

From: poshfandee@yahoo.co.uk
Sent: 04 April 2017 19:23
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of myself, my father Bernard Bird, and my sister Susan Bird in relation to the proposed closure of C15 Brickyard Drove.

My father and sister have lived at 221 Benwick Road, Whittlesey, Cambs PE7 2HD for over 22 years, and I moved into the annex approx. 3 years ago.

During this time the council have cut the grass in the lane leading to the stile twice a year, with my father voluntarily mowing a path in between these times in order that we, and other ramblers can enjoy easy access to the footpath that runs parallel with the railway track on the other side of our property. He is in his 70's and feels it is important to have his regular 'exercise' in a circuit over this crossing and either turning left or right depending on his mood, before circling back home.

My father, sister and late mother moved to this property as they enjoy showing dogs in competitions and have a few dogs that live in the kennels at the bottom corner of our property. The location is superb as they are not disturbed, or indeed cause disturbance, to others.

You can imagine the stress this closure proposal is causing as the latest proposed option will take ramblers closer to the kennels, and inevitably cause hassle.

We were not initially notified of the proposed closure as the courier who was employed to deliver leaflets with notice of this did not bother to come down our track, and it was only by a passing comment that I found myself phoning the council to see if the rumour was true! Initially the gentleman in the council said he had nothing and that he was confident it was false, but within hours phoned me back to apologise and say there was proposal for closure of our nearby crossing.

My father and I attended the first meeting and said we would like the crossing to be kept open. On the forms we were asked to complete, leaving it open was not a 'tickable' option and we were asked to list in order of preference an alternative.

We were informed the crossing was to be closed on safety grounds, but as there has never been an incident there this was a ludicrous suggestion. One lady from the railway then said if crossings were closed they would be able to run more trains, and when we said the main Whittlesey crossing can be closed for 40 minutes out of every hour already, so this was certainly not for the benefit of residents, she was ignorant enough to suggest they would look at putting a road over the crossing. (we have been waiting for this on the King's Dyke main road crossing since I was a child over 50 years ago and that one still hasn't gone ahead!)

We discussed at length the issues with alternatives, and were told nothing had been decided and there would be another meeting. This second meeting I duly attended alone as my father had been unwell.

We discussed different routes and eventually said we would be ok with the footpath going along the track to near where the crossing is at present, before turning right, going over a new footbridge, and a 3 metre wide section left at the edge of the field to walk down. We would then turn left, across another new footbridge and along the edge of that field before coming out at Eastrea level crossing. We discussed how the edge of the fields would need to be made into footpaths as it is nearly impossible to walk in fen fields at several times of the year.

We strongly object to the proposed new route.

- This would mean walking directly across a field that is actively farmed, as the soil would be ploughed and too soft to walk in, let alone the difficulty of trying to walk through crops or in poor weather. This means in reality the route would be impossible to traverse unless there is a drought and the crops can't grow.
- The proposed route would take ramblers closer to the kennels, and is completely in contrast to the reason my family moved here over 22 years ago.
- The public footpath that currently runs to the crossing would be abandoned and not maintained.
- There would be no walking access to the Whittlesey Country Park that is due in the future, or onto the path the other side of the track without a long detour.
- My sister and I both suffer depression, and at present can go for a walk 'off road', but should the crossing close, walking across a field is unviable, and there is no footpath on the Benwick Road. Exercise is an important part of our mental wellbeing, and as we also both have arthritis, walking is our best option.

I kindly ask that you consider our views, and as there is no financial or other possible gain to be had by closing the crossing, that it be kept open as it currently is.

Yours faithfully,
Denise Livingstone

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