

Making our town centres better places - report from STF event featuring Living Streets



31 Town Councillors, Local Authority Officers and community activists attended this event yesterday from 11 towns across Somerset. Jack Skillen from [Living Streets](#) joined us.

They learned about current good practice in making the centres of our communities more walking-friendly, and less dominated by vehicles and the associated Highway engineering. Places where people want to stay longer, and that improve the quality of life.

Notes from the discussion session

A panel of the presenters - Jack Skillen (Living Streets), Pete Harding (Axbridge Action Group), Peter Wheelhouse (Frome Town Council) - were joined by Martin Pakes (A Better Crewkerne & District) to answer questions.

Gerlinde Rambauser (Vision for Frome) - There is an excellent example of innovative traffic engineering at a very busy junction in Cheshire - [the video is here...](#)

Q. What was the cost of the Frome feasibility work? PW - The contract for Landscape Projects was £19,000. It's not about reducing traffic volumes (though there may be some

reduction once the scheme is in place), but reducing speed of traffic in the centre to make crossing safer and a better quality public realm.

Charles Wood (Vision for Frome) - Its worth noting that our Community Plan (that flagged up concerns over town centre traffic) was adopted by the Town Council; their support has been crucial to getting this project going.

Q How constructive have SCC Highways been? MP - Initially very helpful with creating a Traffic Plan, but slow and drawn out since. I have to ask - where is the money? This kind of improvement work low on Highways priorities. PW - We had a very positive meeting with SCC Officers today - and not just Highways but also Ecology and Conservation Officers too.

Q. How much of the total cost of the Crewkerne scheme is the Waitrose s106 money? MP - The full Crewkerne scheme will cost over £1m if fully implemented (just making North Street one-way is currently going ahead) - the Waitrose funding is £150,000.

PW mentioned costs incurred - Frome Town Council had to pay for Traffic Impact Assessment first.

JS - Reminded everyone that Engineers advise, Politicians decide.

Simon Ratsey (Transition Town Wellington) asked if there were any good examples of changing behaviour regards travel? PW felt that the Frome Supermarket Sundays (3 markets taking place at the same time with a road closure too) had changed some people's behaviour, who had walked into the centre.

Charles Wood - there is also a temporary park & ride in Frome on Supermarket days.

PH - has been lucky enough to travel across Europe: its design that makes streets more friendly, which then changes people's behaviour ie makes them use streets/places differently.

Graham Sizer (Minehead Chamber of Commerce) - markets are a safe way of trying out changes to the Highway and the public realm.

MP - Waitrose draws in lots of people from wealthier villages around Crewkerne. The trick is to get them into the other, local shops.

Q. Are there similarities or differences between different sizes of places regards making more walkable streets? JS - Not really, as most people aspire to walkable, high quality centres (whether town, neighbourhood or village).