

Caroline O'Neill

From: Suffolk Local Access Forum <slaf@suffolk.gov.uk>
Sent: 02 May 2017 22:43
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Cc: Barry Hall; David Barker (Local Access Forum); Diana Kearsley; Steve Kerr; Andrew Woodin
Subject: The Network Rail (Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction) Order
Attachments: 2017-05-02 SLAF TWA Response.doc

Good Evening

Please find attached Suffolk Local Access Forum's response to The Network Rail (Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction) Order.

Many thanks

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Suffolk Local Access Forum

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: SLAF/NR
Date: 2 May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

The Network Rail (Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction) Order

At the recent meeting of the Suffolk Local Access Forum, members were apprised of the publication of the above Order which if implemented would see the closure of 24 rail crossings in Suffolk and agreed that because of the short timespan given for responses they would send this letter as an Holding Objection to the above Order.

The Local Access Forum has responded constructively to Network Rail's Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultations to the proposed crossing closures, but it would appear that for the Order little attention has been paid to the comments made by those who took the time to respond previously including Suffolk County Council who will ultimately have to take over the management of any diversions, user groups, landowners and individuals.

From the briefing that the Forum received, it appears that despite offers from the Suffolk County Council Rights of Way team to inspect the proposed diversion routes together with Network Rail consultants, this was not taken up. Consequently there are areas relating to routes on private land where they are unable to comment on the proposals regarding the suitability of the terrain, the length of any new footbridges or the need for any other structures required. Where they have been able to check the proposals it appears that where some changes to routes have been made, landowners have not been fully consulted. This we feel is unacceptable.

Regarding the Order, the Local Access Forum still has issues with some of the alternative routes proposed by Network Rail as they use narrow country roads with overgrown verges which may contain drainage grips, poor visibility on bends and narrow bridges over the railway where Network Rail suggest that painting white lines and erecting new signage will suffice.

In many instances, it is clear from the description of the project works that where a diversionary path runs alongside the railway a 1.8m chain link fence will be erected. This is

not acceptable in a rural setting as it would be visually intrusive, the more traditional 1.35m post and wire would be better.

Whilst a diversion that adds around 500m to a route seems reasonable, some of the diversions add over a kilometre which is a substantial addition.

Our response to the crossings that we feel further work needs to be carried out before this Order can be approved is set out below:

SO1 – Brantham Sea Wall

Whilst the proposed route is acceptable we would like to see the river path remain open as it well used by local birdwatchers.

SO2 – Brantham High Bridge

No explanation given for the change of route east of the railway line which now appears to use a private road and field margins. Has its impact on landowners been assessed? We do support the linking path footpath proposed alongside the A137 to Brantham Bridge.

SO4 – Island

We do not object to the deletion of the alternative footpath on the south side of the Capel St Mary road but still feel that narrowness of the road bridge for pedestrian use has still not been addressed.

SO5 – Pannington Hall

These proposals result in the extinguishment of a significant length of right of way and whilst accepting the proposals we urge that the proposed 2m footpath south of The Street should be changed to a 3m wide bridleway to connect with existing bridleways. Once again the impact on safety of the narrow road overbridge should be re-examined.

S12 – Gooderhams

The possibility that the existing stiles should be replaced by kissing gates at the Cow Creek crossing should be considered given that Fords Green and Bacton are also being closed, which could lead to greater use of that crossing.

S13/S69 – Fords Green & Bacton

These two proposals should be considered together. Although some attempt has been made to reduce the use of the B1113 for pedestrians it is essential that that a proper footway is established along Broad Road for safety reasons.

S22 – Weatherby

From Network Rail's survey, this is obviously a very well-used crossing even if it is not a public right of way. The suggested alternative route alongside a busy road and using a narrow under bridge is not acceptable. Also the suggested use of 2m high steel palisade fencing to stop trespass once the crossing is closed would be a visual intrusion.

S23 – Higham

The suggested diversion uses existing roads with inadequate verges. To reduce safety concerns we suggest that the possibility of putting a field edge path behind the group of houses by the war memorial should be investigated.

S25 – Cattishall

We have consistently commented that the crossing should remain until developer funded footbridge in place and the underpass opened.

S27/S28 – Barrels/Grove Farm

These two proposals should be considered together. The alternative routes involve a significant amount of road walking and the moving of the footpath 5 Thurston from its position on the Definitive Map to alongside the boundary of 'Pheasants' has been done without consulting the landowner.

S31 – Mutton Hall

The proposal to use the narrow road overbridge near Butts Farm is unacceptable. We have suggested to Network Rail that it would be more sensible divert the path south of the railway line westwards and use the underbridge on Captains Lane.

The Suffolk Local Access Forum would, following any Public Inquiry and decision by the Secretary of State expects as part of the final Order that none of the crossings would be closed by Network Rail until the diversion route had been fully put into place and inspected and deemed as satisfactory by Suffolk County Council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Hall', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barry Hall
Chair of Suffolk Local Access Forum

