

Comberton to Haslingfield

**Enhanced Local Representative Groups (ELRGs)
Round #2 meetings**

Monday 6 October 2025

Agenda

1. Housekeeping and welcome – Paula
2. Actions – Paula/Stephen/Fiona
3. Planning and Infrastructure Bill update – Paula
4. Environment – Fiona
5. Key environment changes since NSC – Stephen
6. Accessibility Panel – Georgina
7. Discussion, Q&A – all

Housekeeping

Thank you for joining

This is a virtual meeting.

Please display your full name as when you registered to attend – this can be done through the 'Participants' section.

To help everyone feel part of the discussion, please turn your camera on during the meeting if you can.

Please use the 'Raise Hand' function to raise a question during the meeting, found in the bottom ribbon (under the 'Reactions' option).



Display your full name in username



Please use the mute function



Use the 'Raise Hand' function if you want to raise a point during the meeting



Please do put your camera on if possible

Introduction



Paula Whitworth

Senior Stakeholder Manager (East)
Joined East West Rail 21 July 2025

ELRGs:

- Comberton to Haslingfield
- Foxton to Shelfords
- Croxton to Toft
- Cambridge

About me

Career

- 25+ years' background in external communications and engagement.
- Corporate affairs director, Motability Operations.
- Head of communications, NHS England (East).
- Head of national newsdesk, Network Rail.
- Six years in local government communications.

Personal

- Live in Northamptonshire with husband and 20-year-old son.

Actions from ELRG round #1 meeting

Action	
1	EWR to provide an update from the Environmental team on how trees will be maintained during maintenance period.
2	EWR to provide a table which outlines surveys undertaken, and links to where publicly held information will eventually be uploaded.
3	EWR to confirm rationale behind locations for noise and air quality surveys.
4	EWR to discuss how concerns can be raised by residents around the conduct of contractors (referencing recent crop spraying incident).
5	EWR to confirm whether the example of Norfolk has been considered as part of bat access through the viaduct.
6	EWR to confirm the location of where construction compounds will go, after having been moved from the south of Comberton College site.
7	EWR to ensure the Parish Online Mapping Programme is considered moving forward.
8	EWR to confirm the alternative sites under consideration for the Harlton Construction and Logistics site.
9	EWR to confirm the decibel level that EWR is working towards for the entry and exit of trains to and from tunnels.
10	EWR to confirm how homes near Royston Lane will be able to access nearby roads, and whether an additional access road will be built.
11	EWR to confirm that 'The Gas Works' (fireworks depot) has been considered.
12	EWR to confirm that feedback on active travel from Cllr Sharon Erzinciloglu has been logged, as well as other comments from the session.

Project updates

Enhanced LRG meetings

Enhanced Local Representatives Groups meetings	
Clapham Green - Colesden	1-Oct
Oxford - Bletchley	2-Oct
Comberton - Haslingfield	6-Oct
Foxton - Shelfords	8-Oct
Fenny Stratford - Kempston	9-Oct
Croxton - Toft	13-Oct
Bedford	15-Oct
Cambridge	20-Oct
Roxton - East of St Neots	21-Oct

Met with Mike Reader MP to discuss planning reforms

Met with Olly Glover MP, a member of the Transport Select Committee

Met with Calum Miller MP and local councillors re: Bicester Level Crossing

Meeting with Cllr David Hingley, Leader of Cherwell District Council

Meeting with Emily Darlington MP and Network Rail

Meetings with Emily Darlington MP and Callum Anderston MP on the Marston Vale Line

Met with Cllr Steven Broadbent, new leader of Buckinghamshire Council

Met with Laura Kyrke-Smith MP - Aylesbury Spur

Meeting with Richard Fuller MP and Clapham Parish Council

Met with Mohammad Yasin MP and meeting with Mayor Tom Wootton r.e. Ashburnham Road

Meeting with Blake Stephenson MP

Met with Rachel Hopkins MP to discuss benefits of EWR for Luton

Met with Lord Krebs, a Crossbench Peer interested in sustainable infrastructure

Meeting with Ian Sollom MP and Richard Fuller MP to discuss landowner issues

Meeting with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayor, Paul Bristow

