

Bedfordshire Group - Transcript

Meeting #12 - Details

Date: Thursday 28 September 2023

Time: 6:30PM

Type of meeting: Virtual

Further detail and clarifications (in response to comments/questions made throughout this recording) have been added via post meeting clarifications in the summary note, which is currently with attendees for review and will be available [here](#), on Thursday 2 November. We recommend that you read this transcript alongside the summary note.

Attendees:

EWR Co attendees

- Hannah Staunton, EWR Co lead.
- Mo Alserdare, Programme Manager for the Bedford area
- Sarah Jacobs, Local Representatives Groups Engagement Manager
- Gail Buckland, Community Engagement Manager
- Katy Sutton, DCO Team Engagement Area Lead
- EWR Co production and support team.

Parish Council representatives

- Cllr Alastair Grant, Brickhill Parish Council
- Cllr Peter Lamswood, Brickhill Parish Council
- Cllr Jan Lewandowski, Willington Parish Council
- Cllr Gordon Johnson, Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden Parish Council
- Cllr Joni Pelham, Shortstown Parish Council

Local authority councillors

- Cllr Nicola Gribble, Renhold & Ravensden, Bedford Borough Council

Other attendees

- Peter Norris, Renhold Parish Council, Technical Expert

Apologies

- Biddenham Parish Council
- Bolnhurst and Keysoe Parish Council

- Bromham Parish Council
- Cardington Parish Council
- Clapham Parish Council
- Colmworth Parish Council
- Cople Parish Council
- Great Barford Parish Council
- Milton Ernest Parish Council
- Oakley Parish Council
- Ravensden Parish Council
- Roxton Parish Council
- Shortstown Parish Council
- Staploe Parish Council
- Stevington Parish Council
- Thurleigh Parish Council
- Turvey Parish Council
- Wilden Parish Council
- Cllr Jonathan Gambold, Biddenham in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Wendy Rider, Brickhill in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Charles Royden, Brickhill in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Dylan Mark Simmons, Bromham in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Roger Rigby, Bromham in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Jane Walker, Clapham & Oakley in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Jonathan Abbott, Clapham & Oakley in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant, Great Barford in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Martin Towler, Riseley in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Doug McMurdo, Sharnbrook in Bedford Borough
- Cllr Leigh Coombs, Shortstown in Bedford Borough
- Sarah Gallagher, Shortstown in Bedford Borough
- Julie Cox, Wyboston in Bedford Borough

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
- Video recording

Key points, actions and outcomes

[0:00:00]

New Slide – Enable Captions

Hannah Staunton (HS): Ah that one. Yes, this is a meeting that gets recorded and gets posted on the website. So, we've just started the recording now. If anyone is uncomfortable with that, please let me know and we will stop the recording. You can do that on a side chat if you're not comfortable saying that to the group. Generally, that that that bit passes quite fast.

[0:00:23]

[...] The other thing we've just been asked to do, a couple of people were saying that it's, it's still difficult to hear either because they've got people in the background, or just the nature of zoom meetings is a little bit challenging. So, there's just a little quick how to guide here for how to show ongoing captions, with the obvious caveat that captions are auto generated and real time, so there may be some mistakes in that. So, if you are doing captions, and find someone saying something weird, you're welcome to ask for correction as we go through.

New slide – General updates title page

[0:01:00]

[...] Any other thoughts on that before we go in? Brilliant. I've actually just on the side, I was checking one of the slides and I've just noted a just noted a discrepancy in one of the action slides. So can I ask the team when we get to slide 11, I will share that one live myself. And then we'll flip back into the into the back of the deck.

[0:01:30]

[...] So, whoever's running the deck just to be aware when we get to slide 11, if you could come out of the deck, and I'll I'll go straight into it. Apologies team. Right, general updates. Next slide.

New Slide - General updates

[...] So, as we sort of mentioned with Gail being here, we held 12 community events across June and July. Two of those were additional, we were planning 10, originally, and we had some feedback from the relevant LRGs that they wanted.

[0:01:59]

[...] Events, additional events in Cambridge and Bletchley, which we were happy to provide. We had 2300 attendees over the course of them, and I think the Bedford one was one of the better attended. Some of them were really not very well attended at all, you won't be surprised to know that that sort of West westwards of Bedford, the numbers tend to drop off as you go further towards Oxford, but the Bedford event was very well attended was fantastic.

[0:02:29]

[...] And we've also done several videos which kind of pulled together the questions that were being asked in these sessions, which, if anyone in your area is interested in having a look at those, you probably know the answers yourselves to all the questions. But if anyone in your area wants to understand directly, and I must directly apologize that I didn't have a hairbrush for many of them and look like a bit of a state. But the answers we're giving are quite straightforward. If you've got any questions about those, please let me know. But I would definitely encourage you to

[0:03:00]

to point your parishioners, if that's the right word towards those videos, if they've got questions about that sort of thing. The accessibility advisory panel, which we've spoken about before. And it's worth reminding everyone, I think that the attendees for the accessibility advisory panel were in part, found due to conversations with LRGs. So, it's, it's something that I do want to keep updating the LRGs on.

[0:03:28]

[...] We recently held the third meeting where the panel met key people from inside EWR and carried on giving their views on the design and development requirements as we go forward, which has been really helpful for us to ensure that the railway is genuinely accessible for everybody. We are going to continue having those meetings as we go forward. I think I'm right in saying they're quarterly at the moment. And we'll continue having those throughout the length of the project.

[0:04:01]

[...] Those are the main updates of any any sort of questions or thoughts on any of that before we crack on. Then I suggest we crack on ... think this is the moment where I'm going to share my screen and it won't look as good as when Tabitha was doing it, I'm afraid.

New Slide – Completed Actions

[0:04:27]

[...] here we go. So just to say that the ongoing sort of arrangements around the BFARe meeting, understanding that this itself is not a BFARe meeting so we shouldn't really get into the details here. But just to say that that is being arranged there was a date in we're now unable to make that because of train strikes. Which means that Beth won't be able to come several meetings in the same day as I'm sure you

[0:05:00]

[...] Understand, so she wasn't unfortunately able to come up, we'll find a new date for that. The second line here, we were asked by one of our attendees to provide an overview of how EWR Co is considered cost of Route E, technical note was uploaded to the website, I believe a fortnight ago, possibly longer and I believe the link was circulated to this group. Sarah is that correct?

Sarah Jacobs (SJ): Yes.

[0:05:30]

HS: Fabulous, we were asked to provide a Google satellite map of how EWR and Black Cat interact, which we were happy to do and have now provided, just make that a bit bigger. Sorry, since my, I told you my skills at driving weren't as good as Tabitha's. We were asked to share the explanation on the shifting Route north of Wilden. Again, we did circulate that, we provided information on how the red line boundary and consultation area will be defined.

[0:05:59]

[...] That was provided I believe, Sarah, jump in and let me know if I'm talking nonsense. I believe that was shared as text. Is that correct?

SJ: Sorry, Hannah. I wasn't listening to that part, sorry I was coughing. Can you repeat that?

HS: That's so? I really think you really need to go get a snooze. Tabitha is telling me yes, on the side chat that was shared thank you just so much,

SJ: Sorry guys

HS: Honestly, you're not well my love. And then lastly, EWR Co, to confirm if a square kilometer sort of a measure could be added to the online maps.

[0:06:30]

[...]: And again, we were happy to do that. So any comments or questions on these before we shift on to the outstanding actions,

Peter Norris (PN): You won't actually be able to put a square on the map will you.

HS: We have done that. I believe we have done that.

PN: Nope, It says unfortunately, it's not possible to do it.

HS: That is intriguing. Umm Sarah's just stepped away. I apologize for that. Peter, I thought I was on top of that particular issue.

[0:07:02]

[...]: Let me just double check. Okay, I'm gonna take that away to understand myself a bit better, why that wasn't possible. And I will get back to you, because I don't feel that that's beyond our capability. So I feel like I want to understand that one a bit better myself, Peter, if I may. I do apologize. That one I think I hadn't read the answer,

[0:07:28]

[...] because I felt that was let me take that away that that feels like something we should be able to do. So I'd like to understand the technical reason why not?

PN: Could I go back to action number two.

HS: of course.

PN: I find it difficult to understand this, it says EWR Co to review information provided by an attendee and provide an overview of how they've considered the cost of the route E. When that at the foot the introduction, that means nothing to me.

[0:08:00]

I can't remember anybody putting some information in providing information, which was taken away to be discussed.

HS: Sure. So, we were specifically asked I believe this was a specific question around the it was it was I understand it was brought up in a it was Mike Barlow

[0:08:27]

[...] requested some specific information, which we responded to in a technical note that's been added to the website. So, it's at it's part of the technical note for the BFAre alignment. And I will put the link to that in the chat for this meeting now. So, it is there. Which this is now on the website. I can't get back into into the meeting.

SJ: Oh, I'll put it in the chat. Now, Hannah.

HS: Thank you. I'm really bad at driving this. Good Gravy.

[0:08:59]

PN: I think my comment really is once again, the use of the word attendee because.

HS: we were having that discussion just before the meeting started. Actually, I think that's a hangover from sort of the previous approach and the approach of other groups. So let us this isn't saying I can't get back into the meeting. I'm really bad at this. So, I apologize for that. But I'm happy to confirm that that was in response to a request directly from Mike Barlow.

[0:09:30]

No, that would be fine.

HS: Okay, I'm somehow back in the meeting, but I've jumped over the slide deck. Are there any other questions? I think we can go back into item 12. Unless there's any other questions or comments.

New Slide – Topic – Approach to how we engage with you and your communities title slide

SJ: Hannah we can elaborate a little bit more on the the comment about the map.

HS: Yeah

SJ: We did speak to the technical team and unfortunately, it's not possible at the moment with the software they're using. Because of industry standards.

[0:10:00]

[...]: That will we will go back to them and see what else can be done with that.

HS: Yeah, let's get let's get more detailed explanation out of that. And can we put that meeting, that item as still outstanding. That's probably for my benefit more than anything, because I'm quite keen to understand that there might something that we can retrofit over the top, as long as we can put a caveat saying that the precise, you know, there may be some precision issues, but I take their point, actually, these things are the software sometimes has these odd quirks.

[0:10:30]

[...] We have a raised hand from Gordon.

Gordon Johnston (GJ): Yes Hannah, before we go on, can we discuss some of the comments from meeting notes meeting 11 notes?

HS: Absolutely. Let's do that. We actually jump to slide as well. We jumped? Slide 12, I think

New Slide – Outstanding actions

[...] but yes, we can definitely discuss some topics. What would you like to discuss, Gordon?

GJ: Well, one of the points I've raised in my email. Was that was item 3.6.

