

Walk the Line for the Missing Link East West Rail – ‘Next stop Cambridge’.

14 June 2013:

Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge could be linked by a new 100 mph railway. Oxford to Bedford is due to open in 2017¹, and campaigners are pressing for the line to be extended to Cambridge.

On 29 June, Railfuture² and Campaign for Better Transport³ will make the case for completing the missing railway between Bedford and Cambridge with a walk between Bedford and Sandy.

The event begins with a rally and photo opportunity at 10:30am in Priory Country Park, departing at 11am from Bedford finishing at Sandy Market Square later in the afternoon. The walk is approximately 7.5 miles and there are refreshment stops en route.

Mr Noel Kavanagh, the Labour Spokesman for Transport on Cambridgeshire County Council is planning to walk or bike with the campaign. He said that ‘a rail link will reduce the necessity for people to use vehicles, reduce pollution and benefit the environment’.

Susan Dye of the Campaign for Better Transport added “the new line is vital for people who work or live in the Oxford to Cambridge region. We need a 21st Century solution to sort our transport chaos. We’re not walking the old route because we want to see the tracks put back on the cycle path; we need an optimum cross-country route balancing cost, environmental aspects, journey time, and social benefit.”

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Beeching report which paved the way for thousands of station closures and thousands of miles of track scrapped. Interestingly however, Dr Beeching recommended maintaining the Bedford to Cambridge line, but five years later this was overturned by the Government and the line was closed. Since then, much of the line has been built over, but most of the Bedford to Sandy section has been converted to a walking and cycling route.

For more information visit <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam+walk>
And <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam>

Notes:

1. Consortium of local authorities along the East West Rail route announce Network Rail decision to go ahead with East West Rail
<http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/network-rail-announce-plans-to-construct-western-section-of-east-west-rail/>
 2. Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for passengers and freight. Railfuture is a voluntary group representing rail users, with 20,000 affiliated and individual members.
<http://www.railfuture.org.uk>
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3. Campaign for Better Transport is an independent charity, providing well-researched, practical solutions to transport problems, pressuring national and local government to adopt them, and empowering ordinary people up and down the country. Our vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment.
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk>
4. Railfuture's Oxford Cambridge Campaign "the new link that makes a network"
<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam/>
5. The Walk between Bedford and Sandy will follow the Sustrans national route 51 (the University Way) from Bedford MK41 9DJ to Sandy SG19 1HU. The route is approximately 7.6 miles and sign posted. Walkers and cyclists are equally welcome. <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/route/the-university-way>
6. Timings for the Day
10.30 Gather at the Visitor Centre in Priory Country Park, Bedford, MK41 9DJ.
10.45 Rally and photo-opportunity
11.00 Start of journey to 'Make the Link'
Cafes/pubs at Danes Camp and Blunham.
Finish at the Market Square, Sandy, SG19 1HU
7. Contacts
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