

EWR2 Project Newsletter

Spring 2024





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Aerial image of Winslow Station and progress on the station car park, March 2024



Welcome

Welcome to the Spring 2024 issue of our project newsletter.

As we progress through the final year of the project, looking back on our progress in late 2023, and this first part of 2024 it is fair to say that whilst we have continued to successfully deliver the project's key milestones, this has not been without its challenges, and I am aware that our works – particularly our highways works - have caused disruption to local communities across the project.

I would like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding during these works, in particular our colleagues at Buckinghamshire Council and Oxfordshire County Council, as well as the various parish councils across the project footprint for their help and support.

I'm pleased to report that we are on schedule to complete all our highways work this year as planned. We carried out the majority of the highway repairs to the HGV routes in 2023 and 2024. Shortly, we will complete work on Sandhill Road near Verney Junction, and later in the year at Furze Lane in Winslow as we vacate the construction compound here. We will also complete the reinstatement of our 'A1 Compound' near Bicester and complete the highway work at one of the new Network Rail access points at this location. You can read more about our highways works on page 15.

Elsewhere, the project has been delivering across many work fronts since our last newsletter in 2023, with a key focus on track construction. Thanks to a huge effort from our track team, both lines are now in situ across the entire length of the project, connecting Bicester to Bletchley via double track rail for the first time in over 50 years. This has been achieved despite the challenges the team have faced due to industrial action being experienced across the UK rail network as well as a shortage of stone ballast needed to complete our works.

As our track construction programme has moved into its completion phase to prepare for 100mph operation, this has enabled our signalling, power & telecoms team to progress the installation of the various power and control systems required to enable the safe operation of trains in the future. In addition to the installation of the equipment needed to power and operate the railway, the team has completed the installation of all the cabling needed for the system to communicate to the control centre at Rugby, and are on track to complete the remaining on site signalling construction work in the second quarter of 2024. The testing phase ahead of final commissioning of systems in autumn 2024, has begun in parallel since Easter.

Furthermore to the above, we have long since completed the majority of our structural works, including the construction of five new overbridges, 10 new footbridges and the refurbishment of over 20 existing bridges including the Bletchley Flyover, something of an update to a local landmark. In Bletchley, the new footbridge connecting the two new platforms of Bletchley High Level station to the existing Bletchley station was installed earlier in the year and the new station building is very near to completion.

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



As you'll read on page 12, our civils team have also made good progress at the new Winslow Station, with the station building and platforms now approaching completion, whilst construction of the new car park which will service the station is moving ahead at considerable pace.

Add into this our compound demobilisation and land reinstatement works, landscaping, and planting, it's clear to see it has been a very busy, but successful late 2023 and early 2024 for the Alliance. I am pleased to report we remain on schedule to complete all of our works on time in 2024, ready for East West Railway Company and Network Rail to begin making final preparations to bring trains into service from 2025.

With our construction now substantially complete, I propose that this will be the final issue of the East West Rail Alliance newsletter. I thank you again for your continued support and interest in the project via this newsletter, our other communications and events.

Mark James

Alliance Director



The East West Rail Alliance team marking the completion of track construction from Bicester to Bletchley, March 2024

Project progress update - Track

Since the last track update, the track team have successfully constructed all of the track works.

On Wednesday 7 March, the Rail & HS2 Minister Huw Merriman attended site at Steeple Claydon and inserted one of the final rail securing clips, with Greg Smith MP and members of Buckinghamshire Council also in attendance.

With Bicester to Bletchley fully connected by two tracks for the first time in over 50 years - a hugely significant milestone for the project - the focus of the track team has moved to delivering the finishing works, which will enable the new track to go straight into service at 100mph.

Track Programme Manager, Joe Jamieson said: “2023 was always going to be the most significant year for the track construction programme and, despite some significant external challenges, I’m extremely proud of the progress we have been able to make.

“This is largely thanks to the collaborative way in which we’ve been planning the works with our colleagues in other disciplines across the Alliance, but also with our supply chain partners and our colleagues in the Network Rail’s Supply Chain Operations team. This milestone is a real testament to the incredible commitment and professionalism shown across the entire team, over the borders of all boundaries.

“Utilising the New Track Construction train and the bottom-up track construction methodology has meant we have been able to reduce our impact on the local community, however, it does mean that everything needs to be planned well in advance, with trains sometimes booked up to a year ahead of when they are needed on site, so to be at this stage now where 100% of the track is in situ and we are on schedule to complete our works on time is a real achievement for the team and everyone else involved. It’s been a masterclass in collaborative working.”



Some facts and figures on the construction of track:

- The new track construction train has installed 85% of total 66km of track on this phase of the project
- In addition the overall track works has seen:
 - 246 trains delivering 245,030 tonnes of ballast, removing the need for nearly 14,000 lorry journeys
 - 78 trains delivering 92,700 concrete sleepers, removing the need for a further 1,103 lorry loads
 - 42 trains delivering 638 x 216m rail lengths, removing over 350 lorry loads and considerably reducing the need for on-site welding and stockpiling



A view of the completed railway from OXD9 Whaddon Road, Newton Longville looking west, May 2024

View the latest project progress photos...







Project progress update - Railway Systems

In recent months, the Alliance's signalling, power & telecoms (SP&C) team have made significant progress.

The team have successfully completed the installation of the fibre cable across the entire length of the route, including the temporary fibre through the HS2 Integration Area, which has enabled testing of the fibre network to begin. This includes high-capacity fibre cabling and external interface points destined to bring improved broadband/connectivity to the communities.

