

Our Plans for Tidemills Footpath Crossing



Why we want to close Level Crossings	General Information	Risks at this Crossing	Options Available to improve Safety	Crossing Usage and Surrounding Area	Impact of any Proposed Developments
<p>Network Rail is all about safety. Our number one priority is to get people home safe every day.</p> <p>We have to think not only about railway passengers, but also others affected by the railway – including level crossing users. That means we have to consider the risks more carefully and in more detail than anyone else does. Of course, most of the time crossings really are safe, but when used carelessly, or even when people make simple mistakes, the results can be lethal.</p> <p>Railway tracks were initially built for much slower trains, and at a time when the only traffic likely to be crossing the lines was the occasional horse-drawn carriage! But the trains got bigger and faster, travelling at speeds unimaginable when the tracks were built. The crossings have stayed the same. Crossings that were intended to be used by pedestrians safe in the knowledge that they would hear trains chugging toward them, or see their steam, now take them across the path of far more dangerous vehicles. Barriers, signalling and other safety measure reduce the risk substantially, but when road meets rail, the danger can never be completely eliminated.</p> <p>That's why new railway lines like HS1 don't have any crossings at all, any more than you'd expect to find them on motorways or airport runways. That would be irresponsible and unsafe. Level crossings remain on railways built for another age only because thinking about safety has lagged behind the development of technology.</p> <p>Nine people were killed on level crossings in 2012. Several hundred more were involved in near misses.</p> <p>Is the convenience of these crossings really worth the risk of even one death?</p> <p>Especially when in most cases they can easily be replaced with a footbridge or other alternative? The question surely answers itself.</p> <p>Ten cars were struck by trains at level crossings in 2012, causing serious damage to vehicles and infrastructure, and putting the lives of hundreds of people at risk. Let's make it simply impossible for a moment of madness or a simple mistake to lead to tragedy.</p>	<p>Tidemills is a combined foot path and user worked crossing. The project is looking to close the footpath element of the crossing. The footpath crossing has wicket gates to access the crossing on both sides. The crossing sits within the South Downs National Park.</p> <p>SIGHTING – The crossing is sited on a single track with trains running in both directions. The Train speed is 60mph. Approx 79 trains a day pass over the crossing for a duration of 20 hours. Train lengths are approximately 60 metres, 3 carriages, peak time trains are longer.</p> <p>There are whistle boards in both directions of the track. Whistle boards are signs on the line side which mandate the train drivers to sound the train horn to alert pedestrian users that there is a train coming – they are compulsory and must be obeyed like a road traffic sign. They are placed at set calculated distances to be heard at optimum distances for warnings. They are blown between the hours of 0700-2300 every day.</p> <p>The crossing is mainly used by dog walkers, walkers, beach users including fishermen and water sports enthusiasts. Sighting from the level crossing to the east is good at over 1km. Sighting to the west is limited to approximately 300m by the curvature of the track, although it is thought that users would be able to see the top of any approaching train from a greater distance.</p> <p>Records indicate that there have been 39 recorded incidents since 2008 at the crossing this includes 12 near misses (A near miss is defined as an incident where a train driver had to make an emergency brake application to avoid a collision with a pedestrian on the crossing). 22 incidents of misuse and five technical faults.</p> <p>Recorded Incidents at the crossing in the last three years:</p> <p>01/05/12 – Near miss with woman & dogs 23/05/12 – Gate vandalised 18/06/12 – Gate not closed properly 28/07/12 – User slow to clear crossing 28/03/13 – Laser light shone at driver 01/04/13 – Trespass by user 16/05/13 – User confused and trespassed 23/08/13 – Walkers crossed in front of train 20/09/13 – Abusive calls to signaller 19/01/14 – Driver applied brakes 17/06/14 – Near Miss</p> <p>The pedestrian gates were repeatedly vandalised over a period of approximately 12 months hence the decision to change them to the new style metal ones. Since the change vandalism has decreased considerably.</p>	<p>This is an extremely well used crossing on the Newhaven Harbour to Seaford Line. The level crossing user crosses one railway line, with a distance of 10 metres from one side to the other. Approximately 79 trains go over this crossing daily. Trains travel at speeds of up to 60mph.</p> <p>Network Rail uses ALCRM, a risk modelling system, to determine the relative risk of all of our level crossing assets. One of the key risk drivers at this crossing is 'high usage'. This crossing is very busy, however, the algorithms and resulting risk score, are unlikely to reflect the true risk at this crossing.</p> <p>The incidents described are a reflection of the types of risks at this access over the railway. There is the additional risk that railways attract criminal behaviour, such as the trespassing and vandalism which have all occurred here.</p>	<p>Option1 – Installation of Stepped Footbridge The installation of a stepped footbridge to give users an alternative means of access over the railway and the closure of the current crossing. This option was not progressed as there are a number of users with disabilities that use the crossing and users with large items ie children's pushchairs, canoes, sailboards, fishing equipment etc.</p> <p>Option 2 – Installation of Ramped Footbridge The installation of a ramped footbridge to give users an alternative means of access over the railway and the closure of the current crossing. This option is currently being progressed. This will enable all types of users to continue to use this route as a means to get to the beach and associated walking routes etc.</p> <p>Option 3 – Wicket Gates/Miniature Stop Light A miniature stop light could be installed at the crossing. This is basically a red/green light to indicate when a train is approaching. This would not reduce the risk significantly to warrant the expense of installing this system at this location. This option is therefore not being progressed.</p> <p>Option 4 – Closure of Crossing by Diversion There are signs on the approaches to the crossing indicating that the crossing does not form a dedicated right of way to the public. However, the council believe that as the crossing is well used a virtual public right of way exists and that they will only agree to a wholesale closure if there is a suitable diversion or alternative path. The shortest diversion for users is via Buckle Road underbridge (STS/808) which is located approximately 830m east of the level crossing at 57m 1716y. The length of the diversion to users is approximately 2.3km. It is very unlikely that East Sussex County Council would accept this diversion therefore this option is not being considered.</p> <p>Option 5 – Installation of underpass Pedestrian underpass – the topography of the land surrounding this crossing does not suit an underpass therefore this option is not being progressed.</p>	<p>The crossing was used by approximately 15 users whilst the survey team were on site (over a period of approximately 1 hour). The team visited site at around 09:30.</p> <p>The majority of users noted were either dog walkers or water sports enthusiasts accessing the beach. The majority of users parked vehicles in the parking area on the North side of the line and crossed the railway at the level crossing on foot.</p> <p>A full 9 day survey is planned to be carried out in July 2015 to gain full understanding of usage at this crossing.</p> <p>The most recent census for risk analysis was recorded on 190514 at 1221 and 21 pedestrian users were noted in a 30 minute period.</p>	<p>Network Rail have not been notified of any proposed developments at this location, however, it is understood that the Port Authority who own some of the land are proposing to expand their freight operation on the beach side of the crossing. Network Rail does not have any further details about this currently.</p>