

Statement from Dr Andrew W Taylor

I understand that the proposal for a replacement bridge at the Moorgate Crossing site has been rejected on the grounds of cost. A footbridge at this crossing was proposed because of the increased train speeds expected and the probability that new signals will result in a stationary train at the crossing point. Both of these factors would greatly increase the hazard of an unstructured crossing at this point. I find it regrettable that the initial proposal was withdrawn on the grounds of cost, significantly and adversely affecting many members of - and visitors to - this rural community.

This is a historic walking route in daily use by shoppers, families, and workers moving between the villages for centuries and more recently in large numbers by recreational walkers - some with small children or elderly or less able walkers.

It is accepted that a theoretical, planners' alternative to this well-used Right of Way has been suggested, passing between Ladcastle Road and Oldham Road/ Uppermill High Street only by means of little-used footpath FP 244.

FP 244 has fallen into disuse because it is difficult and dangerous by means of narrowness and steepness at the top and dangerous by virtue of the precipitate exit on to the main road at the bottom. It is hard to identify at both ends and is permanently subject to damp, slippery surfaces and seasonally leaf fall from the surrounding protected tress.

The top consists of very steep and narrow steps with a rise height beyond the capability of the elderly, the less able and the very young who would be among those who would be diverted there by the closure of the Moorgate crossing. Its narrowness prevents useful assistance by carer, parent or teacher. I understand that Network Rail is proposing "enhancements" to the steps at the top and the path in the middle part but these proposals do not adequately address these problems. The steepness of the ground and the narrowness of the gully mean that the proposal involves a lengthy flight of narrow, winding and irregular steps. This is unavoidable. The steps would soon become slippery with leaves and algae, and would be a constant maintenance problem. Local footpaths are not currently maintained. The construction work would involve very extensive engineering work on soft and yielding ground which is prone to flash flooding. The path in the middle section would remain very steep and vulnerable to erosion by floodwater. All of this means that the route will be completely unsuitable for young children, the elderly and anyone with mobility or a balance issues. This can account for a significant proportion of the current users of the Moorgate Crossing.

Possibly the worst danger is faced where the bottom of FP244 exits abruptly down on to the A670 (at SD 99517 05387) with only about 18 inches (460mm) of pavement to descend onto. This is at a point on the 30mph road, curving out of sight as it does, with no view to the right to observe for the presence of oncoming traffic. Reducing the speed limit on this stretch of road to 20mph - even if observed - would not reduce the risk sufficiently as the road at this point is barely

wide enough for two large vehicles (buses or HGVs) to pass in opposite directions without being inches from the kerb. A family, a teacher or a youth leader with only a few children in their care descending at this point may not be able to ensure the children's safety. The road is incapable of widening at this location without costs far greater than the possible footbridge at Moorgate crossing.

My 50 years' local Mountain Rescue experience of rescuing families and individuals descending treacherous paths (in the hills without traffic hazards) tells me that this is a thoughtless and dangerous proposal, conceived to avoid the cost of retaining a community path extensively used for centuries. It can only extend the walk for those who use the Moorgate crossing regularly and put them into significant personal danger - all to save costs.