

EWR2 Project Newsletter Spring 2023



EWR Alliance



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Welcome

Welcome to the Spring 2023 issue of the EWR2 Project Newsletter.

I am pleased to report that the project continued to make good progress through the latter stages of 2022 and early 2023 and remains on track for completion of the infrastructure in mid-2024.

As you will read below, all five of our new overbridges have been completed and opened to traffic, with eight of the ten new pedestrian footbridges also open to the public, and the majority of the bridge refurbishment works either complete or nearing completion.

The track construction has continued through 2022 and at the time of writing over 43km of track has been installed across the project. In recent months, we have also begun the main Signalling, Power & Communications programme, which involves installing all the electrical equipment, cabling, signals and systems required to connect the new railway to the existing rail network.

There has also been steady progress at the new Winslow Station and the Bletchley 'High Level' Stations, which will connect the two new platforms on Bletchley Flyover to the existing Bletchley Station. Both of the stations are scheduled for completion this year, with the Winslow Station car park following in 2024.

There is no doubt that the progress we have made has not been without challenge and we remain acutely aware of the impact that our works are having on the local community. On behalf of the Alliance, I would like to again apologise for any disruption which may have been caused and thank everyone for their ongoing patience and understanding as we construct the new railway.

Throughout 2023, we will continue our demobilisation and reinstatement works, which will see us complete construction work, close our compounds, reinstate land that has been used for the construction and carry out highway repair works in agreement with the local authorities. Inevitably, this will involve some localised disruption and HGV movements, particularly for the highway works, and you can read more about the details in our 'Managing the Works' section below. However, we will continue to work hard to minimise the disruption caused by our works and will keep providing advance notification of any disruptive activities to those members of the local community who may be impacted.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support for the project.

Mark Cuzner
Alliance Director

Read the interactive, electronic version of this newsletter by scanning the QR Code:





New Track Construction (NTC) train at Winslow Station

EWR2 - Track Construction Update

The track construction programme – one of the biggest of its kind currently in the country – is now 65% complete and remains on target to complete in February 2024, with the team now working on two fronts, from Bicester to Poundon and Bletchley to Steeple Claydon.

The track construction programme continues to utilise very effectively one of the two UK 'New Track Construction' trains each month in order to deliver the works to programme, with 30 plus shifts now delivered and more than 43km of track in situ.

Upcoming targets include:

- March - June 2023: Completion of 1.8km of track between Twyford and the Calvert HS2 integration area
- March - July 2023: Completion of more than 11.2km of track between Winslow and Steeple Claydon
- June 2023 – February 2024: Completion of 6.8km of main line track, loop and reception sidings and IMD connections between Steeple Claydon and Calvert (as part of the integrated delivery with HS2 Ltd and their supply chain partner EKFB)

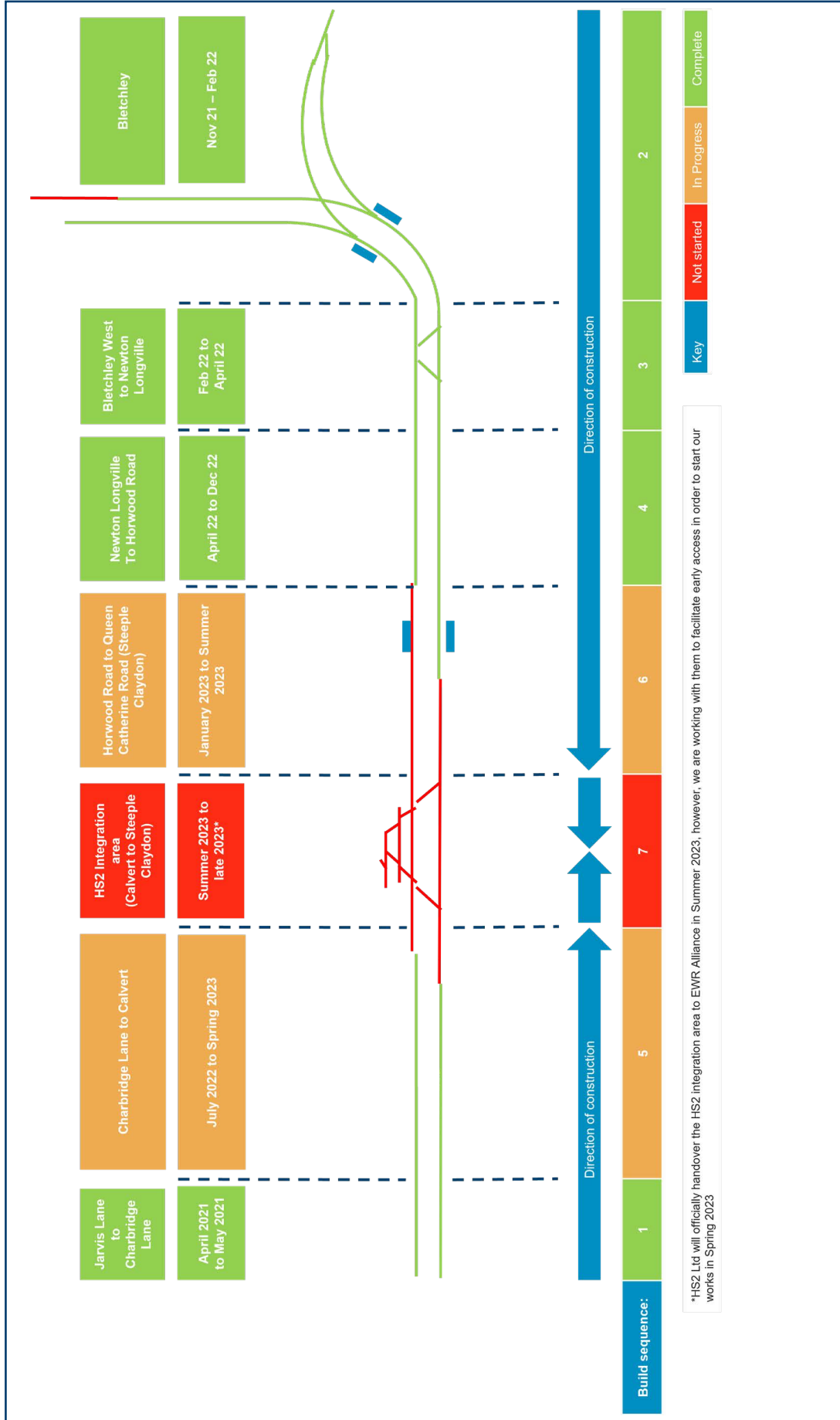
The project's strategy remains to bring as much of the material needed for the track works to site via rail as possible. We are acutely conscious of the potential impact our works may have on lineside neighbours, we have avoided over 4,000 lorry journeys on the local road network, as well as almost 10,000 'on-site' dumper movements.

