

Background

This consultation is seeking feedback on the proposed closure of Hospital Level Crossing, which must close on safety grounds prior to the introduction of faster and more frequent passenger trains. The consultation is being undertaken jointly by Northumberland County Council and Network Rail as part of the proposals for the Northumberland Line project.

The closure of the crossing, and potential alternatives for crossing the railway, have been under consideration since 2018. Key activities since 2019 are summarised in the table below:

Date	Action
September and October 2019	Consultation for the wider Northumberland Line project took place.
November and December 2020	
May 2021	An application for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) was made to the Secretary of State. Amongst other matters, this sought authorisation for the closure of the existing level crossing and the diversion of the existing public right of way through a new underpass.
September 2021	A planning application was submitted for a new underpass to replace Hospital Level Crossing.
	Significant objections were received in response to the TWAO and planning applications, with many local residents concerned about anti-social behaviour associated with the proposed underpass.
	In response to these objections, it was agreed that options for Hospital Level Crossing would be revisited before deciding whether to progress with the underpass proposals. This consultation is a key part of that process.

Options being consulting on

The footpath over the level crossing is a public right of way and cannot be permanently closed without obtaining legal powers to do so. There are two ways of doing this.

The crossing is closed with no replacement, so that users need to use alternative routes along existing roads and footpaths. This is known as an **extinguishment**.

The crossing is closed with a new alternative route created, known as a **diversion**. A diversion will require the building of either a bridge over, or an underpass (subway) under the railway.

Based on the work carried out to date, there are four possible options.

1. Closure with no replacement.
2. Stepped footbridge close to existing crossing.
3. Ramped footbridge close to existing crossing.
4. Underpass close to existing crossing.

Our preferred solution is closure with no replacement. This preference considers the views expressed by local residents and other stakeholders at the recent inquiry into the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application and in response to the planning application for an underpass. However, we would like to understand views on all the options before deciding which to pursue.

Questions contained in online survey

1. Do you use Hospital Level Crossing? (those answering 'no' go directly to Q6)
2. If you use Hospital Level Crossing, how frequently do you use it on average?
3. When you use Hospital Level Crossing, what type of journeys are you generally making?
4. When you use Hospital Level Crossing, do any of the below apply?
5. Do you consider yourself to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements (e.g. user of a wheelchair or mobility scooter, difficulty climbing stairs)?
6. To what extent do you support the option to close the existing level crossing, without providing an underpass or bridge at the crossing location, or a bridge at Ashington Station?
 - ✓ Strongly support
 - ✓ Slightly support
 - ✓ Neutral
 - ✓ Slightly oppose
 - ✓ Strongly oppose
 - ✓ Don't know
7. Please use the space below to provide your comments to explain your answer to question 6. Please include reasons for support, any concerns you would have about a such a closure, and whether you consider a diversion needs to be provided.
8. Do you have any comments or suggestions specific to the option to replace the level crossing with an underpass close to the location of the current level crossing?
9. Do you have any comments or suggestions specific to the option to replace the level crossing with a ramped or stepped footbridge close to the location of the current level crossing?
10. Are there any further comments or suggestions you would like to make? Please include anything additional that you think we should consider, to inform our decision.

The Council will be asked to consider and agree a Corporate Response, to questions 6 – 10, as appropriate.

In addition, members are at liberty to respond in full as residents/users of the hospital level crossing, and any future infrastructure.

The consultation closes at 11.59pm on 31 May 2022 and can be accessed using the following link, which has been shared across our media:

<https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/transport/hlx/>