

Members' Library Service Request Form

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Originator	P Forsyth
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Document Title	Markle Level Crossing closure and provision of alternative road alignment

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For Publication

Additional information:

Report necessary to formally add development roads to the list of public roads for maintenance purposes

Authorised By	Tom Reid
Designation	Head of Infrastructure
Date	08/09/21

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- 3.12 For the moment Transport Scotland have paused the level crossing upgrade at GRIP4 (Governance for Rail investment Projects Single option development) prior to detailed design, however there remains a recognition that both projects must exist concurrently until such time confirmation the road realignment land assembly can be verified. Early considerations of land requirements and dialogue with landowners has identified a potential corridor within which a new road and bridge crossing of the East Coast Main Line could be provided. This is further detailed in Appendix A Land corridor. Work is now progressing with the landowner to confirm purchase. Agreement in principle has been reached but detailed negotiations must be confirmed timeously to avoid breaching a back stop date March 2023. Funding to support the purchase of the land is being made available by Transport Scotland with ownership transferring to East Lothian Council upon completion of missives. Should negotiations with the landowners not prove practicable, the alternative arrangements in place by Network Rail to upgrade the level crossing will become the fall-back position.
- 3.13 The road will be formally adopted by the Council on completion with the road bridge over the East coast main line, adopted by Network Rail for maintenance purposes. At this time the estimate additional length to the network will be 1km.
- 3.14 Due to the level of road/rail interface, rail electrification and property set back at Markle steading, a replacement bridge cannot be built on the existing road alignment.
- 3.15 The proposed new road alignment corridor is approximately 130-140 metres wide to the south of the settlement of Markle between the horse paddock adjacent to Cherrytree Cottage and Markle Fisheries.
- 3.16 The preliminary proposals for the replacement crossing include:
 - a new 6 metre wide road bypassing Markle to the south
 - a new bridge located above the railway cutting which would reduce the height of the structure above ground level
 - vehicular access to Markle Steading maintained via the existing road network
 - existing road stopped up at the level crossing entry gates and road over level crossing removed
 - an upgraded access road to Markle fisheries
 - the existing right of way from Dunder Drive to Markle Steading maintained
 - tree planting to the west of the new bridge to reduce the visual impact
 - sustainable drainage systems to the west of the new bridge
- 3.17 To expedite matters the Council has engaged Balfour Beatty through the SCAPE Civil Engineering and Infrastructure framework to progress delivery through a design and build contract arrangement. A high level construction feasibility report carried out by the contractor has defined a cost estimate and projected project spend, value for money assessment, a tender programme

providing clarity and confidence of construction methodology and delivery timescales.

- 3.18 A detailed programme of works has provided an estimated construction duration of 311 days, and indicative project cost of £7.4m. This feasibility report is a non-contractual assessment of the project, which does not include: a biodiversity net gain assessment, social impact action plan, supply chain analysis, project risk assessment, and detailed construct commentary. The feasibility report has made certain assumptions which will be designed out as the project moves to outline design and detailed design accordingly.
- 3.19 Following East Lothian Council's climate change declaration, the project will look to lock in through the design process and construction methodology appropriate carbon emission mitigation to use local materials, plant and services (SME), borrow pits, diverting waste from landfill, as part of a social value action plan and provide ecological diversity through tree planting, hedges, and SuDS. This will also include social and economic benefits with journey time savings, reduced private and agricultural vehicle emissions, and improved line speed over the longer term, to mitigate the impact of construction activity.
- 3.20 Recommended advance works and activities involve no risk designer appointment, ground investigation, topographical surveys, archaeological investigation and Network Rail workshops that will progress over the next few weeks.
- 3.21 Key interactions with stakeholders and the community are fundamental to prompt delivery in particular community engagement to understand the level of public acceptability. To understand the level of public acceptability, Road Services ran a public consultation via East Lothian Council consultation hub on line between 7 July - 31 July 2021. In general, 80% of 92 responses received were in favour of the proposal to replace Markle level with a new road and bridge. 15% of those surveys either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A summary of the Markle Level Crossing Replacement Consultation is contained in Appendix B.
- 3.22 Considering the level of support and balance the views from the community and cooperation with the landowner, agreement has been reached with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to accelerate further technical evaluation, land purchase, design and programme enhancement to enable construction to commence early 2022.
- 3.23 East Lothian Council will lead the procurement of design and construction services, with full funding for all internal project management costs, external design and construction cost, including all ancillary technical impact assessments, planning permission and associated Network Rail costs borne by Transport Scotland who is the project funder.
- 3.24 East Lothian will oversee and compliment the interaction between designer

