



C Mandville

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8 January 2020

Dear C Mandville

Information request

Reference number: FOI2019/01299

Thank you for your email of 6 November 2019, in which you requested the following information:

'With regards to Accessibility during the closure of crossings in Chichester, the complete closure of the Stockbridge Road level crossing and Basin road level crossings prevented access across the tracks to all wishing to cross the line. Road access was signposted, pedestrian access was via the footbridge next to the railway station. Can you explain with full documentation:

- 1. Discussions on access for people with limited mobility e.g. Walking aids, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, or other aids.*
- 2. Plans to assist vulnerable people who would be unable to use the footbridge.*
- 3. Plans showing all signage and direction assistance for such people.*
- 4. Advance notification to the local sheltered housing, care homes etc that lie within 1 mile of the affected road crossing.*
- 5. Any risk assessment or DART documentation.*
- 6. Documents relating to the involvement of any Access groups (guide dogs for the blind, Chichester Access group) How many complaints received over these works and access issues.'*

I have processed your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) as the information requested is environmental according to the definition

in regulation 2(c)¹ of the EIR (which refers to measures and activities affecting or likely to affect elements of the environment).

We do hold some information relevant to your request, and I am providing this in the attachments to this letter. In providing this information, I should also explain that the majority of the discussions that took place were completed in person or over the telephone, and these discussions were not documented. To assist you, when records were not made of relevant meetings, I will provide a summary of these discussions in the responses below.

We regards to the documentation that we hold, please find attached the following:

- Document 1: An email chain where we discussed safe segregation between the worksite and the platform at Chichester to allow access to the lifts.
- Document 2: An email chain between ourselves and Govia Thameslink Railway discussing segregation at the station.
- Document 3: An email with pictures of the platform segregation with an update on the works.
- Document 4: The project sponsors action tracker.
- Document 5: The action tracker from the assurance summit. Please be aware that any actions or decisions agreed upon and resolved at the summit were not recorded in the action tracker.²
- Document 6: The minutes from a meeting with West Sussex County Council where accessibility was discussed.
- Documents 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12: Copies of the advance notifications which were sent to local residents.

As these documents sometimes contain information about other subjects, I have redacted (in white) all information which is not specifically relevant to your request.

I have also withheld (in black) personal details such as names, email addresses or telephone numbers under section 40(2) of the FOIA. This regulation allows us to withhold personal information when its disclosure would contravene one or more of the data protection principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. In this case, the individuals would have no reasonable expectation that these personal details would be disclosed to 'the world' under FOIA. This means that disclosure would be unfair and so breach the first data protection principle that personal information must be handled fairly, lawfully and transparently.

¹ Please note section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) exempts environmental information from the FOIA but requires us to consider it under the EIR.

² An assurance summit is an independent evaluation of the works and their state of readiness. It is chaired by Network Rail's Route Assurance Lead and is attended by representatives from all parts of the business - operations, maintenance, project teams, communications – and the relevant Train Operating Company.

For ease of reference, I will now address each of your questions in turn.

1. Discussions on access for people with limited mobility e.g. Walking aids, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, or other aids.

Network Rail takes its commitments to providing accessible routes very seriously as part of its obligations to national standards. It is a mandatory requirement for all projects when the public are impacted, and all disabilities are considered under these regulations.

Documents 1 and 6 refer to access for people with restricted mobility, however, I can advise that we do not hold a formal plan for restricted mobility. I can further advise that discussions regarding accessibility were carried out at early stages of this project and they were based on previous similar projects: I will provide a summary of these discussions below.

The sponsor and project team met with West Sussex County Council on 10 June 2019 to discuss accessibility arrangements, with the project team explaining emergency access arrangements whereby engineering trains could be stopped and boarding placed across the level crossing to allow a vehicle or person to safely cross.

We then met with West Sussex County Council again on 11 July 2019; the minutes for this meeting are provided in document 6. Further discussion was held regarding the provision of a shuttle bus for persons of restricted mobility. Please note that at this stage it was erroneously believed that there were no lifts at Chichester station.

Accessibility was discussed again at the Route Assurance panels on 4 September, 18 September and 10 October 2019. It was at these meetings that Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) confirmed that the lifts at Chichester could be used for persons of restricted mobility, which was agreed at the assurance panels as the strategy to take forwards. Use of the lifts was agreed to be quicker and more reliable than use of a shuttle bus as persons of restricted mobility may have had to wait for the bus, as it would have used the diversionary routes around Chichester with heavy traffic expected at times.

