

APPENDIX 10

**Hampshire County Council Engineer comments on
diversion**

10.1 Email from Hampshire County Council Engineer of 30 January 2015:

"Creating a pathway at the foot of the railway embankment may well be a possibility assuming that no material is removed from site.

Any removal of material or driving of significant piles has the potential to make the embankment unstable and it is recommended that this is avoided. It may, however, be feasible to import material that could act as a freestanding footway, or with a small timber restraint, at the bottom of the slope. This would need careful consideration and is likely that the existing network rail fence would need to be moved in order to facilitate this.

It must be noted that this opinion is only based on viewing the site from the level crossing and, therefore, information essential to an informed decision is not known.

In order to be able to provide a more considered opinion access onto the embankment and a geotechnical investigation are essential. Without these a definitive answer cannot be given".

APPENDIX 11

**Document submitted by local resident: 'Buriton Footpath
Crossing – Safety Audit dated 27 March 2007, updated
17 Nov 2014'**

27 March 2007
(updated 17 November 2014)

BURITON FOOTPATH CROSSING - SAFETY AUDIT

Note: this Safety Audit has minor corrections, eg to update increased numbers of scheduled trains; and includes new paragraphs 9A listing incidents of abuse 2008-2014, and 10A concerning visitors to Buriton. Incidents experienced during legitimate use by members of the public are a corner stone of the case for closure of the crossing.

1. *At the Parish Council Meeting on 22 January 2007 you asked me to provide documentary evidence of breaches of public safety on the Buriton Footpath Crossing, in response to paragraph 3 of the HCC (Network Development Officer) letter of 29 November 2006.*

2. *The crossing has always been dangerous for users of the Rec, especially those with children and dogs. It is particularly dangerous for unsupervised teenagers, for it gives them access to the line itself, and to the tunnel. With the advent of new, quiet trains the crossing has become much more dangerous.*

3. Old Trains
Diesel trains and stock were noisy enough to hear half a mile away.

4. New Trains
The new, quiet trains with a more crowded timetable, and Continuous Welded Track, have transformed the level of danger. An average of 132 trains passes the crossing every day. The line speed is 85 mph. Because their approach out of the tunnel is sudden and unexpected, and they are coasting silently downhill, northbound trains present the greater danger: 55 scheduled South West trains a day on weekdays, 49 on Saturdays, 33 on Sundays. The southbound figures are similar: respectively 60, 52 and 33. Many trains are scheduled to pass each other on the track above Buriton, and one may conceal another at the crossing.

5. HSE Guidelines for Footpath Crossing Safety
a. *HSE guidelines state "Warning time of an approaching train should be greater than the time required by the user to traverse the crossing surface". HSE assumes that*
1. *the user traverses at 1.2 m/sec between Decision Points (Stop Look Listen Notices). This gives a crossing time of 11 seconds;*
2. *all trains sound their horns at the whistle boards. HSE inspection has determined that this gives warning times of 17.9 seconds (for northbound trains), and 16.5 seconds (for southbound);*
3. *all trains travel at or at less than 40 mph northbound and 55 mph southbound. **In truth, however, the line speed of 85 mph gives a theoretical and potential warning time of c. 9.6 seconds (between tunnel mouth and crossing) for northbound trains.***
b. *The crossing meets HSE guidelines **if and only if all trains sound their horns at and not after the whistle boards.** In practice **some trains sound their horns late, and a significant percentage (perhaps 15%) do not sound their horns at all.** The possibility of human error can therefore never be eliminated, and serious, repeated breaches of public safety happen on a continuing, frequent and daily basis.*
c. *In addition, HSE guidelines do not consider whether*
1. *the user is, for example, a child, disabled, or encumbered by children, bikes, dogs, pushchairs, or other people;*
2. *the user is using the crossing for a purpose other than legitimate crossing.*
In both of these cases, even if the horn is sounded at the whistleboard, the crossing is dangerous. The Angmering fatality (3 January 2007) happened at a similar footpath level crossing.

