

Occold Parish Council 9.2.2015
County Councillor Report

Level Crossings

Network Rail have released a consultation on their plans for 2019 to 2024 – the Anglia Route Study www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/anglia-area-route-study-draft-for-consultation.pdf The consultation ends on 3rd February 2015 and responses should be sent to AngliaRouteStudy@networkrail.co.uk

Prior to the timeframe this Study covers, a number of schemes are expected to be delivered including “safety improvements, particularly involving level crossings” (including closing 500 more level crossings across the country). Within the Study itself the key project affecting us is “Norwich in Ninety”. This project aims to cut journey times between Norwich and London to 90 minutes where they are currently between 104 and 115 minutes. The fear, locally, is that Network Rail will use this opportunity to save money by closing lots of level crossings whether road or footpath.

Closure of any crossings will have a devastating impact locally – villages cut off from each other (how to travel from Mellis to Gislingham for example); footpaths closed with access to the countryside completely limited; not to mention the damage to local businesses and general impact on diversions.

Network Rail is not intending to confirm which crossings will be affected until after the consultation, although it may prove unlikely that road crossings are effected, it is vital we are consulted by Network Rail as soon as possible.

For information on a local group set up to combat this, please see www.suffolkcrossings.co.uk

Broadband Update

I am delighted to report that I have been asked to join a group of councillors, tasked to address the way forward regarding the gaps in the roll out of the Suffolk Better Broadband programme, each councillor that represents divisions that are going to be left not covered by the first phase of the programme is invited.

The first meeting (16th February), will focus on the relationship between, and timescales for, the first and second contracts, the latest position on the 2Mbps Universal Speed Commitment and discuss ideas and options to support communities not covered by the first contract, but within the 2Mbps commitment area. We should also consider communication arrangements, opportunities to win more funding and to support the development of community based solutions.

working together as a group we could make the most of these opportunities and ensure that residents and communities across the county have the right information to make local decisions about broadband provision and that they do not miss out on the development of fast broadband across Suffolk. This issues is extremely pertinent to Thorndon & the outer reaches of Occold, I will report at the next meeting the outcome of this first meeting.

Highways Reporting Tool

The new highways reporting tool is available via the County Council’s website or directly at www.suffolk.gov.uk/report-a-highways-problem This should help to speed up and give clarity to the present arrangements.

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