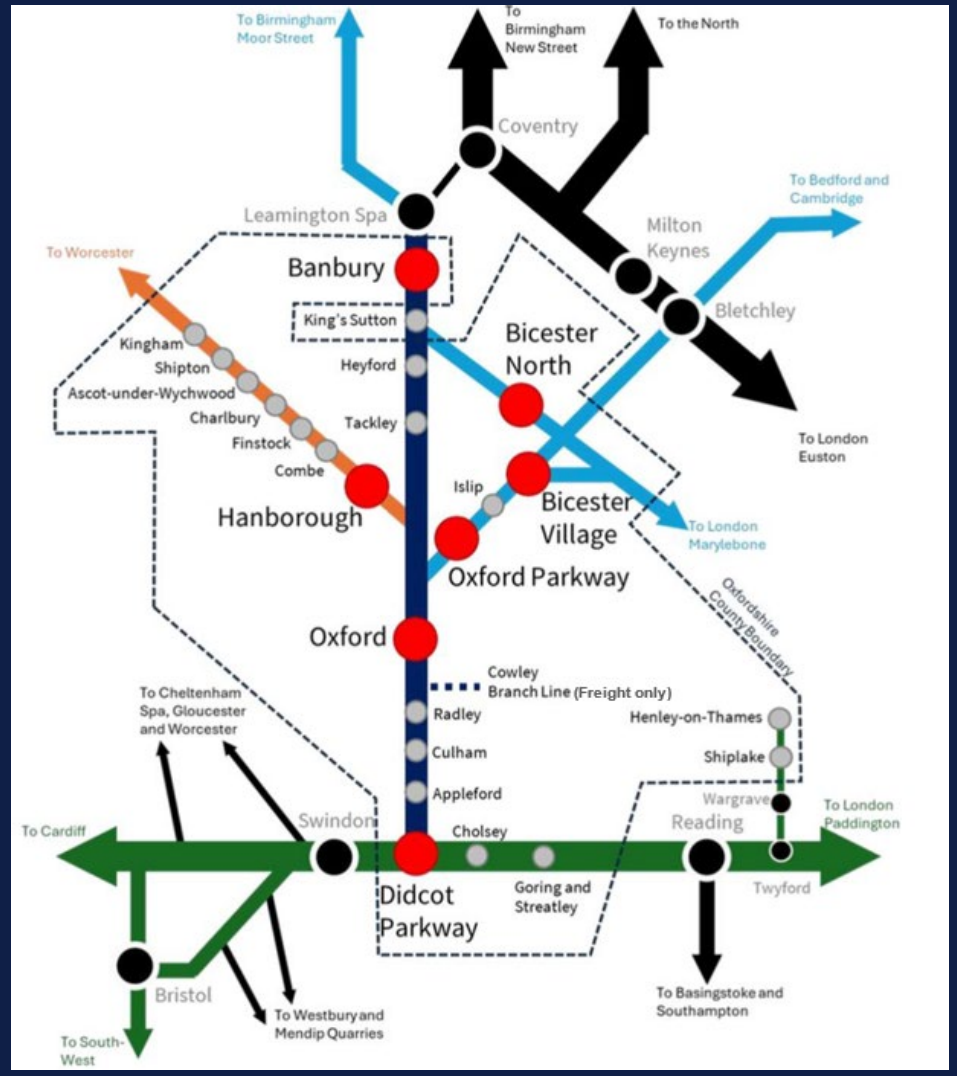
Oxfordshire rail development

Pete Brunskill MRTPI FRGS
Rail Development Lead

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Oxfordshire rail network: today



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail - a bold and ambitious new approach

- Oxfordshire LTCP sets very demanding targets on changing modal share by 2030 and 2040
- A County facing significant population growth and majorcommercial development pressures
- Need for rail, bus and active travel to do a lot more in terms of both passengers and freight
- Improved connectivity is key
- Other than the GWML in the south of the County, all services are currently diesel operated
- A strong political desire to get lorries off the road especially the A34 and more freight on to the railway

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Key priorities and deliverables

- Improving connectivity and enhancing infrastructure: the **Oxfordshire Metro**
- Climate Action: Oxfordshire **Electric Freight Spine**
- Rail as Place Shaper: **Oxford railway station**
- **Sponsor and joint fund five new railway** stations to support sustainable growth:
  - **Oxford Cowley / Littlemore**
  - **Begbroke**
  - **Wantage and Grove**
  - **Ardley**



