



## **Public Rights of Way**

### **Level Crossings on the Rail Network**

#### **Memorandum of Understanding between Network Rail, ADEPT, LGA & IPROW.**

#### **Introduction**

This Memorandum of Understanding has been developed by a working group of representatives from Network Rail (who deal with Level Crossings), the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport - Rights of Way Managers' Group (ADEPT), the Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management (IPROW) and the Local Government Association (LGA). The aim is to improve working practices between Network Rail and Local Highway Authorities (LHAs) where Public Rights of Way (PRoW) use level crossings on the rail network in England and Wales.

It is not intended for this Memorandum of Understanding to be legally binding. This document contains high level principles aimed at encouraging clearer communication and building collaborative relationships between Network Rail and LHAs. This will encourage the most effective dialogue when changes are proposed to a level crossing which affects a PRoW.

This is an important step towards working together to ensure that users remain safe when using the PRoW network in England and Wales.

This Memorandum of Understanding may evolve over time as the working relationship between Network Rail, ADEPT and IPROW develops. It does not detail any agreed processes; these will be set out in future documentation.

#### **Scope of the Document**

This document covers all of the interactions that Network Rail has when dealing with Public Rights of Way and Level Crossings and includes temporary works (including emergency closures) as well as longer term proposals such as bridge works, permanent closures, diversions and downgrades.

This document will evolve to reflect the work that is currently proposed. A work program will continue between ADEPT / IPROW / LGA / Network Rail to identify examples of best practice, where there are areas for improvement and to encourage greater understanding of processes, which will be reflected in the following outputs: -

1. Where PRoW level crossings are affected, Network Rail will integrate PRoW legislation and processes alongside its project management tool (GRIP). This includes an ongoing dialogue about the processes used for the closure or diversion of PRoW and how the GRIP tool can be best adapted to take into account of the various factors, including timescales.
2. The production of further documents may be appropriate to encourage best practice when dealing with emergency or temporary closures.
3. IPROW and ADEPT will use best endeavours to promote best practice and consistency amongst LHAs.

# Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

## 1. MoU Objectives

- 1.1 To promote safety at level crossings
- 1.2 To ensure effective communications and working partnerships between Network Rail and LHAs
- 1.3 To encourage a consistent approach to managing PRow level crossings.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1 Network Rail is a safety critical organisation and keeping people safe on the railway is at the heart of everything it does.
- 2.2 LHAs duties are to assert and protect the rights of the public to use and enjoy the PRow network.
- 2.3 The over-riding objective of this MoU is to acknowledge and bring each other's varying duties, responsibilities and interests together, where sometimes they can be seen to be in conflict, and try to resolve that conflict.

## 3. Communication between Network Rail and LHAs

- 3.1 Network Rail and LHAs will examine the best course of action given the constraints available when examining options for the future of any level crossing and will discuss as appropriate. Network Rail and LHAs will work together, acknowledging that each has different areas of expertise. Network Rail has the experience and understanding of the interface between railway operations and level crossing safety. LHAs are better placed to understand the impact of the crossing on the wider PRow network.
- 3.2 Network Rail recognises the knowledge and expertise of LHAs regarding the PRow network and will consult with the LHA at the earliest appropriate opportunity. Network Rail retains the discretion to decide how it ultimately approaches level crossings.
- 3.3 A range of meetings are available to discuss PRow issues, such as the Network Rail Level Crossing Strategy Group, Road-Rail Partnership Group meetings, ADEPT regional meetings and local level public consultations, and involvement with these is encouraged.
- 3.4 Network Rail and LHAs will continue to work together to identify the best methods of communication to promote continuous improvement.
- 3.5 LHAs will inform Network Rail of any issues that arise in addressing an application submitted by Network Rail, including any further information required, as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 3.6 Network Rail will investigate any perceived concerns brought to its attention and attempt to address them to the best of its ability.
- 3.7 ADEPT and IPRoW will encourage PRow staff and managers improve understanding of level crossing processes and to form working relationships with local Level Crossing Managers / Liability Negotiation Advisers within Network Rail.
- 3.8 Network Rail will seek to broaden the understanding of those in the Rights of Way profession, in relation to the current means of risk assessing Level Crossings.
- 3.9 ADEPT / IPRoW will seek to broaden the understanding of PRow legislation of relevant Network Rail staff where this is required.

