Diversity Impact Assessment

Name of policy, programme or project: 149934 Tovil Footbridge

Name: **Your job title/position:**

Department: Network Operations South East Route **Date:** 2nd August 2016

Diversity Impact Assessments (DIA) are the method used by Network Rail to clearly demonstrate that we have paid due regard to our duties within the Equality Act 2010. The DIA is a tool that helps NR confirm that our policies and the way we design, build and operate will work for everyone. Completed Diversity Impact assessments must be copied to DiversityImpactAssessment@networkrail.co.uk

Step 1: Clarifying Aims

Q1. What are the aims of this project/piece of work?
Overview of site(s) Tovil footpath level crossing and footbridge are located in Fant Ward within the Maidstone area of north west Kent. Both sites are located between Maidstone West and East Farleigh railway stations. Tovil footpath level crossing is constructed of a timber decking with non-slip surfacing material. It also includes manually operated pedestrian iron gates, chicane barriers and signs advising users to 'Stop, Look and Listen' for approaching trains. Additionally there is an audible bell warning system at the level crossing; this will sound when triggered by an approaching train warning users of its presence. This bell alarm can ring for in excess of 2 minutes and it has been observed that users cross over the footpath level crossing when the bell sounds. This footpath level crossing is situated over two lines of track between Maidstone West and East Farleigh stations, with trains travelling in both directions at up to 70mph. The footbridge is located circa 15 yards immediately to the west of the footpath level crossing. The north side provides access to Bower Lane towards Upper Fant Road, which in turn leads to the main A26 road serving Tonbridge. The south side provides access into Wharf Road leading to Lower Tovil. An existing Public Right of Way (PROW) provides access over the railway from both the footpath level crossing and the footbridge.

Project objective

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has an interest in the management of level crossing risk for which Network Rail has responded by showing a commitment to reducing this nationally.

In line with the above, Network Rail as the infrastructure controller are to close the footpath level crossing and remove the existing footbridge, replacing it with a new enhanced/accessible footbridge. There is also a requirement to remove the warning bell system currently associated with the footpath level crossing.

The successful delivery of this work will remove the need for users to come into direct contact with the railway, thus providing an enhanced and safer crossing point and removing the safety risks currently associated with public use of the footpath level crossing.

The implementation of the closest diversionary route available crosses the railway to the north of Maidstone West station and the length of the diversion is approximately 3 km. This is not considered to be acceptable for users.

Figure 1 – Tovil footpath level crossing facing north towards Bower Lane

Figure 2 – Tovil footpath level crossing facing south towards Wharf Road

Figure 3 – Tovil footbridge

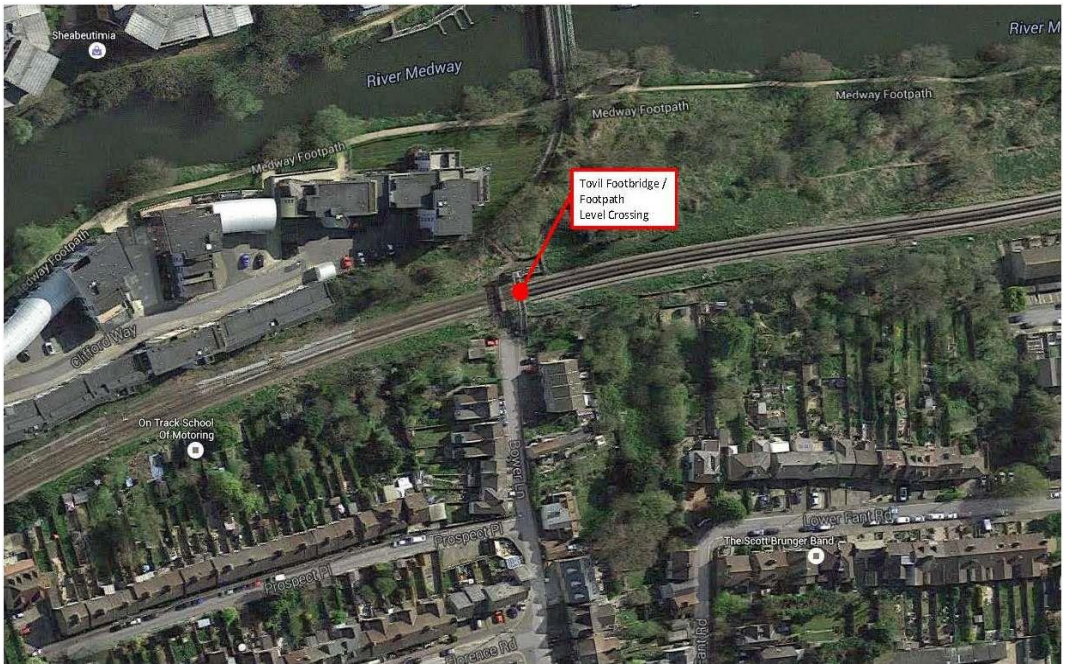

Figure 4 – Google aerial view of the site – Tovil footpath level crossing / footbridge

