

**Agenda item 5**

For information – Update on Frome’s Safer School Streets project

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**Summary**

This report provides an update on the Frome Safer School Streets scheme with a reminder of the aims of its trial, the details of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) in place, the highway improvements works, community engagement work and initiatives implemented, evaluation, enforcement, and next steps.

**1. What is the aim of the project?**

A Safer School Street is an area that limits vehicle access during school pickup and drop-off making it safer for people to walk or wheel to school. This scheme has been funded by the Department for Transport.

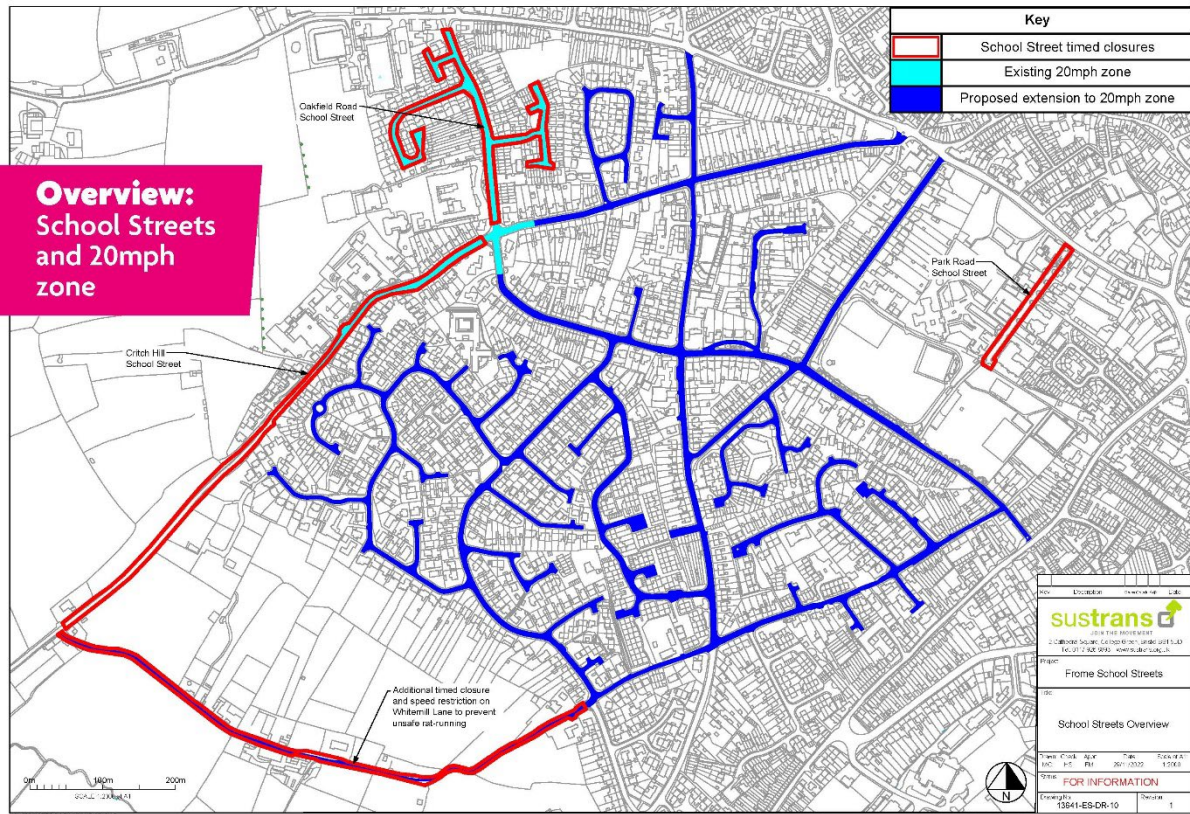
The Frome Safer School Streets scheme aims to make conditions safer for active travel to and from four of Frome's schools: Trinity First School, Oakfield Academy, Critchill School and Avanti Park School - a total of 1500 students. The Frome scheme has been collaboratively designed by Sustrans and the local community, in partnership with Frome Town Council and Somerset Council. The scheme will run for a trial period of 18 months, from April 2024 to September 2025, to monitor its effectiveness in reducing traffic, improving safety, and increasing levels of active travel on the school run. Active travel has a huge number of benefits, including positive environmental, financial, health and wellbeing impacts.

**2. What does the trial involve?**

The project’s Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) stipulates short, timed vehicle restrictions outside the schools Monday – Friday during term time as detailed below.

Location	Morning vehicle restriction times	Afternoon vehicle restriction times
Oakfield Road (Nunney Road to Broadway) Nunney Road (Oakfield Road to the bottom of Critch Hill) Whitemill Lane (from Critch Hill to Critchill Road)	8:10-9:00	2:45-3:30
Park Road (up to Avanti Park School)	8:25-8:55	3:00-3:30

An extended 20mph zone has also been introduced across the wider residential area as pictured here along with the restricted roads.



The ETRO also outlines the exemptions from the restrictions. These include blue badge holders, parents/guardians of pupils with EHC plans, school staff, residents and those requiring access to residential properties within the restricted zone, healthcare workers, users of Harry’s Hydrotherapy Pool, school and public transport, emergency services, postal services, utilities, highways maintenance, animal welfare, street cleansing and waste collection.

