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Subject: Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order - Objection to Footpath 209 Closure (Moorgate)
Date: 18 December 2025 18:23:48

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Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order Objection to Footpath Closure (Moorgate)

Sending on behalf of: John Matthews, 1 Mytholme House, High Street, Uppermill, OL3 6DA (copied in)

I wish to object to the closure of Footpath 209 (Moorgate crossing), for the following reasons:

Footpath 209 is part of an ancient highway and historic packhorse route across Saddleworth and beyond. It dates from at least Saxon times, but more likely it is much older than this. It is vital that we protect our ancient and historic pathways for current generations and those still to come.

The footpath also cuts through the beautiful Uppermill conservation area, leading to both Ladcastle and Moorgate quarries. There is a site of special biological interest in Moorgate quarry (Moorgate Quarry Nature Reserve). The quarries are frequently used by local people and visitors to the area. If the footpath is permanently closed, it will become difficult to access these areas and they will be lost.

The current footpath is good underfoot. It is frequently used by walkers, runners and cyclists. The footpath was shown to have a very high pedestrian usage in a survey conducted by Network Rail. The footpath gives safe and immediate access to all the facilities in the village of Uppermill. The businesses in Uppermill make a high contribution to the Oldham Borough economy.

Network Rail originally proposed to install a footbridge over the railway at the top of Dark Lane. Planning permission was granted by Oldham Council for the proposed footbridge in 2022. Since then, Network Rail has said that the cost would be too high to justify it. However, Footbridges, are being installed in neighbouring Tameside, so this would seem unfair to Uppermill and those that use the path regularly.

The alternative Footpath 244, which is being suggested by Network Rail is not safe to use. It is steep and slippery because it is usually wet with water draining down the hillside. Underfoot it is rocky and there are steep steps, which are difficult to negotiate. It exits direct on to the busy main road leading into Uppermill. Locals view it as unusable and unsafe. It is especially unsafe for elderly users and children.

With this in mind, installing the footbridge would seem like the only safe and fair alternative for all the people who use Footpath 209. It would ensure that people can continue to use our ancient footpaths and enjoy the lovely countryside and

nature around the Ladcastle and Moorgate quarry areas and Uppermill in General, whilst also taking account of public safety on the railway.