Affiliated to Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

OBJECTION TO THE CLOSURE OF MOORGATE LEVEL CROSSING ON BEHALF OF WEDNESDAY WALKERS (OLDHAM)

THE NETWORK RAIL (STALYBRIDGE TO DIGGLE (SADDLEWORTH) ENHANCEMENTS) TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT ORDER.

Kevin Lawton BSc, CEng, MICE (Ret'd)

16 December 2025

1.0 Background

1.1 I am a resident of Saddleworth and an occasional user of the path (number 209) and level crossing proposed for closure. I am retired and on a voluntary basis I am the Footpath Secretary dealing with Public Rights of Way (PROW) queries for the Oldham based Wednesday Walkers which has c. 270 members.

1.2 I have been involved in meetings, discussions and exchange of emails with NR staff for the past three years, initially supporting their proposal for a footbridge to replace the crossing, but then as an objector when NR abandoned that idea citing costs of £4.5m which would not be value for money.

1.3 NR have applied in this TWAO to permanently close path 209 and upgrade path 244 as an alternative route as this picture from the consultation leaflet shows. The white route is the path to be closed, and the orange dashed line the proposed alternative.

1.4 <u>We are not opposing the upgrading of the railway or the eventual closure of the level crossing. We want the route of path 209 retained on its current alignment and not via a longer, unsafe and circuitous route. This can be achieved with a footbridge</u>.

2.0 Basis of objection

2.1 Path 209 is an ancient highway named Dark Lane, which is thought by Saddleworth Historical Society to have been in existence since Saxon times, ie, 1,000 years. It is shown on early maps from 1766 onwards and has local historical significance as part of a network of inter-regional routes. This is a

heritage asset that should be retained, and it has not been referred to in the Environment Report.

2.2 NR had planning consent for a footbridge in 2022, and this was recommended in NR's Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA). It was stated in the planning application that 'The proposed footbridge will enable this important recreational route to be retained at the same location'.

2.3 NR failed to obtain a permanent closure order from Oldham Council in July 2024 but then obtained a temporary closure from August 2025 until February 2026 using false information that it related to works on Uppermill Viaduct half a mile away, and this pre-empts the permanent closure now applied for. An interim safe system of using the crossing should have been provided until this TWAO is determined. The solution could have been a temporary signal on the approach to the level crossing, rather than after it, as the crossover will only be used on an intermittent basis. No other reason would require the closure of the crossing, and this is illustrated by the fact that the level crossing in Mossley on this same line has not been temporarily closed.

2.4 NR's survey of the path in March/April 2022 showed a very high usage, 434 people over 11 days which is an average of between 39 and 40 per day and including vulnerable people. I have just become aware that a more detail survey was carried out over 26 days in November/December 2024 and although this was in Autumn, there was still an average daily use by 25 people.

2.5 Despite many written requests since June 2025, but first mentioned at a site meeting on 12 November 2024, NR has not been able to justify the increased cost from £1.2m to £4.5m for a footbridge. NR's own design manual shows the basic cost of a series 400 footbridge without lighting to be £750,000. I accept that there would be the cost of some minor land acquisition to add but the final cost should be no more than £1.5m and this would be marginal against a TRU total budget of £11.5b. It would also be within the parameters originally thought acceptable by NR when planning consent was obtained. Set against this cost would be the saving of expenditure on 244, which would not be required, previously stated to be £200k but not confirmed. My request for the budget cost of the proposed works on 244 has not been answered, and I envisage from the details now in this order, along with the associated land acquisition costs for access, that it will be much higher. In fact, if the costs for the footbridge now given to me in a FOI and copied at Appendix 1 are extrapolated to the works on 244 then we are looking at costs in excess of £1m which would be a significant off set against the costs of a footbridge. I have again asked for confirmation, and this is being dealt with under FOI with a response date by 6 January 2026. ***See Addendum.***

