

# Cabinet

19 November 2024

## Future of Wareham Pedestrian Level Crossing

### For Decision

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio:**

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

**Local Councillor(s):**

Cllr Beryl Ezzard

Cllr Ryan Holloway

**Executive Director:**

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

Report Author: Jack Wiltshire

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**Report Status:** Public

### Brief Summary:

The council and Network Rail have been working together over several years to find a permanent solution to remove the risk of a serious or fatal injury occurring at Wareham Pedestrian Level Crossing. Dorset Council has responsibility to manage the pedestrian level crossing under a lease agreement with Network Rail. The provision of crossing attendants to manually open/close the electronic gates currently costs the council £120,000 per annum. The lease agreement expires in June 2038 with no further option to extend. Failure to secure an alternative long-term solution prior to 2038 would cause severe difficulties for the local community resulting from severance between Northport and Wareham town centre.

An independent risk assessment commissioned by Network Rail concludes that the most appropriate solution is the closure of the pedestrian level crossing and the modification of the stepped footbridge with ramps or lifts. The report rules out the option of full-barrier automation, as not an appropriate measure at Wareham

Pedestrian Level Crossing. Having reviewed the report, Dorset Council's preferred option would be modification of the existing footbridge with ramps, or lifts if a ramped solution cannot be achieved.

This report presents recommendations on a permanent solution at Wareham Pedestrian Level Crossing providing a permanent step free pedestrian access connecting Northport to Wareham Town Centre.

**Recommendation:**

That Cabinet approves the following:

- i. Dorset Council collaborates with Network Rail on the design of ramped access to the existing Wareham station footbridge, or lifts if ramped access is undeliverable, enabling necessary planning permissions or consents to be sought.
- ii. If required and subject to securing the necessary consents and agreement of proposed funding arrangements with Network Rail, a further report be submitted to cabinet to approve any council financial contribution towards the delivery of a permanent step free access solution.
- iii. A review of the Wareham Pedestrian Level Crossing attendant service hours is undertaken and that stakeholder engagement on any proposed reduction is completed ahead of retendering the contract.
- iv. The council will relinquish permissive rights for use of the Wareham Pedestrian Level Crossing as soon as a permanent step free access is delivered.

**Reason for Recommendation:**

To provide a permanent form of step free access over the railway line, connecting Northport to Wareham Town Centre.

To provide an uninterrupted form of step free access over the railway line that is not closed intermittently by live railway operations.

To enable the delivery of strategic enhancements to rail infrastructure and services.

To eliminate the health and safety, financial, reputational and strategic risks associated with use of the current pedestrian level crossing.

To achieve a significant revenue saving by removing the on-going crossing attendant provision.

## 1. **Background**

- 1.1 Dorset Council has responsibility to manage the pedestrian level crossing under a lease agreement with Network Rail. This lease agreement which gives permissive rights to use the level crossing expires in June 2038 with no further option to extend.
- 1.2 After the Office of Rail Regulation, now the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), issued a notice to improve in 2009, the council and Network Rail have been working together to find a permanent solution to remove the risk of serious and fatal injury occurring at the Wareham pedestrian level crossing.
- 1.3 Addressing safety concerns at the pedestrian level crossing, the council is responsible for the provision of crossing attendants to manually open/close the electronic gates. The annual revenue cost to the council of providing this service is currently £120,000 per annum.
- 1.4 This provision was initially viewed as a short-term solution to maintain accessibility over the railway. The council will need to continue to provide this service until a permanent solution is found or the expiry of the lease in June 2038.
- 1.5 Planning and listed building applications made in 2013 were granted consent but a scheme could not be delivered. Further applications made in 2015, and 2017 to install ramps to the existing footbridge and remove the pedestrian level crossing were refused.
- 1.6 Appendix 1 sets out the location, current arrangements, history of events, and previous decisions of Wareham pedestrian level crossing.
- 1.7 Following the publication of Network Rail's Dorset Connectivity Study in 2021, the council requested that Network Rail provide further explanation why closure was the only option and explore all available options, including the viability of automation of the crossing in the light of technical advances since such options were last reviewed.
- 1.8 In 2023, Network Rail commissioned Sotera Risk Solutions to complete an independent risk assessment and options selection for Wareham pedestrian level crossing. A covering letter from Network Rail dated 19<sup>th</sup>

July 2024 (Appendix 2) states that the Sotera Report (Appendix 3) does not commit Network Rail to a resolution, but that Sotera has satisfactorily considered a range of options and has made recommendations on the future of the pedestrian level crossing.