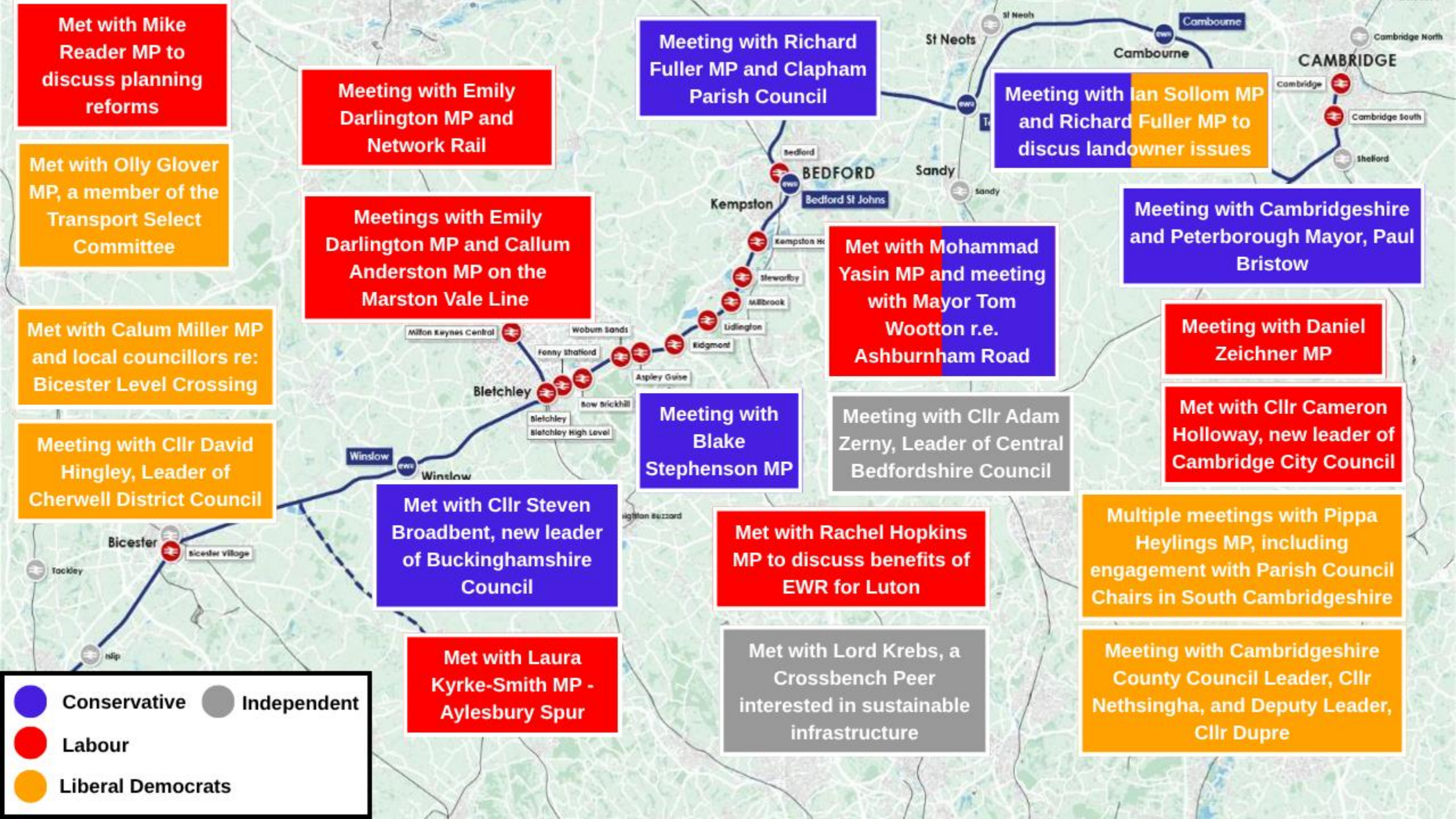
Meeting with Daniel Zeichner MP

Met with Cllr Cameron Holloway, new leader of Cambridge City Council

Multiple meetings with Pippa Heylings MP, including engagement with Parish Council Chairs in South Cambridgeshire

Meeting with Cambridgeshire County Council Leader, Cllr Nethsingha, and Deputy Leader, Cllr Dupre

● Conservative ● Independent
● Labour
● Liberal Democrats



Community Engagement – route wide

- Developing a programme of community 'pop up' sessions along the route on a rolling basis. Due to be launched before the end of the year.
- Provide an always-on approach to community engagement so people continue to feel connected to the project when we have limited information to communicate.
- Widen the understanding of the project in communities across the route.
- Provide another channel to receive questions and help build understanding of what we're doing.
- Develop long term relationships with our diverse community from now through to the end of construction.
- **Currently finalising a programme and would welcome thoughts on priority venues / locations.**



Landowner engagement, starting Sept 2025

As part of our ongoing programme of engagement with land and property owners, we are writing to people across the East West Rail route whose land or property could be impacted by the proposals. This includes people we have contacted or met with before, as well as some people who we now believe could be impacted by East West Rail based on changes we have made to the designs since the non-statutory consultation.

We understand that land and property owners will have questions and concerns about this and so we are asking them to get in touch with our Land and Property team so that we can arrange to speak or meet with them regarding the project. Their dedicated case manager will explain the current proposals for East West Rail and how their land or property could be impacted, answer questions and talk them through what could happen next, including what support may be available to them.

We will record any suggestions land and property owners make and feed these back to our design team so that we can consider how we can reduce or mitigate impacts on their land or property, where possible, as we continue to develop the proposals for East West Rail.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill



The Planning and Infrastructure Bill (PIB) presents a significant opportunity to modernise engagement for nationally significant infrastructure projects. East West Rail (EWR) is working closely with government to understand and respond to the Bill's implications, particularly around consultation timing, stakeholder involvement, and iterative design development.

Our Engagement Vision

We see engagement under PIB as a strategic, iterative, and inclusive process designed to build trust, reduce risk, and improve outcomes.

