The Northumberland Line Order

APP – W5-2 Summary Proof of Evidence

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTHUMBERLAND LINE TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT ORDER APPLICATION

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF DARREN LORD

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE LEVEL CROSSING

1.   **Introduction**

1.1   My name is Darren Lord. I am a Route Level Crossing Manager within the North & East (North area) Route, which is part of the Eastern Region for Network Rail. I have been in my current role since December 2020, but by profession have 35 years' experience working within the railway industry. Before joining Network Rail, I worked for various train operating companies covering roles from conductor to train driver. I then moved to Network Rail in 2010 covering various roles until I was appointed to the Level Crossing Manager's position in November 2012.

1.2   My roles and responsibilities during my employment have included conducting maintenance activities, carrying out risk assessments on level crossings, managing the enhancement and renewals work along with other activities relating to "Off Track" works within the railway industry. My current responsibility is the day-to-day management of seven Level Crossing Managers (**LCMs**) on the North and East (North) route which is part of Eastern Region.

1.3   This summary Proof of Evidence (**Summary**) provides an overview of my main evidence in relation to the proposed closure of the following level crossings:

(a)   Palmersville Dairy Level Crossing (**Dairy LX**);

(b)   Hospital Level Crossing (**Hospital LX**);

(c)   Lysdon Farm Level Crossing (**Lysdon Farm LX**);

(d)   Newsham Level Crossing (**Newsham LX**); and

(e)   Chase Meadows Level Crossing (**Chase Meadows LX**).

which was included in the draft Northumberland Line Order (**Order**) by Northumberland County Council (**NCC**) to enable delivery of the Northumberland Line project (**Scheme**).

1.4   My Proof of Evidence explains how the LCMs conduct the risk assessment in respect of level crossings and sets out risk information for each crossing and how it is projected to change as a result of the Scheme. My Proof of Evidence also outlines a number of options evaluated to mitigate the increased risks at each level crossing that are projected to result from the operation of the Scheme and makes a recommendation in relation to each crossing that it is closed to enable the safe delivery and operation of the Scheme.

1.5   The Proof of Evidence also describes the Red Rob Bridge Crossing and the Bomarsund User Worked Crossing, which will be affected by the Scheme, but are not proposed to be closed by the Order.

2. **Risk Assessment**

2.1   My Proof of Evidence sets out three aspects to a risk assessment undertaken by LCMs in respect of each level crossing, being:

(a)   On site data collection;

(b)   All Level Crossing Risk Model (**ALCRM**) (Quantitative Assessment); and

(c)   Narrative Risk Assessment.

2.2   Each aspect of the risk assessment processes is discussed in detail from a practical perspective.

2.3   A risk assessment must be carried out every 1.25 years at the highest risk crossings; every 2.5 years at the medium risk crossings and every 3.25 years at the lower risk crossings.

2.4   My Proof of Evidence also covers the maintenance asset inspections of the level crossings and the associated maintenance undertaken by LCMs.

3. **Existing Level Crossings**

3.1   My Proof of Evidence provides the current ALCRM score for each of the affected level crossings, which is as follows:

(a)   Dairy LX has an ALCRM score of D5 and an FWI of 0.000725575 (according to the risk assessment completed on 22 October 2019);

(b)   Hospital LX has an ALCRM score of D5 and an FWI of 0.000934329 (according to the risk assessment completed on 22 October 2019);

(c)   Lysdon Farm LX has an ALCRM score of E12 and an FWI of 0.00000019 (according to the risk assessment completed on 23 January 2018;

(d)   Newsham LX has an ALCRM score of L6 and an FWI of 0.000315523 (according to the risk assessment completed on 30 April 2019); and

(e)   Chase Meadows LX has an ALCRM score of D7 and an FWI of 0.000055785 (according to the risk assessment completed on 11 June 2019.

These rankings represent the range of risks across all types of crossings where A and 1 are the highest, and M and 13 are the lowest.

3.2   Hospital LX, Chase Meadows LX, Lysdon Farm LX and Dairy LX are passive crossings, meaning that users of the level crossings must decide for themselves whether it is safe to cross. The crossings are not controlled or equipped with lights, audible warnings or barriers interlocked with signals. users are instructed at the decision point, 2 metres from the nearest running rail, by virtue of a sign to Stop Look Listen: Beware of trains.

3.3   Newsham LX is a protected crossing, meaning that the crossing is protected from train movements ensuring that trains are not authorised to pass over the crossing until the crossing is closed and the crossing area has been checked to be clear.

3.4   Within my Proof of Statement, I provide detailed description of the individual level crossings' environment, train service data, user census data and hazards associated with the use of the crossings.

3.5   My Proof of Statement demonstrates that a number of hazards have been identified in relation to the existing use of the crossings, which could lead to fatality or serious injury.

3.6   In respect of the Hospital LX and the Dairy LX, while during the period of the previous 4 years there were no reported incidents at the crossings, both crossings have been heavily misused by school children walking up the track to the crossing, young people riding mopeds over the crossings and young people hanging around and/or sitting on the crossings' environment.

4.   **The Scheme and projected changes to the Level Crossings**

4.1   The Scheme proposes an increase in the number of trains and a change in the line speed, which includes changes to the crossings' environment. As a result of the changes proposed by the Scheme, the ACLRM Risk score of the individual level crossings is projected to change as follows:

        (a)   Dairy LX – increase from D5 to C3 (high risk);

        (b)   Hospital LX – increase from D5 to C2 (high risk);

        (c)   Lysdon Farm LX – increase from E12 to C10;

        (d)   Newsham LX – increase from L6 to G3 (high risk); and

        (e)   Chase Meadows LX – increase from D7 to C4.

4.2   My Proof of Evidence sets out a number of options that have been evaluated to mitigate the increased risks at the individual crossings and demonstrates that the proposed closure of each crossing will result in the lowest ALCRM Score of M13.

4.3   While I identify alternative options to mitigate the increased risks, such as:

        (a)   installation of miniature stop lights (overlay or integrated); and/or

        (b)   ensuring that whistle boards are in the correct positions and provide AWD

        it is clear that the maximum reduction in the ALCRM Risk Score, which could be achieved by such alternative options is:

        (a)   a reduction to D4 in respect of the Dairy LX;

        (b)   a reduction to D2 in respect of the Hospital LX;

        (c)   a reduction to D11 in respect of the Lysdon Farm LX;

        (d)   a reduction to I4 in respect of the Newsham LX; and

        (e)   a reduction to D4 in respect of the Chase Meadows LX

        which is still higher than the current ACLRM Risk Score.

5.   It is, therefore, my recommendation that the Hospital LX, the Newsham LX, the Chase Meadows LX; the Lysdon Farm LX and the Dairy LX should be closed to allow the safe delivery and operation of the Scheme.

Dated: 11 October 2021

I believe that the facts stated in this Summary are true.

Darren Lord