

Roxton to east of St Neots Enhanced LRG- Meeting notes

Meeting #1

Date: 12/06/2025

Time: 6:00pm

Type of meeting: Online

Key discussion points and outcomes

1. Introduction, overview, and housekeeping

- 1.1 Sarah Jacobs (SJ) welcomed attendees to the meeting and ran through the housekeeping and agenda. SJ explained that the notes from the meeting would be made available on the community hub.
- 1.2 Tony Hyde (TH) stated that he attended a previous LRG with similar attendee numbers held in person and therefore questioned why this meeting was online. SJ explained that the meeting was moved online due to low sign-up numbers and clarified that more attendees were able to join online.

Review of actions from the last meeting

- 1.3 SJ addressed one action from the previous meeting regarding EWR Co providing a hierarchy of the areas covered in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). SJ explained this had been addressed in a post-meeting clarification note, and therefore no further action was required.

2. Project updates

Universal theme park

- 2.1 SJ explained that EWR Co is engaging with Universal to determine the potential implications of the theme park for Bedford and the wider network. It has not yet been confirmed what the park may mean for EWR Co, but they are committed to maintaining close contact with all relevant parties, such as Universal, Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure accessibility and connectivity are core elements of the planning process.

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- 2.2 Lara Davenport-Ray (LDR) noted that she would be interested in finding out more about the job opportunities available to people from her ward as a result of Universal. SJ agreed and stated that EWR Co will keep all stakeholders updated in the future if they hear any more about this.

Chiltern Railways

- 2.3 SJ explained that Chiltern Railways has been announced as the operator for the first stage of EWR.
- 2.4 Chiltern Railways will look to employ 45 apprentice train drivers and has delivered additional facilities for driver accommodation in Bletchley. Further updates will be provided once Chiltern Railways announces an initial date of operation.

Ground Investigation (GI) Works

- 2.5 SJ ran through the ground investigation (GI) works slide, highlighting that GI works had already started in the area and that elected representatives would have been notified. SJ confirmed that posters have been provided to nearby properties and businesses to notify them of any upcoming works in their area. It was noted that previous LRG groups suggested that more landowner interaction was required, so EWR Co are ensuring these landowners are directly informed of GI works.
- 2.6 SJ discussed the [video](#) available on the EWR Co website, providing more information about the GI works.
- 2.7 Justin Griffiths (JG) indicated that it may be prudent to give landowners more than four weeks' notice of the works, especially considering farming seasons.
- 2.8 Stephen Christian (SC) stated that EWR Co had been in conversation with land agents regarding this and was arranging relevant mitigation, for example, the relocation of animals.
- 2.9 JG highlighted that he had been made aware of landowners in Roxton Parish who agreed to land access some time ago, but they are still unaware of the exact timings of works taking place on their land.
- 2.10 Kate Campbell (KC) stated that the schedule of surveys depends on the access agreements that are secured and EWR Co have been collaborating directly with landowners to agree land access licences. .

- 2.11 JG agreed that he must have been discussing a more general access licence, rather than the specific GI schedule. KC encouraged JG to share any further information about this and stated EWR Co would investigate further to ensure there were no landowner access concerns.
- 2.12 Martin Yemm (MY) signified that he had a positive experience with EWR Co GI works- that they had been contacted in advance, discussed the best routes and had done a careful job of the works.
- 2.13 SJ highlighted the discovery of fossils along the route as part of these works.

Surveys


- 2.14 SJ provided an update on the range of surveys and any future anticipated timelines. These include biodiversity, noise and vibration, water resources, air quality, traffic and transport, water, and cultural heritage surveys.
- 2.15 SJ also discussed more intrusive surveys planned for the future, expected to be conducted alongside external organisations such as National Highways. SJ confirmed that stakeholders will be notified about these before they begin.
- 2.16 LDR highlighted that due to the disruption caused by the works on the A428, the biodiversity surveys may not be completely representative of the environment and asked if this was being mitigated.
- 2.17 SJ reiterated that because many of these surveys are undertaken alongside partners, it is likely that the partners have historical data on the areas. SJ stated that EWR Co expected several questions about environmental surveys and therefore it is hoped that members of the environmental team from EWR Co will join future meetings to share a detailed update.

3. Non-statutory consultation (NSC) next steps

- 3.1 SJ provided an update on the non-statutory consultation (NSC). EWR Co is working through the consultation feedback, and the [NSC Summary Report](#) was published on 16 May, which outlines emerging themes.
- 3.2 A more comprehensive 'You Said, We Did' (YSWD) report would be published at statutory consultation. SJ explained that the YSWD Report would summarise feedback received as well as evidence on how the project has considered feedback as part of the design development.

NSC emerging themes

- 3.3 SJ discussed some of the emerging themes from the NSC, which included growth opportunities, construction and logistics, and land and property.