Our approach is structured to:

- Align with government policy
- Enable meaningful two-way dialogue
- Plan for a consultation on final proposals before submission

Environment update

Environmental Assessment Update

- [Environmental Update Report](#) published during 2024 Non-Statutory Consultation (NSC)
- Ongoing review of NSC feedback and stakeholder engagement
- Surveys underway to support design development
- Ongoing environmental assessment to inform design
- Stakeholder input helps shape and improve design outcomes



Environmental Update Report

Non-statutory consultation

Design Integration & Mitigation

- Protecting the environment is a fundamental part of our decision making when developing our proposals
- Preliminary assessment informs early design decisions and the design of embedded mitigation
- Aim to avoid or minimise impacts through design

Avoidance

Measures taken to avoid creating impacts from the outset.

Minimisation

Measures taken to minimise as far as reasonably practicable the duration, intensity and/or extent of impacts that cannot be completely avoided.

Rectify

Measures taken to improve degraded or removed ecosystems following exposure to impacts that cannot be completely avoided or minimised.

Compensation

Measures taken to compensate for any residual, adverse impacts after full implementation of the previous three steps.

Survey Update

Environmental surveys are being undertaken across the entire route. Surveys which are ongoing or have been completed include:

- Arboriculture
- Farm Business Interviews,
- Biodiversity
- Air Quality
- Historic Environment - geophysical
- Noise and Vibration
- Traffic and Transport
- Water environment

First phase of Ground Investigation progressing

Surveys which are planned to start in Winter 2025/2026 include:

- Archaeological Trial Trenching
- Soil surveys (Agricultural Land Classification and Soil Resources Surveys).





Biodiversity Net Gain Update

- EWR made an early commitment to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, ahead of it becoming a mandatory requirement for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects from May 2026
- Awaiting government guidance Biodiversity Net Gain for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects
- Our design integrates BNG early by avoiding and reducing habitat impacts
 - EWR does not directly impact any Ancient Woodlands or other irreplaceable habitats
- We have established the BNG Forum to work with key stakeholders to deliver BNG that works for nature and communities

Environmental Updates Since Non-Statutory Consultation

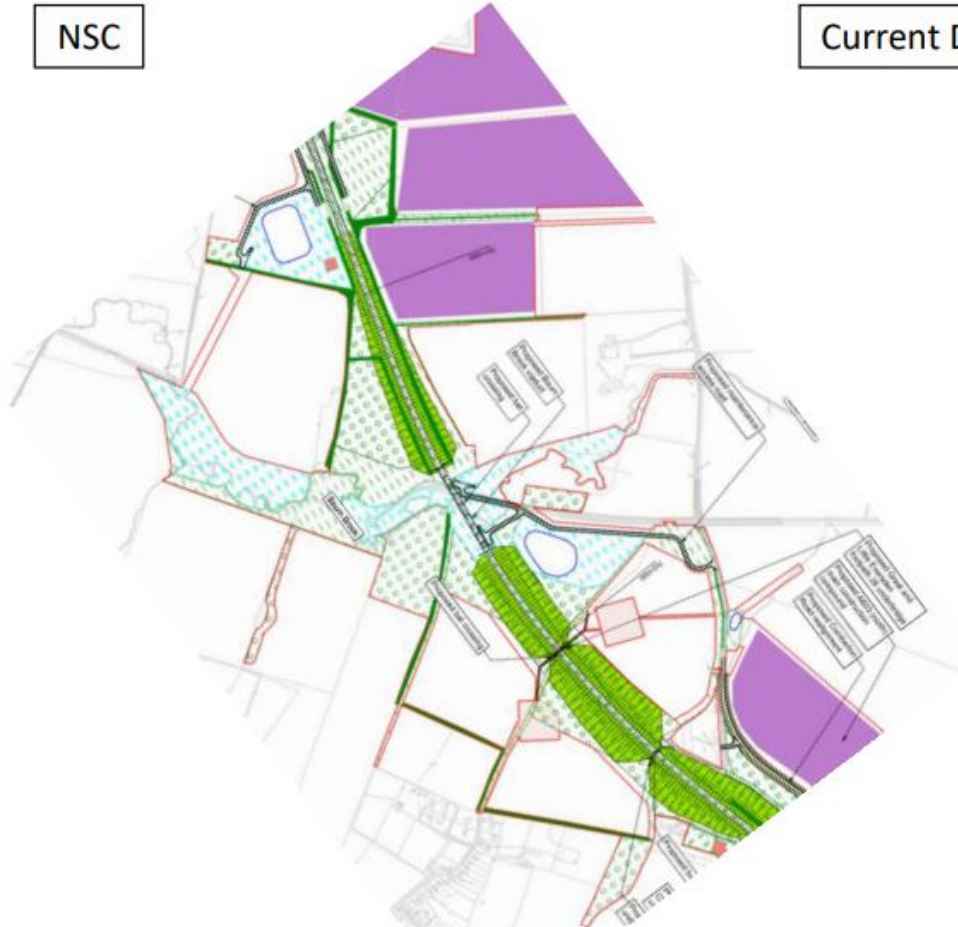
- Refinements to proposed environmental mitigation following feedback from NSC, landowner meetings and updated survey information.
- Embedded mitigation – alignment and gradient work to lower the height of the railway in the landscape between Comberton and Haslingfield.
- Proposed landscape mitigation earthworks to help screen the railway.
- Green bridges - B1046 Comberton Road and Hardwick Bridleway 5 green overbridges remain from NSC. New green bridges at A603 Cambridge Road and Hardwick Road.
- Chapel Hill tunnel - alignment and tunnel length design ongoing to avoid archaeological impacts.
- Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory – discussions with the university and surveys are ongoing regarding electromagnetic interference.
- Barbastelle bats – engagement with Natural England is ongoing regarding EWR's Habitats Regulations Assessment Evidence Plan.
- Drainage ponds relocated and consideration of flood compensation areas to address flood risk concerns.
- Reductions in the compounds and stockpile extents. Consideration of buried archaeology to inform locations of drainage ponds, access roads, compounds and stockpiles.



