Obviously the online world is great, but the paper world still exists.

CE: It does.

JG: So producing a little flyer that we need to distribute around our community is what I'm thinking. So just having those two slides that we can print them off.

CE: I have even better than that, I've got an actual poster that we've got at created so we can put it on notice boards and things so I can send you that as well.

[1.28:10]

JG: Brilliant I can print it off on my end. Ok, that's great. And the other question was in and around, because a couple of parishioners that have approached me about it, as they're nervous and the question they had was how will I get to a meeting? You know I have mobility issues. How do I get to a meeting? The fact that you're compensating people to the tune of 50 pounds per meeting probably would give most people a chance to pay for a taxi to get to somewhere.

[1.28:35]

CE: Listen if we were doing in person meetings, we would be paying for their travel expenses. But I mean, what I want to do is build this panel and then ask them themselves, how they want to meet and I imagine that most people would want to meet virtually and then similar to this that we would want a yearly on a six monthly in person. I think that's for the group to choose what the what they would like to do.

[1.29:02]

Slide 23 – Future Topics

JG: Yeah well both of my parishioners that spoke to me about it, are of a generation that are not online. And that probably isn't uncommon for people with mobility issues. Not that you have to be old to have mobility issues, but you know what I mean?

CE: Yes absolutely. And whatever it is, that people need from the panel, we can make happen.

JG: Brilliant, okay if you could send us that poster, we'll get it printed out.

[1.29:30]

CE: Okay thanks Justin and Nicky?

NG: Hi, Caroline. I'm really interested to hear what you had to say actually. I had to nip out I'm really sorry. I'm sure I didn't miss too much only it was only out 10 or 15 minutes. Just to point on I think it links back to what Gordon said a good few minutes ago now and I think Justin touched on it as well, it's about what what's in it for us?

[1.30:02]

[...] When Beth and Hannah visited, I think on the 26th of October, Beth said I mean I said, not Beth I think Hannah said I reiterated that for me to drive into Bedford, park-up, catch a train to you know to Cambridge when I can, you know I can drive up and do the park and ride. I was told well actually, I'm not a typical customer. I'm not the demographic that you guys are after. So how are you going to ensure that people in rural areas and people who don't match your demographic profile are included?

[1.30:40]

HS: Can I quickly clarify my comments actually, I think I wasn't clear at the time, and I don't remember that conversation, but that's fine. To clarify that – and it's really the point that Robbie was making earlier – not everyone is going to use railway, not everyone wants to switch out of using their car, not everyone can, for a huge variety of reasons. And that's fine.

[1.31:09]

[...] What this isn't, is a project that that takes away everyone's cars and forces them to use rail, there will be people that do not want to use rail. There are however a huge number of people that, for a huge variety of reasons, don't use private vehicles. Maybe they can't afford that? Maybe they have issues about driving? Myself as you probably remember for that trip, I get desperately carsick. So any opportunity to not be in a car, that's where I am. I don't take taxis really, I don't unless I can really help but I will always travel by train if I can. Because I get very, very badly carsick otherwise.

[1.31:41]

[...] There is a range, there are a range of people, and that's why this is one new, sustainable option for people in the region. So if I gave the impression there was something specific about your demographic. That would mean I would make that assumption about you. I

apologize. That wouldn't have been my intent I don't think. What I meant to say was that this railway is not dictating to people that you must move out of your car.

[1.32:09]

[...] There are always going to be people that prefer car but we know that there are also a lot of people that would prefer there to be an additional option. And it might be something that you use every day. It might be something you use once a week. That's also not for us to dictate. But it is something that we're looking at and to just bring together the point Robbie was making and the point Caroline was making, we need to make sure that this railway is as attractive as possible to as many people as possible because that's, that's the most responsible way of using public money, that's the most responsible way of building an asset for the community. And as you're sort of rightly saying, what is in it for local people? There'll be a range of things that are in it for a range of people. For some it might be that we've taken cars off the road so that perhaps their journey might be easier. It might be that we've given them that extra option for if they have a blinding migraine that they don't want to drive but still need to be somewhere but it gives them that option.

[1.32:56]

[...] Or it might be that it's a daily commute. So there's kind of a range of things. So I do apologize, if I gave the impression that there was some sort of cut and dry demographic that we were going for. It's not that. There's you know, as Caroline was saying, this is about everyone being able to use it, and wanting to use it and finding a reason for you know, for everyone to find that an easy and straightforward thing to be able to do. I hope that clarifies the point from that trip?

[1.33:22]

NG: Yeah no, fine. I just think it links into the points that other people have said really, you know, we're quite sparse with public transport anyway. And we have no other option and yeah, I mean, that's just how it is.

