

LRAG News Update – 29 August 2023

Media Involvement

On 27th August LLAG chair, and others, received the following request, from the editor of the Guildford Dragon, to make a comment on Surrey CC's latest website update by 1700 on 28 August: "Do you think the planned consultation is adequate? If not, why not?" ... in 100 words!

The timing is slightly unfortunate in that, with only 3 weeks to go before the public engagement phase is due to start, nobody outside Surrey CC and The Consultation Institute, has been given details of the final design, the traffic management plans, or the set of FAQs that will be available. The stakeholder group members have been repeatedly assured that they will receive all this information this week, in advance of a confirmation meeting on 6th September ... but are told that they must not share anything outside the actual members of the group.

The reply to Guildford Dragon had to be anodyne, saying "we don't know, but given the short period in between the final meeting and the 18th September, when letters to all households are anticipated, not much will get changed, and so stakeholders are being presented with more or less a *fait accompli*."

The benefit of the doubt is still being afforded to Surrey CC, that they will provide a comprehensive and balanced presentation for the public, in accordance with the guidance in the Cycle Infrastructure Design document. However, given the level of secrecy and the reluctance to acknowledge alternative opinions in the record of the last meeting, it seems unlikely that there will be a substantial accord at the 6th September Meeting.

Actions During Public Engagement

It cannot be over-emphasised how important it is for the public to actively engage, via all the means provided by SCC, during the 8 weeks following 18th September. As has been repeatedly stated, LLAG's remit is not to act as opponents of the scheme; it has worked hard to make sure that the information available to the public is accurate and comprehensive, frequently difficult due to the evasiveness of the source.

SCC are firmly of the opinion that the public reaction on the previous occasion was solely because of the proposed 5-month closure. The wave of emails that caused the postponement, and the mood of the meeting on 5th January reinforced the fact that there were, in fact, many other factors causing disquiet.

When final details are permitted to be made publicly available, LLAG will assess the extent of the content and try to "fill in any gaps" on their website. This will attempt to provide a guide for the public to raise additional points at the 4 drop-in events and a guide for making comments via the Commonplace.is scheme which Surrey CC will use.