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Consultation and engagement



- Draft plan and questionnaire hosted on ‘Let’s talk Oxfordshire’ from 3 September until 1 October
- An unprecedented response from residents, businesses, interest groups and visitors
- Some 55 detailed letters of support received
- Meetings with 278 individuals including developers and landowners, Railfuture, Oxon4Buses, Cyclox, CoHSAT Universities and Councillors at a range of in-person events
- Formal recall of the Oxfordshire Citizens Assembly

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Local Transport Authority	Consultation period	Number of responses
Oxfordshire County Council	3 September – 1 October 2025	2,571
West Midlands Rail Executive 2022	25 Oct – 11 Nov 2022	333
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	12 June – 03 Sept 2023	174
Warwickshire County Council 2019	27 July – 20 Sept 2019	167
Oxfordshire County Council	Six weeks up to 16 March 2012	89

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Redrafting and democratic approval

- WSP thorough analysis of all consultation responses and letters of support
- Careful consideration of formal recommendations made by the recalled Oxfordshire Citizens Assembly (five out of six accepted)
- RailTeam detailed review of the indicative TSS and all proposed interventions (with Network Rail)
- Called in by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Full report to the Council's Cabinet with extensive supporting documentation including an EQIA, CIA and Risk Register
- Four speakers in strong support and unanimous adoption at Cabinet on 18 November 2025

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

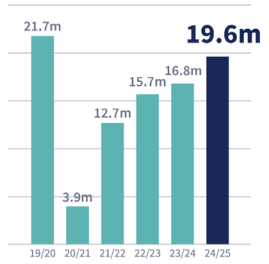
A growing passenger railway

Estimates of station usage 2024/25

Oxfordshire stations

19.6 million

Estimated total entries and exits at Oxfordshire stations this year. This is an increase of 2.8 million or **17%** from the previous year. This year's figure is **90%** of pre-pandemic levels.



Five most used stations in Oxfordshire

1. OXF — Oxford — 8.14m ▲20% YoY
2. DID — Didcot Parkway — 2.88m ▲13%
3. BAN — Banbury — 2.27m ▲20%
4. BIT — Bicester Village — 1.92m ▲9%
5. HOT — Henley-on-Thames — 0.74m ▲16%

Oxford — **Fourth most used station in the South East**, coming after Gatwick Airport (21.2m), Brighton (15.3m) and Reading (14.3m)

10 Oxfordshire stations have now exceeded pre-pandemic figures

Didcot Parkway — **Station with the highest number of interchanges in Oxfordshire** (0.67m)

21 out of 23 Oxfordshire stations saw increased usage from the previous year

Three least used stations in Oxfordshire

23. FIN — Finstock — 1,136 ▲2% YoY
22. AUW — Ascott-under-Wychwood — 1,282 ▼8%
21. CME — Combe — 1,326 ▼15%

Main origin and destination stations for Oxfordshire stations

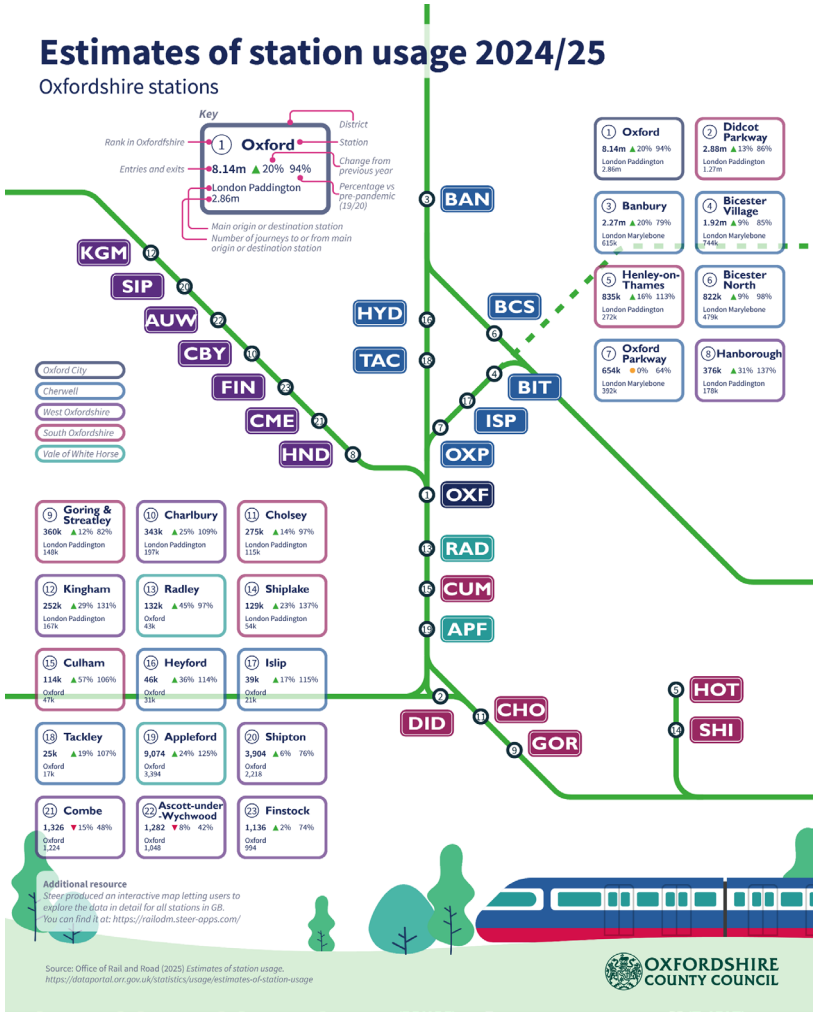
- London Paddington
- London Marylebone
- Oxford