HS: I think I would agree. I mean, you know, we know the buses in and around Bedford aren't great at the moment. It's definitely something that, if we work with the local authorities, we're in a position to be able to support on that and to be able to talk about that and talk about getting a more holistic set of transport options actually up running.

[1.34:03]

[...] Now that, you know, we can't control what the local authorities do with buses, but we can certainly make it more attractive for them to move people around in different ways. And to give people more options, we can certainly sort of help with that help with guidance. It might be something around you know, additional infrastructure. For example, there are rail routes that have really strong cycle paths running near that involves a greater land take.

It also obviously has benefits for the environment and benefits for traffic. There's a range of stuff that you might be able to do in that area, that we're that we're kind of looking at. I think if that sort of onward the transport, that First Mile Last Mile, which is Robbie's presentation if that is something that you particularly want to pick up with us, I think we definitely can take some thoughts on that as well, I think that will be really, really good.

[1.34:48]

NG: Yeah, thanks Hannah. I must admit, I kind of came to this talk so that you know, Renhold is represented at every meeting. And I actually found it really, really interesting. It's, it's something I know nothing about. But the speakers have been really good. So thank you.

HS: Awesome. Thank you. Also, that's just some note popped up and Paula and I'm sorry if I missed a comment that you made around passenger numbers? So yeah, I mean, the latest data that's coming out of the Department for Transport, there's just been a slow, quite continuous growth coming back out of COVID.

[1.35:23]

[...] I think when I first started looking at the numbers in earnest, it was early summer. When they hit 90% of pre COVID levels year on year by comparison actually because there were two. There's a report or an article in Rail Technology Magazine, which is saying that UK Rail Passenger numbers are now at 99% of the pre COVID heights. I can drop you a link to that. I'll drop that link in the chat now. So you've got that.

[1.35:52]

CE: We've got a question from Guido as well.

GL: Yeah thank you, am I muted, no I'm not. I was kind of wondering, to what extent do you East West Railway is kind of doing a bit of horizon scanning in terms of the possibility with the number of councils, we're going to be moving on to some form of congestion charging for cars coming into town and whether that's coming into your planning for first and last mile?

[1.36:23]

[...] Because it's big money spinner for local authorities to be honest with you, in addition to the benefits to the environment. So kind of an open question on that.

CE: We've got Robbie. Yep.

RG: Yeah. It's not something that has come on to onto our horizon at the moment. It's a really, really good point. I think as we as we see, as you said, there's a lot of councils, a lot of city councils in particular looking at some sort of congestion charge, or congestion zones.

[1.37:00]

[...] Which of course impacts on the transport modes. So I think it's a good point. It's something that we will continue, will continue looking at, and it's possibly something for us to raise with councils as we engage with them going downstream.

[1.37:31]

CE: Okay, well I think I'm going to hand back over to Hannah to wrap up the meeting because that's, that's my section finished. Thank you very much.

HS: Absolutely, thanks so much. I'll echo Nicky's comment actually and say I always find these meetings incredibly interesting. And that was no exception. I think, Caroline and Robbie are both very expert in their fields, and it's always really useful for me to be able to hear them speak, so thank you very much for that.

[1.38:04]

[...] Brief chat I think about future topics would be really helpful? Just to agree future topics for discussion, again just a reminder that the topics which we discuss are very much led by the group. If, well when we have some, we have a substantive update to give... ah Nicky! Sorry I missed your hand up there.

NG: No it's just on future topics just to get in before anyone else does really.

HS: Haha, excellent. Good planning!

[1.38:30]

[...] So just to remind you that we will, of course, when there's a substantive update to give, we will either make sure that meetings are sensibly timed around that or click in an additional meeting or an additional briefing. So that's sort of covered. This is more about what kind of topics we want to see in these general drumbeat kind of conversations outside of any large announcements. So without further ado, Nicky, do you want to jump in and have the first word?

NG: Yeah, that'd be great. Thank you.

[1.39:00]

Slide 24 – Topics for Future Discussion

[...] So, I understand: Meeting eight is Freight and Tractive Effort and meeting which is I think is going to be in January, late January. Nothing for meeting nine at the minute. I'd like to propose that meeting nine covers the plans that East West Rail will put in place for managing the work program and trying to permit as normal a life as possible. That can, will continue in the impacted areas sort of during works, etc?

[1.39:32]

HS: From what I understand, I'll take that to the delivery team and have a conversation. I think again, it would be at this stage until there's a design...until there's something we can say what it is we're building, it's very hard to talk with any authority about the exact mitigation measures we've put in place because mitigation measures are specific to the locations that you're delivering stuff.

[1.40:02]

[...] So, this is, I envisage this forum being incredibly important in helping us detail those mitigation measures when we do have more information on that space, but I think that well, I think, again, we can definitely talk about the overview and the approach we might take, that there won't be there won't be details to discuss. Unless there's been a sort of an announcement in the meantime, that gives us more, more detail on the build. And I think that's, does that help? Is that something, do you still want that?