The project team confirmed the maintenance and fault history of the lifts to assess the requirements for a standby maintenance engineer. This was to assure that the lifts would always be available for use. The project team also developed a segregated walking route and directional signage at Chichester station to allow those people needing to use the lifts to access them safely. This was discussed and agreed upon at a meeting held at the station which was not formally documented however reference to this can be found in documents 2, 3, 4 and 6. Additional agency support staff were also provided at the station to assist all passengers, including those of restricted mobility.

2. Plans to assist vulnerable people who would be unable to use the footbridge.

As indicated in the response to the previous question, due to the accessible nature of the lifts and footbridge option for crossing the railway, it was expected that most persons of restricted mobility would be able to use this option. A safe walking route, directional signage and agency staff were available to support this operation.

To provide access for those who could not use the footbridge and lifts, the project team had the authority to book a taxi for a vulnerable user to allow them to cross the railway via the road diversion route.

To provide emergency access, the project team had the authority and equipment to clear the crossing of equipment and engineering trains and to place emergency access boards across the crossing. This would have provided a temporary accessible route over the crossing but was a “last-resort” option due to the disruption it would have caused to the project works. It is also the least safe option compared to the other two options above.

3. Plans showing all signage and direction assistance for such people.

There are no formal plans for the directional signage. However, I can explain that the area and route were assessed during a site visit prior to the blockade. Please note that this was a meeting held at the station and it was not formally minuted. During this meeting the project team agreed a safe route but we do not hold a formal record of the walking path.

Following this meeting, directional signage consisting of arrows was produced with the blockade brand to help with wayfinding and to make it easy to recognise.

Network Rail, GTR and agency staff were all present at Chichester on the dates of the closure; the agency staff in particular were present to assist passengers and those using the footbridge.

4. Advance notification to the local sheltered housing, care homes etc that lie within 1 mile of the affected road crossing.

Network Rail undertook a comprehensive communications and stakeholder campaign in the area around Barnham-Havant to raise passenger, business and local awareness of the blockade. As Chichester was a key location in the blockade, due to the project works and impact on the level crossings, early attention was paid to this area. 261 key stakeholders were approached, some of whom are member organisations and who cascade Network Rail messaging to their members. Stakeholder groups included:

- Community, Health, Environment Groups
- Government

- Educational institutions (from nurseries to third level education)
- Trade Bodies
- Transport organisation
- Media
- Tourism (including large event organisers – football, horse-racing, sport)
- Local businesses
- Existing stakeholder forums

A dedicated stakeholder manager visited Chichester on multiple occasions with material to share with residents and businesses to highlight the blockade and the impact on the community. The following received regular updates since July 2019:

- Marriott House
- Donnington House
- Manor Barn
- Brampton Court (via the management company FirstPort)

5. Any risk assessment or DART documentation.

A Diversity Impact Assessment is not a requirement of track renewal governance processes (Grip4Track).³ However, early consideration was given to accessibility as evidenced by the meetings with West Sussex County Council, and Network Rail's own assurance panels. We took action to ensure that all persons were able to safely cross over the railway line in Chichester and provision of an accessible route was included as an action in the Barnham-Havant Blockade Tracker.

6. Documents relating to the involvement of any Access groups (guide dogs for the blind, Chichester Access group). How many complaints received over these works and access issues.

While we do not hold documents relating to the involvement of any access groups, Network Rail works across several communications channels to reach as many people as possible. The communications campaign used audible and visual methods of communication to alert passengers, the community and local businesses to the blockade and the road closures at Chichester. Care is taken to make the communications campaign as diverse and accessible as possible.

As noted previously, Network Rail contacted over two hundred stakeholders regarding the blockade and our communications team requested that local businesses highlight any other stakeholders that had been missed, although we did not receive any further suggestions. Network Rail also provided contact information so that any person could easily contact us and request information or advice.

³ <https://www.kintecglobal.com/news/what-is-the-grip-process-41806/>

With regards to complaints, the blockade's duration was nine days with road closures at Chichester seen over both weekend, 26 - 27 October and 2 -3 November 2019. Road closures were also in place on some following weekends due to project follow-up works.

We are not aware of any person who was unable to cross the railway, and we proactively addressed the accessibility issue early on by exploring several options to provide access for all at Chichester during the times of the level crossing closures. With Govia Thameslink Railway's agreement, the lifts at Chichester station were available 24 hours a day via a safe and segregated walking route. Additionally, signage and staff support were available to ensure that persons of restricted mobility were aware of the accessible route and could request additional help if needed. Network Rail's communications and control teams were also available 24 hours a day to help resolve any issues that arose.

I have made enquiries with the National Helpline and the project team and we have received no complaints about access at Chichester during the blockade.

I hope you find this information useful. If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk or on 01908 782405. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

Anisha Pandya
Information Officer

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Appeal rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the Head of Freedom of Information at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at FOI@networkrail.co.uk. Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF