

*DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF  
SECURITY UPGRADE WORKS AT ST BEES SIGNAL BOX*

*August 2020*



## **Introduction**

This document is intended to outline the programme works to enhance security at St Bees Signal Box. The ‘Proposals’ section below explains the works in further detail, setting out the rationale and justification for the proposals. This will also include analysis of the proposals’ heritage implications to satisfy the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant local planning policy.

## **Site Location and Context**

The small signal box at St Bees Station, at the Main Street level crossing adjacent to the Station on the Cumbrian Coast Line, is a Furness Railway Type 3 structure. St Bees Signal Box was Listed at Grade II in November 2013. The associated list description is reproduced as Appendix 1 below. The site is also located within the boundaries of the St Bees Conservation Area.

## **Planning Policy**

Relevant National and Local planning policy is outlined below:

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The NPPF sets out the Government’s vision for planning to help achieve sustainable development. Central to this is that economic, social and environmental gains should be sought through the planning system. The NPPF’s approach to Heritage is fundamentally unchanged from that of PPS5, in that there is still a focus on the identification of ‘heritage assets’, outlining their ‘significance’ and considering any impact upon that significance as a consequence of any proposed works.

NPPF paragraph 128 establishes the information requirements for an application for consent affecting a heritage asset. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Paragraph 129 details the policy principles that should guide LPAs in determining applications in relation to heritage assets. It states that in considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

When determining applications, LPAs should take account of (paragraph 131):

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.

### National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

The NPPG underpins national policy set out within the NPPF. Further guidance in relation to Conserving and enhancing the historic environment states that:

*In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time.*

### Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028

#### *Policy ENV4 – Heritage Assets*

The Council's policy is to maximise the value of the Borough's heritage assets by:

A Protecting listed buildings, conservation areas and other townscape and rural features considered to be of historic, archaeological or cultural value

B Supporting proposals for heritage led regeneration, ensuring that any listed buildings or other heritage assets are put to an appropriate, viable and sustainable use

C Strengthening the distinctive character of the Borough's settlements, through the application of high quality urban design and architecture that respects this character and enhances the settings of listed buildings

Policy DM27 supports this policy, setting out the Council's approach to development which affects built heritage and archaeology

#### *Policy DM27 – Built Heritage and Archaeology*

A Development proposals which protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the Borough's historic sites and their settings will be supported. This will be particularly relevant in the case of:

- i) Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- ii) Conservation Areas
- iii) Listed Buildings and structures
- iv) Non-listed buildings and structures or landscape features of local heritage and archaeological value
- v) Surface and below ground archaeological deposits

C Development within Conservation Areas will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area and, where appropriate, views in and out of the area. The Council will pay particular attention to:

- i) How new development respects the character of existing architecture and any historical associations, landscape features, open spaces, trees, walls and quality of townscape
- ii) The impact of any proposed works to trees with regard to policy DM28

D Development which affects Listed Buildings or their setting will only be permitted

where it:

- i) Respects the architectural and historic character of the building
- ii) Avoids any substantial or total demolition, or any demolition that is not related to proposed development affecting the building
- iii) Does not have a significant adverse effect on the setting or important views of the building
- iv) Involves a change of use to all or part of the listed building which contributes to the conservation and overall economic viability of the building, and where the use can be implemented without any adverse alterations to the building

### **Significance of Heritage Asset**

In order to assess the heritage significance of the signal box, in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF, it is important to make reference to heritage values as defined in the Historic England document Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidelines, which can be summarised as follows:

- Evidential value – the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity (i.e. archaeological interest)
- Historical value – the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life are connected through a place.
- Aesthetic value – the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place (i.e. architectural and artistic interest)
- Communal value – the meanings of a place for the people that relate to it.

Having regard to the above, the signal box can be said to provide both aesthetic value, as a consequence of its architectural qualities, and historical value as to how the Cumbrian coast railway was originally conceived and constructed.

Having regard to the structure's historic value, the Historic England document '*Designation Listing Selection Guide: Transport Buildings*' (2017) is of particular importance when assessing the historic value associated with railway infrastructure. This sets out four 'ages' of railway construction which, in descending importance, is as below:

- • The pioneering first phase, 1825–41;
- • The heroic age, 1841–50;
- • The third phase 1850s–1870s, the consolidation of the network; and
- • The fourth period, up to 1914, the completion of the network.

Given the construction date of 1891, it is apparent that the structure stems from the fourth 'completion' phase of railway construction. Therefore, although not amongst the oldest of historic railway structures on

the network, there is nevertheless noteworthy historic significance attributable to it. The signal box is one of only two surviving examples of a Furness Railway Type 3 signal box

The box's aesthetic significance is centred on external features including a tapering base, snecked stonework and high pitched roof.