and Network Rail implementing all necessary statutory agreements, asset protection and direct service agreements.

- 3.25 To manage risk, a monthly progress and spend reporting mechanism will be agreed between parties and an internal governance arrangement to forecast spend and cost recovery.
- 3.26 Head of Terms are currently being finalised and a Minute of Agreement will be prepared between parties to formalise the arrangement, responsibilities and legally binding provisions to safeguard the Council from non-delivery risk.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The consultation response is in line with the core objectives set out in the approved East Lothian Council Plan 2017-2022 and the intent, themes and outcomes as set out in the East Lothian Plan 2017 – 2027.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.2 The subject of this report does affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy. An integrated impact assessment will be undertaken in due course.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

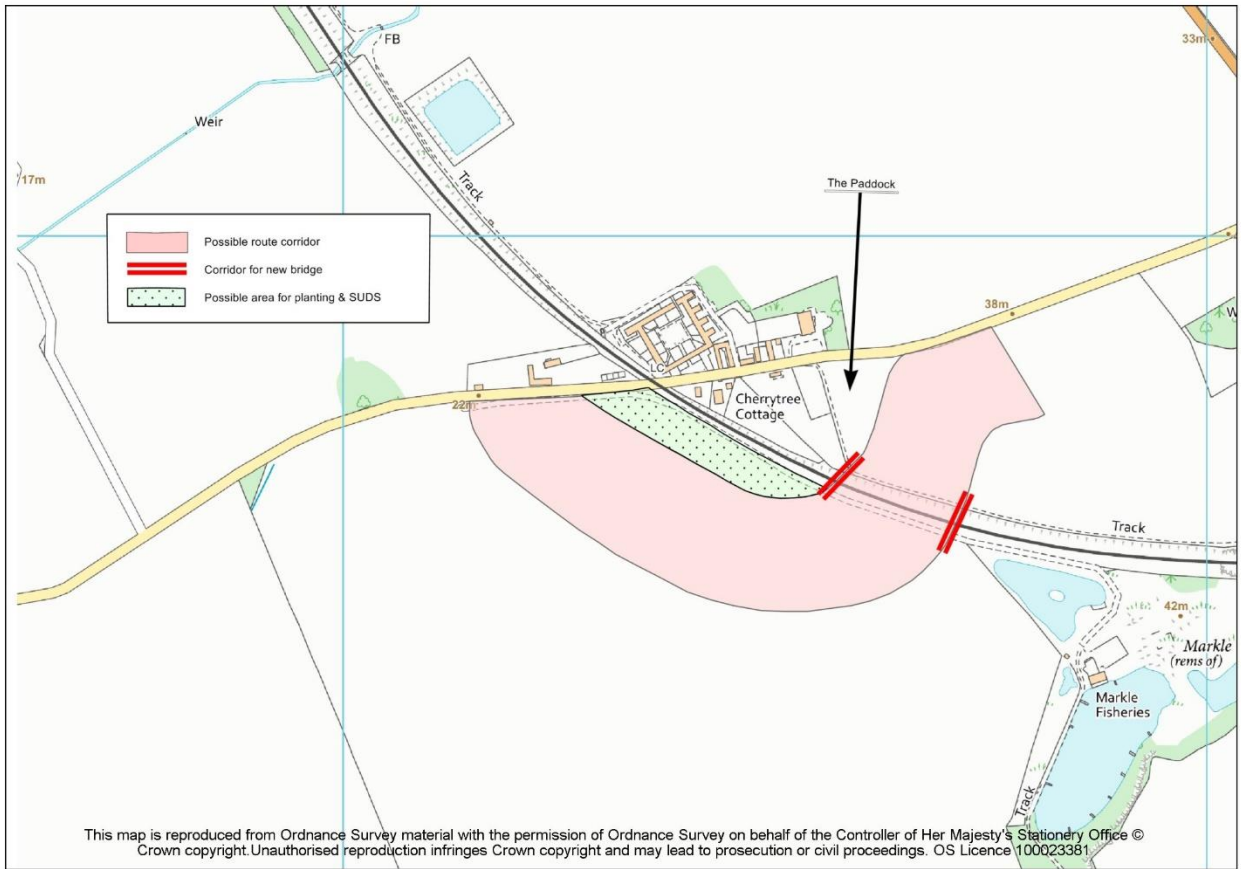
- 6.1 Financial – The project will be fully funded by Transport Scotland rail directorate, which includes all associated internal and external project management costs, land assembly costs, legal costs, design and construction costs, planning and technical assessments costs, and 12 month maintenance cost associated with the delivery the project.
- 6.2 Personnel – Development service and Roads Project management personnel will lead and co-ordinate project deliver which can be accommodated with the corresponding service areas.
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

