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From: Ann @ LGS Services <ann@lgs-services.co.uk>
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To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Network Rail Anglia Level Crossing Reductions TWA Order - response from Cambridgeshire LAF
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Importance: High

Dear Sir or Madam

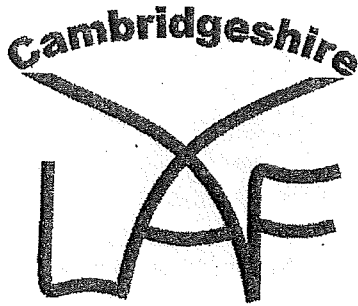
Please find attached a response from Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum.

Kind regards

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On behalf of Gail Stoehr
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19 April 2017

Dear Sir or Madam

Network Rail Anglia Level Crossing Reductions TWA Order – response from Cambridgeshire LAF

This submission constitutes formal advice from the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum. Network Rail is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

Introduction and general points

A few general points cover the response to all level crossing closure plans. Where level crossings are maintained, all possible steps should be taken to maximise safety for users. These include the provision of lights linked to signals, such as at Shepreth; gates to replace all stiles; close boarding across rails; the provision of time-table information next to the crossing. LAF requires all diverted paths or new paths to be adopted as rights of way by Cambridgeshire County Council, with agreements relating to ongoing maintenance. Field edge paths should, wherever possible, be established as permanent grass. Assurances must be obtained from the County Council that they are willing to pay for grass cutting, fence repair and other regular maintenance, or that Network Rail will pay for such maintenance, before any closure is put into effect.

LAF needs to be assured that all new footpaths on private land have been agreed between the landowners, Network Rail and the County Council. LAF objects to any proposal where this is not the case. No new footpaths are to include stiles or other impediments for elderly or disabled walkers.

Some of the crossing closures in East Cambridgeshire involve diversions to new footpaths under railway bridges crossing watercourses. Whilst accepted as being safer, there is a concern that flooding issues have

Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum was set up by Cambridgeshire County Council as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and its remit is to advise relevant bodies as defined in Section 94(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 on matters relating to access to the countryside. Section 94(4) bodies are required by the legislation to take the views of the Local Access Forum into account, and the latest Guidance issued by The Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs lists Network Rail as a Section 94(4) body

not been fully assessed. Footpaths along dykes may well be accessible even when there is some flooding – and the crossing closures could significantly reduce walking opportunities in winter. It is important to assess how frequently flooding occurs in autumn/winter/spring before any of these Fenland and East Cambridgeshire crossing closures are approved. Most of the railway lines (especially Ely-Peterborough) involved are relatively lightly used, with excellent sightlines. Provided that level crossings have good safety features, as described above, it may be best to keep them open.

C18 Munceys Fordham Parish (Grid reference 562341, 269170) OBJECT to the closure of the level crossing and stopping up of Fordham FP19 (Schedule 2 and schedule 11)

The proposed closure affects Fordham Footpath 19 (FP19) and the proposed diversion impacts on Exning parish in Suffolk as well as Fordham parish in Cambridgeshire.

Fordham FP19 currently provides a pleasant cross-country route running in a generally northern direction directly from the settlement of Landwade in Exning to Station Road on the western outskirts of Fordham in Cambridgeshire. The proposed diversion affects a length of path of approximately 700m, from GR 623686 to the crossing at GR 623691. The replacement route proposed by Network Rail between these two points is 2k, a significantly greater distance of 1.3k. This would add around 20 minutes for the average walker and such an addition is considered totally unacceptable.

The proposed route is not only very inconvenient but also more unpleasant; a significant section of 315m is alongside industrial buildings, on a gravel/stone surfaced path between fencing and the railway line. In fact a total 850m of the proposed diversion runs immediately alongside the railway line. This entire section is far inferior to the current cross country route.

Network Rail has offered a new circular footpath through and around a small woodland area just to the west of the level crossing, presumably in recognition of the significant downgrading of the footpath route afforded by the major diversion. It is not clear that this would in itself attract many walkers as Landwade is very small and access from Fordham is effectively cut off; the primary reason for using FP19 is to walk between Landwade and Fordham.

C18 Munceys level crossing is on a relatively lightly-used railway line. The sightlines are excellent. There are no recorded accidents or incidents. Adequate measures at the crossing to make it easy and safe to use are all that is required to maintain this ancient footpath link.

C20 Leonards Soham Parish (Grid Reference 558967, 272448). Object to the closure of the level crossing and stopping up of both Soham Footpath 114 and Footpath 101, (Schedule 2 and Schedule 11)

Soham Footpath 101 is part of a direct link, involving several rights of way, running generally north east from Wicken to Soham village. The recreational links between these villages are becoming very popular, especially with the development of the National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision and the fast growth of housing and population of Soham. A major new development has recently been given the go-ahead off Cherry Tree Lane in Soham. Footpath 101 (FP101) is regularly used as part of a circular walk between Wicken and Soham.

