

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE****IN TOWN WITHOUT MY CAR 2005****LOCATION: HIGH STREET, EGHAM****16 December 2005****SUMMARY**

In Town Without My Car Day is an annual event held across Europe to promote alternatives to the car. This year over 1,000 towns/cities took part in the event. The day involved a road closure, in this case High Street, Egham and involved the local authority, businesses, schools and partners working together to raise awareness that there are alternatives to the car for the travelling public.

It is hoped that by promoting more sustainable means of transport that associated problems would be mitigated such as air and noise pollution, road safety, health of the local population, and congestion which is calculated to cost the County Council more than £600 million every year.

**BACKGROUND**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September Egham took part in a very successful In Town Without My Car Day event. The High Street was closed to motorised vehicles from 08:00 to 18:00. Partners took part and supported the event by providing equipment, resources and staff time.

It was agreed at the 11 March 2005 Local Committee that results should be reported back to a future Committee.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to agree:

- a) **that members support the development of an In Town Without My Car Day to be held within the Borough of Runnymede on an annual basis starting in September 2006, and continue to support other initiatives to promote sustainable travel modes.**

## **1.0 Stands / Information Points on the day were as follows:**

### **1.1 Transport Alternatives**

- Surrey Car Share and Company Travel Plan stand promoted the work of Surrey County Council in reducing the number of cars on the roads. Surrey Car Share as a result of taking part in the event, networked with local companies to set up their businesses on the database and also gained some single subscriptions to the site.
- Runnymede Local Transportation Service presented a stand on their work to improve the roads in the Borough and also progress on the local cycle network.
- Safe Routes to Schools and Road Safety Team provided information on their work on increasing road safety and also how they promote alternatives to the car at the local schools.
- Cyclostore attended the event and provided some free bike maintenance for the passing public. Cyclostore also attended a cycle proficiency-training day at Magna Carta school to provide some bike maintenance to the children.

### **1.2 Public Transport**

- South West Trains (SWT) - a representative attended the event and promoted the service through Egham. This provided a great networking opportunity between SWT and others at the event.
- Quality Bus Partnership re-launched the partnership by the introduction of a new member. British Airports Authority (BAA) has recently joined the partnership, which along with the other partners SCC, Runnymede Borough Council, Travel London, First, Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, is improving the services throughout the Borough.
- A Routemaster was provided by BAA, which provided information on bus routes through the Borough. First provided a Yellow Bus (a successful Runnymede Borough Council initiative to reduce congestion in the Borough) and Travel London provided a low floor bus. All these buses were used as information centres to promote local services.

### **1.3 Local Environment**

- Runnymede Borough Council presented their work on Recycling, Energy Efficiency and the Local Development Framework. Their involvement allowed them to answer the public's questions on local issues.
- Royal Holloway University of London presented a stand on their work to increase sustainability on campus.

The event was used as a 'sounding board' by visitors, this enabled them to find out more about the local authority's work and how SCC are working in partnership with other authorities and businesses to improve local services. The day was a successful way to engage with the public on a variety of issues.

## 2.0 Questionnaire results

Questionnaires were provided by the Department for Transport and were used by all the In Town Without My Car Day organisers. These are aimed to help judge the response from the public to the event.

Students of Strodes College completed the majority (63%) of the questionnaires. Understandably this had an impact on the responses but it was felt beneficial to engage with young people, which may influence future behaviour. The main points were as follows:

- Over 95% of the respondents thought that the event was either a good or a very good idea;
- The majority of the respondents thought that it was a good idea to repeat this kind of an event once a month and almost 60% thought that the car free zone should be bigger;
- 70% would shop in the street more if it was car free all the time;
- The most popular comments about the event were that the street was quieter, friendlier, safer, it was easier to walk and cycle around, it contributed to solving the pollution problem and the event helped raise awareness about issues associated with increased car use.