- 1.9 This Cabinet report considers the Network Rail letter and Sotera report and presents to Cabinet recommendations on a long-term solution providing a safe, permanent, sustainable form of step free pedestrian access connecting Northport to Wareham Town Centre.

## 2. **Risk Assessment and Options Selection for Wareham Footpath Level Crossing**

- 2.1 Sotera Risk Solutions Limited undertook an independent review of the options for Wareham pedestrian level crossing and submitted its report to Network Rail dated 1st March 2024.

- 2.2 The options assessment included:

- a) A data review
- b) A site visit to assess the current operation, existing controls, and identification of local hazards
- c) Assessments of the crossing type options
- d) An options assessment from a safety, cost, accessibility, and feasibility perspective

- 2.3 Sotera's detailed assessment of the nine strategic options are presented in their report at Appendix 3, table 4, page 40.

- 2.4 A non-technical summary of the options assessment is presented in Table 1.

*Table 1 – Summary of Sotera strategic options assessment*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Capital Cost</b>	<b>Revenue Cost</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
a) Current crossing type	£1m	£120k per annum	Consider if option d or e not feasible.	Not designed as a high integrity safety system. Precludes the usage of the down sidings.
b) Closure without alternative	-	-	Consider if option d or e not feasible.	No step free access. Removal may be challenged under Equality Act.
c) Maglock gates operated by a crossing attendant	£3.8m	£220k per annum	Discounted	Vulnerable to misuse. Long crossing closure time / potential for train delays. Precludes the usage of the down sidings.
d) Closure and lifts to the stepped pedestrian bridge	£3m	£30k per annum	Take forward for further consideration	Less visual impact. Wait times / capacity to cope with the existing level of use. No alternative if the lift fails. Allows use of the down sidings.
e) Closure and ramps to the existing stepped pedestrian bridge	£4.7m	£3.5k per annum	Take forward for further consideration	Can be visually intrusive. Walking distance is longer (141m vs 21m). The bridge is always available and users are not delayed. Allows use of the down sidings.
f) Closure and underpass	£8m-£12m	£20k per annum	Discounted	Excessive capital cost. Construction is complex and may require additional land.
g) Downgrade to footpath crossing	£1m after 30 years	£6.8k per annum	Discounted	Not acceptable due to the high risk of misuse.

miniature stop light				Precludes the usage of the down sidings.
h) Manually controlled barrier with CCTV	£3.8m	£389k per annum	Discounted	Excessive cost. Vulnerable to misuse. Long crossing closure time. Signals would have to be upgraded. Precludes the usage of the down sidings.
i) Manually controlled barrier with obstacle detection	£3.7m	£26k per annum	Discounted	Network Rail standards do not include full barrier crossings as types for consideration. More vulnerable to misuse. Precludes the usage of the down sidings.

- 2.5 Network Rail note that the assessment and recommendations verify their own options evaluations.
- 2.6 Previous engagement with the local community has shown that there is an ardent desire to maintain the pedestrian level crossing. A 'Save Wareham's Ground Level Pedestrian Railway Crossing' petition on Change.org, started in March 2024, has 2,297 signatures (as at 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024). However, Dorset Council only has permissive rights to use the level crossing until 2038. It is not within the council's power to keep the pedestrian level crossing open beyond this date.
- 2.7 The Sotera report concludes that the option of a full-barrier-type solution, suggested locally to automate the crossing and remove the requirement for crossing attendants, is not an appropriate measure at this crossing.
- 2.8 For operational reasons, the report highlights that the continued presence of the pedestrian level crossing prevents the use of the down sidings. These sidings can only be brought into use once the crossing is closed and removed. Use of the sidings could deliver significant benefits including:

- a) Enabling the longer-term aspiration to deliver the Dorset Metro service with an increase to 4 trains per hour between Brockenhurst and Wareham.
  - b) Facilitating the reinstatement of a passenger service to Swanage.
  - c) Use for the stabling of passenger trains and on-track machines to support normal operations, planned and un-planned engineering works.
- 2.9 The report concludes that the most appropriate solution is the closure of the crossing and the modification of the stepped footbridge with ramps or lifts.

### **3. Implications for Dorset Council**

- 3.1 The council and Network Rail have been unsuccessful so far in their joint attempts to deliver a permanent step free access over the rail tracks at Wareham level crossing.
- 3.2 The current lease agreement allowing pedestrian access over the railway via a level crossing, which is not a definitive public right of way, between the council and Network Rail expires in 2038. Network Rail has maintained its position that an alternative crossing facility should be provided so that the crossing can be closed at the end of the current lease or sooner if a long-term solution can be delivered.
- 3.3 The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) is responsible for ensuring that railway businesses manage level crossing risks effectively. If a level crossing poses a significant safety risk, the ORR can take action to ensure it is made safe. The ORR's strategy for health and safety regulation seeks to ensure that the closure of level crossings is the first option considered in a risk-control strategy by the duty holder, in line with the principles of prevention. Where practicable, this should be achieved through the removal of level crossings and replacing them with bridges, underpasses, or diversions. Dorset Council does not have any powers to prevent the pedestrian level crossing closing sooner than 2038 if a safety improvement notice is issued by the ORR and further control measures cannot be justified or prove undeliverable.

- 3.4 Failure to secure an alternative permanent solution prior to 2038 would cause severe difficulties for the local community resulting from severance between Northport and Wareham town centre.
- 3.5 The following issues have been further considered in preparing this cabinet report:
- i. Continued provision of crossing attendants for up to 19 hours a day, 7 days a week: the council is responsible for meeting the annual costs, £100,456 in 2023/24, increasing to £120,000 in 2024/25. These costs will further increase due to wage rises and increased utility costs. The contract is due for renewal in 2025/26 and therefore there is some uncertainty and risk associated with predicting the future cost to the council. Due to the significant ongoing costs and because of council budget pressures, it is highly desirable that a less costly, permanent solution is progressed so that the existing arrangements can end sooner than 2038.
  - ii. Ramped access to the existing footbridge: Securing planning permission and listed building consent is not guaranteed. Planning permission was granted in 2013 but subsequent applications in 2015 and 2017 were refused (See appendix 1 for further details). Any new design would need to seek to address previous reasons for refusal including concerns of harm to a heritage asset, the mass and scale of the ramp structure and its impact on the street scene.
  - iii. Lift access to the existing footbridge: There are safety concerns of entrapment and anti-social behaviour at times when the station is unmanned. There would be on-going operational, maintenance and replacement costs associated with this option. At times when the lifts are out of service, there would be no step free access. The lifts would need reasonable capacity to cope with the high existing level of use at the level crossing.
- 3.6 It is recommended that Dorset Council collaborates with Network Rail on the design of ramped access to the existing Wareham station footbridge, or lifts if ramped access is undeliverable, enabling necessary planning permissions or consents to be sought. Thus, subject to planning permission and listed building consent being granted, and funding being secured, this will allow the council to relinquish permissive rights for use of the level crossing earlier than 2038 should the council wish to do so.
- 3.7 A permanent solution would:



- a) Provide certainty to residents and remove potential for severance
- b) Enable rail service enhancements, benefiting local people and the wider region
- c) Remove a barrier to local development proposals moving forward
- d) Remove significant ongoing revenue costs from Dorset Council

3.8 As a separate scheme, and not as an alternative to the level crossing or permanent step free access solutions, the council is currently investigating the construction of a footway/cycleway adjacent to the A351 Wareham Bypass road bridge. The A351 Wareham bypass was constructed in the 1970's without any footway. The feasibility of a shared footway and cycleway across the existing bridge deck alongside the A351 and other route enhancements are currently being investigated. The estimated cost of the scheme has risen steeply reflecting inflation throughout the construction industry. The council is currently looking at ways to bring down costs and are reviewing the affordability of the scheme.