6. Visibility of Northbound Trains

In every circumstance a driver sighting obstruction ahead on the crossing cannot stop the train in time. At the northern Decision Point (at the top of the steps on the Buriton side) the tunnel mouth is just visible. If you **see** a train emerging there is time to cross the further track with 7 seconds to spare **providing it is travelling at 40 mph**. But you cannot **hear** a train approaching if there is noise from the A3 or from rustling leaves, until the train is about 5 seconds away. At the southern Decision Point visibility of the tunnel mouth is obscured by an electricity sub-station and by the 85 (mph) notice until a train is about 100 metres or 4 seconds from the crossing.

7. Proximity of Young People

Evidence of young people, drink and perhaps drugs is strewn around the north gate at the bottom of the steps leading up to the crossing. It is a secluded meeting place, with access to and from the woods. The owners of the Old Rectory report "beer cans are lobbed into our paddock every day", and discarded lighters and scraps of silver paper suggest other activity.

8. Additional dangers of unimpeded access to the line and tunnel

Network Rail confirms that the Buriton crossing is the only remaining crossing of the main Portsmouth line between Petersfield Station and Rowlands Castle. It has attracted 3 suicides. Clearly, the tunnel is a potential and easy target for terrorism

9. Incidents Reported by Network Rail (1996-2006) - Misuse

The Network Rail safety database for the last 10 years shows (7 Feb 2007) various events at the Buriton crossing (BFC):

<u>Date</u>	<u>Detail of Event/Trespass</u>
21 Aug 1996	Near miss with 3 children playing chicken on the crossing
21 Oct 1998	Vandalism – BTP reported damaged fence by kissing gate at BFC on playing field side
24 Apr 1999	Trespass – Field Manager attended BFC after report of person trespassing
30 May 2000	Near miss with child lying on track at BFC. Driver unable to continue
11 Aug 2000	Driver reported children trespassing at BFC
13 July 2001	3 kids Portsmouth end of Buriton tunnel, walking towards it
13 May 2003	2 youths Portsmouth end of tunnel. Both then found in recess in tunnel and arrested by BTP
18 Feb 2005	Youths on line Portsmouth end of tunnel
3 May 2006	2 people walking line Portsmouth side of tunnel
14 May 2006	Youths throwing stones from crossing.

Network Rail commented "Reporting of these incidents (by drivers) rarely matches the number of times incidents occur. The majority of footpath crossings get no abuse whatsoever. A select few, including Buriton, will have isolated incidents which may be an indication of other, non-reported events. At the end of the day, all it takes is either a careless or distracted person at the wrong time at the crossing to cause an accident".

9A. Incidents Reported by Network Rail (2008-2014) - Misuse

A list of incidents amalgamated from the NR Transparency Team and from the NR crossing closure application (at 16 Nov 2014) shows continuing misuse at Buriton

DATE	TRAIN DRIVER REPORTED INCIDENTS IN LAST 10 YEARS FROM NR TRANSPARENCY TEAM	TRAIN DRIVER REPORTED INCIDENTS FROM NR CROSSING CLOSURE APPLICATION
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21/8/14	Man flashing at passing trains	
4/10/13	3-4 children shining lights at passing trains	
26/6/13	Children throwing stones at passing trains	Children throwing stones at trains
29/7/12	Children playing at crossing, driver applied emergency brake	A child lying on the crossing – driver applied emergency brake, and stopped the train. Driver badly shaken and unable to continue.
26/6/10	Trespass – naked man	Numerous instances of adults and children trespassing (where people use the crossing to access the track), including the Transport Police making arrests and individuals entering the tunnel.
23/9/08	Trespassers walking from crossing to tunnel	
5/5/08	Hikers walking towards tunnel	
		A near miss with children playing chicken on the crossing.
30/4/10	Puppy injured	

10. Incidents reported by Villagers – Legitimate Users

To form an accurate overview of the great potential danger of the crossing, the Network Rail safety data base must be seen in the context of additional, more frightening incidents experienced in the space of about 3 years by legitimate users of the crossing. These incidents were **not** reported to Network Rail. Statements (dated Feb/Mar 2007) by villagers are attached verbatim. They deserve to be read in full. Together they sharply expose the danger of the crossing, and discredit the disingenuous view that there has never been an incident. Although they do not provide accurate dates, they are a snapshot of what has happened and what continues to happen under our noses. They support and amplify some but not all of the incidents reported by Network Rail.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Statement</u>
Trespass in tunnel*	6, 12, 13
Playing on crossing	2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15
Lying on crossing	6
Dare/Chicken	4, 10, 12, 15
Stone throwing	2, 6
Foot caught in line	(1), 5, (7)
Electrocution of dogs	(5), 8, 15, 17
Suicides**	10
Unsupervised access by children	1, 3, 11
Improvident adults	10
Trespass on line	1, 10

* A father in Buriton undertook to state, but has not yet done so, that he used to go into the tunnel as a teenager, and that his teenage son still does so.