## 3.0 What went well

- The event was well organised which allowed for little disruption on the day;
- Literary Institute was a good choice as a base for the day. It enabled the team to leave items safely in the hall while at the same time provided catering and bathroom facilities;
- Branding was effective as it allowed the public to distinguish that Surrey County Council staff were present to answer any questions. Free t-shirts were supplied by the Department for Transport to help reduce costs on the day;
- Balloons were a cheap way of encouraging younger visitors to fill out the questionnaires. They were given to young children as a token gesture which was popular with the adults.
- A local band played music throughout the day which created a relaxed and friendly environment;
- A horse and carriage provided taster rides along the High Street for the public. This was well received and proved to be a good way to encourage people to think about their choice of transport;
- The event proved to be a good networking potential for all involved;
- Team working meant that the event ran smoothly which allowed the public to see SCC in a good light. The involvement of so many partners (Runnymede Borough Council, South West Trains, Bus Operators, Local Businesses) promoted that the local authority is working closely with other partners to improve the public highway;
- Questionnaire results proved that the event was well received by the public;
- Quality Bus Partnership – the partnership was re-launched at the event and was a great way of promoting the joint working by the operators through Egham and the routes that they provide;
- Local college students attended the event and made it very successful as they increased the numbers on the day and took part in some of the activities;
- Good support from the local press meant that there was coverage before and after the event.
- Consulting the local businesses - SCC informed all the businesses along the High Street of the road closure which meant that there weren't any disgruntled business

owners and they weren't surprised on the day. The majority of the businesses in the area supported the event.

#### 4.0 Improvements for next time

- The car free zone was confined to the High St but it would have been more effective if this zone had been bigger. There were a number of visitors that mentioned this as a response to the questionnaires. This would have helped highlight the aim of the event, as it would have encouraged people to leave their cars at home for the day. The reasoning behind just closing off a small quiet road was that the Borough had not taken part in the event before and wanted to make sure that there was support for it and to learn from any teething problems.
- Even though this event can be organised on a relatively low budget some staff time has to be taken up on the day to help facilitate the event.
- Office Cover – calls were diverted to the Contact Centre and reception staff were informed that the office was empty on the day. Calls to the office general number were diverted to a mobile phone and emergency contact numbers were circulated but there were still visitors to the office who requested to see in person members of staff. For future events a member of staff will remain in the office to cover telephones and to meet members of the public with particular issues.

#### 5.0 Financial Implications

An initial budget was estimated as £5000 but the actual event cost (**excluding** staff time) was £1966.72.

The event was manned on the day by existing salaried County Council staff. No additional money was incurred for staff costs over and above that already committed for the financial year. From analysing time sheet records **if** staff were to have charged their time, the total staff cost for the day was calculated to be £1,677. It should be noted that staff at this event engaged with customers beyond this direct remit, explaining issues and concerns across the entire Borough. The time spent by staff in advance preparing for the event has been calculated as £2634.

A number of items purchased can be re-used for any future events. Items bought to help facilitate the event were relatively cheap. These are detailed below:

Event Costs	Description	Cost	Reusable?
Hire of Hall on the day	Literary Institute and refreshments etc...	£236.00	
TT Signs, Addlestone	Banners X 3	£352.50	YES
Mobile Education Unit	Trailer and stand	£80.00	
Brass Monkeys	Band	£450.00	
Highway maintenance and improvement stand	Related costs e.g. balloons, chalks and face paints	£211.37	YES
Tchibo	18 cycle computers - prizes for competition	£168.65	
Atkins	Hire of mini bus for event 21/09 to 23/09	£168.20	
Horse and Carriage	£600 but costs were shared with Spelthorne LTS	£300.00	
<b>Event Costs total (excluding staff time)</b>		<b>£1,966.72</b>	

## 6.0 Future Locations to be considered:

Addlestone and Chertsey have been previously suggested as good locations for future events but due to the amount of road works at these locations in recent times it is felt sensible to avoid any further disturbance to the local traders.

The event could be held in Egham again as the High Street was a very suitable location and there was support from the local traders. If it were held in Egham again, greater business involvement would be encouraged.

Deputy Mayor, Professor Moreton Moore suggested that Royal Holloway University of London would be keen to organise an event during "Freshers' week" 2006.

## 7.0 Conclusions

In Town Without My Car turned out to be a great success. The response from the press and the public was very positive and there were suggestions to increase the size of the road closure so that it would have a real effect on the traffic.

If the event were repeated in future years it would help to increase awareness of the transport alternatives available in the local area. This in turn would help to increase numbers walking, cycling and using public transport, which would contribute to Surrey's Vision of making the travelling experience within the County more sustainable.

**Report by: Susanne Afra, Sustainable Travel Officer**

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