Source: Office of Rail and Road (2025) *Estimates of station usage.* https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Estimates of station usage 2024/25

Oxfordshire stations



Source: Office of Rail and Road (2025) *Estimates of station usage.* https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Oxford railway station

Oxford station must be at the heart of the City's next phase of growth and be fully integrated with Oxfordshire's wider rail and infrastructure programme, including:

- **Reopening the Cowley Branch Line** with two new stations at Oxford Littlemore and Oxford Cowley, improving access to the City and key strategic employment sites
- Network enhancements such as **Platform 5 and a Western Concourse at Oxford**
- **Four-tracking between Radley and Oxford** and electrification to Oxford and beyond —underpinning Oxford's role as a national gateway
- The **East West Rail connection to Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge**, positioning Oxford as a pivotal hub between the West and East of England

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Oxford Station: required features

As the County's primary interchange, the new Oxford station must set the standard for seamless multimodal travel, the backbone of a connected, low-carbon rail network. Key integration priorities include:

- **Real-time coordination** with local and regional bus networks
- **High-quality walking and cycling links** including access to the Oxfordshire Strategic Active Travel Network (SATN)
- Provision for **micromobility** (e-bikes, cargo bikes, car clubs) and other accessible modes
- **Smart contactless ticketing**, intuitive wayfinding, safe interchange and secure cycle hubs

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Oxford Station – Passenger Improvement Plan

A totally new station still possibly some five – seven years away, meanwhile patronage continues to grow year on year – **do nothing is not an option**

Upgrades proposed include:

- Eastern Concourse and Cycle Parking PACE 2 and PACE 1 studies 2026-2027
- Physical delivery of concourse and new bus shelters/RTPI improvements from April 2027

Outline (indicative) cost circa £3m with GWR/DfT making £1.5m available and OCC £1.5m



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Oxford station Phase 2C works: summer 2026