** There have been 2, perhaps 3 other suicides in recent years: a man in c.1945; a woman from Sumner or Glebe Road in c.1981; and a man or woman in c.1991, seemingly distinct from the man, perhaps in c.1997, in Statement 10.

10A. Incidents unreported by Visitors – Legitimate Users

A large majority of users of the crossing are visitors. A covert survey over 16 hours of a Half Term weekend (26-29 October 2006) showed limited use, except on Sunday afternoon, when none of the 22 adults, youths and children who crossed were villagers.

One group was heard to say "I wonder where this path leads to?"; another "No need to touch the live rail – the footpath goes into these woods". Many were simply curious, or casual strollers from the Recreation Ground, and some had dogs. A group of 4 youths crossed with mountain bikes, a

fifth stopped while a southbound train passed, and a man went back for him, saying he was worried about another train coming.

This level and type of pedestrian traffic is typical. It is certain that many visitors, if not most, have little or no idea of the existence, let alone dangers of the railway line, and levels of confusion are high.

Although a few walkers have mentioned concern about the crossing on arrival at The Five Bells, incidents experienced by visitors of necessity leave with them, unrecorded when they depart, unknown and impossible to collate.

In February 2014, a horse was led down from Bridleway 4 (Hangers Way) and on to the crossing. Unable to descend the northern steps, it was led back again.

11. Concern over safety of the Rec

Until the 1970s the Rec extended only as far as the tennis courts, which were grazed by cows, and the footpath ran for a hundred yards between fences up to the crossing gate. For some of those who "believe that trying to close the Buriton foot crossing is a mistake" the Rec was then much safer than it is now.

But times have changed. Aware of the Headteachers' concerns (summarised at Statement 16) over the safety of the Rec, the PC voted to "try and close the footpath" (PC Minutes of 26 September 2005). Among members of the public present at the meeting there was no doubt about this vote.

It is confirmed in a letter written the following day to the Parish Magazine (Autumn 2005, page 17): "... A letter was received by the Chairman in July which was not read out, but we understand it was about children's safety. After a short discussion parish councillors noted in favour of closing the (foot)path over the railway. The Chairman used his casting vote".

The Parish Council took no action to follow up its vote.

Concern over the safety of the Rec is repeated in the attached statements of several villagers (1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15). The responsibility of decision makers is implied in most of the statements, and explicitly in statements 5 and 12.

12. Retention of the Crossing

Well-meaning arguments in favour of retaining the crossing are in denial, or fail to comprehend the safety issue. In particular, the naïve view of "parental control", and "responsible parents", a view championed by Parish Councillors without children, ignores peer pressures and the curiosity and thrill-seeking natural in young people, and betrays children and young teenagers, whose parents may be at work, who go to the Rec or the woods to play, especially during half term and school holidays, and who are attracted to the line and tunnel as a challenge. Statements from villagers make it clear that the very existence of the crossing is for many the gateway to an adventure playground.

13. Closure and Diversion

- *Network Rail advises that the cost of a footbridge, even if permitted, would exceed £1M. Given the relatively low levels of pedestrian usage, and the proximity of South Lane (already carrying Hangers/Shipwrights' Way), Network Rail would not contribute to the cost.*

- *The Ramblers Association (24 November 2006) would support a proposal to close the crossing and divert the footpath to South Lane, "as it removes a dangerous crossing on the busy main line to Portsmouth. In the time that has passed (since May 2000), with the introduction of new rolling stock, the crossing has become more dangerous".*

- The Open Spaces Society writes (2 February 2007) "we would have no overriding objection to a diversion of Buriton footpath 3 alongside the railway to link with Bridleway 4" (South Lane)
- Network Rail confirms that, if the crossing is closed, the whistle boards will be removed. This may satisfy "local Conservatives", who seem to be concerned with noise rather than safety, and "intend to get the noise problem solved permanently". If the crossing is not closed, it is imperative that all trains sound their horns at high volume at the whistleboards.