[0:11:02]

[...] Hannah, you mentioned you mentioned that added that many other points raised in the previous consultations, have informed design, such as revisiting the heights of embankment and viaduct and re-evaluating the design at various level crossings. and these in turn have led to changes from the design proposed in 2019 and 2021. Well, as far as this LRG group is concerned, that's irrelevant,

[0:11:30]

[...] because to my knowledge, there are no level crossings between Bedford and certainly the East Coast mainline. If there are we need to know about them.

HS: So, no, you're entirely right. It was a list of things, list of changes that were relevant across the whole route. And it was really some of the larger changes that were made, were the ones that I was kind of ticking off because the smaller changes are really ones for the individual design teams to be able to, to rattle off.

[0:12:03]

[...] But on a more macro level, I was talking about some of the larger changes. So, I think you're probably right, that the level the level crossing one unless you particularly sort of go and drive or take train through those places will be less relevant to you. But I think the embankment and viaducts issue is one that has come up in here before. So, I would say that one's probably more relevant.

[0:12:29]

GJ: Right, the other one was a comment I made about the reservoir to the east of Colton Road. And the EWR Co response was that, you know, it'll all be looked into, the particular farmer concerned had a meeting with somebody from a EWR Co recently, and he discussed this.

[0:13:00]

[...] And they said, oh, we don't worry about minor details like that at this stage. Well, the stability of a reservoir where a railway is getting close to is not what we consider a minor detail. Was the chap talking out of order?

HS: No, I wouldn't have thought so I think that I'd be interested to know Katy's view on this. But my view, my instinct is that obviously that's not a minor issue.

[0:13:29]

[...] And that's if if they actually did use that wording, that'd be interesting. But I think that there are certain levels of certainty that you can have the issues can be sorted through. And I think that maintaining the stability of the reservoir is probably one where the engineers have a high level of certainty that that can be accommodated. And in the design, Katy and Mo though, I think both of you have more expertise in these areas than I do. So, I wonder if you could jump in?

Katy Sutton (KS): Yeah, it was just I was gonna say it's probably over to Mo, but I guess I'm curious about who it was that was saying that.

[0:14:03]

[...] We're kind of, could you elaborate on who that was? Sorry. Do you know the name?

GJ: I don't have a date. No, I can get.

HS: I think that will be helpful. And they can work.

GJ: I will ask the question and see if I can get a date and a name.

HS: That'd be very helpful. Thank you. Thanks, Mo. I'd be interested to know if you have any thoughts.

[0:14:27]

Mo Alsedare (MA): The only thing I can come in and say is that it's not a minor issue. I mean, these kinds of things are very close to our hearts. If the railway line is close to the reservoir, and there are concerns with the structural integrity, the onus is on EWR is to demonstrate that that is you know, we're not going to fundamentally have an impact on the structural integrity of it. That work is done in stages and will take place between now and when we actually get consent. So, yeah, I think you know, if that is the message that was conveyed to you, it is not is not the right message.

[0:15:00]

[...] We are duty bound to actually look at the structural integrity of all structures on the routes. And that was part of a presentation I had given previously on code of construction practice and how we minimize impacts during construction. So, I'm very happy to give you more information on that offline if that is something that would put your mind at ease.

GJ: Right. Okay, but I can't find out who it was. That was the guilty party. Okay, thank you.

[0:15:30]

HS: Fantastic. Sorry, let's, we're just emailing a colleague about the kilometer thing. Any other questions or thoughts before we move on? Thank you. So then just finally, there was a request to look at the list of proposal items the team are working on and expect to share the statutory consultation. I think as we sort of touched on lightly last time,

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[...] there isn't a set list of products and documents that you would necessarily expect to see at the next round of consultation. So that's something that's ongoing internally. And we will update you when we have more information on that. Katy, I wonder if you've got anything to add as this is definitely your wheelhouse,

KS: I think there's there's a few things that are set out in legislation that you will definitely be seeing. One of them is the PEIR, which is the so just let me know, sorry, if you can't hear me, but one of them is the PEIR, which is the preliminary environmental impact report.

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[...] So that's an early doors assessment report for environment. So, the potential impacts that will definitely be there. That's that's set out in legislation for statutory consultation. But then you'll expect to see this the standard consultation type documents a summary of the route, what we're proposing, the consultation feedback form, so you can share your feedback. But yes, that's all currently going on right now.

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[...] To decide what materials will be available at stat-con.

HS: Brilliant, any other thoughts or questions before we move on? Fabulous, thanks so much.

New Slide – Topic – Approach to how we engage with you and your communities title slide

[...] This is, as I say, the topic I've been really excited about talking to everyone about. And I know that you've had an extra sort of couple of people join. So welcome to Peter. Welcome to Alastair.

[0:17:29]

[...] If anyone else is in and I haven't seen, I apologize, but but very much welcome. To those people that have just joined, please feel free to come off mute to show your camera. And indeed, I would definitely encourage it for the next section if you feel comfortable doing so. This section for us, obviously, we have had two consultations. Now. We've done a lot of desk research into

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[...] who is in the local community and how to find people. We've used media, we've used the LRGs, we've used all manner of different approaches to try and reach people. I think that work is never done. That work will be ongoing for the life of the project to find new people to talk to new groups to talk to. And especially as we get into some of the more specialized area of design, it's really important that we go down every avenue that's open to us.

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[...] At the moment, we're at this stage. So, we've had two consultations, as you can see, and our route update announcement earlier in the year, but we've got a lot left. So, a lot, still to go, we've got engagement, we've got statutory consultation, we've got an examination period, with the DCO, we submit the DCO. And then we go into construction. And all of these require us. And I'd say require it, we want to make sure that we're talking to as many and varied people as we possibly can.

[0:18:59]

[...] So, I'm I'm very keen that we get as much of your knowledge and your local understanding as we possibly can, at that this stage in the project, and indeed at every stage as we go through, which is really what today's session is about, can I pop to the next slide. So, what we're going to do is we're going to have this session today, where if we were in person, imagine that this is sort of post it notes and all that kind of stuff. So, we're kind of just going to do the equivalent here.

[0:19:29]

[...] It's kind of hard to get the same energy in a in a zoom call, but we'll try. We want to understand all of your suggestions for who and how we can talk to in the community. And then we'll have a look at what what we're already doing and see where we can improve and see who who we're not yet talking to who we could talk to and make sure in that space. So, as we go through to the next section, please throw throw your ideas and suggestions in any way you feel comfortable.

[0:19:59]

[...] We've got the teams that are that they'll be writing stuff, there'll be looking at the chat bar, raise your hand, don't raise your hand, whatever feels comfortable. But I'm really keen that we kind of get get some good ideas out there. So, these are some ideas, these are meant to be indicative not prescriptive. So please think as big as you like, or as small as you like, if there's a specific person in your local community you think is worth us talking to? That's fantastic. We're looking for, you know, just as wider thoughts as you've got,

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[...] we've had three or four of these sessions already. And we've had some really wonderful feedback. So, I'm not saying it's a competition. But you know, we've had some really good feedback already from some other areas, environment groups. Now, obviously, we have an environment team, we have statutory groups who we talked to who we know, and we've got a big tier of groups underneath that. But there will be ones that we haven't heard of, there will be ones that are very unique to your community,

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[...] community groups, that could be anything that could be from parents, work groups that we don't know about, that could be business groups that we don't, we don't yet we're not yet in touch with. That could be anything really. So, any community groups in your area that you know, local charities as well, they are very difficult to find often through desk research. It may be that they act as a charity, but they don't yet have charitable status. And they're even harder to find. So those kinds of groups and passions and accessibility groups as well.

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[...] So we want to make sure that we are talking to not just the people that we can find through desk research, the people that were recommended by the local authority, and we will be having this process with the local authorities as part of the statement of community consultation, but that we're really going to the horse's mouth, the lion's den, the source of all information. So, we're talking to you. So please think really broadly, don't be constrained, I'm going to try very hard to shut up which as you all know, is difficult for me.

[0:21:59]

[...] Transport groups brilliant Gordon, Chuck them at us. So, the team, we're just going to take notes now. So, let's see if anyone's got some views. And then we'll try and keep the conversation moving. So Gordon, can you kick us off?

GJ: Well, I just posted a note, are there any Trainspotting groups?

HS: Brilliant idea. We have?

KS: Sorry, I'm Jumping in

[0:22:26]

[...] sorry. This is part of my this part of my job as well. So it's really useful to hear your feedback and your local knowledge. So, Trainspotting groups really interesting point. It's not a statutory consultee. So, it's good to hear these look these types of groups. If you have any suggestions for local to you trainspotting groups, that would be great. Just drop them in the chat. But we can also do some research ... go on, go on Gordon and sorry.

[0:22:59]

GJ: We were talking to we're talking to parish councils, which is the important one here. You're also talking to environmental groups, CPRE, etc.

HS: can I go back to real quick to the parish groups, because I think that's, that's a brilliant one. One of the things that we'll be sort of talking about later, as well as the methods to talk to them, and I know that parishes do tend to have newsletters and that kind of thing. Is it is that a good space for us to be involved with in the newsletters and kind of giving information through in a specific way?

[0:22:33]

[...] Or in a specific thought? Are there any offshoots or committees of your specific parishes that will be helpful for us to understand? I will say this, there is opportunities to feed in this. So, if this is an ongoing conversation, so please don't think that you can't reflect and come back to us later.

GJ: There is a local newsletter, but it covers a couple of parishes here. Excuse me. So covers both Wyboston, Chiltern are Colesdon and also Roxton.

[0:24:03]

HS: So, I think that'd be really helpful. Let's make sure we've got access to that newsletter. We'll come back to you, I think. Thank you. I can see that you've said British Horse Society. Brilliant. Yes, we have spoken to British Horse Society, quite a lot. Ramblers is that like an individual Ramblers, or like the Rambling association or

Nicola Gribble (NG): It's a Rambling Association. And there's local groups, I mean, when you consider all the rights of way that are going to be decimated,

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[...] they're going to have I should hope, a jolly good opinion on that.

KS: Yep. We've got local we've got both the Ramblers Association and local but if there's any kind of really local to you, I think if you could suggest them in the group chat, that'd be great. Just to make sure that we're not missing anybody off.

NG: I think the thing is Hannah, I mean, what what are you going to say at these communication events because

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[...] All the other ones that in no, we diligently go to know, and no one can answer our questions. And we just the same stuff all the time.

HS: Yeah. I mean, I'm really happy to have a question about that kind of stuff. But what what would we have had these conversations before, I'm really comfortable opening up and having a conversation about the events. And actually, the next section of this is definitely about events. But in order for us to be able to talk to people and find them, alert them that there are consultations coming, and there are going to be consultations coming, we really need to know who they are.