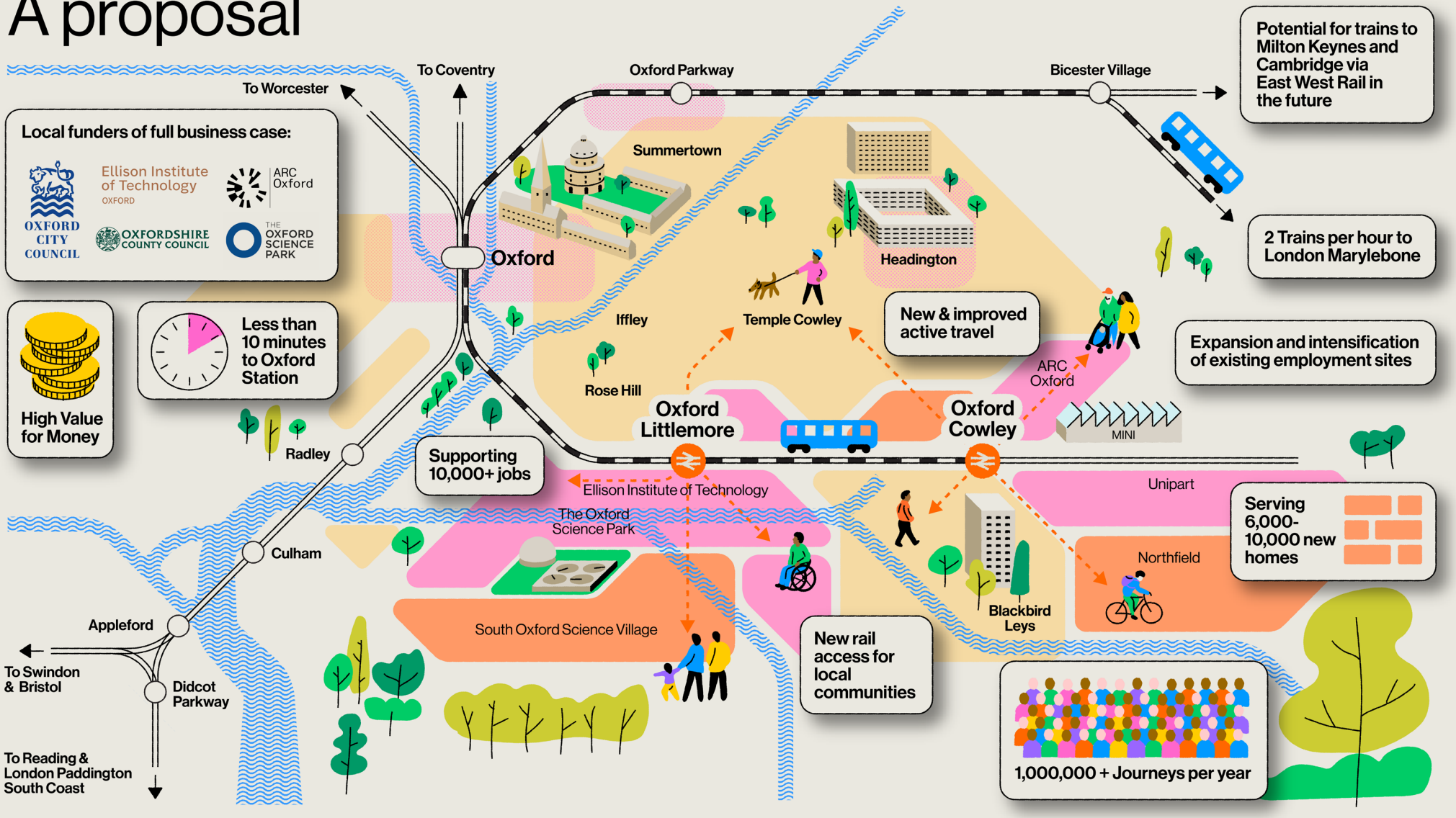




OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Reopening the Cowley Branch Line for Passengers

A proposal



Cowley Branch Line - Key Updates

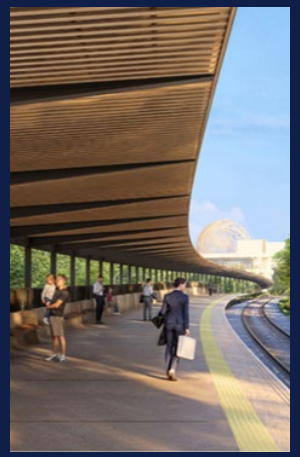
Develop-phase funding has now been released following the sign-off of the Remit Letter. This phase will run for the next five to six months, after which revised FBC will be submitted

A **full working timetable** has been developed for the Cowley service through Oxford. Performance modelling will begin in due course to validate timetable robustness and operational feasibility

Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) and environmental remits have been agreed and initial cost estimates have been received to support early planning and design development

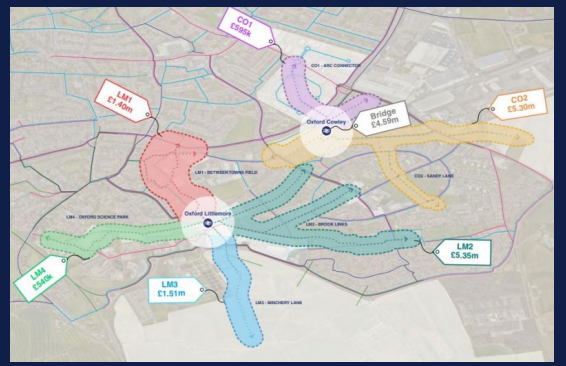
The **Oxfordshire Integration Board governance structure** has been established . A draft integration plan for the Oxford-wide works has also been developed.