### **Proposals and Assessment of Impact upon Heritage Significance**

Network Rail is proposing to undertake a programme of security upgrades at the signal box. This is needed due to a significant history of antisocial behaviour directed towards railway staff working at this location. Signallers working at the station are being verbally abused by members of the public and have had physical threats towards them. This primarily occurs when the local pubs close and passengers arrive at the station for onward travel. It is believed that the issue behind this is the fact that the Signallers' toilet is located on the station platform and as there are no public toilets available for passenger use. Additionally, the signaller needs to leave the Signal Box to exchange tokens with the driver, leaving the Signal Box vulnerable to antisocial behaviour.

Network Rail commissioned a feasibility study document to consider options for addressing the issues observed at St Bees. Following extensive pre-application discussion with Copeland's Conservation Officer, it was agreed that a package of interventions was agreed to be the most suitable form of remedying the observed issues. This will consist of a steel framed extension to house a WC and sheltered landing at the first floor level, following demolition of the existing stand-alone WC structure, existing staircase and porch. Remedial works, comprising repainting to the existing timber, window surrounds and repointing to the existing stone work including the repair of a number of stone masonry units to the signal box chimney breast are also proposed.

Further detail on the scope is set out below:

#### *Proposed Extension Works*

A steel framed extension structure to the existing signal box is proposed. The proposed extension is to house a WC and sheltered landing at the first floor level and a junction box with hatch access at the ground floor level. The existing stand-alone WC structure and existing staircase and porch to the signal box are to be demolished.

In addition to the new extension building remedial works are proposed to the existing signal box structure. The remedial works comprise repainting to the existing timber window surrounds and repointing to the existing stone work including the repair of a number of stone masonry units to the signal box chimney breast.

The proposed extension building and remedial work will not drastically alter the visual appearance or the layout of the signal box. The works will be sympathetic to the existing signal box structure and its surroundings with materials chosen to match the existing in appearance and surface finishes.

#### *Steel Extension Structure*

The proposed extension is to be a green coloured timber clad structure with white horizontal Cedar Lap shiplap cladding with a plane lap at the corners. The bottom 300mm of extension is to be clad in red sandstone to match the original building topped with a stone sill detail with a single ventilation brick. The cladding level with the existing signal box windows will comprise panels with cross braced wood and a strong continuation of the existing signal box sill in timber. The proposed steel staircase is to be painted grey. All timber to be painted in Network Rail approved paint system. Network Rail to confirm the RAL colour for the proposed paint system.

### *Roof Covering & Guttering*

The existing signal box has a steep pitched hipped roof finished in slate. The proposed extension is to have an adjoining roof to match in material and have the same pitch as the existing as well as the same edge overhand as the existing. The extension roof is to comprise Welsh slate roof tiles and ridge tiles to match the existing roof. The slate is to be sourced from Penrhyn or Cwt-y-Bugail Quarry in North Wales. The roof hips is to comprise a mitred hip arrangement with concealed lead soakers. The lead flashing is to protect the roof where the existing and new roof planes meet, the surface of the zinc is to be treated to alter the surface colour to Network Rail's requirements. A competent roof specialist is required to achieve a quality finish of the proposed roof arrangement.

The new guttering to extension is to be an Alumasc Heritage Range with a powder coating to match the existing white UPVC gutters of existing building. The existing guttering system to the original signal box is to be extended at the rear of the building around the chimney stack to prevent further damage to the stonework from the roof water run-off.

### *Window Frames and Glazing*

The proposed extension is to have one additional white UPVC window to match existing. This opaque, top hung window is to be on the rear elevation of the building, which forms the WC unit. The UPVC window frames has an estimated service life of 25 years. The existing timber window surrounds are to be stripped back and repainted. The paint colour is to match existing. All paints are to be approved by Conservation officer before ordering. All timber to be painted in Network Rail approved paint system. Network Rail to confirm the RAL colour for the proposed paint system.

### *Doors*

The proposed extension has an internal door into the new WC. The new door is to match in style and colour to the existing door. There is to be a brace and batton type door providing access into the ground floor of the signal box with a No. 16 lock.

### *Internal Lighting*

The WC room and the internal landing area of the 1st floor of the extension are to each be lit with a surface mounted circular LED light. The proposed replacement LED lighting will be very similar in appearance to the existing landing light but it will be dimmable and controlled by motion sensors, activated only when workers access the structure reducing the signal box lighting energy costs. A single light and switch will be provided for the internal area of the ground floor for maintenance purposes. The area beneath the staircase is to be illuminated by LED lighting controlled by motion sensors, activated only when accessing the under stairs area. Bulk head lighting is to be fitted to the extension to illuminate the access staircase.

### *Surfacing*

The disturbed areas of surfacing around the signal box extension and the former location of the WC is to be resurfaced using asphalt concrete conforming to BS EN 13018-01.

### *Security Fencing*

The security fence is to comprise 2.4m high bespoke Barbican security fencing by Jackson's Fencing or similar approved with a locked gated access to the access staircase of the extension. An additional security gate in the fence line with a No. 16 lock is to provide access to beneath the extension staircase. The fence colour is to be white.