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DATE	8/9/21

Appendix A - Markle level crossing replacement



Appendix B - Markle Level Crossing Replacement Project – Consultation Summary

General

The consultation ran online from 07/07/2021 to 31/07/2021.

A project website provided information about the project which linked to a survey. People were also able to submit responses via email:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads_and_transport/12641/markle_level_crossing_replacement_project

The survey sought to identify:

- Whether the respondent regularly crossed Markle level crossing, lived in East Lothian, worked in East Lothian or other.
- To what degree the respondent supported the intention to close Markle level crossing.
- To what degree the respondent supported proposals to replace Markle level crossing with a new crossing to the south of the settlement.
- To what degree the respondent supported proposals to replace Markle level crossing with a new road and bridge over the railway line.
- Any other comments.

The consultation was advertised through the Council's social media channels and links were also provided directly to the Dunsper Community Council, Markle Residents Association and key stakeholders.

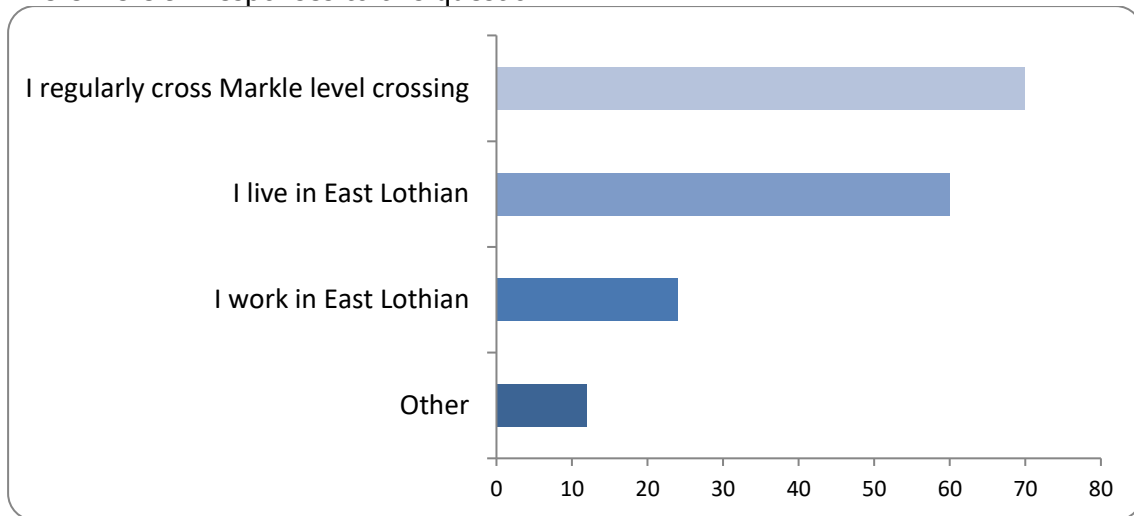
Responses to the survey: **92**

Emailed consultation responses: **4**

Summary of Survey Responses

Question 1: Tell us about yourself:

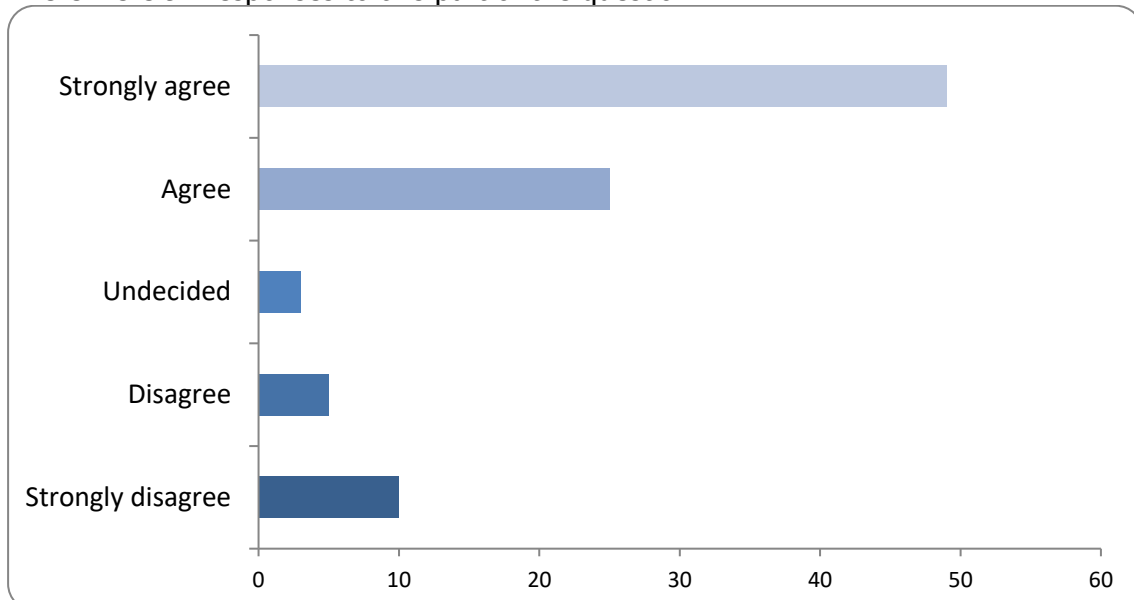
There were 92 responses to this question.



Option	Total	Percent
I regularly cross Markle level crossing	70	76.09%
I live in East Lothian	60	65.22%
I work in East Lothian	24	26.09%
Other	12	13.04%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 4: In general I support the preliminary proposals to replace Markle level crossing with a new road and bridge

There were 92 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent	Percent
Strongly agree	49	53.26%	} 80%
Agree	25	27.17%	
Undecided	3	3.26%	} 4%
Disagree	5	5.43%	} 16%
Strongly disagree	10	10.87%	

Please explain why

There were 58 responses to this part of the question, some of which cited more than one reason for their response.

