

# **FALKIRK COUNCIL**



**Place Services  
Engineering Design**

## **Sunnybrae Footbridge Consultation**

### **Feedback Document**

## **Introduction**

Falkirk Council replaced the 150813/10 Sunnybrae Footbridge (Appendix A) over the River Avon in Avonbridge in Spring 2026. These works were essential as the condition of the asset were noted to be continually degrading during routine inspections.

Falkirk Council's Engineering Design Unit commenced a public consultation via the Council's corporate survey platform Participate +, from 9<sup>th</sup> June to 21<sup>st</sup> July 2026 in response to concerns from residents regarding the recent footbridge replacement. These concerns centred around the size, scale and colour of the new footbridge and questions were asked whether the previous structure could have been repaired. Several residents contacted the Council who responded on the project before a meeting on site was arranged with senior management, residents and an Elected Member. The full results of the public consultation are included in Appendix B

The consultation was open to those who live in Ward 9. I.e. residents in the vicinity of Avonbridge as well as a range of local disability and accessibility groups.

## **Background**

The previous structure, on Falkirk Council's core path network, was highlighted for replacement. Falkirk Council undertake regular structural inspections on all its assets, and this structure has been assessed as "very poor" on the Bridge Condition Indicator and therefore required to be replaced after continued degradation.

All structure replacements are designed to current standards, which are more onerous than those the previous footbridge would have been designed to, taking cognisance of aspects such as flooding and equal access. These current standards meant that a larger structure was required. Given the surrounding area and properties - the structure benefits from provision for equestrian use, as well as route users with accessibility and mobility issues, in accordance with the legislative Equality Act 2010. The bridge height has been set after analysis of the flood risk locally from the River Avon, which has given us the final height requirement of the bridge.

Falkirk Council's Engineering Design Unit has permitted development rights to replace structures in their ownership which meant that a full planning application was not required. We had however consulted with our colleagues in Development Management through the process and ensured we met all necessary criteria.

## **Public Consultation**

After a significant advertisement campaign for the survey which included social media posts, distribution emails to local members and residents and posters in appropriate locations in the village, 45 responses were received. Paper copies were also issued to local businesses, however, on return, there were zero found to be completed.

As stated above, the full consultation responses are noted within Appendix B.

In summary the results showed:

- 80% of respondents are in favour of repainting the exposed steel elements of the bridge Dark Green. Which from consultation answers, links to local residents wishes of the bridge blending more with the surrounding environment.
- 62% of respondents are in favour of there being planting to cover some of the structure.
- 76% of respondents felt that the bridge should be suitable for pedestrians primarily.
- There was a split of opinion on the ramp being replaced with steps with a small majority in favour - 40% in favour of the ramp being replaced with steps, 35% not in favour and 25% neutral.
- 64% of people are in favour of the parapet height being reduced to pedestrian standard. (1.4m high) This means the bridge would not be suitable for equestrian use.

From the text-based questions, there were various points raised by respondents, with main concerns being;

- Some responders feel that the structure is too large and 'industrial' in comparison with the surrounding area, others wanted it removed.
- Some feel that it invades the privacy of homeowners on the north side of the structure.
- Some people felt that making the bridge Equality Act 2010 compliant was not required given the state of the core path on the south side of the bridge, however others agreed it should be compliant for accessibility and future proofing.

## **Conclusion**

The consultation showed that local people were in favour of making alterations to the size and appearance of the new bridge. To this end Falkirk Council are proposing to carry out the following alterations.

| Survey responses                                                                                      | FC Proposal                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Preferably change the colour to a dark green.                                                         | The Bridges team will commission a contractor to paint the visible steel of the structure to a dark green colour: estimated timescale – early Spring 2027 (due to weather & watercourse constraints).                         |
| The visual appearance of the bridge would be improved by lowering the height of the parapet railings. | The Bridges team will commission a fabricator to reduce the parapet height to 1.4m high in line with pedestrian guidelines: estimated timescale 3-4 months.                                                                   |
| The appearance of the bridge would be improved if planting covered some of the structure              | The Bridges team will consult Grounds Maintenance for planting on the north side of the bridge to help the structure to blend in with the surrounding area: estimated timescale next suitable planting season.                |
| Install steps on the north side of the bridge in place of the proposed ramped access                  | The Bridges team will commission a contractor to install a stepped access to the north side of the bridge: estimated timescale 3-4 months.                                                                                    |
| Core path on South of structure is not fully accessible                                               | We have discussed this with our Culture & Greenspace team who are currently carrying out a Core Path Plan consultation. The River Avon Heritage Trail is priority at present, however, they may look at this route in future. |

## Appendix A



Previous structure

New structure



## Appendix B

45/45 responses

### 1. Are you a resident of Avonbridge?

45/45 responses

| Answer | Count |
|--------|-------|
| Yes    | 34    |
| No     | 11    |
| Yes    | 75.6% |
| No     | 24.4% |

### 2. If yes, what is your postcode?

29/45 responses

*Summary: Most respondents provided postcodes from the FK1 and FK2 areas, indicating strong local engagement from residents living near the Sunnybrae Footbridge. This suggests that the project is attracting attention primarily from those who are most likely to be directly affected by or interested in the footbridge.*

### 3. The visual appearance of the footbridge would be improved by repainting the external steel to a neutral colour more in keeping with the location.