In addition to the installation of the assets associated with the power distribution (Distribution Network Operator Cubicles, Principal Supply Points and Auxiliary Supply Points), the team has also completed the installation of systems such as the Global System for Mobile Communications- Railway (GSMR) and is now in the system testing phase of the works.



L-R: A signal installed on site, a tower and a lattice tower Global System for Mobile Communications-Railway mast.



Winslow Station car park construction for Buckinghamshire Council in progress with a crane being used to lift the steel beams and place concrete panels

Project progress update - Stations

From a station's perspective, our stations delivery team are focusing on the systems installation phase of the two new stations on East West Rail Phase 2. The installation of station lighting, fire safety, public address and CCTV systems are nearing completion at Bletchley High Level Station, and the similar system installation and testing activities at Winslow Station are in progress.

Adjacent to Winslow Station, the new car park structure is progressing well with all of the ground works completed, and the steelwork structure complete together with the modular slab concrete panels. This structure too is moving into the systems installation and testing phase.

Both stations are scheduled for completion later this year and will enter operational service from 2025.

Thank you for attending our Rail Safety sessions

In the last two years, East West Rail Alliance have promoted the importance of being safe around the railway to local schools and community groups from Bicester to Bletchley.

When track construction began, the Bicester to Bletchley line was classed as a 'live' railway with engineering trains operating in the area. Following the completion of track construction and signal testing the project then is handed over to Network Rail, who will test trains along the line ready for passenger service.

We want to thank the schools, local cubs, scouts, beavers and rainbows who have attended our briefings, we hope that you found the sessions educational.

If you would like more information on Network Rail's railway safety campaign, you can access the Network Rail page here: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/safety-in-the-community/railway-safety-campaigns/>



Public Rights of Way

Over the course of the project's physical presence across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, there have been several temporary and permanent closures on the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. The closures have been in place whilst the project re-routed paths and level crossings over existing or new bridges, footbridges and improved footways.

By removing level crossings and replacing them with alternative structures, we have created a safer environment for members of the public when interfacing with the operational railway. Furthermore, a number of routes have been constructed with improved surfacing, furniture and signage, and one in Winslow has been upgraded to a cycleway.

The project, together with the RoW teams at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Buckinghamshire Council (BC), have been re-opening routes since 2022 and have now completed over 50 routes. The remaining routes are now completed and will be re-opened this summer.

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

Read the latest public rights of way list by scanning the QR Code:



Jarvis Lane footbridge in Bicester



Resurfaced road in Stratton Audley

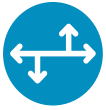
Completing highway improvements

Over 150 separate highway improvement activities were carried out to enable the construction of East West Rail (EWR) Phase 2 from Bicester to Bletchley.

During 2023 and 2024, we carried out a highway reinstatement program across the local road network, generally focused on the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) approved HGV routes and local access points used for construction. We have also largely completed the new permanent Network Rail access points and these works are due for completion later this year. In collaboration with the local councils, over 25km of highway reinstatement and repair works have been completed to date.

To ensure the work to the roads is completed efficiently and with the least amount of disruption to the local community, we have generally implemented full road closures and, when it is safe to do so, reopened roads in the evenings or on weekends. Where possible we have also used temporary traffic lights to manage traffic and have always worked to maintain local accesses, reopening roads early if possible.

Chris Reid, Civils Project Leader said: “We thank the community for their patience as we complete the highway reinstatement work. We know the communities day-to-day lives have been disrupted by the closures, but we hope the improvement to the roads completed so far along the route of the railway will be welcomed in the longer term. Thank you to the community for their understanding and to the local authorities, for working with us to coordinate the closures across the local highway network.”



Stakeholder engagement

Last year, the stakeholder engagement team continued holding drop-in sessions in Steeple Claydon and Winslow to speak to residents regarding upcoming works, and provided updates on the progress being made.

As construction activity comes to an end we will no longer be holding drop-in events this year, but we will continue to respond to all requests for project information.

Community Liaison Officer, Buthaina Sa'id said: "It's been great to see local members of the community over the years. Thank you for coming along to the events, showing interest in our project and speaking to our team.

"We hope that you found the events useful. Although we are no longer holding the drop-in events if you do have any questions please contact us."

Thank you to all who have attended our drop-in events over the years, if you do have any questions please contact us at publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk



Members of EWR Alliance at a drop in session in Twyford

Sustainability and ecology awareness

The Alliance has achieved its target of delivering £3m of social value.

The project made a commitment to leave a legacy in the community and we have done so by completing requests submitted by the local community and have organised volunteering days; work experience placements; charity activities; community engagement projects, such as painting and gardening, as well as apprenticeship placements and looked to procure services and goods locally wherever possible.

A big thank you to all who have sent their requests in over the years, and as a result last November the Alliance surpassed the £3m target.

As the project draws closer to the end of our works programme, the level of support that we can offer has reduced but, we can still support, the delivery of first aid/defibrillator and similar training to community groups this year.

If you have a need for training within your local community or wish to develop new skills which might also be of interest to others locally and you would like us to consider it, you can use this form to submit a request. Examples of training that can be provided are:

- First aid and defibrillator training for volunteers with local sports teams
- Mental health awareness and support
- Practical fire extinguisher skills
- Ecology and sustainability briefing

If you have any training requests for local residents, please complete our Community Engagement request form by entering the weblink: <https://forms.office.com/r/9C00k5Ue3J> or scanning the QR Code on the right.

You can submit a training request by scanning the QR Code:









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