

OBJ/40

Caroline O'Neill

From: F.C Palmer & Sons
Sent: 24 April 2017 15:40
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order
Attachments: Davids Letter, re crossing closures..docx

Importance: High

Dear Transport and Works Act Orders Unit,

Please see attached my objection to the proposed closure of the works user crossings on our farm.

Please can you send a receipt email to confirm delivery.

Regards

David Palmer

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20 April 2017

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport and Works Act Orders Unit
General Counsel's Office
Department for Transport
Zone 1/18 Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Sirs

Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order

I refer to the various notices which have been served by Network Rail to acquire compulsory powers to close the level crossings referred to as C34 – Fysons, C01 – Chittering C-33 Jack OTells (Adams Crossing) and C02 – Nairns in the proposed Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order.

I have instructed our Agents, Messrs Cheffins to formally object to the proposed closure of all three level crossings but I wanted to write to you myself to explain the huge impact that the closure of these crossings will have on my business and my family.

I started farming with my brother, Ian Palmer in 1980 and we expanded the business to farming approximately 350 acres by 1989. That year, Stowbridge Farm, Stretham comprising 1,000 acres and buildings was put on the market. Ian and I scraped enough assets and funds together to enable us to borrow the money to purchase Stowbridge Farm, Stretham. Despite some lean times in the early nineties, we managed to keep going and over the last 25 years, the business has grown to approximately 3,150 acres which straddles the Cambridge to Ely railway line.

During this period, my Nephews, Adam and Luke and Ians son-in-law, Kier have joined the business and we now grow a wide range of root and vegetable crops on our farm providing employment for over 20 people.

I have always maintained a good working relationship with Network Rail and their predecessors as we rely on the three level crossings to access the 1,753 acres of land which we farm on the east side of the railway line. However, I have been extremely disappointed by the high handed way in which Network Rail and their Agents, Bruton Knowles have dealt with the proposed closure of the level crossings. They have taken the attitude that the crossings are going to be closed irrespective of the impact on our farm and our livelihoods.

Whilst Network Rail originally led us to believe that they were prepared to consider automating the C-33 Jack OTells crossing, they are now seeking compulsory powers to close this crossing although they will be maintaining the pedestrian crossing immediately to the north.

If Network Rail are granted compulsory powers to close all three level crossings, this will sever the farm and will make it unviable for us to continue farming in our present structure. The business will have to be restructured, the range of crops grown will have to be reduced and the labour employed will have to be significantly reduced. This will have a devastating impact on me and my partners, all because Network Rail are unwilling to consider the automation of the C-01 Chittering crossing.

I very much hope that you will urge Network Rail to reconsider the options and engage in some meaningful discussions with me and my partners before granting Network Rail compulsory powers.

Yours faithfully

David F Palmer