

Manchester and High Peak Area

Oldham Group



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Matthew Woodward
Inspector
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5th May 2026

*I have shortened some of the text and
renumbered the Appendices to bring them in order
25th June 2026*

Dear Mr Woodward

TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992
Transport and Works (Applications and Objections
Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006
THE NETWORK RAIL (STALYBRIDGE TO DIGGLE (SADDLEWORTH) ENHANCEMENTS) ORDER
STATEMENT OF CASE
FOR THE PPLICATION

Proof of Evidence

My reference: TWA/25/APP/02/OBJ 260

1. My name is John Walton, and I have been the Footpath Secretary of the Oldham Group of the Ramblers for over 44 years. I have a Higher National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering.
2. I will concentrate on the mechanics of the footbridge that Network Rail was prepared to put in – initially a Series 400 from around 2021 at a cost of £1.2 million but its price has ballooned to £4.5 million. This was mentioned at the Oldham Highways Regulation meeting on 18th July 2024.

3. The footbridge was first mentioned in August 2021, when I received an email from Gareth Jones of Network Rail (York) saying – We are proposing to replace the existing level crossing with a grade separating footbridge to provide a safe route across the railway corridor for pedestrians. See my sketch to Gareth of a footbridge on **Appendix 1. ok**

4. PA/349207/22

- 4.1 I receive a copy of planning applications each week, to see if any effect a ROW. If it does affect a footpath, I make representations to the planning officer to put my concerns into his report. Sometimes a Section 106 is prised out of the developer to enhance a local facility.
- 4.2 In June 2022, Network Rail submitted a planning application to Oldham OMBC for the Moorgate level crossing in Uppermill. The drawing number submitted with the PA was 151 - 667 - TSA– 26 – MVL3 – DRG -T -LP- 040004 Rev P03. **This is what I called a Rolls Royce footbridge. See Appendix 2.**
- 4.3 There was reference to the name of an owner who in this case was (redacted) of Ridgewood House, Moorgate Street, Uppermill, So, it looks like Network Rail was taking a small section of Ridgewood House to develop the **Rolls Royce** footbridge.

5. Oaklands Road compound

- 5.1 I have looked at the 6 bridges from the Mossley boundary to the Uppermill viaduct, and it is mentioned 11 times that materials and crange will be taken to each bridge which was being reconstructed or taken down. Spoil from the reconstructed bridges is to be removed via road rail vehicles to the Oaklands Road compound.
- 5.2 As the Moorgate footbridge lies a few Km north of Oaklands Road similar journeys can be made. Over time Oaklands Road compound is going to be very busy and no doubt some form of constructive sequential will be applied as it says in the ***The Transport and Works Act 1992 (TWA): Application.***
- 5.3 Over the years Oaklands Road is going to be very busy servicing the 6/7 bridges plus some other bridges in Mossley. The Moorgate footbridge could be serviced with many of the materials lifted over the low wall adjacent to the Oldham Road compound. It will be a bit congested up and down the line when the Oldham Road bridge is being reconstructed. See **Appendix 5.**

6. Times when the rail line is closed

- 6.1 I have looked at the times when the rail line is closed and no trains are running. There are multiple times when the Moorgate footbridge can be constructed. See **Appendix 6.**

7. Times when craneage is being used.

- 7.1 I also looked at the times when craneage was being used to bring materials to the bridges and take spoil away to Oaklands Road. This method can also be used to take the bridge structure and remove any spoil from Moorgate. See **Appendix 7**.

8. Times when limited space is mentioned.

- 8.1 Looking at the comments in **Appendix 8** all three of them compare to the limited space mentioned at Moorgate.

9. My costing and Network Rails cost

- 9.1 I looked at the inflated cost of the Rolls Royce footbridge and my approximation for my simple footbridge and although I am not a civil engineer, my total cost amounted to something similar to the 400 Series footbridge adding a few quid for inflation. See **Appendix 9**.

10. Information from Tameside.

- 10.1 In 2017 the Group covered the Tameside area and I was able to receive a copy of two S119 orders where the level crossing was to be closed and replaced with standard 400 series footbridge.
- 10.2 One crossing carried footpath 63 Droylsden, (bridge no 17AA) and had 4 people using it per day and the second one carried Ashton u Lyne path 108 (bridge no 17AB) and carried 5 people per day. They were about 300m apart and Network Rail paid for all the legal costs etc. For a photo of the level crossing see **Appendix 10.1** (the upper photo shows the level crossing).
- 10.3 Lower photo shows a Series 400 footbridge. See **Appendix 10.2** It is also of a photo of a footbridge that carries footpath 100 in Saddleworth.

11. Increasing costs

- 11.1 I have been lobbying for a footbridge on path 209 where Network Rail had originally proposed a footbridge in **2022 costing £1.2 million**. But by mid-2023 Network Rail reneged and said rising costs were a major factor. Now £4.5 million.
- 11.2 What I did not realise it at the time, was the **Rolls Royce** footbridge that appeared in the above planning application and not a series 400 footbridge.
- 11.3 The time taken for a series 400 footbridge is usually 9 months at different times to suit the rail line being closed. See **Appendix 11** – Hours worked in the 9 month period.
- 11.4 Looking at the times commencing on 1st Sept 2022 and the end on the 20th May 2023. It appeared to me that an order had been placed but could have been cancelled due to the activities of the Alliance. **More later!**

11.5 Important dates in 2022 and 2023 – See time line with the same heading

11.6 Re the 9 months to construct a Series 400 footbridge

11.7 Date of release of Rolls Royce footbridge Feb 2022

11.8 Planning App to OMBC June 2022

11.9 Date when the Alliance Rail Holdings were dissolved – Feb 2023

12. A bespoke footbridge

12.1 I have designed a special footbridge with one set of steps on the Uppermill side with a cranked overbridge linking up with the western side of path 209. If the overbridge was made from Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP), I reckon it would cost around £1.6 million. **Show sample.**



12.2 The photo above is where materials for the Moorgate footbridge can be lifted over the wall and transported to the site by rail vehicles.

