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Our ref: 167037-NWR-W2B-MVL3-LTR-W-LP-002786

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: The Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements Order

Further to our ongoing engagement with the Canal & River Trust ('the Trust') in relation to Network Rail's (NR's) Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) scheme ('the scheme'), this letter sets out what we understand has been agreed between Network Rail and the Trust on the proposals included in the Transport and Works Act Order ('the Order scheme'). We would be grateful if you could please confirm that our understanding is correct and provide any comments you may have.

1 The Order scheme

1.1 MVL3/39A Standedge Canal Tunnel

At an MS Teams meeting on 23/08/2024, NR introduced proposals to create a temporary access route through the existing public car park and over Standedge Canal Tunnel. This was proposed to provide access to the railway, required for mobile crane and material / component deliveries to facilitate NR's additional proposals to reconstruct the bridges at Ward Lane and Station Road. At this stage, NR noted that an assessment needed to be made to determine if Standedge Canal Tunnel is strong enough to support the proposed access route and what, if any, mitigation would be required. In response to the proposals shared, the Trust agreed to share the latest PI and GI reports for the tunnel with NR. These were shared on 18/11/2024.

Following the high-level review and assessment of the proposed loading and its impact on the structure (noted by NR as required at the MS Teams meeting on 23/08/2025), at an MS Teams meeting on 08/11/2024 NR updated the Trust that the scheme would propose the provision of a temporary access through the existing Trust car park and over the Standedge Canal Tunnel and shared a proposed alignment (route). NR noted that this proposal would require the temporary, partial closure of the car park and for the closed section to be cordoned off. It was also explained that the wall would need to be removed and that some de-vegetation of trees

would be required. NR confirmed, however, that a suitable walking route between the tow path and Sam / Station Road would be maintained.

NR presented proposals to provide a reinforced saddling profile and to strengthen the arch to ensure it maintains its functionality. It was confirmed that the original ground levels, the wall and the vegetation would be reinstated following completion of the proposed work.

Following this meeting, on 02/12/2024, the Trust provided the following feedback on NR's proposals for Standedge Canal Tunnel:

“Our engineers have raised serious concerns in relation to the proposal to excavate and saddle over the existing tunnel as shown. The Trust's position is that we would not want any works with the ‘zone of influence’ of the tunnel and would not support any works or loading within this area. (Under normal circumstances an area of ground is said to be in the area of influence of a tunnel; this area is calculated by taking a 45-degree line from the tunnel invert and projecting this line to the surface. The area of influence is inside this 45-degree line where it reaches the surface).

Therefore, any temporary access/structure to be provided here spanning the tunnel needs to be self-supporting and not put any additional loading on the tunnel. We would suggest a Bailey bridge/independent structure with a deck bridging over the tunnel would be more appropriate to guarantee there is no detrimental impact on the tunnel. We would want to see details to demonstrate that the temporary structure to be provided would be independently supported and not place any loading on the tunnel.”

The following additional detail was also provided to NR by the Trust on 04/02/2025:

“In summary the Trust only offers right of support from its Tunnels to the natural land above or any structures that were present at the time of the construction of the tunnel. This applies to all land within the zone of influence of the tunnel. Therefore, the Trust will only accept new construction over its tunnels where the tunnel will not be subjected to new or additional loading. Saddling the tunnel may provide additional strength to the tunnel but will subject the tunnel to additional dead load as well as the live loading that the saddling has been designed to take. As a result, the Trust would look to see that any structure built over our tunnels is supported on independent foundations that do not impart any loading on the tunnel itself and is not supported by the ground within the zone of influence of the tunnel.”

In response to the Trust's feedback, NR updated the proposals for Standedge Canal Tunnel and presented these to the Trust at an MS Teams meeting on 24/03/2025. As a result of the feedback received, NR shared updated design proposals, proposing that a concrete relieving slab is installed over the masonry arch, using the existing abutments to support it. A compressible board would be installed between the existing arch barrel and the proposed relieving slab, such that the existing barrel is not loaded. New waterproofing would be installed, and the relieving slab itself would provide long term protection for this section of the tunnel. At the foundation level of the abutment, the proposed load (based on a 45° load distribution along the length of the abutment walls) would be +3% and the resulting pressure would be low (less than the compressive stress of the existing material). NR also confirmed that there would be no impact on the dead bore tunnels as a part of the proposed works. Access would be maintained.

