

Item 5 – Petitions and Petition Responses

Supplementary paper

Additional information provided by the lead petitioner as background to the request to initiate a car-free day in Guildford town centre

A Car Free Day (Green Guildford Day)

‘Car Free Day’ is an international event celebrated around 22 September each year in which people of all ages are encouraged to move around towns and cities by walking or on bicycles and public transport.

Guildford can participate (again, as it did so in 2001/2) by using a mixture of compulsory and voluntary measures to create a mini festival to celebrate a **‘Green Guildford Day.’**

September 2020 can be considered a pilot for an annual event.

The aims of a Car Free Day/Green Guildford Day are to:

1. Reduce pollution and carbon emissions (in line with the Council’s declared climate emergency);
2. Stimulate the ‘modal shift’ in transportation that Guildford needs, by encouraging residents and visitors to find alternative, healthier ways of getting around. It would showcase what the town centre would be like without cars and what alternative methods of transport exist;
3. Publicise environmental issues and how Guildford can become greener.

Street closures and voluntary restraint on car usage

The compulsory core of the event would be the closure of a selection of town centre streets to all but essential traffic for a day each year. Ideally these would include the High St (including the upper section), North Street, the gyratory system (or sections), and cross cutting streets such as Chapel St. and Market St.

However, in the first year, it may be necessary to limit the scope of closures (e.g. exclude the gyratory and upper High St) because of logistical and cost issues. In this case, voluntary restraint on car usage would be encouraged through publicity that would ask drivers to leave the car behind, and to limit idling their vehicles wherever possible.

Green events

The day would be celebrated by a series of events and activities in the town centre. These would amount to a mini festival focussed on alternative methods of transport and environmental issues. The aim would be to attract *more* people to the Town Centre, not exclude them through car restrictions.

For example:

- Family fun bike ride around High St/North St (organised by GBUG)
- Electric Bike demonstration (as part of the Electric Bike scheme?)
- Walking tours of the town centre (coinciding with WalkFest in September)
- Extension and promotion of Park and Ride
- Events put on by Green groups e.g. Guildford Environmental Forum, Green Drinks, Extinction Rebellion, Surrey Wildlife, Woodland Trust, Greenpeace
- Environmental film show (Electric Theatre?)
- Link to Heritage Open Days (in September)

- Air Quality testing by GCARE (University of Surrey), comparing car free day to normal usage.

Key issues include:

- Allowing access to emergency vehicles and blue badge holders
- Retailers and traders concerns over loss of business
- Access for deliveries
- Through traffic across the town centre
- Access to public transport (trains, buses and taxis)
- Costs of street closures.

Suggestions to mitigate the issues:

- Publicity aimed at the positive aspects of the day and activities to ensure more visitors to the town, not less
- Promote Park and Ride – more frequent services and publicity for P&R for the day
- Consider first event as a pilot with limited street closures and maximum voluntary aspects, possibly on a Sunday (N.B. P&R currently does not operate on Sunday)
- Engage with community and green groups to adopt and support the day
- Use an alternative brand such as 'Green Guildford Day' rather than Car Free Day to avoid stigmatising cars
- Learn from the experience of Guildford's Car Free Day in 2001 and 2002 ('In Town without my Car') as part of European Car Free Day, which were considered 'a great success' (see SCC report to the Guildford Local Committee, 24th July 2002).
- Set up a working group with representatives from interested parties to consider how to maximise the benefits and minimise any disruption.

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10.03.20