

Witness: H.W. English
Made: 17 Aug 2020

Witness Statement in relation to Glebe Way Level Crossing
PINS REF: 3226477

Witness Statement of Helen W. English

1. I, Helen W. English am a barrister (retired).
2. I live at [REDACTED] Saddleton Road, CT5 4JD, resident since July 2012, that is, 8 years. Previously from 2006 to 2014, I visited only because I owned a beach hut, having a tenancy for the site on public land at Tankerton from Canterbury City Council, the local authority. During that period, I got to know the routes, including the Glebe Way Level Crossing.
3. I make this statement objecting to the proposed closure of the Glebe Way Level Crossing, which I use daily.
4. I use the crossing at Glebe Way because it provides a convenient, quick, safe and scenic access to town and the beach, avoiding the narrow (poorly maintained) pavements along the main road into Whitstable from Saddleton Road, which lies opposite the Glebe Way path. I do this for shopping on average 3 to 4 times a week. Also, I walk 2 dogs daily using the Glebe Way Level Crossing, as again, a direct route to Island Wall and the coast. A key attraction is easy walking access, via the Glebe Way Level Crossing, affording the best view west of that coast which improves well-being.
5. **Effect of closure of the Level Crossing:** understanding the geography and current pedestrian and car traffic of Whitstable is an essential precursor to this decision. From my attendance at hearings Network Rail, CCC and KCC from 2011 often ignore local knowledge. Instead, remote, unaccountable officials decide how to act, paying only lip service to a belated consultation. Closing the Glebe Way Level Crossing will be a detriment to safety, well-being and the fabric of the community because:
 - a) closure of a pleasant safe alternative to town forces pedestrians onto the narrow pavements of Whitstable's High St. and Canterbury Road, clogged with traffic and not easily accommodating, family groups with children, older people or pets on leads. The Glebe Way Level Crossing leading to Westcliff and Island Wall walking east is a safe and pleasant alternative, encouraging walking.
 - b) Creation of danger: heavy car use on Canterbury Rd and High Street traffic combined with narrow pavements which are cracked and uneven, make

walking on the main road dangerous by proximity. Network Rail proposes closure of access to a safe, accessible alternative.


- c) The closure of the Glebe Way Crossing will reinforce the local view that "officialdom" never listens. This hastens local disengagement, causing breakdown in the social contract.
6. **Safety:** The electronic warning sound, the horn warning and notices at the Glebe Way Level Crossing are sufficient: I regularly note them in operation. They *could*, for people with hearing impairment, using ear plugs or mobile phones, be improved. I do not minimise the distress caused to the train drivers, services called to the site or to family by the death of a person. However, it is essential to analyse how and why death occurs, accidentally or by intention. The choice Network Rail propose is not proportionate to the harm it seeks to avoid. Closure will cause harm.
7. **Lack of maintenance of the other 2 high level crossings/ Network Rail's Record:** Network Rail leaves the 2 existing Network Rail higher level rail crossings at Prospect Field's western end and the Golf Course Crossing in squalor: covered in graffiti, dirt, weeds: eye-sores reflecting contempt for "safety" the environment or community well-being. In the winter, they smell of urine. Public squalor is a potent token of Network Rail's failings. I append photos.
8. **Solution:** A solution is minor infrastructure investment. As well, improved cleaning and maintenance to encourage use of the other 2 high level crossings; reflecting an interest and concern for the community: these would be proportionate and simple. Infrastructure which is clean and well-maintained is safer.
9. I am prepared to attend the forthcoming inquiry to give oral evidence.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: _____

Date: _____


21 Aug 2020