



# BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION

THE RAIL USER GROUP FOR BEDFORD AND FLITWICK

---

## JUNE 2015 NEWSLETTER

---

### I. **BLOCKADE FROM 23:15 ON FRIDAY 19 JUNE UNTIL 04:00 ON MONDAY 22 JUNE - GTR INFORMATION**

Network Rail will be working on two major projects on the Thameslink North route between 23:15 on Friday 19 June and 04:00 on Monday 22 June. They are (a) the commissioning of the new carriage sidings at the south end of Cricklewood Train Care Depot for the new fleet of Class 700 trains arriving next year; and (b) the demolition of a redundant bridge between Elstree & Borehamwood and Radlett. In addition they will be carrying out work to the signalling systems between Harpenden and St Albans in the early hours of Sunday 21 June and will also be carrying out a number of other upgrades, taking maximum advantage of the possession.

**From approximately 23:15 on Friday 19 June until 04:00 on Monday 22 June, there will be no train service between St Albans City and St Pancras. Up to four Thameslink trains per hour will run between Bedford and St Albans City, calling at all intermediate stations, with buses replacing trains between St Albans and St Pancras International.**

On Saturday, up to four Thameslink trains per hour will run between St Pancras International and Brighton. On Sunday, two trains per hour will run between London Blackfriars and Brighton. These trains will call additionally at Elephant & Castle for connections with the Tube. On Sunday, customers may choose to travel on Southern train services between London Bridge and Brighton and intermediate stations. There is step free access to the platforms at London Bridge station. In addition, there will be rail replacement buses between Tulse Hill and Sutton via Mitcham Junction because of further engineering work in that area.

#### Buses between St Albans and St Pancras International

Thameslink rail replacement buses will run between St Albans City station and St Pancras International as follows:

- 'Fast' buses running non-stop: up to 4 buses every 15 minutes to coordinate with the arrival of trains from Bedford.
- 'All stations' buses: up to 2 buses every 15 minutes to coordinate with the arrival of trains from Bedford

Up to 24 buses an hour – 16 'fast' and 8 'all stations' – will be running between St Albans and St Pancras in each direction.

Buses leaving St Albans will depart from bus stops C and D in the bus interchange immediately outside the station building in Station Way. Buses arriving at St Albans from London will set down customers in Ridgmont Road car park at the entrance to platform 4, from which all trains to Bedford will depart. (Ridgmont Road car park will be closed from approximately 16:00 on Friday 19 June until 06:00 on Monday 22 June and car park users are being advance notice of this.)

At St Pancras, buses will set down customers in Midland Road and will pick up in Pancras Road.

At all other stations (Radlett, Elstree & Borehamwood, Mill Hill Broadway, Hendon, Cricklewood, West Hampstead Thameslink and Kentish Town) rail replacement buses will set down and pick up in the normal designated location for rail replacement buses.

#### Buses between Harpenden and St Pancras International

From 01:00 until 09:14 on Sunday 21 June trains will run between Bedford and Harpenden only. During these times buses will run between Harpenden and St Albans, connecting with 'fast' and 'all stations' buses from St Albans to St Pancras International. At Harpenden station buses will set down and pick up in the west side car park adjacent to the station building.

#### Coaches between Luton and St Pancras International

Coaches will replace East Midlands Trains (EMT) between Luton and London St Pancras International for the same period. Up to eight coaches per hour will run in each direction, to coordinate with EMT arrivals at and departures from Luton station.

#### Luton Airport Shuttle Buses

Thameslink will be running the normal timetabled service between Luton Airport Parkway and Luton Airport. However there will be a frequent additional bus service between Luton Airport Parkway and Luton station to connect with all arriving and departing East Midlands Trains services. This will ensure that East Midlands Trains customers arriving at and departing from Luton have a regular, rapid link to Luton Airport.