14. Summary

- There is documented, on-going evidence of serious, repeated breaches of public safety, and of imminent danger to the public
- The danger of the crossing has been sharply increased by the introduction of quiet trains with a more crowded timetable
- Human error by drivers renders the crossing dangerous, potentially lethal to the public at all times
- Legitimate users of the crossing, who can slip or panic if encumbered, have, with trains coming out of the tunnel, a margin of 7 seconds between life and death; but only if trains travel at 40 mph
- There is serious and continuing misuse of the crossing by teenagers attracted from the Rec to play chicken/dare, lie on the crossing, throw stones at trains, flatten coins on the line, and trespass in the tunnel
- There is misuse by adults.
- The crossing attracts suicides, and, potentially, gives access for terrorism in the tunnel.
- The safety case for closure of the crossing is robust, and urgent.

Tim Mitford

STATEMENTS (to whom it may concern) BY VILLAGERS

Statement 1: Malcolm and Lynne Ashcroft, 17 Kiln Lane

"I would like to raise my concern about the continuing operation of an open crossing in the middle of the village of Buriton. This crossing is situated in a public playing field and in very close proximity to the village hall, local tennis courts, football and cricket fields and more worryingly the village school. This crossing has been a cause of concern for some time, due to some misguided members of the public, who seem to think keeping this footpath open across a major main line train link is more important than the safety of our children, dogs and general public.

There have been a number of occasions through the last two years when I have seen the gates broken and the access open to any person and/or animal to a live rail link. The crossing itself like all wooden structures will become slippery during wet weather and there have been occasions when people have fallen on this crossing. Obviously no major event has resulted; otherwise this crossing would be closed by now.

I have witnessed in the last two years people strolling down the track from this access point to pick fruit, and this whilst trains continue to run. I have also seen a young boy of no more than seven or eight push this gate open, and start up the steps to the track, only luckily to be caught by an adult just short of the line.

I cannot in all reasonableness understand why the British public must always wait for a major incident to happen before sensible action is taken. Waiting for someone to die on this crossing is a senseless and unnecessary act for the railways. The public access to the woods and walks are already serviced by two routes from Buriton, one at the bottom of the village by the duck pond, and one from Kiln Lane. I would urgently join with the other protests from the village and encourage the railways to make the right decision before its too late and for the good of all."

Statement 2: Peter and Chris Black, Dairy Cottage, Manor House

"We are the parents of three children living in Buriton and are very concerned about the safety of the railway crossing behind the recreation ground. The fact is that it is so close to an area of play adds to the danger.

We would specifically like to draw your attention to two incidents. First, when we had snow recently, there were two boys of around 12 years old with their bicycles within the crossing itself. As we walked past they were clearly just hanging around. They got out of the way when a train approached before casually lobbing a snowball or two as it passed. They were probably old enough to understand the dangers but there were several younger children on the rec at the time who may have seen the incident and may not be as aware of the dangers.

Recently a man in his twenties, who grew up in the village recounted how he and friends would put pennies on the line to see what happened to them as the trains ran over them. We would stress that he is a perfectly upstanding member of the community but was curious as all boys are as they grow up.

We understand that there is a growing feeling of concern in the village, and would stress that the time to act is now before a disaster occurs, rather than wait until it is too late. The ease of access to the railway at this point, with no supervision seems an unnecessary risk. We would like to see the crossing closed.

There are other ways of getting up the hill already and if there is opposition to closure on access grounds every effort should be made to find a solution, but in our view the issue of safety must come first."

Statement 3: Olivia Burnett-Armstrong, 39 North Lane

"I would like to register my support for closing the railway crossing between the recreation ground in Buriton and Buriton Woods. I have held several children's parties at the fantastic village hall sited on the recreation ground, but have always found the proximity of the crossing a worry when in charge of young children.