In conjunction with Network Rail, the Alliance is now operating a new ballast distribution point at Hinksey near Oxford, making it easier and more efficient for the rail transportation of materials to site from the Bicester working front.

Unfortunately, the project has been impacted by the railway workers industrial action over the recent months which has resulted in late alterations to train delivery times and some of these have occurred during unsociable hours. In accordance with our commitments under the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO), we will notify affected residents and businesses as soon as we become aware of these issues.



View our latest Track construction map for information on our sequence of works.



Rail Safety on the new line

As the once mothballed railway between Bicester – Bletchley returns to life, we again focus on the importance of rail safety and the dangers of trespassing on the railway...

Construction of the new track on the once mothballed line between Bicester, Bletchley and Milton Keynes is now well underway, with engineering trains for track construction now arriving from both directions.

But whilst the re-opening of the line brings with it major benefits, from a public perspective, the ongoing works mean that the route is effectively 'live' and as such, is governed by the same strict rules and regulations as the rest of the UK rail network, aimed at keeping everyone safe and making it out of bounds to the general public.

In support of these changes, the Alliance has completed the installation of permanent fencing with associated signage and security along the railway boundary, designed to prevent people from accessing the railway and explaining the dangers of doing so.

To help reinforce the rail safety message, the Alliance, in conjunction with Network Rail and the East West Railway Company, is launching a dedicated campaign to promote rail safety, visiting schools, youth groups and other community organisations along the line of route. This will also be supported by a broader campaign including letters, posters and signage, running from now, right through to when the new line enters operational service.

For further information or to arrange for members of the project team to come and speak to your local school, youth or community group, please email us at publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk

The column on the right includes a few examples of the key messages illustrating the importance of rail safety and the very real dangers of rail trespass.

You Vs. Train – the dangers of trespassing on the railway

Despite the railway being full of hidden dangers, every day, hundreds of people risk everything by trespassing on the railway. When you trespass on the railway, there are serious and catastrophic consequences for you, your loved ones, rail staff, and communities as a whole.

Network Rail and British Transport Police's You Vs. Train campaign highlights the dangers of trespassing on the railway.

Warning: The supporting video contains scenes some viewers may find upsetting.

Watch the video by scanning the QR Code:



For more information on railway safety, please visit: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/safety-in-the-community/>



Bletchley High Level and Winslow Stations update

East West Rail's new stations at Bletchley High Level and Winslow are taking shape, with the installation of Bletchley's new footbridge scheduled for completion in the spring.

For both stations, the project team looked overseas when sourcing the required footbridges, with Dutch based company Delft chosen to construct the low maintenance fibre reinforced plastic structures.

In the case of Bletchley High Level, the new footbridge, which connects the new and existing stations, is being installed in sections with the aid of a 300-tonne crane, after receiving a police escort to site due to its size.

The station building itself is scheduled for a summer 2023 finish, with the internal fitout on the main building well underway, whilst down on the platforms, cladding works and the installation of coping stones and tactile paving is complete. After that, the Signalling, Power and Communications team will move in to start installing all of the customer information and communication systems.

Over at Winslow, the new station, located in the cutting of the original route and serving Oxford and Milton Keynes, will feature lifts (in addition to the new footbridge which is currently in fabrication), as well as waiting shelters, toilets, cycle storage, CCTV and customer information systems. There will also be a dedicated 365 space car park, works on which are scheduled to start this summer.



Aerial image of Bletchley High Level Station taken in February 2023



Aerial image of Winslow Station and Buckingham Road taken February 2023

Building Bridges

Since approval of the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) in 2020, the East West Rail Alliance's Civils team has been busy delivering a portfolio that has included 16 overbridges (carrying road over rail) and 16 underbridges (rail over road), almost all of which are now complete and open to the public, with only a few minor works outstanding.

Of the 16 overbridges, five of these are entirely new structures, replacing existing level crossings or replacing existing structures that no longer meet modern safety standards. Utilising modern methods of construction to minimise the impact on the local community, maximise efficiency and improve safety, all five of the new structures opened to traffic in 2022, with OXD26B Queen Catherine Road near Steeple Claydon opening in October and OXD24C in Verney Junction opened to traffic in November.

They join OXD34A Station Road, Launton and OXD10AA near Salden Wood, both of which opened in March 2022 and OXD36A Charbridge Lane in Bicester, which opened to traffic in May 2022.

In addition, the civils programme has included installation of 10 footbridges, all but one replacing level crossings along the line of route (Bicester to Bletchley/Milton Keynes), with seven now open for public use whilst some minor works and official handover with the relevant local authorities is concluded.