- 3.10 LHAs will expect Network Rail employees involved in schemes which affect the closure of level crossings to engage with its Liability Negotiations Team.
- 3.11 In line with Network Rail's responsibility for the safe operation of the railway, where it identifies that a level crossing poses an urgent safety risk to the public and requests a temporary emergency closure, the LHA will give a high priority to engaging with and responding to Network Rail.
- 3.12 For all other level crossing applications, the LHA will prioritise accordingly based on the evidence supplied and will explain the reasons behind any decisions taken.

#### **4. Level Crossings and Public Rights of Way Changes**

- 4.1 Where there is a need to make changes to the PRoW network, both LHAs and Network Rail agree that: -
  - a) The correct application forms will be used for any application. Information will be provided in a clear and concise format which meets the legal requirements for such an application.
  - b) Network Rail will develop its own internal checklist for improving evidence it provides in support of applications.
  - c) Where LHAs identify areas where further information is required, the nature and reason for the information will be communicated as early as possible. Network Rail will provide additional information, where possible, and engage with the LHA to resolve any issues that are raised.
  - d) Although this MoU does not apply to private rights, when dealing with private crossings or bridges, Network Rail will engage with LHAs to establish if there are pre-existing PRoW over crossings under consideration.
  - e) Meetings between Network Rail and the LHA Rights of Way Officer will be scheduled as appropriate and continue throughout the process as necessary, with the aim of resolving highlighted issues and monitoring progress.
- 4.2 It is recognised that each level crossing will have many factors that need to be considered, of which PRoW will be one aspect. There may be a number of options available and, although Network Rail will consider the views of the LHA, it is recognised that Network Rail may consider a different option as the most appropriate course of action.
- 4.3 Where the public are being displaced onto the local highway network, Network Rail and LHAs should properly assess the alternative proposed road routes with a full road safety audit (RSA) assessment, commissioned by the LHA and funded at Network Rail's expense.
- 4.4 Network Rail has responsibilities for safe railway operations and applications under sections 118A and 119A of the Highways Act 1980 are promoted by Network Rail on public safety grounds. All safety related applications should be progressed as promptly as possible by a LHA and Network Rail will assist, where practicable.
- 4.5 It is recognised that the statutory test applied by the LHA to make an extinguishment or diversion Order under the Highways Act 1980 is, primarily, expediency and the making of an Order is at its discretion.
- 4.6 If the decision of the LHA is that it will not progress an application it will inform Network Rail at the earliest opportunity, providing reasons for its decision. If the LHA does not progress the application Network Rail reserves the right to apply to the Secretary of State in accordance with s120 of the Highways Act 1980.
- 4.7 Network Rail will engage with LHAs on a case by case basis with a view to reaching a decision establishing responsibility for the maintenance of highway surfaces on structures that replace level crossings (as appropriate to the legislation).

4.8 Where Network Rail is considering the use of Transport and Works Act powers it will inform the LHA(s) of this as soon as possible along with the reasons for this decision.

**5. Pre-Application Consultation**

5.1 Network Rail is conscious of ensuring that the public has the opportunity to input into the proposals it makes for changes to level crossings and PRoW, and will carry out pre-feasibility consultation work wherever possible. This can include consultation with stakeholders, discussions with the LHA, obtaining permission and public meetings, etc.

**6. Confidentiality**

6.1 Network Rail may ask any LHA in an individual case to keep some information regarding changes to crossings confidential. If this is the case then Network Rail staff need to make this clear from the outset.

**7. The Information Acts**

7.1 With regard to the ongoing discussions and meetings of the Working Group all parties acknowledge that:

- (a) There may be requests through the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and/or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (collectively, the **Information Acts**), to disclose information relating to the subject matter of this Memorandum of understanding; and
- (b) Notwithstanding any other provision in this Memorandum of Understanding, Network Rail shall be responsible for determining in its absolute discretion whether any information is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the Information Acts.

7.2 ADEPT and IPRoW shall provide all necessary assistance and cooperation as reasonably requested by Network Rail to enable it to comply with its obligations under the Information Acts.

For:

**Network Rail Infrastructure Limited**

**ADEPT**



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Name: Mike Ashworth

Name: Andrew Haines

Title: Chair, Transport Board

Title: Chief Executive

**IPRoW**



Name: Chris Miller

Title: President