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21 May 2020

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FAO Councillor Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council

### **Safe Passage for Cyclists During Current Health Crisis**

This letter is sent on behalf of the committee of West Surrey Cycling Club (WSCC), which is a branch of Cycling UK. The club has more than 200 active members who live in and around Guildford, Woking, Godalming, Farnham, Haslemere, and Camberley. Our club caters for all levels and ability in a way that is social, enjoyable and safe. Last year we organised 350 rides and our members covered over 120,000 miles on club rides in the gorgeous scenery of Surrey, Hampshire, Sussex and surrounding counties, led by experienced ride leaders.

In addition to being active leisure cyclists, many WSCC members are also committed to the benefits of using bikes as an alternative to motorised transport, whether for recreation, shopping, commuting or other business purposes.

During the recent and ongoing lockdown period, it has been heartening for us to see so many people within our region resurrecting their bikes and returning to the unusually quiet roads. It has been particularly inspirational to see family groups out on their bikes, rediscovering the simple and healthy pleasures of this mode of transport. The space and clear passage that has been granted to cyclists during this period has created a chance for many to gain confidence and competence on two wheels.

## Opportunities for change

Now that the most severe lockdown restrictions are being relaxed, and as we move towards a more general opening up of social and commercial activity, there is a clear opportunity to make these newly acquired cycling habits a more permanent feature of our transport choices.

Indeed, given the legitimate concerns raised by crowding passengers into public transport, we believe it is absolutely essential for our local and national governments to prioritise safe spaces and passageways for cyclists. It is neither desirable nor practically feasible for an increase in private car use to take up the slack as people switch away from bus and train travel, and although walking/running might provide an option for some, they cannot be expected to be a workable alternative for those who do not live in or close to the town centres.

Almost all of our members are car drivers as well as cyclists, but none of us wants to spend more time sitting in traffic, creating pollution and literally going nowhere. Cycling is a real solution. A recent CUK survey found that well over a third of the population would be prepared to cycle more and use cars less.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/third-people-agree-they-could-ditch-car-favour-cycling>

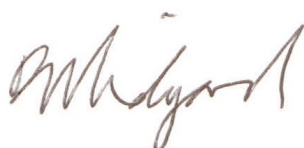
## Policy action

We are aware that the Government has recently created a £250m emergency fund to support councils to develop safer facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, and that more than 30 local authorities have already taken steps to achieve this essential goal. We urge Surrey County Council to take urgent steps to join this movement through a combination of:

- Traffic free cycle tracks and paths to high streets and town centres
- More designated cycle lanes on roads
- Traffic restrictions in residential streets
- Speed limit reductions in residential and built up areas

Our club comprises a large number of active cyclists across various parts of Surrey and beyond. We will be encouraging individual WSCC members to contact you with ideas and suggestions as to what can best be achieved in their local areas to provide essential safe passage for cyclists.

Yours sincerely



Derek Ridyard  
Chairman, West Surrey Cycling Club

This letter is being copied to Council leaders in the Local Authority Councils (in Surrey and Hampshire) most relevant to our membership:

Woking	David Bittleston
Guildford	Caroline Reeves
Waverley	John Ward
Surrey Heath	Alan McLafferty
Runnymede	Marisa Heath
Mole Valley	Stephen Cooksey
Rushmoor	David Clifford
Hart	David Neighbour