[0:25:34]

[...] And we're trying really hard to reach as many people as we can. And that's kind of what what we this section of the conversation is about, where we are really happy to talk about that by just with a sort of a chair hat on rather than with an EWR Co hat on, it'd be really helpful if we could just try and think some people I mean, to your to your point around knocking on doors to understand. So, we have spoken to directly, for example, all impacted landowners.

[0:26:00]

HS: But I wonder if there's something more specific that you're talking about there that you feel we've missed?

NG: I guess it's just going back to Gordon's point about, you know, the the chap who was affected with his reservoir, and he kind of just got a pretty, you know, off the cuff remark really? It's, it's, I don't know, it's just not right, is it?

[0:26:27]

[...] As a thing, I mean, what's you're actually saying to these people, you know, yeah, we, you know, we're gonna come through, and we can't really give you any more information. And, you know, we can't give you any more details yet how it's going to crumble the size of your reservoir. So don't worry about that, you know,

HS: I think Alastair has just put up an interesting comment in the in the chat to be great for your confidence about rights of way being maintained during construction, and how they'll be enhanced post construction. That's a really, really good point. And that's something that we'll be able to do much better.

[0:26:58]

[...] And we'll be able to have those conversations and really understand the priorities of local Rambler groups, local horse rider groups, local, you know, parent and child groups, if we know who they are, and if we can find them. So, your your, your, I think your point is, is really pertinent, which is, we don't yet know what it is that we're proposing, we're not in that position. But what we want to be able to do is when we are in that position, we want to be able to send an email, pick up the phone, create a meeting, have those people around the table as quickly as possible,

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[...] so that we can talk that that kind of stuff through with them. So, what we are trying to do here is getting to a position where we can have conversations as quickly as possible. So I take the point, Nikki, that, you know, to date, you've personally felt that there's not been the information that you needed out there, what we're trying to do is to make sure when that information does become available, we can move as quickly as possible in including people in that and getting their views in quickly. So that we can use it to hopefully affect change. That's kind of what the sessions for

[0:28:00]

NG: Yeah, no, thanks for that, Hannah. And I know we're, you know, we have our specific local residence group here. But if we go back to Alastair's point, the people in you know, we're actually quite aware of what's going on and stuff because we've taken an incredibly active interest, people in Bedford town, and the immediate area have not got a clue of the disruption that is going to happen. Now, how can we get in touch with them?

[0:28:33]

HS: Brilliant question. And I think we've, as I said, before, we've tried, we've got a lot of different methods that we're using, but as as representatives of local people, you might be looking at us going well, goodness sake, why didn't they use the, you know, the smoke signals that we all use? Or the you know, the this Facebook group that we've all got? What are what are those things that would be helpful for us to be using to reach people? And it's a couple of classic what in DCO terminology is called the hard to reach groups.

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[...] And they're called that because that's exactly what they are. So are there any of those is really, really good point you raise Nikki how how to reach those people, we can go away, we'll do a lot of research, we'll do a lot of work to make sure we reach them. But there may be stuff that you know, that we don't know. And I think that that's kind of where we are. So, with that specific example, do you have anything in mind that you would like us to do in that space?

[0:29:26]

NG: I honestly think you should be contacting Ward councilors of the areas in Bedford that are going to be deeply affected. Absolutely deeply affected.

HS: For avoidance of doubt Ward councilors definitely on the list, we email them, they're invited.

NG: Yeah, how can we make them understand then?

HS: Good, good question. And I think again, it's it's we we do talk to them we do give them information. Are there things that you think we could do more of that might engage them a little bit more?

[0:30:02]

NG: I mean I can try at council level to just get people, you know, aware and interested. Because honestly, this is just going to hit them like a flipping wrecking ball. It really will.

HS: Okay. I mean, we slightly disagree on that point, but it's a helpful, sort of a helpful thing to know that there's a space there. Alastair you've had your hand up for a while.

[0:30:25]

AG: Oh, yeah, sorry. Just can you hear me okay?

HS: Absolutely.

AG: Yeah, brilliant. I'm just a little bit concerned about this. In terms of Public Rights of Way, and Nicky's point, and then your your, your response to that, Hannah.

[...]: It's pretty clear that East West Rail could make a statement today now saying that all Public Rights of Way will be maintained during construction, and they will all be reinstated, or enhanced, where opportunities are to enhance the existing rights away system without fail, right?

[0:31:00]

[...]: You don't need to go out to talk to other hard to reach groups or engage with anybody else to do that you could make that statement. Now, the fact that they don't, or East West Rail, basically, is always talking about oh, yeah, we're going to engage, and every question is a good question. And everything is, you know, so wonderful. Well, you know, there are some basic things that could be done, now, today. You don't need to engage with anybody else, you can make some clear statements about things and the Public Rights of Ways is a great example.

[0:31:31]

[...]: You know, that will give some people some confidence that East West Rail, are not just kicking the can down the road until it's too late. You know, so all the engagement and all this stuff, it's all froth, nothing substantial is ever happening. And then suddenly, you're going to be wham, we're going to do this. And by the way, oh, no, we weren't able to do that we weren't able to do the other. And there's a whole bunch of other things that we weren't able to do. Because that's what it feels like, to me.

[0:31:56]

[...]: It feels like you've got you've got so much time, and you've had so much time. And yet there's no categoric statements coming out about what you're actually going to do, and how some of this disruption is going to be avoided. So, you know, I share Nicky's frustration. And I think we need more substantial statements, and you don't need to engage any more or wait any longer to do that.

[0:32:18]

HS: So, I just push back a little bit on on some of those things, until we have the design until we actually have an approved design that's gone, you know that that that we have a preferred design right now, we don't have a final design. And because we don't have a final design, we don't have a construction methodology, it would be disingenuous to say that we know how we're going to build that. It would be incorrect.

[0:32:40]

AG: Can I just come back on that? Because what are the what are the design criteria, then you say you haven't got a design? So what criteria are you building into the design? Are you building in from day one the fact, for example, as we're talking about Public Rights of Way that they will be maintained and enhanced? Is that part of the design criteria?

HS: Yes, so I'll just bring Mo in at this point. I wonder if Mo, if you could, if you could jump in at this point.

[0:33:09]

MA: Just to say, I completely understand kind of their level of frustration. I think there is there's things that we can go out and say publicly and things that you know, kind of most infrastructure projects will undertake. Anyway, I think when it comes to the topic of PRow's, I mean, you know, EWR's position would be to, you know, where reasonably practicable, maintain pedestrian access.

[0:33:31]

[...]: You know, for cyclists, and equestrians, and those affected and, you know, in many cases, if a PRow needs to be stopped up, we need to go out and speak to landowners, and to see how that affects them and to design that PRow and, you know, kind of look at the, you know, the potential changes to the PRow. And I think, you know, it, it is the stage of the project where we're at, and it is the process we're undergoing that actually does clarify all those things.

[0:33:57]

[...]: Really, I think that's that's what I wanted to come in and say. Certainly, I think those kinds of things will emerge as part of the development of the scheme. And similar commitments would have to be made on a range of issues. So I think, I don't know if I've answered your question or if anyone from the team wants to come in and kind of complement what I said. But really, I think just kind of, yeah, work closely with landowners to try and see what changes need to be made to PRows.

[0:34:27]

[...]: And where reasonably practicable and not discontinue those, and even in some cases were required and necessary may offer improvements to those as well. But as I say, these are generic, generic principles, you know, the details of, each design developments will have to be discussed on a case by case basis.

HS: And I think that's, for me, a really interesting point. And one of the reasons for this conversation is that it's important to discuss these on a case-by-case basis.

[0:34:56]

[...]: And it's important that we understand in in that particular area, the usage and the, you know, if we say keep a Public Right of Way open during build, for example, you might roll your eyes when I say that. But what does that mean? Does that mean having a diversion in place? Does that mean having stepped access? Does that mean having, what does that mean, in practical terms to the local community? Because some local communities will have very clear views of what that means.

[0:35:29]

[...]: That there is devil in the detail. And I think this conversation we're trying to have today is trying to work out who the right people are to have those conversations with. Local schools. That's brilliant. Thanks, Nicky. Yep, I think local schools, journeys turn from school, school that's really helpful. Businesses, I think, also a good one, that we've spoken to some sort of local businesses. We're obviously in touch with the larger business groups, the

chambers and that kind of stuff. But it'd be really interesting to know if there are smaller business groups.

[0:36:06]

[...]: I know that sort of small, maybe one sole trader type stuff, they sometimes get together as groups and that kind of thing. So if I don't, if anyone knows of any of those locally, that we might be able to get in touch with. I think we'll leave this as maybe we want to think about. Peter, you've had your hand up quite patiently.

[0:36:30]

PN: Yeah. At some point, I'll pick up from what Nicky said earlier on. When she mentioned that you should be contacting Ward councilors. You say you do that, that they can take part in the LRGs and the system is there. But pretty widespread there's, there's a there's a lack of interest and lack of involvement by the majority of Ward councilors.

[0: 37:08]

[...]: To what extent do you have contact with the actual Borough Council?

HS: We're, we're quite well connected. It's not just something that we do spontaneously, but there's various sort of obligations of the Development Consent Order that require us. So Katy is an expert in this area.

[0:37:26]

PN: True but do you, for instance, and going back to the PRoWs, have you got a specific contact with the Public Rights of Way officer on the borough?

KS: Yeah, yes so we will.

PN: Well, you will. Have you?

KS: So we would have to, we can take it away and check with environment teams. The environment teams would be the ones that would be engaging with the Public Rights of Way officer, I think, council, we can take that away and I'll let you know.

[0:37:57]

PN: So you should by now. I mean, you've had your alignments mapped out for two years now. And one agreed since earlier on this year. They're so close together, that's in many cases, it's the same Public Rights of Way they're on a threat of being severed.

[0:38:25]

[...]: The, there must be a reasonable understanding of the extent to which realistically, you can preserve by rerouting or making other provision particular Rights of Way. And there'll be others that are plainly it's going to be impossible.

[0:38:52]

[...]: And you should be able to level with the PRow officer a borough level. So she would then be in a position to field questions coming from the public. The Borough Council itself, I think there's there's a level of frustration between the Borough Council and East West Rail Co.

[0:39:20]

[...]: I don't, I feel that they suffer the same sort of problems that that we do. And they'll be talking about where we ask them, we asked what we believe is a reasonable question and get told well, the design is not mature enough to get to give an answer to that. The Borough is run by the 27 maybe Borough councilors.

[0:39:57]

[...]: And just on one hand really are the number of Borough councilors which, which seemed to take an active interest in this, and that's changed since the elections earlier on this year. It's now, you know changed the balance within the council. But it pains me that this route is going to go just past Biddenham, just past Bromham. They are, they are detached areas.