Please note that while residents within the restricted zone are exempt from the timed vehicle restrictions, we have asked that all be mindful of the timed closure to ensure optimum safety for all in the area. Families and independent, older children heading to or from school will be asked to either walk or wheel, and when not possible, to park and stride a short distance.

The ETRO came into force on 22nd April 2024 at the start of the Summer Term and will extend to the beginning of the Autumn Term, September 2025. At that point and following the evaluation of the scheme, a decision as to whether to make the scheme permanent will be taken and will involve children, parents, schools, and local residents.

### 3. Highway Works

The scheme has involved extensive highway works across the Safer School Streets zone. We have new courtesy crossings, a raised table and raised table crossing, new dropped kerbs and tactile paving, footway build outs, updated white and yellow lining, benches and seating, new cycle stands and low maintenance, self-watering planters. New surface patterns to the areas outside schools have also been introduced to make it clear to drivers that they are entering a school zone, and to encourage extra caution.

We have experienced unforeseen delays in construction and so are still waiting for the highway works to be completed by the contractor. We are hopeful that the remaining works will be carried out before the end of December 2024. Once permits for the remaining works are in place, we will liaise with the contractor to ensure traffic management measures are in place and all road users are given sufficient warning. As before, Sustrans will supervise the works.

The improvements will benefit over 1500 students of Oakfield Academy, Critchill School, Trinity First School and Avanti Park School, their families, and local residents.

An additional element of the scheme is that Active Travel charity Sustrans, with input from Somerset Council, successfully secured further central government funding for a much needed and long-awaited crossing on the Butts, from Water Lane to Somerset Road. The crossing will complement the Safer School Streets work and responds to concerns that have been expressed about this busy junction for some time. The crossing will provide further traffic calming measures including speed bumps and high friction surfacing and improve safety for cyclists using this part of the National Cycle Network.

#### **4. Community engagement and initiatives for success**

Since March 2024, we have been working closely with the students at all 4 schools to encourage active travel and positive behaviour change. We have spent time with students to promote the benefits of the scheme to physical and mental wellbeing. Over 120 students joined our Mojo Moves Walking Buses and many more made use of our Smoothie Bike.

We have led assemblies and delivered presentations with a focus on road safety and education including our Be Bright, Be Seen initiative and road safety and litter pick walks. Frome Community Bike Project provided three Dr Bike sessions to offer free safety checks to all bike users, and Fusion Extreme wowed and inspired 1500 students with an impressive BMX Stunt Show.

In June 2024, we introduced a Park and Stride Scheme for the Avanti Park families who live the furthest from the school and are unable to actively travel. With the kind permission of the trustees of the Memorial Theatre, 20 families are now able to park behind the theatre for a short period in the morning and in the afternoon and walk the short distance to school.

At the same time, we were also in contact with Somerset Council who agreed to allow families the use of their car park in Badox for access to Trinity First School, Critchill School and Oakfield Academy. This car park can also be used as a safe and convenient place for parents to drop off those children able to travel independently to school.

#### **5. Evaluation**

Since the scheme came into force in April 2024, we have welcomed feedback from the community on the street, at the Town Hall and via our dedicated email address. We continue to listen to all stakeholders and take note of all reports, observations, concerns, and support for the scheme.

We are currently working with the schools and Sustrans to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme and will continue to do so until the end of the 18-month trial period. We are monitoring traffic to understand whether the scheme has led to the desired

increase in walking and wheeling to school, and also to gauge possible traffic displacement to surrounding roads.

In October 2022, Sustrans carried out extensive quantitative data collection, monitoring traffic speeds and volume with cameras and ATCs (Automatic Traffic Counters). In October 2024, this monitoring was repeated for scheme evaluation.

In early 2025, we will publish a post-scheme public perception survey to ask residents, schools, students, parents and all road and pavement users about their experience since the scheme was implemented.

Somerset Council will also host a Commonplace survey on their website for the public to feedback.

## 6. Enforcement

Unlike hundreds of other Safer School Streets schemes around the country, we do not have automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras to enforce the short, timed vehicle restrictions in place on Oakfield, Nunney and Park Road. However, our scheme is enforceable by Avon & Somerset Police and fines can be issued to those who are non-compliant. As we are all aware, police capacity is stretched but our PCSOs have been present on the roads during the restricted windows when possible and we have encouraged the police to put more resources in this area.

The NSL Civil Enforcement Officers are unable to enforce the Safer School Streets restrictions, however they can enforce traffic and parking law and continue to be present, when possible, to ensure safe use of the restricted zone. This has resulted in several fines being issued to those parking in a manner that is deemed dangerous. We are encouraging them to put more resources in this area.

## 7. Next Steps

We will continue to listen to feedback from the community, schools, and residents, along with collecting data and monitoring behaviour change.

In March 2025, the plan is to we will encourage all schools in Frome to take part once again in the Sustrans active travel challenge, Big Walk and Wheel. This would be is a welcome opportunity to spread the positive messages surrounding active travel for our town and our community, and to encourage desired behaviour change.

If children, parents, schools, and local residents are in support of the continuation of the scheme, the ETRO will become a permanent TRO at the end of the trial period.