

# STOP THE ARC GROUP

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A Community Benefit Society Reg. No. 8806

## PRESS INFORMATION

3 March 2024

**For immediate publication**

### **Open Letter to Comptroller and Auditor General –**

#### **National Audit Office Has Mislead Parliament over £1Bn Inflation on East West Rail**

Dear Mr Davies,

In your [2022/3 Annual Report](#) you wrote that the effect of inflation was clearly shown on the government's infrastructure projects. Yet a few months later [your report](#) on East West Rail (EWR) ignores this problem, despite four reviews that followed my complaint about that omission. Since your quoted EWR cost (2021 prices) the Office of National Statistics estimate that infrastructure inflation is 20%. That adds over £1Bn to EWR's costs, but your team refuse to include this in the report. Are you and I are the only people who care about inflation – the very reason for the cancellation of HS2 Leg 2?

The response to my complaint admits that the 13 Dec 2023 press statement about the EWR Report was misleading and that future press statements will include references to the cost base year. However you refuse to correct the inaccurate statement that was issued. It should also have included the effect of inflation.

Your report ignores other vital issues. Your team's remit was to examine cross-government working, yet you failed to address government policies on Net Zero, food security and water shortages. This despite the fact that the courts have ruled against two major Dept for Transport projects that ignored climate change policies. You failed to criticise the Treasury for the same error in the membership of the EWR Economic Growth Board. It has subsequently emerged, but available to you at the time, that while one part of the Treasury is promoting EWR as the transport solution to the growing Cambridge BioMed Campus, another part was acquiescing in transferring the NHS capital funding away from the same Campus acute hospital needed to support the future clinical trials.

The effect of these errors has been to mislead the Public Accounts Committee, who were not spurred to action. [Our evidence](#), submitted to the PAC before your report was published, gives a more comprehensive view of the issues. And the Transport Select Committee, hearing evidence next Wednesday (6 March), are thus unable to reach a view on EWR, good, bad or indifferent.

Your complaints review process is not fit for purpose. You claim that you are not subject to external scrutiny, meaning that public and media examination is the only option available, as a previous C&AG discovered. The EWR report must be re-opened, completed in full and a correcting Press Statement issued.

I would be grateful if you acknowledge receipt.

Nick Burton, MBE  
Trustee StopTheArc Group Ltd (CBS 8806)  
Husborne Crawley

***Note for Media:***

For immediate publication

(My address is not for publication)

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**PS:** EWR's misinformation continues: their Bedford survey confirmed that 75% of responders will catch a train if one appears, but hid that nine times (44%) as many responders wanted more buses than EWR (5%), and three times as many (15%) wanted nothing!

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**Stop The Arc Group**

Stop the Arc Group is a non-political campaign group, founded in 2018 to fight the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and associated development that threatened to destroy the environment and its inhabitants. The Expressway was officially cancelled in March 2021, but other plans for the Arc remain, against which STARC actively campaigns and supports other organisations with the same objectives. STARC acknowledges that the environment is a national asset which should be protected for the health, welfare and well-being of all, making the Ox-Cam Arc not just a local and regional concern but a national issue.

STARC's mission is to fight to protect the countryside and its wildlife for the health and enjoyment of all future generations, and strive to educate people about the threats to our countryside posed by the proposed Ox-Cam Arc developments.

STARC supports new housing of the right kind and in the right location, but not the Arc's proposed growth in Oxon of more than 100%, of 66% in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, of 74% in Northamptonshire and 81% in Cambridgeshire.

STARC believes campaign groups are strongest when information and work is shared with other groups, and that local groups are most effective at mobilising their local communities. STARC has strong links with groups and Parish Councils from Oxford to Cambridge. STARC shares information and engages with BFARE, Cambridge Approaches, CPRE, BBOWT, RSPB, BEAG (Buckinghamshire Environment Action Group) and others.

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