Q2. Could this work impact on people? If yes, explain how.

The closure of the footpath level crossing, along with the removal of the existing footbridge coupled with the construction of the new accessible footbridge, will provide a safer, secure route for all users crossing over the railway, at this location.

The footpath level crossing currently provides a step-free route over the railway albeit this is slightly uneven. The presence of the metal chicane barriers makes access to this route challenging for users of pushchairs/wheelchairs. Furthermore, the current bell warning system is not compliant with modern day standards and its removal will have a positive impact in terms of eliminating noise pollution. Since January 2013, 2 failures associated with the bell alarm have occurred, for which Network Rail has responded by deploying maintenance personnel to rectify these failures. At present trains pass over the footpath level crossing in both directions at up to 70 mph.

The risks to vulnerable users i.e. wheelchair, deaf/blind/partially sighted, associated with the footpath level crossing are considered to be unacceptable, therefore 'safety' is the main driver for Network Rail seeking to achieve closure. The closure of the footpath level crossing will include the removal of the chicane barriers located on either side approaching the railway. All users will be required to use the new access created on either side of the railway to and from the new accessible footbridge.

The new accessible footbridge is to be located immediately to the east of the existing footbridge. The height of the footbridge is to be 5.1 meters, the span is 14.6 meters with the ramp lengths (including landings) being 102.7 meters with an associated gradient of 1 in 15. Handrails are to be fitted to the ramps. Network Rail is providing the facility to enable the local authority to install lighting on the footbridge. The footbridge is compliant to relevant standards.

During the construction works where possible/practical, access over the existing footpath level crossing and footbridge will remain for users. Where required, the project will provide assistance (marshalling) to users wishing to use the footpath level crossing or if necessary will provide an alternative form of transportation.

The local community are seen to benefit from the construction of the new footbridge which will provide a safer crossing point for all users, including those with a protected characteristic. The proposed footbridge will be fully accessible allowing access over the railway to users who may currently not be able to traverse the stepped footbridge or the footpath level crossing in its current form. The need for users to come into direct contact with the railway will also be removed, thus eliminating the direct risk of user/train interface.

During the construction local residents maybe disrupted in terms of highway congestion and it is recognised that mitigation measures (e.g. noise blankets) will be required to be put in place to minimise the level of noise generated.

Step 2: The Evidence Base

Q3. Summarise what data we have about the diversity of the people potentially impacted by this work and any research on the issues effecting their inclusion.

Diversity search (e.g. local demographics – disability, age etc.)

In order to gain a better insight into the diversity impact and other implication of the proposed work at Tovil (footpath level crossing/footbridge), it is important to examine both the statistical and geographic data available to establish the composition of the population living around the area, including any recommendations for the project team that might have relevance to this DIA.

Demographics:

Table 1 – Fant Ward age distribution statistics

Age	Fant Ward (%)	England (%)
0-4	6.60	5.96
5-7	3.87	3.74
8-9	2.62	2.61
10-14	6.46	6.57
15	1.21	1.27
16-17	1.99	2.51
18-19	1.89	2.40
20-24	7.23	6.01
25-29	10.24	6.9
30-44	25.61	20.6
45-59	16.44	19.4
60-64	4.02	6.0
65-74	5.96	8.6
75-84	3.87	5.5
85 and over	1.32	2.2

Table 1 - Statistics obtained from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) (2011) shows that the population of Fant Ward is predominately between the ages of 30 to 44. This suggests that the local population is likely to be in good health.

As the data presented obtained by the ONS were verified back in 2011, it has been assumed that the age demographic remains similar.

Health and Disability:

The percentage of residents in Fant Ward can be considered in very good health (48.7%), which is considered as being higher than the national average (47.2%). The combined percentages in the area with bad to very bad health are lower than the national average which indicates good health in the area. This information is referenced from the ONS.

