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Latest broadside fired at busway contractor



IMPASSE: County councillors are fed up with the slow progress being made to resolve problems with the guided busway. Inset: Bob Menzies

GUIDED busway bosses have seen "no evidence" that their contractor is ready to fix defects on the track.

The depth to which the relationship with BAM Nuttall has sunk was exposed yesterday when Shire Hall chiefs passed a motion condemning the firm's performance.

It also emerged the firm had refused to provide calculations which considered the "worst case scenario" of what could happen when busway beams expand due to heat.

This is one of six issues BAM Nuttall previously provided a timetable for solving.

Three will certainly require physical work – the River Great Ouse

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viaduct, water collecting on the St Ives park and ride site and raising of the maintenance track to avoid flooding.

It is not yet known whether the other three, including the beam expansion, will require repairs.

At a meeting of Cambridgeshire County Council's cabinet, chief executive Mark Lloyd asked Bob Menzies, head of busway delivery, whether "he got any sense our contractor is gearing up to undertake physical work".

Mr Menzies replied: "I can't say we're seeing evidence of that."

Slow progress on working out

how to fix the defects had already forced bosses to concede it would be "July at the earliest" before an opening date for the link between St Ives and Cambridge could be revealed.

Mr Menzies said the drilling of boreholes to check the stability of the track foundations had begun on Monday, and expressed hope the viaduct and park and ride issues could be resolved.

The beams caused the most concern because, while calculations confirmed some gaps between concrete were not wide enough to allow for expansion, it was not clear what the effect of this could be.

Mr Menzies said BAM Nuttall

had not considered the "worst case scenario" in terms of safety in the data they had provided – something it was meant to do and the council will now push for.

Mr Menzies said he believed there was "very little chance of exploding beams coming up in the air" but said the risk to beams and bolts needed to be assessed.

The cabinet passed a motion expressing its "ongoing dissatisfaction with the contractor's performance".

Cllr Jill Tuck, council leader, said: "I cannot understand the business sense of them not providing the information."

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