#### Alternative Travel from London to Luton Airport

Arriva Greenline will accept Thameslink customers with valid rail tickets to Luton Airport Parkway or Luton Airport on their route 757 coaches from London Victoria to Luton Airport. This will run from 01:01 on Saturday 20 June until 06:32 on Monday 22 June. Thameslink ticket holders can choose to join the service at Victoria Buckingham Palace Road (Stop 6) or at any of the following stops:

- Marble Arch Park Lane (Stop 14)
- Gloucester Place, Allsop Arms (Stop S)
- Finchley Road station (Stop CL)

Please note that ticket acceptance is TO the airport only, to avoid the risk of excessive and unmanageable demand from the airport into London.

#### Other alternative travel options

##### Great Northern route

- Thameslink tickets will be valid on Great Northern services to and from King's Cross. Thameslink car park Season Ticket holders can choose to park at GTR-operated car parks provided that their car park permit is clearly displayed in the windscreen. Please note that the car parks at Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City stations are not operated by GTR and Thameslink car park permits will not therefore be valid there.

We will not be providing bus links between the Thameslink and Great Northern routes as we don't want to risk the capacity available on the Great Northern route being overwhelmed by excessive demand.

##### London Midland / Southern

- Thameslink tickets will be valid on London Midland services to and from London Euston, including on the Abbey Flyer service from St Albans Abbey station to Watford Junction and the Marston Vale line from Bedford to Bletchley (which runs Monday – Saturday only). There are connections at Watford Junction station with Southern services from Milton Keynes to Clapham Junction / East Croydon, with onward connections to Gatwick Airport and Brighton.

### London Buses / London Underground

- Thameslink ticket holders travelling from stations between Elstree & Borehamwood and Kentish Town inclusive to and from Thameslink central London stations may choose to use local bus services to connect with London Underground services, as an alternative to using our Thameslink 'all stations' rail replacement buses.
- On Sunday only, Thameslink tickets will be valid on bus routes 63 and 45 between St Pancras International and Blackfriars. Buses will leave from Bus Stop S in Midland Road. This is the same stop that our rail replacement buses will be setting down customers from St Albans and intermediate stations
- On Sunday only, the London Blackfriars to Brighton (and vice-versa) services will call additionally at Elephant & Castle, for connections to/from the Tube.

London Underground routes for which ticket acceptance has been given:

- Northern line between Edgware, High Barnet, Mill Hill East, King's Cross St Pancras and London Bridge / Elephant & Castle
- Jubilee line between West Hampstead and London Bridge including, on Saturday only, changing at Westminster for the District and Circle lines to Blackfriars. (There will be no District or Circle line trains serving Blackfriars on Sunday due to planned London Underground engineering work)
- Metropolitan line between Finchley Road (cross-platform interchange with the Jubilee line) and King's Cross St Pancras or Farringdon
- Bakerloo line between Baker Street and Elephant & Castle

## **2. THAMESLINK PROGRAMME**

### **(a) Bermondsey dive-under team find station remains**

Network Rail says Thameslink Programme engineers have uncovered the remains of a south London station closed a century ago.

Remnants of the old station were found during construction of the Bermondsey dive-under, which will see two Victorian viaducts partially demolished and rebuilt to allow Charing Cross trains from south east London and Kent to descend almost to street level, going under a new route carrying Thameslink services from Croydon, and back up again. Southwark Park station, perched on a viaduct above Rotherhithe New Road, only served passengers from 1902 to 1915 before it closed permanently. Now Thameslink Programme engineers have rediscovered the former ticket hall and platforms.

Project Manager Greg Thornett said: "We uncovered the footings for the former platforms while we were preparing the top of the viaduct for new track and we are now working up in the roof space of the former ticket hall to fill in the old skylights, ready to carry the final track alignment. Much of the existing stretch of viaduct will be replaced by the ramps into and out of the new dive-under, but the arch that used to house the old booking hall will remain."

Southwark Park station was one of several in the area, including Spa Road, closed as a result of competition from trams and buses and the coming of the First World War. The Bermondsey dive-under is situated where the former Bricklayers Arms branch left the main line and a new access road follows the former trackbed under the remaining viaducts. The site offices sit on the stub end of the trackbed leading towards the former locomotive shed.