2.6 Some of the cost increases for the footbridge were said to be due to difficult access, poor ground conditions and the need to work out-of-hours over a period of 8 months. That situation is not now relevant following publication of draft plans showing proposals for nearby access points to the track, closure of the track for works at Greenfield Station and other adjacent embankment works. The TWAO

does not show if this access is still required but either way there is a proposed compound on the carriageway of Oldham Road and the relative levels of Oldham Road and the track make it perfectly feasible to load equipment, materials and a prefabricated bridge from road to rail and transport these 700 metres to the crossing site. This change of circumstances has never been acknowledged by NR and repeated requests to discuss it have failed. Instead, we were advised that there would be no change to the plans to close the crossing, with 244 as an alternative, and there would be no meetings until after the TWAO objection period had closed. We were told that we would have to make our case at a Public Inquiry, which is not in the spirit of the TWAO guidance that requires 'constructive dialogue' with interested parties. The TRU team also did not live up to the promises on the website to have meetings and to keep stakeholders fully informed. I have had to resort to FOI to get information.

2.7 The proposal to use path 244 which has dangerous old stone steps and an exit on to Oldham Road with no footway, is not suitable even with improvements, as a replacement for 209 which has an even gradient and no steps. This is the view of Oldham Officers which is the reason why no alternative route was specified in the temporary closure order. The proposal in the TWAO does not comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and is therefore unacceptable. There is no evidence that a DIA has been carried out for the use of 244 as required by NR's policy document (NR/GN/CIV/300/07) and no evidence that any disability groups have been consulted. It also appears that NR has not heeded the warning given by the Office for Rail and Road in the Consultation Report that they should carry out a 'suitable and sufficient risk assessment covering the changes'. The response from NR that the path would be improved with 'compatible steps and handrails' is not borne out on the drawings of the proposals.

2.8 The 'Design and Access Statement' in this TWAO refers in section 2.6 to the Equality Act and in 2.6.1 to two NR policy documents. These documents mainly deal with stations and buildings but in 'Inclusive Design' there is reference to the importance of carrying out a Diversity Impact Assessment. One was carried out for Moorgate, and it recommended a footbridge, so we are now left with a dubious 'cost decision' not to build a footbridge which has over-ridden the needs of disadvantaged people.

2.9 Consultation with the public in November 2024 was only about the option of closing the crossing and using 244 as an alternative. No detail proposals were put forward for improvements promised to 244 and no option of a footbridge was presented. The public were therefore misled and prevented from commenting on the option of a footbridge. Despite this, the majority of responses 68% were against the proposal.

2.10 Path 209 features in walking leaflets as part of a local circular route.

3.0 Rail safety

3.1 We have been advised that the Moorgate crossing has to close due to the proximity of a signal 20 metres beyond the crossing controlling a crossover

between tracks which could result in a safety issue with a train stopped across the crossing. This raises issues about why the crossover is there and not further up the track, but we have been told that the location of the crossover was determined by the curvature of the track and rules governing the spacing of signals. I do not have the technical knowledge to dispute that so accept that the crossing will have to close when the full upgrade is implemented.

3.2 NR is proposing the use of path 244 as the alternative route but even with planned improvements it will still be unsafe and unsuitable as a replacement for path 209 which does not have these issues. If approved, this would transfer a rail safety issue to a highway safety issue. This is illustrated in the Safety Report referred to in para. 4.17 below that Oldham should monitor the outcome of the diversion. If there were more accidents, then the only solution would be the footbridge on 209! Surely NR should agree to a footbridge now and before any accidents. Oldham would incur a significant cost in maintaining the steps, surfacing and drainage proposed for 244, not NR as suggested in the Safety Report.

3.3 We want the historic route of path 209 retained and are campaigning for a footbridge as a replacement for the crossing and this would remove all rail safety issues. We recognise that a footbridge would have steps (42) but only on the Uppermill side as the topography means that the deck can run into the ground on the Ladcastle Road side. This will affect some people with mobility issues but given that the gradient of path 209 is about 1 in 4 then that already limits its use, and we believe this to be a reasonable compromise. The topography also means that a fully DDA compliant bridge would be inappropriate and the extent of the ramps and additional land acquisition that would be required on the Uppermill side would not be value for money.