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- 3.4 JG asked what mechanisms are used to assess the comments that EWR Co received – whether these were done by Artificial Intelligence (AI) or human beings.
- 3.5 SJ confirmed that all the feedback was processed by humans and that there is a large team dedicated to reviewing and progressing the feedback. KC added that the input is coded, the key themes are pulled out, and extensive work is required to bring the information into the public realm.
- 3.6 Tony Hyde (TH) stated that he was unable to find the NSC document on the EWR Co website. SJ shared the link of the document in the chat, but SJ and KC agreed to investigate this further and ensure it was easy to find.
- 3.7 James Catmur (JC) stated that he had read the document but agreed that it was extremely high level and that they were waiting for the You Said, We Did Document.
- 3.8 SJ highlighted that EWR Co understood they had not provided a recent update and therefore wanted to provide a high-level update to keep stakeholders engaged and informed.
- 3.9 JG noted that the A1 plans and maps shown at the NSC were difficult to read and were missing context, and he hoped this would be resolved in the future. JG stated that if EWR Co. are putting materials into the public realm that cannot be seen or are difficult to read, then they are undermining themselves and giving those campaigning against them an easy target. JC added that there is frustration when maps are difficult to understand and highlighted that the better maps that were shared were those produced by Little Barford Parish Council.
- 3.10 SJ and SC agreed with JG and JC, expressing that EWR Co understand this concern and will ensure it is addressed in future consultations. SJ confirmed that there will also be more detail provided in the statutory consultation documents.
- 3.11 SJ detailed the most common themes from the Roxton to east of St Neots area, such as a desire for a St Neots station and environmental concerns including noise pollution and visual impact.
- 3.12 JC suggested that he wasn't surprised there were many comments proposing a new station at St Neots. SC confirmed that these comments were being addressed.
- 3.13 LDR asked if EWR Co were seeing commonalities in the responses from the public and local authorities, or whether these were quite divergent.
- 3.14 SC stated that the current feedback is anonymised and therefore is difficult to distinguish between the two. SJ confirmed that this level of detail was not currently available but acknowledged it as a good suggestion and would investigate it further.

Development Consent Order (DCO) Process

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- 3.15 SJ shared the Development Consent Order (DCO) process timeline and confirmed that EWR Co is still at the pre-application stage. The key principles of the DCO process were outlined, including that it is an inclusive process and EWR Co wants communities to have a say at every stage.

4. Revised Local Representative Groups (LRGs)

- 4.1 SJ discussed the revised group structure for LRGs and explained that all parishes and wards within the red line boundary have been placed into the 'Enhanced' LRGs, whereas those outside this boundary are part of the 'Community LRGs'.
- 4.2 SJ explained that the decision lies with the enhanced group regarding whether anyone else can join their group (if there are any requests). This can be highlighted in the Terms of Reference (ToR).
- 4.3 TH expressed concern that Abbotsley parish covers two groups – Roxton to the east of St Neots and Clapham Green to Colesden, and stated that it would be more logical to cover entire parishes. SJ agreed that EWR Co are open to moving the groups around slightly.
- 4.4 LDR requested more information about what is defined by 'east of St Neots'. SJ shared the list of groups represented in this group.
- 4.5 JC suggested that he was invited to two groups but decided to join only one, and JG also added that Roxton parish would like to be invited to the Clapham Green to Colesden group in the future.
- 4.6 SJ explained that EWR Co had used this round to reset the groups now that they were statutory consultees, and that the ToR can be reviewed if there are requests for movements between groups.
- 4.7 LDR stated that there was a large housing estate in her ward, which will eventually be around 3000 houses, and that there is an active residents' group here. LDR suggested that she would consider this group a key consultee.
- 4.8 SJ said that if resident groups had questions for EWR Co, they should ask their councillors to bring them to the LRG meetings on their behalf. SJ also confirmed that EWR Co will investigate how they can engage with the community and/ or community groups in other ways.
- 4.9 JG asked for clarification as to whether technical support for individuals, who aren't necessarily elected officials, would be invited to the LRGs. SJ confirmed that technical partners have previously been included and that others can join the group as long as the existing members vote and agree that they are happy for another member to join.

5. Terms of Reference

- 5.1 SJ stated that the ToR had some minor changes and that she would share these with the group after the meeting. She stated that feedback was required from attendees on the ToRs.
- 5.2 LDR highlighted that St Neots Town Council were not included in this LRG but are likely to be covered in the red line boundary. SJ confirmed that EWR Co would take this away and ensure that St Neots Town Council are included in the correct group moving forward based on their location.

Post meeting clarification:

St Neots Town Councillors (Eynesbury Ward) were invited to the Roxton-St Neots ELRG meeting. Other councillors representing Eaton Socon Ward & Eaton Ford were not invited, as they are outside of the red line boundary.

