

From: Paul
Sent: 15 April 2017 14:50
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Network Rail Anglia Level Crossing Reductions TWA Order

From: Mr Paul Gyton

Address: 

I wish to object to the closure of three of the level crossings included within the Network Rail Anglia Level Crossing Reductions TWA Order. The three crossings are all Public Footpath Crossings in Essex. They are:

E26 - Barbara Close
E31 - Brickyard Farm
E33 - Motorbike

Objections common to all three crossing closure proposals

Network Rail's website (<http://archive.nr.co.uk/transparency/level-crossings/>) gives details of misuse, near misses and accidents for every level crossing. For these three, no incidents of any sort were recorded in the year prior to the last assessment, or since. There is therefore no evidence that justifies closing these crossings on safety grounds. I am not aware of any proposals to increase the line speed at any of these locations, so the risk level will remain unchanged in future.

Network Rail has chosen to pursue closure using the TWA Order process. This process is intended to give Network Rail the powers to carry out major enhancements to the rail network. Here they are using it just to close crossings. Public footpaths are generally the responsibility of the local highway authority - Essex Highways in this case. Any other landowner wishing to close or divert a Public Right of Way in Essex would pursue this through Essex Highways. Network Rail is attempting to bypass Essex Highways, which should be the final arbiter on all matters affecting Rights of Way.

Network Rail has not considered any other measures to improve crossing safety, short of closure. The initial consultation documents explicitly excluded the possibility of building *any* footbridges and no other options such as improving sight-lines or providing audible/visual warning of approaching trains have been considered. If Network Rail believes these crossings to be dangerous, other mitigating measures short of closure should be introduced first, with closure only to be considered if these measures prove inadequate. Network Rail *has* introduced other measures elsewhere in the Anglia region - see <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/feeds/new-warning-system-to-improve-safety-at-footpath-level-crossings-across-anglia/> for details, in an article headed 'New warning system to improve safety at footpath level crossings across Anglia'. If this system can be used on some crossings, then why could it not be used on these three?

Objections specific to the closure proposal for crossing E26 - Barbara Close

The crossing is in the middle of a long straight stretch of track. Visibility both ways is excellent and using the crossing is completely safe.

The proposed alternative route (using existing streets/footpaths) is lengthy. Given that the crossing is completely safe, why should the public be forced to take a lengthy and unnecessary detour?

Objections specific to the closure proposal for crossing E31 - Brickyard Farm

Visibility to the west (i.e. towards Benfleet Station) is excellent. There is a curve in the track east of the crossing, but it is far enough away to allow one to cross safely.

The proposed alternative route would not be too inconvenient, but I believe it would be misused by cyclists looking for a shortcut into Hadleigh Country Park. As the proposed new route would connect to what is currently only a footpath, this misuse would extend beyond the new stretch of path. I raised this during the initial consultation run by Network Rail and suggested that either a physical barrier should be erected to exclude cyclists, or a hard surface be laid so that it did not get churned up in wet weather. I see nothing in Network Rail's final proposal that suggests either measure will be implemented.

Objections specific to the closure proposal for crossing E33 - Motorbike

Visibility in both directions is perfectly adequate to allow one to cross safely.

The proposed new route will pass across an area of boggy ground. I walked part of the new route in June 2016 and even then the ground was wet. Creating a path that remains dry all year round would be a significant undertaking. Network Rail may have the money and resources to achieve this initially, but any path across boggy ground requires regular maintenance in order to keep it in good order. Who is going to pay for this? The landowner shouldn't have to pay to maintain a path unnecessarily dumped on them by Network Rail and Essex Highways are always short of money and struggle to maintain the existing footpath network to an adequate standard. Network Rail should maintain the alternative route in perpetuity, but I see nothing in their proposal that addresses this point.

The proposed alternative route is lengthy. Given that the crossing is easy to use in a safe manner, why should the public be forced to take a lengthy and unnecessary detour?

Thank you for taking the time to consider my objections.

Paul Gyton.

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