

Public Questions and Statements
Cabinet – 4 April 2018

Agenda Item 6 - Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

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Statement

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1. Question from Angela Salter, resident of Wareham, to the Cabinet Member for Natural and Built Environment in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

Question

Why do DCC not take more notice of the facts that the majority of Wareham residents wish to continue to use the railway level crossing as a level crossing and would wish to see either the crossing continue as it is or have an automatic barrier fitted as road crossings do? The proposed ramps will make it more difficult for people with disabilities to cross the railway line so why are these are being forced on Wareham when there is no evidence of any lack of safety with the current crossing?

Answer

DCC have recognised that, of residents who have stated an opinion, the majority have expressed a desire to keep the level crossing open. This was noted at a public exhibition held by DCC and a public meeting held by Wareham Town Council in July 2017.

The current level crossing cannot remain open as a permanent form of step free access across the railway. Both DCC and Network Rail recognise that there is a high health and safety risk of a pedestrian train collision at the crossing. Network Rail also state that the crossing cannot be improved by using automated barriers, as this form of control cannot be used for pedestrian only level crossings and will not eliminate the risk of a pedestrian train collision. Network Rail will not enter into a new permissive rights agreement to allow the crossing to remain open.

Constructing access ramps that connect to the existing footbridge at Wareham Railway Station will provide a safe, permanent, uninterrupted form of step free access over the railway line. The ramps will eliminate the risk of a pedestrian train collision associated with the use of the existing pedestrian level crossing.

An equalities impact assessment has been completed which considers how the protected characteristic groups of disability, age and pregnancy and maternity will be affected by the proposed ramps scheme. The impact of the scheme on these groups has been assessed as positive. A full copy of the assessment is available on both the DCC planning authority portal and as part of the 4th April 2018 DCC Cabinet Agenda.

2. Statement from Maxine Humphries, resident of Wareham, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

- A large majority of the local population are against this monstrosity and it would not be democratic to allow this proposal to be built against the will of the local people
- If built the structure would further divide the community in half
- The centuries old ancient right of way should never have been extinguished in 1973
- Allowing this proposal would be a massive dis-benefit to the local population

3. Statement from Councillor Malcolm Russell, Wareham Town Council, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

Over 250 residents attended the Public Open meeting held last year and voted unanimously against the scheme. Wareham Town Council made a resolution to oppose the current scheme and submitted a strongly worded letter of objection. Representations to PDC resulted in a unanimous rejection of both Listed Building Consent and the Planning applications. We sincerely hope that DCC Cabinet will not pursue the ramped bridge anymore which the Town Council and local residents oppose. However, if you are minded to take this to the Regulatory Committee we urge you to arrange the meeting to be held in Wareham so that those affected, including those with disabilities, are able to attend.

This is a statement, with a request to hold the Regulatory Committee meeting in Wareham.

4. Statement from Jim Etherington, resident of Wareham, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

I am sending this message to you as Wessex Network Rail is trying yet again to succeed in having their proposal for the "skateboard ramp" accepted.

No doubt you have seen the excellent article in the [April issue \(no.219\) of the Purbeck Gazette by David Hollister on this subject \(p.10\) entitled "No Brain and No Hearts"](#), and one could do worse than read out said article at the meeting in Dorchester on April 4th.

The only additions I would suggest to this article is that;

- 1) as well as the examples of Wool and Holme Farm railway crossings, one could also cite Poole High Street, where thousands of pedestrians daily and safely use the railway crossing and the footbridge,
- 2) Wessex Network Rail could better use the money to start to improve the service on what has been claimed to be worst in the country.

Hope the above has been of some help

5. Statement from Mark Titman, Titman Design, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

First impressions are very important in setting the scene of a place. Wareham is presently a Georgian and Victorian modest and graceful gateway to The World Class Heritage site of The Purbecks. As such these ramps are a blot on the beauty of not only the station, but the town and the whole experience of visiting the Purbecks. Wareham deserves better quality. Would Venice have these? Aim higher please!

The design of these ramps is industrial and overly structured- they are ugly and out of place. Anyone can see this. To not accept it shows either lack of visual sense or bias. They are also dangerous for the infirm, older people, pram and wheelchair users. The ramps are steep and even if non stick will still be slippery. The train company or council will be sued repeatedly and will be seen to be breaking the responsibilities they have for these less mobile folk.

These ramps will also break Wareham into two parts and separate what is presently a coherent socialised town- where all folk mix comfortably. Many developers recognise the benefits and value of a good community and call this "social capital". These ramps will lower not only the tourist, visual and buildings' values in the town but will break the valuable coherent social life of the town - making the folk North of the level crossing strangers to the South. There will be less crossings and as such the infirm, mothers and older folk will become alienated. One thing I have come to love about Wareham is not only the architecture but the affectionate way strangers greet one and other amicably on the street on a daily basis.