Aerial image of OXD36AA Charbridge Lane taken in January 2023

In 2021, the team also successfully delivered the dismantling and reconstruction of Bletchley Flyover, which carries the new railway over the West Coast Main Line, alongside the refurbishment of Bridge DHF155, also at Bletchley.

Commenting on the progress made, Alliance Director Mark Cuzner said: "Clearly, building and refurbishing the structures required for the project was always going to be one of the key priorities for the EWR Alliance. Each individual structure presented its own unique challenges, whether that be engineering, logistics, public interface or environmental. Our teams across the project have risen to those challenges, using modern methods of construction and innovative engineering to complete the works on programme and to the required quality.

"Whilst we have made every effort to minimise the impact of these works on the local community, clearly we have needed to implement a number of road closures and traffic management measures in order to complete the works safely. We would like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding during these works."

For a full update on each of the structures on the project, please refer to the 'Managing the Works' section of this newsletter.



OXD32 Station Road Marsh Gibbon bridge



Public Rights of Way

We recognise that footpaths, or Public Rights of Way (PRoW), are an important resource for the community and seek to minimise closures of PRoWs where possible. In some instances, closures must be made to ensure public safety whilst works are undertaken, for example to divert watercourses and reroute PRoWs.

The Alliance is seeking to reopen the PRoWs affected by the project as early as possible and again make them available to the community.

The QR Code below has a list of PRoWs that are affected by our works, i.e. those where we are required to make material changes to the PRoWs and/or provide the ability for members of the public to cross over the railway that we are currently constructing.

Please note this information is subject to change and any closures/re-openings will be notified nearer the time by the Alliance via the local authorities as necessary.

To view our ongoing PRoW works, please scan the QR Code on the right.

Interactive Public Rights of Way maps for Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire are available via the respective council websites.

[Buckinghamshire Council PROW maps](#)

[Oxfordshire County Council PROW maps](#)



Managing the Works

With the vast majority of the main civils construction for the project complete or nearing completion, the project's focus is now switching to the completion of the stations, and the construction of track, signalling, power and telecommunications systems needed to operate trains once the new railway opens.

Whilst this shift from civils construction to the installation of rail systems means the majority of our work will now be taking place with reduced impact on the public, throughout 2023 we will still be completing construction, demobilising our compounds, removing our haul roads and reinstating the land used to its former condition and carrying our highways repairs. In order to carry out these works, we will need to implement traffic management measures and, in most cases, full road closures across the project area. Our construction compound near Verney Junction is required through most of 2023 and compounds in Winslow and Bicester will remain in place and operational until 2024.



In support of this, this section of the newsletter provides a list of upcoming activity which may have an impact on the local community. Whilst every effort has been taken to coordinate with other works and provide as much detail as possible, all dates are subject to change and in some cases, it is not possible to provide exact dates until nearer the time. As such, we have provided the season, to give people an indication of when the work might take place. As always, we will aim to notify those lineside neighbours significantly impacted by the works in advance.

On the next page, you will find a table providing an update on the status of each structure across the project, including any remaining activity and associated potential disruption. You will also find a table providing an update on the highways and utilities works (e.g. road repairs or traffic management measures) that will be in place whilst we complete our works.

In addition to the above and forming part of the project's track construction programme, in recent months our Signalling, Power and Communications team has started 'on track' works in the Bletchley area. The works, which involve signalling installation and cable pulling, will start at Bletchley and move progressively west towards Winslow/Steeple Claydon, taking place during normal working hours.

In addition, as part of the track construction programme, the project will continue to use engineering trains to bring plant and materials to site, thus reducing the impact on the local road network. Whilst we are unable to give precise details as to when and where these trains will be operating, every effort will be made to keep disruption and noise to a minimum.



Structures Progress

Note - each bridge/structure has a 'bridge number' prefixed OXD (Oxford to Denbigh), referring to its line designation on the rail network.

Bridge number	Location	Category	Status
OXD4	Selbourne Avenue, Newton Longville	Underbridge	Completed in April 2022 and open to traffic. Installation of additional signage and access construction scheduled for summer 2023, requiring overnight road closures.
OXD5	Newton Longville	Underbridge	Completed in April 2022.
OXD6	Bletchley Road, Newton Longville	Underbridge	Completed in March 2022. Minor finishing works including installation of new signage scheduled to take place in 2023, with traffic management in place.
OXD7	Newton Longville	Underbridge	Completed in November 2021.
OXD8	Newton Longville	Underbridge	Completed in November 2021, however, the Public Right of Way remains closed and is scheduled to reopen Spring/Summer 2023.
OXD9	Newton Longville	Overbridge	Bridgeworks complete and road opened in December 2022.
OXD10A	Near Mursley	Underbridge	Completed in April 2022.
OXD10AA	Salden Wood near Mursley	Overbridge	Completed in March 2022. Minor finishing works to be completed in Spring 2023 with some traffic management measures required.
OXD11	Whaddon, Mursley	Overbridge	Completed in May 2022 and open to traffic.
OXD12	Horwood Road, near Mursley	Overbridge	Demolition of small aqueduct completed in August 2020.
OXD12A	Mursley	Footbridge	Completed in May 2022 and open to public use
OXD13	Horwood Road, near Mursley	Overbridge	Completed in November 2021 and open to traffic. The bridge will be closed in Spring 2023 whilst a new parking bay is constructed north of the bridge and the access point to the construction compound is removed.
OXD13A	Moco Farm, near Mursley	Footbridge	Completed in May 2022 and open to public use.
OXD14	Moco Farm, near Mursley	Overbridge	Main works were completed in November 2021, providing access to the local farm. We will be completing some works on the nearby Public Right of Way (PRoW) here in 2023. For more information, please see the PRoW update below.
OXD15	Horwood Brook, Winslow	Underbridge	Completed in July 2022. New access walkway scheduled for installation in mid 2023, however, little public impact is expected.
OXD16	Little Horwood Road, Winslow	Underbridge	Opened to traffic in May 2022, however, additional works including haul road removal, highway repairs, ancillary civils access construction and final bridge works will take place Summer 2023, with a road closure in place on Little Horwood Road. See Highways table below for more information.
OXD17	Horwood Brook, Winslow	Underbridge	Completed in August 2022.