On 16/05/2025, the Trust confirmed in-principle acceptance of the relieving slab proposals, subject to the following:

- *“A copy of the Approval in Principle/Statement of Design Intent for review/comment.*
- *A full copy of the design calculations and drawings for the proposals to review prior to construction. This should include a list of the crane types and other vehicle types/load cases that slab will be designed for.*
- *A CAT III check of the proposals to be completed.*
- *Full copies of the Design and Check Certificates, prior to construction.*
- *During construction and use of the slab all vibrations adjacent to the tunnel will need to be kept to a minimum, working to BS 5228-2 and taking into account this is a historic structure.*
- *A detailed tunnel monitoring plan to be submitted and accepted by the Trust prior to any construction works commencing, the monitoring plan should cover construction of the relieving slab, and the use of the relieving slab during the works. Results of the monitoring should be made available to the Trust as and when requested and the full set of results provided upon completion of the project and the use of the slab.*
- *Confirmation of the Duty Holders under the CDM Regulations.*
- *Full As-built records to be provide along with the Health & Safety File within 6 months of completion of the work.”*

In further response, on 22/07/2025, NR wrote to the Trust, confirming that, for works relating to the relieving slab over MVL3/39A, NR will submit the certificate of design and check, as part of engineering assurance, at Engineering Stage 5 (ES5) of the ES5-8 NR process. ES5 represents the point at which the construction ready design is ready for approval and the requirements are validated by NR. Additionally, the following items for works relating to the relieving slab over MVL3/39A are acknowledged and will be addressed as part of the ES5-8 process, unless specifically amended:

- A full copy of the design calculations and drawings for review by the Trust prior to construction, including load case information (e.g. crane types and vehicle types);
- Completion of a CAT II check of the proposals by an independent team within the same design organisation;
- Full copies of the Design and Check Certificates issued to the Trust prior to construction.
- Control of vibrations, by the ES5-8 Designer/ Contractor, adjacent to the tunnel during construction, in line with BS 5228-2 and with consideration of the historic nature of the structure.
- Submission to, and agreement with the Trust, of a detailed tunnel monitoring plan prior to any construction works. This plan will cover both the construction and operational use of the relieving slab, with monitoring results to be made available on request and fully provided at project completion.
- Confirmation by Network Rail of the Duty Holders under CDM Regulations.
- Provision by Network Rail to the Trust of full as-built records and the Health & Safety File within six months of completion.

NR can therefore confirm that, following this feedback and engagement with the Trust, the Order application for the scheme, made to the Secretary of State on 07/11/2025, includes the relieving slab proposal for Standedge Canal Tunnel.

1.2 The Trust's Consultation Feedback

For completeness, we note and refer you to the Trust's written response to NR's Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) consultation, received 22/10/2024, and to which NR responded on 25/02/2025.

NR's 25/02/2025 response noted that further details would be provided as they became available and, therefore, at an MS Teams meeting on 24/03/2025, NR confirmed the following:

- In relation to MVL3/32 Underbridge Works and Embankment Works, no access will be required.
- Regarding MVL3/36 Ward Lane Overbridge, NR's proposals are for two culverts under the tracks on the north side of the structure, with two new manholes to be installed on either side of the railway (into the culverts) to allow for inspections and cleaning.
 - The Trust confirmed their in-principle support for this proposal.
- The Trust will be briefed on compounds once the traffic management strategy is available.
- An area has been identified where there would be a potential impact on angling, if it is permitted currently. If that is the case, signage would be installed and any expected impact would be discussed with the Trust, once details are available.

Most recently, the NR Consultation Report (published on 07/11/2025 as part of the scheme's formal Order application and available on the NR website ([link](#))) provides the following additional updates in response to the Trust's consultation response:

MVL3/32 Underbridge Repairs and Embankment Works:

Previous position as per NR's 25/02/2025 letter: Access via NR land to be confirmed.

Update as per 07/11/2025 Consultation Report: NR confirmed that only minor works to MVL3/23 are proposed, and these are to install a handrail to the parapet. To complete this work, access will be via the railway (NR land) and no interface with the canal will be required.

Bridge 77 Clogger Knowle Bridge, Bridge 75 Mytholme, Bridge 73 Brown Hill Road Bridge, Bridge 77 Ward Lane Bridge, Bridge 59 Station Road Bridge:

Previous position as per NR's 25/02/2025 letter: NR will provide this information to the Trust in due course.

Update as per 07/11/2025 Consultation Report: NR confirmed that these structures may be used by construction vehicles, and that NR] will continue to engage with the Trust as the Order Scheme develops.

We would be grateful if you could please confirm receipt of this letter and confirm that the Trust is in agreement with the matters set out above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P Carter', written in a cursive style.

Penny Carter
Network Rail