



Please reply to:

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Oxfordshire County Council  
County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND

16<sup>th</sup> December 2022

## **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2023-24 BUDGET CONSULTATION**

I am writing on behalf of Railfuture\* Thames Valley and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed budget.

As our principal interests relate to transport, we will limit our comments to this aspect of the budget.

We strongly support Priority 5 of the Council's Vision: to develop an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network. Whilst we recognise the financial pressures the Council is under, it is vital that none of the budget changes inhibit this and maximum effort must continue into leveraging in funds from DfT and other parts of central government to further this aim.

We strongly supported the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study produced by Network Rail in consultation with OCC and others. It sets out a number of vital investments:

- Reopening Cowley branch line for passenger services
- Additional services to Hanborough
- Greater capacity in and around Didcot including a new station at Wantage/Grove

We also welcome the work started, with the support of the County Council, into reinstating a rail line to Eynsham, Witney and Carterton.

We were therefore very pleased to see the provision of £250,000 in the 2022-23 budget towards progressing these schemes including the development of Business Cases. This work will enable OCC, for example, to be ready to respond to further rounds of New Stations Funds or similar government initiatives. It will be important for any money not spent from this budget so far to be carried forward, if necessary in a new allocation specific for the purpose.

We are therefore against the 2023-24 budget proposal 24EP18 to reduce funding for this work by £50,000 as it may impact on the continuation of this development work on the priority rail schemes for Cowley, Hanborough, Wantage/Grove station and the Witney/Carterton branch.

We should be pleased if you would take on board our comments on the proposed budget. Please come back to us if you need further clarification on the points we have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Rose,  
Vice-Chairman  
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*\* Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation, campaigning for improved rail services and promotion of the contribution rail can make to sustainable transport. In the Thames Valley we have several hundred members, including the affiliation of most local Rail User Groups. We are independent of the industry, political parties and trades unions, and always seek to put rail users first, be they freight or passengers.*