Bridge number	Location	Category	Status
OXD18	Buckingham Road, Winslow	Overbridge	Refurbishment works completed in December 2022. Anglian Water need to carry out utilities works to connect the new station water supply, which are currently planned for April of 2023. Final fencing work is also required around the bridge and station. Further details, including any traffic management requirements, will be confirmed nearer the time.
OXD19	Winslow	Footbridge	Completed in June 2022 and open to public use.
OXD20	Furze Lane, Winslow	Overbridge	Completed in September 2022 and open to traffic. Note: Whilst works on the OXD20 bridge are complete, further works on Furze Lane near OXD20 will be required as the team demobilise the nearby Furze Lane compound and carry out highways repair works. This is currently scheduled to take place in 2024, however, further details, including any traffic management requirements will be confirmed nearer the time.
OXD21	Winslow	Underbridge	Completed in August 2022, the associated new Public Right of Way is now open.
OXD22	Verney Road between Addington and Winslow	Underbridge	Verney Road is currently closed to allow for works on OXD22 to be completed until 17th December. The road closure works are scheduled to complete in January and the road will reopen to traffic.
OXD23	Addington	Underbridge	Final finishing works are required to the railway walkway at track level and this should cause minimal disruption to the public, the PRoW will be opened Spring/Summer 2023.
OXD24	Addington, near Winslow	Underbridge	Completed in August 2022 and open to traffic. Minor finishing works including installation of new signage scheduled to take place in 2023, with traffic management in place.
OXD24C	Verney Junction	New overbridge	Completed in November 2021, providing access to the local farm and altered footpath.
OXD25	Sandhill Road, Middle Claydon	Overbridge	Completed in November 2021 and open to traffic. Traffic lights will remain in use until the project has ceased the majority of HGV movements in Summer 2023.
OXD25A	Middle Claydon (No.4&6)	Footbridge	Scheduled for completion in Spring/Summer 2023.
OXD26A	Middle Claydon	Footbridge	Completed in August 2022 and open to public use.
OXD26B	Queen Catherine Road, Steeple Claydon	New overbridge	Completed in October 2022 and open to traffic. Hedge planting and highways finishing works are due to take place either side of the bridge, starting in early 2023 and lasting approximately three weeks, with two-way traffic lights in place.
OXD29	Main Street, Charndon	Overbridge	Completed in September in 2021 and open to traffic.
OXD29A	Poundon/Twyford	Footbridge	Completed in February 2022 and open to public use.
OXD30	Green Lane, Marsh Gibbon/Poundon	Overbridge	Completed and opened in Spring 2022, providing access to the local farm.



Bridge number	Location	Category	Status
OXD31	Marsh Gibbon/ Poundon	Overbridge	Completed in Spring 2022.
OXD32	Station Road between Poundon and Marsh Gibbon	Underbridge	Completed in October 2021 and open to traffic.
OXD32A	Poundon/Twyford	Footbridge	Completed in August 2022 and open to public use.
OXD33A	Marsh Gibbon	Footbridge	Completed in August 2022, and will be opened when approach footpaths are in suitable condition in Spring 2023.
OXD34	Marsh Gibbon	Underbridge	Completed in July 2022 and open to traffic.
OXD34A	Station Road, Launton	New overbridge	Completed in March 2022 and open to traffic.
OXD35	Launton	Underbridge	Farm access completed in June 2022.
OXD35A	Grange Farm near Bicester	Footbridge	Completed in October 2021 and in public use.
OXD36AA	Charbridge Lane, Bicester	New overbridge	Structure complete and open to traffic.