Thornett added: "Although the old viaducts will be replaced by modern structures, they are designed to remain in keeping with the older architecture. It's exciting to see this transformation and it will be a real sense of achievement to see trains running on it."

Related works on the Thameslink Programme will see Network Rail and dive-under contractor Skanska rebuild 20 bridges between New Cross and Waterloo East to increase their strength. The structures being replaced are of an old design where the rails are carried on timber baulks. These need replacing every five to 10 years whereas the newer structures will be stronger and last longer between maintenance.

## (b) Class 700 – Recent Siemens/Thameslink Press Release

The manufacture of the new Siemens-built, Desiro City trains for Thameslink – known as the Class 700 - is well under way, with the first train due to arrive in the UK later this year. Over 200 (out of a total of 1,140) Class 700 body shells have now been manufactured with a total of six trains completed to date. This summer will see the arrival of the first new Thameslink train into the purpose-built Three Bridges depot, one of two new depots being constructed by Siemens to maintain the new fleet. The trains will then be handed over to the train owner Cross London Trains who will lease the trains to rail operator Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) ready for the start of passenger service between Bedford and Brighton, Wimbledon and Sutton in spring 2016 followed by Peterborough and Cambridge services later the same year.

The state-of-the-art Class 700 is the UK's first second generation train and the innovative design incorporates the feedback of UK train operators, passenger focus groups (*mmmm - Ed*), train crew, cleaners and maintainers. Developed specifically to meet the demands of the ambitious Thameslink infrastructure programme - delivering high frequency, high capacity services - they will be more reliable and more energy efficient than existing rolling stock. Their lightweight design will mean less wear and tear on the tracks, saving money in maintaining the network.

Siemens has also sought to incorporate UK suppliers wherever possible. For example, amongst other UK-manufactured items, a number of the new trains hi-tech electrical components are being manufactured in Hebburn, near Newcastle; pantographs in Somerset; cab radios in Dorset; flooring in Hertfordshire; exterior lighting in the West Midlands; train protection and warning systems in Cheshire, and CCTV in Tyne and Wear. In total, around 8,000 UK jobs are being created through the £6.5bn Government-sponsored Thameslink Programme, including up to 2,000 in support of the new trains, across the UK supply chain.

The trains have a rigorous testing schedule. Early last year the first Class 700 was put to the test in a special climate chamber, measuring its ability to withstand the effects of extreme ambient temperatures, solar gain, ice, snow and wind, thus ensuring the trains are up to the challenge of carrying commuters in and out of London, whatever the weather. The units have additionally already undergone a year of intensive testing at Siemens' unique test track facility - the site of a former RAF base - where the trains accumulate their fault free mileage prior to introduction onto the busy UK rail network.

**The following is part of an article from "Rail Engineer" that takes a deeper look into the manufacture and testing of the new trains:**



### The order

A total of 1,140 carriages were ordered from Siemens. The contract was first announced on 16 June 2011 when Cross London Trains Ltd, a consortium formed by Siemens Project Ventures GmbH, Innisfree Ltd.,

and 3i Infrastructure Ltd, was revealed as the preferred bidder. It was the last day of Railtex that year, and the Siemens staff were understandably in celebratory mood.

However, after delays in confirming the finance (a total of 19 banks were involved), the order was not signed until July 2013. By then, to hit production targets as the railway was still due to be complete in 2018, Siemens had already manufactured pre-series vehicles including bogies and traction equipment which were undergoing tests in Germany.

So once the go ahead was finally given, production could commence in earnest. Sixty 8-car and fifty-five 12-car units were specified, designated Classes 700/0 and 700/1 respectively. The units all have a welded aluminium construction with inside-frame bogies. Four cars on the 8-car units, and six on the 12-car, will have both bogies powered while the others will be purely trailer vehicles. All trains will be dual-voltage, working off both 25kV AC and 750V DC supplies. Two panto-graphs will be fitted and both will be used in normal operation. Mechanically, the trains will be symmetrical around the centreline. Both driving cars will be powered as will the third and sixth on the 8-car and the third, fourth, ninth and tenth cars of the 12-car.

