

More anger after latest report into busway delay



CONFIRMATION: Roy Pegram has formally revealed that BAM Nuttall is being penalised

GUIDED busway contractor BAM Nuttall is trying to shift liability for a track defect on to taxpayers, the *News* can reveal.

Councillors and officials involved with the beleaguered project reacted angrily to the publication last night of a progress report which showed the firm was slipping even further behind its own deadlines.

The document said it would be "unwise to speculate" on when the long-delayed link between Cambridge and St Ives might open, because there was "no clear programme" for resolving six faults which have been identified.

Cllr Roy Pegram, Cambridgeshire County Council's infrastructure boss, said: "BAM Nuttall has broken the promises it made to Cambridgeshire residents and it simply is not good enough.

"Some of these defects go back more than one year and were raised at the

■ CHRIS HAVERGAL
Local government correspondent

time they submitted their initial designs which make the latest delay by BAM Nuttall even more infuriating."

A report going before the authority's cabinet next Tuesday shifts the focus on to the River Great Ouse viaduct, which has been built without expansion joints and consequently leaks water on to steel beams, possibly shortening the bridge's lifespan.

The parts were included in initial designs and BAM Nuttall has now submitted a solution which the council says would not solve the problem completely and would transfer liability for the design on to taxpayers.

Councillors are also frustrated at slow progress on raising the adjacent maintenance track and cycleway to stop flooding.

The report discloses BAM Nuttall waited until the minutes of a meeting

with the Environment Agency were agreed before issuing a draft instruction to designers.

John Onslow, the authority's acting executive director for environment services, said the company was now "revisiting the argument over liability for the defect" rather than issuing a formal instruction and he branded this "unacceptable".

He adds: "While there has been more progress on these issues in the last six weeks rather than in the preceding six months, none has yet been resolved."

Yesterday Cllr Pegram officially confirmed for the first time that BAM Nuttall was being deducted damages of nearly £14,000 a day for late delivery of the project, as the *News* reported in January.

A BAM Nuttall spokesman said the firm was unable to comment for contractual reasons.

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