

## **PUBLIC INQUIRY**

### **APPLICATION BY NETWORK RAIL UNDER TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992**

### **PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER 200X**

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#### **OBJ/12-CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

#### **PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

**Matthew Stevenson**

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

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1. My name is Matthew Stevenson. I have lived at 16 Brinkley Road, Burrough Green, CB8 0PJ since July 2014. Before this I lived at Ditton Walk in Cambridge from 2012 to 2014. Before 2012 I lived in Willingham, north of Cambridge. I am a company director for Peaks Storehouse Limited.
2. I first started off-roading in 2009 but had a break. I got back into off-roading in 2012 when I joined the Trail Riders' Fellowship (TRF). I have used these routes regularly since then, at least twice a month. Rides are organised weekly and we stagger the rides through the month.
3. My use of these routes is for pleasure. In particular I value them for the physical fitness they offer me and for the social scene, as it's usually a group of us who go out together.
4. My group starts its rides in Chatteris and heads east towards this network of byways. They are part of a route that the TRF have been using for many years, because there are not many byways available. They help make a circular off-road route. My typical route is shown on the map at Appendix 1.
5. If these routes were to be cut out then it would make a big hole in what we can do, and it puts us on roadways. Using an off-road bike on roads makes for a hairy ride because we have knobbly tyres, so if you go over a manhole cover it's more slippery than road tyres.

It's more dangerous because it puts you in a road traffic environment where you could have a collision.

6. Motorcyclists should be considered as users as much as other types of user. There are other motorcyclists who might not be good users, but that's no different from other users like cyclists. Most motorcyclists behave very well. The TRF follows a code of conduct. Motorcyclists are equally entitled to use these byways as other users. It feels like motorcyclists are being persecuted with these proposed closures.
7. I am the Equestrian Officer for Cambridgeshire TRF. The TRF helps out with numerous horse events to build relationships with equestrians and also a wider understanding in society that motorcyclists are responsible users. This stems from the fact that many members have wives or other family members who are equestrians.
8. I also use Coffue Drove on these rides and am happy with the proposed diversion to the adjacent underpass. It's close by and won't affect our enjoyment of the route.
9. I saw a Network Rail notice on Willow Row Drove on the left-hand side of the crossing in August 2017. I didn't stop to look at it because we had already discussed it at the August meeting and it was in an awkward place. I haven't seen notices on Furlong Drove. Network Rail should have put the notices at the beginning of the byways. It would be so much easier as we would be more likely to see them. We would question the notice if we saw it there because that's what we are used to seeing. Who's going to look at notices on the crossings or at odd places in between routes when you're focussed on other things?
10. The TRF's regional Secretary emailed the Cambridgeshire members on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016 about the proposed closures. The email is at Appendix 2 to my statement. I completed Network Rail's online form on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and I received an automatically created email receipt from NR for both these crossings and also C10 Coffue Drove and C30 Westley Bottom.
11. I also recall that at the recent meeting in August 2017, when our Secretary raised the issue about the forthcoming inquiry, a number of members said they had submitted a response back in 2016 and why did they need to do anything more? Unfortunately, it seemed that Network Rail had not taken account of what we had said on these two routes, and this was why I have come forward to give evidence to the Inquiry.

Signed 

Dated 30-10-17