3.4 The answer to a FOI request showed that 16 of the 29 level crossings on the whole TRU route are not to be touched as their risk rating has not increased. The problem at Moorgate has therefore been created entirely by NR installing a signal-controlled cross-over close to the level crossing and they should have been more amenable to the option of a footbridge.

4.0 Comments on the draft order

4.1 Costs of a footbridge

4.2 The sole reason for abandoning the idea of a footbridge was cost. This was said to be £4.5million in a report to Oldham's Highway Regulation Committee in July 2024. This cost was made up of higher works costs of £2.3m due to out of hours working over a period of 8 months, access problems and poor ground requiring piled foundations. To this was added £1.2m for unspecified land acquisition and a further £1m for no reason at all. Details are shown in Appendix 1. Minutes of a site meeting on 12 November 2024 actually state that land costs are not included in the increase! Repeated requests for justification of the costs which I have made since that meeting and more formally since June 2025, were not answered. I therefore submitted an FOI in October 2025, and NR could not

answer it within the usual 20 days and extended it for 40 days. I finally received a response on 2 December 2025 which is shown in Appendix 1, Firstly, the 'Total base cost' has been incorrectly added up and should be £2,972,000 – **nearly £1m less than stated.** The costs do not bear any resemblance to those reported to Oldham's Highway Regulation Committee. It includes lighting, which in the Manual referred to in para. 4.4 below costs £100k but is not needed and this is stated in NR's planning application. It appears to me that the add-on costs, rather than the footbridge, are the ones that do not meet the Treasury's Managing Public Money Principles referred to in the report on page 14 - Appendix 1. Neither have I been supplied with information about boreholes which I requested in July 2025. Nobody locally had seen any being dug and given the proximity of stone quarries there is suspicion about this claimed increase.

4.3 As the project developed it became clear that the railway line would have to be closed for works at Greenfield Station and this would give the opportunity for track-based access to construct a footbridge. Line closures are also planned for the bridge works at Wrights, Wrights Mill and Wickens. Online videos of works on the TRU east of Leeds show that all the necessary rail-based equipment is available to carry out this work. All attempts to discuss this change, including with the Managing Director of TRU and the stakeholder team were unanswered, but other TRU staff advised that no changes would be made to the TWAO and that we should make our case at a Public Inquiry. Discussion was promised only after objections had been made. This is not in the spirit of communication with stakeholders and other interested parties as promoted on the TRU website or to have 'constructive dialogue' as required in the TWAO guidance for applicants.

4.4 Online there is a NR Design Manual for footbridges (NR/GN/CIV/200/07) which, dated June 2024, shows the cost of a 400 series footbridge without lighting to be £746k. At Moorgate, there would be a small area of land required, as there was in the original planning consent, and even with extra foundations, if needed, the cost should be under £1m. This would then be value for money given that the total estimated cost for this section of the work is £235m. NR should be made to consider a footbridge as an option.

4.5 Other much more expensive footbridges are being provided on TRU east of Leeds at Lady Ann, Church Fenton, Rose Lane and Barrowby Lane. The answer to a FOI has confirmed that the costs of the significantly bigger Barrowby Lane bridleway/footbridge which has just been completed with ramps to DDA standards and piled foundations is **£2m**.Two footbridges with just 4 and 5 users per day were constructed only 300 metres apart in Droylsden to accommodate advance electrification of the TRU line. Lady Ann footbridge was apparently designed in consultation with local residents so we cannot understand why the Moorgate level crossing is being treated so differently.

4.6 Consultation

4.7 The consultation report supports my view that our attempts to have meaningful discussion with TRU staff were unsuccessful as the answers just repeat that NR propose improvements to the nearby path 244. It ignores the concerns raised by

Oldham Council. In other words, there was no way of influencing the decision of TRU staff already made to close path 209 and use 244 as an alternative. Paragraph 4.2.5 of the Planning Statement, repeated in para.3.1.6 of the Design and Access Statement, suggests that options for dealing with level crossings have been influenced by feedback from the consultation. This is not true in relation to Moorgate and as confirmed in para. 1.4.7 of the Consultation Report the proposed closure of Moorgate was not included in the first round of public consultation. Para. 2.2.35 of the Consultation Report refers to a site meeting that I was involved in on 12 November 2024, and I would point out that our request for information on: a) costs of the footbridge, b) details of the work and costs for 244 and c) whether a footbridge could be completed during line closure for Greenfield Station, had still not been answered 12 months later.

