



Lucy Frazer QC MP  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

OBJ/38

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

LA  
RPL

13 April 2017

Dear Chris,

#### Transport and Works Act Order - Network Rail Anglia Level Crossing Proposals

I have recently met with my constituent, Mr. Luke Palmer of F. C. Palmer & Sons, Stowbridge Farm, Green End, Stretham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3LF to discuss his concerns about Network Rail's proposals to close a number of level crossings on the land that he farms around Stretham in my constituency. Having seen the site I share his concerns and hope that they will be taken into account when the decision on this TWAO is made.

Mr. Palmer farms 3150 acres of which 1753 acres are on the eastern side of the Kings Lynn to London railway line. There are four level crossings on the land, three user-worked crossings (Nairns No. 117 C02, Jack O'Tell (Adam's Crossing) C33 and Fyson's C34) and a footpath (Chittering C01). All are included within the TWAO for closure and Mr. Palmer's concerns relate to all of the crossings, but especially to the closure of the two main user worked crossings, Nairns and Jack O'Tell.

The first important point is that these crossings are heavily used. My constituent tells me that approximately 1,000 return crossings per year are made over Nairns and Jack O'Tell transporting farm produce in 12 tonne trailers in addition to crossings to access the land for planting, irrigation etc. Mr. Palmer estimates that these two crossings are used 20-30 times a day in off-peak season and in excess of 50 times a day during the peak season.

As the crossings are so heavily used an effective diversion needs to be possible which does not seem to be the case here. Mr. Palmer tells me that no diversion has been proposed by Network Rail for the closure of the Jack O'Tell crossing and the proposed diversion for the Nairns crossing would involve an additional 2.5 mile journey and put their heavy farm vehicles on the A1123. My constituent tells me that there have been three serious road traffic accidents involving farm vehicles on this road recently and he fears that there will be more if a greater number of journeys need to be made on the A1123. In addition, Mr. Palmer is concerned that the proposed diversion requires access via Little Farm where they have no

*Member of Parliament for South East Cambridgeshire*

legal right of way. Access could, therefore, be denied by the landowner (requiring a 10.3 mile diversion via the A10) or charged for.

Finally, my constituent is concerned that at no point during the consultation process has Network Rail supplied data on how frequently these crossings are used and how many accidents have happened. Indeed, despite referring to the need to improve safety at these crossings, Network Rail have told Mr. Palmer that they have not collected data on the safety record at these crossings. Mr. Palmer says that other level crossings not earmarked for closure have poor safety records and points to the Bannold Road crossing where there have been four suicides in the last three years.

Given these concerns I agree with my constituent that the decision to close these crossings needs to be looked at carefully again. I hope that you will chose not to consent to these closures in the current TWAO and that, instead, ensure that alternative options for improving the safety of the railway as it travels through Stretham are fully explored.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lucy Frazer', written in a cursive style.

**Lucy Frazer QC MP**