[0:40:31]

[...]: They are going to get severely impacted in due course with the with the extent of work that's proposed. And yet the, trying to get interest within the Borough within the Borough Council level, and also the parish councils in those two respects, is, is very difficult indeed.

[0:40:56]

[...]: And that should be a mechanism where you talk where where you're interfacing with the Borough Council, and the Borough Council itself is seeking out feedback from its own via its own Borough Councilors from the from the community levels.

KS: Yeah, Peter, I think that's a really good idea about, you know, you, the councilors engaging with the council more about EWR. I think we are engaging quite a lot with the

officers of Bedford Borough, and we're bringing them up to speed on the design. So I think it's now over to your side maybe to have that update with the councilors and the Bedford, the Borough officers.

[0:41:37]

[...]: I mean, I can I can go talk about authorities and statutory consultees all day. But I think what would be really helpful for me is, you all live in the area, you've got lots of local knowledge. Lots of, I want to I'm looking for those, those representatives. So you're all representatives of the local communities. But are there any other groups, community groups that are really well bedded into your communities that we can use as contacts to help spread the word about this project?

[0:42:09]

PN: Yes. I know that's the aim of the discussion this evening Katy. But you're talking to one of the most involved LRGs of the whole 20 odd.

KS: Yeah.

PN: And it has the benefit of having parish council representation, Borough Council representation. Whereas the more urban areas, they don't have parish organisations they have Borough Councillors.

[0:42:42]

HS: I wonder. We can move on to the next question. Because I think we're kind of reaching a relative sort of slow point in this, I will say that some of the other groups have asked us and we're happy to do it to get in touch with specific rail user groups that aren't sort of available online for us to find mom and baby networks that are that are quite active in the local communities that wouldn't have a relevant thing. Specific schools that they feel that there's, you know, that proximity to line perhaps wouldn't be the specific reason why we'd want to engage in that sort of stuff.

[0:43:14]

[...]: So can I suggest that we can move on to the next question, but I would really appreciate if if we reflect on any, if having reflected rather, there are any other groups that you feel it'd be helpful for us to reach out for. Whether broad ideas or specifics that that I think would be, would be amazing. I take the point, Peter, that your parishioners are very well represented through you and through other people in the group. But there will be groups that we haven't touched on in this meeting yet that I think will be, will be quite interesting to explore. Let's move on to the next question.

[0:43:50]

[...]: Am I, Gail, are you going to run this? The next the next part of the session? Because I think we've this one we've covered, haven't we? Are you going to run the next part of the session?

GB: Yes, I can do.

HS: Wonderful. So I think if we go to Gail, would you mind picking it up then?

[0:44:17]

[...]: So we've got a frozen screen here. I think we're going to reshare. So we're going straight through to slide 19 at this point.

New Slide – Communicating and engaging with you and your communities

[0:44:34]

[...]: Let's see if this one sparks off any any sort of interesting thoughts.

GB: Brilliant. Thank you. And so as you I think most of you will.

HS: Forward. 19. Next slide. Brilliant. Thanks so much.

GB: There we are.

SJ: It's 2A we need. There's a slide before that.

HS: No, I think this is fine. Thanks.

[0:44:59]

GB: Brilliant. So, so we do currently engage with people who many different ways. And that includes a newsletter, you're all aware of the drop ins that we've delivered. And what we'd really like to know is a bit more about the newsletter, understand if you do receive it, if it's useful, what your thoughts are on that. But also, are there any other ways that we can reach out to people that that we may be not doing already, for example, poster sites?

[0:45:27]

[...]: I think at one of the drop in someone suggested that actually everyone in the community goes to the local shop, so why not put some information in the local shop for us

to get regularly? So it's ideas like that, that we're looking for different ways that we can communicate that perhaps we don't already. And I think it was briefly touched on earlier, you know, are there any Facebook pages that we should be reaching out to? Are there any newsletters already within the community that we can add stuff into? And so on and so forth? So I think there's a few ideas there.

[0:46:00]

If we if we start off, do you all a bit of a show of hands? Do you all get the newsletter that we send out quarterly?

Are there any reasons for that? Is it that you choose not to subscribe, or you weren't aware of it even?

NG: So I get it. Obviously, we get it digitally. What about those who aren't digitally enabled? And have no idea that there is such a such a thing as a newsletter?

[0:46:28]

GB: Yep. That's a really, really fair point. And we have actually sent it out a hardcopy out to people at their request as well. So yeah, that's a really, really good point. Are there any any hardcopy newsletters that gets sent out? I know, I know.

NG: No, one at all. None at all. I mean, I could, I could put hard copies up on village noticeboards, etc. And yeah, why don't you join local Facebook? So I'm sure you're gonna have some fantastic comments.

[0:46:54]

GB: I mean, if we, if we didn't join local Facebook, could we provide the content for people to post on those Facebook groups? Because there's a lot of closed groups, there's a lot of community groups that that we maybe can't reach out to. So if we provided that kind of content? Would there be people available to post that out when we need to? For example?

NG: I mean, I certainly post in, in our local area, yeah.

GB: Great, that's really good.

NG: I just just want I just worry about people who have not got the foggiest idea of what was going to happen. So

[47:34:00]

HS: So just be really clear here Nicky, that's, that's the exercise we're trying to do here. We are not trying to hide from people, we're trying to reach people. We understand them, we have exactly the same goal as you. What we're gonna do, we're doing a lot of work in the background to try and do that we really, really are. But we're asking for your suggestions and views as well. So how do we, we agree with you, we're concerned about finding people who don't know this is happening? Do you have views on how we can reach them?

[0:48:06]

NG: Well, I say our local area is I would feel is reasonably well informed. Just because of you know, as Peter described, you know, the work that we do, sorry, my voice is going again, the work we do and the work we you know, we continue to do, but there's just literally thousands of people who haven't got a Scooby Doo.

[0:48:29]

I mean, I don't have the time to go around to knock every house in Bedford, you know.

HS: And again, that's definitely why we're having this about.

NG: So how about that you actually, you know, an email to every every ward councilor, personal email to every ward councilor explaining, and then make sure that they're included in the quarterly newsletter as well.

HS: They are actually I think that's, I think that's something that we just automatically do unless they opt out. But what we can do is go and check.

[0:49:05]

[...]: We could kind of do a dip test with a few of them and see if they're actually engaging with it.

NG: You could do and just say, look, we're really worried that this message isn't getting through.

HS: I think that's fair. We've had some

NG: Sorry, excuse me.

HS: Oh, Nikki, sorry, gosh, is that time?

NG: No, it's fine. It's fine. I'll just go on to mute.

HS: Alastair, you've got your hand up.

[0:49:32]

AG: Yeah, thanks Hannah. Just an interesting point here. I mean, we do a parish newsletter. By the way, for those that don't know, I'm on Brickhill parish council along with Peter Lamswood, who's also on the call. Brickhill is, we've got 9000 voters in Brickhill, so it's a big parish, right. And then the route, proposed route goes pretty close to us. We deliver a hardcopy newsletter and we're just started doing it again. And then there will be another one before Christmas for sure.

[0:50:03]

[...]: We generally struggle for content to put in there. But I'm scratching my head to say, right, okay, I've engaged with East West Rail. Now what can I tell people about what's happening? And I'm kind of scratching my head just to put anything substantive down on paper to say, this is the state of play. This is what this is what we're, what we're doing.

[0:50:25]

[...]: So what have you got that would allow us to fill a few paragraphs of the parish newsletter to say, this is the latest state of play? And we don't have to talk about it now. Right.

HS: Yep.

AG: But I'm worrying because all I'm hearing is every question is a great question. Everything's, you know, really, really good and so helpful, all the rest of it. But when you know, where's the beef, right? What can we actually tell people now we can't keep telling them, the designs in progress. The business case is in progress. Everything's in progress. Because they're not interested in that, you know, unless it's something really substantial.

[0:50:57]

[...]: What can we tell them? Otherwise, we'll turn them it off.

HS: That's really fair, Alastair. And I think that that's a challenge that we really do have in a big project like this. Things take a while. And the design, internally, I can tell you, there's a ton of work going on. But it's not stuff that we are able to talk about externally, because it's, it's ongoing work. And it's not finished. And it's draft. And it's stuff that it would be irresponsible to put in the public domain in draft.

[0:51:28]

[...]: That's, that's, I think, the way this the way the big projects move. So we do have a real challenge in being able to give people meaningful updates regularly, because there are moments where we are allowed and cleared. And we have designed up documents, and we've written them hopefully in a way that is intelligible to the majority of people reading them. In between that updates are harder to come by.

[0:51:58]

[...]: Having said that we do we do try, we do all we can to pull stuff out and to to circulate stuff. I'd be really interested to know if if a regular spotlight on something that's already been in the public domain, but maybe people don't understand it in full detail or would like a refresher or something like that would be useful. We do do a quarterly newsletter. So there is content coming out the business about some of the activities that we're undertaking, so we could repackage that feed maybe.

[0:52:28]

[...]: And, and get that over to you. There is stuff happening, but there won't be a sort of quarterly this is the new design, or this is the big thing, like we did around Route Update Announcement. But would there be maybe a conversation to have around what what kind of information would be useful on a regular basis?

AG: Yeah, I'm happy to have that discussion. But I mean, this is exactly you've just highlighted exactly what I why I think people are so suspicious about everything. And I think I feel rightly suspicious, because you quite rightly say you can't put draft documents out into the public domain, because it probably be misleading.

[0:53:00]

[...]: Things might change, subject to debate, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So if you then wait until everything's finished and signed off and agreed, then you've cut out the consultation to a certain extent as well, you've advised people as they're going along. This, this might happen, that might happen. If you if you're going to wait until the design is finalised, and then presented to people and say, oh, by the way, we've looked at all the Rights of Way. And we found that actually, but it's not possible to do anything with any of them. Sorry, you know.

[0:53:28]

[...]: Then that's the sort of direction you tend you seem to be going in, and that's where I'm concerned about it. Just as an example, you know, how how do you engage people, when you can't tell them anything that means anything to them? Because, you know, what, Nicky's completely correct. A lot of people are not engaging in this, because you know, what, they've got lives to lead, right? They're busy people, and East West Rail, or whatever

is far far out there. It's not in their consciousness. But you won't get through to people unless you've got something substantial.

[0:53:57]

[...]: You know, it's chicken and egg here, you know, and I don't know, I don't know, I can't suggest a way around it. I'm happy to have any debate, you know, outside of this meeting about, you know, what is meaningful content. But right now, if I, if I wanted to put half a page in the parish newsletter about East West Rail, I don't know what I put in there, apart from the fact that Sarah kindly came around, and we had a look at some Rights of Way, a couple of weeks ago, which was nice of her, and Eleanor to be honest.

SJ: It was a very nice day, thanks for the invite.