The photo below is a copy of the Network Rail bespoke footbridge which is very similar to mine and was slipped in sometime during late 2025

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order
Statement of Case (NR30)



Figure 76 Image of bespoke bridge replacement

8.2.2.34 It is weathering steel footbridge supported on a platform to the east with mass foundations on the west. The structure is cranked to follow the alignment of the existing footpath and has a number of unique details.

8.2.2.35 The primary site constraints which lead to this bespoke solution are listed and highlighted in the image below.

- a) Side long ground
- b) Proximity of Network Rail boundary on east side
- c) Proximity of existing dry-stone walls on west side
- d) Existing land drainage
- e) Remote site with limited access from highway

My design of a cheaper footbridge on path 209 and with simpler installation.

12.1 This cheaper footbridge is based on a CAD drawing and can be seen on **Appendix 4.1.**

12.2 The plan view of my footbridge can be seen on drg no 4.2.1 and the side view on drg no 4.2.2. Details of the individual components can be seen on **Appendix 4.3.**

13. I have now designed this simple footbridge which consists of the following advantages:

- 13.1 Cheaper due to less materials and possible a FRP overbridge.
- 13.2 Less concrete.
- 13,3 Lighter and less bored holes in the solid rock.

- 13.4 Only one set of steps. Time to install – Around 4 weeks when Greenfield Station and the adjacent road bridge are being modified. Not 9 months.
- 13.5 Lighter craneage.
- 13.6 My design is 4.5m from the running rail and is taking around 100 sq m from Richard and Helen Mottram of 3 Moorgate Street, the landowners of Ridgewood House. This small area is at the top of their field.
- 13.7 I have had some interesting information regarding the purchase of the 100 sq m of land to build my new footbridge and the logistics can be seen on **Appendix 12**.

14. Battersley Lane near Garforth

- 14.1 The following is a brief look at a bridleway/footbridge which Kevin went to have a look at recently. It is called the Battersley Lane bridge and cost just over £2 million which Kevin squeezed out of Network Rail under the FOI Act.
- 14.2 It has piles 10m long to support the concrete base for the steps as it is sitting on an area of weak coal seams, The ramp has shorter piles as there is less load on these piles. Perhaps Network Rails concern about piles on the Moorgate footbridge are nothing compared with the bridge shown below.
- 14.3 The drawings shown below are a plan view and a side view with details of the 2 piles highlighted.
- 14.4 The photos shown on page 7, are an artist's impression and a photo taken by Kevin earlier this year, can be seen on page 8.

- Temporary access requirements from Barwick Road to the new Barrowby Lane Bridge;
- Land for landscape and ecological mitigation planting.

New ramped brideway bridge with steps, with bridge base approximately 5.5m above railway

New access track to brideway bridge

Barrowby Lane Bridleway Crossing to be closed

Potential embankment stability works

New access track to brideway bridge

Indicative location of temporary site compound for bridge installation

For information Only
NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

[illegible]

Figure 24 - Proposed ramped and stepped bridleway bridge general arrangement drawing



Proposals for Barrowby Lane bridleway/footbridge.



Bridleway/footbridge as completed – 30 January 2026

15. Alliance Consortium

- 15.1 The following comments were received from a reliable source in Nov 2023.
- 15.2 Moorgate Halt falls into a package of works with the Transpennine Upgrade referenced as 'W2B' effectively, the route between Stalybridge and Huddersfield.
- 15.3 This was originally to an Alliance consortium named 'Transpire TRU West' whom were awarded all the works from Manchester to Leeds.
- 15.4 The Alliance is now in its 3rd year of delivery. However the Department of Transport raised significant concerns their ability to deliver value for money and have subsequently withdrawn package W2B from the alliance (circa £1.5b project).
- 15.5 Therefore, any design work completed to date, has now been paused until such time as NR can tender the whole of the W2B route to the open market.

16 Conclusions

- 15.1 I started this long letter by saying Network Rail was going to build a stepped footbridge to allow pedestrians to cross the railway safely.
- 15.2 A year later I highlighted the planning application, where a Rolls Royce footbridge was included as a proposed solution to keep path 209 open.
- 15.3 I then went on to describe my footbridge with one set of steps on the east side with a cranked overbridge linking up with the western side of path 209. I reckon it would cost around £1.6 million.
- 15.4 The next section concentrated on the compounds to see what their function was and slotting in the text from the NR's, 470 page document. In all cases NR were using the compounds in the same way for the construction of the 6 bridges from the Mossley boundary to the Uppermill viaduct. This included light and heavy-duty cranes, taking materials during the many rail closures, and taking any spoil back to Oaklands Road.
- 15.5 It gradually occurred to me that Network Rail was constructing a bespoke footbridge using the same working methods that all the other 6 bridges were using. I think they had copied mine, but I am not complaining as long as joe public gets a footbridge to carry walkers along path 209 that had been in existence since 1300.

- 15.6 So, I finally end this presentation on the mechanics of a stepped footbridge and I ask you to consider mine and all the other 260 or so objectors to keep path 209 open with a simple footbridge.
- 15.7 Looking at the dates of Network Rail and methods of constructing a footbridge which they seemed to have nicked from me a couple of years ago. They could have admitted defeat and scotched a large part of this public inquiry saving the taxpayers lots of dough.

QED

Yours Sincerely

John Walton

Footpath Secretary

Oldham Ramblers

Special Projects