

Good morning Martin

Members of the Forum are very disappointed and more than a little surprised to read that you have closed the crossing at Little Bowden.

This is apparently completely without due process and is in effect an illegal obstruction of a right of way. As such I have no doubt you will run into problems with the locals, their political representatives and the user groups, not to mention the Highways Authority.

The forum have engaged with you in the past to try and bring together all interested parties and to seek reasonable compromises and we are therefore nonplussed by this arbitrary action

Having looked at all the crossings along this stretch of line since we started the debate with you we would consider this crossing to be perfectly safe if users obey the warning lights and bells. We acknowledge that visibility is poor in both directions so it is essential that they do so. We are not aware of any incidents (fatalities or near misses) since the crossing was reduced from a manned gated road crossing to a footpath crossing many years ago.

We are aware that the crossing is heavily used and if you feel that for the sake of a few miles an hour extra speed you would wish to substitute a bridge then well and good but we can see no justification for closing this valuable link in the meantime. In any event the line limit through Market Harborough station is quite low and as such any raising of the speed limit seems impractical unless electrification is back on the agenda.

When we last visited the site we monitored the situation for an hour and saw umpteen people using the crossing, some exercising dogs, some returning from shopping, schools etc all doing so responsibly during which time **eight** trains passed, all giving an audible warning of their approach. The warning system worked correctly on every occasion. The one feature which could give rise to concern is that up trains trigger the warning system before passing through Market Harborough station, so those stopping there cause delay between the warning being initiated and the train restarting, and crossing users may become impatient. There are (or were) adequate warning notices about the operation of the crossing, who to contact in the event of apparent failure, and even the contact details for the local Samaritans for those contemplating suicide.

We know that every fatality is a tragedy and last years statistics showed a regrettable increase in fatalities from 8 to 10, but it is not clear where the fatalities occurred - on 'open' crossings like this one, or on barriered crossings also used by vehicles. The number of suicides in same period was 288 (source Railway Magazine August 2015) but that is a separate issue.

We would be very interested to know how many accidental deaths there have been on the network involving people crossing at other than crossings also used by motor vehicles.

Roy

Roy J Denney, Chairman, Planning & Travel Committee

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*The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LAF) is an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, and exists to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access.*

*Section 94 of the CROW act makes it a statutory function of the forum to give advice to a range of bodies, including local authorities, on access issues in respect of land use planning matters. The Secretary of State advised that in particular forums were to focus on the impact and options for minimising possible adverse effects of planning policies and development proposals, in respect of future public access to land. Forums are tasked with identifying and expressing support for opportunities to improve public access, or associated infrastructure, which might be delivered through planning policies or new developments.*



**Response:**

Hi Roy,

I can understand your disappointment and surprise but the crossing was not closed by me personally more a Company decision not taken lightly.

I have in the past spent many an hour building relationships with both Leicestershire County Council and your good selves and hope we will again get the opportunity to meet and discuss the rights of way that cross the railway at grade within the County. However, at present the situation regarding the crossing at Little Bowden is no longer within my circle of influence and the situation is being managed by colleagues in York whom I have forwarded your e-mail to.

If you have any further questions regarding this crossing please contact the Network Rail helpline on 0845 7114141.

Kind regards,

Martin