[0:54:25]

AG: So we can put that in, but you know, what else? You know, this is this is great. We will, we will want to we would want to help publish stuff. But what have we got? You know.

HS: That's that's a sort of a really helpful steer Alastair. And I think that's one that I'll I'll sort of take on how to think about the best way of explaining it. And I think the best way sort of packaging stuff. Just to really be clear about what we mean about design. And I think again, this one's this one is quite hard to kind of properly convey the approach and the way that we're, any project like as an approach and the way we're approaching. our role is to

[0:54:59]

Our role is to take a lot of information, including information from consultation, so people's preferences, people thoughts, but also information that we might not have any other way. So we do get information through through consultation that wouldn't get any other way. And we also put that alongside economic data, environmental data, our own research, desk research, physical surveying that kind of stuff.

[0:55:26]

[...]: And to put that together, and then to put out into the world, what we believe, at the point that which we publish that are, is the best option or set of options. And then ask people for their views. And so that's what we mean, when we say we're working on the design, we're working toward the next point that we can do that. And the idea is, so in 2019, we had several options on the table, we asked for people's views, their views helped us narrow down to a single, broad area.

[0:55:58]

[...]: The second consultation helped us narrow down to a specific alignment that we believe to be at present our preferred alignment. When we consult on that alignment, we may well get information back that causes us to review that, to review our preference. But so what we mean when we say the design is progressing, we're working towards the next time we can put something in the public domain that we think, given the information we have at that moment, is the best progression of the design.

[0:56:31]

[...]: But that we are asking for more help to finalise and to go further. That just took me two minutes. And I feel like that's quite difficult sometimes to explain on mass to people that that's what we mean, when we design.

KS: I think I think it's important to say that it's a legal requirement for the design to be at a formative stage. So that means that it can still be shaped when we go out to consult.

[0:56:58]

[...]: So it won't be a final design. There's still plenty of opportunity to shape the design. And there's also legal requirements for us to consider all the feedback that we receive. And we have to show how we've considered that in our consultation report that's submitted as part of the DCO as well. So there's plenty of opportunity to shape the design, it's not final. But as Hannah explained, it's, it's we're in the design development stage.

[0:57:26]

MA: I think if I can just come in and also kind of from a design perspective, say, there's a, you know, besides the kind of the legal requirement that Katy just highlighted. I mean, there's there's an iterative kind of process in designs, it's multidisciplinary, as Hannah alluded to. You know, you define your track levels, then you define the structures and define the environmental impact. Then some evidence from emerges in terms of what the impact of that is, which gets you to kind of revisit your designs to a point where, actually, you know, you do an interdisciplinary kind of design review, and you've got a solution that you think works.

[0:57:59]

[...]: And then you go out and consult about it. I mean, I've really, you know, it's a caricature of the design process. But I think, you know, I appreciate that you think it's taking a long time for us to actually develop the designs. It is not as simple as one might think. There's so many different disciplines that feed into it. Just from the top of my head, you know,

drainage, flooding environments, and, and all sorts of other aspects, like you mentioned, Public Rights of Ways and, you know, balancing palms and all of those things.

[0:58:32]

[...]: So, yeah, I think we are, we are very actively working towards getting to a point where we can kind of, you know, share designs with you and involve you really in the design process. That's ultimately that's the that's really what we're working towards all of us, within EWR Co, that's probably our biggest priority. So I think in some cases, we've provided some detail. Like in Bedford, you know, there's detail about the number of platforms, the number of foot bridges.

[0:59:01]

[...]: We've gone as far as telling you kind of as much information as we can. We've shared as much info as we're reasonably able to share with you. In some areas where the details not there, we've just been very transparent and honest and said, look, we we just don't have that detail. That's not to say we're not going to do it. That's not to say that we're not going to consider it. It's only that's within the process, that's going to come out of the wash really, and I think I think the one thing, the one subtlety I'll make is that yeah, as I said, it's an iterative process.

[0:59:30]

[...]: You know, we call it preliminary design, there's different labels to it. And a culminates to detail design, which is afterwards the DCO is granted anyway. So, as I say, I've already given a presentation on kind of the design process and the COCP and how we incorporate all those things in the design process. I'm very happy to actually share some of those with you as well. What it does is that it just tells you the process and the methodology for us to actually come up with the design elements that you are so rightly interested in. You know, noise mitigation, impacts on yourselves and things like that.

[1:00:05]

MA: But yeah, just trying to kind of, you know, set the record that, you know, it's not done and dusted, and we are working on it actively.

HS: Does that help put stuff into context Alastair? Because to me that, that feels sort of quite reasonable, quite normal for this point in a project, but I'm interested to know how that...yeah, what do you feel?

[1:00:30]

AG: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I appreciate the design aspects of it, the time it takes, and all the rest of it. But I'm trying to put myself in the position of someone who's not engaged, who's got a busy life, who's got 100 and 1000s different things, you know, they're worried about, East West Rail isn't one of them and we're trying to say, how do we communicate with these East West Rail issues to somebody like that. And it sounds to me like right now, at the moment, actually, we can't, because there's nothing substantive that we can really tell them, that's really going to impact them.

[1:01:00]

[...] My observation from parish council experience is that it's very hard to get people to engage, literally with anything, they just don't do it, unless they can physically see something from their front door and then they'll complain about it, frankly, that's basically the way it works out. Engagement in parish councils or being a parish councillor, or feeding back into parish councils, you just don't hear from anybody, you just don't hear from them, it's not just an East West Rail thing, it's hard to engage the community on things, it just is.

[1:01:35]

KS: I think that's a really good point and I do think there is a balance in consultation fatigue, and engagement fatigue and sometimes there's no point in going out to people when we don't have anything to update on, I think engagement and will, and interest will ramp up over the next year, because we will be going out for a consultation.

[1:01:56]

[...]: So there'll be a lot more interest because we'll be doing a lot of awareness raising, publicizing of that consultation. So and, and the hardcopy type advertising as well. So it's not just going to be digital. So I think the interest will start to increase over the next few...over the next year.

[1:02:20]

HS: I think back on.... sorry, I'm gonna hand over to Gail in a sec, but what I think my final thought on this, where we sort of started with Alastair is, you know, any anyone on this thing if you've got pages that you need to fill in your parish magazine, I know from experience with my parish magazine growing up, and helping my mum run that, that you do often find the odd spare page, you do often find a little bit of whatever, please ask us, we may have content, we don't expect you to not have your own views on it. We don't expect you to not seek views from the rest of your parishioners. But if it's helpful for us to do that, if you've got to put page please tell us, we're always up for writing content and giving content.

[1:02:59]

AG: Thank you.

GB: Thank you, I'm just gonna take us back a few steps, because actually, that was really interesting to hear and I appreciate the conversation around content and that content is really key and it would be great to have lots of messages and information but equally, what we have found through some of the feedback and the conversations that we've had from the drop ins is that there's, people are struggling to work out where to get that information.

[1:03:28]

[...]: So whilst there might not be content that you think would be engaging at the moment, as Hannah said earlier, what we do want to do is make sure when that content is coming through, we can reach out to these people immediately and we can make sure that we're engaging with as many people in the community as possible. With the best will in the world there's quite often times where people say, well, I didn't know about these events and that's where one of the conversations came up about why don't you put a poster in the local shops, so you know, I completely understand the comments about the content but equally, there are people out there that want to know where they can find information from and want that guidance and want to see things appearing, which is why one of the options here is local poster locations across the route and within the community.

[1:04:15]

[...] So yeah, just wondering if there's any more to touch on it with regards to newsletters and ways to communicate? If not, we'll move on to the events and the activity that we can do.

HS: Nicky?

Slide 20 – Communicating and engaging with you and your communities

NG: Yeah, sorry, guys, me again, I'll try not to cough.

[1:04:36]

[...]: I'm just thinking it's really important that any information or any comments that I've given out, are actually, you can actually quantify them. I'm just thinking of the statement that Beth West gave out the other week, in which she said 70% of Bedford residents are in favour of East West Rail. Now, I'd like to know where she actually got those figures from and has she just plucked them.

[1:05:05]

HS: There's a...the research is published on our website, we'll send them around following.

NG: Yeah, but she specifically said Bedford residents, Hannah. She didn't say that spurious survey that was done in 2019.

HS: It wasn't 2019 believe it was 2021, I think. Let me if you know exactly when that was said, please let me know.

NG: Yeah, yeah sure, I mean, it's literally within the last week or so. I think it was after the declaration was delivered to Huw Merriman, actually. But she specifically says 70% of Bedford residents, which I've never seen any figures to support that. So it's really, really important that figures given, statements given are strong and they're also correct.

[1:05:52]

HS: Okay, we'll take that away we're happy to look at that because you know, I would agree with you. You know, in comms terms that's a prove point, so in comms terms I would definitely agree with you. I think that's definitely a point worth making, thank you.

NG: Okay, thank you.

GB: If we just go to Gordon and then we'll talk through this next slide.

[1:06:11]

GJ: Yes, have you considered billboards?

HS: Such a good...so actually, yes and it's something we're thinking about at the moment, is what they call out of home advertising. Yeah, it's definitely something we're thinking about. It's quite expensive, as you know, so got to be very careful around budgeting.

[1:06:30]

GJ: Yeah, especially where you think you might be putting the railway through, 'East West Rail – we're gonna put a railway through here, you know, check this Facebook page' and all the rest of it. Good way of getting your message across.

HS: I mean, you're absolutely right. I would love to be doing stuff like that. I'm really happy to hear that as a suggestion. The issue we have is just being very careful that when we do it, we do it in a way that's just really careful with public funds. But yet we're...I think that's a really sensible idea, a really lovely idea.

[1:07:10]

GB: Thanks, Gordon. We'll just take a look at this slide. So we've spoke, we've spoken a few times about the community drop ins that we ran at route update, we ran 12 of those across the route they were they were incredibly well attended. It'd be great to get your feedback on those. Were the venues suitable? Were the timings good? Were there enough events? What was the material like, you know, publicity of those events? But also, are those the kinds of events that we want to see going forward? Is there an alternative layout? It'd be really great just to get your feedback on those. Hi Nicky.

[1:07:45]

NG: Hi, again. Yeah, I mean, I've been to... I haven't been to every event, I've been to several events. I honestly believe that people need people. However, I feel incredibly sorry for some of the people that you shove at these events because they don't seem to know the area, they're very young, they don't seem to be particularly well briefed. They're spouting the party line. They can't answer specific questions and it leads to massive frustration that leads to massive frustration from, you know, residents, businesses, etc. And the Ravensden one in particular was I couldn't stay in there too long, because it was so, so warm, so hot. It's quite small.

[1:08:33]

[...]: But I do think people need people but those people at the events must be able to answer questions, not just about the party line, they must have...be able to empathize and sympathize with people, they must be able to not just say, well, I don't know, because I don't work, or you know, I don't live here or I've only I've only worked here a month. It's not good.

