

Report on consultation as to whether Cross Lane should be one way with construction of footpath/cycle path-responses to questionnaires

Introduction

A safe off the road route between Cross and Compton Bishop (CBPC) is a long held objective of Compton Bishop Parish Council. Cross Lane is recognised as a dangerous route and becoming more dangerous with increasing traffic, both heavy lorries and cars. The Cross to Axbridge Safe Path Campaign (previously the Coffin Lane Campaign) has been working with the CBPC to achieve this aim with assistance from local District and County Councillors. In October 2020 the construction of a pedestrian refuge on the A38 which enabled a safe crossing over the busy main road to Cross Lane and also a paved footpath up the verge of Cross Lane to the gate giving entry to the right of way across the fields to Axbridge was completed with funds provided by SCC under the SIS scheme. This was an important step to meeting this objective.

However, in order to provide a safe passage to all residents the right of way across the fields need-to be made safe and accessible for all. This requires fencing from cattle, accessible gates for family's and buggies and bikes, the route also needs a firm surface. Despite many attempts it has not been possible to reach agreement with the landowners to make these improvements. As an alternative making Cross Lane one way thus allowing space on the route for a pedestrian/cycle path has been proposed. The Parish Council requested the Cross to Axbridge Safe Path Campaign to issue a questionnaire to households to ascertain whether they would support this proposal. The questionnaire is appended to this report.

Results of the Consultation

250 questionnaires were delivered, one to each household in the Parish. There was a choice of posting the completed questionnaire in special post boxes erected around the Parish or emailing responses.

As will be seen from the questionnaire, respondees were requested to answer yes or no to the question as to whether Cross Lane should be one way with a pedestrian/cycle path erected along the closed lane. They were also invited to add any comments.

The number of responses received and those for and against the proposal were as set out below.

Returns by Email	
For	11
Against	7
not stated	3
Total	21

Returns by Paper	
For	53
Against	30
Total	83

Grand Total - All returns (at 8th Dec 2020) = 104

Summary of comments.

The full anonymised comments are published on the Coffin Lane Campaign website and Compton Bishop parish website.

The content of the comments are important as showing that many of those voting no did so as they considered the one-way was not the right way to go but rather that further efforts should be made to achieve the improvements to the path across the fields set out above. Among those voting for the proposal, nevertheless, would also prefer such improvements to the path across the fields. Among those opposed to one way and those in favour there were questions as to why the landowners could not agree. It was not understood by some why they would not agree and it was seen as unreasonable. Some suggested a compulsory purchase order. Though one response questioned why landowners should give up land to “townies” who move to the countryside. Quote: *“You don’t find indigenous locals riding bikes”*.

One response said there should be both the upgrade of the footpath across the field and also the cycle path across the fields.

A number of respondees were enthusiastic as to the one way system *“fabulous idea, can’t wait to walk to Axbridge”*, *“permanent one way system will benefit so many people keeping us all safe”*. *“A walking and cycling pathway would transform this area”*. There were also comments appreciating the work so far and thanking those involved in making it happen.

Other comments from those in favour of the one way system were:

1. It would allow those with mobility scooters or otherwise disabled to go between Cross and Axbridge which was not possible across the fields. “ I feel the new footpath (for me, at any rate) is a “white elephant” as I would love to be able to go to Axbridge without taking a car but, as I am disabled and need a mobility scooter to travel any distance, there is no way that I could travel up a muddy field”.
2. Safety was an important issue for many including safety for cyclists and families with children. It was important and urgent as the increase in the volume of traffic, including, lorries was increasing. A permanent one-way system will benefit so many people keeping us all safe.
3. The one-way system would make the junction safer.
4. It was pointed out that the field route was not suitable for some users being muddy and that a proper path would mean that walking was not weather dependent. Only agile walkers can manage the field.
5. There would need to be improvements to the Shute Shelve turning to avoid congestion and make turning onto the A38 safe.

6. I would increase the travel distance but worth it for safety.

Other comments from those voting against the proposal

1. There would be congestion at the Shute Shelve exit from the bypass onto the A38.
2. The turning at the bypass was dangerous and it would be expensive to widen/improve it.
3. Inconvenience to car users with a longer journey between Cross and Axbridge. Not a green option. Longer journey would affect child care arrangements.
4. It was thought a one-way system would not improve the A38 junction.
5. It was thought the proposed cycle/foot path would be dangerous, with the risk of collision with users. The one-way system would still have heavy traffic.
6. It was unfair to inconvenience the majority of road users who were motorists in favour of the small minority of walkers.
7. One response thought the one-way system was a precursor to planning applications on the adjacent fields.
8. There was already a cycle path (the Strawberry line) and cyclists should use it.
9. If a one way system then cyclists would have a more dangerous route back down Shute Shelve.
10. The solution was to upgrade the footpath and not understanding why the landowners would refuse even to discuss the issue.
11. Similar traffic solutions as to those who voted yes

Local businesses

At the outset of the consultation representatives of the Campaign group met with 3 local businesses to inform them of the proposal and ask their views. There was concern from one business that there should be access and egress in Cross Lane for businesses. Another business in Cross Lane remarked that trade would be affected if Cross Lane was one way as it would not be visible for traffic coming south, down the A38.

One written response subsequently was against the proposal and visibility was the main reason plus the disruption of the works.

The businesses were assured that they would be kept fully informed of developments and consulted again if the matter went ahead.

The Bus Route

Some of those voting for the proposal were concerned as to the impact of the route of the 126 bus route. As the route from Wells westward would use the Axbridge bypass unless the bus deviated from its route and turned left at the bypass there would no longer be a stop at Cross.

Equally some voting against the proposal did so as they thought they would no longer be able to use the bus.

The Sedgemoor District Council policy to encourage bus use was referred to.

Making the cross roads safer

There were a large number of suggestions both from those in favour and those opposed to the one way proposal as to how the cross roads could be made safer. They included:

1. No entry to Old Coach Road from Cross Lane.
2. No right turn from Old Coach Road into A38.
3. Traffic lights.
4. 30mph speed limit on Cross Lane/ A38.

Other comments

1. The **street lights** were mentioned by a few responses as giving unwanted illumination to bedrooms up Cross Lane and the loss of the night sky. It is unacceptable that lights should be all the way up Cross Lane and lights being totally unnecessary as no one would be walking across the fields at night.
2. One comment suggested a separate designated path for cyclists.
3. The best solution for cyclists would be a one-way system for light traffic and buses only with lorries using the bypass.
4. Improvements are needed at east end of Old Coach Road which is too narrow to make it safe.
5. There was one suggestion that an alternative was to upgrade the Drove and footpath to Axbridge. Though it was accepted that this was a longer route.

The Parish Council is invited to accept this report. As indicated the full anonymised comments received are available to those who would like to see them.

Next steps

Before taking the matter further it would be helpful to have the advice of Coucillor Bob Filmer on how best to move forward. We understand that moves are afoot to have some form of consultation with the residents of Axbridge. It would also be best to know the outcome of such consultation and whether there is, even at this stage, some hope of engaging with the landowners before submitting the report to SCC.

Cross to Axbridge Group.

8 December 2020