

Public Meeting Notes. EWR London Road Crossing 6/1/25 at 7.30pm

Chairman Langford Village Community Association (LVCA) - Carole Hetherington - introduced the meeting, and spoke about the history of London Road Crossing (notes attached) and highlighted the recent vehicle usage figures supplied by EWR. To read Chairman's history [click here](#).

Traffic journeys daily crossing the railway - 9,385 (recorded Nov 2023)

Weekly traffic crossing the railway via London Road - 62,283 (recorded Nov 2023)

This traffic will clog up the alternative routes, affecting all areas of Bicester if we don't get an underpass or bridge that vehicles will use instead of the present crossing.

Carole congratulated Calum Miller MP on achieving an adjournment debate in the House of Commons, to talk about London Road and in getting a government transport minister to attend to reply to Calum.

Presentation given by Calum Miller MP:

This is the last chance to get heard. Later in 2025 new train services will be starting between Oxford and Milton Keynes. We have secured commitment to find solutions by ministers, but the only crossing solutions proposed by EWR so far at London Road are pedestrian and cycle related.

Peter Hendy, Minister of State for Rail, and Lilian Greenwood, Parliamentary Under-Secretary Department of Transport, will listen to new ideas and have the money to pay for solutions.

However, we need to come back with a strong response. **Speed and Urgency are needed.** More freight and additional passenger services (extra to those already expected when Oxford - Milton Keynes route opens later this year) will probably not start until 2030, but we want the money to be spent sooner rather than later.

There is a request to copy Calum in on local people's responses to the EWR consultation so he fully understands the issues and is aware of what residents are telling EWR during this process.

24th January is the deadline for responses to the Consultation.

Carole explained that physical feedback forms or responses made via website are the only consultation responses that EWR will consider. She explained that she had collected copies of the feedback form from Bicester Library and would detail the website form completion process later.

Carole requested either feedback from the floor on ideas to take the campaign forward or asked if attendees would rather hear of the ideas pulled together already.

The decision was to listen to the ideas that had already been formed.

Getting the Message Across:

- Encourage everyone to complete & send in feedback by 24 January.
- Car rally from Langford to town centre via alternative routes to demonstrate chaos if no London Road solution.
- Write to Minister of State for Rail about the need for a vehicle crossing.
- Ideas of other ways to promote the campaign, media, social media, business champions.....

Making the Case:

- Drone footage to demonstrate current hold ups – (request to Eddie Gong Xi.
- Monitoring the downtime of the crossing, longer than EWR states?
- Car rally demonstrating impact on Bicester if no London Road solution for vehicles.

Proposing a Solution:

- To obtain some engineering drawings which would work.
- Present to EWR to assess as workable solutions.

There then followed a Question & Answer session

Q Where do OCC and CDC sit on all this?

A This is a National Strategic Process, requiring a Development Consent Order. Both OCC and CDC have been working with traffic data and working with EWR to come up with a solution.

Q Who represents the road side part of the problem?

A OCC. They will decide on the risk based on barrier downtime.

Q Why wasn't all this considered before?

A Decisions were never made, when there was an opportunity 2014/15. They dithered and didn't take future plans into consideration. Phase 2 began the other side of the crossing, so it has never been included.

Q Has anyone heard from Shell about the future of the garage?

A No – no opinions heard from them.

Q Bicester Village is very influential. What is their opinion?

A Not aware of any businesses that have made any comment.

Q I have a theory that Bicester Village will support the proposal as it will divert traffic past their business.

A It will also reduce access to their car park.

Bicester Village recently has submitted a planning application to demolish the warehouses to create a temporary car park along Station Approach.

Q What was the County Council's position? The leader hasn't been very supportive. The funding for the Joint Officer looking at solutions was removed. Others have been ambivalent. Over the last 4 years officers haven't been supportive.

A Leadership was very ambivalent but officers have been working with Calum to come up with some solutions. It will be a national solution and need funding from national support. OCC is behind getting a solution for all.

Q I understand the need to influence the Minister but shouldn't we be doing things more locally?

A Yes, we need to challenge all businesses, but not sure the council will help.

It will be a national decision and Calum suggests focussing on national representatives.

Q Traffic modelling doesn't work. How about closing the barrier for a week and running a car rally at the same time. Could we get the media involved?

A. Agreed we have many issues with the traffic modelling. Not sure we would be able to get the crossing closed for a week, however we all know the impact when the barriers break and the chaos caused on other roads.

Comment. They (EWR) are not seeing the impact of future additional developments like Wretchwick Green etc.

Comment. If the barriers break down, we need to get the drones up to survey traffic impact and prove the impact it has.

Q We are never going to win if keeping using the crossing isn't a feasible option. Maybe keeping it open one way would at least get part way to a solution.

A We need to keep vehicles going through and need a solution to present.

Q We don't want to keep on talking. We need to challenge EWR.

A The idea of closing the level crossing is a good idea to try and engage other people. We need to find out what has a prolonged impact. Maybe EWR would want us to do it because it might prove the figures are wrong.

Q We need to talk about making a noise. We need to start now. I am happy to time the crossing downtime.

A We do need to do something.

Comment. It would be a dangerous thing to close the crossing for a week. It could prove we can cope without it, although all the pedestrians using BV station lifts might have an impact.

Q It's all very well, but we need tangible solutions. In bad weather everything floods. The underpass would become a river. What options are there?

