

# Neil Sachdev appointed as Permanent Chair of EWR Co

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has appointed Nilesh (Neil) Sachdev as Chair of the [East West Railway Company \(EWR Co\)](#).

Neil has been appointed for a term of 3 years and will oversee the delivery of the [East West Rail project](#), which will deliver a new direct rail link between Oxford and Cambridge, serving towns and cities along the Oxford-Cambridge arc.

He replaces Rob Brighouse, who has served as the founding chairman of EWR Co since 2017.

Neil brings a wealth of leadership experience at board level and strong commercial and business acumen. He is currently a Non-Executive Director of Network Rail Property Limited and Chair of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation Board for the [Ministry of Defence](#). He has previously held a variety of senior leadership positions in the energy, property and retail sectors.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

I'd like to welcome and congratulate Neil, who joins this project at a hugely exciting time, following an injection of £760 million to kick off a new phase in delivering the railway. East West Rail will serve as a catalyst for growth along the Oxford-Cambridge arc by creating jobs and improving connectivity.

I am also very grateful to Rob Brighouse for the excellent job he has done as founding chair, establishing the company, preparing the ground for the recent investment decision and leading the organisation through its considerable growth.

Neil Sachdev said:

I thank Rob, who has not only initiated this project, but provided strong leadership in delivering the first stage of the project and building a great team at EWR Co.

I am looking forward to working with the EWR Co team, all our local stakeholder communities and businesses to deliver growth for the local economy and build on the exciting vision of the EWR project.

Rob Brighouse said:

It has been my privilege to be the Founding Chair of the East West Railway Company. We have built an amazing team of individuals who have brought together a wealth of experience from within and beyond the rail industry, from the UK and overseas – all with a common purpose.

After 4 years, it is now time for me to move on, and I will continue to support the industry in delivering for passengers and freight operators, in the first instance through my Senior Independent Director role on the Network Rail Board.

I wish everyone in the company every success as they go on to deliver a cost-effective railway for the good of the Oxford-Cambridge arc.

EWR Co was set up as an operational arms-length body in 2018 to explore new and better ways of delivering infrastructure by accelerating the pace at which projects are built, while driving down costs to secure a better deal for customers and taxpayers.

Neil's appointment comes as the project enters a new phase of delivery, following the [confirmation in January of £760 million in government funding for works between Bicester and Bletchley](#).

These works are expected to create 1,500 jobs and will include the construction of a new station at Winslow, as well as enhancements to existing stations along the route, including Bletchley.