

## **Update 7 February 2021 - Meeting with Haslingfield PC and Anthony Browne**

The meeting Haslingfield PC arranged with Anthony Browne was fairly positive. He agrees with Cambridge Approaches and CamBedRailRoad that the northern route should be given equal assessment with the southern route. He does not believe that the work EWR has done so far and the decisions they have made demonstrate this. He believes that parity of assessment is vital before an informed decision can be made. He pointed out that his constituency is affected by both northern and southern approaches and therefore would not back one or the other until a proper assessment is done.

EWR, in response to Cambridge Approaches badgering to see the business case has declined by saying it is 'too technical'.

Mr Browne believes that EWR will push on with diesel trains initially as they are cheaper than the other options and the line has to show value for money.

EWR are only concerned with the line up to Cambridge, as that is their remit. Therefore the issue of freight is not really being considered by them even though the future plans of the government are for the line to join up with the east coast (Felixstowe/Harwich). This is not joined up thinking and if not considered now could end up with the city of Cambridge and the villages of South Cambs being blighted by tens of freight trains a day rattling through. In light of this Anthony Browne has spoken with Daniel Zeichner and Lucy Frazer (other MPs whose constituencies could be affected).

Anthony Browne also agreed that the decisions so far are not joined up with developers - ie Northstowe development. He intends to speak with Northstowe developers, the housing minister Chris Pincher and the rail minister Chris Heaton-Harris. He is unsure whether they are aware of the issues, but could be a major influence if they see the value in taking the railway to the population growth.

He also said that the credible threat of a Judicial Review could have positive outcomes without actually going ahead with it. Cambridge Approaches said that they have just about reached the £80,000 in pledges to generate a Judicial Review if need be. So far Leigh Day, the firm of solicitors engaged with CA, has sent a letter to EWR about fairness of route options and bats (ie the legally significant bits).

Anthony Browne agreed that a proper strategic environmental assessment had not been done by EWR. He said that Tony Juniper (chair of Natural England) happens to live in Cambridge and is an ex-colleague of his - so he will contact him for advice.

Finally, Mr Browne concurred that campaigning was an effective tool at the moment through letter writing, solid arguments, getting the press involved, threatening a Judicial Review and generally making as much 'noise' as possible. He said the next step could be to push for parliamentary questions.

He ended by saying that the looming freight issue was not reassuring at all.

So, we now all wait for the published preferred route/routes by EWR. This is likely to happen in the next month. Apparently the station positioned to the north of Cambourne would cost an extra £500 million as two bridges would need to be built - as the line would then come to the south. It'll be interesting to see if the North Cambourne station makes it on to the possible route.

Isabel