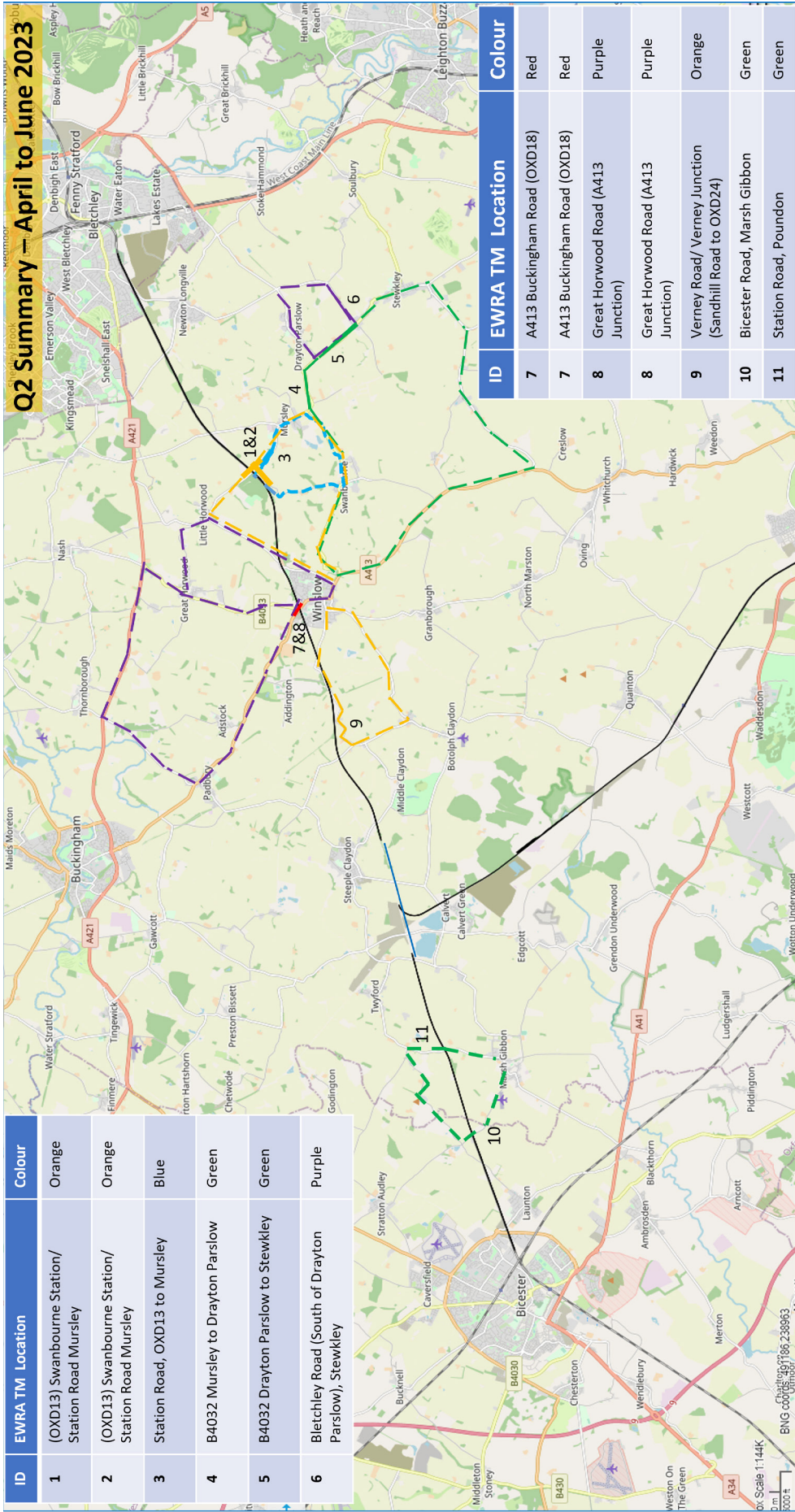
Forthcoming Road Closures & Traffic Management

The table below shows the currently planned work between April and June 2023 (Quarter 2) following collaboration with Buckinghamshire Council to minimise disruption and coordinate with other works on the highways network. Typically, closures for road repairs will be between four and six weeks and One Network (<https://one.network>) can be viewed online showing the status of closures. Please also refer to the map below for the planned works for Q2 with corresponding ID number. Closures for July to September (Q3) will be communicated during the Spring but are likely to include Sandhill Road, Herds Hill & Little Horwood Rd.

Road / Map ID	Area	Location	Description	Traffic Management/ impact	Start	Finish	Status
Bicester Road	Launton	Oxfordshire	Speed reduction signs in place to support ongoing construction works.	Reduced speed	28 September 2022	Summer 2023	Ongoing
Bicester Road / 10	Marsh Gibbon	Oxfordshire/ Buckinghamshire	Highways, repair and reinstatement works.	Road closure	March 2023	April 2023	Ongoing
A413 Buckingham Road / 7	Winslow	Buckinghamshire	Utilities works associated with the new station.	Two-way lights	April 2023	April 2023	Upcoming
Great Horwood Road (A413 Junction) / 8	Winslow	Buckinghamshire	Utilities works associated with the new station.	Road closure	April 2023	April 2023	Upcoming
Swanbourne Station/ Station Road / 1&2	Mursley	Buckinghamshire	Construction of new maintenance access.	Road closure	April 2023	May 2023	Upcoming
Station Road to Mursley / 3	Little Horwood/ Mursley	Buckinghamshire	Highways and repair works and reinstatement of construction compound.	Road closure	May 2023	June 2023	Upcoming
Verney Road/ Verney Junction (Sandhill Road to Bridge OXD24) / 9	East Claydon	Buckinghamshire	Highways and repair works and reinstatement of construction access.	Road closure	Late May 2023	July 2023	Upcoming
B4032 Mursley to Drayton Parslow / 4	Mursley	Buckinghamshire	Highways repair and reinstatement works	Road closure	June 2023	July 2023	Upcoming
B4032 Drayton Parslow to Stewley / 5	Drayton Parslow	Buckinghamshire	Highways repair and reinstatement works	Road closure	July 2023	July 2023	Upcoming
Bletchley Road (South of Drayton Parslow), Stewley / 6	Drayton Parslow	Buckinghamshire	Highways repair and reinstatement works	Road closure	July 2023	July 2023	Upcoming
Station Road / 11	Poundon	Buckinghamshire	Highways repair and reinstatement works	Road closure	July 2023	August 2023	Upcoming



A map of planned works for Quarter 2.



Engaging with the local community

The Alliance's commitment to community engagement continues, with recent drop-in events proving successful. The team held a drop-in event in Winslow at the Lawrence Rooms and presented information on a wide range of topics including track construction, road closures and protecting the environment.

Held in January and attended by Deputy Director Jez Baldock, Utilities Project Manager Kerry Iles and Stakeholder Manager Buthaina Sa'id, the project team supported a Buckingham Council organised event at Steeple Claydon Village Hall which saw over 30 members of the public attend.



Information boards at the Winslow Drop In Session

And in February, the Alliance provided support for a series of information events organised by HS2 at Calvert Green, Twyford and Steeple Claydon sharing our disruptive traffic management and road closure plans.