[1:08:56]

GJ: They must be able to communicate, which they can't, because they don't know.

GB: So can I just sorry, Gordon, just unpick that a little bit, so must be able to communicate that more about the messaging in the detail and the content?

GJ: Yes. Yeah.

GB: Perfect, thank you.

GJ: You know, you ask them questions and all they do is trot out the party line because they haven't got a clue about local specifics and people have attended the meetings because they want to know about the local specifics. Simple as that.

[1:09:36]

GB: Peter, you've got your hand up.

PN: Yes. The series of public walk ins that you did after the route update announcement was worth attending. But it's disappointing in that there wasn't an awful lot more information that was on offer, than had been published back in 2021 in terms of how it was proposed to actually engineer these, this alignment.

[1:10:25]

[...]: The fact that you'd taken the opportunity to two vary alignments one and nine, so they combined for a brief period that was new, but virtually everything else was as it had been discussed before. It was also the expectation of Beth West, that East West Rail will be revisiting these public walk-in sessions in the autumn to give more information.

[1:11:10]

[...]: I suspect in fact that there's not a lot more information now than there was a few weeks ago. The other concern I've got is that during the sort of phony war period between the 2021 consultation and the route update announcement in 2023, East West Rail got up to a whole range of activities in connection with the DfT and this really introduces the background as a question I've asked for later on as well, to be answered.

[1:11:53]

[...]: But it did throw uncertainty into the mix because although the alignments had been fairly closely detailed back in 2021, since then, a lot of the goalposts have been moved during the various exercises that were carried out and we're not quite sure if the goalposts have been put back to where they were before.

[1:12:25]

[...]: And so, we seem to be on shakier and shakier ground, the longer we go with this. So we're...it's becoming more and more difficult to, to advise on how best to communicate with the communities when a lot of the things seem to be still floating downwards from having been thrown up in air.

[1:12:51]

GB: Okay, so I understand some of what you said there is for questions for later on, so that's fine. So I guess, within relation to the events for you, doing more drop ins, without any

additional information wouldn't be worthwhile? That's what I'm taking away from that. Would that be right?

PN: Well people will, they'll always be interested in the height of embankments and the depth of cuttings in their local area. They were fairly well defined in the alignment diagrams. But now we have from on high and East West Rail saying well, we are reengineering those where we can, to save money and to reduce the visual impact. So you're gonna have even less answers than were provided before. That's the difficulty.

[1:13:57]

HS: I think if we, if we can separate the.... there might be specific point there about the methodology and all that kind of stuff. But I'm keen that we kind of try and give Gail some more meat to work with, I think on the events themselves, But I think Mo, I could see Mo furiously scribbling points there. So I'm sure Mo's got something to come back on some of those points.

MA: Not that I'm furiously scribbling points, but I think there was, I think in 2021, we said we published plans, and we consulted on them. After 2021, and in the space between 2021 and the route update announcement, there was a back check of a lot of the work we had undertaken.

[1:14:35]

[...] You're absolutely right. And you referred to it as moving the goalposts. You can refer to it as you know, a review of the project requirements in that space. So in that world, for example, the requirements for a clockwise train timetable was no longer imposed on us, so you didn't need to have a train every 15 minutes exactly, you could have one every thirteen or every sixteen.

[1:15:00]

MA: As you know, I've kind of explained this before to Peter, I know I'm repeating myself, but just for the benefit of giving a complete answer, but in essence, that has resulted in changes to the designs in the MVL area, some of the changes or the assumptions around Bedford station and other parts of the route. To your point around kind of reviewing the embankments, and minimizing the visual impacts, that is something that the project is currently doing and will continue to do. But I think continuously will do so and try and minimize that impact as much as we can and it's to the benefit of the communities. And in that there is a requirement or a trial to try and reduce the amount of material that is excavated, that amount of imported material, the height of embankments, refining the track alignments, and various other considerations that do actually come in.

[1:15:52]

[...]: You know, as I say, to my earlier point, it's an evolving design. And at statutory consultation, you will have, you know, good detail as to what the proposals are in that area. However, at this point in time, that detail is being worked on. So I think from a strategic level, there has been changes to the scheme as a result of the you know, the ACP project, as we refer to it internally, but in essence, there has been changes, the goalposts have been, you know, shifted or readjusted, and the designs are, you know, have matched that kind of change in projects, aspirations and project requirements.

[1:16:32]

[...]: So, I think, you know, I don't know if that answers your question, I kind of know where you're coming from, I understand you, you want to understand the height of embankments, you want to understand the visual impacts.

PN: Now, Mo we're getting dangerously close to you answering the actual precise aspects of the question that I've that I've put in and it would be a shame to dispose of that, whilst we're still wondering about the best way to talk with the communities. So I'm happy to leave it at that.

[1:17:11]

[...]: I'm linking the substance of the questions, the implications of what was behind the questions and the difficulty or the obvious difficulty that you have in presenting updates to the community as to what things going to look like in the long term. We're gonna, we will be getting... we're working towards a position where the statutory consultation, you will find an awful lot of loose ends. I shouldn't think they'll be all tightened up.

[1:17:56]

[...]: But it will give the public a new look of the project, which they'll be able to understand, hopefully, a lot more and appreciate the implications so that they can give you some sensible feedback to that statutory consultation.

[1:18:19]

GB: Okay, thanks, Peter. And I just like to spend a minute or so more on this just to see if there's any more feedback, Gordon, sorry, I can see your hand. And then we'll move on to the Q & A, because it does seem like we're kind of heading towards that territory. But Gordon?

GJ: Just a quickie. On the last meetings notes, there was a post meeting clarification on what was going to be carried out because I'd asked a question about...or a question had been raised about carrying waste on the rail.

[1:18:55]

[...] And part of the post meeting clarification was: freight operators may choose to use freight piles to carry waste along the route. We are currently working with the rail freight industry to gauge the potential interest in running freight services on East West Rail. So that raises two questions, why after four years, have you not got things signed, sealed and settled with freight operators so that you know freight will be carried on the track? The other thing is that basically, you're gonna build a railway but you're gonna have no control over it afterwards. So how do we put that across to our residents?

[1:19:44]

GB: Okay, I think we are moving on to Q & A side of things. Gordon, can we just put a pause on that, because I just want to dig a little deeper into the drop ins if that's okay. Was there any other feedback that anyone wanted to give around the drop ins? I mean, the Bedford one was really well attended 440 people attended the Bedford one at Bedford heights, Ravensden was incredibly busy. Gordon, is this is this event related?

[1:20:19]

GJ: It is actually.

GB: Perfect.

GJ: A couple of people mentioned to me that they were sort of in almost intimidated by the presence of some of your heavies at the Tempsford drop in.

HS: Is there a question?

GJ: No, it's not a question it's a statement to takeaway and think about if you're going to do anything and in the future.

[1:20:49]

HS: Yeah, a few people have asked about security. I think that's a really interesting point. So there were some specific events with some specific reasons why we had potentially more visible.

GJ: I understand why they're there Hannah. I fully understand why they were there. But their presence was, well, these people said they found it intimidating. So

[1:21:15]

HS: That's a good note, thank you.

GB: Alastair?

AG: Yeah, just a quick one Gail, I mean, I attended the one of at Bedford heights. I did speak to some people there, who, in contrast to other people's experience, actually had been working on East West Rail for some time, they were a relatively senior level. however, they still just trotted out the party line. So it's a bit disappointing really, I didn't actually personally learn anything new.

[1:21:28]

[...]: I did manage to speak to one person who will remain nameless, who did give me a bit more detail. And I much appreciate that, and it wasn't anything secret or whatever, but just the one who could speak a bit more around the whole rail industry issues and how East West Rail fitted into it, which I appreciated.

[1:22:09]

[...]: But apart from that, I thought they were well attended. It's worth doing. Don't do them again, unless you've got something more substantial to say would be my advice. You know, and I had a couple of conversations with people, and they were more interested in getting a job on East West Rail than anything else? So you know, it's, there's a variety of people up there, I felt.

[1:22:30]

GB: Okay, that's great. Thank you, Nicky?

NG: Yeah, thank you, sorry, I've just seen on the on the typing, but knowledge from staff at events. I mean, we have said the knowledge was pretty, pretty poor. I guess I'd hate for you just to be picking up the positives on this. I mean, Alastair just said, you know, he, the person he spoke to he had a good experience with, but other people certainly didn't. I think it's very sketchy knowledge from, yeah, from some staff, very sketchy knowledge from others.

[1:23:05]

GB: Yeah, we've got a couple of points there Nicky, and there's certainly notes being taken. So we do understand what the meaning was behind that. And we'll just make sure that's reflected.

AG: Sorry Nicky. Just to clarify, yeah, I spoke to four people through three of whom trotted out the party line that everything's fine, and everything's going to be re-reviewed, and everything's going to be great and, and one of them had a sort of a sidebar conversation almost on the way out the door.

[1:23:34]

NG: Yeah, I mean, I, I had a I had a conversation with one of the, one of the people again, who shall remain nameless, and I felt incredibly sorry for them. This person actually said that they did not know how much longer they could stand there defending topics they didn't believe in.

[1:23:59]

[...]: This person was almost in tears, and I shook their hand and basically wished them well. And this, you know, this person was, it actually quite upset me because they were they were actually upset. I felt that they were overwhelmed, I felt that they were having to spout a party line when they didn't believe party line. I've got no idea this this individual still works for East West Rail and I'm certainly not identifying them, but it did upset me.

[1:24:34]

HS: Yeah, thanks, Nicky. I mean, I think to jumping slightly, I think we take staff, wellness and at these events really seriously. Really, very seriously. If people feel that they're saying things that they're not comfortable saying, that's not that's not a position I want to put them in. And that's not a position I would ever put someone in a room and ask them to do.

[1:25:00]

HS: I've certainly had staff members crying, because members of the public have told them, they're too young they can't possibly know anything, without really having a conversation with them told them that, you know, they need to inspect their moral compass and things like that. But we have a lot of conversations around the wellbeing of our staff, we similarly have a lot of conversations around the wellbeing of people attending events as well because we know that for some people, this is really challenging.

[1:25:33]

[...]: And we know that that for some people who are minded to be aggressive on any topic, that having a public drop in does tend to allow people to be aggressive sometimes without really being engaged with the project. So I think there are a lot of...there are a whole range, I think of emotional challenges that we really try and think through when we're putting these meetings together.

[1:26:07]

[...]: But I think that's a very helpful addition. If there are people staffing meetings you don't feel comfortable with what they're talking about, then I think, I would be surprised, because I know the colleagues fairly well, but I think that's helpful to know that you've had that conversation.