### *Repainting to existing stonework & repairs*

Sandstone to the chimney breast is to be repaired where the stonework has been severely water damaged. Network Rail require a specialist Stonemasons report on the proposed repairs. The existing red sandstone masonry has recessed mortar joints, as part of the extension works, the joints will be raked out and repointed. The stonework is to be repointed in lime mortar flush to the stonework and colour matched to the existing mortar.

The package of works proposed are all essential to ensure the security and safety of railway employees. The proposals have been designed to be sensitive to the character and appearance of the Listed Building. This will also ensure that there will be no harm to the signal box's important role within the conservation area: There will be no harm caused to the setting of the conservation. Moreover, the package of additional masonry repair works will enhance secure the and long-term structural preservation of the signal box.

The works will be undertaken using historically-appropriate materials, and carried out using sensitive methodologies. The works will facilitate an appropriate and sustainable continued future use of the signal box in its original purpose.

### **Conclusion**

It is considered that the works proposed are respectful to the character and appearance of the listed structure. The proposed works – which are essential to ensure the longer-term preservation of the signal box and also ensure railway staff are able to work in a safe environment - will be carried out in a sympathetic manner that harmonises with the context of the surrounding conservation area.

In light of the above, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with relevant policy stipulated by the NPPF and the Copeland Local Plan. Consequently, it is requested that Listed Building Consent be granted for the proposed development.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST DESCRIPTION

*Location*

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

*Location Description:*

Sited NX 97029 11989 at the Main Street level crossing adjacent to St Bees Railway Station.

*County:*

Cumbria

*District:*

Copeland (District Authority)

*Parish:*

St. Bees

*National Grid Reference:*

NX9702911989

*Summary*

Furness Railway Type 3 signal box built 1891.

*Reasons for Designation*

St Bees Signal Box is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Architecture: not withstanding the loss of the original glazing pattern, St Bees, with its tapering base, snecked stonework and high pitched roof is an unusually architectural signal box which is reasonably well preserved. \* Representative: as one of only two surviving examples of a Furness Railway Type 3 signal box: an adventurous architectural design dating to circa 1875, possibly by the practice of Paley and Austin. \* Interior: the survival of the original 1891 Railway Signalling Company lever frame adds to the special interest.

*History*

From the 1840s, huts or cabins were provided for men operating railway signals. These were often located on raised platforms containing levers to operate the signals and in the early 1860s, the fully glazed signal box, initially raised high on stilts to give a good view down the line, emerged. The interlocking of signals and points, perhaps the most important single advance in rail safety, patented by John Saxby in 1856, was the final step in the evolution of railway signalling into a form recognisable today. Signal boxes were built to a great variety of



different designs and sizes to meet traffic needs by signalling contractors and the railway companies themselves.

Signal box numbers peaked at around 12,000-13,000 for Great Britain just prior to the First World War and successive economies in working led to large reductions in their numbers from the 1920s onwards. British Railways inherited around 10,000 in 1948 and numbers dwindled rapidly to about 4000 by 1970. In 2012, about 750 remained in use; it was anticipated that most would be rendered redundant over the next decade.

St Bees Signal Box was opened in 1891, being built to the design now known as the Furness Railway Type 3. This signal box design was employed by the Furness Railway between 1875 and 1895 for a proportion of its signal boxes. Aspects of the design appear to have been influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement and also have similarities to many of the station buildings designed for the railway by the Lancaster based architectural firm of Paley and Austin, many by the architect John Harrison who managed the firm's office in Barrow. The Type 3 signal box design may have been by the firm, although this has not been proved.

St Bees Signal Box is sited behind the northern end of the western station platform, overlooking the Main Street level crossing.

### *Details*

Railway signal box, 1891, for the Furness Railway, possibly by Paley and Austin of Lancaster. Furness Railway Type 3 design.

**MATERIALS:** red sandstone, slate roof.

**EXTERIOR:** two-storey signal box with a steeply pitched hipped roof. The signal box's base is stone built with snecked stonework that has a gentle batter so that it tapers up to the operating floor's window sill. Central to the rear wall there is a projecting chimney stack that survives to full height. This is quoined with grey sandstone with its base supported by three corbels. The locking room (the ground floor room) is lit by lancet windows to both front and rear, with a larger window in the north end, all now boarded but originally with a lower large pane with four square panes arranged in a square above. The operating room (the upper floor) is entered from the southern end, via a modern porch at the head of an external staircase. The operating room has windows to all sides, being continuous to the east (facing the tracks with seven windows) and north (overlooking the crossing with six, narrower windows). These windows were originally arranged with plate glass lower sections with four small panes in a row above. These windows have been replaced in uPVC with undivided top-lights.

**INTERIOR:** the signal box retains its original lever frame, of 24 levers, supplied by the Railway Signal Company.

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