

East West Railway Co Invites Interest in Support Contracts

Oxford to Cambridge railway corridor project promoter East West Railway Co has invited expressions of interest in the contracts for the provision of engineering and environmental services, land and property services, and commercial management services, for the central section of the route between Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge.

EWR Co is also seeking the provision of management and technical resources to augment its in-house team through the project development phase and to support its Development Consent Order application process.

The promoter explained that it was looking for partners to support its commitment to developing a railway 'in a way that protects the environment, minimises impact on local communities and provides value for money for taxpayers'.

"East West Rail will play a part in supporting and accelerating economic growth in a region that currently lacks connectivity", said Programme Delivery Director Ian Parker. "We want to work with suppliers who are as excited as we are about contributing to the future economic prosperity of the region, linking international renowned science parks, high tech industries and world leading universities, and building the right railway for the people who live and work between Oxford and Cambridge."

The company, which was launched in 2017 by then transport secretary Chris Grayling to oversee the project, aims to restore the Varsity Line between the two cities nearly 50 years since it was closed as part of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s.

The railway will be built in two stages, with the stretch from Oxford to Bedford already underway. The second phase will complete the line from Bedford to Cambridge. The preferred route for the Bedford to Cambridge section was announced in January, with the railway set to connect existing stations at Bedford and Cambridge with Cambourne and an area around Sandy and St Neots in Cambridgeshire.

Phase 1 of the Oxford to Bedford route, which connected Oxford and Bicester Village, was completed in 2016 by Network Rail, Chiltern Railways, Carillion and Buckingham Group. Enabling works on the second phase of that stretch of the route between Bicester and Bedford are underway and being carried out by the East West Rail Alliance, a group formed in 2015 by Network Rail, Laing O'Rourke, Atkins and Volker Rail.

East West Rail Alliance will also be the main contractor on that part of the route.