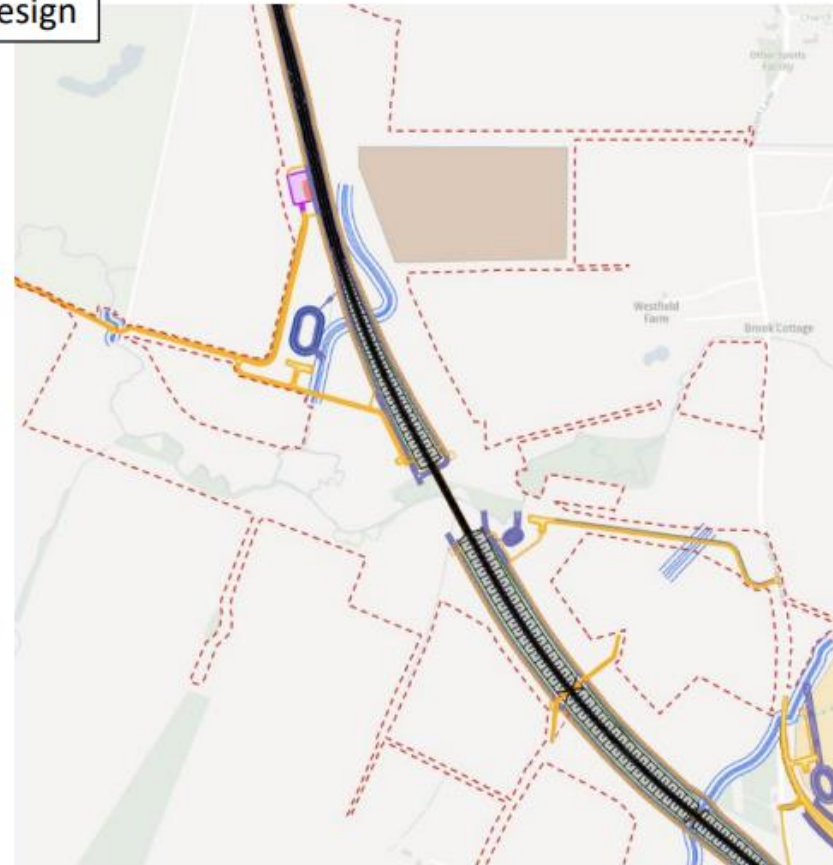
Update – Environment

Bourne Viaduct

NSC



Current Design

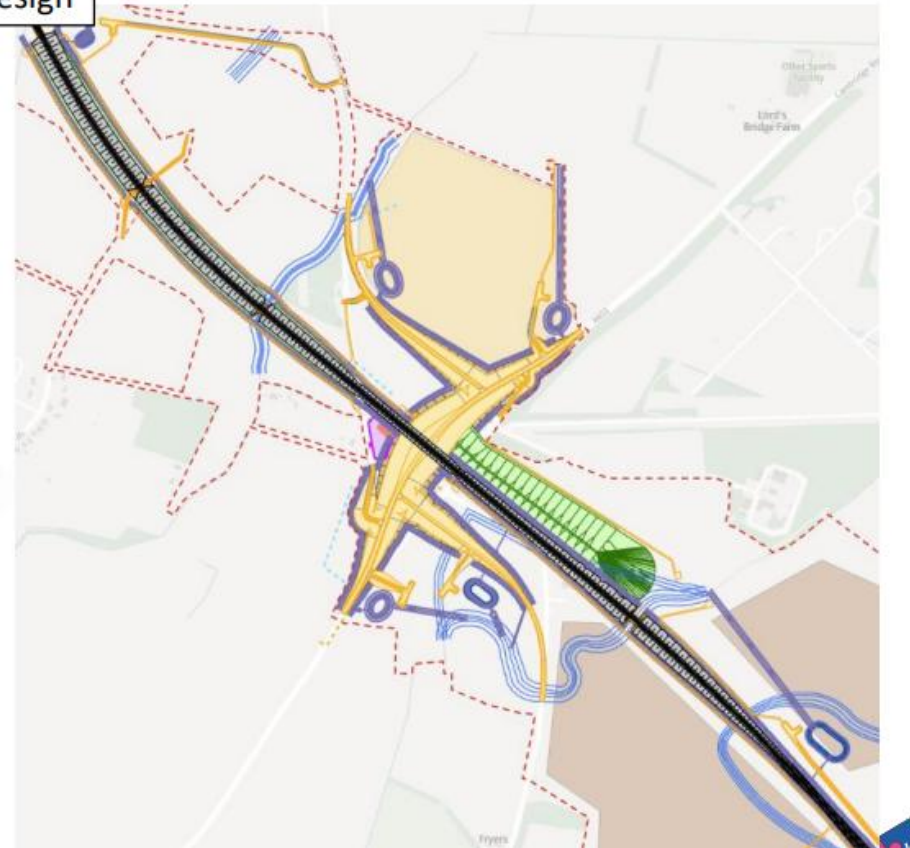


Update – Environment

A603 Cambridge Road

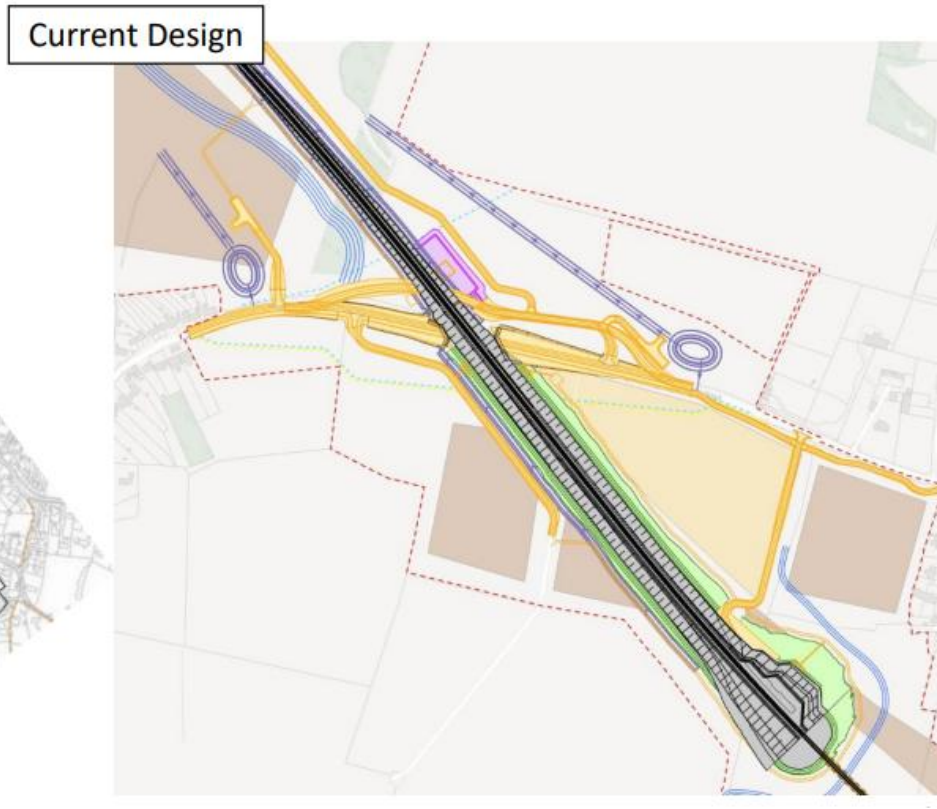
NSC

Current Design



Update – Environment

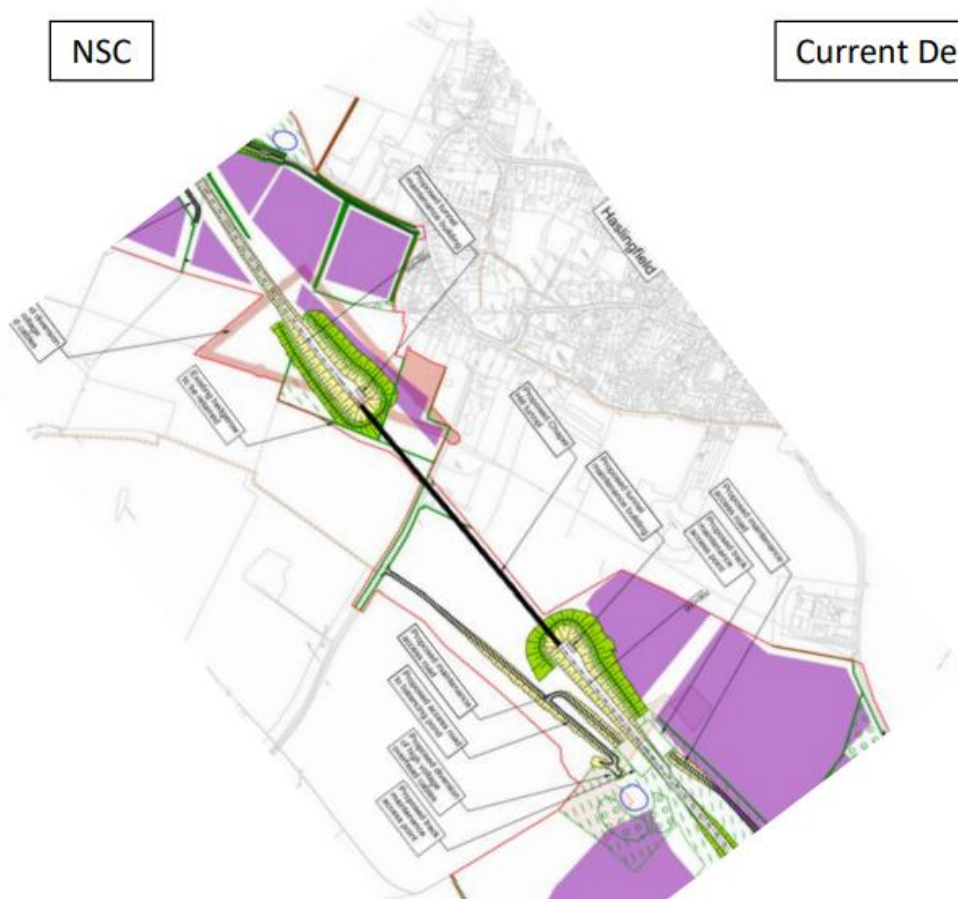
Harlton Road



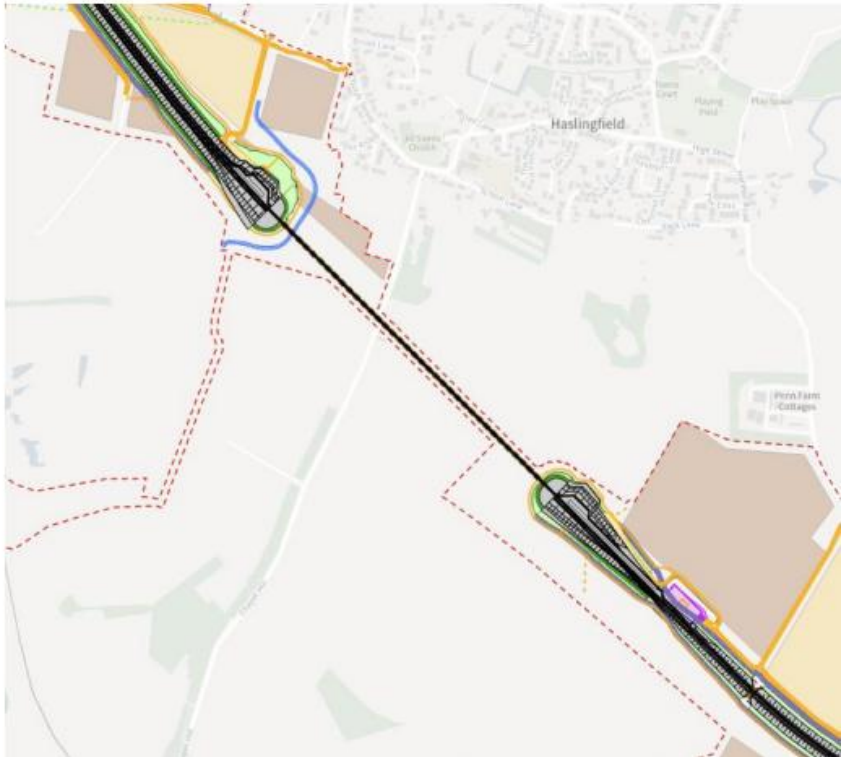
Update – Environment

Chapel Hill Tunnel

NSC



Current Design



Inclusion and Accessibility

Georgina Taylor

Accessibility Manager

Why is Inclusion Important to EWR?



It's about providing **equitable access, as far as possible**, to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.



It affects **all areas of life**, including jobs, the economy, access to health, choice around participation and social activities, access to education, seeing friends and family.



It's an investment that can **create a loyal and expanded customer base, reduce the cost of future adaptations** and mitigations, and minimise costs associated with providing dedicated assistance to end users.

An inclusive railway translates into a better experience for everybody

Our Legal Obligations

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, public authorities are legally required to uphold the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**, ensuring that equality considerations are built into every stage of planning, design, and delivery.

Key Obligations:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination** – EWR is actively working to prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on protected characteristics.
- **Protected Characteristics Include:** Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation
- **Advance equality of opportunity** - Consider how to remove or minimize disadvantages, meet different needs, and encourage participation from underrepresented groups.
- **Foster good relations** - Promote understanding and reduce prejudice between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- ✓ **Identify potential discrimination under the Equality Act 2010**

EqIAs are helping uncover whether a proposed action might disadvantage people based on protected characteristics (e.g. age, race, disability, gender).

- ✓ **Promote inclusive decision-making**

They enable EWR to consider diverse needs from the outset—rather than retrofitting inclusion later.

- ✓ **Support legal compliance**

EqIAs are being used to demonstrate that EWR have met our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) obligations.

