

Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order

Dear Secretary of State for Transport,

I am writing to you in my capacity of Walk Leader of health walks, the scheme locally being called the **Heart Beat Health Walks**. These take place on four days each week for 51 weeks each year and are now in their 15th year of continuous operation. Therefore my immediate reaction is to be in opposition to any proposed closure of existing footpaths.

In respect of the works proposed for the parish of Littleport in Cambridgeshire, I note the proposed permanent closure of the footpath defined by the markers PO41, PO42 and PO43 and would advise you that *that* route so defined has been impassable with safety since works were carried out on the relief drain on the SW side of the path in 2002/2003. Since then, a public enquiry in connection with a proposal by the railway company to close the railway crossing where footpath 11 crosses the railway, it has been possible to walk a revised route to a realigned railway crossing on the SW side of the open drain. The inspector at the public enquiry ruled that the crossing should be maintained as the path diversion route suggested (indicated on sheet 13 plan by numbers 27, 28 and 29) would take pedestrians in close proximity to road traffic and was less safe, therefore, than a properly ordered railway crossing. To this end, the inspector made a number of suggested improvements to the rail crossing which were carried out subsequently by the rail company. In view of the findings of that public enquiry, I hope that the path across the railway at this point will be retained, rather than risk the expense of a further public enquiry since conditions remain unchanged at that point.

I am not appointed spokesman for the 289 current participants of the walk scheme named, but as leader I am necessarily concerned with their health and safety in general and not just at the times when the various walks are being taken. Where using roads is unavoidable, there is always a danger of physical contact between vehicle and pedestrian, but what is covert and more sinister is the danger to health incident upon the inhalation of traffic exhaust fumes which pollute the air, mainly due to the presence of particulates and NO_x. In quite recent times, the government department has become alarmed with the nature and extent of the pollution issues and the consequences of damage to public health. (Actually, I know from my own personal experiences that information about the dangers of high levels of atmospheric pollution has been known for about 50 years, but successive governments seem to have taken little heed of the information to influence their policies or decisions to prevent the situation becoming critical.) It is no secret that health care is an ever increasing burden on public finances and it is the duty of every inhabitant to try and reduce that burden in whatever way is possible. That is why I consider the preservation of safer, cleaner walking places and paths is very important and to be taken seriously. Therefore, I trust that you will think carefully about all the issues involved before making your decisions.

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Walk Leader
Heart Beat Health Walks, East Cambs.

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WELCOME TO HEART BEAT HEALTH WALKS – EAST CAMBS !

These are just a few notes to help introduce you to this walk scheme with the hope that you will come to enjoy its exercise, company and facilities on offer.

To start with, a little history: Health walk schemes were set up in locations all over the country , driven by the “Walking the way to Health Initiative” from the year 2000 (this website is still in use if you wish to know more about schemes currently in operation nationwide). The Heart Beat Health Walks scheme was set up in East Cambs during the closing months of 2002, this task being visited upon the staff of the local NHS smoking cessation clinics in East Cambs. The scheme was launched on 14th February 2003 with the walk at Littleport, which, for the first year served as a pilot operation. Walks at Soham, Ely, Burwell, Haddenham and Sutton were added during April 2004. Apart from Haddenham, all these walks have run continuously since then, and it is estimated that during this time about 4000 people have enrolled to walk. Some of those who enrolled initially still attend regularly, and two of the original walk leaders still lead walks ! Each week, on average, a total of 75 walkers attend for one walk or more, and it can be considered that 250 could be called “regular walkers”.

Conduct of the Walks:

Where possible, each walk will be supervised by a minimum of two leaders, who will carry identity badges. One walk leader will lead the way and the other will be at the back of the group during the walk. The leaders assume responsibility for your care for the duration of the walk, and you are advised to follow their directives when given. However, you will be expected to observe all normal personal precautions and care. You may leave the walk at any time that you wish but please make sure that a walk leader is advised of your intention. It is strongly advised that you carry with you contact details of persons to be contacted on your behalf in case of emergency. If you are unfortunate enough to have a medical condition which might need emergency attention (e.g. asthma, epilepsy, allergy), it is wise to carry with you the appropriate medicine. Walk leaders are first-aid trained and *will ensure* that you receive any necessary treatment, but it will help if they are aware of your problems at the time of enrolment on the walks.

For a small charge, a laminated identity card with suitable details can be provided for you to carry with you, and, should you wish, can include a small photo to certify your identity. It is good practice to carry with you such details at all times wherever you are.

The Venues:

Mondays: Soham, 10.00 a.m. Meet at St. Andrews Church, Fountain Lane

Tuesdays: Littleport, 10.30 a.m. Meet at the Harley-Davidson metal sculpture opposite St Andrews Church

Tuesdays: Ely, 2.00 p.m. Meet near main entrance to Ely Cathedral, The Minster

Wednesdays: Sutton , 10.00 a.m. Meet at bend of The Brook at entrance to junior school

Thursdays: Burwell, 10.00 a.m. Meet at War Memorial near post office

Friday – last in the month only: Sutton, Place and time as Wednesday.

Wednesday : Haddenham , 2.00 p.m. (to be advised when operational).

All walks last approximately one hour and vary between 2 and 3 miles in length.

After Walk Facilities:

All walks have opportunity for refreshment on completion and toilet facilities are available at most. Please ask a walk leader for appropriate directions, in brief:-

Soham, Conveniences available near church and at Atasca (refreshments) in High Street

Littleport, Conveniences and refreshment at YPL Granby Street – also Main Street

Ely, Conveniences (Palace Green and Cloisters) Many premises serving refreshments

Sutton, Second Wednesdays and last Fridays each month Nellies Charity Café provides refreshment and toilet facility. Small tea room in High Street.

Burwell. Day centre in Ash Grove. The walk has privileged use of facilities for refreshment, and, if urgent, toilet facilities may be used. Public convenience in the Causeway near library.

Haddenham, Martha's Pantry on Friday, Three Kings Pub.

WHY WALK ? Press abstract.

The UK chief medical officers recommend adults spend at least 150 minutes per week in moderate physical activity, and one way of achieving this would be to walk for 30 minutes on five days each week – for children, at least 60 minutes per day, preferably more. Only about one third of people in Britain achieve these recommended levels.

“ If a medication existed which had similar effects to the physical activity of walking, it would be regarded as a ‘wonder drug’ or a ‘miracle cure’ . “ (Quote from Chief Medical Officer in 2010).

Inactivity is a key factor responsible for the dramatic growth of obesity. Recent studies have shown that 61% of English adults and 30% of children are overweight or obese.

All forms of walking are beneficial, but for the greatest benefit to heart, lungs and blood pressure, brisk is best. This stimulates heart and circulation beneficially. Regular repetition of this exercise method will:

- = Improve performance of the heart, lungs and circulation
- = Lower blood pressure
- = Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and strokes (inactive and unfit people have double the risk of dying from coronary heart disease.

Walking at **any** speed will:

- = Help manage weight

- = Reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes (sometimes referred to as age-related diabetes)
- = Reduce the risk of some cancers e.g. of colon, breast and lung.
- = Improve flexibility and strength of joints, muscles and bones, and reduce the risk of osteoporosis (brittle bones).
- = Increase “good” cholesterol
- = Boost the immune system
- = Improve mood, reduce anxiety, aid sleep and improve self-image
- = Managing and/or recovering from health problems.

In general, walking in moderation will help recovery from many medical conditions and positively influence the quality of life for almost everyone. Done in company it will help to stave off effects of loneliness and depression and encourage a more positive outlook on life.

November 2017