



Jeremy Quin MP
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Network Rail Southern region
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Dear Jeremy

Parsonage Road Level Crossing, Horsham

Thank you for meeting with me and my team at Parsonage Road Level Crossing on Friday afternoon. I was grateful for the opportunity to discuss the safety improvements at the crossing, as well as to explore how we can reduce the impact of these changes on local road users in Horsham.

As we discussed, the improvements at Parsonage Road (through upgrading the crossing from half-barrier to CCTV-controlled full barrier) have allowed us to significantly reduce the risk it presents to road users – in fact, our risk-score for the crossing has reduced by 18 times as a result of the increased protection offered by the upgraded infrastructure. With the new crossing in place, a signaller in Three Bridges monitors the crossing via CCTV each time the barriers are lowered, to make sure there are no obstructions (such as cars or pedestrians) before the train is allowed to pass. The full barrier closure then prevents any vehicles or pedestrians from accessing the railway once a train has been signalled across the crossing, considerably reducing the risk of a collision.

To allow the crossing to operate in this way, the lowering process begins 'earlier' in a train's journey across this section of track, to make sure the signaller has time to observe the live CCTV footage of the crossing and to stop the train at a red signal if required. While this is much safer, and more appropriate for a built-up area such as Horsham, I appreciate the extended barrier downtime is having an impact on the road itself and on drivers who use Parsonage Road. I'm very sorry for the delays to your constituents' journeys and for the frustration this has caused – and that's why I'm committed to making sure we improve on the situation reported to us immediately after the upgrade.

We will take a number of specific actions to do so:

1. Changes to the infrastructure change the working patterns of our signallers – and it can take some time for a new system such as this to 'bed in' consistently. Our local team are working hard to raise the barriers as much as possible between passing trains, especially where a series of trains traverse the crossing in relatively close succession.
2. In recognition of the impact on local roads, we've introduced a revised set of operating instructions to our signallers to encourage consistency of operation at all times of the day to improve the flow of traffic on Parsonage Road. This includes instructions to delay lowering the barriers until as late as safely possible.

3. By the Spring of next year, we will have finished an extension to platform 2 at Littlehaven station, which means trains will no longer overhang and block Rusper Road when calling there. This will reduce barrier downtime at this crossing and improve traffic flow in the wider area, giving people another alternative viable route across the railway.
4. At certain points in the hour, three trains pass over the crossing in close succession which leads to an extended period of downtime. In conjunction with our train operating company colleagues, we will explore the options to remove this occurrence through a timetable change (with the next opportunity in be May 2023), recognising the impacts this would have on the rest of the route between London and the South coast – particularly the interface with the Brighton Mainline.

I absolutely recognise the crossing downtime was particularly high in the weeks immediately after the upgrade – your constituents and our local team reported incidents where the barriers were lowered for more than 10 minutes at a time. I agree this was excessive, so I'm pleased that we are now no longer seeing closures of a similar or longer duration, thanks to the changes becoming embedded in our ways of working. Indeed, on average, we have significantly reduced the downtime to a maximum to around 2-3 minutes per closure – and local road users should now begin to notice the difference on their journeys.

We will also provide you with data from the barriers on how we have managed to improve on the downtime since installation, to make sure the impact on the community is kept to an absolute minimum.

Once again, thank you for meeting with me in Horsham and if we can be of any further support on this issue – or any other rail-related matters – please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Katie Frost", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Katie Frost

*Route Director – Sussex
Network Rail Southern region*