### **Manufacturing process**

The Class 700 trains are being assembled at Krefeld in Germany, close to Düsseldorf. Here the bodysells are constructed from plank-like hollow aluminium extrusions. Several of these 'planks' are clamped together and welded up longitudinally on a large welding machine to form a solid side. More are clamped onto a curved jig and again welded to form the roof. These large panels go into a huge, boxed-off milling machine where the window and door apertures are cut, together with any other holes for equipment and power access.

The floors are made in the same way except these are welded up by hand from sturdier elements, including two friction-stir-welded plates which will take the bogie attachments. The four main elements are then welded together to make a recognisable bodysell, and the fitting-out and painting can begin. Final assembly is done on a production line in five stages, number four purely being testing of the systems installed in the first three.

After assembly and test, the cars are made up into four-car units and hauled off to the test track for final assembly into finished trains and final testing.



### **3D planning**

One interesting area of the Krefeld factory is a cinema-style room with a huge screen and no seats. Here, graphics of the trains can be displayed using information straight out of the design software. It doesn't just give a view of the finished trains, it does it in layers and in three-dimensions. Wearing 3D glasses, viewers can therefore see each element of the train and how it interacts with others. By panning and rotating the

view, it can be inspected from all sides. There are many uses for this technique, but one of the most important is trial-assembly. The build sequence can be tested, and any conflicts, whereby a component cannot be installed as it will be blocked by something else, can be sorted out before assembly starts in the factory itself. This prevented all of the initial build errors that crop up in any complex assembly.

### **Under test**

The first 12-car set arrived at the Siemens test and validation centre at Wildenrath in March 2014. This was only eight months after the contract was signed. At the time of writing, six further trains (five more 12-car sets and the first 8-car) have also commenced testing. The programme includes performance testing, checks on ride comfort and safety systems, and racking up fault-free running. Driver training is also underway as Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) trainers gain experience on the new trains so they can impart that knowledge to the rest of the drivers on their return to the UK.

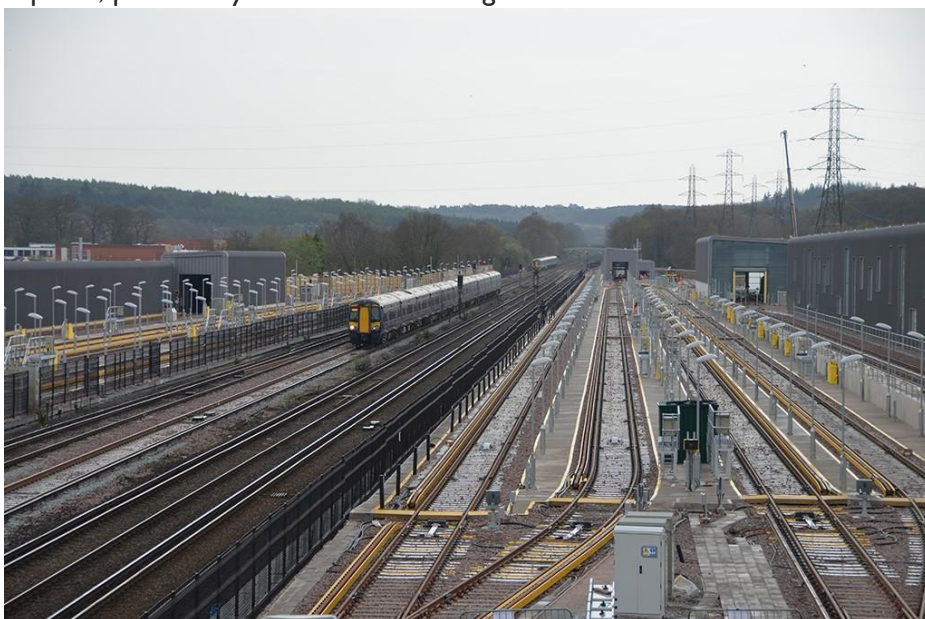
The first train is due to arrive in the UK in August 2015 and, after testing under British conditions on the main line, be handed over to GTR in December. It should then enter passenger service sometime in February 2016, displacing a Class 319 set which will be cascaded elsewhere in the network. From early 2016, trains will arrive at a rate of one a week until the entire contract is complete with the last unit handed over in June 2018.