#### 4. **Financial Implications**

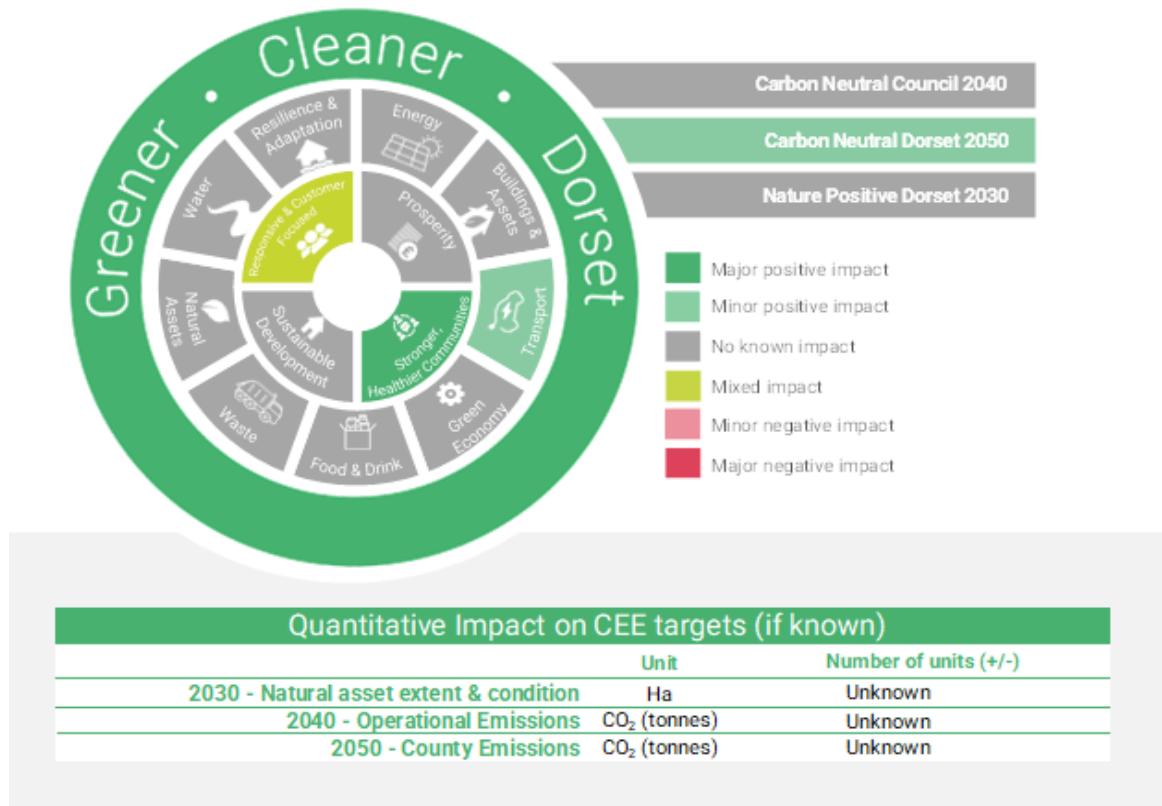
- 4.1 The council is exposed to ongoing capital and revenue costs associated with the management of the pedestrian level crossing under the lease agreement with Network Rail through to June 2038, or until such time that a permanent step free access is delivered and the lease can be relinquished.
- 4.2 The annual revenue cost to the council of providing crossing attendants at Wareham pedestrian level crossing is currently £120,000 per annum. Between 2015/16 – 2023/24, this provision has cost the council £1,026,888.
- 4.3 As highlighted in 3.5, the current contract with the crossing attendant supplier is due for renewal in 2025/26 and therefore there is some uncertainty and risk associated with predicting the future cost to the council.
- 4.4 It is recommended that a review of the overall number of crossing attendant service hours is undertaken and that engagement with key stakeholders is undertaken on any proposed changes prior to the contract being retendered.

