

From: [REDACTED]
To: [A1 Birtley to Coal House](#)
Subject: A1 Birtley to Coal House Scheme Deadline 1 submission
Date: 03 February 2020 12:19:16
Attachments: [A1 Birtley to Coal House improvement scheme PROWs.pdf](#)

Dear Sir/ Madam

My Reference: 20023044

Please find the attached letter on behalf of Tyne and Wear Joint Local Access Forum expressing our concerns with regards to the diversion of Rights of Way and suggesting a site visit that the Inspector might undertake.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Harrison

On behalf of

Tyne and Wear Joint local Access Forum



My ref:-20023044



Planning Group Co-ordinator
Tyne & Wear Joint Local Access Forum

Email 

03 February 2019

F.A.O. The Examining Authority

Tyne and Wear Joint Local Access Forum
Advice on A1 Birtley to Coal House Improvement Scheme

I am writing on behalf of the Tyne and Wear Joint Local Access Forum. We are a statutory advisory body established under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 and our role is to advise on Public Rights of Way and the wider issue of improving access to and enjoyment of the countryside having regard to *“the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area “ ...”including the flora, fauna, and geological and physiographical features .“*

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Tyne and Wear Joint Local Access Forum. Highways England 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 Forum in carrying out its functions.

In principle we accept the proposals as laid out by Highways England in their D.C.O. We do however, have concerns regarding the delivery of the scheme and in particular the temporary diversions to the Rights of Way.

Approximately 2 miles to the south of this scheme, the A1 crosses a former railway line which is now part of the National Cycle Network (NCN 7). Highways England have introduced a temporary diversion to the cycle route for approximately one year whilst they upgrade and strengthen the A1 overbridge. The diversion of approximately 400 metres takes cyclists and pedestrians from a continuous off-road path onto roadside pavements, with a busy road crossing plus two other road crossings and a litany of other hazards including a rubber mat surface. See the website which includes a public comment page.

<https://a1mvigorailway.commonplace.is/timeline> It is our understanding that Highways England got the go-ahead having made promises on the diversion and were then unable to fulfil these due to the presence of cables just below the surface which they had failed to prepare for. This diversion has introduced

significant safety hazards for users and we know of one road traffic accident involving a cycle and a car that was indirectly caused by it.

Diversions to the rights of way on the A1 Birtley to Coal House scheme must be achieved in a way that is safer for users than at A1 Vigo. We would expect that the diversions of rights of way can be staged, not only with each other so there is no cascading of diversions, but also that any diversion of the rights of way that involves crossing the roads at Junction 66 should not be concurrent with greater traffic flow at that junction due to traffic being diverted off the main A1 carriageway. Highways England's D.C.O. application identifies a number of collisions between vehicles and cyclist at this junction and nearby with the present layout and steps must be taken not to introduce further risk. We would like sliproads to be crossed to be narrowed with Pegasus crossings and appropriate fencing for equestrians. If that is not possible then steps should be taken to slow down and marshal traffic.

We would advise that the Inspector, along with members of the A1 Birtley to Coal House HE team might visit the nearby A1 Vigo Railway bridge scheme to see an example of a poorly executed diversion that must be bettered when doing A1 Birtley to Coal House.

If you would like to discuss the above advice or need more information, please contact me.

As a final point we are required to report on our performance each year to Natural England & DEFRA. Please would you reply to this letter confirming what action will be or has been taken on the advice provided. If none I would be obliged if you would supply reasons.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Harrison

Planning Group Co-ordinator on behalf of
Tyne and Wear Joint Local Access Forum