A. Representative from CDC Bicester West (Cllr John Broad) living on Langford. Is there a feasible way of doing this? It would be as much of an issue for pedestrians as well as cars.

Comments - People are forgetting that a crossing at Charbridge Lane was replaced by a bridge.

EWR are closing lots of crossings because they are dangerous. We need feasible solutions

Only option is for an underpass. The current proposed underpass went on for miles.

Civil Engineer attendee – I've had a look at options and because of electrification of the line, the height would be an issue. The only solution would be an underpass. Something could be done and it would be a simple solution for a civil engineer.

Q What is the situation regarding emergency vehicles, an underpass height would need to accommodate them?

A. We don't believe emergency vehicles use London Road currently because the crossing could be down.

Q Agreeing some actions. Leaving the barrier down for so long, timing it will just prove them right.

Questionnaires – has anyone given the feedback forms out and lobbied businesses. There must be an emphasis on short timescales

A Everyone needs to go online and fill in a feedback form. Carole has the info.

Comment Very little talk about the London Road with businesses. It will probably wipe out some business.

Q Couple of thoughts. Maybe just a threat of closure may have impact. It seems that the signalling is dire. Are EWR improving signalling to reduce downtime?

A They have done everything that they can. Due to the proximity of the station to the crossing, any train approaching from Oxford will cause the barrier to close. As the downtime increases there is an increased risk of cars/pedestrians jumping the barrier.

Q This is a great turnout. Is there a taskforce? We need half a dozen people to set up a taskforce this evening.

A. We have come prepared and already have a form for volunteers.

Comment: I thought there was a Chamber of Commerce representative, we could approach.

Q Has this situation arisen anywhere else?

A Not as far as we know.

Comment: Happy to put weight behind campaigning, but very obvious that we are not going to win the battle of the London Road.

A. There really is an agreement to continue looking at workable solutions, it's now down to us to provide one, hence working with civil engineers.

Q Are we trying to achieve an underpass?

A Yes, as we now have an expert view that a bridge wouldn't work.

Q If we are looking at bridges? Surely if there was a solution, surely the railway would have done something?

Comment. One of the first EWR people I spoke to said people had been successfully bamboozled.

Q How critical is this?

A 24th January is critical date.

Whatever is achievable needs to be done by 24th – get going people on social media.

Calum – There is an obligation on EWR to run a consultation and they have until Autumn this year to present a proposal. There is also an obligation to show they have made real effort and taken comments into account. So please get your responses in.

Launton representative – with all local roadworks, the traffic through Launton has quadrupled. There is a need to engage with other villages.

The Minister of State for Rail, Peter Hendy, is the main man. The 24/1/25 is the deadline for EWR feedback, not for contacting the Minister. At the first consultation in 2013 it was mentioned that passenger trains would be in addition to the freight from Harwich and Felixstowe and the crossing was always going to be closed. The Minister of State is the person to be contacted.

Dan Sames – I disagree about the main people in this, the Chief Secretary of the Treasury is the person – it's all to do with funding. It was quoted at £65m at one point. We've been campaigning for 10+ years. We've already had the crossing closed for a month when the gas pipes were replaced. It is the future developments that are going to have the impact.

Calum Miller - Re-campaigning, we are in better place than before. Government have thrown its weight behind the EW Rail project with £750m and needs it built. We need some of that money spent sooner on a solution, rather than later. They have assigned money to this project but is it enough to deliver our solution or do we need more of the £750m? Ministers have now said they are behind the proposals but are now arguing how the money will be spent.

Carole – within 10 miles of Bicester £100m has been spent on a bat shed for rare bats.

Comment. That £100m was from the HS2 project.

Carole – lets summarise the idea and actions

- Get as many as people in Bicester as we can get to complete the EWR feedback and submit by 24th January, please encourage neighbours, family members, get everyone involved.
- Car rally – need to organise this soon and get as many cars as possible.
- Write to Minister for Railways and copy in Calum. Peter Hendy has been consistent throughout. If going to write one letter, then the Minister, Peter Hendy, would be best.

Q Is there a letter template?

A Best to avoid as will not be seen as individual responses.

Q What about the children walking to school? Has anyone contacted the schools to see if they are aware of impact? Headteachers couldn't get involved but perhaps get the mums and dads involved.

A. Only spoken to one school who were very concerned, it would be great if you could take this on, thank you.

Other points

Approaching businesses will help, need volunteers to help with this.

If you know anyone with a drone, please ask them to take footage of any hold ups which occur regularly and submit to LVCA please. This will help prove our point that the modelling they have done is wrong.

It seems barrier monitoring may be counterproductive.

We need to concentrate on offering an engineering drawing of a feasible underpass to EWR

Details for feedback by 24/1

Go online to:

www.eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024

Step 1 – Answer Q1-4 and 5-6

Step 2 - Select Oxford to Bletchley section

Step 3 When asked for your preference please select 'Other' which allows you to add comments about needing vehicle access. Only the pedestrian and cycle options are listed specifically.

Paul – Don't forget a good cycling and pedestrian underpass is needed at London Road but not the one proposed as the design is flawed (a straight pedestrian/cycling underpass is need - NOT one that has bends in it)

How to make contact:

LVCA Chairman Carole Hetherington

Email: chairman@lvca.org.uk

Mobile :07811 283257

Many thanks to Calum Miller for attending this evening and supporting the fight to keep London Road open to vehicles.

Volunteers - Please leave your name and areas of interest to help with the campaign.

Meeting closed