- 4.5 The estimated capital cost of providing a new step free access connecting to the existing footbridge as set out in the Sotera report range between £3m for lifts to £4.7m for ramps.
- 4.6 There is currently no funding secured to support the design and construction of a new step free access connecting to the existing footbridge. The council will seek to engage with Network Rail to agree a suitable funding package.

5. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

- 5.1 A completed Natural Environment, Climate & Ecological decision wheel is provided in figure 1. A copy of the Accessible Table of Impacts and completed Table of Recommendations is provided in Appendix 4.

*Figure 1 - Natural Environment, Climate & Ecological Decision Wheel Summary*



- 5.2 A major positive impact is identified delivering stronger, healthier communities. A permanent step free access over the rail tracks will

provide future resilience and ensure the area of Northport is linked to Wareham Town Centre.

5.3 A mixed impact is identified delivering responsive and customer focussed services. The local community strongly favour keeping the pedestrian level crossing open, however, the council does not have any powers to prevent the pedestrian level crossing closing. A permanent step free access over the rail tracks would:

- a) Provide certainty to residents and remove potential for severance.
- b) Provide residents, visitors and railway users who are unable to use the stepped footbridge with a crossing point available 24 hours a day.

## 6. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 6.1 The closure of the existing pedestrian level crossing without an alternative form of step free access being provided would result in severance between Northport and Wareham Town Centre.
- 6.2 As identified in the Sotera report, a five-day pedestrian census was carried out during September 2022 and October 2022. A seven-day average of 861 pedestrians/cyclists per day was recorded. The crossing is well-used by the elderly (4.1%), children (7.8%), pram/pushchair users (2.8%), mobility impaired (0.9%) and cyclists (21.2%).
- 6.3 The existing crossing is frequently used by cyclists and forms part of the Northport Greenway Cycle Route between Wareham and Wareham Forest and a link through to the Strategic Cycle Network (National Cycle Route No 2). Closure of the foot crossing will mean cyclists would have to carry their bike over the existing station footbridge, or cycle along the A351 flyover to cross the railway line. This would be a significant barrier to a sustainable and active form of travel.
- 6.4 For the reasons set out in 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 it is necessary that the council and Network Rail secure a permanent step free access solution connecting Northport to Wareham Town Centre.

## 7. **Other Implications**

7.1 NA

## 8. **Risk Assessment**

8.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

8.2 A risk assessment is presented in Appendix 5.

## 9. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

9.1 An EqIA assessment was completed in 2017 to accompany a cabinet report to the former Dorset County Council for a ramped access scheme. A new draft EqIA assessment (Appendix 6) has been undertaken to accompany this report and will be submitted to the Diversity and Inclusion Officer for progression.

9.2 The assessment considers the scenario where the existing level crossing is permanently closed, with the objective of determining the impacts on protected characteristics.

9.3 If either the crossing attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the closure of the existing level crossing without an alternative step free access being provided, there would be a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access. They will be unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing and would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.

9.4 A permanent step free access solution would provide a 24 hour, seven days a week accessible route over the rail tracks. However, as a design has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the full range of impacts will be. Therefore the EqIA will be regularly reviewed and updated as a permanent solution is progressed.

## 10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Location, history of events, previous decisions

Appendix 2 – Network Rail Letter

Appendix 3 – Sotera Risk Solutions. March 2024. Risk Assessment and Options Selection for Wareham Footpath Level Crossing Report

Appendix 4 – Climate Emergency Wheel Supporting Tables

Appendix 5 – Risk Assessment

Appendix 6 – EqIA

## 11. **Background Papers**

Dorset County Council Cabinet. 4 April 2018. [Future of Wareham Foot Crossing](#).

