1. Why was there no advance notice of this closure communicated to residents north of the railway line?

There have been a number of near misses involving members of the public using this level crossing, the most recent being 8th June 2019 involving an elderly lady who narrowly avoided being hit by the approaching train. Network Rail decided to apply to Milton Keynes Council to apply for an Emergency Closure Order to enable them (Network Rail) to consider options at this Level Crossing. The decision to close the level crossing was made by Milton Keynes Council last Thursday. They issued the Closure Notice and the Level Crossing Manager locked off the gates and secured the notices either side of the crossing later that afternoon.  There is no advance notice of an emergency closure as it is by its very nature an emergency and needs to be closed immediately to prevent any further incidents and protect members of the public.

There is a history of near misses at this foot crossing and Network Rail has a duty to prevent any further near misses or serious incidents which is the reason a decision was made to pursue a temporary closure of the crossing.  The Highway Authority were contacted, and due to the history of near misses, they were receptive to the proposal to temporarily close the crossing.

1. I see that the trains are still running so where will this “emergency” survey take place.

The wording on the closure notice comes from Milton Keynes Council Highways department and all queries regarding the wording should be directed to them.

1. Why will it take 3 weeks?

This is the prescribed time limit as set out in statute, the Highways Act 1980.

1. Why is the notice attached to the gates so dictatorial, threatening, abrupt and uninformative? Like something from “Big Brother”.

The Closure Notice was issued by the Council who determine the format and wording which should comply with the Highways Act 1980.

1. Has a suitable and sufficient risk assessment been conducted concerning the only possible alternative route over the main railway crossing?

A Risk Assessment is conducted for all level crossings.  The alternative route, over Woburn Sands CCTV crossing, is a far safer alternative for the public as they are protected from crossing the operational railway when trains are approaching by barriers. They do not have this protection at School Crossing Woburn, as evidenced in the catalogue of near misses, the public can cross the operational railway when trains approach.

Kind regards

Network Rail Communications Manager