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The East West Rail Alliance

6 March 2023

Dear Mark Cuzner and Peter Hume,

EWR Attending Select Committee

I am writing to thank you for attending Buckinghamshire Council's Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee on Thursday 2 February 2023. Members of the Committee found it useful to hear how progress was being made with the works but did have a number of concerns regarding disruption to Highways and its impact on residents and businesses, uncertainty over the Aylesbury spur and the use of diesel rolling stock. I hope comments from the Select Committee on these topics will be taken into consideration as the project progresses.

As you will recall, there were lines of questioning that were unable to be answered and you undertook to provide written responses to the Select Committee. Additionally, Members had a number of further questions that were unable to be asked due to time constraints. Therefore, the Committee await your response via return letter on the following:

Roads & Highways

1. Damage to highways and mud on the roads are recurring issues that were raised last year. What have you done additionally to rectify this and when can we expect improvement?

Ecology & Environment

2. Please share more information on the commencement and implementation of the Biodiversity 10% Net Gain Strategy. Also, considering areas needing to reach maturity, what is the target date to achieve the 10% net gain in Buckinghamshire?
3. How many trees have been removed by the project so far and how many more are expected to be cut down? We note that this was asked last year but not answered.
4. Last year we were advised 150,000 trees had been planted and note the figure is the same this year. Please clarify: does this mean 300,000 trees have been planted so far or has the figure not changed in 12 months? How many of the planted trees have since died and been replaced? How many trees will be planted by the end of construction?
5. What have been the carbon emissions so far and what is the overall emission expectation? We note that assessment work was being carried out on this last year but have not seen any signs of progress.

6. Members note the construction is futureproofing to consider climate change but how robust will this be? What precautions are being taken during construction to ensure a higher toleration to extreme temperatures?

Rail Line & Rolling Stock

7. What are the indicative costs of electrifying the line during construction rather than retrospectively?
8. Appreciating the commercial sensitivities, what is the end date for the 'short-term' use of diesel rolling stock? If this cannot be shared yet, then when can we be advised?
9. Please provide information regarding the evaluation of different rolling stock options.

Please ensure that your response to the questions and further information to be circulated to the Select Committee are sent to Chris Ward (Senior Scrutiny Officer) so that this can be shared with Members. A copy of this letter and your reply will be appended to the minutes of the meeting which will be available here:

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=343&MId=17616>

Once again, I thank you for attending our Select Committee meeting and look forward to welcoming you and your colleagues again for an update on the project in 2024.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Bill Chapple OBE
Chairman of Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee
Buckinghamshire Council