Dorset County Council Cabinet. 26 October 2016. [Future of Wareham Foot Level Crossing](#).

Dorset County Council Cabinet. 26 June 2013. [Pedestrian Rail Crossing at Wareham Station](#).

## 12. **Report Sign Off**

- 11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member.

## **Appendix 1 – Location, history of events, previous planning decisions, and current arrangements**

### **Location**

The Southwest mainline railway (London Waterloo to Weymouth) divides large residential areas to the north from Wareham town centre in the south. The pedestrian level crossing is a key step free accessible link for pedestrians and cyclists between these two parts of Wareham.

The pedestrian level crossing is located adjacent to Wareham station with Sandford Road/Bere Road on the northside and Sandford Lane on the southside.

The nearby stepped footbridge is located approximately 25m to the southwest accessed from Sandford Road and Sandford Lane.

The A351 Wareham Bypass is located to the east. There is no footway on the bridge, and this is not currently a suitable route for pedestrians or cyclists.

Figures A1 – A5 provide a location plan and photos of the crossing facilities in relation to the existing footbridge and Wareham station.

Figure A1. Location Plan



Dorset explorer map [link](#).

*Figure A2. View south from Sandford Road - Bere Road Roundabout showing the location of the pedestrian level crossing and footbridge*



*Figure A3. View Northeast from the footbridge of the pedestrian level crossing*





Figure A4. View of Northwest of the footbridge from the station platform



Figure A5. View south towards the pedestrian level crossing access onto Sandford Lane



## **History of Events**

1973 - Wareham Bypass constructed and road crossing over the railway line stopped up.

1988 - formal lease agreement in place between the former Dorset County Council and Network Rail for a period of 25 years, with a further possible 25 year extension, to allow pedestrian access over railway line via the level crossing.

2009 - following safety improvement requirements by Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the independent safety regulator for Britain's railway, electronic gates are installed, and safety attendants are employed to monitor the use of the crossing.

2013 - Network Rail apply for planning permission to build ramps up to the pedestrian footbridge and remove the level crossing. Planning granted but ramps not able to be constructed.

2013 - lease extension, for a further 25-years, agreed between the former Dorset County Council and Network Rail allowing continued access across railway land.

2015 - second planning submission by Network Rail to install ramps and remove the level crossing. Planning application refused.

2017 - the former Dorset County Council lead on new scheme to design and built ramped access up to the footbridge, supported by Network Rail.

2018 - planning application to install ramps and remove the level crossing is refused.

2019 – Meeting was held with the Minister of State for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris), Michael Tomlinson MP and representatives from Wareham, Dorset Council and Network Rail.

2021 – Network Rail's strategic Dorset Connectivity Study identifies that the closure of Wareham level Crossing should be progressed collaboratively between Network Rail, the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body and Dorset Council. It also states that such an intervention is required if train frequency is to be increased such as the Dorset Metro and regular services to Swanage are to be restored.

2023 – At the request of Dorset Council, Network Rail commission an independent review of options to reduce the risk at the crossing including automation at the crossing considering technological advancements and innovation elsewhere on the rail network.

2024 – Network Rail letter received, and Sotera Risk Solutions Risk Assessment and Options Selection for Wareham Footpath Level Crossing report published.

2038 - lease agreement with Network Rail for pedestrian access over the level crossing, through railway land, ends.

## **Planning History**

*2017: [6/2017/0550](#) (listed building consent) & [6/2017/0639](#) 1 (full planning application)*

An application for planning permission was submitted by Dorset Highways, the applicant, and registered by Dorset County Council planning authority on 14 November 2017 for alterations to the existing railway footbridge and erection of new ramp structures, providing a step free access from the highway to the footbridge.

An application for listed building consent was submitted by Dorset Highways, the applicant, and registered by Purbeck District Council planning authority on 6 November 2017.

Decision: Refused

*2015: [6/2015/0478](#) (full planning application) and [6/2015/0479](#) (listed building consent)*

Applications for planning permission and listed building consent were submitted by Network Rail to Purbeck District Council for the construction of access for all pedestrian bridge with associated lighting and highway works, including formation of pedestrian crossing and creation of a new footpath.

