

Questions for Cross Examination from OBJ/84 (Rachel Wood)

Three Questions for Mr. Mark Brunnen (on NR/27-1)

Question 1:

In 5.6 on page 15, you mention the requirement to pay attention to “the need to minimise the possible transfer of risk”.

Although I understand you are speaking here of transferring risk to other crossings, would it not be reasonable to apply the same principle to the possible transfer of risk to local traffic hotspots, and if a well-used crossing is closed and people chose to drive instead of walking the proposed alternative route, because it is in their view not acceptable or convenient enough, then is it not important to consider the consequences at local traffic hotspots?

Please note that in this I am not speaking of the issue of shifting risk so that other authorities have to take responsibility – I am instead speaking of the increased risk of injury to pedestrians and car users. Surely we should agree that this is of concern to all of us?

Moreover, on the point that the first option to be considered in a risk control strategy is to close crossings – it is important to remember that we don’t have the luxury of simply closing dangerous hot spots on the roads.

Question 2:

In the same passage (5.6 on page 15), you also speak of the requirement to pay attention to “the possibility of importing new dangers such as increasing the likelihood of trespass.”

Would you not agree that there is a danger of doing exactly this if a well-used crossing is closed without the provision of an alternative route which is acceptable to the users?

Question 3:

Section 6.1 (on p. 20) indicates that Network Rail is committed to risk management, including “support for public education”; in this case, I would like to know when you have approached local schools sited near level crossings.

Thank you very much for your attention to these questions.

Three Questions for Dr. Eliane Algaard (NR/28-1)

Question 1:

Regarding Section 2.6.6 (p. 13):

Is it correct that crossings were put forward for Phase 1 and 2 on the basis that they “could be diverted and removed through the utilisation of existing nearby infrastructure”?

Does it not therefore become critical that the diversion offered is regarded as acceptable and appropriate by the users, so that they do actually use it, rather than driving instead?

Would you not agree that if users indicate that they will drive rather than using the proposed alternative route, then the decision to put a crossing forward for Phase 1 and 2 should be reconsidered?

Question 2:

Similarly, in 2.6.13 (p. 14), reference is made to the Core planning principles described in paragraph 17 (on p. 5) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), in particular, the 11th and 12th bullets, which in their fuller form state that planning should:

- “actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs”.

If users are stating that they would choose to drive instead of using a proposed alternative route, or that their social wellbeing will be damaged by the proposed closure, then would you not agree that the Network Rail proposal does not actually accord with the principles in paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework?

Question 3:

Similarly, in Section 2.6.18 (p. 15), reference is made to the House of Commons Transport Committee report ‘Safety at level crossings’ (2014), and you state that you consider that the various factors included in the public interest test for closure of level crossings (paragraph 28 of the report, p. 16) have been taken into account. These include:

- ii) the convenience of the public;
- iii) the efficiency of the transport network (including the network of public paths);
- and
- v) the need for the crossing and its significance for the local community (including the protection of heritage)

Please could you explain whether you still hold this view after looking at the submissions of local residents (for example, regarding S22 Weatherby), and if so why?

Thank you very much for your attention to these questions.