[1:26:25]

NG: I mean, I say, I appreciate, you know, appreciate what you're saying. But in that, you know, in situations where people are losing houses, and livelihoods and businesses, you know, they are going to be emotional, and they, they want they want answers, and it's going back to what we've said all along. You know, we've just, we're just having the same stuff all the time.

[1:26:46]

[...] You know, parish council meetings, I every month, you know, I do an East West Rail update, and it's you know, myself and Peter attended another group meeting, but you know, this, you know, this this month, it was on communication engagement, but haven't really got much to say on this one, you know.

HS: It may be that this group wants to revisit the view that having a meeting every six weeks is useful. Again, I'll point out that most LRGs feel that quarterly is, is helpful, I don't think that precludes correspondence in between. But if the meetings are becoming a little repetitive for you, because as sort of insinuated earlier, we don't have a major update at the moment, then I think that that might be something to consider as a group.

[1:27:32]

[...] We're comfortable still having those meetings if you do find them useful. But I'm, I will say that that's just, you know, an observation from today's meeting that they feel to be that sort of been said a few times that that maybe having these meetings, this often isn't having the impact.

PN: They're worth having.

[1:27:54]

[...] They're worth having Hannah, whilst people could come up with decent topics to have a meaningful discussion about.

HS: But I think that's the point is that, you know, having sort of explained the structure of the design process, and that there are moments where the design gets to a point where we can put our latest thinking in the public domain for review, in between those times, there are going to be relatively minimal updates and I think when we first started these meetings, there were a lot of sort of pent up questions that this group had and so I could completely understand why a more frequent, you know, meeting was helpful to answer some of those questions.

[1:28:32]

[...]: If you feel that we're now going around in circles a little bit and answering the same questions. It's just an idea. It's just something to put out there. We're happy to meet every six weeks, but I just don't want Nicky to feel or anyone else to feel that they're sort of losing their evenings and not getting that much out of it.

NG: No, I never feel that Hannah and I, I'm with Peter.

[1:28:58]

[...]: I mean, I think, you know, I think personally, they are useful meetings. My frustration is A.), you know, the lack of information, but also and again, it's something Peter spoke about earlier, the, you know, the lack of participants as well. When you look at the, you know, the amount of people who are actually invited versus the amount you turn up. I mean, it's, you know, we kind of know each other by first names now, don't we?

[1:29:25]

HS: I think it's, and again, back to sort of the conversation we were having earlier maybe, if there are different ways of doing this, we spoken about, you know, maybe online would encourage more people, maybe in person would encourage more people, we've offered hybrid, we've offered broad ranges of topics. I'm really interested in what we can do to get people more engaged with the project and I think that's if you do take away one thing from this meeting to update people on it that we really...while there aren't updates to put out in the public domain...

[1:30:00]

HS: Now is the time for us to be getting our house in order, and making sure that we've got the right people to talk to. That Gail's got a really good plan for the next set of events. That

we've got, you know, really, really good mailing list, it's as strong as it can be. So this, this is really the time for us to do a lot of that really strong foundation work, and make sure that the maximum number of people are able to participate in the consultations when you know when when the next consultation comes.

[1:30:28]

[...]: So I think that's, in the meantime, how we get people engaged with these meetings. I think, you know, Nicky, again, we're really keen to see what else we can do. This isn't the only project that has these issues. It's quite common, as Katy was saying, consultation, fatigue and engagement, fatigue is quite common.

NG: Yeah, sure.

HS: But we just really want to do what we can to get around that, because we do want to engage as much as possible, Gordon, sorry got your hand up.

NG: Thank you.

[1:30:56]

(GJ): I think a good bit of the problem is from the initial meetings, when we had very good attendances. But I think people got totally disillusioned and that's a polite way of putting it, with Will Gallagher. And I think he, because he could not walk a straight line with his tongue. Nobody believed him, and I think people lost interest then. And you're gonna have a lot of hard work to try and recover that situation.

[1:31:34]

HS: So I think you know that there's always a bit of a period at the beginning of these meetings being set up where, you know, we're finding the right rhythm, or finding the right kind of relationship to have. Is there something that would be worth a reset, maybe we could offer something more informal in person to kind of get people together, maybe something more formal would be useful to kind of bring people in, maybe we need to kind of reset that moment, if you know what I mean, to try and encourage more voices.

[1:32:03]

[...]: Or it might be that, you know, you want to have a conversation away from East West Rail as people who come these meetings an awful lot, and, you know, have that conversation without us in the room. To have a conversation. And Joni I think that's, again, really helpful talking about trying to communicate the positive case, I think, you know, we're, we really want to be doing that more as well.

[1:32:28]

[...]: And I'm talking on a broad thing. But anyway, I think we're all ears basically Gordon. Because if it's helpful to reintroduce me or reintroduce another member of the team that you'd prefer to chair or something like that, then I think we can definitely, we can definitely work on that. Definitely, for sure.

SJ: Hannah, can I just make a comment just to the group, because it's come up in other meetings that they quite like to have just, you know, special subject matter experts, or some of our experts just come back and do like one off meetings with your just to sort of get into the detail a bit more.

[1:33:04]

[...]: So it's not really an LRG sort of business as usual meeting but for topic meeting where we just bring somebody in. And we've talked about other groups have mentioned this. So this will be between LRG meetings, but it's something we can think about. Potentially bringing in, you know, one of our experts again, just to have longer with them to have more conversation with them. You know, so we're not interested in any of the other sort of LRG business just talking about that topic.

[1:33:28]:

[...]: But if it's something the group is interested in, we can, we can just discuss that other groups have.

HS: Outside of the forum. So it's not like a formal agenda, it's more like an ask me anything.

SJ: Yes.

HS: Interesting. That could work.

SJ: But if the group's interested in that, then, you know, let me know. And we can certainly look into that for you.

HS: See that suggestion. Very conscious that we've got half an hour left. And we've got sort of all sorts of different pressures on time, I'm sure. So we do have a kind of Q&A to move into.

[1:34:05]

[...]: I will say, before we move out of this kind of information gathering area, I think we will follow up by email because I'm, I'm absolutely convinced that once everyone's kind of left the room and reflects and maybe sleeps on it, you'll think oh, that, you know, the tuba playing ukulele orchestra would be great for this or, oh, there's that pub down the road where people play dominoes and that that's a great group.

[1:34:29]

[...]: Or I wish I told Gail that you know the that I really wish they'd been x y z at the events or something like that. So we will circulate this for more. Before before we move off and go into the Q&A. Are there any very specific sort of feedback comments on the events the structure of the events or the structure of the communications generally that anyone wants to make the points now. Alastair, you've got your hand up. I don't know if that's historic.

[1:34:59]

AG: No, no, that's That's a new one. Sorry, slightly off topic, but you did. So you did mention the possibility. And I certainly support that. If any parish councilors who are on the call want to have a parish councilor call on East West Rail. I'm more than happy to engage with that, because I don't think we do that very well to be honest. I think it's kind of got overridden with other groups or organisations trying to steer things.

[1:35:31]

[...]: I mean, Mike, just just for a bit of background, my angle is I'm agnostic on East West Rail for many reasons. But if does get built, I want to get the best possible result for not only Bedford Borough, but Brickhill residents. That's, that's my angle on it. I can't influence whether it gets built or not, or indeed where it goes. But I want to keep an eye on it and make sure that we actually get something out of it. So that's my angles, if anybody on the on the parish council of front, wants to engage in conversations around that and share some ideas about what things we're concerned about outside of East West Rail meetings, and I'm happy to do that.

[1:36:08]

HS: Do you all have each other's details? I think GDPR stuff we always need to check before we share. But if if you want us to facilitate that we can. Not facilitate the call, obviously. I

mean, just put you in touch with each other and some stand back. Or do you all have each other's details?

PN: No.

GJ: I'm sure we can find them.

[1:36:30]

HS: Okay, with if I don't hear any objections, or if no one objects me in the thing. We'll make sure that that we we put we put everyone here on an email together. And then we'll stand back.

GJ: Thank you.

AG: I think that'd be helpful. Thank you.

HS: No problem. Should we move into Q&A type things? With the remaining time, that'd be all right.

[1:36:57]

[...]: Wonderful Mo, it's your time to shine. Should we ask. These these rather than sort of reading out the questions, I guess, or does the does the questionnaire want to read the question out? So Peter, I think this one was yours.

PN: I could read? Well, I can read it out, if you haven't read it before was submitted.

[1:37:29]

MA: This is kind of in line with the original question that you just asked about the PWOS being revised. And as a result of the ACP really, and I think I gave, I gave an example of where the ACP and some of the relaxation, the so called relaxation project requirements resulted in a change of our proposals. Most notably, the service pattern, for example, it was a consistent four trains per hour from from Oxford to Cambridge, which has now actually changed.

[1:38:02]

MA: So there were some changes to it. You know, the, the ETR report is very prescriptive as to which changes were applied in that area. So I think there's that is that kind of

PN: Actually I've just realised Mo, that you got the answer below.

MA: Yeah, I've got I've got it kind of written. But I'm not reading it. It's kind of my bread and butter sheets, just like, but yeah, in essence, that is the answer.

[1:38:32]

PN: Yeah. Unfortunately, got a list of people above. Right are project objectives and objectives. That's your PWOS is it?

[1:39:00]

MA: That's it. Yes, that's the translation of that into project terms, yes.

PN: So they haven't changed. They're still extant.

MA: They have changed. The requirements set upon us say we have to.

PN: So as you haven't changed.

MA: The project, objectives haven't changed, but the PWOS has.

[1:39:26]

MA: So in essence, the interpretation of the project objectives itself has changed in the form of a PWOS. Sorry, that does sound complicated, but in essence, it is, you know, a relaxation of the interpretation of what the department's remit to us was, has been undertaken. And that's what's allowed the changes from the scheme from 2021 to now.

PN: Are we going to part two of this and to answer the actual three questions that I detail specifically?

[1:40:00]

[...]: Or would you like me to ask them again now?

MA: The answer to that one is yes is it will be designed to W12 gauging. So that, you know, the CS three stages, the CS three is a brand new railway from Bedford to Cambridge. And those those areas that are new will be built to W12 gauging and as you rightly identify the existing areas will also be compliant with

[1:40:33]

PN: CS3, does that not include the opening up the Marston Vale line.

MA: And that's that's a CS2, before me. So connection stage two.

PN: Okay. Well, and specifically, within CS2 and CS three stages, those are the those are the three questions.

MA: Yes, yes, CS2, CS3 W12 gauging.

[1:40:59]

[...] For free, a free loading gauge.

PN: Alright, so the W12 which is basically is a size requirement or separate requirement for for supporting axle weights?

MA: Correct, yeah, it's a loading as well as a geometric.

PN: So no changes there, and on all of the bridges that so you build all of the bridges that may may be along the Marston Vale line will be wide enough to accept gauge w12.