Decision: Refused

*2013: [6/2013/0424](#) (Full planning application) and [6/2013/0425](#) (Listed building consent)*

Applications for planning permission and listed building consent were submitted by Network Rail to Purbeck District Council for the alterations to Wareham Station Footbridge to facilitate the crossing of the railway.

Decision: Approved

## **Current pedestrian level crossing arrangements**

Dorset Council has responsibility to manage the pedestrian level crossing under a lease agreement with Network Rail. This lease agreement expires in 2038.

The crossing offers a step free level crossing of the rail lines. There are currently no suitable accessible (step free) alternatives which means that the crossing is a vital link to the local community. The level crossing is not a Right of Way but makes up part the Northport Greenway Cycle Route between Wareham and Wareham Forest and a link through to the Strategic Cycle Network (National Cycle Route No 2).

Alternative pedestrian access is provided by Network Rail in the form of a listed stepped footbridge (not a recorded public right of way) which is not suitable for people with protected characteristics, restricted mobility, wheelchairs and scooters, people with pram/pushchairs, those with heavy baggage and cyclists.

Since 2009, crossing guards have been required at the pedestrian level crossing following a review by the Office of Rail and Road who raised safety concerns at the crossing. The crossing is manned seven days a week from 06:00 to 01:00 (19 hours). There are three full time guards employed by STM Security Ltd to cover the service hours. The crossing guards are based on site with duties carried out from a cabin that is within the gated bounds of the crossing. The current contract expires on 31/08/2024 with an agreed 12-month extension starting on 01/09/2024.

The crossing is required to operate with gates being closed remotely when a train is approaching the crossing. The gates remain locked closed outside of normal opening times.

The provision of crossing attendants was initially viewed as a short-term solution. Permanent solutions at the level crossing which would replace the level crossing remain under investigation. Until a permanent solution is found there will remain a need for crossing attendants to manually open/close the electronic gates so that the ability to safely cross the rail lines is accessible for all. Should a suitable alternative to the crossing be installed, the need for the crossing will cease.

Dorset Council remain committed to finding a permanent and sustainable solution to the enduring situation around the future of Wareham Level Crossing both to secure certainty for local residents moving between north and south Wareham and to pave the way for strategic rail service enhancements.

Figures A6 – A9 show photographs of the current crossing safety features.

Figure A6. External gates controlled by a level crossing attendant



Figure A7. Miniature Stop Lights (MSLs) and external gates controlled by a level crossing attendant



Figure A8. External gates and staffing facility



Figure A9. View towards Sandford Road



## Appendix 2 – Network Rail Letter



Mr J Wiltshire  
Head of Highways  
Dorset Council  
County Hall  
Colliton Park  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT1 1XJ

Ms L Ward  
Head of Public & Passenger Health & Safety  
1 Puddle Dock  
Blackfriars  
GREATER LONDON  
EC4V 3DS

19<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Dear Mr. Wiltshire,

Please find enclosed the Risk Assessment and Options Selection for Wareham Footpath Level Crossing (the Report) completed in March 2024 by Sotera Risk Solutions. The Report was commissioned by Network Rail and produced independently. Network Rail had no influence over the scope or the conclusions of the report. The only parameters of Sotera's report were the necessity to conform with industry standards, policies and wider governance, e.g., principles of managing public money. This was because it is Network Rail who solely holds the responsibility for level crossing risk and is the only body authorised by the government to, expertly, manage that risk. This report does not commit Network Rail to a resolution, but merely discusses the options.

The Report principally contains an assessment of the risk of the crossing which corresponds with Network Rail's own assessment. The main components of a comprehensive level crossing risk assessment are (but not limited to):

- the nature of the users,
- numbers vulnerable users,

- role of the attendants in controlling the access to the railway.
- alternative routes and their suitability,
- local layout.
- current controls
- highlight incident data
- future demand for the crossing.

