



Department
for Transport

Martin Vickers MP
(sent by e-mail)

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
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Dear Martin,

Thank you for taking the time to meet me and Network Rail on Monday 8 April. I found it a useful discussion and hope you did too.

As we heard from Network Rail at the start of the meeting, the background to this case is complex and steeped in history. Suggitt's Lane level crossing is not a right of way for the general public, but was established instead through a private access agreement that was signed in 1863 between the original railway and a fishing business that has been long since defunct. Network Rail also provided legal clarification that this right of way cannot be passed down to relatives of the original fisherman and that, whilst the council have access, this cannot be shared with the wider public.

During the meeting a number of important points were raised which must be taken into account in seeking a safe and sustainable solution to this issue. One such issue is the degree of safety risk associated with Suggitt's Lane level crossing. Network Rail explained that this is primarily due to the high level of usage at the crossing, but there is also evidence that the crossing is being misused by a small, but notable minority, on a regular basis. Indeed, Network Rail clarified that the crossing carries the 8th highest risk rating of over 800 footpath level crossings on the London North Eastern and East Midlands Route.

At the same time, I appreciate the accessibility challenges for local residents, and in particular that the alternative route involving a detour to the town centre would be inconvenient for existing users and could result in pedestrians encountering more road traffic on their journey.

At our meeting, Network Rail set out the range of options they have already considered in reaching their decision that this crossing should be closed. They pointed out, for instance, that a number of the infrastructure solutions proposed by stakeholders would not necessarily eliminate risk or deter

misuse at Suggitt's Lane crossing, but would nonetheless incur significant cost.

Network Rail did, however, identify that Fuller Street footbridge could be a viable alternative crossing. It is a relatively short distance from Suggitt's lane, although it is not currently accessible for local residents with reduced mobility. Network Rail have identified the options of a ramp or lift at Fuller Street footbridge as alternatives to creating a brand-new crossing, but as the footbridge is owned by the local council, this option can only be taken forward in discussion with them.

I therefore support Network Rail's proposal for a meeting between all relevant parties that have an interest in Suggitt's Lane at the earliest opportunity, including North East Lincolnshire Council, representatives from local residents' groups and, of course, Network Rail themselves. I hope that this could pave the way for all parties to be able to agree a solution that addresses both the safety and accessibility issues satisfactorily. I also welcome Network Rail's offer of providing a general update on the legal issues that are present here.

I am copying this letter to Andrew Murray and Alan Spence at Network Rail and to Cllr Watson, Deputy Leader of North East Lincolnshire Council.

Please do not hesitate to contact me again if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours,
Andrew

ANDREW JONES