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OFFICE OF RAIL REGULATION

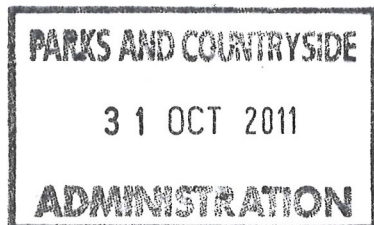
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Dear Claire

**POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF MORLEY (OLD GASHOUSE) AND WHITE ROSE  
FOOTPATH CROSSINGS**

I am an inspector with the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). I led ORR's investigation into the tragic death of Natasha Elliot on 16<sup>th</sup> May last year. I have subsequently been involved in the discussions regarding Network Rail's proposals to secure permanent closure of both of the above crossing. I understand you are familiar with the discussions surrounding the proposals for the closure of the crossings.



At the request of Network Rail I attended a meeting of interested parties at Morley Town Hall on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2011. At the meeting representations were made by the various parties including the Ramblers Association and Leeds Access Forum, who were both initially against any closure. I outlined ORR's concerns regarding the relative risks of two crossings. My understanding was that the attendees then accepted the desirability of seeking closure if alternatives could be secured which gave suitable alternatives for access. The possibilities of alternative routes which may be acceptable and permit closure were discussed and the group agreed to reconvene on 14<sup>th</sup> of October to discuss progress with the proposals. As ORR had nothing additional to contribute to the subsequent meeting I advised we would not be presented at the progress meeting.

I have been advised by Robert Havercroft Network Rail Operations Risk Co-ordinator that at the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> that the Ramblers Association, Leeds Access Forum and Morley Walking Club representatives were now of the view that:

- a. With regard to Morley footpath crossing the only alternative that they would accept would be the provision of a bridge. I understand Network Rail is exploring this possibility.
- b. With regard to the White Rose crossing the organisations no longer accepted the proposal to close this crossing by diverting the public footpath via the nearby footbridge.

The primary purpose of this letter is to reiterate my views expressed at the meeting I attended on 9<sup>th</sup> September in relation to the risks. The main points I made were:

1. Any footpath crossing will have a degree of risk to crossing users from injury from being struck by a train. As a general principal if a crossing can be taken out of use then the risk to crossing users is eliminated and as such ORR support the principal of reducing the risks by reducing the number of crossings. We do clearly accept however that crossing users have legitimate needs and rights of access which must be taken into account when considering closures.
2. The proposal for closure of one or both of the crossings has a degree of interdependency. For example the closure of one crossing may result in increased use of the crossing left open. If alternatives to the use of the both of the crossing can be agreed, then the preferred option would be to close both crossings. If however constraints permit the closure of only one of the crossings then it would be clearly desirable to close the crossing which presents the highest risk to users.
3. I believe the two crossings have very different levels of risk. One of the predominant factors is the ability of the crossing users to be able to see a train approaching in the distance to permit them adequate time to cross safely or make the decision to wait until the train has passed before crossing. The White Rose crossing is on the western edge of a cutting through which the railway line runs. The line is also on a curve through the cutting. As such the visibility of trains approaching from the Leeds direction is very limited,

especially when crossing from the north to the south. Because of the limitations in the ability to see approaching trains from the Leeds direction, crossing users are in part dependent on approaching trains sounding a warning horn on approach to the crossing. Unfortunately despite this being a requirement placed on the train drivers this warning may not always be given. Whilst the Morley footpath crossing also has the requirements for a train to sound the horn, visibility of approaching trains is much better at this crossing. As such ORR would not be able to support the closure of the Morley crossing if the White Rose crossing remained open with the potential of increased use. If it is not possible to secure the closure of the Morley crossing, I would still support closure of the White Rose crossing as a priority. From the alternative pedestrian route described, this would appear to have only minimal impact in terms of additional distance to walk.

Concerns about safety at the White Rose Crossing were also expressed by the representative from the police at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September. He believed there was a risk during pursuits by the police of suspects from the White Rose centre who run across the crossing when being chased by the police.

I hope that by confirming the points I made previously that this helps guide the debate regarding the closures. Please feel free to share this letter with any of the parties involved in the discussions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



**Ian Cook**  
**HM Inspector of Railways**

cc (email only) Robert Havercroft –Network Rail Operations Risk Control Co-ordinator (LNE Route).