

Transport and Works Act 1992

**The Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure)
(England and Wales) Rules 2006**

The Network Rail (Tackley Level Crossing) Order

Statement of Aims

(Required by Rule 10(2)(c))

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An application has been made by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited ("Network Rail") to the Secretary of State for Transport under section 6 of the Transport and Works Act 1992 ("the 1992 Act") for The Network Rail (Tackley Level Crossing) Order ("the Order") under section 1 of the 1992 Act.
- 1.2 The Order will allow Network Rail to close ("the Closure") the level crossing at Tackley in Oxfordshire ("the Level Crossing") and provides necessary related powers, including in relation to the diversion and stopping-up of highways and streets and the acquisition of interests or rights in land. This document is a concise statement of the aims of the Closure and has been produced as one of the documents required to be submitted with the application under rule 10(2)(c) of the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (as amended).
- 1.3 The Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study identified that the Closure of the Level Crossing would allow additional capacity to enable service enhancements which would help improve journey times.
- 1.4 The Closure would also create a safer railway between the Didcot North Junction to Aynho Junction (known as "the Oxford Corridor"). When closed, it will reduce dangerous misuse and trespass onto the railway.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Network Rail policy on level crossings:
 - (a) Network Rail are responsible for around 6000 level crossings nationally and there is a legal duty to assess, manage and control the risk for everyone, improving safety. The way to eliminate the risk completely is to close the crossings, where agreement can be reached to do so. The safety of level crossings can also be enhanced (and therefore reduce the risk) by upgrading crossings including improving sighting for users, introducing new technology, or changing the type of crossing.
 - (b) Each level crossing has an associated risk assessment carried out on it at regular intervals, which considers a number of important factors such as the crossing's location, how much traffic (rail, road and pedestrian) it receives and the crossing's history of near misses and accidents. The risk assessment results are then used to inform Network Rail's strategy for level crossing risk management. It is Network Rail's aim to achieve the maximum possible risk reduction at level crossings, so there is a priority to close those that present the highest risk.

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- (c) In the Western Route, there are 545 level crossings, of which Tackley has been assessed as high risk and is a priority to close. There are no additional improvements or enhancements that could be made to the arrangement or operation of the Level Crossing that make it safer than how it was before the temporary closure. Closing the Level Crossing and installing appropriate alternatives with the footbridge and bridleway diversion, is the only way to fully eradicate any future risk to users by removing direct access to the live railway.
- (d) As the Level Crossing was also used as a barrow crossing to access the platforms, an enhancement was seen as a negative step and would not address Network Rail's safety concerns and strategic goals of reducing safety risk to the public. Providing a footbridge at the station will allow safe access between the two platforms, opposed to the barrow crossing.

2.2 Level Crossing

- (a) The Level Crossing is located just south of Tackley Station on the Didcot-Chester (DCL) Line at 72 miles 47 chains.
- (b) The Level Crossing is a public bridleway crossing with Whistleboards, which are used at footpath crossings where users can't see approaching trains. When the train passes a board, the driver must sound the horn so that users know a train is coming.
- (c) Trains pass here on the two-track railway. The line speed is 90 mph in both directions, noting however the differential speed limits of 90/110 HST (High Speed Train) to the south of the station and 90/95 HST to the north. The railway at this location is busy with over 100 trains per day passing through the station which include freight trains, higher speed passenger and regional train services.
- (d) The Level Crossing (currently closed under a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO)) served as a bridleway and foot crossing, a Sustrans cycleway and a station barrow crossing for access between Platforms 1 and 2 of Tackley Station. Prior to closure in April 2020, the Level Crossing was well used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders alongside station users and connects the bridleway to the east and west of the station.
- (e) The Level Crossing was closed under emergency measures in April 2020 after a near miss involving pedestrians at the site. As a temporary measure, a temporary footbridge has been erected at Tackley station and the Level Crossing closed under a TTRO, with support from Oxfordshire County Council.

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- (f) The Level Crossing is considered high risk and is in the top 10% of the 545 crossings on the Western Route in terms of risk, making it a priority crossing for closure. The Level Crossing was the location of a fatality (2008), two near misses (both in 2019) and was subject to repeated misuse before its closure.

3 THE PROJECT

3.1 Tackley Level Crossing

- (a) The Level Crossing will be permanently closed, and a new bridleway will be diverted along a new route to the west of its current position, running adjacent to the railway to the south.
- (b) The existing route of the bridleway (379/2/10) will remain open as a cul-de-sac, with only the portion over the railway being stopped up. This will be accessible by using the new bridleway and existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) network.
- (c) The new bridleway route will run to the south, adjacent to Network Rail's existing boundary, before joining up with the existing byway (379/25/10). Construction of the new bridleway route and associated fencing to link the east and west side of the station are shown in Appendix 1.
- (d) The permanent solution to re-provide the (barrow crossing) functionality of the Level Crossing at the station itself will be a stepped footbridge, with lifts, installed at the station, spanning across the railway. Permissive access can be provided to non-railway users, including pedestrians and cyclists on foot, along the platforms and over the footbridge unless and until ticket barriers are installed at the station, or Network Rail otherwise determines access to non-railway users should cease.

4 AIMS OF THE CLOSURE

4.1 Safety:

The Closure aims to improve safety:

- (a) The Closure will provide a new, safer, Equalities Act 2010 compliant crossing of the railway suitable for all permitted users including those on foot, with pushchairs, mobility scooters and with cycles at Tackley, by installing a footbridge with lifts at the station to replace the barrow crossing.

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- (b) The Closure will remove any possible interaction between a user and the railway. Railway users will be able to move between the station platforms using the footbridge and lifts, rather than using the station barrow crossing and having to cross a live railway.
- (c) The Level Crossing was the location of a fatality (2008), two near misses (2019) and was subject to repeated misuse before its closure under an emergency TTRO. Closing this Level Crossing and providing alternative access over and around the railway, will help to remove the interface between the public and trains, in turn reducing risk.

4.2 Service Improvement:

The Closure aims to improve service delivery:

- (a) By removing the Level Crossing there will be a reduction of any train delays or personal injuries associated with equipment and incidents at the existing Level Crossing.
- (b) The Closure will act as an enabler to release capacity to run additional freight and passenger train services along the route in the future. This is dependent on other level crossing closures in the area.

4.3 Local transport improvement

The Closure will contribute to improvements in local transport:

- (a) Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council are supportive of an accessible footbridge being installed as part of the proposal for the closure of the Level Crossing.

4.4 Cost Efficiencies

The Closure will deliver cost efficiencies:

- (a) The Closure will minimise the whole life cost of the network by removing an asset – it will no longer require future maintenance, nor incur operational and delay costs associated with equipment and incidents.
- (b) There will be an associated operational and maintenance cost following the installation of the new bridge, however this is believed to be less than the current costs of the Level Crossing and has been considered in the cost-benefit analysis of the scheme as a whole.

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5 APPENDIX – THE PROPOSED NEW BRIDLEWAY AT TACKLEY