45/45 responses

| Answer            | Count |
|-------------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree    | 25    |
| Agree             | 11    |
| Percentage Total  | 80%   |
| Neutral           | 3     |
| Percentage Total  | 6.7%  |
| Strongly Disagree | 4     |
| Disagree          | 2     |
| Percentage Total  | 13.3  |

#### 4. The external steelwork would fit better within the environment if painted:

45/45 responses

| Answer      | Count      |
|-------------|------------|
| Dark Green  | 32 (71.1%) |
| Dark Brown  | 5 (11.1%)  |
| Light Green | 3 (6.7%)   |
| Dark Grey   | 2 (4.4%)   |
| Light Brown | 2 (4.4%)   |
| Light Grey  | 1 (2.2%)   |

#### 5. The visual appearance of the area would be improved if planting covered some of the structure to make it stand out less.

45/45 responses

| Answer            | Count |
|-------------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree    | 19    |
| Agree             | 9     |
| Percentage Total  | 62.2% |
| Neutral           | 9     |
| Percentage Total  | 20%   |
| Strongly Disagree | 5     |
| Disagree          | 3     |
| Percentage Total  | 17.7% |

#### 6. The footbridge should be suitable for: (pick as many as apply)

45/45 responses

| Answer           | Count      |
|------------------|------------|
| Pedestrians      | 34 (75.6%) |
| All of the above | 8 (17.8%)  |
| Cyclists         | 7 (15.6%)  |
| No preference    | 6 (13.3%)  |

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Equestrian                            | 4 (8.9%) |
| Wheelchair and mobility scooter users | 4 (8.9%) |

**7. The north side ramp should be replaced by steps, accepting that the arrangement would not be accessible to all potential future users of the core path.**

45/45 responses

| Answer            | Count |
|-------------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree    | 16    |
| Agree             | 2     |
| Percentage Total  | 40%   |
| Neutral           | 11    |
| Percentage Total  | 24.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 9     |
| Disagree          | 7     |
| Percentage Total  | 35.6% |

**8. The visual appearance of the bridge would be improved by reducing the height of the parapet railings, which would leave the footbridge outside of recommendations for certain uses.**

45/45 responses

| Answer            | Count |
|-------------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree    | 20    |
| Agree             | 9     |
| Percentage Total  | 64.4% |
| Neutral           | 8     |
| Percentage Total  | 17.8% |
| Disagree          | 4     |
| Strongly Disagree | 4     |
| Percentage Total  | 17.8% |

**9. The footbridge staying as is, being repainted with steps down the north side, and with lower parapets and planting would be a more suitable installation.**

45/45 responses

| Answer            | Count |
|-------------------|-------|
| Strongly Disagree | 15    |
| Disagree          | 6     |
| Percentage Total  | 46.6% |
| Neutral           | 6     |
| Percentage Total  | 13.3% |
| Strongly Agree    | 5     |
| Agree             | 13    |
| Percentage Total  | 40%   |

**10. Do you have any comment on your current or future use of the Sunnybrae footbridge and the River Avon core path, or in how these things influence you day to day.**

28/45 responses

*Summary: The strongest theme is that many respondents think making the bridge accessible on its own makes little sense unless the whole route is improved too. Repeatedly, people say the path beyond the bridge is narrow, muddy, uneven, overgrown and not suitable for wheelchairs, cyclists or people with limited mobility. Several therefore call either for the full path to be upgraded and maintained, or for the bridge design to be reconsidered. A similarly common view is that the new bridge is too large, visually intrusive and out of keeping with the area. Many describe it as a “monstrosity” or say it should be removed and replaced with something more like the old bridge. Many respondents say the old bridge and route were well used, especially for daily or frequent dog walking, local visits, exercise and circular walks, and that the route has long been valued by residents and visitors. There are mixed views on accessibility: some argue the bridge does not need to cater for wheelchairs if the rest of the route cannot, while others, including a wheelchair user, support inclusive access but only if the core path itself is also made usable. Other points raised include lack of maintenance on the path, requests for it to be cleared and levelled, concern that it is not cycle-friendly, worries about safety on surrounding roads, and objections from nearby landowners about privacy, dogs, and the route crossing private land.*