4.8 A majority of the public did not want 244 as an alternative following the consultation event in November 2024 but I would point out that the questions did not provide an option of a footbridge, so it is likely that those who agreed with the closure were influenced by safety issues on the railway and misleading information about the proposed works on 244.

4.9 At the consultation event in November 2024 a picture was shown of a possible set of steps to replace the dangerous old steps on path 244 (Page 168 Consultation Report). The proposal in this TWAO submission for improvements to 244 are much more extensive and nothing like that picture or what was promoted. Other display boards gave minimalist information about access points, compounds, traffic management and the environment. It can now be seen from the TWAO documents that the impact of constructing the TRU project will be very significant and this was certainly not emphasised in the consultation.

4.10 NR press release about the temporary closure of the crossing gave misleading information that it was due to ‘near misses’ and my request on 1 October for information about such incidents has remained unanswered.

4.11 The public notice for this TWAO is strange in that copies of the order have been deposited at Mossley and Greenfield Libraries but not at Uppermill Library which is the main one for Saddleworth.

4.12 I have also noticed some changes to proposals in the consultation documents that are not now in the TWAO. For example, the compound for the works on 244 is much bigger, accesses off Ladcastle Road and Oldham Road for embankment works not included, a new access to be created at junction of Oldham Road and Chapel Road, drainage outfall to the canal not included and a compound proposed on Oldham Road that could encroach onto the embankment between Oldham Road and Chapel Road. Some of these changes affect Green Belt and clearly there are issues about reinstatement and traffic management which were not addressed in the consultation or in the TWAO.

4.13 Closure of path 209 and the level crossing

4.14 <u>We accept the permanent closure of the crossing on safety grounds when the full TRU is implemented but we want the route retained and the best way to do</u>

that is via a footbridge. This is entirely consistent with the upgrading aims of this TWAO and with NR's policy: 'Enhancing Level Crossing Safety 2019 – 2029'.

4.15 As stated above, local historians believe that path 209 has been in existence for about 1,000 years and has local historical significance as an inter-regional route. It is therefore a heritage asset which as promised on the TRU website should be considered for protection. It already existed and was retained when the railway was constructed in the 1840s.

4.16 Use of path 244 as an alternative route

4.17 Path 244 is hardly used as it has flights of dangerous stone steps and an exit on to the busy Oldham Road where on the south side there is no footway and reduced visibility of on-coming traffic. On the north side, the highway margin on the proposed route to the canal is 600mm reducing to 450mm due to what looks like a buried stone boundary marker. See picture below. The assumption should be that there would be greater use of it as an alternative to 209 and an increase in accidents. The safety report produced by Mayer Brown in September 2025 does not quantify additional usage either by vulnerable people or children and is clearly a last-minute attempt to justify the alternative route. In relation to the option of extending the 20mph zone favoured by NR, it actually concludes that the risk of accidents will increase but the severity should be less. That assumes that drivers will have slowed down in the short distance before the path exit. Their recommendation to reduce the risk is a footway of at least 1.2 metres, which is not physically possible. This report is therefore, independent proof that the use of path 244 as an alternative route will result in an increase in accidents and is totally unacceptable.

Exit of path 244 onto Oldham Road

4.18 Path 209 has no steps so the proposed upgrade of 244 in the TWAO which will have 65 steps (41 new steps, 22 water bars and 2 existing), is totally unacceptable. No physical solution is offered to the unsafe exit at Oldham Road and the idea of extending the 20mph zone does not solve it, and this is confirmed by Oldham's Traffic Engineer. There are other aspects of the proposal such as the lack of handrails and the use of GRP planks on the steps that I find unacceptable, and I am not clear how rainwater run-off can get into the filter drain and flow to the outlet without causing erosion. The safety proposals in the Mayer Brown report in relation to concrete steps with an extended tread length and handrails have not been incorporated into the proposed improvements. The step height of 180mm is above the maximum of 170mm recommended in DfT Guide to Best Practice: 'Inclusive Mobility'. The proposed width of 1.1 metres for the steps, with a narrow section of 700mm and other sections of 1.0 metre does not comply with the definitive width of 1.2 metres. I also note that although the total length of the path is 174 metres, only 97 metres are to be renewed with the remaining 77 metres just 'cleared of vegetation' even though some of that length is in poor condition.

