

# East West Rail Phase 2

## Project Newsletter, Spring 2021

### Welcome

Welcome to the spring 2021 issue of the East West Rail Alliance (EWRA) project newsletter. I hope that you are keeping safe and well during these challenging times.

I would like to once again apologise on behalf of EWRA for the disruption caused by our works. We appreciate the patience and understanding of the community and we remain committed to both minimising the disruption, while also trying to complete our works sooner to reduce the duration of the disruption.

As reported in the winter issue of the newsletter, 2021 will be a significant year for the East West Rail Phase 2 (EWR2) project with the substantial part of the main civils works (comprising mainly of excavation, new structures and drainage) to be completed by the second quarter of 2022. Following completion of the civil works the project will be focused on track construction and installation of the railway systems with most of the required materials being delivered by rail, which means construction traffic generated by the EWR2 project will be significantly reduced after the second quarter of 2022.

Since our last newsletter the project has made good progress and several key project milestones have been successfully achieved, which you can read more about below.

As ever, we have included local progress update tailored to your area and we have also created a new section dedicated to our earthworks programme, which continue to ramp up over the coming months.

At the time of print, the Alliance is preparing for our May Bank Holiday which will see over 100 precast concrete beams will be installed above the West Coast Main Line during a three day closure of the railway. The new beams will form the deck structure for the new Bletchley Flyover structure that will carry the East West Rail line over the existing West Coast Mainline.

Finally, I wanted to thank all those who took part in our recent newsletter survey. We have had largely positive feedback on the format, frequency, and usefulness of the newsletter as well as some constructive feedback on how it can be improved which we have tried to incorporate into this issue. You can read more on the results below and I hope you find this latest edition of the newsletter of use.

We are acutely aware that our works are having an impact on the communities near to the project and we will continue to strive to minimise these impacts wherever we can. In the event that you do observe something that causes concern please do not hesitate to contact our project hotline.

Once again thank you for your continued support and interest in the project.

**Mark Cuzner, EWR Alliance Director**



Over 100 beams wait to be installed on Bletchley Flyover

**ATKINS**  
Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group

**NetworkRail**

**LAING O'Rourke**

**VolkerRail**

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## Project Progress

**Since the last issue of the newsletter we have continued to make significant progress across all areas of the project.**

Our work to the local highways in the vicinity of the project are now substantially complete. These improvements included over 130 separate activities to widen roads, create passing bays, construct accesses to our work sites, compounds and haul roads, all designed to reduce our impact on the local road network. Our highways teams will now focus on completing the small number of remaining activities as well as carrying out ongoing repairs and maintenance as and when required.

We have completed piling activities for all the bridges required for the project (except for Winslow cutting), which has allowed significant progress on the construction of the five new overbridges required for the project. You can read more about progress of each bridge in the area updates. We have also successfully installed the first of ten new footbridges for the project at Jarvis Lane near the western boundary of the project.

At Bletchley we have continued to carry out the complex work required to bring the Bletchley Flyover up to modern standards. The existing structure above the West Coast Mainline has been successfully dismantled and the bridge abutments that will support the new bridge beams across the railway have been constructed. The new bridge beams will be placed over the West Coast Mainline during a major railway possession that will take place over the early May Bank Holiday.



Charbridge Lane overbridge, April 2021

At the north end of Bletchley Flyover work has also started on the new high-level station that will extend from the existing Bletchley Station and provide passenger access to the new railway. Piling and foundations have been completed and work will start shortly on the station construction.

Finally, in mid-April, the first section of new track for the EWR2 project was successfully installed near Bicester. This is a key milestone for the project because it is not only the first section of track, but it will also enable access for the engineering trains that will carry out the track construction across the whole project.

### Station Road overbridge takes shape

One of the five new overbridges to be constructed on the project, the Station Road overbridge has made significant progress in recent months.

As reported in the winter 2020/2021 issue of the newsletter, the team were busy installing all the precast concrete shell abutments ahead of the bridge beams being lifted into place.

The beams were successfully installed on site in March and the structure is now largely completed. The team will now focus on the significant amount of earthworks that are required to tie the bridge into the local road network.