The team will be organising similar community engagement events during 2023. If you would like the team to visit your area or would like to be kept up to date with information on the project, please contact the team via publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk



Newton Longville Free Church car park once the works were completed

Leaving a Legacy

Carpark upgraded at Newton Longville Free Church

In January, the Alliance and its supply chain partner C. Dowdy Ltd was able to support Newton Longville Free Church by upgrading the carpark to make it more accessible for its visitors.

The carpark had become overgrown and was worn out from use over the years. When the team got to work, the area was cleared of weeds and debris; and with the materials provided the carpark was given a fresh look.

Richard Forrest, the Property Steward from Newton Longville Free Church said, "The car park is super after your teams' efforts this week, the materials used have made our church new again. The men who did the work were so helpful and pleasure to be with. Many thanks again."

No sitting on the fence at Marsh Gibbon

Forming part of the project's commitment to social value, the works were undertaken by Newton Frost Fencing during w/c 16th January, with the installation of new welded mesh fencing around the perimeter of the school (which is located in the village hall).

In addition, the Alliance team also carried out de-vegetation works, helping to free up land to provide space for additional outdoor recreational activities.

Commented Karim Laraki, Project Engineer:

"I'd like to thank everyone involved, particularly in respect of the planning and effectiveness of the works, which will help to provide an improved environment for the children, whilst giving extra reassurance to the parents of those children attending the school."



New fencing at Marsh Gibbon Pre-School

Everything will be croquet

After having issues with vandals damaging the wooden fence and turf, the Winslow Croquet club requested for fencing to improve the security of the club.

Following a visit to access the area and fencing required, weldmesh fencing panels including the associated clips, bolts, fittings and a double gate was donated to the club sufficient to enclose the croquet pitch. EWR Alliance also supplied the post-crete to enable all of the posts to be securely installed.



The Winslow Croquet Club with new fencing installed

MK Food Bank donation

The Alliance has been providing support to local food banks, with £365 raised to purchase food for the Bicester Food Bank, plus £150 worth of food items and £70 cash donated to the Milton Keynes.



Donations made at the Bicester Food Bank on the left and MK Food Bank on the right.

Freshening up the Hummingbird Centre

Members of the Alliance donned overalls and armed themselves with paint brushes to help give Launton's Hummingbird Centre a hand with decorating. In addition to applying paint to the centre's main room, the Alliance was able to donate* two TVs, previously used at Alliance compounds and donated as part of the project's asset redistribution process, which will be mounted on the newly decorated walls.

The Hummingbird Centre is a cancer support and therapy facility, run mainly by volunteers and providing support to those affected by cancer, as well as their families.

In addition, the Alliance also donated televisions to local charity Action4Youth.

The project team has been working with the Aylesbury based charity for the last few years, with support including donations to its Inspiration Programme, in turn benefitting the likes of Buckingham School.

Kate Harrison from the Environment and Sustainability team commented: "This is another example of our commitment to providing social value to the wider community and we're delighted to be working alongside organisations such as Action4Youth, whose efforts are making a real difference to the communities they serve."

Welcoming the donation, Action4Youth's Bonnie Clayton said: "We want to say a massive thank you to the Alliance for the televisions, which are being used in three of our key areas! We really appreciate them."

For more information about Action4Youth, visit www.action4youth.org.

Stakeholder Engagement team help out at charity scavenger hunt

Launton Parish Council held a digital scavenger hunt to raise money towards the renovation of the Launton Parish Hall.

The event saw teams tasked with finding snail shells, acorns and other items scattered across the village using the What3Words app, which provided clues to solve a cryptic puzzle. Once they had collected all the clues, the scavengers returned to the hall to submit their answers and receive their prize.

The Alliance's Stakeholder Engagement team were on hand to support the organisation of the event, providing information packs and pens to help the scavengers on their way.

The event raised £295 for the renovation of the hall. [You can read more about the event on Launton's community newsletter 'Launton Lines'](#).



Members of the Alliance team at the Hummingbird Centre



Promoting the industry to the next generation!

Members of EWR Alliance attended an Aspirations Evening for pupils of The Royal Latin School in Buckingham. Organised by the school, the event provides prospective school-leavers (students in years 9-13, ages 13 to 18 years old) with the opportunity to speak with industry professionals, helping to give them an idea of what future career opportunities might be available to them.

Section Manager Dom Harris, Site Engineer Chienyem Mezue, Project Manager Tom Bowles and former Alliance Management Team member Steve Jones supported the event, drawing on their experience in education and their work on the EWR project. Dom and Chienyem were particularly well placed to give a detailed insight into the world of engineering and the opportunities available for GCSE and A-Level leavers.

Following his retirement earlier this year, Steve has also maintained a keen interest in promoting Civil Engineering as a career opportunity and was delighted to have been approached by the school to represent the industry. Said Steve: “The event was very well run and attended and those Alliance team members taking part did a great job; the enthusiasm and energy shown was inspiring in itself!”



Members of the Alliance team at the Royal Latin School Aspirations Evening



Land reinstatement well underway

With the majority of bridges and earthworks complete as the new railway takes shape, the project has now started the process of handing back much of the land needed to support construction.

Land take itself first began in 2019, following the award of the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO). This enabled the East West Rail Alliance to secure the land it needed to establish its work compounds between Bicester and Bletchley/Milton Keynes, including the four main construction compounds at Launton (A1), Winslow (B3), Newton Longville (B6) and Bletchley (C1/C2).

The Alliance, in line with its commitments under the TWAO, is embarking on an extensive programme of land reinstatement, led by Senior Project Managers Chris Reid and Andrew Finn.

