

Woking Access Group

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Chair: Clive Wood
Vice Chair: Neville Hinks
Administrator: Michelle Willoughby

Cllr Ian Lake
Surrey County Council
County Hall
Penrhyn Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 2DN

11 August 2010

Dear Cllr Lake,

Introduction of pilot shared use area – Woking

I am writing to you on behalf of Woking Access Group, to express our sincere concern and disappointment in the way that we feel the introduction of the shared use cycle and pedestrian areas have been introduced in Woking. As portfolio holder with responsibility for policies within transport related issues, we would request that you give due consideration to the concerns that we have.

As I am sure you are aware, a pilot scheme was introduced in Woking town centre on 3rd April 2009, which allowed cyclists to use their bikes in what previously had been pedestrian only areas. We understand that this was part of the Cycle Woking project.

Proper consultation

Woking Access Group have severe concerns and are extremely disappointed that Surrey County Council Officers responsible for the introduction of this pilot scheme, did not consult with either the Access Group, or any other disability organisation, prior to the introduction of the scheme. You will note from the Equality Impact Assessment (attached) which was carried out several months after the introduction of the pilot, that Woking Access Group were 'informed' of the introduction of the shared use area at their meeting on March 26th 2009, approximately one week before the scheme was introduced. Therefore the group was not consulted, rather told that this is what is happening.

Since the introduction of the pilot scheme, the access group have not been approached by Surrey County Council Officers involved with the project to seek our views. Although, Paul Fishwick – Cycle Woking programme manager, did give a short presentation on the Cycle Woking programme

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at an access group meeting on May 20th 2010. I understand that the access group members made clear to Mr Fishwick that they were dissatisfied with the lack of consultation prior and during the scheme. I feel I should highlight this, as it would appear that Mr Fishwick informed Andrew Jackson, from the office of the Chief Executive for Surrey County Council, 'that most people received his presentation well and were satisfied that their concerns were being taken into account'. I have been informed that this was certainly not the case.

Officer's report to local committee (Woking)

We would like to bring to your attention some areas of concern we have within a report submitted to the local committee (Woking), on July 7th 2010, by Mr. Fishwick 'Cycle Woking – Proposed Scheme'. In section 3.3, we note that Mr. Fishwick mentions concerns by 'certain groups representing the disabled prior to the introduction of the experimental order'. Mr. Fishwick goes on to say that these concerns were based 'on perceived issues'. I should say now, that we find this comment ill informed and dismissive. Disabled people have genuine concerns for their safety, when sharing areas which are also being used by cyclists or any other vehicles. These genuine concerns are also shared by other groups such as older people.

Section 3.4 states that the 'experimental order has been in place for just over 15 months', and goes on to say 'that this has acted as a lengthy consultation period for people or representatives of groups to report issues and incidents, but to date non have been reported'. We would like to make you aware that Surrey Disabled People's Partnership (formerly NWSADP), did highlight concerns regarding the safety of disabled people and others in this pilot, as well as the lack of any consultation process or an Equality Impact Assessment, prior to the introduction of this pilot.

The Access Group has been informed that an additional meeting of the Local Committee (Woking) will be held on September 2nd to discuss Cycle Woking decisions that were deferred from the July Local Committee meeting. Members of our Access Group will be attending this meeting and we hope to have the opportunity to address the committee members.

We would request that the shared use facility pilot in Woking be suspended and that a full and inclusive consultation process is carried out, to allow all sections of the community, including disabled people, the opportunity to give their views with regard to introducing such initiatives within Woking. We also feel that this consultation should be extended to the whole of Surrey as the issue of shared surfaces is one that may impact on disabled people and other members of the community across the county.

Cllr Lake, Woking Access Group has a sincere belief that the introduction of such shared use schemes will put the safety of vulnerable pedestrians and others at risk. We ask that you and your fellow elected members give our concerns proper consideration.

I would like to suggest that a meeting is arranged for I and fellow members of the Access Group to meet with you to discuss this issue, at the earliest opportunity.

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Clive Wood
Chairman
Woking Access Group

CC: Local Committee (Woking) members
David McNulty – Chief Executive Surrey County Council
Carol Pearson - Chief Executive Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
Ray Morgan – Chief Executive Woking Borough Council
Dominic Webb – Chair Surrey Access Forum & SAF members
Paul Fishwick – Cycle Woking (Surrey County Council)

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