Key reasons cited for supporting new road and bridge crossing:

Reason	No of Mentions
Safety	22
Removes delays associated with barrier closures	7
Best Option	7
Retains access with short detour	4
Reduced traffic through Markle	4
Minimal environmental impact	3
Overcomes regular level crossing failures	2
Removes noise nuisance from warning signals	2
Location minimises visual impact	2
Agree with concept but road and bridge design details of concern	2
Supports aims of level crossing removal	1
Cost effective	1
Improved traffic flow	1
Bridge better than no crossing but no good case made for removing crossing	1
Agree with concept but cost of concern	1
Agree subject to road not enabling development	1

Key reasons cited for being undecided about a new road and bridge crossing:

Reason	No of Mentions
Cannot support without footbridge for pedestrians	1
Depends on exact location	1

Key reasons for not supporting new road and bridge crossing:

Reason	No of Mentions
Not required, full barrier wait times acceptable	3
Visually damaging	3
Cost	2
Not required, close crossing diversion acceptable	2
Loss of amenity	2
Increased traffic	1
Increased noise	1
Environmental damage	1
Decreased safety for pedestrians – Markle has 20mph speed limit. Unlikely road and bridge will	1
No assurance there will be a safe cycle route to Dunpender	1
Loss of train spotting location	1

Question 5: Do you have any comments about the closure, replacement and /or potential new road and bridge proposals we should consider?

There were 53 responses to this part of the question.

Summary of Comments	No of Mentions
Safe active travel provision required over bridge	9
Rights of way to East Linton and through Markle Fisheries must be maintained and how connections will be maintained clarified	8
Closed crossing needs sympathetic treatment	6
Concern over bridge and road design and setting in landscape	5
Insufficient information on various aspects including exact alignment, visual impact, future use of field, whether there will be more housing	3
Bridge should be as low as possible to maintain views	3
Close the road or change to full barrier crossing	3
Landscaping important - replacement of lost green space and trees / tree and hedge planting on Markle Steading side	3
Footbridge at location of existing crossing	3
Locate bridge as far east as possible to minimize visual impact and cost	3
Long standing drainage fault at Markle should be addressed at the same time	3
Enormous cost	2
Concern the new road will facilitate development	2
Needs to be space for steam enthusiasts to have a good sight line for photos	1
Survey is biased towards acceptance	1
Project will result in despoiling of village centre	1
No footbridge at location of existing crossing	1
Fourfold increase in delay not significant as traffic flows are so low	1
East Linton wrong location for station	1
Loss of arable land	1
Visually disruptive	1
Don't build it	1
A road connection must be maintained	1

Summary of Email Responses

There were 4 email responses.

Email 1 (East Linton Resident)

- The option of just closing the road is the most cost effective one.
- There is underpass access for farm vehicles which are necessary to work the fields and whilst residents on either side of the railway track would have some additional journey time, depending on their journey, this is minimal in the scheme of things.

Email 2

- The proposal for a diverting 6m wide road and having a bridge is the most sensible and cost effective of the options.
- It will remove the need for the level crossing which continue to be a major concern and hazard these days.
- Concern scheme will enable the selling of land to house builders etc.

Email 3 (Resident)

- The level Crossing is a nuisance to the local community due to noise and visual pollution. It is disruptive to our lives and interrupts sleeping patterns of my young family, due to the ongoing noise of the level crossing.
- Maintaining the crossing in any way would be inconsiderate and detrimental to the inhabitants of Markle, especially if there is an alternative solution available.
- We are strongly in favour of the closure Markle level crossing and the plan to replace it with a new road and bridge over the rail line. It is the kindest and safest option for the railway line and for Markle Steading.

Email 4 (Resident)

- All level rail crossings should be replaced by a bridge for safety reasons.
- The replacement minimises the potential for people to use a crossing for end of life purposes.
- Removing this crossing removes the barrier alarm. It is a disturbance to local residents.
- There are regular incidents of road users speeding up as they approach the current crossing in order to cross before the gates come down. Speed is a danger.
- In wet weather especially the surface of the crossing can prove a hazard to both pedestrian users and cyclists.
- Favour the proposal to remove the crossing and replace it with a bridge. A closed gate crossing would not remove any of the above safety issues.