- ✓ **Improve outcomes for all**

By highlighting unintended consequences, EqIAs can lead to better, more equitable design of infrastructure.

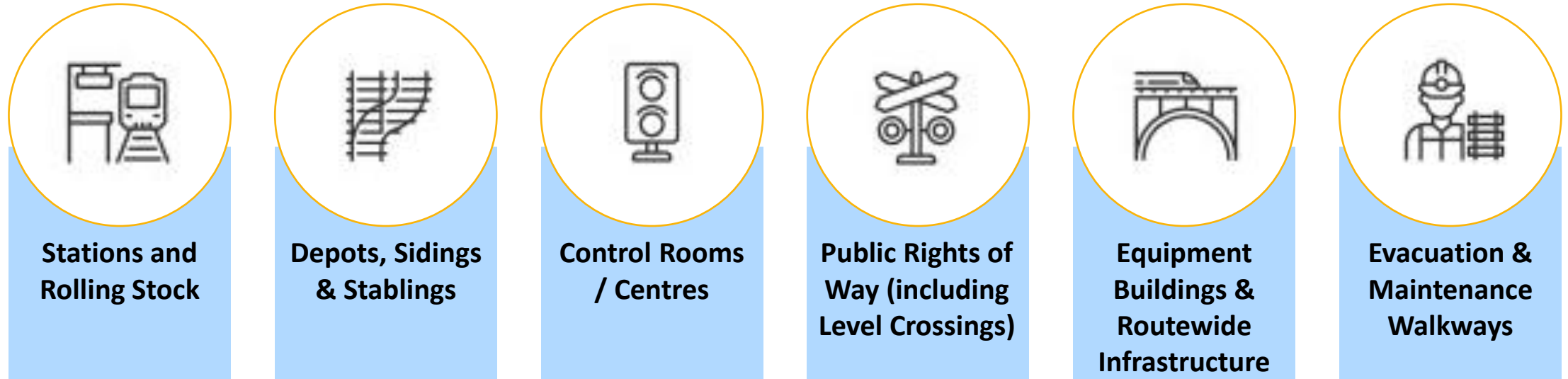
- ✓ **Encourage transparency and accountability**

Documenting the assessment process shows stakeholders that equality has been considered seriously and systematically.

The EqIA will be submitted as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application

Inclusive Design

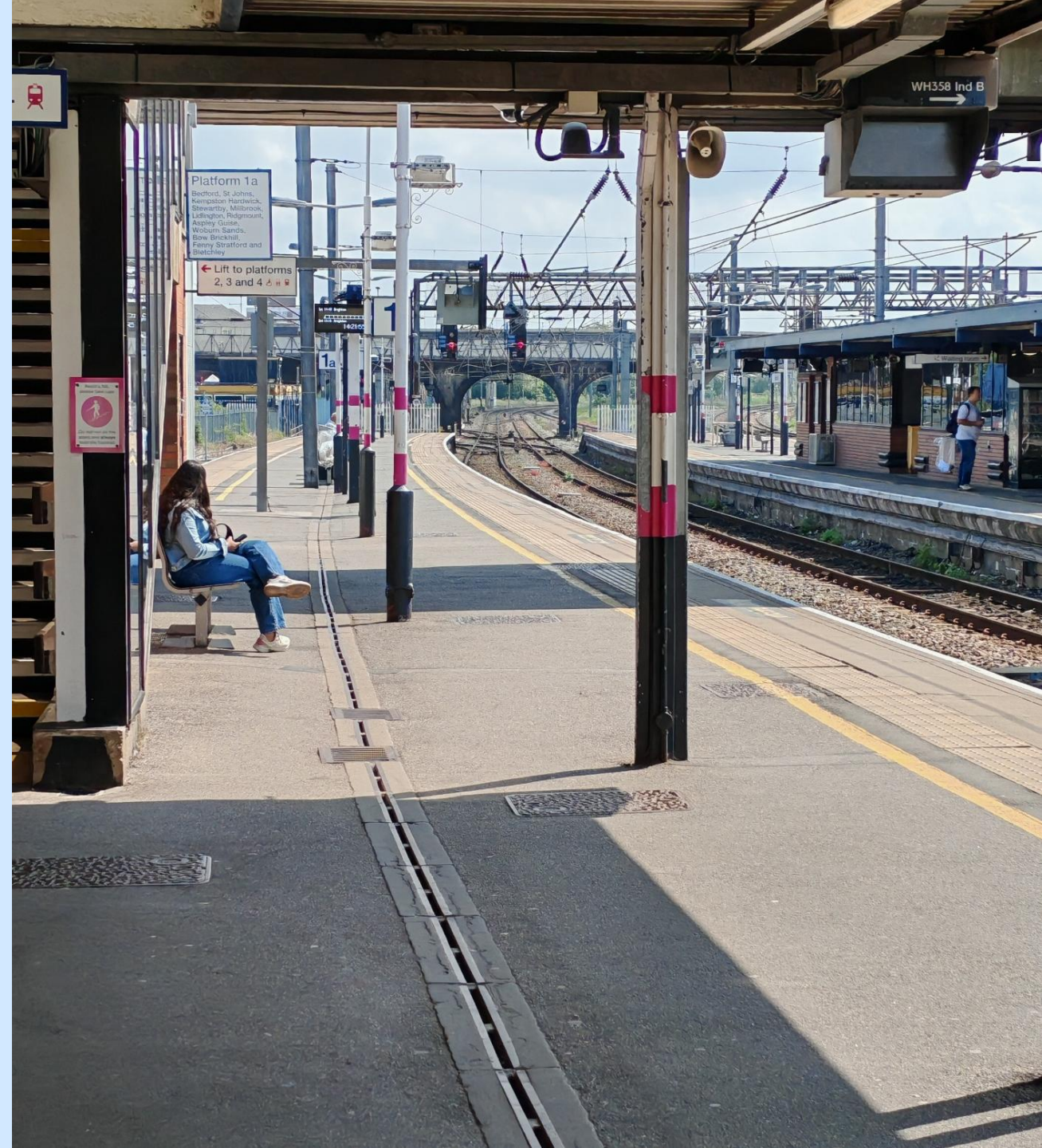
We are looking at inclusive design across all assets, including:



All **users** – not just passengers but also staff roles (e.g., operators, maintainers)

Stations

- Iterative **reviews of station designs** to assess accessibility and inclusion
- Working with design team to **develop mitigations** where issues arise
- **Developing station requirements** based on good practice and feedback gained from panel sessions
- We will present station designs to the EWR Accessibility Advisory Panel to **gain feedback from people with lived experience of disability**
- **Station visits with the AAP** (May 2025), to see their experience within a railway station and understand challenges they face



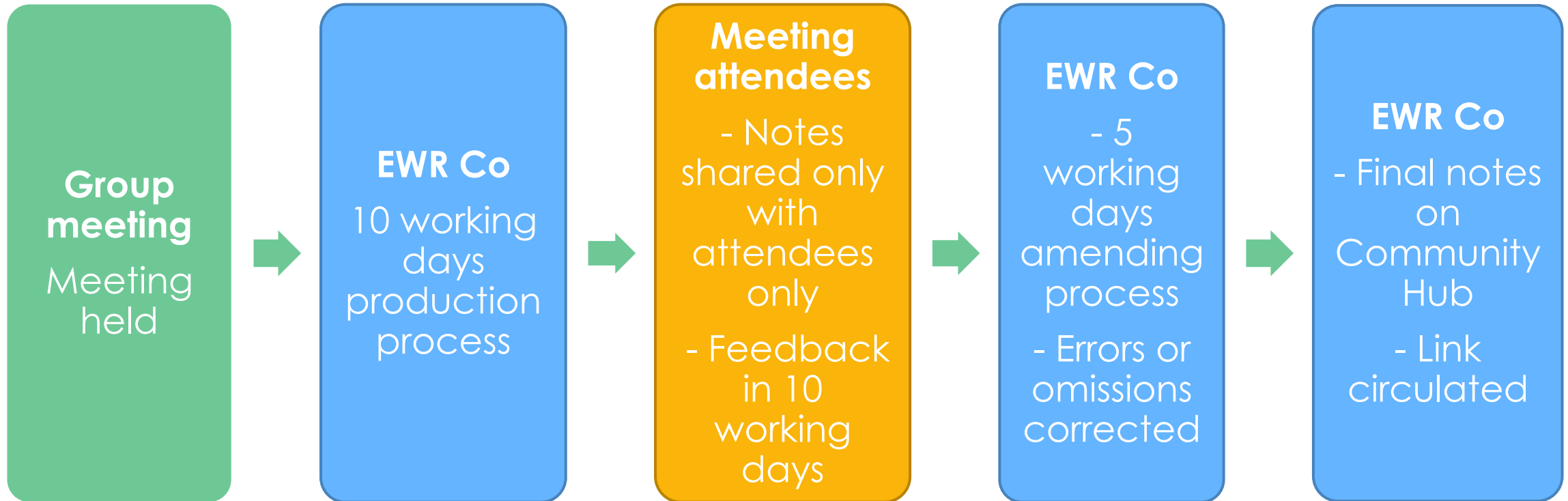
EWR Accessibility Advisory Panel

- **Established April 2023** to ensure inclusive design through lived experience.
- **9 of the 12 residents** live across the Oxford–Cambridge route, many active in accessibility advocacy.
- **Focus:** Improving access for broad spectrum of disabled people with both visible and non-visible disabilities.
- **Meets every six weeks**, both in person and online, to provide ongoing feedback.
- **Purpose:**
 - Identify barriers early in the design process from a lived experience perspective
 - Develop inclusive infrastructure solutions
 - Enhance independent travel for all users
- **April 2024 published the priority issues** in rail eastwestrail.co.uk/east-west-rails-accessibility-panel-lists-priority-issues-for-disabled-passengers

For more information see the Inclusion Page on the EWR website [East West Rail | Accessibility Advisory Panel](#)

Discussion, Q&A

Creating meeting summary notes





Thank you

www.eastwestrail.co.uk