[1:41:32]

MA: That is the working assumption. Yes. Yes, I'm afraid that sorry, I should not I should not be answering. It's not my area. NVL is just outside of Bedford, I used to formally work on the MVL. So I have working knowledge of it. But I should not be providing the official answer to that.

PN: Okay, will all well under bridges built or modified to provide standard overhead clearance for OLE that's the overhead line equipment for electrification.

[1:42:00]

MA: So, that is the intention to provide clearance for the OLE yes, that is our remit from the department. Whether that means that we will have to rebuild or modify those bridges, is yet to be determined depending on surveys and kind of working out what the vertical clearance is. So in essence, there's a there's an element whereby, you know, you might be able to achieve that OLE clearance without having an impact on the existing bridges.

[1:42:29]

[...] And hopefully, that is something that's a positive for the community and a lot of efforts has been kind of undertaken in that direction, trying to minimize the number of structural interventions on bridges, while also safeguarding the OLE clearance so that the railway can be electrified.

PN: And right, and the last one, will positive passive provision for future electrification being incorporated throughout the CS3 stages? I think the answer to that is going to be yes.

[1:43:03]

MA: It's a yes. Although I don't know what positive passive provision is.

PN: Yeah, It's in your PWOS

MA: So, I think sorry, I mean, it must be. So passive provision in terms of what we just discussed, the ability to go out and electrify the railway will be taken into account. Yes, so the railway can be electrified, or would be able to be electrified as part of our designs.

PN: It means your track bed is wide enough to accept future gantries.

[1:43:32]

[...] and buy more land or widen cuttings.

MA: So, I mean more is relative, I think our proposals for land take will incorporate those requirements for electrification.

PN: Part of the part of the reasoning behind this question was It was a feeling that there have been some widespread economies made on the Marston Vale section.

[1:44:01]

[...] which has a lot of the originally planned work not being done to it on the basis that you can operate at a lower speed or higher speed than it does at the moment, which is 60 miles an hour, but not 100 miles an hour as was originally specified, specified.

[1:44:29]

[...] And clearly, there are some bridges which could have a have a bearing on whether or not you can easily run OLE if DfT eventually decide to have it electrified. So where can I find your current PWOS and where they have changed from

[1:45:00]

[...] was published in fair detail in Annex B to the 2021 alignment consultation Technical Report.

MA: I'm not aware of that having been published just yet. I think it's been finalised. Again, I think that's one that's ever so slightly above my paygrade that I can take away and answer you want it. Your points on the MVL is correct. A lot of the interventions on the MVL have been reduced on the on the premise that we can reduce line speeds.

1:45:30

[...] I can, once again, I can't give you the exact answer, but I can actually get that across to you after this meeting in terms of which bridges require intervention, and which bridges would not require intervention subject to of course, the caveat that we are going through a design period, there's survey work that's been undertaken. And there are bespoke OCS solutions. So overhead line solutions that can be achieved. Even if you don't meet the vertical requirements, you're still able to come up with a derogation whereby you're able to play some of the OLE equipment, either side of a bridge, for example. So I think I think what I can commit to, is to go out and give you as much information as I can on that on that matter, or on that topic from my colleagues.

PN: Thank you that would be useful. I would appreciate that. But you'd appreciate you'd appreciate this is yet another dimension, the whole project, where

[1:46:28]

[...] we're a bit, we're uncertain. On about about the fundamental specification for it, and that makes it more difficult to to be open with with our communities.

MA: I totally get that. You know, I think 2021 consultation was quite detailed in that regard. There was a lot of, you know, I think,

[1:47:00]

[...] you know, in the Bedford area, for example, we had identified that the Ampthill Road bridge may need some work to explore Caldwell Street, that that being the reasonable worst case scenario, when it kind of planning in legal terms, that's got some sorts of significance. I think, I think I've, I've tried to explain this in other forms, and I hope, I hope that subtleties aren't lost on you, I know they're not, but in essence, you know, we are obliged to develop some designs that are reasonable worst case scenario,

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[...] to get the planning, you know, process or the planning going the refinements of the designs that will set the boundary for what can be achieved, you know, in essence, what we get planning for, is the only thing that we can really build, we can't go outside of what we planned for. So in essence, you know, if there's a certain land take that's been provided within the DCO, we can't go out of that, and implement additional electrification work outside of the DCO process. So I've been, you know, I've been quite convoluted.

[1:47:59]

[...] But in essence, what I'm trying to say is that the 2021 consultation, in many cases, should give you a good feel for the reasonable worst case scenario. And what we're going through at the moment is an element of refinements of designs with a view to perhaps reduce that uncertainty that you refer to, and, and in areas where we can where we have the certainty, perhaps, you know, remove that kind of reasonable worst case scenario and

give you a more realistic one. So, you know, to put that in perspective, when it comes to traction power,

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[...] you know, the very good example you've given, you know, in terms of environmental impacts, we're gonna have to assume the reasonable worst case scenario. And in terms of vertical clearances, beneath structures, we have to assume the reasonable worst case scenario. So what that means is that we assume the railways electrified to achieve vertical clearances, but also, you know, we consider the environmental impact of diesel trains, if you see what I mean, that doesn't mean we will go out and run diesel trains.

[1:48:58]

[...] That doesn't mean we'll go out and electrify, but it does give us the planning bounds or limits for us to be able to go out and kind of undertake both options. There is uncertainty, definitely I'm not going against that. And we are trying to manage that in the most sensible way that we can. But yeah, I appreciate that. There is uncertainty on local residents, it is translated to uncertainty I appreciate that. And once again, a lot of effort

[1:49:28]

[...] You know is made into kind of reducing that uncertainty as much as possible.

PN: Okay, Mo. And last question really is. What is the degree of confidence held by East West Rail that the SC will actually start in the first half of 2024?

[1:50:00]

MA: I mean, nothing suggested we wouldn't be able to do that. Hannah, do you want to come in?

HS: Yeah, I think Yeah, jump in. I was sort of I think Katy is on the line as well. Yeah. You know, the whole business is, is working towards that. As we've sort of explained before the timelines until, until the timelines are set, the timelines aren't set. But yeah, the whole business is, is working towards that. And that's, that's what that's our, our window. So what's our degree of confidence? I guess?

[1:50:00]

[...] I never say 100%. Maybe a little bit pessimistic Peter. But yeah, it's it's what was what we're working at. So yes, it's just my natural optimism. It's my natural pessimism that's stopping me from saying 100%?

PN: Well, yes, I wouldn't have thought it was anywhere near 100%. But so at the moment, it's still when when East West Rail, so it's in the first half of 2024. It knows that it can launch it by the end of June.

[1:51:02]

HS: As I say, that's what that's what we're working towards. That's the that's the goal. That's the plan. That's the aim. We don't have a firm date. So we're still working through the program. I think I mean,

PN: Okay.

HS: Now, why does that sound sound odd, it's just important to say that there is a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to have to start a start a stat con, there's just a tremendous amount of design work, we and as I was sort of saying earlier, we've got to be,

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[...] we have to be very confident that the thing we're putting in the public domain is worth everyone's time having a look at, we've got to be very, very confident that what we're putting in the public domain is the best thing that we can. And if the, if we don't feel that we can do that, then we'll have to be honest about it. But at the moment, everything is moving in the right direction, and everything looks good from our side.

[1:51:58]

[...] But as I say these things, you know, some some things just take as long as they need to take. So that's a natural bet hedger. But I would say, yeah, there's no reason why that I that I know of why we're not where we wouldn't be confident in that.

PN: Thanks. Thanks Hannah. No more questions you'll be pleased to here.

HS: I just wanted you to finish that with your honor. No more questions, your honor. Just once in my life, I'd like to hear that.

New Slide – Closing remarks, future meetings and topics

[1:52:30]

[...] If anyone else, I'm aware that we're entirely now at half past eight. And I do try and like to keep this time if I can. Thanks so much, everyone for your time. If you do have questions outside of this, of course, please do email us we've got a few specific actions to follow up getting the team in touch with each other, all that sort of stuff. And working through the specific outcomes here.

[1:53:00]

[...] I am hoping that we get some more sort of ideas in the wash up, but but understand that there's some specific interests of this group and specific circumstances of this group might make that less than possible.

New Slide – Topics for future discussion

[...] So I think that it just falls on me now to say, we will be I think I'm writing doing our usual circulation to get the topics for next time. Oh, Gordon.

[1:53:27]

GJ: Just a quickie, Hannah. Is it possible to find for us to know what topics the other LRGs have been discussing?

HS: Yes, Meeting Notes for all LRGs are available on online anyway, so nothing's nothing secret.

GJ: We can access every other LRG can we

HS: think so? Sarah. That's right. Yeah. Peter's nodding.

SJ: Yeah, on that. On that point, Gordon, we're gonna have a list very soon on the homepage of the community hub, which will list all of the topics that have previously been done to be in one place. Give us a few weeks, that'll be there.

[1:54:00]

HS: My instinct would be that this group has probably had more than has probably had the same this, you've probably had extra extra topics rather than been under topiced. But I think that'd be an interesting thing to look

GJ: it would be nice to know what topics the other LRGs have been discussing. And if we can gain if we can benefit from what they've been talking about. That was all.

[1:54:30]

HS: I'm pretty sure that you'll have had all the same topics as them. But if there's anything in there, you haven't had I think we'd that's that's not a problem. Any thoughts on that before we talk about next time this topic? So I think that one of the topics that we have given to

another group, but we haven't yet given to this group, more timing than anything is perhaps useful for Alastair and perhaps others. Talking about sorry, I misread that. That wasn't actually referring

[1:55:00]

[...] Back to something Alastair said I do apologise. But there was a question about compensation for impacted communities and active travel examples from CS1. I mean, I'm not an expert in this, but I know that we're not at a position with a conversation having the department to be specific about compensation. Active travel and CS1, I think it probably will be a more fruitful conversation in the immediate. We can definitely bring someone in to talk broad in broad brushstrokes about

[1:55:30]

[...] oh, look, Tabitha has already put the link in well done Tabitha, gosh she's good. But I would suggest that active travel, and for those unfamiliar with the term, that sort of walking, wheeling options, just to give some background of what's been happening in the space, it's already being built, that feels like it can be quite fruitful. Should we put a poll out and see what people want to talk about?

[1:55:57]

GJ: Yeah

SJ: Yep, can do that.

[1:56:01]

HS: And let's do that. Wonderful. Okay, thank you very much. So, we'll see you in around about six weeks then. And we'll circulate notes and whatnot, as per usual, and as I said, please, if you have any sort of last thoughts, any thoughts after reflection, that kind of stuff, please do get in touch with the team. And thank you again, so much for your time. Really appreciate it. We'll see you next time.