The Report addresses these points satisfactorily. Additionally, Sotera considered a variety of options to reduce the risk at the crossing and undertook analysis to reach a recommendation.

Firstly, the conclusion reached by the Report was that the option of a full-barrier-type solution, which has historically been suggested as the locally preferred way to automate the crossing and remove the requirement for the attendants, was not an appropriate measure at this crossing. Its implementation would be at odds with the industry standards and policy. It notes that there is no corresponding type of crossing for footpaths, but most importantly it is a disproportionate solution considering its cost to the public purse. This option would leave opportunities for trespass and vandalism, whilst frustrating waiting users, and cause delay to railway productivity. Consequently, Network Rail cannot promote solutions that are not designed to address the risk that pedestrians face with a solution designed for controlling road traffic.

The Report considers and discounts the following options: an underpass, removal of the attendants and relying on the Red/Green lights, introduction of a MagLock gate, and MCB-CCTV or MCB-OD\* full barrier crossing types. These observations of the Report mirror Network Rail's own options evaluations. The most appropriate solution in all aspects, the Report concludes, is closure of the crossing and the amendment of the current stepped footbridge by the addition of lifts or a separate footbridge with ramps or lifts.

Whilst public safety is the central consideration underpinning the requirement to make this crossing safe, the report also addresses the important operational reason – the continued presence of the crossing prevents the use of nearby sidings. These railway sidings are located to the east of the station and can only be brought into operational use once the crossing is closed and removed. This is due to the design of our signalling system in the locality (which is a highly complex site from a signalling perspective) which requires decommissioning of the crossing before the sidings can be activated. The significance of the ability to put these sidings to use cannot be overstated; they could be used for the stabling of passenger trains and on-track machines to support normal operations, planned and un-planned engineering works. It could also be used to facilitate the Swanage Railway link as well as a longer-term strategy to introduce

\* Manually Controlled Barriers with CCTV camera and Manually Controlled Barriers with Obstacle Detection. These crossings refer to a full-barrier level crossing with lights and audible warning where a person or an automatic detection process makes sure that the level crossing is clear before allowing trains to approach.



an additional metro service to Wareham bringing additional regular trains.

Please feel free to share the Report, along with this letter, to facilitate discussion on the Wareham level crossing. I hope that the similarities between the Report and our stance will help to show that we have no prejudice for the final outcome, but are simply following a reasonable path to the reduction of risk. I think that we have provided enough evidence to show all the options and the issues surrounding each of them, allowing you to open the debate on the future of this level crossing. I will continue to assist you in any way possible so please do not hesitate to include Network Rail in your ongoing plans at this location.

Yours sincerely,

*Leanne Ward*

Leanne Ward, Head of Passenger & Public Safety, Southern region.

**Appendix 3 – Sotera Risk Solutions. March, 2024. Risk Assessment and Options Selection for Wareham Footpath Level Crossing Report**

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## Appendix 4 – Climate Emergency Wheel Supporting Tables

### ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	Minor positive impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	neutral
Stronger healthier communities	Major positive impact
Sustainable Development & Housing	neutral
Responsive & Customer Focused	Mixed impact

### TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
<b>Energy</b>	
Options incorporating ongoing operational energy use should consider low carbon energy sources.	To be considered as part of the design review.
<b>Buildings &amp; Assets</b>	
Construction of new assets should consider the options for incorporation of sustainable materials and construction methods.	To be considered as part of the design review.
<b>Transport</b>	
Consider how participants can be encouraged to utilise low emission, public and active modes where appropriate.	To be considered as part of developing Local Transport Plan 4 and Dorset Metro proposals.
<b>Green Economy</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Food &amp; Drink</b>	

No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Waste</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Natural Assets &amp; Ecology</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Water</b>	
No recommendations found for this category	NA
<b>Resilience &amp; Adaptation</b>	
Future options analysis may consider the relative climate vulnerability of the options to extreme weather events or non-weather climate impacts like supply chain disruption.	To be considered as part of the design review.

## **Appendix 5 – Risk Assessment**

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## **Appendix 6 – EQIA**

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