Station Road Overbridge, April 2021



## Sandhill Road Closure

Over recent weeks and months, we have been engaging with local residents and stakeholders regarding the closure of Sandhill Road, a road that crosses over the railway to the south east of Steeple Claydon via a road bridge. Due to the age and condition of the Sandhill Road bridge the structure requires replacing and upgrading to modern day standards.

A high pressure gas main supply line runs across Sandhill road on the north side of the bridge and initial surveys which were presented during consultation showed that a protection slab could be installed to protect the gas line without it having to be replaced, resulting in a 12 week closure of Sandhill Road.

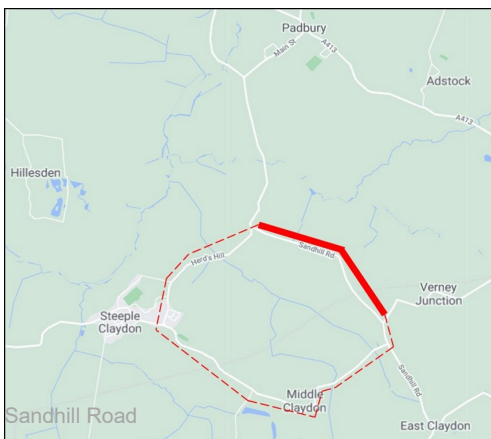
The owner and operator of the high pressure gas supply line, Southern Gas Network (SGN) carried out further surveys to the gas supply line crossing over Sandhill Road and concluded it would necessitate considerably more work, requiring shutting down the supply leading to an outage. This can only be carried out in the summer months when gas usage is lower than at other times of the year.

Due to the additional work to the gas line and having to revise the bridge replacement work around this has resulted in having to close Sandhill Road for a longer period than originally anticipated.

After receiving feedback from residents and we have carried out a full review of all work with SGN who will carry out the pipeline replacement and our supply partners shorten the time frame.

As a result, some key changes have been made to both the SGN and EWRA works plans, allowing us to shorten the length of time the road is closed by nearly 50%.

In summary, the High Pressure Gas main work will take place from 10 May - 17 August. The final bridge and road work will then take place from 17 August - 5 September, a total 17 week closure. Access to all properties will remain throughout.



A final notification to residents and businesses impacted by the upcoming closure has been issued and thank you to all those who have been involved in the feedback process, including those who dialled into the live webinar we hosted earlier in the year to provide an update on our plans.

## Traffic Ambassadors and Variable Message Signs deployed

As part of our plans to monitor and improve the flow of EWR2 construction traffic (including vehicles used by the Alliance and our supply chain partners), Traffic ambassadors have been recruited and deployed to local areas across the project.

The Ambassadors will monitor the performance of the projects traffic flows and will report any issues they observe to our Logistics and Construction Managers who will be able to take immediate action.

In addition, the Ambassadors will monitor delivery vehicles to ensure they comply with requirement to display EWR2 identification, and to ensure EWR2 construction vehicles stick to the approved construction routes for the project. Finally, they will monitor driving behaviours to ensure compliance with the law. Our ambassadors will be identifiable by their hi-vis EWRA branded jackets and EWRA labelled vehicles.

The Alliance has also installed 14 Variable Message Signs (VMS) across the Bicester to Bletchley area, with messaging will displayed to request EWR2 construction traffic to follow the "20 is Plenty Campaign" where applicable, direct vehicles from unapproved construction routes and warn of potential delays due to traffic in the area.

It is hoped the appointment of these Traffic Ambassadors will help us manage the flow and performance of our construction vehicles across the project, however, should you spot any issues caused by any vehicle associated with the EWR2 project, please report this to [publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk](mailto:publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk) or via the Network Rail Helpline on 0345 711 4141.



## Lending a hand in the local community

The Alliance has continued to carry out a number of community engagement projects and volunteering opportunities, despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since the last issue of the newsletter:

- Our team has worked with students at Aylesbury Grammar School on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) project to come up with a design for the new Winslow Station.
- A member of the project team has volunteered with Bux & Oxon 4x4 Response Group (BORG) to help with the Covid-19 vaccination programme in Winslow.
- Continued our gardening and maintenance project at Grendon Underwood Combined School near Bicester.

If you have any thoughts and suggestions for community projects we may be able to get involved with, please contact [publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk](mailto:publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk).