Riding on the first prototype around the Wildenrath test track revealed a modern, quiet multiple-unit without any vices. The seats were quite hard, as is often found on commuter trains, with a 2+2 seating arrangement reflecting the fact that these are medium-distance trains and not just short-haul, standing-room-only commuter specials (*mmmm again - Ed*). Both conventional and accessible CET (controlled emission toilets) are included with the latter being in the centre of the train. Doors are wide and there is a large open space adjacent to get people on and off. Luggage racks seem strong (a Siemens engineer was sitting in one) and well-placed. The driving position is central – there is no gangway-connection between units on these trains – with a good view. As it was under test, the usual Driver's Safety Device (aka 'dead man's handle') was disconnected and a load of test cables emerged from the desk, but it was simple for a novice to drive.

When in service, the trains will be fitted with large passenger information displays which can also play video – ideal for both safety messages and advertising. All in all, the trains look and feel good and testing is going well. The next step will be to see the first one in the UK in August – but where will it go?

### **Depots**

115 trains, or 1,140 carriages, take up a bit of room – in fact just over 23 kilometres in total. Even with an old Class 319 being retired when a 700 goes into service, there will still be a considerable amount of space required, particularly as there will be a lag on the cascade.



The two main depots for the fleet will be Hornsey on the East Coast main line, in 25kV country, and at Three Bridges on the 750V DC Brighton line.

Three Bridges is interesting in that it occupies both sides of the main line. The main five-road workshop is on the Up side with storage sidings between it and the main line. Facilities include a wheel lathe, carriage wash and two bogie drops. The southbound side has just sidings, a carriage wash and a full-length underframe cleaning building. All sidings have CET emptying stations. The two parts of the depot are connected by a footbridge.

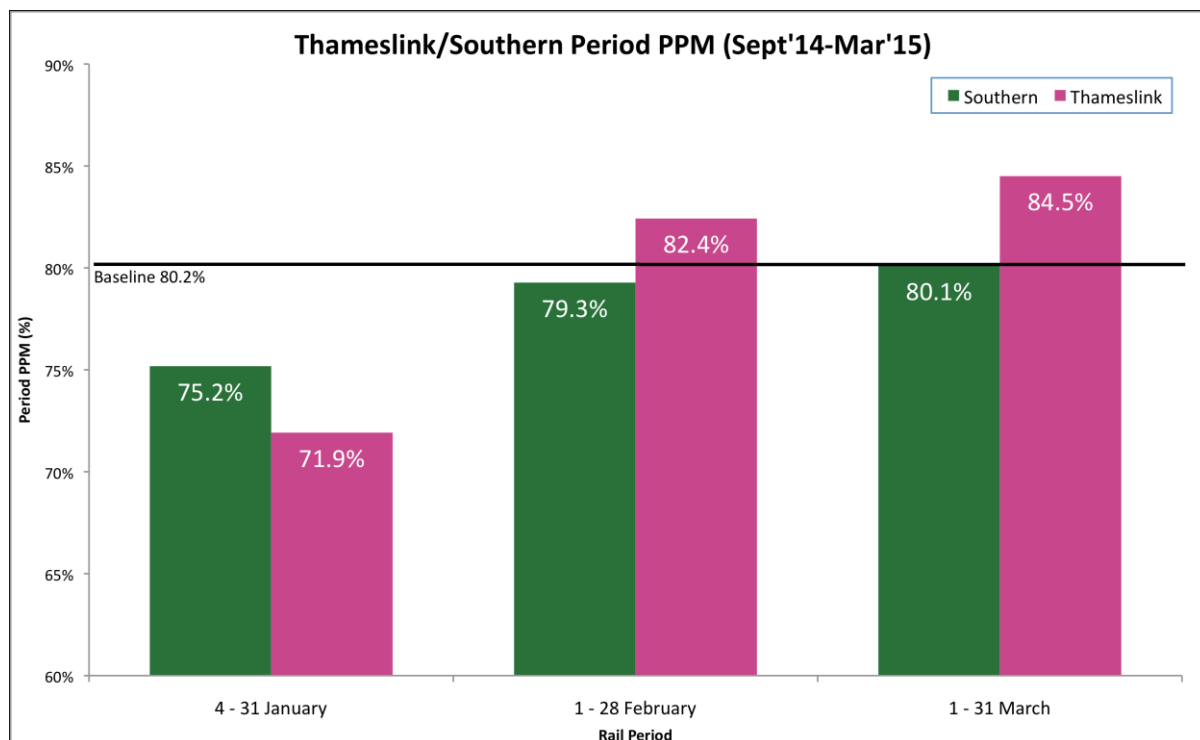
There is actually a third part to the site, behind the main maintenance facility on the line to Littlehaven, where some additional stabling, with CET emptying stations, has been constructed.