On one such occasion a three year old was seen heading for the railway line, the consequence of him reaching it could have been fatal with such easy access to the track as there is now. I have asked my eight and ten year old daughters their view on this crossing. Their response was "It is so scary, I never want to cross the railway line there". It is also a hazard when dog-walking in the woods, as the dogs could easily wander onto the track if the gate was left open".

Statement 4: Alan Catchpole, 11 Avon Close, Petersfield

"I am the Tree Warden for the parish of Buriton. Whilst inspecting some trees in the recreation ground which adjoins the railway line my attention was drawn to the sound of children laughing excitedly in the direction of the railway lines. On investigation I saw two children aged approx. 10 years standing on one side of the electrified line where the public footpath crosses it. They were shouting at another younger boy who was hiding on the opposite side. I think they were playing dare. After talking to them they all went away. I eventually reported this to the Chairperson of the Parish Council, who, I think, informed the Railway Police. This event took place about 6 years ago"

Statement 5: Rob and Kath Connolly, 12 Kiln Lane

"Following a discussion with one of our friends in the village we understand that you are collecting evidence in support of a footbridge or similar for the right of way across the railway line at the crossing in the corner of the recreation ground.

Here are 2 particular incidents that might be worth noting in support of any proposal to have a bridge-type public footpath over the railway line. It is clear to us that at some point there will be an accident.

In the summer of 2005, we went for a village walk before Sunday lunch with my brother and his 3 young children – as usual from our house this was across the 'rec', up and over the railway crossing and then a ramble through the woods. It was wet, and as we attempted to cross the railway with 5 children, from 14 down to 2 years old, my 4 year old niece slipped on the wooden boards and got her foot caught between a rail and a wooden lathe. She screamed out. Naturally my first thought was about a possible train coming with the tunnel so close, luckily we quickly managed to free her actual foot but not her small pink 'welly' which remained wedged and stuck – this created a panic, but when the children were safely behind the gate we did manage to go back and free it. There was a natural shudder when we all imagined what consequences there could have been.

What is clear is that any child of 11 or so who is strong enough to open the gate can get up the steps and wander down the line ... having no real idea of what a potentially dangerous and life threatening position they are in.

In the village, we are also aware that teenagers occasionally 'play' on the railway line, and that there are many village events (car boot sales, fetes, fireworks, etc) where children can easily run or walk off while their parents are distracted, whilst at the same time having an expectation of them being safe because it is a 'recreation' area.

Surely the best option would be a diversion of the crossing so that the railway line can be avoided.

A second incident, observed at the beginning of autumn, was seeing a young dog who had obviously slipped its leash, 10 yards from the crossing between the rails, with an increasingly frantic owner calling it back whilst anxiously looking at the traffic lights for a train. Indeed the trains would not need to sound their horns so loudly if it wasn't a real health and safety issue here. We think you will agree that a more effective, better and safer crossing is essential. We hope and trust that you will treat this matter with the degree of gravity it deserves."

See also Statement 5A below.

Statement 6: Nicola Cook, Sumner Road

"An incident occurred in the year 2000 that involved my Son. The incident was so serious that I informed the Transport Police and reported my son and his two friends.

On the day in question, my Son and his two friends were laying (sic) on the crossing and waiting for the trains to appear out of the tunnel, they then waited until the last possible moment before running to the other side. The last time they did this the train driver thought he had hit one of them, he stopped the train, and was seriously traumatised, and he was convinced that he had indeed hit someone. I watched a report of this on Meridian News, and questioned my son who admitted that he was one of them, together with two girls who were older than him. He also informed me that it was not the first time they had done this.

I have also witnessed myself, other children throwing stones at the trains and running through the tunnel. I used to do similar things myself when I was a child, as did all my friends, despite being forbidden from going near the crossing by my parents.

There is no good reason for needing a crossing on that part of the track; there are other ways of getting into the woods. I strongly believe that there will be a serious accident or even a fatality on the crossing if it is not closed"

Statement 7: Caroline Cuthbertson and Andrew Gill, 4 Sumner Road

"We would like to express our concerns regarding the railway crossing at Buriton recreation ground. Having lived in Buriton for fifteen years, we have walked in the surrounding woods with our children and dogs on a daily basis. We have always felt that the crossing is an unnecessary hazard. Although we appreciate that this is an old footpath, the speed and silence of modern trains surely mean that this is no longer a safe route into the woods.

