

From: [REDACTED]
To: [TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE](#)
Subject: Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order
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Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order

I am not against an improvement in the current train service through the area to Manchester or Leeds. Indeed, anything which improves public transport and reduces the number of vehicles on the roads is to be applauded. However, I am objecting to the above TWA order in the strongest possible terms for the following reasons:

The Consultation process has been minimal and not at any time a meaningful dialogue among interested parties such as the Parish Council, the business community and local residents. Indeed, Network Rail seems to have kept dialogue to a minimum and at no time has been proactive in making sure that information has been distributed to the local communities. Consultation events have been closed down early even though residents were there and asking questions. Local people, and the Parish Council, have been given extremely scant information as to the significant level of disruption to local life expected during the works, or the plans to mitigate this disruption. For example, Oldham Road will be closed for at least 16 weeks at Greenfield Station and no clear alternative routes are suggested so that there is minimal disruption to life. Indeed, residents of Diggle could end up driving across a field in the green belt under these proposals!

Network Rail has done very little to inform local people and their representatives that it had been resolved to take the matter to the Secretary of State through a TWAO for a decision on certain contentious matters, (only contentious because Network Rail refused to get round the table with local representative and discuss them.) They have also not broadcast how the local community, including the Parish Council and business representatives, can get involved in this process in order to comment or object to the contents of the order.

There are ten compounds proposed in the plans for use by Network Rail on that stretch of line in Saddleworth to facilitate the storage of machinery and materials etc . Saddleworth is a tourist area known for its amazing scenery and

Pennine villages with a strong personality of its own and promoted not only locally but internationally. However, no mention is made of what will happen to these compound areas when the works are finished. If they are going to reinstate these areas, the question is how will they replace the mature trees they have removed and are the costings already taken into account?

The compounds proposed in the area are :

Land off Armit Road which is in the Green Belt and a site of biological interest and a regular place for local people to use for recreation

Friezland Church Hall car park. This Church Hall is used as a community space for many activities. The information does not state whether the Hall will have to be closed during the works and therefore destroy community life

Saddleworth Rugby Club car park which is ironically used as the main car park by commuters using Greenfield station to access Manchester or Huddersfield The carriageway off Oldham Road between Greenfield Station and Chapel Road. If this includes part of the adjoining banking it would mean removing a large stand of mature trees which are in the Green Belt.

Land off Ladcastle Road is apparently required for the works proposed on RoW footpath 244. This land is also in the Green Belt

The description "Land adjacent to Uppermill Viaduct" is rather vague. It is a large structure surrounded by Green Belt. The Lime Kiln Café sits in this area. Has anyone discussed the consequences with the business and, if they have to close, a compensation scheme.

Former railway to Butterhouse Lane tunnel

There are three proposed compounds in the Ward Lane area of Diggle all in the Green Belt, including local recreation areas and a children's play area. Reinstatement has not been mentioned, neither has the consequences for local businesses

Sam Road car park

Network Rail already has existing compounds at Oaklands Road and at Diggle which they intend to expand permanently. The expansion of the one at Oaklands Road will infringe on to an OPOL (Other Protected Open Land) site which again is used by local people for recreation.

To facilitate these proposed works there appear to be quite a number of road closures and diversions. However, it is said that the devil is in the detail but not much detail of timescales and diversions is forthcoming. Previous experiences have been very unfavourable eg. When the road under the viaduct was closed for two weekends diversion routes were not adequately communicated or signposted after the local Highway Authority was informed at

the eleventh hour. These were two most important weekends of the year being bank holidays when local businesses do a significant amount of trade and a local Art Trail which was cut in two by the closure.

The closure of the Moorgate level crossing (Footpath 209), possibly permanently, is a real blow to the community. In 2022 Network Rail applied for and got planning permission to install a footbridge so the path, an ancient highway as well as a Right of Way, could continue to be used. The decision by Network Rail to withdraw the commitment to replace the level crossing with a footbridge is a real blow. It is not clear to the local community why this decision has been made. The path has a much greater footfall than many in other areas where bridges have been installed. Network Rail sites cost as one of the reasons (£4.5m) and yet has recently installed a bridge which is a bridleway, so has complex ramps and steps, at Barrowby Hill for the cost of around £2m. The logic for this does not add up. Even Freedom of Information requests on this subject have not been answered in the required timescale. The route suggested as an alternative, RoW Footpath 244 is much longer and much steeper and contains some very dangerous aspects. It has been declared by the local Highway Authority to be dangerous and unusable. The path exits on to the main road through the village at a pinch point where the footpath is less than 12 inches wide and lorries, tractors and double decker buses thunder past. The Parish Council, the local action group and members of the local community have repeatedly pointed out to Network Rail that this exit is an accident waiting to happen, but they have been totally ignored. The alternatives if footpath 244 is not used and 209 remains closed are two things. The first is that part of the local community will be cut off from the main shopping and social facilities and the second is that, if Ladcastle Road and Oldham Road is used via Greenfield Station bridge with its narrow footpaths, the extra distance is nearly 1.5 miles.

The positive in the proposals is the upgrade to Greenfield station which is long overdue. Disabled people and mums with buggies and children can finally access the Huddersfield bound platform. Hopefully, this will persuade some people to leave the car at home and use the train but there will be no extra parking or drop off and this again is needed to encourage people out of their cars and onto public transport.

The documents do not guarantee a more regular local and frequent service from Greenfield following the work. The document mentions "up to two trains" but this could equally mean none. Rail user groups and the Parish Council would like to see a commitment to provide two stopping trains an hour through the day directly servicing both Victoria and Piccadilly stations.

If this is not forthcoming, then why will the people of Saddleworth have to suffer all this disruption for no real benefit ?

Barbara Beeley,





16th December 2025