Hornsey is on a long, thin site that is already occupied by the depot for several classes of trains including Class 319s. The original plan for a larger depot was rejected in 2009 and the resulting rethink reduced it in size and enlarged Three Bridges.

The reconstructed depot at Hornsey, which will be open for the new Class 700 trains in 2016, includes an updated wheel lathe, carriage wash, underframe cleaning building and a three-road maintenance shed.

Three Bridges will come on-stream before Hornsey and, when the first Class 700 arrives through the Channel Tunnel early in August this year, it will be taken to the West Sussex depot.

## 2. Performance - Press Release from GTR



The above graph shows performance since the start of 2015, measured using the Public Performance Measure (PPM). This refers to the % of planned train services that were less than 5 minutes late at final destination.

The 'baseline' level of 80.2% reflects performance in early 2015 with the situation at London Bridge during the works with only three tracks available. Our improvement plan is aimed at increasing performance above this baseline level.

During March PPM on Southern was 80.1%, a slight improvement on the February figure of 79.3%. The worst day of the period was Monday 9 March when the result was 46.4%, this was due to a fault on an engineering train near London Bridge. Other large incidents affecting performance included a person being hit by a train at Streatham Common on Tuesday 3 March and a points failure at London Bridge on Monday 16 March.

During March PPM on Thameslink was 84.5%, an improvement on the February figure of 82.4%. The worst day of the period was Monday 9 March when the result was 70.5%, also due to the fault on an engineering train near London Bridge. Other significant incidents affecting performance included a person being hit by a train near Cricklewood on Saturday 21 March and a points failure at West Hampstead Junction on Friday 6 March.

**At a recent Stakeholder forum both the BCA and APTU spoke to Stuart Cheshire thanking him for the improvements so far with performance but indicated that more needed to be done and that we would be closely monitoring the situation and if need be would ask for further meetings to discuss performance.**

### **3. May Timetable Change**

There are only very minor changes to both EMT and GTR services.

#### Northbound, from Brighton

0530 to Bedford departs at 0528 and runs 1-2 minutes earlier to Gatwick (where it departs at 0607 and then runs as before);

0622 to Bedford departs at 0619 and runs 2-3 minutes earlier to Redhill (where it departs at 0711 and then runs as before);

0700 to Bedford departs at 0657 and runs 3 minutes earlier to East Croydon (where it departs at 0754 and then runs as before);

0724 to Bedford departs at 0722 and runs 1-2 minutes earlier to Redhill (where it departs at 0811 and then runs as before).