We have seen groups of children struggling across with their bikes, a friend of ours tripped and hurt her ankle while walking across with her pushchair, and we have heard many stories of children playing on or near the crossing. Twice within the space of a week last summer we found the gate on the wood side wedged open, causing a hazard to children, dogs and anyone else walking in the woods who was unaware of an opening onto the railway.

As parents of young children and regular users of the recreation ground and surrounding area, we feel it is time the crossing was closed before tragedy occurs."

Statement 8: Liz and Norman Davies, 11 Heatherfield

"I write to indicate that whilst playing tennis on the Buriton recreation ground I have observed children playing unsupervised on the crossing at Buriton tunnel. Some twenty years ago we lost our first dog by electrocution on the railway line near to the Buriton tunnel crossing. She was never one to obey commands to come to heel! A free spirit!"

Statement 9: Robin and Jennie Harvey, 54 Bones Lane

"We have been concerned over the use of Buriton Recreation ground railway crossing. Whilst appreciating the length of time that the crossing has been in existence, the trains are now very much faster and quieter.

Our son was at a scout and cub camp at the recreation ground last year, and our concern was the proximity of the crossing and that access is very easy for boys who are naturally inquisitive and are in the habit of a dare. Boys being boys, despite adult and parental advice, will naturally be drawn towards something which is out of bounds.

We feel very strongly that as there are other alternative routes, ie Kiln Lane and South Lane, the crossing has become obsolete used only by those who would like to keep up a tradition. We are great followers of the right to keep public paths open, but with the safety of our children at stake it seems imperative that the closure of the crossing should be given every consideration.

Several incidents have been related to and experienced by ourselves that this matter should be taken seriously. Does it need a fatality over and above tradition to make an effective decision to close the crossing?"

Statement 10: Famie Hoddle, Limeworks Cottages, Kiln Lane

"I write in support of any representations that the Parish Council undertakes to make to the relevant authorities in support of the closure of this unsafe crossing and the consequential diversion of the footpath to the underpass at Toads Alley, or via the road under the bridge at Kiln Lane.

I live and work on the piece of land overlooking the recreation ground bordered by the main London to Portsmouth line, the footpath to the pedestrian Crossing and Kiln Lane.

As a consequence I have been witness to some of the disturbing events and their consequences on the railway line over the last twenty years. The most distressing of these was the apparent suicide in the railway tunnel, several years ago of a man who was seen accessing the railway land via our land and the crossing.

Young teenagers and children often use the crossing gates to gain access to the line. I am aware that local children (some now adult) have played "chicken" with the trains in motion, and have planted coins and other debris on the rails so that they can watch the sometimes spectacular effects from the live rail.

Parents and adults with children and toddlers using the crossing as access to the railway line seem unaware that within feet of the boardwalk the rails are permanently electrified and that

contact with the live rail can kill instantly. Some seem to think that the red and green signal lights are for the benefit of the pedestrians, and not the train drivers, and are not aware that trains can appear from both directions, sometimes simultaneously.

Parties accessing the crossing increase dramatically during the school holiday periods and bank holidays, when visitors to the recreation ground are most numerous.

During a car boot sale last year I came across a father with his toddler son picnicking at the top of the staircase adjacent to the boardwalk over the line. The child was playing between the picnic spot and the crossing point, next to the line.

The trains, due to the recent improvement works on the line and replacement rolling stock are significantly quieter and faster. The only significant audible warning is from the train horns. These are clearly activated manually, and the time is allowed for people to evacuate the line varies.

Signage is by any standards inadequate, and the dangers are not clearly explained. Children sometimes cannot see, read or understand the boards. The gate at the forest end of the footpath to the railway line is often left wedged open, either by woodland debris which falls to the bottom of the slope, or more often by people bringing parties of children, dogs, bicycles and pushchairs to the crossing. This allows unrestricted, open access to the line for the next party.

There are two alternative safe crossings each within 50 yards of the existing crossing leading from the children's playground.

I am not in favour of losing, or diverting ancient (or more recent) rights of way. However, unless and until the crossing can be made safe, failure to take action to ensure the safety of its occupants and visitors and to avoid further tragedy will be the responsibility of this community."

