

# **Public Consultation Report – The Bridge / Culvert Repair**

Written by Anna Mearns

## **1. Introduction**

Stoke St Michael Parish Council held a Public Consultation to gather opinions on the impact of reopening the road following the bridge and culvert repair works, and to consider wider traffic and safety concerns within the village.

The consultation took place on Saturday 27th September 2025, from 10:00am to 1:00pm at the Memorial Hall, Stoke St Michael. An information leaflet was distributed to the majority of households in the parish prior to the event.

## **2. Attendance**

- 45 members of the public attended the consultation.
- 7 Parish Councillors were present to meet and engage with attendees.

## **3. Information and Displays**

Display boards were used to prompt discussion on various options and considerations, including:

- Bollards and kerbs
- Road markings and coloured road surfaces
- Traffic calming and priority schemes
- TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) – 7.5t weight limit
- Decreasing road width to allow pedestrian space
- Awareness of pedestrians and safe walking routes to school
- Local HGV routes and safer alternatives.

Additional information was available regarding the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Consultation and the Safer Routes for HGVs initiative.

A public notice was also displayed confirming that culvert repair works were scheduled to begin on 20th October 2025 for approximately 15 days.

## **4. Response Collection**

Feedback was collected both during and after the consultation event through comment sheets, emails, and written submissions.

Summary of engagement methods:

- On-site comments recorded under key headings (7.5t limit, pavement/walkway, transitional arrangements, shared priority, suggestions).
- Written responses emailed to Councillors or the Clerk – 26 comments.
- Three extended submissions from residents and the School PTA.
- Two written responses received via the collection box at the Londis Shop.

Total additional responses: 31

## **5. Summary of Key Findings**

All 73 responses received were reviewed to identify recurring themes and concerns. The findings below represent the main points raised by participants.

### **5.1 Retention of the 7.5t Weight Limit**

63% of all respondents explicitly supported retaining the 7.5 tonne weight restriction. Concerns focused on safety, road capacity, environmental impact, and quality of life.

Key points raised:

- The restriction improves safety for pedestrians and reduces congestion.
- Large HGVs cause noise, vibration, and air pollution.
- Roads and bridges are unsuitable for heavy vehicles due to narrow lanes and on-street parking.
- There are fears that removing the restriction would increase risk to children and pedestrians.

### **5.2 Pedestrian Safety and Pavements**

44% of all responses raised concerns about pedestrian safety, particularly the absence of pavements through the centre of the village, Stoke Hill, and Mendip Road.

Key suggestions included:

- Constructing a pavement or protected walkway across the bridge.
- Installing barriers, bollards, or road markings to protect pedestrians.
- Ensuring safe routes for children walking to school.

### **5.3 Shared Priority and Road Width**

Many comments supported maintaining or enhancing shared priority arrangements to manage vehicle flow across the bridge. There was strong feedback regarding the unsuitability of village roads for large vehicles due to narrow width, steep gradients, and lack of passing spaces.

### **5.4 Transitional Arrangements**

While few respondents used this specific term, most emphasized the need to retain current safety features and traffic restrictions during and after the repair period. Respondents urged the Council to ensure pedestrian protection and maintain the 7.5t limit throughout any transition phase.

### **5.5 Other Suggestions and Concerns**

Additional points raised included:

- Introduce a 20mph limit through the village (raised in 15 responses).
- Install speed or noise cameras.
- Add a zebra crossing near the pub and shop.
- Encourage HGVs to continue using alternative routes.
- Explore relocating the concrete works in Holcombe.
- Engage local media to raise awareness of safety concerns.

## **6. Conclusions and Next Steps**

The consultation demonstrated overwhelming support for maintaining the existing 7.5 tonne weight restriction and for improving pedestrian safety measures. Residents emphasized that protecting the safety, wellbeing, and environment of the community must remain the Council's top priority.

Key recommended actions for the Parish Council:

- Formally request Somerset Council to retain the 7.5t weight limit.
- Investigate installation of pavements, bollards, or barriers across the bridge.
- Liaise with Highways to explore 20mph and traffic calming options.
- Continue communication with residents via email updates.
- Review pedestrian routes to school and ensure safe access.

The Parish Council notes previous PC surveys showed high rates of concern with heavy traffic through village and calls for action to protect vulnerable road users in the village have not diminished.

## **7. Author's Note**

This report was initially compiled by Councillor Anna Mearns on behalf of Stoke St Michael Parish Council. All efforts have been made to accurately represent community feedback. The analysis is qualitative and aims to reflect key recurring themes. Original written responses are retained for review.

## Appendix

A total of 74 written responses were received.

31 responses either emailed to the Parish clerk or left in a collection box at the village shop were added to the 42 collected at the meeting

Below are some of direct quotes received

*"The weight restriction adds safety to our village without the lorries negotiating narrow lanes and tight corners."*

*"Allowing HGVs would increase noise and air pollution negatively impacting the peace and quality of life in the village."*

*"The village is not suitable for large lorries causing traffic congestion and noise."*

*"There is concern that reinstating unrestricted access could lead to increased wear and tear on the new bridge and surrounding roads."*

*"The density of on street parking on Stoke Hill and Mendip Road...restricts the flow of cars, lorries squeeze through at best."*

*"Since the weight restrictions the village feels much safer to walk through"*

*"The road through the heart of SSM is not designed for high volumes of heavy vehicle traffic...Protecting the safety, wellbeing and environment of our village community must be the overriding priority."*

*"The re-opening of the bridge to heavy goods vehicles is a huge health & safety concern."*

*"Before the 7.5 tonne restriction, Stoke Hill was frequently used by heavy weight lorries as a short cut. If that starts happening again, and it will, it is just a matter of time before someone is injured or worse."*

*"The size of these vehicles is terrifying to pedestrians who may only be a few inches away."*

*"It is imperative that urgent and meaningful pedestrian safety measures are put in place."*

*"Pedestrians will once again be placed in the position of feeling that they are endangering themselves simply by walking into the village."*

*"Lack of pavements through most of the centre of the village means those walking dogs or those on horseback etc have had a safer space without large commercial traffic alongside."*

*"I'm very anxious about the prospect of walking down this road with the enormous lorries on and no pavement."*

*"Unsuitability of all the access routes into the village. Both within the Parish and beyond...These are all narrow country lanes for some distance before an A road is reached."*

*“Stoke Hill is a steep, single track road with houses abutting the roadway, Frog Lane is a narrow, single track. There are no pavements. There are no passing spaces.”*

*“Wellbeing in the village has improved as a result of the road narrowing and 7.5 tonne weight limit.”*

*“Since the restriction was introduced, residents have noticed a significant reduction in noise and speeding traffic...overall traffic flows have slowed making the village feel safer and calmer.”*

*“Narrow pavements and limited visibility at junctions already make this a challenging environment for young pedestrians.”*

*“Retain the existing barriers which improve safety for children and pedestrians by creating a safe walking area.”*