## Artificial otter holts in use

We're delighted to report that we now have evidence of the artificial otter holts constructed across the project being used by the local otter population.

The otter holt - located in one of the Environmental Compensation Sites constructed to offset the environmental impact that the project will have during the construction stage – has been regularly monitored by our Ecology team since it's construction. During this time the team has also been trying to entice the otters to the holt by adding additional features such stepping stones and spraints (otter droppings) at the entrances.

All the team's efforts were rewarded in early March of this year, as the cameras that have been installed under licence recorded evidence of otters using the holt on a regular basis.

You can view the camera footage of an otter entering and exiting the holt in the online version of our EWR2 Project Newsletter.



An otter uses one of the artificial holts constructed by the Alliance

## Thanks for your feedback!

The EWR2 Project newsletter plays a key role in how the Alliance keeps local stakeholders and residents informed of project progress and upcoming works.

We have strived to make the newsletter as useful and informative as possible, embracing interactive technology via our online version to bring the project to life with videos and photos whilst also including localised sections to keep the communities in which we are working up to date with progress and upcoming activity.

Earlier this year we gave readers the chance to share their feedback on the newsletter with us via an online survey which ran for two weeks.

The results are now in and we're delighted to report that on average the newsletter scored 4 out of 5 in terms of its overall usefulness, with the local sections also scoring 4 out of 5 for their usefulness.

Respondents found the newsletter generally interesting and informative and the local area updates provided useful information about works in their area. As a response to feedback we've made some amendments to maps to make them clearer.

For clarity, you can contact us via [publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk](mailto:publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk) or via Network Rail's 24/7 helpline on 0345 711 4141 and your query will be directed to the most appropriate person.

You can also use the [publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk](mailto:publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk) address to let us know if you have any further feedback or suggestions for future issues of the newsletter.

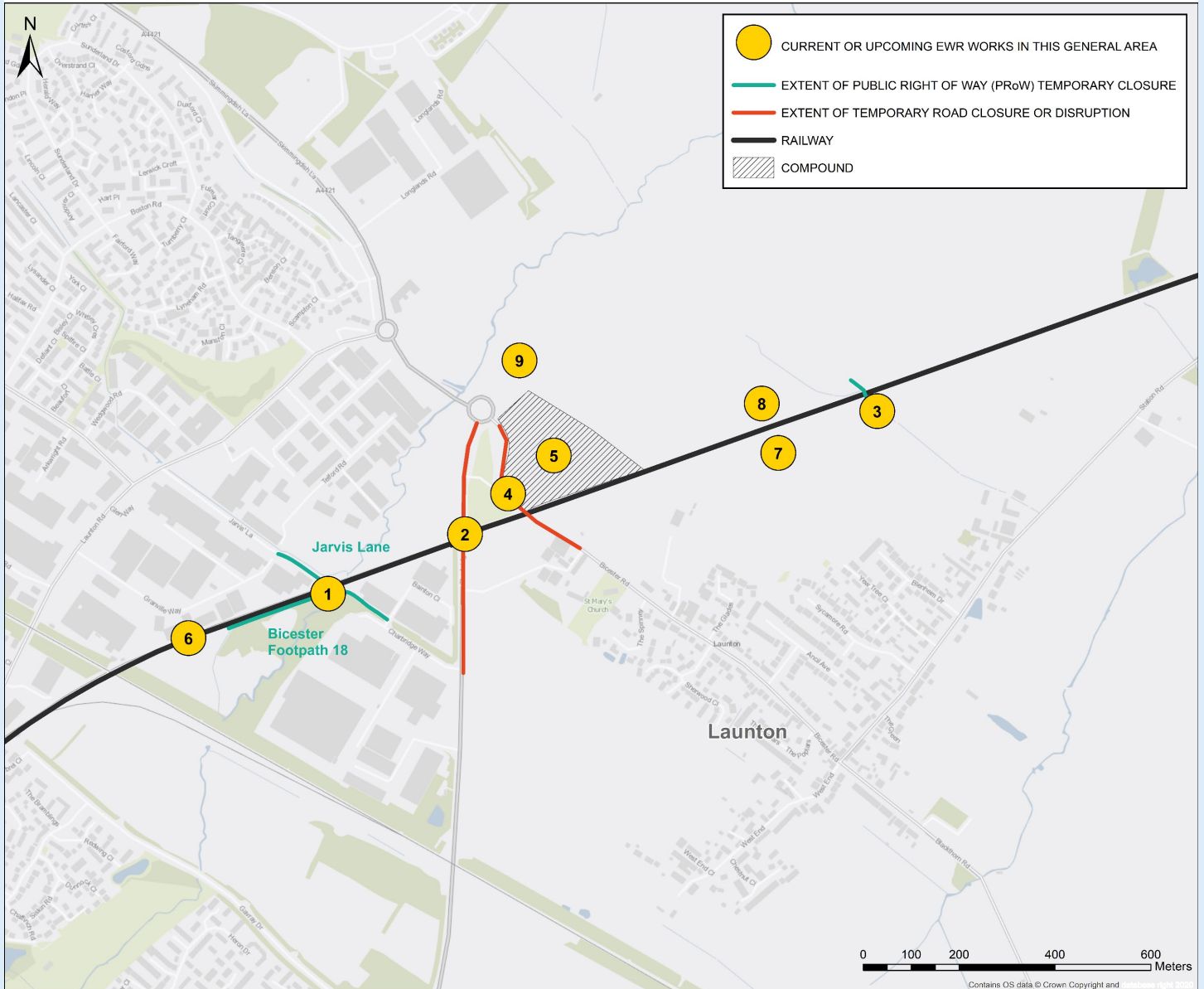
Once again, thank you for your feedback and input into the readership survey.



