

LRAG News Update – 22 August 2023

Future Plans for The London Road Active Travel Scheme

LRAG has learned that the public engagement will commence on 18th September. It will last for 8 weeks and there will be 4 drop-in sessions. In addition, letters will be sent to every household in the area announcing the website for feedback, and locations and times for the drop-ins. The final decision on whether to proceed with the scheme, following reports from the Consultation Institute, will be taken by Cllr Matt Furniss at the appropriate Lead Member meeting, with both the report and the meeting being public.

Sustainable Travel Reference Group (STRG)

Minutes: The first reply to LRAG's challenge about the accuracy of the Minutes from the 26th July meeting was a rebuttal from SCC. A further challenge was issued and a re-issue of the Minutes appeared mid-afternoon on 21st August with some amendments, but still containing misrepresentations.

This continues to be an extremely disappointing attitude, especially when there is such an emphasis placed in SCC pronouncements that stakeholders are co-producing the engagement process. It appears that co-production only applies if there is concurrence with SCC's opinion.

There remain several points of contention:

- Although the Minutes refer to Agenda Items, there was no Agenda issued.
- Attendees were told to expect to **vote** on prioritising questions for the engagement exercise, but the Minutes assert that only their **participation** was required. This is misreporting.
- Stakeholders received a 20-page document, containing analysis of the Miro Board comments by The Consultation Institute - without prior warning - at 12.20, to be voted on at a meeting at 19.00. In the absence of adequate time to review this document, it would have been impossible to determine and vote for priorities during the meeting.

This lack of sufficient advance notice is not properly clarified in the Minutes and consequently does not fully explain the chronological sequence why the LRAG chair advised that he would not be in position to vote on determining priorities for questions.

- The tone of some of the comments submitted during the Miro Board process is incorrectly stated as not involving aggression, despite it being necessary to retrospectively add a caution advising contributors to provide civil inputs.
- Some of the question-and-answer section of the Minutes is not reported in enough detail, specifically around the justification for refusing to repeat a consultation for the expanded scheme, similar to the one that previously, repeatedly, quoted positive approval ratings.

The LRAG chair attempted to point out that, whatever it is called, a more thorough quantitative gathering of public approval ought to be possible now that full design and implementation details will be available in advance. Not to do so could easily create inferences about the technical validity of the previous consultation and indicate that the public voice is being quashed.

- The Minutes advise that the content of future meetings is to be compressed. This was not discussed or agreed with Stakeholders. Detailed workshops are now to be held too late to influence preset public questions and answers, contrary to the impression previously created.

As mentioned on several previous occasions, and as clearly stated on [LRAG's website](#), the full set of benefits and concerns must be available to the public so that they can see the whole picture. Failure to present the full picture risks mistrust and misconception.