Why Wareham is being given these ramps when 66% of the population have voted against them and two planning applications have been refused is odd and frustrating. Why haven't our voices been listened to? Why are we going through this AGAIN? Why really are they needed? is there an unseen reason that benefits the rail company? Surely it is not access issues as claimed, because this will actually be dangerous, as well as ugly and also will reduce the value and experience of being in or visiting Wareham. Why not pick on somewhere else that also has level crossings...I smell a rat!

6. Statement from John Simpson, resident of Wareham, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

I had polio when I was one leaving me very disabled. In all my life I have never known any Council, do anything other than to try and make life easier for disabled people - until now.

The proposal for ramps with the steepest gradient permissible will be more dangerous than using the crossing and unusable for people in manual wheel chairs and with walking difficulties. The community is clearly against it.

Councils are obliged to represent the people and their views, and act in the interests of the community. If they can't do that they should resign their seats and let new more representative people stand.

7. Statement from Graham Baynes, resident of Wareham, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

1. There is a diametric difference between Network Rail's aims and the actual needs of Wareham's populace.
2. The people of Wareham need a step-free pedestrian level crossing. This can be provided by using the existing gates, controlled by the signalling system and possibly coupled with a reduced line speed on this stretch of rail. Network Rail is resolved not to accept this, because there is no precedent for such a pedestrian crossing. The company does, however, control hundreds of road crossings in this way, and does not deny that the scheme is feasible.
3. The argument that a ramp, connected with the bridge, will not unduly inconvenience pedestrians, including those with push-chairs, may be valid for the fit. It may, too, be manageable for push-chair users with no other encumbrance. It is not suitable for the unfit; nor would it be safe for a parent with a child in the chair and a toddler on a rein (and, possibly, a dog). This would especially be the case when going down the ramp – where greater control is needed – and in icy weather.
4. Network Rail seems to have disregarded the problem faced by potential rail passengers from the north of the town who, if buying a ticket to travel eastwards, would have to cross the line twice. In this they have apparently convinced DCC that no problem exists. In fact, the return climb, up and down the ramps, involves a considerable total distance (in the order of a quarter of a mile) and time. This is not acceptable.
5. DCC's prime responsibility is towards the public, and not the Railway company. History and the already improved safety, brought about by the power-operated gates, indicate that the safety aspect is adequately covered by the Town's proposal. The ramps would probably increase, rather than reduce risk.
6. My argument is independent of any listed building aspects.

8. Statement from Judith Price, Wareham Town Trust representative, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

Only If **practicable** should level crossings be replaced with bridges, under passes or diversions.' All attempts to design inclusive Equality compliant bridges in the past have been impracticable. The current design fails to achieve the main objective of conformity with the Equalities Act. I am particularly concerned for the 21% of cyclists preferring the dangerous road route.

NR has invested in new technologies the Honeywell scanner is already installed on the crossing at Holme, Automation could be initiated tomorrow.

NRs mission for passengers contains goes beyond the Equality Act's public sector duty and includes all disabilities. They need inclusive cross platform connection for their passengers.

9. Statement from Robin Humphries, resident of Wareham, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

Summary

- 1) My own place in all of this
- 2) A most dangerous crossing
- 3) The Street Scene
- 4) Protection of Graded structures and how much modification is justifiable
- 5) The Ramp Design. 1 in 12 gradient is this legal
- 6) Protecting disabled access to this crossing. Disability rights are these going to be violated

10. Statement from Cllr Mike Wiggins, Wareham Town Council, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

A letter by Michael Tomlinson MP will be read out by Cllr Wiggins and is attached to this document.

11. Statement from Ralph Holmes, resident of Wareham, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

Like many, many other Wareham residents, I am strongly opposed to a ramped bridge as the only way of crossing the railway line near the station. Like them, I feel that an automated crossing similar to that in Poole High Street would be the ideal answer. In Appendix 8 Network Rail claim Poole High Street is a public road. In practice however, like in Wareham, it is no longer a road. It is fully pedestrianised. The crossing at Wareham is much more than a minor permissive footpath. It must be possible to design and make a suitable gate for it.

12. Letter from Stewart Firth, Director of Route Sponsorship (Wessex Route) Network Rail, in relation to the Future of Wareham Foot Crossing

Letter attached to this document.

13. Statement from Councillor Ray Nowak, Portland Town Council, in relation to Brackenbury Infant School

It's not my intention to speak at Cabinet given that the recommendation is to support the bid from PTC for Brackenbury School, other than to say 'thank you' if the recommendation is agreed.