

Caroline O'Neill

OBJ/41

From: F.C Palmer & Sons <fcp.pots@btconnect.com>
Sent: 24 April 2017 15:41
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order
Attachments: Adams Letter Railway line.docx

Importance: High

Dear Transport and Works Act Orders Unit,

Please see attached my objection to the proposed closure of the works user crossings on our farm.

Please can you send a receipt email to confirm delivery.

Adam Palmer

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20 April 2017

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport and Works Act Orders Unit
General Counsel's Office
Department for Transport
Zone 1/18 Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Sirs

Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order

I refer to the various notices which have been served by Network Rail to acquire compulsory powers to close the level crossings referred to as C34 – Fysons, C01 – Chittering – C33 Jack OTells (Adams Crossing) C02 – Nairns in the proposed Network Rail Cambridgeshire Level Crossing Reduction Order.

I now farm in a partnership with my Father and Uncle and brother and brother in law. The business now employs over 20 staff and we grow a range of intensive crops on the farm supporting the high requirement for labour. I have farmed all of my working life and as a business we have worked hard to expand and enhance the farmland base we operate from. We have used the crossings on a daily basis for all of the time I have worked on the farm, if we do not use the three crossing to get from one side of the farm to the other, our alternative is to travel out one end of the farm and along the public highway and then back in on the other side of the public railway crossing. This can add up to 7 miles on a journey which is additional cost to the business and unnecessary time and fuel wasted to complete a task, some days we can use the crossing in excess of 30 times.

The other issue when using the roads to travel between the land rather than the crossing is the fact we are slowing down the traffic with agricultural vehicles as well as creating a hazard on the road when turning right across the traffic to enter back onto the farm. The situation is once we have travelled over the crossing to turn right off the main road, the access back onto the farm is 150m after the automated crossing on the road, we have had three accidents in two years with our own machinery turning right across the road back into the farm. What happens is, vehicles who are three or four cars back in the queue after the railway crossing has opened overtaking from further back in the queue and hitting our vehicle turning right at the front of the queue. I know this is a result of driver error, however we are all aware of the hazard and the accidents continue to occur no matter how much signage we put in place warning other users. It is only a matter of time before there is a fatality, so increasing the frequency of the vehicles turning right will only bring the timing of this eventuality closer.

Whilst Network Rail originally led us to believe that they were prepared to consider automating the C-33 Jack OTells crossing, they are now seeking compulsory powers to close this crossing although they will be maintaining the pedestrian crossing immediately to the north. The reason for this is cost

Network rail have said to automate the crossing for vehicles it will cost circa £1,000,000 well this seems a reasonable price to pay to maintain a business employing 20 staff and significantly reducing the likelihood of a serious RTA or fatality. Neither of these points seem to have been considered or are of any interest to Network Rail

If Network Rail are granted compulsory powers to close all three level crossings, this will sever the farm and will make it unviable for us to continue farming in our present structure. The business will have to be restructured, the range of crops grown will have to be reduced and the labour employed will have to be significantly reduced. This will have a devastating impact on myself and my family, all because Network Rail are unwilling to consider the automation of the C-01 Chittering crossing.

I very much hope that you will urge Network Rail to reconsider the options and engage in some meaningful discussions with me and my partners before granting Network Rail compulsory powers.

Yours faithfully

Adam G Palmer