

Summary of Objections and Officer Responses

1. The Closure of Stanhope Ford is a loss to Stanhope's Heritage.
 - a. *The Traffic Regulation Order will close the ford to vehicular traffic in the interests of road safety. The stepping stones can still be utilised by pedestrians and the ford bed will be maintained in a condition that is safe for those wishing to paddle / play within the river during the summer months.*

2. Loss of Tourism / Economic impact on Stanhope and Weardale
 - a. *The Council have researched visitor numbers at Tourist Information Centres in Weardale and Teesdale and have also assessed visitor numbers at other key tourist attractions including Bowes Museum, Killhope Lead Mine. Many have seen a reduction in annual visitor numbers in recent years we believe as a result of the current economic impact seen throughout the Country. Stanhope Ford has been closed to vehicles for the past two years and we have not found it possible to directly correlate the closure of Stanhope Ford with a loss of tourism within Stanhope*

3. Problems with Alternative Route "B6278 Stonebridge & C76 Frosterley School" – (Unable to traverse Stonebridge bridge with abnormal loads, Extra traffic passing Frosterley School & Increased mileage and time using diversion route).
 - a. *Stonebridge on the B6278 upstream of Stanhope Ford has, like all bridges in County Durham, been assessed as being able to accommodate HGV loadings. A traffic count undertaken in November 2010 at Stonebridge shows an Annual Average Daily Traffic Flow of 724 vehicles per day. There have been no reported problems at Stonebridge in the past 2 years since Stanhope Ford has been closed to vehicular traffic.*

 - b. *There is a requirement placed upon abnormal load hauliers to contact the Highway Authority when planning a route. As such all abnormal loads will be directed towards using the most suitable route taking into consideration the characteristics of the vehicle and known physical restrictions on the route such as bridge widths, weight limits, overhead cables etc. These vehicles are escorted either by the Police or the abnormal load company themselves.*

 - c. *There is no planned construction works to be undertaken on the Stonebridge in the foreseeable future. If works were to be planned in the long term then a suitable diversion route would be agreed which would likely be via the C73 Frosterley. It is acknowledged that a Primary School takes direct frontage onto the C73 but a check of historic HGV traffic flows on this route shows a significant reduction since the closure of the Household Waste Disposal site located between Frosterley and Hill End.*

4. Lack of historic repairs undertaken to protect the ford (Council has failed in its statutory duty to maintain the ford)

- a. *Stanhope Ford, being a structure, is inspected as part of a routine annual inspection regime by the Council's Structures Team. Additionally, like all other structures, Stanhope Ford is also inspected when it can be determined that structural damage may have occurred following periods of adverse rainfall.*
- b. *As with all roads and structures, there comes a time when year on year repairs and patching is no longer cost effective and major repair / replacement work is necessary, as is now the case with Stanhope Ford.*
- c. *As an example, the cost of repair work is set out in the table below:*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cost of Repairs</i>	<i>Nature of Repair</i>
<i>September 2000</i>	<i>£1,000</i>	<i>Concrete Repairs</i>
<i>May 2001</i>	<i>£620</i>	<i>Concrete Repair stepping stones</i>
<i>April 2002</i>	<i>£201</i>	<i>Concrete Repair stepping stones</i>
<i>November 2002</i>	<i>£4,250</i>	<i>Improved Signage</i>
<i>June 2004</i>	<i>£1,333</i>	<i>Concrete Repair stepping stones</i>
<i>July 2004</i>	<i>£500</i>	<i>Replace depth gauge and post</i>
<i>June 2005</i>	<i>£700</i>	<i>Replace depth gauge and post (x2)</i>
<i>May 2005</i>	<i>£1,770</i>	<i>Replace damaged signs and posts</i>
<i>September 2007</i>	<i>£4,500</i>	<i>Installation of barriers and signage</i>
<i>December 2008</i>	<i>£895</i>	<i>Replace depth gauge and post (x2)</i>
<i>August 2009</i>	<i>£3,800</i>	<i>Concrete Repairs</i>
<i>November 2009</i>	<i>£308</i>	<i>Replace depth gauge sign plate</i>
<i>May 2010</i>	<i>£1,739</i>	<i>Concrete Repairs</i>