6. Route section: Roxton to east of St Neots

- 6.1 SC highlighted that EWR Co now have a preferred route option near Tempsford, which is currently with the DfT and it is hoped that an announcement will be made on this soon. SC confirmed that constructive conversations have been taking place with National Highways to discuss work around areas such as the A1, the Black Cat roundabout and the logistics hub in the area.
- 6.2 SC provided an update on the Tempsford station, stating that the Chancellor announced earlier in the year that the East Coast Mainline station would be accelerated. SC explained that the station was being designed and then would be modularised, working closely with Network Rail as they will be completing the designs and building the station.
- 6.3 JG asked about the designs at the Tempsford station. SC stated that optionalities have been advanced and assumptions made to develop these designs further.
- 6.4 JG also asked about the brief for the designs for Tempsford station and asked whether the design would allow the station to be built as economically as possible.
- 6.5 SC confirmed that he was not a station expert, but believed that the designs do not allow the cheapest station design option, and EWR Co are working closely with architects to develop the designs further.
- 6.6 JG stated that there was an opportunity here to educate the community about how the parameters are set for station designs and what work is being done. SC agreed with this comment.

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- 6.7 Claire Camilleri Rose (CCR) asked via the chat - *“Following on from Justin, is there a design vision for things like the viaduct? Or will it be purely practical/ structural?”* SC confirmed that yes, there is a design vision and EWR Co are looking at various options.
- 6.8 LDR asked via the chat, *“Is the station design part of an NSIP, or will the local planning authority have any role? I think that's Central Beds Council”*.
- 6.9 SC confirmed that they will have input as statutory consultees, and EWR Co have spoken to and shared plans with them. SJ confirmed that this thinking could be brought to the LRGs in the future.
- 6.10 JC discussed the gradients in St Neots and asked if there could be a station here, as many people are in favour of this. SC stated that options at St Neots are being explored and that further information will be provided in the future.
- 6.11 SC provided other updates, detailed in the slides, such as issues being considered as part of the design, including safeguarding the beauty of areas and noise mitigation. SC detailed that we had the most feedback received for the core section and that this is going through a filtering / triage process. SC also mentioned that extensive work is being done on active travel provisions at the stations, as many recommendations have been made for this.
- 6.12 LDR asked whether the accessibility panel working group was still operating and whether they continued to advise EWR Co. SC confirmed that they were, and SJ stated that the same group made a call out today asking for new members.
- 6.13 JG asked for further clarification on what SC meant by modularisation on the Tempsford station designs.
- 6.14 SC confirmed that he was referring to a number of factors, as EWR Co does not want to build something to then knock it down; however, there may be elements where temporary structures or facilities are implemented that are not required in the final scheme. EWR Co are looking at an integrated final solution that can allow them to build the East Coast Mainline section separately. JG confirmed he understood the process.
- 6.15 TH stated that it would have been useful to go through some of the specific feedback submitted by parish councils in the LRG meetings.
- 6.16 MY added that it would be interesting to see some published results of the surveys, e.g. archaeological / wildlife surveys. SJ confirmed that the GI surveys will be uploaded to a geological data website, but this often takes a few months to appear. In relation to the wildlife surveys, it is hoped that the environmental team can join future meetings to discuss some of these results and that all confirmed survey results will be published as part of the statutory consultation materials.

6.17 SJ confirmed that EWR Co will produce a summary note of the meeting and suggested that the attendees should get in touch if they have any further questions.

6.18 SJ closed the meeting, thanking the attendees for joining.

Summary of Actions

- **ACTION 1:** EWR Co to keep stakeholders informed of job opportunities made available through Universal theme park
- **ACTION 3:** EWR Co to ensure the NSC document is easily accessible on the website
- **ACTION 4:** EWR Co to find out if they can share similarities/ differences in responses from the public compared to local authorities
- **ACTION 5:** EWR Co to invite Roxton Parish council to Clapham Green to Colesden LRG in the future (already actioned)
- **ACTION 6:** EWR Co to explore possibility of addressing specific parish council feedback from the non-statutory consultation in future LRG meetings

Attendees

EWR Co attendees

- Sarah Jacobs - Senior Engagement Manager (EWR Co)
- Stephen Christian – Development Programme Manager (EWR Co)
- Kate Campbell - Head of External Engagement (EWR Co)

Local authority councillors

- Cllr James Catmur – Great Paxton ward, Huntingdonshire District Council
- Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray – St Neots East ward, Huntingdonshire District Council


Parish Councils

- Cllr Tony Hyde – Abbotsley Parish Council
- Cllr Claire Camilleri Rose – Roxton Parish Council
- Cllr Justin Griffiths – Roxton Parish Council
- Cllr Martin Yemm – Wyboston, Chawston and Colesden Parish Council

Apologies

- Little Barford Parish Council

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- Pottton ward, Central Bedfordshire Council
 - St Neots Parish Council
 - Tempsford Parish Council
 - Cambridgeshire County Council – St Neots East & Gransden ward
 - Huntingdonshire District Council – St Neots Eynesbury ward
 - Bedford Borough Council – Wyboston ward

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