4.19 I am aware that Oldham Council does not support the use of 244 as an alternative route and that NR has been advised of that.

4.20 The alternative route would be 440 metres longer and it does not serve as a logical point for access to the centre of Uppermill or as a straightforward alternative. There is an error in para. 10.4.30 of the Environment Report where it suggests the extra distance is only 200 metres.

4.21 The proposed use of 244 does not comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty as mobility impaired people will be significantly affected. No Impact assessment has been carried out as recommended by the Office for Rail and Road and no consultation with disability groups.

4.22 The proposal requires the removal of two trees which are protected under a Tree Preservation Order.

4.23 On 8 December 2025 I received a copy of a Highways Statement prepared by Mayer Brown in June 2025. This report identifies all the problems with the use of 244 that we have identified but their priority recommendations for improvements are to the stone steps and the path surface, not the junction with Oldham Road. This report together with the Safety Report prepared in September 2025 illustrates that NR was trying to justify their decision to use 244 which they had already made some 12 months earlier – and they have not succeeded. In relation to path 209, I am appalled to see in the Highways Statement under Recommendation 1 that: 'destruction of the existing walkways should be implemented as necessary to properly remove the route and prevent it from being navigated'. This was not mentioned in any consultation leaflet or meeting.

4.24 The case for a footbridge

4.25 A footbridge would remove all safety concerns about the level crossing and would retain this historic route.

4.26 A footbridge was NR's preferred option in 2022, and this satisfied their Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA).

4.27 NR's two surveys showed the path had a very high usage and by vulnerable people.

4.28 I believe that reconsideration of the costs will show that a footbridge would be value for money. The cost quoted for Moorgate is completely out of proportion to other bridges being constructed on the TRU and the costs from the FOI in Appendix 1 are exorbitant. I have formally challenged the figures, but under FOI rules I may not get an answer until 2 February 2026. ***See Addendum.***

4.29 The topography means that steps are only required on the Uppermill side of a footbridge. On the Ladcastle Road side the deck can run into the ground. It could be argued that steps affect some mobility impaired people but given that the average gradient of the exiting path is about 1 in 4 then there are already some limitations. A footbridge with only one set of steps is therefore seen as a reasonable compromise and is better than NR's DIA which recommended a footbridge with two sets of steps.

4.30 A footbridge is what the local community want.

5.0 Summary of objection

- Path 209 is an ancient named highway of local historic significance as part of a network of inter-regional routes from at least the 16th C. NR's surveys have shown the path to have very high pedestrian usage and by vulnerable people
- A footbridge was favoured by NR in 2022 when it was recommended in their Diversity Impact Assessment and NR had planning consent for one.
- Footbridge abandoned by NR in 2024 due to cost increase from £1.2m to £4.5m which has not been substantiated and is way in excess of the cost of other bridges currently being built
- NR failed to get approval from Oldham Council in July 2024 to permanently close path 209 and obtained the current temporary closure using false information
- NR has refused to discuss revised construction access arrangements which will save cost
- Misleading public consultation by not including an option for a footbridge
- Majority of responses to the consultation were against the use of 244 as an alternative
- Use of 244 with 65 steps and an unsafe exit on to Oldham Road where there is no footway is not an acceptable alternative to 209 which does not have these issues
- The alternative route does not meet the TWAO test of being 'suitable and convenient'
- Public Sector Equality Duty has not been complied with as the impact on mobility impaired people has not been considered and no risk assessment of using 244 has been carried out.
- Failure to have 'constructive dialogue' with interested parties

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 There are two TWAO tests to justify closure of a level crossing and whilst NR can probably demonstrate the 'necessity' of the closure of the level crossing, it has not demonstrated that the alternative is a 'convenient and suitable replacement for existing users' as required in the TWAO Procedures.

