



Winslow Local Area Forum Update

EAST WEST RAIL LINK UPDATE

The East West Rail Link presentation is being given at a future meeting. The notes below outline the discussions that took place at a meeting on 2 September.

If Winslow Local Area Forum Members have further questions, these can be forwarded to the EWR link consortium for response.

Meeting with Secretary of State for Transport Lord Andrew Adonis and the East West Rail (EWR) Consortium

Representatives of the EWR Consortium, accompanied by Phyllis Starkey MP and Evan Harris MP, met with Lord Andrew Adonis at DfT headquarters in Marsham Street on 2 September 2009.

The purpose of the meeting, facilitated by Phyllis Starkey, was to update the Secretary of State on the case for Western Section of the project (Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford and Aylesbury to Milton Keynes) and to seek his views and advice on how the project might be progressed. This reflects that the project is at key point in its delivery.

Lord Adonis opened the meeting by saying that in his view the project was a great scheme and wished to know how he could help to make it happen.

Phyllis Starkey thanked the minister, welcomed his comments and acknowledged the strategic importance of the project in linking up in an east-west direction the existing north-south rail routes out of London.

The minister then moved the discussion onto consideration of the potential sources of funding.

The Consortium representatives advised that the potential to secure contributions from private developers is estimated to be in the order of £50- 60m. It was noted that housing projects that had already received planning consent could not make a contribution. On the assumption that private sector contributions can be secured in due course, there remains the need to secure a mechanism for forward funding in advance of receipts from the developers. It was noted that it was this issue that led to the development of the MK tariff; so it is possible to put a mechanism in place provided the role of 'banker' can be agreed.

It was noted that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is no more than an alternative to the traditional S106 mechanism used to collect private sector contributions.

The transport component of the Regional Funding Advice is another potential source of funding. The Regional Transport Board has identified EWR as a regional priority, however no allocation of funding has been made to date. The on-going work associated with the regional DaSTS work programme, plus the pressure on regional budgets, is requiring the RTB to review its investment priorities. Government support for the scheme in principle would encourage the RTB to consider the need for a regional contribution, possibly as part of its Interim DaSTS Report (scheduled to be submitted in April 2010).

Chiltern Railway's Evergreen 3 project is a significant factor; it would reduce the overall scheme cost of £260 million by approximately £60-70 million and if the decision is taken to buy, Evergreen 3, the minister anticipated being able to make positive and supportive comments about the principle of supporting East-West Rail.

Work is under way within the DfT to identify the outputs to be included in the next High Level Output Specification as a precursor to Control Period (CP) 5 (2014 – 2019). In an ideal world Network Rail would recognise EWR as a priority as part of the planning process. Network Rail's recently published Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (GW RUS) is extremely positive in this respect. Although not a commitment, it recognises the importance of re-opening the line between Oxford and Bletchley and looks further ahead to potential utilisation of the Bletchley to Bedford line for freight connections to the Midland mainline.

Views on the development of the scheme to a point of readiness were considered. Joint promotion by DfT and Network Rail would assist in providing leadership and encourage development of the wider funding package required to deliver the scheme. It was acknowledged that resources would need to be found to enable the development work to progress in good time.

It was agreed that on the basis that CP5 outputs will be finalised in mid 2012 and a realistic date for implementation of the scheme is 2014 there is a need to carry out further post GRIP 4 development work during the period 2010 to 2013. This work will need to include Transport and Works Act procedures, Environmental Impact Assessment and thereafter other associated works included within GRIP 5.

A fully costed programme leading to a 2014 start date is to be developed by the Consortium. Discussions related to resources and funding for this development work should take place as soon as possible between Network Rail and the Consortium. Potential funding sources for the development need to be discussed but could include Community Infrastructure Funding (CIF), Growth Area Funding (GAF), and Network Rail.

Finally, the minister's support for the project was welcomed. It was recognised that, his support for the project in light of the outcome of his consideration of Evergreen 3, may serve to develop the momentum required to ensure the scheme is delivered at the earliest opportunity.