

PNFS Ref:- SH-ECC-100

I represent the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society in Sheffield, as its Area Officer.

We are a registered charity founded in 1894 to protect the public rights of way network and access to public spaces and open access land.

The issue that I'm contacting your organisation about concerns a public footpath which crosses the railway line on the northern outskirts of Sheffield. It crosses "at grade", i.e. pedestrians have to exercise due care and attention and beware oncoming trains on the section of line between Chapeltown and Meadowhall stations.

Several years ago, Network Rail through their regional office in York, blocked off this crossing with Heras fencing and applied to Sheffield Council for a temporary Traffic Regulation Order to keep it closed until a decision was made as to the crossings long term future.

In 2023 I attended a site meeting with a Liabilities Negotiation Officer from the York office, together with representatives of Sheffield Council Public Rights of Way Group, the Ramblers' Sheffield Group, and Ecclesfield Parish Council. The discussion came to a consensus that the only feasible alternative to the existing crossing was to build a foot bridge to replace the at grade foot crossing. Since then, the officer concerned has left her job and Network Rail are denying that she ever said what was agreed on site.

Last year, I found out from a Public Rights of Way officer that the temporary Traffic Regulation Order had expired without a renewal application. Thus Network Rail are in the position of obstructing a public highway.

Their excuse is that the safety equipment which warns pedestrians of approaching trains has been vandalised twice and would cost an excessive amount to replace without any guarantee that it won't be vandalised again. A replacement bridge is far more expensive and the funding is not available.

The sum total of all of this, is that a public footpath is illegally obstructed and Network Rail are offering no solution to this issue using public safety as their excuse for doing nothing. This Society requests that the ORR takes this up with Network Rail and exert pressure to come up with a satisfactory resolution of this matter. A good start would be for Network Rail to apply for a further temporary Traffic Regulation Order.

Yours faithfully,

John Harker
Area Officer Sheffield
Peak & Northern Footpaths Society

Dear John Harker

Thank you for your email of 20 January.

However, we do not have any responsibilities in relation to rights of way at level crossings. Any issues with rights of way should be addressed to the relevant local authority. Our website provides further information on the legal framework for level crossings, including regarding rights of ways, here: [The legal framework for level crossings | Office of Rail and Road](#)

We hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

On behalf of the Public Correspondence Team