6.2 There is a viable alternative to the TWAO proposal to permanently close path 209 and upgrade path 244, and that is a footbridge.

6.3 I believe that the cost of £4.5m which was used as the sole reason for abandoning the footbridge proposal was not genuine and this is illustrated in Appendix 1. Correcting the 'Total base cost' shows that the figure should be about £1m less. The true costs of some of the items should also be much less and can now be reduced further because of easier access when the track is closed at Greenfield Station. From the information I have obtained, I envisage a cost less than £2m. The cost of proposed works to path 244, using the elements given to me in the FOI for the footbridge, must be well over £1m so I am predicting that the actual extra cost of a footbridge will be less than £1m and in the totality of the TRU scheme this should be considered as value for money. ***See Addendum.***

6.4 I request the Secretary of State not to approve the closure of the Moorgate level crossing. This would force NR to come back with the option of a footbridge.

6.5 I have studied the earlier decisions in relation to the closure of level crossings in Essex where 20 out of 57 were not approved; Cambridgeshire 9 out of 25 not approved, and Suffolk 13 out of 22 not approved due variously to steps, extra distance, gradients, inconvenience, highway safety, no footways and PSED. The alternative routes were not therefore 'suitable and convenient'. All those reasons set precedent and apply to the crossing at Moorgate.

6.6 I also refer to the comments of the Secretary of State in the decision on the TWAO for Leeds to Micklefield, given in October 2024 and which is on the TRU line. The conclusions in that TWAO for the Garforth Moor and Peckfield level crossings relating to diversion lengths, should mean that the alternative of using path 244 with an extra distance of 440 metres is unacceptable. The reasons would also include highway safety grounds and ought to lead to the same conclusion that 'the diversion route is not considered convenient, even for leisure purposes, as it does not follow a straightforward path'. The proposal to use 244, illustrated in the NR leaflet at section 1.3 above, clearly shows that the alternative route is not convenient and does not follow a straightforward path. The interim 'minded to refuse' decision for the Tackley level crossing on the TRU is also relevant as it relates to the unsuitability and convenience of the alternative route.

6.7 If despite the arguments above, the Secretary of State decides to approve the closure of the Moorgate level crossing on rail safety grounds, then I request that

under the Transport and Works Act section 48(2) she orders **as part of the decision** that a footbridge is provided.

7.0 Other Public Rights of Way

7.1 For completeness I confirm that I have agreed the diversions for the level crossing (Stockport Road) in Mossley and the diversion of path 222 Saddleworth which is needed following removal of Wrights overbridge.

7.2 Works proposed for bridge MVL3/26 at Shaw Hall Bank Road and MVL3/35 at Ravenstone Drive do not affect the respective paths 210 and 107.

7.3 There appear to be no works planned for the footbridge MVL3/31A at Butterhouse Lane – path100, and only handrail works to the tunnel MVL3/32 – path 106, but drainage works ought to be included as this tunnel is constantly flooded.

7.4 The proposal at 3.6.27 of the Planning Statement for a temporary link road utilising Harrop Court Road and Boat Lane, Diggle, may be beneficial if the improved surfaces are retained as both are public rights of way. This route is needed to provide 'local access' for property on Harrop Court Road whilst the bridge on Station Road is replaced and I have concerns about the scale and durability of this track. Nothing is stated about timescales for its use and in addition to cars and light vans it will have to withstand commercial vehicle access for the businesses, refuse collection and emergency vehicles. In relation to emergency access the extra distance, quality and maintenance of the surface could significantly impact response times particularly for the properties on Harrop Court Road near the bridge and put lives and property at risk.

8.0 Other concerns

8.1 As a local resident I have two other concerns about the proposals in the TWAO affecting Saddleworth:

- Roads will be severed during bridge reconstruction but there are no details of timescales and diversion routes. The closure of Oldham Road at Greenfield Station, which we have been told separately is for 16 – 20 weeks will be particularly significant due to the level of traffic and is likely to have a severe impact on trade for local shops, for tourism, for access to schools, emergency access and for local residents.
- 11 new temporary compound areas are to be established, some on Green Belt, but nothing is specified about timescales and about reinstatement, particularly where mature trees are to be removed as any replanting will take tens of years to recover.