NG: I just think, yeah thanks Hannah, I just think it's a topic that's got massive community interest and impact. So it's worth a standalone, standalone meeting.

[1.40:41]

HS: That might be another one where we talk about what we've done on CS1 maybe and give you an idea of some of the broad-brush strokes that we've done. There's a range of stuff that you think about in that space. So yes, planning works, how you go about planning work, maybe more, more than talking about the specifics of, you know, we would only, I don't know, 'vehicles of this size' and try and bring everything in by water as we've seen on other projects before, that seems unlikely in the space.

[1.41:10]

[...] But that sort of some sort of general stuff around that. But I also I think it might be interesting if we had a discussion around how you would want to have those conversations. So you know, how would you want us to approach you to talk about, I don't know, the potential impacts of potential impacts on local business or something like that of a particular type of work? Is that something you want to talk about in this forum? Is that something that your content to talk to local authorities? I don't know. I think so. Mike might be sort of starting to have those conversations really about how we, how we kind of plan moving forward. Does that sound, I'll go back to the delivery team and see, how much they think that'll help?

[1.41:50]

NG: I kind of got first in, I'm sure Justin and Paul have other comments as well, but hopefully it's been noted.

HS: Absolutely. Justin?

JG: Yeah no I support the subject. For the meeting number nine being in and around those things. I hear what you're saying Hannah about where you're at in your process, and therefore your inability to maybe drill down in detail. It's certainly a topic that will be discussed, well you won't do it in one meeting. It will be a big part of discussions over the next couple of years. But, it would give this forum more of an opportunity also to relay to you some of our local insights into what we anticipate as issues in and around.

[1.42:37]

[...] And then you can feed that into the delivery team. Just as an early doors, you know, there'll be a half a dozen things or a little bit of local knowledge about a particular road or whatever it is that we can begin to put on your radar.

HS: I think that's fair. I think that there may be also I think at this stage, it might be interesting to understand some of the broader concerns that people have about the delivery phase as well. So, I know from that walkabout that we had with Beth, that there were some concerns around school run for example.

[1.43:12]

[...] So specific times of day, more than a specific interventions just what the approach might be during specific times of day. Now obviously, I said before, we won't be able to make agreements on that, we'll give guidance because you won't know particular what's happening but it's really helpful for us to go away with that list of things that you're concerned about. So I think that that's, that's kind of helpful I think.

JG: Yeah.

HS: Paula?

PB: Hi yeah, I would just like to reinforce that. I think, you know, issues for Brickhill particularly sort of having to remove the soil that that will need removing.

[1.43:51]

[...] The thousands of lorries of that and your how it's getting in how it's getting out. What times of the day, dirt, noise, congestion. You know, those are real concerns of residents in and around Brickhill and the wider community as those vehicles have to trundle along with all of that. So, I think that local knowledge, for you to be aware of upfront and to factor in once we know what's occurring, you know, once we get told, what's happening I think would be really valuable.

[1.44:21]

HS: I think that's a really crucial element, isn't it? Because if we you know we have got you know, several options still being looked at. So, diving into the detail. I think might end up being premature until we've moved on. But I think that general thought about well, how would you deal generally speaking, how do projects like this tend to deal with stuff and what are our aspirations to do better? Movement, truck movements for example, were very interesting. I've worked on a lot on projects where you know, they've limited the times of day that they will be moving, they've washed down tires before they come on an offsite in the summer, to keep dust levels low and in in winter, to try and keep modified.

[1.45:09]

[...] All that kind of stuff. I think to understand more about what the general stroke concerns are in that space. Noise for example, being really interesting, you know, a really interesting one. There's kind of lots there, I think that would be really helpful. Em, Guido?

GL: Can I just say I kind of echo specifically what's been said by my Chair. I think bearing in mind there is going to be works on the Black Cat and the disruption that will cause, probably on a similar level to the East West Railway for that past Bedford and beyond.

[1.45:48]

[...] I think it's really important that at least we have some form of idea as to what East West Rail's thinking is in relation to this and the extent to which, East West Rail is liaising with other large projects that may impact the communities, effectively a double whammy or extend the period in which people are going to be inconvenienced. And I certainly know from my experience at Heathrow that this was done early doors because it was a massive consideration from residents living near to the airport, and those further out.

[1.46:25]

[...] So I think having an idea, even if it's not necessarily set in concrete, might help reassure people as to what the likelihood is going to be. Rather than say, well, this comes further down the line and therefore talk to you as and when we've formulated that plans. I don't think that's helpful to the community. And I know it's obviously not your decision. But it's the sort of thing that has been done in other large infrastructure projects. And bearing in mind the roots of the Black Cat project going to start at some point, I think it's really important for our community to know that we're not going to be hit by a double whammy.