Table 2 - Comparison of health in Fant Ward and England, 2011

Health	Fant Ward %	England %
Very Good Health	48.7	47.2
Good Health	35.9	34.2
Fair Health	11.4	13.1
Bad Health	3.2	4.2
Very Bad Health	0.8	1.2

Additional information published by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) indicates that Kent is the fourth least deprived area within the South East. The RNIB indicates that in 2014, the total number of registered blind persons living within the county of Kent was 4,345. A further study into the number of registered blind persons within the area suggests that there is no variance from the national average.

Table 3 - Number of people registered blind, Kent

Total number of people registered blind*	0-4	5-17	18-49	50-64	67-74	75+
4,345	5	85	535	490	375	2,885

*NOTE: Data obtained from the RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool Version 3, 2014.

Further information may be obtained from research@rnib.org.uk

Religion:

Fant Ward is predominately made up of Christians (57.1%) with other religions Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslims, Sikh, with the remaining made up of other religions or not stated.

Table 4 – Religion denomination in Fant Ward and England 2011

Religion	Fant Ward %	England %
Christian	57.1	59.4
Buddhist	0.5	0.5
Hindu	0.8	1.5
Jewish	0.1	0.5
Muslim	1.8	5.0
Sikh	0.3	0.8
Other	0.7	0.4
Not Stated	7.9	7.2

Site Constraints:

The site has a number of constraints in respect of space being available enabling the contractor's ability to construct the new footbridge. The work that can be undertaken without causing disruption to the railway is regarded as being extremely limited.

During the construction of the new footbridge it may be necessary for access over the railway line to be suspended temporarily; this is expected to be for short periods only. During this time users will need to cross the railway line adjacent to Maidstone West station, utilising Clifford Way and Hart Street to the south of the railway line. This route is approximately 900 metres and would take the average person 11 minutes to walk.

Figure 5 – Google aerial view of diversion via Clifford Way

Consider evidence in relation to;

- Disability (including evidence relating to access and inclusive design)
- Age
- Pregnancy/maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Gender reassignment

Step 3: Impact

Q4. Given the evidence listed at step 2, what potentially negative impact could this work have on people who share protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	**Y/N**	**Explain the potential impact**
Disability	Yes	The scheme will create a safer route for persons with restricted mobility through the provision of an enhanced/accessible footbridge.
Age	Yes	As above.
Pregnancy /maternity	Yes	As above.
Race	No	There is no considered negative or differential impact on people with this protected characteristic.
Religion or belief	No	There is no considered negative or differential impact on people with this protected characteristic.
Gender	No	There is no considered negative or differential impact on people with this protected characteristic.
Sexual orientation	No	There is no considered negative or differential impact on people with this protected characteristic.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	No	There is no considered negative or differential impact on people with this protected characteristic.
Gender reassignment	No	There is no considered negative or differential impact on people with this protected characteristic.

Q5.What extra will you do to have a positive impact on diversity and inclusion?

There are a number of additional features which are expected to have a positive impact on diversity and inclusion, which include:

- Removal of the bell warning system including associated noise pollution.
- Installation of enhanced fencing, following the removal of the existing steel spiked fencing and uncontrolled gating. This will create a safer environment.
- A safe, compliant footbridge.

Step 4: Consultation

Q6. How has consultation with those who share a protected characteristic informed your work?	
Who was consulted?	Changes made as a result of consultation
Kent County Council Public Right of Way office	None.
Parish Council	None.

Step 5: Informed Decision-Making

Q7. In light of the assessment above, what is your decision? Please tick and provide a rationale	
Continue the work	Based on the development and desktop studies and considerations of the local area along with the outputs achieved, the project considers itself to be in a position with regards to its measures to adhere to Diversity and Inclusion requirements therefore the project will continue.
Justify and continue the work	N/A.
Change the work	N/A.
Stop the work	N/A.

Step 6: Action Planning

Q8. What actions will be taken to address any potential negative impacts and deliver positive impacts?		
Action	By when	By who
Stakeholder management with local residents along with relevant interested parties/groups. This will involve a public consultation drop in session.		
Confirm the timescales relevant to the installation of lighting on the footbridge by the local authority.		

Step 7: Sign off

Name	**Position**[i]	**Signed**	**Date**

Step 8: Add an action to your plan setting out how you will monitor this DIA

Revision Date:

[i] A DIA should be signed by someone can approve policy, programme or budget changes when required.