

# **CYCLING UK STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE : PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (EAST WEST RAIL BICESTER TO BEDFORD IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER PUBLIC INQUIRY 2019**

## **A INTRODUCTION**

1 My name is Philip Ashbourn and I am the Right to Ride Representative for Cycling UK for Milton Keynes, North Buckinghamshire and South Northamptonshire. I qualified as a Chartered Surveyor in 1963, gained an MA in Regional and Town Planning from the University of Sheffield in 1974 subsequently becoming a Chartered Town Planner in 1990. I was Cycling Officer for Oxfordshire County Council from 1993 to 1996.

2 Cycling UK is the new name of the Cyclists Touring Club, founded in 1878, to protect cyclists interests and to promote cycling. Cycling UK remains the national organisation representing non-competitive cycling.

3 While Cycling UK is primarily a cycling organisation we share common aims with other environmental bodies on important issues facing the world today. These are climate change and air pollution. Cyclists are affected by these as everyone else but they do not contribute to them. Therefore, our comments are directed to a wider range of issues than might be thought our area of comment. Reducing the number of motor vehicles, especially diesel driven, on our roads and encouraging greater use of public transport, especially if sustainably driven, benefits not only cyclists but everybody.

4 While Cycling UK may be perceived as a cycling only organisation we would emphasise that improving conditions cyclists often benefits walkers, people with mobility vehicles and horse riders (we share a legal right to use bridleway rights of way with walkers and horse riders).

5 Our statement is therefore divided into two. The first section deals with the railway generally and how it will affect everybody. The second section deals with how the railway will or will not impact on cyclists (and walkers and horse riders).

## **B THE RAILWAY**

1 The early proposals were for an electrified inter-regional main line as a key link to form a strong North-South route with existing routes. This was just one of several government electrification schemes at the time. Sadly times have changed and we now find that the proposals have been reduced to a very much branch line with trains reduced to four coaches instead of eight and station platforms reduced accordingly. The latter obviously reduces the capacity of the line to take inter-regional trains. Our main objection is to the proposed diesel motive power, the biggest transport air pollution contributor. The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC), representing major medical bodies, including the Royal College of Nursing and the British Medical Association, has called on the government to tackle the country's growing air pollution crisis. This move follows warnings from several major organisations including the World Health Organisation, Unicef and the UN about the scale of the UK's air pollution crisis. To quote the director of UKHACC 'To date the government's response has been slow and lacked ambition'. Hence, we see abandonment of previously proposed nationwide rail electrification schemes, of which East West is one.

## **C THE RAILWAY AND CYCLISTS**

1 CYCLING ROUTES CROSSING THE RAILWAY – We have examined the current detailed plans and are satisfied that the bridleway crossings, road bridge crossings and level crossings are planned to be protected. However, we would prefer to see a written confirmation. We are concerned that these will be affected during the construction period and this could continue for considerable periods forcing cyclists on to busy roads and in some cases denying access to favourite cycling routes. We note that a Stakeholders Group is proposed and we would ask to be a member of that group to monitor cycle route closures and proposed diversions.

2 CYCLE PARKING AT STATIONS – we note that cycle parking is shown on some proposed station plans but not on all. Every station should have short and long term cycle parking. Long term parking should be secure, under cover and easy to use (preferably Sheffield stands) with good surveillance. At the same time good access needs to be provided for cyclists taking their cycles on trains. This means the provision of lifts big enough to take cycles at every station.

3 CYCLING ROUTES TO AND FROM STATIONS – these are a function of local highway authorities but we would expect the railway to liaise with the planning of these and even contribute funding to them. These should mainly link residential areas to cater for commuters thus reducing car parking pressure.

4 CYCLES ON TRAINS – we lag well behind best European practice and even when provided is often a cause of conflict with passengers with wheelchairs, prams and even normal passengers. There should be a minimum of six cycle only spaces, clearly marked to that effect, in every other coach.

## **D CONCLUSION**

1 Cycling UK was initially fully supportive of restoring the Cambridge – Oxford railway. This is a line that never should have been closed and says much about the lack of vision in government transport planning at the time. However, we now find ourselves in a different position. Air pollution affects us all, whether cyclists or not. Diesel is the biggest transport pollutant and the effects are widely documented. We therefore cannot endorse a railway that instead of reducing air pollution will add to it and wish to be considered as an objector to the current proposals.

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9 January 2019