

Network Rail Inquiry Friday 5th October 2018 ELAF notes

- ELAF exists as a forum to look at enhancing and improving access where possible, and this Order proposes crossing closures and extinguishments to PROWs which are a retrograde step for the PROW network.
- ‘Once a Highway, always a Highway’ – some of the PROWs that are proposed to be extinguished are far older than the railway itself; no PROW should be considered for closure UNLESS a ‘suitable and convenient’ alternative is offered – and many of the proposed closures simply do not offer a suitable alternative.
- Network Rail’s reasoning behind these closures is stated that there will be a cost benefit for closures but, despite the emphasis on safety as demonstrated within Mark Brunnen’s Rebuttal, it contained purely safety figures covering all types of level crossings rather than any at grade ones which all of these proposals are.
- ELAF contends that this closure programme has not been considered in a holistic way because of the major infrastructure projects being brought forward in certain areas therefore the closure programme for these crossings is premature. Proposed crossing closures appear not to have had any real thought as to how the overall network will be affected. For example, whilst I will not dwell on specifics which is not for this forum, it is important to note that several crossings are likely to be affected by the upgrading of the A12 between Boreham Interchange and Marks Tey. There are crossings which are parallel to the existing trunk road but two of the route options for the A12 upgrade will see the trunk road bypassed in this area, therefore offering real connectivity when the old road is downgraded and reinstating the paths severed by the A12 in the past. By extinguishing the PROWs this is likely to render this connectivity unlikely as once they are gone, they are probably gone forever. We contend that the inclusion of these crossings along this

stretch of the A12 should be reconsidered at a later date when the route of the A12 is known and the whole programme of closures in this area can be properly thought out.

- Similarly, two crossings are proposed within the Boreham Interchange area. This area is going to see big changes as a result of the A12 upgrade (where it will commence), the new station at Beaulieu – which I understand is scheduled for completion in 2025 – together with the expansion of the housing development at Beaulieu Park, along with a relief road and associated infrastructure. It is intended by Highways England to incorporate a multi-user bridge over the new A12 which will connect Boreham with Beaulieu Park and the new station; the closure of these two crossings with the extinguishment of the PROWs mean that when the bridge is built the paths will need to be reinstated – surely a pointless exercise? The two crossings currently are closed by a Temporary TRO so the ‘cost efficiencies’ in this regard are already being enjoyed. These two crossings should be removed from this programme when they can be considered within the whole infrastructure project.

In summary, ELAF are keen to see a network that is fit for purpose, but we also appreciate that NR need to run an efficient railway – both are as important as each other; therefore ELAF are not totally against the closures of certain crossings where there is a ‘suitable and convenient’ alternative, but some joined-up thinking should be applied certainly to those areas which will be affected by the A12, potentially the A120 and the new Beaulieu Park station and settlement. ELAF would be keen to work with NR to agree a holistic approach that will suit both parties, and it is unfortunate that Network Rail did not instigate such discussions prior to the lodging of this Order.