[1.47:00]

HS: And that's really fair, and that's an interesting conversation I think we can have. There are some areas where I think that the team feel that there could be some synergies to be made. There are some areas where that may be more challenging and I think again understanding the appetite for that locally and being able to document that does give us... ammunition is the wrong word, but it does give us the ability to feed that back to the other

organizations as well and say look, we've got proof that our communities do actually find this really important.

[1.47:35]

[...] I think we'll move into space. Increasingly, where actually it's our job of this forum to I mean, we do the goal really is to make sure this forum is a helpful area for you to feed us specific and concerns so that we can act on your behalf for the wider group people. So I think I'm really happy to move into that space. Again, will we have all that information for meeting number nine or will we be in a position to give you that detail? Probably not unless we've, you know, we've moved on in the design.

[1.48:07]

[...] But I think opening that conversation would be really sensible. I think that'd be really good to do. We can tell you what we've got so far on the conversations we're having with existing places. Gordon?

GJ: Yes. Just upon our own Paula's comment about moving the soil and Guido's comment about the A428. The National Highways team told me that they are hoping that they're going to start their construction early January.

[1.48:39]

[...] But they also mentioned in conversation that major movements of earth, soil whatever, will be carried out between sort of April, May and September during the summer months, not during the winter months. Now considering the amount of material that's going to behave to be moved north of Bedford. Would you be sticking to that sort of policy, or would it be? If so, it would extend the construction period for some considerable time.

[1.49:14]

HS: So I think that's something that's probably why we need this as a topic of conversation because I'm not a construction planner. So I think the detail, and I you know and I think the ethos by which we'll be doing that, I don't think is something that's been set. I think this is more around understanding what the concerns are and having a central way to feed that back. I've worked on projects where construction is significantly hard in winter because of ground conditions. I've worked on projects where for a variety of topographical reasons that hadn't been an issue.

[1.49:48]

[...] So I think we'd need to take advice from experts. And again, it goes down to this thing of exactly what it is we're building because, you know, you've got a range of ground conditions in and around Bedford and indeed across the whole route as well and, and what we will be doing project bearing in mind our project runs all the way from Oxford to Cambridge, and it

will be works the whole length going on between Oxford Cambridge, you have to plan a whole thing.

[1.50:09]

[...] And so it's very, there's a lot that goes into planning that out and I think that will take some time. Sorry, my dog is trying to pull something out my handbag, get out. So I don't think I'm gonna have an answer for you next month. I think it'd be really, really helpful to have that conversation to understand what the concerns are in detail.

GJ: Okay, well if we have that as a separate meeting. We carry on with meeting eight. And I would propose six weeks from now is about the 18th of January.

[1.50:45]

HS: So the dates for the next meetings haven't been agreed, yet. I think we're gonna follow up in a poll in the new year with that, we're just checking on availability of all sorts of different experts on our side and making sure we've got the right stuff. So we'll and obviously this group because we have more frequent meetings in this group than with other groups, we haven't started that round of putting the dates in for the next the next round yet for the for the groups to hold. So I think we're coming out in New Year to set the dates for those.

GJ: Okay, okay. And you do look good in a mac and wellies.

[1.51:22]

HS: Ah well, as if by magic...I think, come on.

07. AOB and Closing Remarks

Slide 25 – AOB and Closing Remarks

Slide 26 – Thank you

[...] I think the worst picture of me that has ever been taken but I did promise you I put it in the in the thing that was from the tour that we did a little while ago. I mean, don't give up the day job. Basically, that's my advice...not a great photographer. But it was really helpful, and I think Beth and I, to sort of close this meeting out with a sort of mention of that tour.

[1.51:50]

[...] I think Beth and I both left that meeting with a really, that tour, that day with some really clear, with a really, really clear idea of some of the key concerns. And it has guided a lot of our conversations since. And it has guided a lot of the thinking I think that we've had. So thank you very much. And if you pass my thanks to people who weren't on the tour, but I know that so much work went into that and so much work went into the materials that

were put together for the tour and the background for it. And I had a brief chat with Beth about at the end of last week. And she did want me to extend her thanks for your time and your patience with us taking us round, I think we found it really helpful.

[1.52:33]

[...] We are two minutes running over, I'm sure everyone wants to go and cook their dinner. So unless anyone puts their hand up. Any more thoughts, questions, feelings?

GJ: No, Thank you all.

HS: Wonderful. In which case, thank you so much. And I will see you all at the next meeting.

[1.52:55]

GJ: Have a good Christmas.

HS: Thank you. Yes, Happy Christmas, Happy New Year everyone.

GJ: Bye now. Take care everyone.

CE: Bye bye.