The proposals put forward by Network Rail linked to the closure of C20 Leonards crossing involve closing a stretch of FP114 to the west of Mill Drove where the route passes between farm buildings and creating a new footpath outside the buildings, running for 230m to the Mill Drove level crossing which is to be kept open. It is stated that the remaining 350m of FP114 which runs from the boundary of the farm buildings across an arable field to a junction with Byway 113, will be reinstated as an unsurfaced path. However, it is noted that in recent years this FP has not been reinstated and most walkers prefer to use Byway 113 (Bracks

Drove) as far as the junction with Mill Drove. Indeed in winter the surface of the field crossed by FP114 can be dreadfully muddy.

On the east side of Mill Drove, Network Rail plan to stop up/close FP 101 between GR 588724 to GR 590725. This is a pleasant path in good order and is 190m long. The proposed diversion, if using Mill Drove to Mill Drove crossing and newly created footpaths back to join FP101 at GR 590725, appears to be around 490m, or an additional 300m. The diversion takes the walker three sides round a square and is significantly longer and inconvenient.

It is very important to note that this diversion takes walkers to another level-crossing! It cannot be argued by Network Rail that the diversion provides any increase in safety – merely a longer and less pleasant walk. (Either further along Mill Drove, which is used by vehicles, or alternatively across a very muddy field if using FP114).

The railway line crossed at C20 Leonards is lightly used and there are excellent sightlines. The crossing is well-used, yet there have been no recorded incidents or accidents. And, as stated above, the diversions proposed involve a longer, less pleasant walk to another level crossing. There is no gain in safety – merely a saving in maintenance costs for Network Rail.

C08 Ely North Junction, Ely parish, (Grid Reference 556137, 281250) Object to closure of crossing and stopping up of Ely Footpath 11 (FP11).

Ely FP11 provides a direct route from Ely to the settlement of Queen Adelaide. Network Rail proposes to divert walkers to another at grade level crossing, Queen Adelaide (Peterborough). The diversion involves a path which is only 1.5m wide where it passes through Network Rail land. This is below the minimum width required by Cambridgeshire County Council in their guidelines for new footpaths. The diversion also involves walking alongside the busy B1382 Prickwillow Road, which is unpleasant. It is noted that the proposal involves the extinguishment of 60m of FP11 immediately east of C08 crossing, leaving a significant length of dead-end footpath for FP11.

The railway line involved in crossing C08 is relatively lightly used and there are good sightlines. The diversion involves a less pleasant and unacceptably narrow footpath taking walkers to another level crossing. With adequate safety features we consider that C08 is suitable for continued use and should not be closed.

C11 Furlong Drove Downham Parish (Grid Reference 551782, 286917). Object to closure of crossing and stopping up of Byway 33.

Byway 33 (A Furlong Drove) provides an off-road route between Little Downham and, eventually, Welney. It forms part of the Hereward Way, a long distance promoted route supported by Cambridgeshire County Council. The closure involves walkers diverting to the adopted road Main Drove to the east, which has no off-road footpath. It also involves a diversion to another at grade level crossing at Third Drove.

Diversions of walkers to either the west, following a new bridleway and Byway 34, or to the east, along the roadway of Main Drove, are both longer than the existing Byway 33. Compared with the current route of the Hereward Way, the western diversion from GR 518860 to the junction of Head Fen Drove and Short Drove at GR 514882 is 1.15k longer than the current route using Byway 33. Taking the eastern diversion – which uses another at-grade level crossing and is consequently no safer – the route is 0.9k longer and involves walking more than 2k on an adopted road without a footpath. Both diversions are considered to be unacceptably long and inconvenient.

The railway line involved is relatively lightly used and no incidents or accidents have been recorded at this level crossing. Network Rail might be supported in closing Byway 33 to motorised traffic, but cannot be supported in closing a crossing with excellent sightlines to walkers.

C24 Cross Keys Ely Parish (Grid Reference 556891, 283017) Holding objection to the closure and stopping up of Footpath 50 (FP50)

The holding objection is to ensure that Network Rail's proposed package, involving footpath creation and the maintenance of existing level crossing C23 Adelaide, is approved in its entirety. It is essential that access to the long distance promoted route The Fen Rivers Way is maintained from Ely. This involves crossing the railway line. Ely is scheduled to expand significantly with new housing development north of the City, putting more pressure on the rights of way network. Access to the River Great Ouse is essential. Both FP49 and FP50 provide access from Ely to the River and the Fen Rivers Way. At least one of these crossings MUST be retained. We will accept the closure of FP50 at the crossing C24 as long as a new route is created alongside the railway line to create a new circular footpath easily accessible from Ely City; Ely is due to expand significantly with development north of the centre, placing increased pressure on rights of way nearby. A new circular route for walkers which avoids a railway crossing will be essential. However, Crossing C23 must remain open.