9.0 Finally

9.1 We **support** the upgrade of the railway; we have **concerns** about the impacts on Saddleworth during the works and, we **object** to the closure of the Moorgate crossing without a replacement footbridge.

APPENDIX 1

Details of costs totalling £4.5m reported to Oldham's Highway Regulation Committee on 18 July 2024 used as the sole reason for abandoning the option of a footbridge. Pages 72 and 83 (script of oral presentation) are from the agenda papers.

11.1. A footbridge to replace a foot crossing normally has a budget cost of circa £1.8Million. The additional constraints and design issues discussed above result in this footbridge being estimated to cost circa £3.5Million.

11.2. A breakdown of costs that was drafted during the detailed design stage for the proposed footbridge, estimated the costs for labour, plant, subcontractors, and materials at approximate total of circa £2.3M and estimated to rise to more. This can be broken down as follows.

11.3. The labour costs consist of the use of specialised persons such as machine banksman, lift supervisors, skilled operatives, and several other supporting functions, over approximately 80 shifts, at an estimated cost of £771K.

11.4. The works will involve a selection of specialist equipment as described previously as well as site cabins and associated facilities at a total estimated cost of £467K.

11.5. The site and works would also require the use of various subcontractors to supply items such as scaffolding, security and the removal of waste materials, which was calculated to cost approximately £930K. However, it was estimated that this was likely to rise significantly due to the added requirement of a specialist piling technique that allows for the process in restricted access sites and the location of the proposed bridge at Moorgate.

11.6. The materials required for the bridge include pre-cast concrete, steel, rebar and type 1 MOT, at a total estimated cost of £216K.

11.7. These estimated costs do not include the costs of the required temporary occupation of adjacent land or its possible permanent acquisition. Therefore, the total will be significantly higher and when these are costed in, the total costs will be circa £3.5M.

12. **Managing Public Money**

Introduction

My name is Vicki Bentley, and I am a Liability Negotiations Adviser for Network Rail. I submitted the s.118A application to extinguish the restricted byway over Moorgate Halt level crossing on the 4th August 2023, the justification for which can be found within my application and its supporting documents.

Pre-consultation

Planning permission was previously granted for a footbridge; but this was only a consideration at that time. During the detailed design process, various engineering difficulties came to light, which have driven up the costs from £1.5M to approximately, £4.5M. As a public body, Network Rail must adhere to the Treasury's Managing Public Money Principles and had to consider more cost-effective options.

There have been several meetings and discussions on the matter with Oldham Council and various footpath user groups. In June 2023, I met with the Rights of Way Officer, and we walked along footpath FP244 SADD that uses Bridge No.29 beneath the railway, just south of Moorgate.

It has since been agreed that this route is treacherous, steep, and unstable in places, and would require significant improvement works to bring it up to a suitable standard. Network Rail have since written to the landowner whose land this footpath traverses asking if they would agree in principle to some improvement works, but unfortunately, they were reluctant to agree to this as they felt it would change the nature and use of the footpath to their detriment.

The s.118A application

After the application was submitted, a meeting was held on the 25th August at the crossing between Network Rail, Oldham Council, and representatives from some of the footpath user groups, to discuss some concerns that had been raised.

Network Rail were asked to explore a possible diversionary route to the north via Den Lane beneath Bridge No.30, and to clarify the engineering difficulties associated with constructing a footbridge.

Network Rail explored the feasibility of the alternative route, including meeting with affected landowners, but unfortunately, one of the landowners would not agree to this. In addition, Network Rail were later informed by Oldham Council that this route was too long to be considered as a feasible diversion.

The 'Additional Information' document was collated from several people involved in the project and aims to clarify the engineering difficulties of constructing a footbridge. responded to.

