



Communities & Localism Select Committee agenda supplement

Date: Tuesday 17 January 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury
HP19 8FF

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Public questions is an opportunity for people who live, work or study in Buckinghamshire to put a question to a Select Committee.

The Committee will hear from members of the public who have submitted questions in advance relating to items on the agenda. The Cabinet Member, relevant key partners and responsible officers will be invited to respond.

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Communities and Localism Select Committee – 17th January 2023

Agenda Item 4 – Public Questions

Question 1

Question for East West Rail

I understand that the community project being undertaken at the East Claydon school to produce a drive-in drive-out car park is one of the larger projects being undertaken by East West Rail. We were advised that all the material to be used was recycled from compounds being decommissioned so the material cost of the project would be minimal. EWR refused to consider completing the project as per the planning application that included a tarmac top dressing on the vehicle routes.

It is disappointing therefore that the quality of communication has been consistently so poor, and the local residents, school governors and parish council are concerned at the work undertaken by east West rail is not fit for purpose.

There appears to be an increasing truculence to address the issues raised by the local community. We did supply drawings of the approved planning application including the drainage system. It was agreed that having built the bell mouth entrance and security fencing appropriate for a school application, that the next stage would be discussed with the diocese building surveyor before progressing. However, East West rail, without any communication or prior warning continued immediately to start stripping the topsoil and laying a solid surface. The project manager, Kerry Isles, then went on holiday and there was no communication until sometime later when they had left the site.

We immediately raised concern that the surface they had laid was inconsistent and was not to the standard they were claiming. We were assured that the surface they had laid was same as on all their construction sites, and they subsequently supplied us with generic drawings, but not specific to this site. They categorically assured us that surface would withstand 50 cars and SUVs on a twice daily basis area to deliver children onto the drop off area away from the road.

Our concerns were almost immediately confirmed when EWR, again without communication, delivered a number of road barriers. This resulted in the surface being deeply rutted and churned up into a muddy mess. EWR subsequently sent a team of men to rake up the surface and re-roll the area. The Community had hoped at this project would reflect the commitment of East West rail to supporting important local projects to a high standard, and safeguard children coming from a number of parishes around the school. We are now seriously concerned that the work done by East West Rail does not reflect that of an internationally reputable civil engineering company.

The question is what reputation do EWR want to leave behind on this project?

- Peter Wright

Question 2

The Agenda Item No 5 EWR Community Engagement prompts a question on behalf of the Middle Claydon Parish Community.

Since the start of the project EWR Community Engagement has been lacking in providing answers to our requests for repairs to the roads in the Parish. The HGV Contractor vehicles are regularly travelling on prohibited local roads and destroying the road surface and creating extremely hazardous road conditions. Attempts have been made to carry out repairs, but the standard of the repairs are substandard and within hours or a few days the road is dangerous again. We have asked for adequate repairs but our requests have not been answered.

The Sandhill Road bridge has been demolished and replaced with a layout which has created a safety hazard. Reference to Google maps shows the old bridge design and has yet to be updated with the new installation. The new bridge is creating a hazard which our Community is concerned about.

The EWR local engagement officers are unable to influence outcomes which benefit our Community.

Therefore, our Question is when are EWR going to repair the road damage their construction traffic has created and when are the HGV Constructor vehicles going to be re-routed away from our Local Roads.

- John Riches

Question 3

Can we please have reassurance that East West Rail Company and the East West Rail Alliance have taken note of the many issues which have occurred during the current construction phase so that lessons can be learned and put in practice for any future, similar developments?

Some of the poor planning, working practices and ways of dealing with communities that have been employed since 2020 have seriously impacted on the village of Newton Longville. The issues which residents have been forced to endure have included:

1. Failure to provide adequate advance notice of work which was to have significant impact on our community such as road closures, making it difficult for residents and organisations to plan ahead. This has been a particular problem since late 2021 when there was a noticeable change in the way information was communicated by the East West Rail Alliance.
2. Road closures which appear to have been longer than necessary with residents well aware that there have been periods when there has been no work underway.

3. Signage for diversions when we have had road closures which has unnecessarily brought traffic through the village instead of routing it around.
 4. Too many occasions when issues that have been raised by the parish council and/or residents when the response has been that everything is working correctly when it clearly wasn't. With perseverance EWRA finally accept that something needs to be fixed. Examples include incorrectly operating traffic lights and positioning of Traffic Management signage/bollards (we have had a very recent example involving non-compliance with the permitted route system where it took multiple exchanges over almost a month for EWRA to acknowledge that they were wrong - "We apologise for the telehandler driving through the village. The team operating this incorrectly assumed that as a specific HGV license is not required for the vehicle, it did not constitute a HGV vehicle" - Community Liaison email 22/12/2022 - It is worth noting that there was in fact more than one reported incident!)
 5. Commitments made for community projects which we were told would not be fulfilled because (in their words) they have 'overpromised and are under-delivering'. An example of this was the Curly Tails pig sanctuary, education and well-being centre where initially only half of the work agreed back in 2021 was going to be completed. The revised offer was eventually improved after a number of exchanges but it needs to be noted that what has been delivered is less than what was initially offered.
- Mike Chapman

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