

Friday 16 October, 2015
Plumpton Level Crossing – Information for residents



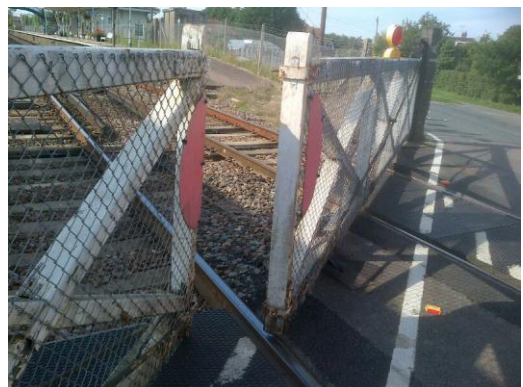
Thank you for attending the public meeting this evening. This letter provides an update on the current situation as well as our plans to reopen the road as quickly, and as safely as possible. If following this evening's meeting you have any questions please contact James Bates, our Community Relations Manager, at james.bates@networkrail.co.uk - alternatively you can contact our 24/7 national helpline on **03457 114141**.

Background

Plumpton is served by trains to and from London Victoria and the line is also the main diversion route if the Brighton Main Line is closed for upgrade works or during disruption. The line speed through the crossing is 80 mph.

Much of Plumpton Station, including the level crossing gates and signal box, is listed and are almost 100 years old. This means that listed buildings consent is required before work can be carried out to these structures.

We have known for some time that the crossing is reaching the end of its operational life. We have also had concerns about the safety of the crossing which is well documented. We have tried on a number of occasions to upgrade the crossing but this has been opposed locally. We are now in a position where we can no longer source or engineer replacement parts and recent works have uncovered that the condition of the crossing is worse than we thought. We therefore have taken the decision that we can not open the crossing as it wouldn't be safe to do so without significant works.



Listed buildings consent application

We submitted an application for listed buildings consent on 29 June following pre-application discussions with Lewes District Council (LDC). This was originally expected to be determined on 24 August but was later refused at an LDC planning committee hearing on 30 September despite being recommended for approval. Unfortunately we had already started works to upgrade the signalling which meant we were not able to simply reopen the crossing. We are sorry that we started the signalling works in advance of the decision, however, now that we have more information about the condition of the crossing mechanisms, we do not consider them sufficiently safe to recommission them without significant work. We have not been able to identify any organisations that can engineer the needed parts for us.

Options

We have identified 4 options for reopening the road. These are:

Option 1

Reopen the crossing in line with a HAZID safety assessment carried out this week
16 risks identified which would need to be overcome
Estimate timeframe – minimum 6 weeks

Option 2

Reengineer existing gates
We don't currently have the ability to do this
Estimate timeframe – c. 6 months

Option 3

Proceed to install object detection full width barrier crossing
Equipment and resource in place
Some legal implications
Estimate timeframe – mid-November

Option 4

Do nothing, keeping the crossing closed pending appeal or new application decision
Estimate timeframe – 3-8 months (depending on method) plus mobilisation of resource to then install/upgrade crossing

From the conversations we've had with local people over the past few weeks the overwhelming view has been that the priority is reopening the road. We believe **option 3** is the quickest and safest way of doing this and we are planning to start work next weekend. At the same time we will appeal the planning committee decision as well as submit a new application for listed buildings consent. We will be bound by the outcome of both of these processes and are working closely with Lewes District Council to understand the implications of doing this.

Compensation

A number of people have contacted us regarding compensation for the longer distance you now have to travel to get from the north side to the south side of Plumpton Green and Plumpton. Unfortunately we are unable to pay compensation for increased journey distances as there is no legal basis for a claim of this nature. Also, following our reclassification in September 2014, meaning we are now an arms-length body of the Department for Transport (DfT), we are unable to provide goodwill payments or gestures as anything of this nature would need to be approved by the DfT. This position is the same for both individuals and business owners.