#### Southbound, from Bedford

0518 Bedford to Brighton departs Gatwick Airport 0717, running 1 minute earlier to Hassocks 0740, arriving at Brighton 0750;

16.52 Bedford to Sevenoaks departs 16.56 and ceases to call at Flitwick, Harlington and Legrave.

17.10 Luton to Beckenham Junction now starts back at Bedford departing at 1650 and calls at Flitwick (17.00), Harlington, Legrave, Luton and St Albans (1724), then St Pancras 1744 as before.

GTR are also maintaining the changes made in March which were also designed to improve timekeeping at London Bridge.

The main changes will be to GTR services in December when the Brighton Mainline timetable is recast. As mentioned in a previous newsletter the BCA has sent in a response to the changes proposed. We are now awaiting a response from GTR which is expected in June.

### **4. East - West Rail**

**Phase 1 opens Oxford to Bicester 26 October - progress continues to Bletchley and Bedford**



Phase I of East West Rail will open from Oxford Parkway to Bicester on 26 October. Chiltern will run the service, and from Bicester trains will run to and from London Marylebone. Bicester and Islip stations have been completely rebuilt, and Parkway is brand new. Next year, the service will be extended west to Oxford (main station), and in 2019, extended east, to Milton Keynes and Bedford.

Good progress has been made during the spring with Phase 2, Bicester – Bletchley – Bedford. Network Rail has built three survey bases at Verney Junction, Steeple Clayton and Swanbourne. The bases allow their contractors to do clearance and survey work along the line. NR held several public meetings along the route in Autumn 2014 and Spring this year and no ‘show stoppers’ came up. The design of the new station at Winslow looks as if it will be a credit to a growing small town, and most people were happy with it.

Further east, Network Rail presented plans to upgrade the large number of public level crossings between Bedford and Bletchley. There is an individual plan for each of ten crossings. Most of the road crossings will be upgraded to make them easier to use for both trains and vehicles. Most of the track / footpath crossings will be replaced by bridges or subways. Public meetings are being held in several locations over the summer.

The route options for the future Central Section between Cambridge and Bedford are still under assessment by Network Rail. The Local Transport Plans of all the councils on the section support the project; none favours a particular route, though the Cambridgeshire plan mentions a park & ride station on the A1198 (the road from Huntingdon to Royston).

The Eastern Section, from Cambridge to Norwich and Ipswich, also has strong support in new reports published jointly by the local authorities in East Anglia. Indeed, Network Rail has confirmed that they are going to double the track from Ely to Soham. Although this isn't part of EWR, the enhancement will enhance the capacity and flexibility of the railway in the region.



Above – centre & right: new track and station building at Bicester; left: new platform under construction. (John Elvin)

The only piece that isn't fitting into place at present is right at the end of the line – the last few miles into Oxford. Here there are 30 objections to the way in which Chiltern and Network Rail plan to limit noise and vibration from the rebuilt railway. Objectors say the noise reduction plans aren't enough to comply with the planning conditions. There are also objections to NR building a temporary office next to Oxford

station. Even if solutions to these issues are agreed soon, it leaves a lot of work to be done before the expresses can continue from Parkway into the centre of Oxford.



Above: Track clearing machine working near Swanbourne (26 miles west of Bedford) (John E Levin)

Finally, there are some good videos of the East West Rail All Party Parliamentary Group on Youtube. The main presentation is: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_t7xyGeucg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_t7xyGeucg)

And you'll see the others in the right hand previews. Some members of the Group lost their seats at the recent election, so expect new faces on this important team.

---

For more information, see our website - [www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk](http://www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

If there is something you want to tell us about, please email: [admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk](mailto:admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

This newsletter is published by the Bedford Commuters Association.

Chairman: Arthur Taylor, 6 Chaucer Road, Flitwick, Bedfordshire MK45 1QG.

Editor: Jim Allwood, 25 Church Close, Martock, Somerset TA12 6DS

---