In January 2024, Oldham Council agreed that the s.118A application met the first legal test which is *"that it appears expedient in the interests of the safety of the members of the public using it or likely to use it that a restricted byway in their area which crosses a railway, otherwise than by a tunnel or bridge, should be stopped up" and the* Council agreed to progress the s.118A application.

Response on 2 December 2025 to my FOI request for details of the £4.5m cost reported above. **The figure for 'Total base cost' has been incorrectly added up and should be £2,972,000 – nearly £1 million less than stated!**

OFFICIAL

Details of estimate	Estimated cost
Supply & Install footbridge of the footbridge, including stairs, lighting, signage and crash prevention.	£991,000.00
Groundworks, substructure, specialised plant hire and works to infrastructure.	£251,000.00
Closure of Level Crossing and improvements to the walkway	£584,000.00
Design costs	£517,000.00
Project management costs	£194,000.00
Access and land costs	£435,000.00
Total base cost	**£3,867,00.00**
Risk provision*	£619,000.00
Total cost	**£4,486,00.00**

*The risk provision is an allowance for any extra costs until a construction methodology report is assessed, so that a final cost to deliver a footbridge proposal can be determined.

If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Church
Information Officer

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ADDENDUM

Information received from NR a few days before the closing date for representations of 19 December 2025.

1. **Cost of works to path 244**
   Sections 2.5 and 6.3. Information below received 15 December 2025 – originally requested 12 November 2024:

Details of Estimate	Estimated Cost
Works to clean and spot repair existing	£10,000
New steps and reconstructed footpath	£63,000
General site clearance and devegetation	£5,000
Design	£9,000
Project managementcost	£6,000
Land requirement and costs to secure compound sites etc.	£20,000
Total base cost	**£113,000**
Risk range low	£32,000
Risk range high	£57,000
Total Cost	**£146,000 - £170,000**

   This cost bears no resemblance to the costs on page 15 above. For example, the figures for site clearance and repair for path 244 are £10,000 + £5,000 but £584,000 for a similar length on path 209. Land requirements for a huge compound area off Ladcastle Road for path 244 of £20,000 but £435,000 for path 209. Design and project management £15,000 for path 244 but £711,000 for path 209. If these levels of cost for 244 were applied to the footbridge, and the adding up error on page 15 above was corrected, we would have costs for a footbridge of about £2.5m. If the risk element of £619,000 was reduced the cost would then be less then £2m and this would come down even more due to easier access when the line is closed for work at Greenfield Station. **On this basis, a footbridge at Moorgate would be value for money.**

2. **Cost of footbridge**
   Section 4.28 and Appendix 1, page 15. On 15 December 2025 further information was promised before 19 December 2025, presumably changing the figures in the FOI received on 2 December 2025 (page15 above). Today, 16 December 2025, I have received the details below inserting a figure of £895,000 (highlighted) for set up and management etc. This conveniently gets to the previous total of £4,486,000, but it still does not bear any resemblance to the figures used in 2024 by NR to argue that it was not value for money.
   I can only conclude that these figures have been made up to try and justify the decision NR made over 12 months ago. The costs are absolutely exorbitant and bear no resemblance to the level of cost for the works to path 244.

These costs are supposed to be for the original design with construction 'out-of-hours' over a period of 8 months. **I appeal to the inspector to dismiss these costs for a footbridge at Moorgate as totally unrealistic.**

What we then want, is to move on to establish a realistic cost for constructing a footbridge whilst the line is closed for work at Greenfield Station, and I appeal to NR for this to be done in a fair, honest and reasonable manner.

Details of estimate	Estimated cost
Supply & Install footbridge, including stairs, lighting, signage and crash prevention.	£991,000.00
Groundworks, substructure, specialised plant hire and works to infrastructure.	£251,000.00
Closure of Level Crossing and improvements to the walkway	£584,000.00
Site set up and management. Compounds, road rail access to track and high security for theft and trespass prevention.	£895,000.00
Design costs	£517,000.00
Project Management costs	£194,000.00
Access and Land costs	£435,000.00
Total base cost	**£3,867,000.00**
Risk Provision*	£619,000.00
Total cost	**£4,486,000.00**

Revised costing received by email on 16 December 2025