## 11. What are your main concerns about the footbridge?

38/45 responses

*Summary: The main themes were that the bridge is far too large, visually intrusive and out of keeping with the rural setting. Many described it as ugly, industrial, a “monstrosity” or an eyesore, saying it spoils the lane, harms the area’s character and feels more like a motorway bridge than a countryside footbridge. Cost was another very common concern. Many respondents felt it was an unjustified or wasteful use of public money, especially as they believed the old bridge could have been repaired rather than replaced. Some said the money should have gone to other local priorities such as community facilities, pavements or other village needs. A lot of respondents also criticised the lack of consultation, planning transparency and communication with local residents, with some saying neighbours and even elected members were not properly informed before works began. Another repeated point was that the bridge’s accessibility rationale does not match the surrounding path network. Several people said the paths, field access and track beyond the bridge are not suitable for wheelchair users, cyclists or horses, so they questioned why such a large accessible structure was built. A smaller number, however, stressed that accessibility should be protected and not reduced. Privacy and security for nearby homes were also raised frequently. Respondents said the bridge’s height allows views into neighbouring properties and could make access easier for thieves. Some also raised safety concerns about how close it is to the road, including risk from passing lorries and tractors. Less common but notable concerns included alleged impacts on private land, questions over land ownership, environmental damage during construction, poor site reinstatement, and worries about future maintenance. Overall, respondents mostly talked about the bridge being oversized, unattractive, expensive, unnecessary in its current form, and poorly handled in terms of consultation and fit with the surrounding paths.*

## **12. What changes could be made to address your concerns?**

33/45 responses

*Summary: Most respondents objected to the current bridge's size and appearance, describing it as too large, out of keeping with the rural setting, and overly industrial. The most common suggestion was to remove it and replace it with a smaller, simpler footbridge more in keeping with the area, often preferably similar to the old bridge or made of wood. A frequent theme was that the bridge seems oversized for actual use. Several respondents questioned the need for such a wide structure and high parapets, suggesting it should be for pedestrians only, with cyclists dismounting and equestrians taking another route if necessary. Some also argued that wheelchair accessibility only makes sense if connecting paths are upgraded too; one respondent explicitly supported keeping accessibility and making the wider core path network accessible as well. Cost was another major concern. Many felt too much money had been spent, called it poor value or a waste of public money, and asked for cheaper alternatives, competitive tendering, or no further spending. Many respondents also felt residents were not properly consulted before installation, and called for letters, public meetings, or better community involvement in future. A smaller number suggested mitigation rather than replacement: repainting the bridge a more natural or green colour, lowering parapets, adding bollards, and softening its visual impact. A few comments focused on surrounding access issues, such as fixing paths and cutting back brambles and nettles.*

## **13. How would you prefer to be involved in decisions/engagement on similar elements in the future?**

24/45 responses

*Summary: Most respondents wanted to be involved earlier, before plans are finalised or work begins, with several calling for formal consultation at the planning stage and warning that earlier input could have avoided problems. A common preference was for direct, local engagement through community meetings, town hall sessions or forums. Others preferred simpler communication methods such as email, letters, online surveys and social media updates. Several respondents asked for clearer information, including visual plans or 3D images, plenty of notice, and more detailed discussion about how structures would be used. There was also a view that those living closest or most directly affected should be contacted directly and given particular weight in the process. A smaller number were either already engaged and intended to stay involved, or were sceptical about needing public involvement at all, arguing council staff should make better decisions without wasting money. One response suggested a community council would be the best route for future engagement.*

#### **14. Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

19/45 responses

*Summary: Most comments were strongly critical of the bridge project, especially its cost, appearance and how the Council handled it. Respondents repeatedly described the process as poorly organised, lacking proper local consultation and accountability, with several questioning who approved the scheme and spend. A common theme was that the bridge is seen as over-engineered and out of keeping with the rural setting. Many objected to its industrial look, scale, bright colour and high parapets, saying it should have been designed to suit the location better, or removed entirely. Several simply called for removal. Cost and value for money were raised often. Respondents questioned spending around £300k on the bridge when other local priorities such as roads, pavements, drainage and community facilities were seen as more urgent. Some felt the previous bridge should simply have been maintained better. Accessibility was another major issue, but often in a critical way. Multiple responses argued that the bridge's accessible design makes little sense because the wider core path is not accessible, and wheelchair access already existed by another route. Some therefore saw the ramp and large-scale design as unnecessary. One respondent suggested replacing the north ramp with steps. There were also concerns about land ownership, claims of biased or limited consultation questions, and calls for a transparent review of the project and decision-making. A small minority defended the bridge or pushed back on complaints, saying safety and suitability for all users matter and that the loudest local voices may not be right. One practical point raised was the need to tidy the site.*