“It’s a considerable undertaking,” explains Chris, “which involves us working on multiple sites covering the equivalent of around 100 hectares of land, most of which will be returned to its original condition before being handed back to the landowner.”

This includes the removal of all compounds, haul roads, temporary access points and small worksites, plus supporting drainage connections and materials such as hard core.

Adds Chris: “Whilst some works are relatively straightforward, certain locations such as the compounds and haul road reinstatement are more complex and involve the removal of

drainage, hardcore, fencing/gates, car parks etc and the reinstatement of existing land drainage and soil.”

Throughout the works, Chris, Andrew and team are also in extensive consultation with over 100 landowners, whose input is helping to shape the reinstatement programme.

The project team is also carrying out landscape planting works including hedgerows, with, as part of its commitment to a 10% bio-diversity net gain, additional planting along the line of route.

Chris also points out that, whilst the reinstatement works will understandably require lorry journeys to move materials around, upon completion, the end result means a reduction in compounds, construction traffic and noise. Most importantly, he says: “These works are a tangible demonstration of the project’s commitment to return as much of the land we have used as possible back to the landowners, as agreed under the terms of the TWAO.”

Adopting a phased approach, to date the project has already handed back a number of haul roads, as well as reinstating the C2 compound at Mercury House, Bletchley, used in support of works at Bletchley flyover. In addition, the reinstatement of both the B5 and B6 compounds at Newton Longville is also well underway, whilst the A3 compound near Marsh Gibbon is due to be handed back shortly.



Land on the project currently in the process of being reinstated

Concludes Chris: “Our aim is to have all reinstatement works finished by late 2023, early 2024. It’s also worth mentioning that in the case of the Spinney at Winslow, we will be keeping fencing in place until June 2023 to allow the grass/vegetation to grow back. As always, we would like to thank the local communities and landowners for their patience and understanding during these works.”

Latest CCS results recognise best practice and innovation

The East West Rail Alliance’s new dust suppression system has earned a ‘thumbs up’ from the Considerate Constructor’s Scheme (CCS). The system contributed to the Bicester end of the project receiving a near perfect score from CCS.

The CCS itself is a not-for-profit, independent organisation founded to raise standards in the construction industry, with organisations voluntarily signing up to be monitored against the Code of Considerate Practice.

Having consistently scored highly for its work, with each site registered to the scheme receiving a score of 49/50, the Alliance received further plaudits following a CCS visit towards the end of last year, during which it was praised for its best practice and innovation.



One initiative in particular that impressed the CCS was the project team’s introduction of a new water dousing system, an industry first and developed specifically to address the challenge of dust from ballast wagons.

Mark James, the Alliance’s Head of Track/Signalling, Power and Comms explained: “Ballast dust has long been an issue on railway projects and EWR2 is no exception. Due to the distance travelled by our deliveries, any initial dousing of the wagons and their respective payloads at the point of origin can be ineffective by the time they reach site. Therefore, we felt that the best way to tackle this problem was through a site-based solution.”

Hence the introduction of the new system, located at Charbridge Lane near Launton, which douses down the ballast wagons with water as they enter the site, helping significantly reduce any impact from dust to site staff and the local community.

In addition to the dust suppression system, the Alliance was also commended by the CCS for its introduction of the Long Welded Rail Train (LWRT), renamed the East West Rail Train and brought out of retirement by Network Rail and EWR Alliance to support the project’s track installation targets, with modifications made to protect those staff working at height through the use of a wheel mounted ‘cage.’



Dust suppression system at Charbridge Lane



Nurturing nature – How the project is leaving a lasting ‘green’ legacy

East West Rail 2’s commitment to leaving the local environment in a better condition than when it arrived is starting to bear fruit, with ongoing surveys indicating increases in flora and fauna across the project’s ecological compensation sites (ECS). To help mitigate the impact of the works and in line with its commitments under the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO), the project has created 20 ECS’s along the line of route from Bicester to Bletchley/Milton Keynes.

With preparatory works starting back in 2018, the last five years have seen the establishment of these high-quality habitats, which include ponds and other newt friendly locations, bat boxes, a dedicated bat house at Swanbourne, artificial badger setts and otter holts on three water courses. The habitats created at the 20 sites must also be managed for at least the next 30 years.

And to ensure that the project is meeting its obligations, the East West Rail Alliance has been conducting a series of ecological/ botanical surveys to monitor progress across each of the ECS’s.

Explains Anna Rowlands, Ecology Survey Lead for the Alliance: “As part of our commitments, we need to be able to demonstrate that our sites are establishing themselves as we would hope against certain condition criteria. We do this through annual condition assessments, checking on the health of the habitats created at each location. This information then influences the ongoing management and maintenance of these sites, such as targeted and timely cutting regimes, which in turn helps to maintain a balanced environment. Evidence shows that the measures we have put in place have also helped to enhance these areas.”

One of just a handful of major infrastructure projects able to measure the long-term impact of its environmental mitigation in this way, the project’s monitoring is already showing signs that its methodology is working, with habitats establishing well and with an increasing



One of the ecological compensation sites (ECS) on the project.



Deptford Pink

botanical diversity. Additional monitoring linked to licensing requirements is also showing increased bat, badger, great crested newt and otter activity at some of the ECS's.

“For bats, we have been undertaking surveys between April and October annually since 2021,” says Anna, “whilst our otter surveys are carried out biennially, most recently in Autumn 2022, with our botanical surveys undertaken across all 20 of our sites every year in June/ July.”

According to Anna, it's clear to see a pattern of establishment, particularly at the first of the ECS's to be created. “They're showing habitat that is representative of what we were hoping to establish, which in turn is leading to increased evidence of species such as reptiles using the sites, with more frequent sightings of common lizards and grass snakes. This is in addition to those species such as great crested newts, which formed part of a dedicated translocation programme.”

