

BBC/EWR Task Group – Minutes



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Date: Thursday, 5th February 2026

Time: 13.30 – 15:30pm

Venue: Hybrid

Attendees:

Craig Austin (CA)

Margaret Birtles (MB)

John Molyneux (JM)

Simon Joynes (SJ)

Paul Pace (PP)

Anna Robani (AB)

Antigua Riley Corion (ARC)

Gavin Chinniah

Dawn Staal (DS)

John Kell (JK)

Guest: Verity Quinn (VQ)

Dawn Walton (DW)

Sarah Combes (SC)

No.	Discussion	Actions
1.	Apologies Ben Raza (BR)	
2.	Minutes from meeting on 20th January. Minutes circulated for agreement.	
3.	Programme Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussions were held around management of workflow and reporting mechanisms.EWR'S 12 month forward plan of meetings has been requested once again. JBB has been advised we can expect this next week.Evidence log being kept where information has not been supplied by EWR in a timely manner.EWR has been asked once again to designate a single point of contact, but this has not yet been shared with us.	SC to finalise workstreams and reporting mechanism. JBB and SC to update evidence log with information provided by Subject Matter Experts.
4.	4 vs 6 track update <ul style="list-style-type: none">JK presented an overview of EWR's 6 track plans, and how this differs to the existing 4 tracks. Alternative solutions to the requirement for 6 tracks were shared. An overview of the presentation can be found at Appendix A.JK updated the group on the response BBC has submitted to a Network Rail consultation on EWR's track access request for the	

	<p>EWR Alliance CS2. JK confirmed that BBC's concerns have been outlined in our response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JBB advised that we are awaiting technical feedback from Perfect Circle regarding the requirement for 6 tracks and exploration of other options, as well as feedback on EWR's Technical Note regarding the requirement to demolish properties on Ashburnham Road. JBB advised that this advice is expected at the end of February. 	
5.	<p>BBC stakeholder communications and engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC discussed BBC's proposed response to EWR's Community Consultation Strategy document. This covers how EWR propose to conduct community engagement. • ARC updated the Task Group of BBC's upcoming community engagement sessions, with communications released inviting residents to these. 	<p>All to provide comments by 6th February.</p>

Appendix A

Summary of presentation on Poets / 4 tracks vs 6 tracks

JK provided an overview of the current Midland Main Line four tracks, and track arrangements for 4-track and 6-track options.

EWR's arguments for building two new tracks were summarised, and our analysis of them.

- EWR are trying to solve a problem that arises with a 4 track solution: conflicts with MML freight services whose timing is highly sensitive due to the congested infrastructure they run through south of Bedford
- We disagree about EWR's proposed solution, not the problem itself
- Some possible alternative approaches have not been fully explored by EWR: track layouts using freight loops are an obvious category; there may be others.

A summary chronology was provided of our work on this issue to date.

- 2021 consultation response: challenged rationale for 6 tracks
- 2024 consultation response: challenged rationale for 6 tracks with reference to EWR's revised platform proposals; recommended more detailed engineering and timetabling study
- 2025 consultation feedback: corrected EWR's assertion that they had met our feedback on track layout
- 2026: response to Office for Rail and Road consultation on EWR's track access application, highlighting ongoing dispute and potential implication for the application as submitted.

Next steps were discussed: we continue to regard the issue as live, and will shortly receive further expert technical advice.