

CRCL/P/3/A
PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF NEIL GIBSON
EAST WEST RAIL CONSORTIUM



**THE CHILTERN RAILWAYS (BICESTER TO OXFORD IMPROVEMENTS)
ORDER**

TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

**TRANSPORT AND WORKS (APPLICATIONS AND OBJECTIONS
PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND AND WALES) RULES 2006**



1. Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Neil Gibson and I am a Strategic Director at Buckinghamshire County Council ('BCC') since 2004. I have a degree in Town and Country Planning (Liverpool Polytechnic 1981 BA (Hons.)) and two post-graduate qualifications in management and environmental management.
- 1.2 I am currently the Director for Communities and Built Environment with responsibility for the BCC's Planning, Environment & Development, Transport, Property, Localities & Safer Communities services. I also lead on a range of cross-cutting corporate initiatives, including taking the senior management lead at the BCC for Aylesbury.
- 1.3 I began my career in local government as a Town Planner in 1982 with King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, after which my career took me to Peterborough City Council, Wrekin Council, Chester City Council and Oxford City Council. During this time I managed a wide range of public service businesses.
- 1.4 As a Strategic Director at Oxford City Council I had strategic responsibility for five business units spanning housing, homelessness, building repairs, environmental health, customer services, and neighbourhood renewal. I also championed a number of corporate initiatives including customer contact strategy and the constitutional review.
- 1.5 In addition to my duties at BCC I am the Chairman of the East West Rail ('EWR') Consortium ('EWRC'). I have held this position since 2005. I am also a member of the EWR Western Section Project Board ('the Project Board') representing BCC. The membership of these bodies is shown in the Appendices to Patrick O'Sullivan's evidence (**CRCL/P/4/B**). BCC is shortly to assume the Chair of the Project Board from the Homes and Communities Agency ('HCA'), which reflects the changes to the role of HCA being introduced by the coalition Government but also, and more importantly, the increasing strength in support for this project from all local authority members in the EWRC and the Project Board, both of which evidently include my own authority BCC.

2. Scope of Evidence

- 2.1 My evidence is presented on the basis of my duties in the overall governance of the EWR project, both as Chair of the Consortium and as a member of the Project Board; I wish to confirm to this Inquiry that our Outline Business Case ('OBC') has been carried out in full compliance with the Department for Transport's ('DfT') guidance. Furthermore the OBC has been reviewed by the DfT's economic appraisal team and has been recognised by them as presenting a robust and strong economic case suitable for further development by the EWRC.

- 2.2 I wish to confirm to this inquiry that the findings of the OBC have been accurately and correctly reported in Patrick O'Sullivan's evidence (**CRCL/P/4/A**) and that this evidence has been endorsed by my colleagues in the Project Board.
- 2.3 It is desirable for me to also say from my own position how important the successful implementation of Chiltern Railway's Order Scheme is to the EWRC. More detailed evidence with respect to this matter is reported in Patrick O'Sullivan's evidence (**CRCL/P/4/A** – Section 10) but as the signatory representing the EWRC to the Memorandum of Understanding (**CD/2.6**) I recognise the very significant benefits that will be provided to the development of the western section and indeed to the longer term plans for the EWR link as a whole as a consequence of delivery by Chiltern Railways of the Order Scheme.
- 2.4 The railway infrastructure proposed by Chiltern will facilitate the development of EWR train services, as well as provide for the Order Scheme's train services, between Oxford and Bicester and, in doing so, will present the EWRC with a considerable saving in capital expenditure (estimated at c. £100 million). This is a cost that the EWRC, without the Order Scheme, would have to find as part of the EWRC's funding requirements. (Section 12 of Mr. O'Sullivan's evidence **CRCL/P/4/A**).
- 2.5 I can also report that from the standpoint of BCC, the Council fully supports the implementation of the Order Scheme; and to this end, BCC's Cabinet Member for Transport and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment have jointly written to the Secretary of State for Transport offering their strong support for the new railway link and welcoming the transport and economic benefits that it will bring to BCC.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Order Scheme delivers a critical first step in the overall EWR building blocks by facilitating the construction of that part of the western section of EWR between Oxford and Bicester. The Order Scheme, including the Phase 2B works, will provide all of the key works necessary for that part.
- 3.2 As explained in Patrick O'Sullivan's evidence, in overall strategic terms the delivery of the western section of the EWR link, by itself, would generate substantial rail transport benefits. But its provision, assisted by the Order Scheme, would also create an impetus towards securing the next stepping stone in the link namely, the implementation of the central section of EWR (refer to Section 6 in Patrick O'Sullivan's evidence **CRCL/P/4/A**); and, thereby, the achievement of the overall objective of the EWRC to provide the strategic east west rail link from East Anglia and the East of England to key growth points in Central Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and beyond.