

TRANSPORT Briefing

Greening satisfied about Evergreen bat licence

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Chiltern Railways is understood to have secured the legal permissions it requires to deliver a new rail link between London Marylebone and Oxford as part of the Evergreen 3 programme.

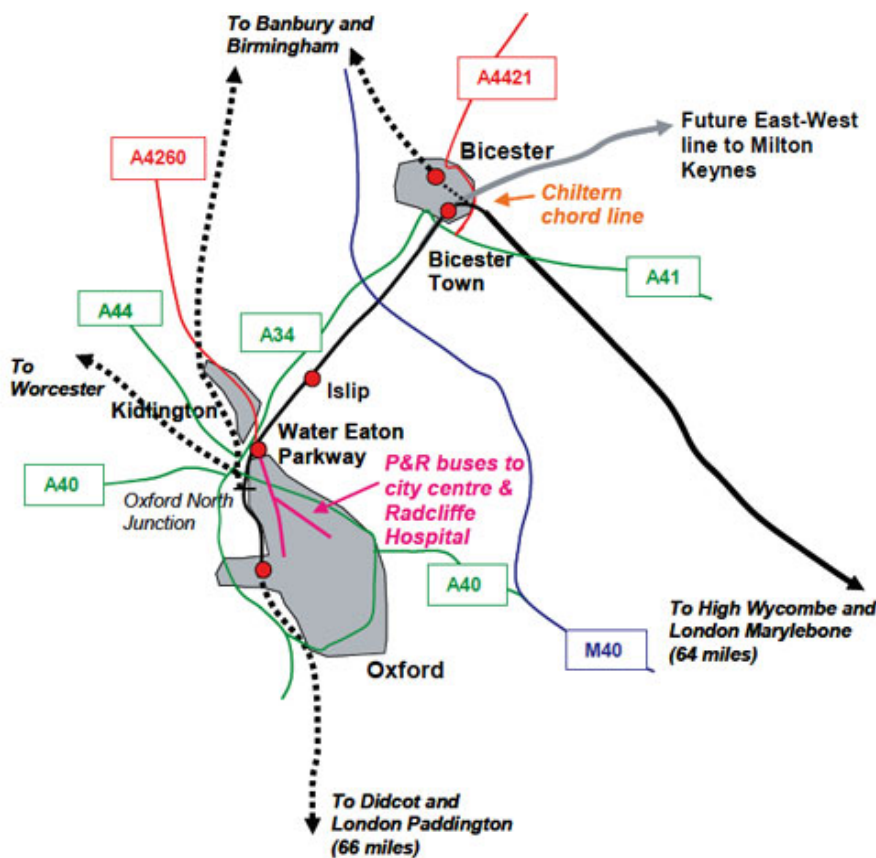
In November 2011 the train operator's application for a Transport & Works Act Order that would allow construction of a new rail chord linking the Oxford-Bicester line with Chiltern's main line into London ran into difficulties when the inspector presiding over a public inquiry recommended that the order should not be granted (TB 8073). However, transport secretary Justine Greening signalled that she would grant the order if Chiltern could address the issues raised by the inspector.

Following new evidence submitted by both Chiltern and Natural England the Secretary of State has said, in a letter dated 24 January and published this week on the Department for Transport's website, that she is now minded to make the order.

A key issue raised by the inspector was Chiltern's failure to secure a habitats licence in relation to bats found in the Wolvercot Tunnel along part of the route to be upgraded. Natural England has now confirmed to the Department for Transport that a licence is likely to be awarded in due course.

According to the letter: "As a result of the agreements reached between Chiltern and Natural England on measures to protect those species, referred to... above, she [Greening] is satisfied that the benefits of the scheme would outweigh by a considerable margin its residual effects (after mitigation) as identified in the November 2011 letter."

The order remains conditional on Chiltern submitting a revised licence application in respect of bats on the basis agreed with Natural Eng
letter also notified those who had previously made representations to the transport secretary about the scheme that they could ask - up u
February - for the public inquiry to be reopened. Given that Natural England's concerns have now been addressed and the deadline for n
has expired this outcome appears unlikely.



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A spokesman for Chiltern Railways said the order was not 100% approved. "This notification by the Secretary of State is the next stage before we can be granted the Transport and Works Order. We are positively encouraged by this and look forward to being granted the order allowing us to start services on the Bicester-Oxford line for train services between Oxford and Marylebone."

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