## Progress in your area – Bicester & Launton

The coded maps in this section mark out areas of Bicester & Launton where we will be working. Use the numbers to find out what is happening in each area, and what activity is coming up in the next three months.

### Bicester





## 1. Jarvis Lane railway works and footbridge works

**Description:** We will be reconstructing the old railway line in this area and a new footbridge is to be built which will allow people to safely cross the railway. We will reopen footpaths as soon as it is safe to do so.

**Duration:** Work began in spring 2020 and is due for completion late 2021.

**Disruption:** Footpath closure/diversions will be in place at various points during this time.

**Recent Progress:** We have recently completed the installation of the new footbridge

**Upcoming Activity:** Following the installation of the bridge and the ongoing installation of the EWR2 track in the area, the earthworks required for the new railway will continue and railway components will be delivered ready for installation.

## 2. Charbridge Lane road bridge

**Description:** One of the most significant construction activities in the area will be the new road bridge on Charbridge Lane, which we will construct using multiple temporary road diversions to minimise disruption to the local community.

**Duration:** Work started in early summer 2020 and remains due for completion in the summer of 2022.

**Disruption:** There remains temporary closure of public rights of ways in the area. Residents will also continue to see increased construction traffic as the bridge is constructed. All closures will be publicised on [one.network](#) and appropriate signage will be displayed.

**Upcoming activity:** Work over the next three months will predominantly consist of the construction of the new overbridge structure. This will involve constructing pile caps - concrete structures built on top of the piles that are driven into the ground to provide the structural support for the bridge, as well as the installation of the precast concrete components of the bridge structure.

Other works to this area will include the completion of the construction of new highway entrances to Tythe Barn and the allotments.

**Recent Progress:** The piling for the bridge structure was completed on programme and the new access to the Tythe Barn has progressed as planned.

## 3. Grange Farm footbridge

**Description:** Along the temporary haul road that we're constructing between Bicester Road and Station Road Launton, a new footbridge will be built in the Grange Farm area to allow safe crossing of the new railway.

**Duration:** Work began in autumn 2020 and is due for completion in winter 2021.

**Disruption:** There will be continued public rights of way closures in place whilst the new footbridge is constructed, and whilst the haul road between Bicester Road and Station Road Launton is used for construction traffic serving other areas of the project.

**Upcoming activity:** Over the next few months we will complete the pile cap foundations needed to provide the structural support for the new footbridge. The earthworks to the area will then take priority ahead of the new footbridge being installed late summer 2021. We plan to open the bridge in autumn 2021.

## 4. Bicester Road over bridge works

**Description:** There has been full and partial road closures in this area to refurbish the existing bridge and construct a new entrance for the local allotments. All lane and road closures have been publicised via [one.network](#) and appropriate signage has been displayed.