Temporary measures to protect resident barn owls have also proved so successful that the nesting boxes installed to compensate for

habitat lost to construction will now remain a permanent fixture.

The Alliance approach has also seen some new arrivals, with rare flora taking root along the project footprint. These include the pillwort, a member of the fern family, which has been recorded around some of the ponds, as well as Deptford pink, a protected species that prefers disturbed ground and which has appeared around the edges of grassland in one of the ECS's, influencing the Alliance's future maintenance programme at these locations.

Adds Anna: “We're also cultivating the reintroduction of the black poplar, one of the rarest of our native trees and a priority species, through the propagation of long cuttings known as truncheons into some of the ECS's that are now thriving. Other translocation works have included calcareous grassland, with our botanical monitoring suggesting that translocation has been successful.”

In addition, the Alliance is taking opportunities to actively engage with a number of local environmental groups to help local people with an interest in ecology and biodiversity



learn more about their local areas and what actions they may be able to take to make their own improvements. For example members of the Greener Winslow Group recently paid a visit to the ECS' at Verney Junction and Furze Lane.

And beyond the project? As Anna explains, once works are complete, the commitment to nature doesn't end there, with a 30-year programme in place to continue the monitoring and maintenance of these locations. "Whilst some establishment is already well underway, it can still take time for the ECS's to reach their target condition, hence our ongoing work with local landowners, as well as Network Rail, who will ultimately become custodians of these sites for years to come."



Grass snake



Pillwort

Environmental works continue to win international recognition

The EWR Alliance has won a Green Apple Environmental Award, further demonstrating the Alliance's environmental credentials.

The Green Apple Environment Awards were launched in 1994 by The Green Organisation and have become well established as one of the most popular environmental campaigns in the world. The annual international awards recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice around the world.

Commenting on the award, EWR Alliance Director Mark Cuzner said: "Congratulations to our Environment & Sustainability team and everyone else who has contributed to our efforts to ensure the project achieves its environmental commitments. Awards such as this demonstrate that our strategy, approach and implementation is recognised as best practice."

The EWR Alliance has also won the 'Excellence in Sustainable Infrastructure' award at the Landscape Institute Awards for its works involving the 20 Ecological Compensation Sites (ECS), which you can read more about in our [Nurturing Nature](#) article above.

But it's not just the EWRA's environmental works winning recognition. Since the last issue of our newsletter, the Alliance has been Highly Commended in the 'Infrastructure of the Year' category for its works at Bletchley Flyover and Highly Commended in the 'Outstanding Teamwork' category at the National Rail Awards.



Alliance Environment and Sustainability Lead at the Green Apple Awards

EWR Alliance scoops Collaborative Leadership Award

The EWR Alliance's approach and commitment to collaborative working has been recognised by the Institute of Collaborative Working (ICW), with the Alliance winning the award for Collaborative Leadership at a ceremony held at The House of Lords.

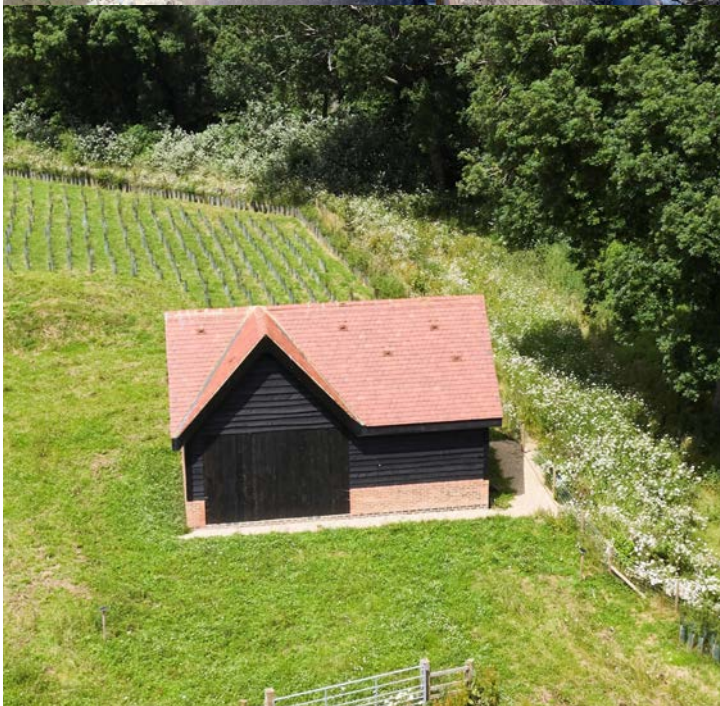
Taking place on an annual basis, the awards recognise businesses, organisations and individuals leading the way when it comes to collaborative working, defined by the ICW as "Business relationships formed by committed organisations to maximise joint performance for achievement of mutual objectives and creation of additional value."

Alliance Director Mark Cuzner said "From the outset, collaborative working has been key to the success of the Alliance, and the successful delivery of the project by leveraging on the skillsets of four distinct organisations. A major part of this success has been holding to the Alliance principle of working collaboratively with our stakeholders to implement the project as smoothly as possible.

"I'm delighted that the approach the Alliance has taken and our ongoing commitment to improve our collaborative working performance has been recognised by the Institute for collaborative working and this award is testament to the efforts everyone across the team has demonstrated to truly embrace a collaborative working culture."



Members of the Alliance the Collaborative Working Awards with Lord David Evans (third from the left)



**east
west
RAIL**

 **EWR Alliance**
Connecting People

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EWR Alliance working for Network Rail on behalf of the East West Railway Company

> For any queries please contact us on: publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk