

Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle TWA Order

Statement of David Slater, MA(Cantab), M.I.C.E. (Since 1977)

My name is David Slater, I lived in Oldham between 1984 and 2018, when I moved to Penistone in South Yorkshire.

I was employed by Oldham Council from 1984 to 2005, when I left as Group Manager Traffic and Transportation, which included Road Safety.

I have always been a keen walker, and since retirement in 2012 have joined U3A, Retired Engineers in Yorkshire and since 2019, Peak & Northern Footpaths Society. All these organisations have walking groups, which I have sometimes joined. I completed a Nordic walking course in Saddleworth shortly after retiring.

I have read the proposal of Network Rail to divert footpath 209 to use of path 244. I have concerns at this proposal and set these out below.

Most of my walking was in the Saddleworth area and I used FP209 on regular occasions over a period of 20 years until 2018. It formed a convenient direct footpath from Saddleworth Museum to the golf course and then Colt Hill Lane. From there I would descend to the linear footpath and Den Lane to complete the circular route back to the Museum, where my wife was giving an art class on Friday afternoons.

I can only remember using footpath 244 once as it was not as convenient from the Uppermill direction and had an unusual start through what appeared to be a private garden, so not very inviting. The narrow footway on the busy A670 would also be off-putting, particularly worrying for walkers descending towards the road with limited visibility of traffic. I would not be prepared to take my grand-daughters along this narrow footway, nor my dog even on a very short lead.

I have seen Les Harrison's objection in relation to this exit of path 244 onto Oldham Road and fully concur with his comments.

A further concern are the 63 steps on path 244, in particular for those walkers of limited mobility through either age or disability. In planning a group walk I do try to avoid such a hazard or failing that, draw attention to this element so that members can decide whether or not to participate on that occasion.

For the above reasons I would oppose this proposal by Network Rail to divert path 209 onto path 244.