5. Restrict the size of vehicles using the ford to prevent damage

- a. *The size and weight of vehicles using the ford was not an issue. The damage that is being caused is a result of progressive corrosion of the reinforcement bars and subsequent damage to the concrete structure of the ford, which is further weakened due to the force of the water during spate conditions. The upstream edge of the concrete ford deck has seen significant damage in the past couple of years.*

6. Install Automatic Barriers, flashing lights, restraint systems

- a. *The installation of costly automated barriers and signs that are remotely monitored and linked to rising water levels cannot provide a guaranteed method of closure because the technology used is complex and is not yet proven to be fully successful.*
- b. *There are risks associated with providing automated monitoring equipment within the river when it is known that debris such trees and other objects are washed down the river in spate conditions. It should be noted the number of occasions that the Council have had to replace the depth gauge signs and posts (Paragraph 36.3) to appreciate the on-going inherent maintenance liability.*
- c. *Determining what is a safe depth of water for vehicles to cross the ford is also problematic. As an example, a 4x4 vehicle would be able to cross the ford in deeper water than say a sports car which would have a lower engine air intake. The Council would potentially be a risk of receiving claims for damages to motor vehicles if the barriers are in the open position and it is seen by motorists to be safe to cross but this inevitably results in water ingress into the vehicle causing damage to the engine etc.*
- d. *Automated monitoring equipment has been trialled elsewhere in the County at such locations as: (a) the A66 Snow Gates, (b) Fore Bondgate, Bishop Auckland automated bollard and (c) the A689 Newton Cap Viaduct Wind Monitoring signs. All of these installations have been unable to offer a guaranteed safe solution, which is vitally important at this location due to a mixture of technology problems, vandalism, communication equipment problems and power outages.*

7. Bureaucratic “a pure indication of the nanny state”

- a. *The Council is acting in the interests of public safety having gathered evidence dating back to 2000 showing incidents that have arisen at Stanhope Ford that have resulted in calls to the Emergency Services. Attempts have been made to improve the signage but motorists were still attempting to drive through the ford during spate conditions putting themselves and the emergency rescue services at risk.*

8. Costs of recovery should be sought from insurance companies

- a. *Recharging for the cost of recovery is a matter for the emergency services to consider. There is no mandatory requirement placed upon the emergency services to charge for rescues. In many cases, the vehicle that has been recovered will have suffered significant damage through the ingress of water either into the vehicle itself or into the vehicles engine resulting in a costly insurance claim being made by the owner of the vehicle to his / her insurance company.*

- b. *The typical cost to the Fire and Rescue Service and thus the community as a whole of attending and dealing with incidents at Stanhope Ford is reported as £828+VAT per hour.*

9. The Council should hold a Public Enquiry

- a. *There is no statutory obligation placed upon a Highway Authority to undertake a Public Enquiry when progressing a Traffic Regulation Order under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.*

10. Emergency Services are taking their operations to the Extreme

- a. *The Emergency Services are required to make a judgement at the scene as to the safest method of rescuing those involved, taking into consideration the conditions and equipment available without causing undue risk to themselves or the persons to be rescued. Modern day health and safety protocols must be taken into consideration at all times.*

11. Rural Weardale is again losing funding and DCC is wasting money elsewhere

- a. *The County Council's highway maintenance budget is targeted towards addressing its statutory duty of maintaining the highway network in a safe condition with the resources that are available in accordance with national best practice as determined by the 'Highway Safety Inspection Manual'. It is for other Services of the Council to determine their individual funding priorities.*

12. Depth Gauges give the wrong impression

- a. *The depth gauges are of a standard design determined by the Department of Transport that follow the requirements of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. When the signs are affixed within the river bed, the position of the gauge is measured to correlate with the water level. It is known that the depth gauges require regular repairs as a result of debris such as large trees being washed downstream during spate conditions.*

13. Why are stepping stones to remain open to pedestrians if the ford is so problematic

- a. *The Council have no intention of closing the stepping stones. These will remain available for pedestrians to cross the ford. Of the 23 incidents recorded by the Emergency Services since 2000, these have all been vehicle related and it is motorists that are continually putting themselves at risk when crossing the ford in spate conditions.*