Funding Strategy is being finalised to the Placemaking Connections to the Stations. Programme and 'day one' infrastructure requirements being finalised and reviewing options for Cowley Station design enhancements









OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Focus on freight



- Oxfordshire Electric Freight spine and key infrastructure investment in the Didcot area will support a considerable increase in goods carried by rail, reducing lorry congestion on key routes such as the A34, dramatically improving air quality and lessening noise pollution
- Greater allocation of paths and use of EWR is key

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Regional and national connectivity

- More – up to 20 five-car - and fully refurbished CrossCountry Voyager units
- Return of Reading – Newcastle services from Sunday 17 May
- Permanent GWR Bristol – Oxford services from 18 May, potentially increasing to hourly from May 2027 (15 tpd)
- Heathrow airport (WRLtH) access critical and improved links to Gatwick desirable



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

New rolling stock to accommodate growth and provide an improved passenger experience

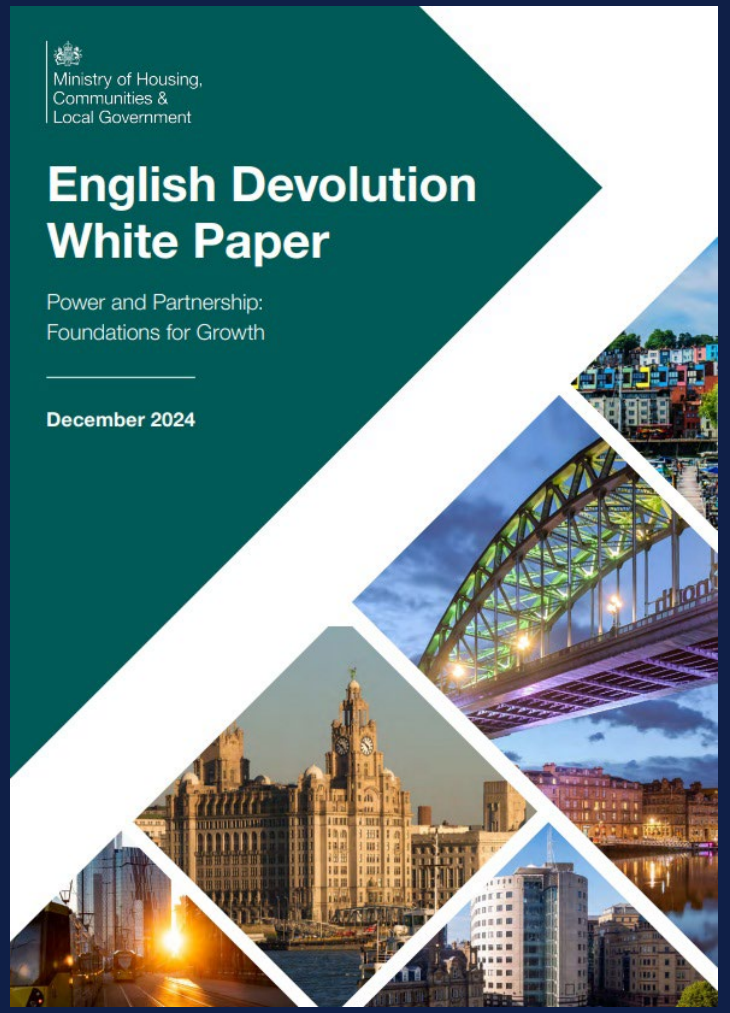
- Class 68 HVO and MK5As ‘Chiltern Explorers’ replacing nearly fifty-year-old MK3 carriages
- Releases eight Class 166 DMUs for strengthening Oxford-Marylebone services from December 2026
- New Class 196 DMUs for EWR with the RFRP delivering a potential uniform fleet of 23m five-car AC BEMUs across the Thames Valley
- CrossCountry Voyager fleet replacement. Tri-mode ten car?



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Devolution and GBR

- Chiltern Railways (20 September 2026), GWR (13 December 2026) and CrossCountry (15 October 2027) NRCs end and DfTO take over
- Network Rail routes merged into IBUs and Great British Railways will be fully in place during 2028
- Proposed Thames Valley Strategic Authority will lead on rail/bus/spatial development strategy and work closely with the IBUs and Great British Railways



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Opportunities for the construction sector

- New stations and associated infrastructure at Oxford Cowley and Oxford Littlemore from 2029
- New station and facilities at Begbroke potentially from 2031 onwards
- New station at Ardley from early-2030s
- Potential Wantage and Grove station mid to late-2030s
- Redevelopment of Oxford station likely during the early 2030s
- Enhancements at all stations in Oxfordshire, including Banbury and Didcot Parkway
- Four-tracking from Radley to Oxford, double-tracking Wolvercote junction to Hanborough, works at Oxford North junction
- Installation of 25kv AC overhead on key sections of railway across the Thames Valley

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Thank-you

Any questions?

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL