

Public speakers

22 March 2021

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

Address

1. Charlie Maynard on behalf of the Witney Oxford Transport Group

Update on Building a better-connected West Oxfordshire: the Oxford-Eynsham-Witney-Carterton rail line

Witney Oxford Transport Group submission to Oxfordshire Growth Board

WOT Group is a not-for-profit, cross-party organisation which seeks a fast, sustainable transport solution along the A40 corridor. As you will all be aware, Carterton, Witney and Eynsham and the surrounding villages represent one of the largest populations in the country not currently connected to the rail network. The poor transport links in the district generate many negatives for the local communities. We support the redoubling of the line from Wolvercot Junction to Hanborough, but also recognise that this will make minimal difference to the two largest District communities in Witney and Carterton.

Please see here for a link to [a Google Earth presentation](#) outlining a potential route, with Oxford reachable from Eynsham in 9 minutes, from Witney in 16 and from Carterton in 22. This is a new, previously unresearched route, which sticks very closely to the A40 and which generates reductions of 70% or more compared to peak bus travel times.

Our near-term goal is for a feasibility study covering the key points of a Strategic Outline Business Case, to be completed this year. On March 5th, we submitted an application to the DfT's Restoring Your Railways Ideas Fund for a £50,000 grant to fund a feasibility study; we have been advised that the Expert Panel to review the bids will convene in May. We have also conducted a [survey](#) of West Oxfordshire residents. Of the 771 surveyed, 750 (or 97%) supported exploring the potential of restoring the railway. Additionally, we received letters of support for this bid from parties including OCC, OxLEP, Witney Town Council, Carterton Town Council, Eynsham Parish Council, the Lord Mayor of Oxford, the Station Commander of RAF Brize Norton, Oxford University, Grosvenor and GWR. WODC Councillors also voted unanimously in support. The Rail Minister has encouraged a proposal to be submitted to the DfT's Ideas Fund.

WOT Group has two key messages for you today.

1. We have asked that, in looking ahead to a 2050 horizon, the ORCS final report reference both the actions currently being taken and the very strong popular and institutional support for moving quickly forward with a feasibility study. Although we have been informed that this is not possible we think this project is material to Oxfordshire's economic growth and transport plans and therefore we are keen that everyone on the Growth Board is kept informed of the activities going on.

2. One of the biggest risks to this project today is that the A40 dualling project, including the Eynsham Park & Ride, in practice rules out the possibility of a

railway being reinstated. This would be a real opportunity missed for an integrated multi-modal transport corridor, an exemplar of good growth. It is clear that the logical site for an Eynsham railway station is as an integrated part of the planned Eynsham Park & Ride.

We are now working with the OCC team on how a future rail link can be accommodated within all their hard work to date. We ask for support from each of you in this effort to ensure we develop and protect a better, faster, more sustainable transportation solution for our entire community.