

PUBLIC INQUIRY

APPLICATION BY NETWORK RAIL UNDER TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION ORDER 200X

OBJ/12-CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Andy Lonnen

**C11 Furlong Drove, Little Downham
C27 Willow Row Drove, Littleport**

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Andy Lonnen. I have lived at 57 The Row, Sutton, Ely, CB6 2PB for 16 years.
2. I teach design and technology part-time at Witchford Village College, and also build punts for some of the Cambridge Colleges.
3. I got into 'green-laning' on lanes and byways about 10 years ago. Green laning is the term given to motorcycling or driving on unsurfaced routes. I had ridden on the roads but also enjoyed walking in Derbyshire and Yorkshire. The countryside around here isn't as dramatic as hilly areas, but green laning is more of a challenge and enjoyable than walking. You can go larger distances, and, being a busy teacher and a dad, time is often tight so it means I can cover a greater distance.
4. Green laning is physically quite a good work-out, and it's mentally challenging as well as you're always planning the route. It's something that completely clears your head because you have to focus on what you're doing. It's also the joy of being out in the countryside where it's very peaceful. It's that feeling of well-being.
5. Green laning also quite sociable and I usually go out in a group. However I also use the byways through Witcham and Coveney as part of my route going home from work in Witchford three times a week as it's more interesting than the road and helps me de-stress. They're different every time I ride them because of the weather and what the farmers have been doing on them. Sometimes I might take a longer route home using Furlong Drove or Willow Row Drove.

6. I am a member of the Trail Riders' Fellowship (TRF) and they do a ride each month. I often offer to lead a local ride. The lanes above Little Downham are interesting to do, and I use Furlong Drove and Willow Row Drove every 2-3 weeks because they are part of the same route that we use. We meet up sometimes at Earith but more often go from my house. Witcham, Wardy Hill, then Pymoor, which leads us nicely on to Dunkirk, which takes in Furlong Drove. Then we do a bit road work and then go past Little Downham to Beald Drove and Coffue Drove in Little Downham.
7. I am not contesting the proposed closure of Coffue Drove because there is an underpass that we usually use anyway for so we can continue the ride without getting off.
8. I became aware of the proposals through the Cambridgeshire TRF Secretary Adrian Kendall. I did provide a response to the June 2016 **(21/06/17)** consultation about Furlong Drove, Willow Row Drove, Coffue Drove; and Westley Bottom in Westley Waterless, but I never received a response Network Rail. Westley Bottom is out of my area so I only use it occasionally but I have friends who do use them regularly. However I use the other routes very frequently.

C11 FURLONG DROVE, LITTLEPORT

9. With Furlong Drove there is an 8-10 inch step up onto the boardwalk which is a bit tricky and is more of an issue if it's wet. The railway is also at quite an oblique angle to the byway, although the decking itself is square on. However it's generally fine as it's a long stretch of line and we make more of an effort to help each other across. We just deal with what we find; we're not bothered if a route is overgrown and muddy.
10. I like to take time to look around and if we're in a group we'll often stop and admire the views. You get a particularly nice view of the cathedral straight ahead all the way along this route which is quite spiritual.
11. The proposal would basically be an extinguishment of 2km. I wouldn't use the route if it became two dead-ends, because there would be no point. I couldn't get through.
12. If the proposed bridleway were to be a byway it would help a little bit but you are still removing about a kilometre of the route. It would be a loss to me and my fellow riders of a valuable amenity. I would prefer that the route was kept open.

[Continued...please see next page for Willow Row Drove]

C27 WILLOW ROW DROVE, LITTLEPORT

13. When I lead this route, we join Willow Row Drove at Denver Farm on Ten Mile Bank and then go to Croft via Hale Fen Road. I don't have any problem with this gate. It's easier than the Furlong Drove crossing, especially if you're in a group because someone will get off and open both gates and see the other riders across. Riding across is safer as you are more balanced. If I'm on my own I will get off, park up, open both gates, push the bike over under power and then park up and go back to close the gates.
14. If the proposed bridleway link was made as a byway it would lessen the impact of the proposed closure on motorcyclists as we could go along it and re-join our network. If not, we would have to use Poplar Drove or go back to the A10 and go up Mow Fen Drove, or the next one which goes up Camel Road. I don't see any reason why motorcyclists shouldn't be able to use the proposed link as well.
15. If it wasn't possible to upgrade the bridleway to a byway, I would like to keep the route open in order to maintain the route options. I would be very disappointed if this proposal went through as it would be taking away a route that I very much enjoy using. At school we were looking at some of the courses that were being considered for stopping. You could say they can just do something else, but it affects their learning because they won't be doing it any more. It's a bit like this with Network Rail's proposal. Once the routes are gone, they're gone, they're gone forever.
16. I noted on NR's consultation document that it said there was no evidence of use of tracks – tarred with brush of damaging routes with other off-road users. I've often been with 10-12 riders and been at the back and got to a junction, and you can't see where they've gone. This is because motorcyclists don't damage surfaces. Therefore NR's statement is not true.
17. In fact, the TRF will often work with the local highway authority to help repair routes, even if they haven't damaged them themselves. The TRF like to work with the responsible bodies and assist with solving problems on lanes in order to keep them open, rather than just demand that something is done. Although Network Rail consulted us, they don't seem to have done anything with the information we sent. I would like to have seen Network Rail talking with us as a user group to find a solution. What they are proposing is not like for like. It feels like a divide and conquer approach.
18. I believe the facts stated in this proof of evidence are true.

Signed 

Dated 22/10/12