

Chiltern hands Evergreen over to Network Rail

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Network Rail is to mastermind procurement for Chiltern Railways' new Oxford rail link in order to co-ordinate works with those required for the East West Rail project.

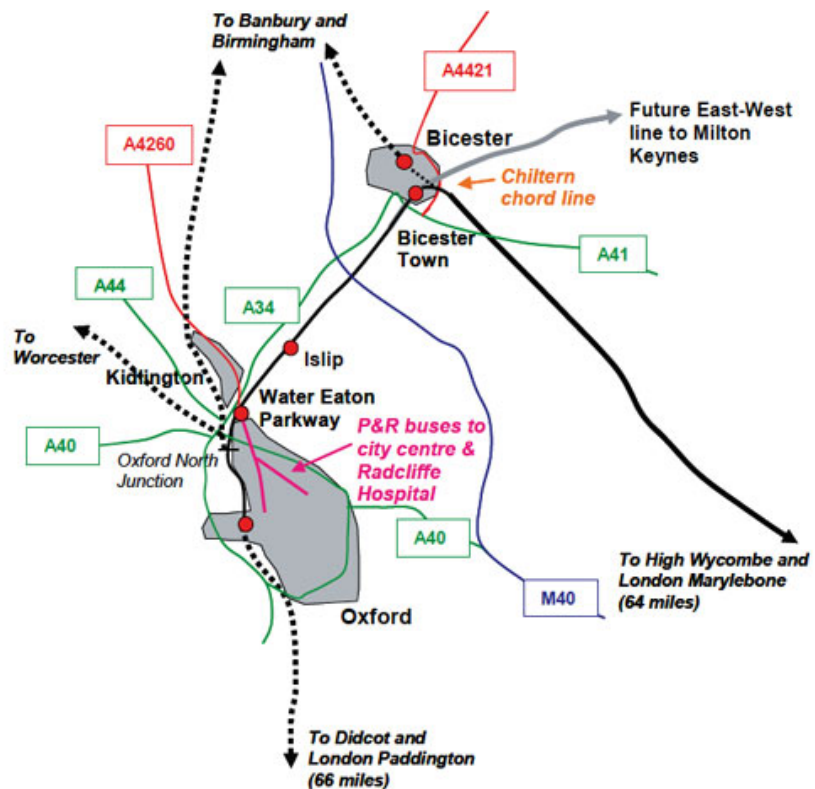
Under its unique 20 year franchise, Chiltern has acquired a reputation for developing rail enhancement schemes which, unlike most railway projects in Britain, have been managed independently of the national track authority. However, for the second phase of Evergreen 3, Network Rail will take charge of the works programme which will be organised in a similar way to other projects across the network.

This approach should allow Evergreen and East West Rail works to be delivered efficiently together; both projects require the upgrading of the route between Oxford and Bicester. Evergreen will see a new 1km chord constructed to allow trains from Oxford to join the line to London Marylebone while further East West Rail activity will be required to upgrade and reopen the line from Bicester to Bletchley.

It remains unclear whether BAM Nuttall, appointed main contractor for the Evergreen 3 scheme in 2010 (TB 6508), will now work on the project following the delays in securing approvals (TB 9342) and the decision to give Network Rail responsibility for delivering line improvements. Network Rail's integrated works schedule shows a core East West Rail contract - valued at between £75m and £100m - due to be awarded in December this year. Chiltern and Network Rail were asked by Transport Briefing to clarify procurement arrangements for Evergreen but have not provided this information.

Earlier this month the two organisations announced what they called a collaboration to deliver the two schemes. Karl Budge, route delivery director for Network Rail, said: "It makes sense to deliver what were originally separate schemes in a collaborative way. This collaboration will allow fast train services to operate between Oxford and London Marylebone and will move Network Rail closer to reinstating the railway line through to Bedford and Milton Keynes via Bletchley."

Latest schedules envisage Oxford-Marylebone services beginning in spring 2016 although trains could run from the new Water Eaton station on the northern outskirts of Oxford from 2015 while remodelling of track and signalling at the city centre station is completed. East West Rail services are set to begin in December 2017; a train operator has yet to be selected for this route.



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