Statement 11: Simon Horlock, Assistant Cub Scout Leader, 1st Petersfield Scout Group, 6 Heatherfield

"In May of 2006 the 1st Petersfield Scout Group organised a District Cub Scout Camp using the recreation Ground in Buriton.

During the reconnoitre of the campsite the railway line and crossing was identified as a significant risk to the children who would be in our care during the event. To negate this risk, it was decided to rope off the footpath and entrance to the railway line from the main area of the campsite, and also introduce the rule that any child found to have passed on beyond the rope would be immediately sent home from the camp. This was explained to both the boys and the parents.

There were no incidents recorded concerning the railway line during the course of the weekend camp, the measure was deemed to be effective. Further camps are planned at the same location and the same measure will be employed again to ensure our duty of care".

Statement 12: Carl Styles, 16 High Street

"My name is Carl Styles and I believe the rail crossing to be dangerous. I am 26 years of age, and have lived in the village all of my life. As a child I spent many hours playing on the rail line, even playing chicken with the trains. I have a baby of 6 months now and I would be mortified to find out that my daughter had been playing on or around the tracks the way that I used to".

Statement 13: Clive Thornton, 1125 Drift Road, Clanfield

"I was born and brought up in Buriton, and used to go up to the railway line with my mates during the holidays. We were all about 12 or 13, and this was at the beginning of the 1980s. We used to go in a gang of about 5 or 6, boys and girls, up the steps to the crossing, and along the track into the tunnel. But we never got more than half way through it, we were too scared. We used to go any day, between around 10 am and 3pm,

I suppose because the crossing was there, and we used it to get on to the track, not to go into the woods. Sometimes we put pennies on the line. This is what young people do.

None of it seemed dangerous at the time, because the trains were diesels and we could hear them coming, and there were not very many. No-one got hurt. But now there are far more trains, and they are faster and very quiet. This makes the line very dangerous, and as a parent now I think the crossing should be closed as a matter of urgency to remove temptation and prevent danger to the public. Most people going up to the woods use the South Lane tunnel anyway"

Statement 14: Juliet and Alastair Timms, 27 High Street

"My wife and I live in Buriton with our five children, three of whom attend the village school. We are deeply concerned by the very existence of a foot path crossing on the main railway line.

Although there are many nuisance issues that the crossing generates (litter, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, fires in the woods) the overwhelming concern is safety.

Children of all backgrounds and education behave impulsively and without thought or reference to rules or advice. It is our job as parents to guide them, but they will show child-like characteristics. They will run across the crossing. They will dare each other. One mistake and this debate will become a different one.

We acknowledge and respect the tradition of history and environment, but believe that a detour of a few hundred yards either way to ensure safety is of little or no real consequence. We would wholeheartedly support closure of the crossing. Any decision should be based on avoidable tragedy and we believe this is one waiting to happen.

Finally, if the crossing is not closed, the position of the decision makers in the event of a tragedy will prove to be indefensible in every sense".

Statement 15: Lady Vincent, ex Whistlers, South Lane

"I write in reference to this extremely dangerous and unnecessary footpath crossing at Buriton. I have three sons, now in their twenties, all of whom, between the ages of 7 and 11 at the time, admit to playing on the railway line at this crossing, for which direct access lies at the top end of the Recreation Ground, by a gate which is usually left propped open.

Had I known that my children were 'playing dare' and 'chicken' on this crossing, I would have been horrified, and would never have let them play freely on the Recreation Ground. I thought they were playing football with their friends, but all too often their favourite pursuit was to put pennies on the line and wait for the oncoming train to squash them. The last one to place a penny was the winner, especially if the approaching train was almost upon them. The possible consequences of this type of game are too horrific to contemplate. Another was to run across the line just before a train approached. What if one of them had tripped?

I understand this crossing is still a source of fascination for the young, who are very easily led into danger by daring each other into more and more foolhardy feats. A recreation ground where children collect and play is the worst possible place to site an open railway crossing! It should have been closed years ago, when the Lime Workers stopped using it.

