

VIEW OUR PLANS FOR A BRAND NEW RAIL SERVICE

FOLLOWING MONTHS OF CAREFUL PREPARATION, CHILTERN RAILWAYS IS SUBMITTING A TRANSPORT & WORKS ACT (TWA) ORDER APPLICATION TO DEVELOP A NEW OXFORD TO LONDON MARYLEBONE RAIL SERVICE.

The TWA Application sets out Chiltern's plans for Evergreen 3, a major upgrade to track, stations, signalling and safety systems between Oxford and Bicester, along with a connection between the upgraded Oxford to Bicester line and Chiltern's London to Birmingham line to create a brand new Oxford to London route.

In the build up to the TWA Application, consultation and attention to environmental considerations have both been key features of the proposals. Issues such as station design, wildlife, safe crossings and noise barriers are all considered as part of the Application and have been adapted and finalised in response to an extensive public consultation programme.

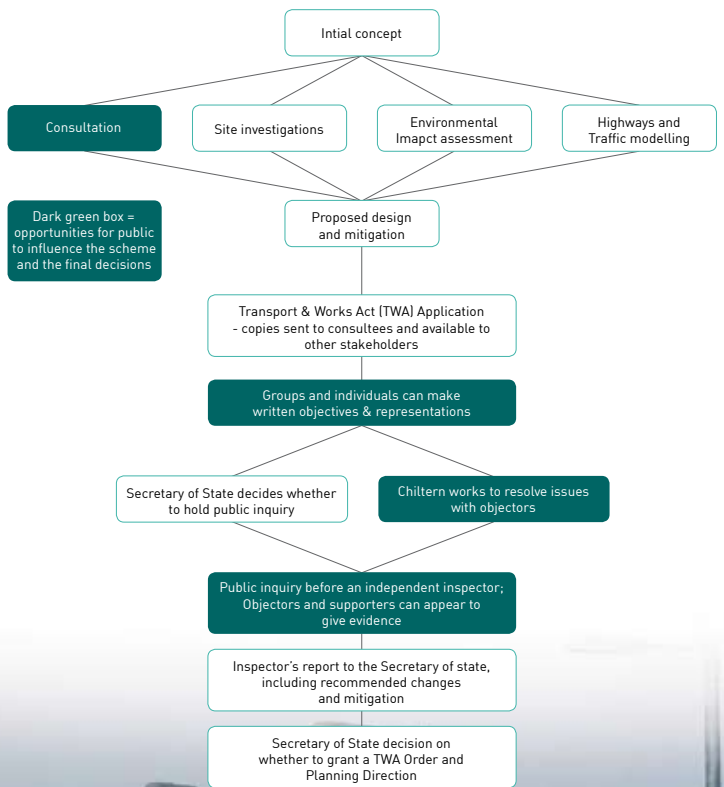
"A priority for Chiltern has been to give members of the public and other stakeholders a proper say regarding our plans," explained the Chiltern Railways chairman Adrian Shooter. "Even though our consultation programme

prior to the submission has finished, we are still working with interested parties to resolve any outstanding issues. Any which remain unresolved are likely to form part of a public inquiry next Summer."

In the meantime, the TWA process provides interested parties with a statutory 42-day period to formally respond to

Chiltern's plans – even if they have made their views known prior to the submission of the TWA Application. All these responses are considered in preparation for any public inquiry into the scheme.

The TWA process itself (see diagram) is designed to be an exercise in local democracy and provides opportunities for discussion



A guide to the TWA process



PLANS FOR A BRAND NEW SERVICE CONTINUED...

and representations at various stages of the process. Adrian Shooter added: "There are a number of examples of areas where we've listened and adapted our plans to the feedback we've received."

Examples of Chiltern's willingness to listen to stakeholder concerns and address them include what will be a substantial investment in noise mitigation measures to reduce the impact of faster, more frequent trains.

A detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out by consultants ERM also includes proposals for new wildlife habitats, for effective traffic measures close to new stations and for the protection of important archaeological features such as the Sheepwash swing bridge just outside Oxford station and the Roman remains near the proposed new bridge at Langford Lane.

In the last example the actual location of the bridge has been changed to avoid impinging on the

Roman remains.

New storage buildings at Oxford Station are now being sited further than was originally planned from nearby housing, while at Islip a footbridge with step-free access is being provided to replace the existing level crossing which will be closed on safety grounds.

Inevitably a TWA Application for a scheme the size of Evergreen 3 produces a substantial amount of documentation which can be viewed online via the Evergreen 3 website – www.chiltern-evergreen3.co.uk – and at certain locations in and around Oxford.

Locations for viewing the Application and the Environmental Statement are: Oxford County Council, Cherwell District Council, the Central Library, Westgate (Oxfordshire Studies); Banbury Library and Bicester Library. An introduction to the scheme explaining its background and how the TWA process works is available on request or via the Evergreen 3 website.

JOINED UP RAILWAY

Question: How do you create a brand new Oxford to London route without constructing 65 miles of new railway?

Answer: you build a short connection to join together two existing lines, delivering all the benefits of a modern, upgraded route with a fraction of the hassle.

At Bicester the Evergreen 3 project will build a new double track "chord line" which will cross what is currently open land between Gavray Drive and

the Charbridge Lane ring road. The land in question is already protected in the Local Plan for railway purposes and a recent planning permission for new houses in the area also makes allowance for the new rail line.

A footbridge over the chord line will be provided for the footpath from Gavray Drive, and Chiltern will also replace the land which has been lost to walkers with a nearby alternative site.



SPOTLIGHT ON TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT >>>

The Evergreen 3 Scheme is set to bring much needed relief to a traffic hot spot close to the existing Water Eaton Park and Ride Site thanks to the use of sophisticated computer modeling.

The use of state of the art computer traffic programmes to model road traffic flows has been a key focus at the twin junctions leading to the Water Eaton Park and Ride site.

By accurately modelling existing and projected traffic flows on roads leading to the proposed Water Eaton Parkway station, the Chiltern team has been able to develop proposed junction improvements as part of its proposals. The simulations showed that many of the present problems on the A4165 and near Kidlington Roundabout stem from the layout and operation of the twin junctions leading to the Water Eaton Park and Ride site.

Creating a single junction will not only handle the extra traffic generated by the new rail station but will also reduce current tailbacks. Improvements are also proposed for buses and cyclists.

Additional parking for rail users is included in the scheme to ensure that there will be adequate parking for both bus park and ride and rail passengers.

Models have been built to assess other traffic 'hot spots' and to test improvements as appropriate. The modelling shows that the overall impact of the new train service will be positive, providing ample opportunities for people to use rail transport in preference to car use.

Locally, the scheme will significantly improve journeys into Oxford City by rail, relieving road congestion on the main routes into Oxford. While there is likely to be some increase in traffic around the new stations at Bicester Town and Water Eaton Parkway, traffic flows should actually improve as a result of the proposed changes.

TURBOSTAR PEDIGREE FOR THE NEW SERVICE



The new Oxford-London services will be operated with "Turbostar" trains – the same ones already on Chiltern's London-Birmingham express services. Each "unit" consists of three or four coaches which can be coupled together to make trains of up to eight coaches during the rush hour.

Chiltern Railways ordered its initial Turbostar in 1996 – the very first trains to be ordered by a privatised rail company. The trains are built in Derby to a specification developed by Chiltern and in all 67 coaches were delivered between 1998 and 2006.

Each coach is powered by a 422hp engine and weighs between 40-45 tonnes. This combination of high power and relatively light weight gives both high speeds – the maximum is 100 miles per hour – and fast acceleration, while also helping to control carbon emissions. The trains have been engineered to minimise noise, track wear and fuel consumption.



The trains are also designed for passenger comfort and convenience.

Wide doors make it easy to get on and off, while a wheelchair-accessible toilet is provided in every train.

There is air-conditioning throughout, while large windows make the trains bright and airy, with low sills so that children as well as grown-ups can see out. The roomy interiors have well spaced seats, many in the traditional face-to-face layout for families travelling together. The tables are specially designed for using laptops and there are power sockets by the seats for computers and phone chargers.

TRAIN THAT KITTEN!

People might choose Chiltern Railways as a favourite travel operator but apparently so do cats – however young. A four week old kitten with an obvious passion for train travel was found recently after travelling at least five times up and down the Chiltern line between London Marylebone and the West Midlands.



The kitten - believed to be wild - first alerted suspicion after drivers heard what sounded like a "meow" coming from underneath the driving cab floor. When the kitten was found you can imagine the shock and it was worked out that the train and the kitten had travelled at least 900 miles. The kitten, now named Diesel, has been adopted by former Chiltern employee, Jodie Fox (pictured above).

Thomas Ableman, Marketing Director, said "This is some tale and we're delighted that this little kitten has chosen to travel with Chiltern Railways on its first ever train journey. Perhaps, we should add to our great value tickets a new range of feline fares."