**Duration:** Work on the Bicester Road over bridge started in early 2021. The initial works which required the closure of Bicester Road were completed to schedule and the team will now continue the refurbishment of the bridge before installing a Vehicle Restraint System (VRS) to the bridge in the spring of 2022.

**Disruption:** Unfortunately, due to the extent of the foundation required for the VRS, a further road closure of Bicester will be necessary in order to install the VRS safely in 2022.

**Upcoming activity:** Refurbishment works to the underside of the structure will be undertaken however no disruption will be caused to the highway or pedestrians.

During the recent road closure we constructed the highway connection for the new allotment access. These works will be completed in their entirety over the next few weeks.

## 5. Main Bicester Compound construction

**Description:** A small compound was constructed in late 2019 with a view to establish our main Bicester compound just off the roundabout on Bicester Road. This will be the main hub for work in this area and will include site offices, storage for materials, maintenance, parking provision, together with welfare facilities for construction staff.

**Duration:** The compound is now fully operational and will be in place until work in the area is complete in late 2022. The land will then be reinstated to its former condition.

**Disruption:** There will be an increase in construction traffic into the site throughout the duration of our works in the area.

## 6 & 7. Railway works and haul road construction

In the coming weeks we will begin preparing the formation for the new railway to be constructed in these areas. The formation provides the ground upon which the new railway will be installed. The installation of the track is due to begin summer of 2022. In addition, we are currently constructing new haul roads for our construction traffic to use in these areas to minimise our use of public highways.

## 8 & 9. Environmental Compensation Sites

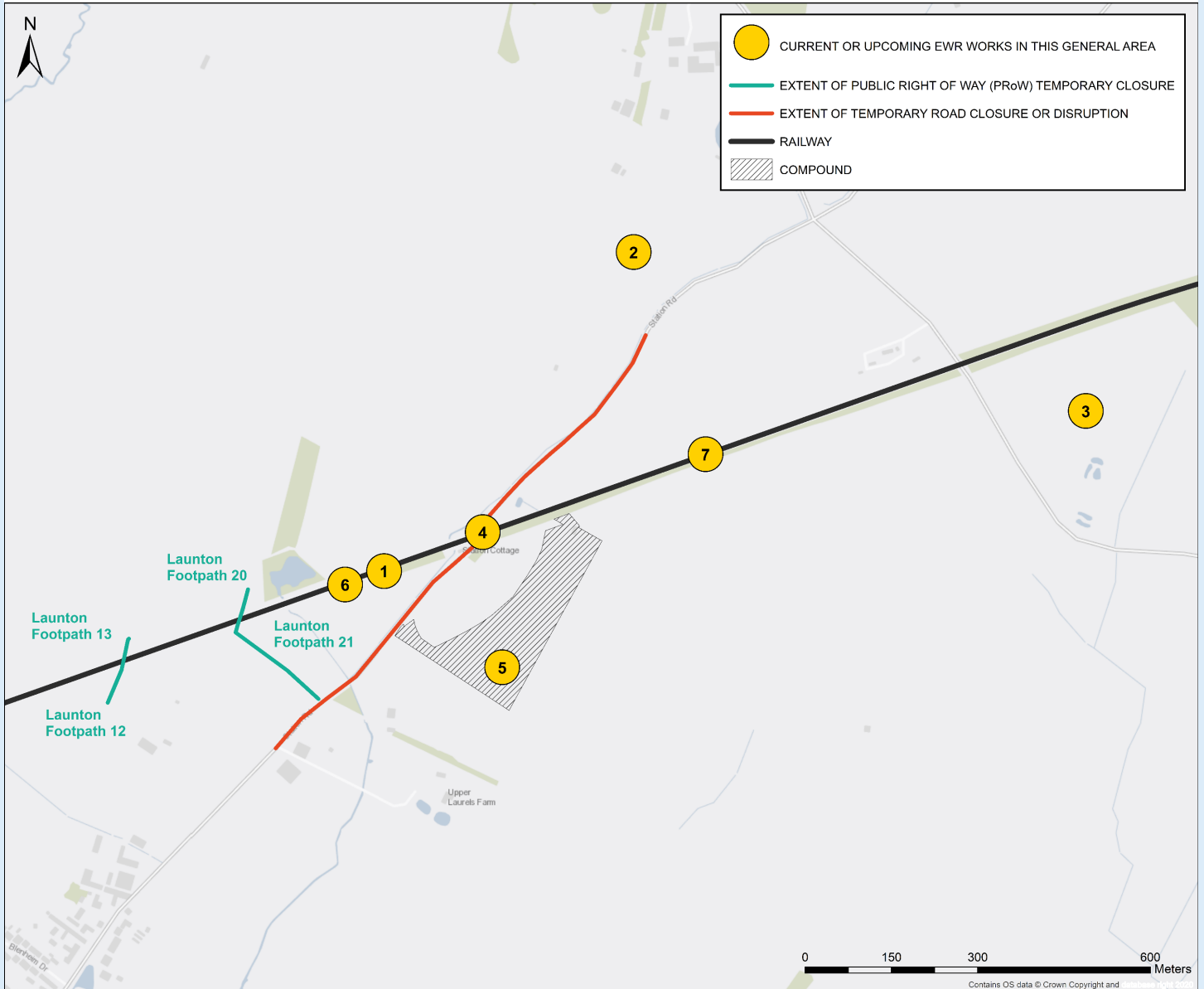
These sites have been established to mitigate our impact on the local ecology and will include features to allow local species to flourish. They include the creation of aquatic habitat features like river back waters, grasslands, scrub and woodland with specific species and features for badger, otter, reptiles, great crested newts, bats, butterflies etc.



