

LRAG News Update – 13 March 2023

Surrey CC confirmed, in their 8th March 2023 website update, the timescale for their new engagement plan, and this morning the first invites to participants in their Sustainable Travel Reference Group (STRG) have arrived. The first gathering has been scheduled for 29th March.

Neither the website nor the invite makes a mention of the size of this group, although previous correspondence has stated that it will be 10-12 stakeholders, whose role *“will be to co-produce the community engagement about the scheme to ensure all those who wish to have a say can do so” ... “in order to seek views on both the design and how we build the scheme.”*

Thereafter, the public consultation is planned on *“taking the form of a survey for households within the catchment of the whole scheme, a number of drop-in sessions at an accessible venue ... as well as further digital and print communications.”*

Defining the terms of reference for the stakeholder group may prove interesting. As we have previously mentioned, simply seeking to revisit and survey opinions about the principles of providing improved cycling facilities must no longer be the main issue for consultation.

Previous adverse public reaction was probably due, primarily, to a feeling of having been excluded from the opportunity to express a view, about the method of delivery (road closure), followed closely by opinions that several aspects of the design were so flawed as to be dangerous. We believe it will be important that the terms of reference for the stakeholder group ensure that whatever is presented to the ‘wider community’ must meet the test of balancing the needs of **everyone affected** more effectively than previous plans.

If you, or someone who can appropriately represent you, has not been invited to participate, and you continue to feel excluded, we suggest that you should write directly to Cllr Matt Furniss (matt.furniss@surreycc.gov.uk) who issued the invitations. Please copy Cllr Tim Oliver (tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk) and Katie Stewart (katie.stewart@surreycc.gov.uk) and copy LLAG (info@lrag.co.uk). As LLAG has only been assigned one place at the table there is a risk that some STRG members may only speak on behalf of minority groups and organisations, but may well be afforded equal status as, say, several residents’ associations.

We aim to make clear to SCC that the stakeholder group must – unlike the previous consultation - represent the community which will be directly impacted by the scheme, and that undemocratic bias must be avoided.

In conclusion, **if you have received an invite to join the Sustainable Travel Reference Group, we would be grateful to learn of the approach by SCC.** In turn we will keep you advised as we learn more.