

Minutes of the TGAA Committee meeting held at 14.00 on Friday 5 March 2010 at 23 Chalfont Road, Oxford.

Present: Tony Hollander (chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis (secretary); Carol Jarvis (lettings secretary); Pete Jarvis (pest control); Jonathan Clark (website and machinery); Paul Clarke, consultant for Chiltern Railways.

Apologies: Neil MacLennan; Vibeke Mannion; Stuart Skye.

Agenda

1 Update on proposed closure of the level crossing

Paul Clarke attended the meeting on behalf of Chiltern Railways to update the Committee on the position regarding the proposed closure of the level crossing. He was told that TGAA would be going into the public enquiry with the firm view that the crossing must stay open and that we would argue both that our crossing is a special case and that Network Rail policy does not say that all crossings must close. Paul Clarke claimed that there has been one near-miss on the crossing in the last four years but no detailed evidence of this claim was forthcoming and it had not been reported to the TGAA committee.

Paul Clarke reported that following a change in the law, HMRI is no longer involved in crossing safety and that Network Rail now has the final say on all aspects of the Evergreen project including making a decision on whether the crossing must close. Chiltern Railways has asked Network Rail if the crossing must close (it was pointed out that this was the wrong question) and has informed them of TGAA's objection which has so far been supported by Oxford City Council. Although Network Rail has said from the start that all crossings must be closed, it has allowed one road crossing near Bicester to remain open because it would have been too expensive to close it. There are objections to the closure of other crossings and Network Rail is currently conducting risk assessments of all 37 crossings so no decision will be made until these have been completed. TGAA will be provided with a copy of the risk assessment in advance of the public enquiry which is due to be held in September or October 2010.

In Paul Clark's view, although Network Rail will realistically go for closure of the crossing, if the risk assessment finds that the crossing is safe, the independent inspector at the public enquiry could overrule Network Rail's decision.

Action:

JC to re-contact Network Rail in Birmingham to re-voice our objection to closure of the crossing.

2 Proposed mitigation works

Paul Clarke explained that Chiltern Railways had to find a mitigation measure with minimal environmental impact and that, following a site visit with representatives of Natural England and the Environment Agency, it was clear that raising the causeway would be inappropriate for the SSSI status of Port Meadow. The ramp proposal in place avoids the problem of flooding and has the approval of Natural England. It was explained that although there was a lot of detailed work on the proposed ramp access, it was not included in the formal order because if it were, Chiltern Railways could be forced to build it even if it turned out that nobody wanted it.

Paul Clark was told that – although TGAA's stance is still to have the crossing kept open – if the crossing had to close, the ramp proposal would be acceptable but we would prefer raising the causeway for which, it was felt, there would be greater public sympathy. However, Chiltern was asked to provide written confirmation that the crossing would not be closed until mitigation is in place. It is Chiltern's intention to go ahead with the plan put forward by the county council for the triangle of land by Phil & Jim school including the TGAA car park.

3 Matters arising from the last committee meeting on 28 January 2010

TH reported that he has received an acknowledgement of our objection to the crossing closure from Nicola Blackwood but deafening silence from Evan Harris.

VW said that there had been insufficient interest in the petition idea to make pursuing it worthwhile.

JC has yet to organise a laminated copy of the detailed mitigation plans to be put up on the

allotment notice board.

4 AGM

VW will arrange for 40 copies of the 2009 AGM and the 2010 AGM agenda to be made available at the meeting.

TH will buy red wine to be presented to John Ashby and John Porter as thanks for all their work on the communal compost and bonfire, and white wine for Kate Lack as a token of our appreciation for her work as Secretary for the last four years .

The Chairman's report will include a details of the land triangle wildlife survey.

BC will give the Treasurer's report and organise 40 copies of the accounts.

PJ will say a few words about pest control.

VM will give the Lettings Secretaries' report which will cover number of plots let, condition of the plots and the state of the waiting list.

JC will report on the website.

Ade Thomas will be given a five-minute slot at the AGM to advertise the Facebook page he has set up and explain its purpose.

TH and JC will liaise on presenting the crossing case at the AGM. Addresses of whom to write to will be added to the other papers to be distributed at the AGM.

5 New rules

There was broad agreement of the proposed new rules with some amendments which VW will incorporate before circulating them by email for agreement at the AGM.

The meeting ended at 17.30