

LRAG News Update – 27 June 2023

Feedback from the Meeting of Sustainable Travel Reference Group (STRG) on 21 June 2023

It is becoming clearer that there are significantly different interpretations, about obtaining public reaction to the Active Travel Scheme, between Surrey CC (coached by The Consultation Institute) and LRAG.

Online definitions offer the following differences in the terms being employed:

Consultation: *the process of discussing something with someone in order to get their advice or opinion about it*

Engagement: *the involvement and enthusiasm of participants*

The public expressed huge dismay at the meeting on 5th January 2023, on several themes:

- lengthy road closure, with effects on businesses, schools and surrounding roads,
- lack of extensive advance consultation,
- perceptions of many unsafe design elements,
- potential for adverse congestion and pollution effects,
- lack of balance of benefits for all road users, and
- inappropriate use of funds (whether governmental or local).

At the time only the section of London Road between Aldi and Boxgrove was being considered. Now a huge number of new residents and businesses are involved, by the intention to convert Boxgrove roundabout to a Dutch-style (cyclist and pedestrian priority), and to continue the cycle scheme to beyond GLive.

SCC's sketch plans were not adequately detailed, lacking dimensions and cross-sections. Discussions at the STRG meeting reinforced LRAG's impression that SCC's version of "engagement with the public" was by merely explaining how the finalised scheme would be.

LRAG's view is that the public will want to have answers for all of the above concerns, in order to reach a balanced judgment about the feasibility of the scheme, not just to know a rose-tinted version of how it will look and work.

The next meeting of STRG is scheduled for 19th July, by which time details of traffic management during construction should be available. LRAG worries that, again, only similar vague details may be presented, which will be insufficient to develop questions that truly seek advice or opinion.

The previous "consultation", frequently claimed by SCC as having 58% support for the scheme, though based on a mere 77 telephone calls, has been swept under the carpet. However, there is no plan for a replacement quantitative survey, particularly involving those who will be most affected by the scheme.

LRAG finds it difficult to understand on what basis SCC plan to assess the public's wishes; what evidence will be gathered and presented; what method of judgment will be applied to decide whether the scheme should proceed.

[LRAG will continue to press for a more informative level of feedback](#) such that it can be openly demonstrated there is genuine influence from the public's desires.

However, if the on-going approach of only revealing the benefits, and failing to be frank about the disadvantages, continues, it may be necessary to re-visit the heavy email bombardment to very senior council officials that woke SCC to their failings last December.