A few months ago, my middle son was walking our dog on the recreation ground, who suddenly bolted through the open gate onto the railway track, yelped in pain, but luckily did not receive a strong enough shock to kill him. Had my dog been electrocuted, and my son tried to free him, he would have been electrocuted too. It just goes to show that it is not just children who are in danger but pets and adults too, especially as the gate is almost always left open.

I would urge you to consider closing this footpath crossing. It serves no purpose other than to be a danger to the public, and the footpath is safely accessible from South Lane a couple of hundred yards away under a proper railway bridge."

Statement 16; The former Headteacher, Mike Bainbridge, wrote to the Parish Council (15 July 2005)

"While understanding and appreciating the views of all parties, from a Headteacher perspective with the safety and well-being of all children who attend our school, I do have grave concerns about children accessing this crossing.

Parents I've broached with the subject, particularly parents with children who live in the village have used the phrase "an accident waiting to happen". I do intend to talk with children and parents in September to formally seek their views, but parents and staff have suggested closing the crossing as soon as possible whilst a solution is reached.

Finally, from a Headteacher perspective, the impact of a fatality of a child on the crossing would be devastating for the whole community, and I've no doubt it would lead to an immediate closure"

LATER STATEMENTS (after submission of this Audit)

Statement 5A: Rob and Kath Connolly, 12 Kiln Lane

"The second incident was 6 weeks ago (October 2010) when we embarked on a short village walk with 2 people in their late 70s. On crossing the railway, my mother's partner, a man of some 14 stones in weight, slipped in the wet and fell on to the crossing, bruising his hand on the steel rail. Again panic ensued as we all thought about the consequences of a train coming. Our concern was exacerbated as he slipped again as we tried to help him to his feet.

I am concerned that there will be an accident here, and therefore fully support any diversion of the footpath across the railway to a safer route"

Statement 17. Janet Askew, Whistlers

"On Christmas Day (2009) my daughter pulled a pet dog dead off the live rail and only her Wellingtons saved her life.

This happened on a similar crossing for real in May (2009). A lady's dog pulled her on to the line and into the path of a train. The driver saw her and applied his brakes, but the train struck and killed her instantly. An accident had probably never happened there either.

The Buriton crossing is much more dangerous. Train drivers leaving the tunnel can see nothing in the distance: they have only 16 seconds before they reach the crossing."

Submitted 24 January 2015:

Additional Statement 17A to Safety Audit submitted to Buriton Parish Council 27 March 2007 (updated 17 November 2014)

Statement 17A. Ruth Askew, Whistlers (16 Jan 2015)

"My name is Ruth Askew.

In unfamiliar surroundings at the time, my two young daughters had a very narrow escape at the crossing on Christmas Day 2009. My own life was also endangered in preventing that disaster.

Their dog broke free and chased a pheasant towards the underpass bridge, and was killed about five foot from the underpass bridge brickwork. The two little girls, aged 13 and 15, had careered down the lines towards the tunnel, attempting to retrieve the pulsating body of their runaway dog,

believing it still to be alive. I stopped Ayla from running ahead of me. Esme was on the ground crying, not what a young child wishes to see. The dog was of course electrocuted and across the live rails. Only my own frantic shouts saved the girls from the same fate.

I was wearing wellies – I had only just bought them and thankfully they were heavy-duty workman types, only because I was fed up with the horses standing on my toes! I pulled the dog off the electric line, and we buried it my parents' garden.

No train was involved. Had one appeared from the tunnel, the outcome would have been even more horrific. The danger from trains is beyond doubt. Yet, my experience shows that danger is ever present, with or without trains. The crossing may be lethal as a platform, it is also the gateway to other dangers, particularly for the unfamiliar.

Having now moved to Buriton, I know the circumstances of the crossing well. It has no unique purpose, leads to nowhere in particular. It is not used other than as a novelty, some dog-walking and human dogma. No harm, save that the crossing attracts children, they get up to mischief. Even a modicum of pedestrian traffic would serve to limit this. But there is none. This leaves the crossing as an unsupervised playground within secluded woodland. In deference to this the PC now proposes to relocate the official recreation playground to the crossing corner, a neat solution if you're "nuts" - a distinct possibility.

Many child-related incidents have been reported. A bomb comprising 18 butane canisters was detonated on the south ramp. Dad still has some bits – his authority view: "Boys will be boys"