

Thank you for your recent letter, dated 3rd October 2021, detailing a complaint from South Milford Parish Council regarding the temporary closure of public bridleway 35.59/20/1.

In order to maintain services, utility and service providers have the legal right to undertake appropriate works. When such works need to take place in a location that is crossed or abutted by a Public Right of Way, applicants on behalf of these companies can apply for temporary closures in order to undertake works so that they do not compromise public safety. These are detailed in the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984. With regard to the closure of public bridleway 35.59/20/1, O'Connor Utilities, working on behalf of Yorkshire Water, applied for the temporary closure of the public bridleway due to them being unable to maintain statutory minimum widths for their essential works area with the route still open to the public whilst maintaining public safety for potential users of the public bridleway.

Upon receipt the application was reviewed by the local Public Rights of Way Officer who deemed it an acceptable explanation for the closure for reasons of ensuring public safety. At the time, we investigated possible alternative routes whilst the closure was in place, however none were deemed satisfactory, again, due to reasons of public safety. We would therefore strongly discourage any persons from walking along the verge of the A162 as an alternative route due to these reasons.

With regard to the length of the closure applicants planning works that feel they need to close public rights of way have two initial options available for closure timeframes; 5 days or 6 months as detailed in the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984. In this case, the applicant stated to us that works were estimated to last for 3 weeks (although we note that in your letter you have been advised 2 weeks) therefore the 6 month closure was the only option available. For both closure options, 5 days and 6 months, these are the maximum durations, although applicants can request extensions. In many cases the works take place and are completed before the end of the closure periods, the route remains closed only whilst the notices are in place and when the works are completed, the notices are removed and the route is then reopened. Therefore in this instance it is likely that this route will only be closed for a period of 3 weeks. It is important to point out that these closure options can cover a large variety of potential works. Any such works can be prone to a variety of delays so longer periods of closure provide an element of support in such circumstances.

However we do appreciate that the wording of the notices has caused misunderstanding and therefore we can confirm on the basis of the information we currently have available, that this route will not be closed for 6 months and anticipate that, short of any delays that occur, works will be complete and the bridleway open by the end of October 2021 at the very latest.

I hope that this information assists in allaying the council's concerns regarding this closure.