## Progress in your area – Bicester & Launton

The coded maps in this section mark out areas of Bicester & Launton where we will be working. Use the numbers to find out what is happening in each area, and what activity is coming up in the next three months.

### Launton



## 1. Castlemann's underbridge repair

**Description:** The existing bridge structure will be upgraded to strengthen the bridge for the new railway. This will include carrying out brickwork repairs to the structure.

**Duration:** The work began in early 2021, with the initial brickwork repairs undertaken. A concrete slab to the underpass will be constructed in summer 2021 when most convenient to the underpass users.

**Disruption:** During the work there will be some restrictions to the access under the bridge.

## 2 & 3. Environmental Compensation Sites

These sites have been established to mitigate our impact on the local ecology. They include the creation of aquatic habitat features like river back waters, grasslands, scrub and woodland with specific species and features for badger, otter, reptiles, great crested newts, bats, butterflies etc.

## 4. Station Road crossing and overbridge

**Description:** As part of our works, the existing level crossing at Station Road will be replaced with a road bridge, providing road users with a bridge over the new railway.

**Duration:** The construction of the bridge started in summer 2020 and is due for completion in summer of 2022.

**Disruption:** There will, at times, be full and partial closures of Station Road whilst we construct the new road bridge. All closures will be publicised on [one.network](#) and appropriate signage will be displayed.

**Upcoming Activity:** Work has progressed well with the precast concrete shell abutments (needed to support the bridge beams) installed and the bridge span beams lifted into place. The construction of the new flood compensation site to the north of the railway corridor has also begun. Over the next few months, the bridge structure will be completed, and we will begin the earthworks required to connect the new bridge to the existing road network.

## 5. Station Road, Launton Compound construction

**Description:** We are finalising the construction compound to help with the construction of the road bridge on Station Road and other works in the area. The compound will be used to provide materials storage as well as welfare facilities for construction staff.

**Duration:** We started the compound construction in summer 2020 and it is due for completion in spring 2021.

**Disruption:** There will, at times, be full and partial closures of Station Road whilst we construct the new road bridge. All closures will be publicised on [one.network](#) and appropriate signage will be displayed.

**Upcoming Activity:** Once compound construction is complete the compound will become fully operational.

## 6. Haul road construction

**Description:** We have constructed a new haul road in this area for our construction traffic to use in order to minimise our use of public highways.

## 7. Railway works

In spring 2021 we will begin preparing the formation for the new railway to be constructed in this area. The formation provides the ground upon which the new railway will be installed. The installation of the track is due to begin summer of 2022. In addition, we are currently constructing new haul roads for our construction traffic to use in these areas to minimise our use of public highways.

→ For any queries or questions please contact us on: [publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk](mailto:publicinformation@ewralliance.co.uk)