PREFERRED ROUTE MAKES MULTIPLE SENSE

It's never easy to create new transport infrastructure but sometimes – just sometimes – circumstances combine to come up with a ready made answer. This has been the case for Chiltern Railways as part of its efforts to finalize the preferred route for the Evergreen 3 scheme. On the one hand Chiltern has been able to propose upgrading the existing Oxford to Bicester line while on the other the line in question will meet a growing need for improved transport facilities serving North Oxford and beyond.

In fact the preferred route has been a number of years in the making, with various options considered and rejected. These include reinstating the old Princes Risborough-Chinnor branch line; creating a railhead beside Junction 6 of the M40 and re-opening the Princes Risborough-Thame-Cowley line via a Parkway near Junction 8 of the M40. The great advantage of the chosen scheme was its use of an existing route, meaning

less disruption to residents and the environment, plus improved commuter services to and from Bicester and further afield via a new Oxford to London route. In addition with the development of Water Eaton Parkway and connecting services, the preferred route will create an important railhead serving North Oxford and Bicester, while at the same time providing a fast and efficient alternative route to London.

OTMOOR'S FORGOTTEN RAILMOTORS



A steam-powered railmotor in its heyday

The Bicester to Oxford line has performed a number of roles over the years, from 'Varsity link to vital supply line in the build-up to D-Day, but one that is now almost forgotten was the attempt to turn it into a country bus service.

Back at the turn of the last century, it became fashionable for railway companies to set up new local services, using "steam railmotors" instead of the usual trains with engines and carriages. A steam railmotor was a complete train in one vehicle – essentially an ordinary passenger coach with a small boiler located in the luggage compartment and a cab at each end for the driver.

Drop-down steps allowed passengers to get on and off from ground-level platforms, so that new stations or "halts" could be built at minimal cost. These were often no more than a few planks laid next to the track, with a nameboard to tell you where you were, and possibly an oil lamp which was lit by the guard when the first train of the day called.

So, in 1905 the London & North Western Railway commenced a railmotor service between Bicester and Oxford, complementing the ordinary Cambridge to Oxford trains.

New halts were built at Wendlebury, Charlton and Oddington to serve the local villages and at Oxford Road, Wolvercote and Port Meadow for Oxford's outlying suburbs.

For a while the new trains in their smart purple and ivory livery must have seemed the height of modernity but it was not to last. The steam railmotors proved to be difficult to maintain – and even harder to keep clean – whilst traipsing across muddy fields to wait in the rain at a remote halt soon lost its attraction compared to catching the new-fangled motor bus at the end of the lane.

In 1917 trains were withdrawn and the halts closed as a wartime economy measure. After the Great War the service resumed, only to close for good with the general strike in 1926.

Few people today will be able to remember trundling across Otmoor in a steam railmotor and even fewer traces of the old halts remain. But history can repeat itself in strange ways. The old Oxford Road Halt will be reincarnated as the new Water Eaton Parkway station – but this time with much better facilities than a few planks and an oil lamp!

To learn more of the line's history, read "Oxford to Bletchley" by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith, pub. Middleton Press.

IN THE FIRING LINE



Chiltern Railways Chairman Adrian Shooter answers questions on the Evergreen 3 scheme

1. Why are crossings such a big issue?

Britain's railways are one of the safest transport systems in the world and safety has improved even further in recent years. However level crossings remain a major safety risk, particularly as over 90% of level crossing accidents are due to errors or misuse by motorists and pedestrians. Eliminating or replacing level crossings is a national aim for both the railway industry and the safety authorities.

2. What is Chiltern proposing?

There are 38 highway, footpath and farm crossings between Bicester and Oxford – an average of one crossing for every 500 metres of line. Some have not been used for years and will be closed. The remainder will be replaced with new bridges for road vehicles, pedestrians or horse riders as appropriate. Where the existing crossings are very near to each other, footpaths will be diverted for a short distance to make use of an adjacent bridge. Wherever possible we have adapted our plans following consultation – so at Islip a new footbridge will replace Mill Lane crossing, whilst at Langford Lane, the road over the new bridge has been located to avoid Roman remains.

3. What will be the impact on local people?

Generally a big improvement. Replacing the crossings removes a major safety risk and the noise from the warning alarms at some crossings, and from train whistles at others, will be eliminated. In some cases the route over the new bridge will be longer than that over the old crossing, but we have sought to minimise this as far as possible.

4. How can I find out more?

Full details are set out in our Transport and Works Act Application, Section 17, "Public Rights of Way Report, including plans of closures and diversions". This can be viewed on the Evergreen 3 website or at local libraries and council offices.

CONTACT US

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