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West Sussex Local Access Forum



Our reference:

Nathan.Whittington@networkrail.co.uk

9 September 2026

Dear Nathan,

Re : Consultation - Highways Act 1980 – Section 118A
Application for extinguishment of part of footpath ANS-101CR in the parish of
Ansty and Staplefield (Bedelands)

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF). WSLAF received a copy of the notice relating to the above proposed closure from a third party, but did not receive it directly from Network Rail. The Forum has not been formally consulted, which raises concerns with the Members about the consultation process. It is not clear which groups or parties have been included in this pre-order consultation.

West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) is an independent advisory body, established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to give access advice to local authorities, statutory organisations and non-government organisations. In giving that advice, the Forum's main objective is to ensure the existing network of public rights of way (prows), as well as the wider access network, is protected and where possible enhanced. The Forum has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape). For further information about the Forum please visit www.wslaf.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. WSLAF remains opposed in principle to any path extinguishment, where a suitable alternative route has not been proposed.

We have considered the information provided by the Risk Assessment and have carried out a site visit. The crossing is located on a main line where there are frequent high speed trains. The risk identified at this crossing is that a long train on one line may obscure the sighting of a short train on the other line, which could be exacerbated if the long train is slow moving. These sighting difficulties may pose a safety risk to the users of the crossing. During our site visit it was noted that the approach to the crossing was clear, the crossing is at grade and sight lines are good. The Risk Assessment makes no reference to incidents or misuse at the crossing.

The proposal is to extinguish part of this footpath where it crosses the railway line, severing the connection to Valebridge Road and other parts of the Public Right of Way (PROW) network to the east, thereby impacting both walkers and the local community.

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To the south of ANS-101CR, footpath BUH-1BH heads west from Valebridge Road and passes under the railway at Lucy's Bridge, but there is no PRow connection between the two footpaths. A walkable connection exists between footpath BUH-1BH and Bedelands Farm Nature Reserve (thereby connecting to ANS-101CR to the west of the crossing) in the form of an existing track which is metalled and lit and is used by vehicular traffic to a traveller site

From the information provided it is not clear if the public can use the track by right as it may be an unallocated roadway where access is 'tolerated'. An increase in footfall may not be welcomed by the community it currently serves. In addition the report states that the track's two landowners have not been prepared to engage in discussions for use of the track and a similar situation has occurred with the landowners to a potential alternative route.

Consequently, without confirmation of a safe permanent route that walkers can access by right between Lucy's Bridge and ANS-101CR west of Bedelands Crossing, we are unable to support this proposal but we will be pleased to reconsider this decision if further positive information is provided.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and the Forum looks forward to being updated on the progress of the proposals and would welcome being consulted in the future on any similar matters that may impact on access.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. [Click here and type organisation] is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Local Access Forum in carrying out its functions.

Yours sincerely

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S' followed by a large, sweeping flourish.

Steve Alexander, Forum Officer

Copy for information to:

All WS LAF members