C25 Clayway, Littleport Crossing (Grid Reference 557550, 286287) Object to crossing closure and stopping up of Footpath 11.

C25 Clayway crossing provides a direct link between FP10 and the County Council's promoted route, the Fen Rivers Way, FP21. There has been an attempt to close this footpath in the past; this was refused by the Inspector. The grounds for refusal identified the pleasant off-road route. So close to Littleport Railway station, trains are going very slowly at this point and there have been no reported accidents or incidents in recent years. This railway line has light traffic. The sight lines are excellent. FP11 provides a more rural approach to the Fen Rivers Way and an avoidance of walking along busy roads. The diversion involves a walk alongside a busy road to the station crossing.

C27 Willow Row/Willow Road, Littleport Parish, (Grid Reference 557852, 289282) Object to crossing closure and stopping up of Willow Road Drove , Byway 30

Willow Row Drove (not Drive as stated in Network Rail's submission) is a Byway leading northwest from the footpath alongside Ten Mile Bank on the River Great Ouse at Denver Farm; it runs for over 3k to Hale Drove. The closure of C27 level crossing results in a diversion around three sides of a square and an increased distance for walkers of around 1.5k which would take at least 20 to 30 minutes; this is very inconvenient. The diversion is to another at grade level crossing at C26 Poplar Drove. This provides a reduction in maintenance costs to Network Rail, but no improvement in safety for walkers. As no incidents/accidents have been reported in recent years at C27 we object to the closure. The railway line is lightly used and sight lines are good. It is important that Network Rail maintains all level crossings to good safety standards.

C01 Chittering, Waterbeach Parish (Grid Reference 551708, 269948). Object to crossing closure and stopping up of Waterbeach Footpath 16

Waterbeach Footpath 16 (FP16) provides a very useful link between Waterbeach village and the Fen Rivers Way, a promoted long-distance footpath route between Cambridge and Kings Lynn. This level crossing is also a vital link in a circular walk from Waterbeach. This village is scheduled to expand considerably, becoming an effective 'new town'; pressure on the very sparse network of off-road rights of way is likely to increase significantly and this is definitely not the time to reduce footpath opportunities. The alternative route proposed by Network Rail is not only unacceptably longer, but involves an uninspiring walk alongside the railway line and a diversion to another at-grade level crossing (Jack O'Tells). Consequently there is no increase in terms of safety – merely a saving in maintenance costs for Network Rail. The sightlines at the

crossing are good. Safety could be greatly enhanced if Network Rail installs pedestrian lights, such as at Shepreth, alongside gates, a timetable on a notice board and the provision of close boarding across the rails.

C07 No. 37, Harston Parish (Grid Reference 543308, 250779). Holding objection to crossing closure and stopping up of Harston Footpath 4

Harston Footpath 4 (FP4) currently provides an essential link in an off-road route between Harston and Hauxton villages. It also provides a link between Harston and Newton, using a relatively new hoggin path on the verge alongside the busy B136 (London Road). It is recognised that the railway line crossed by C07 is busy, with frequent fast trains and it is desirable to create an alternative route which avoids the necessity to use a level crossing, unless this provides high levels of safety, such as at Foxton or Shepreth, with lights for pedestrians.

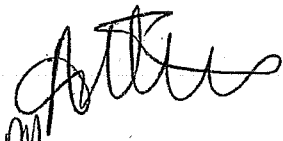
Network Rail has responded to objections to two earlier diversion packages but there remain major problems with the latest proposals. The B136 crosses the railway line at a bridge, but there is a very narrow pavement over the bridge itself and no off-road footpaths or verge on the approach stretches. The current proposal involves new footpaths along field edges, with steps up to and down from the railway bridge. These would create access problems for people with limited mobility. The large new housing estate at Hauxton will create new pressures on this inter-village link and it should have the highest possible rating in terms of accessibility.

C29 Cassells, Brinkley Parish (Grid Reference 558061, 256891). Holding objection to crossing closure and stopping up of Brinkley Footpath 1

This footpath links directly with Little Wilbraham FP11, crossing the Brinkley Road. The proposed diversion to cross the railway line at the gated Brinkley Road level crossing is accepted as safer – as long as adequate off-road access is made for walkers. The provision of a new 2m wide asphalt planings footpath adjacent to Brinkley Road within Network Rail land is welcomed. However, it is not clear from the description or the diagram (which includes “use of existing southern verge”) whether the asphalt path reaches all the way to Brinkley FP1. Any verge not included in the proposed asphalt path must be made suitable for walking and separated from the roadway.

LAF would be grateful to be kept informed of how its advice has been received and considered.

Yours faithfully



Mrs Gail Stoehr
Secretary

