



By Email

To: Leader of Sefton Council & Cabinet

From: Stuart Bennett

Save Rimrose Valley & Rimrose Valley Friends
[REDACTED]

Tuesday 27th June, 2023

Dear Council Leader and Cabinet Members,

Re: Open letter on Traffic Reduction and Port Access Feasibility study

Traffic Reduction

We recently contacted Cllr Maher and Metro Mayor, Steve Rotheram, in relation to the opportunities for Sefton Council to tackle congestion, pollution, CO2 emissions and improving road safety and our physical and mental health.

In light of the government's formal delay to the Port of Liverpool Access Road, we are asking the Council to make use of this respite by urgently pursuing such measures to reduce traffic. This would help reduce the case for the road as well as delivering many benefits, particularly in the South of the Borough.

For background/context, please read the accompanying email attachment, which outlines the work of an organisation called Mobilityways. They focus on the potential for our existing road network to tackle congestion through the development of individual travel plans for those working at big employment sites.

As we understand it, it is for the Local Authority, and specifically Council Leaders, to push for such a scheme to be progressed and to work with the LCRCA to secure access to the relevant funding obtained from central government.

Given the current impasse in relation to port access and the opportunities a scheme such as this presents to tackle so many of the issues being experienced in our part of the borough, we believe that this is something that could and should form the basis of an urgent funding bid, so that both the money and the resource can be found to make it happen.

Mobilityways is registered as a CIC and is formally approved for procurement by the public sector. They are the only provider of the services they offer in the market and are already working with Greater Manchester CA. For transparency, we have no financial connection with them.

As a result, we cannot see any barriers to either our Local or Combined Authority working with them.

Please can Cabinet seek to prioritise and progress this initiative?

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Port Access Feasibility Study

As you are aware, we held a demonstration in August 2021; marching from Rimrose Valley to the Port of Liverpool to highlight the Port's role in the government's road proposal and to reject both port access options put forward by National Highways in 2017. The Council kindly arranged for signage and temporary road closures to enable this to happen safely.

At the event, we invited various people to address the crowds prior to the march and Cllr Cummins represented Sefton Council. He restated the Council's commitment to protecting Rimrose Valley and confirmed it would fight National Highways' plans every step of the way. Cllr Cummins spoke positively about the Inland Port Connectivity Concept report produced by ARUP in June 2020. The council invested money into the production of this report; effectively doing the job of the Department for Transport by looking at alternatives to a road solution.

As part of this update, we were told that the LCRCA had committed £100K to develop this work in the form of a full feasibility study, and that the work would be coming to an end later in 2021. Yet, three years since the initial report was produced and almost two years since this update, we seem to be no further forward.

In the intervening period, the Port Access Steering Group has reconvened, now chaired by the LCRCA, and various working groups have been formed. One is tasked with exploring alternative modes of transferring freight in and out of the Port of Liverpool, but, as far as we can tell, no goals or deadlines have been set for any outcomes and no feasibility study commissioned.

Additionally, Freeport has become a reality and is now in full swing. I recently met with Giles Jones, Project Manager with responsibility for the Freeport's innovation and decarbonisation goals, to explore whether they were pursuing alternatives to port access as part of their work.

Whilst some interesting initiatives are progressing, it was made quite clear that, as things stand, the Freeport project will not be the vehicle to solve the infrastructure around the maritime port and that they too did not have access to the £100K funding referred to above.

As Cabinet is aware, presenting fully costed, viable alternatives to the Port of Liverpool Access Road is not only fundamental to the success of our own campaign; it is the only credible way in which Sefton Council can back up its opposition to these plans. A policy of non-cooperation with National Highways over the road is not a long-term strategy.

The latest confirmed delay to the road plans has presented another opportunity for Sefton to seek the information it requires to demonstrate a better solution for port access, but this additional time will soon run out. RIS3 – the package of road projects to which the Port of Liverpool Access Scheme has been moved – commences at the beginning of 2025, just 18 months away.

Please can Cabinet provide an update on efforts to secure the funds previously committed by the LCRCA for this purpose and advise what progress is being made towards commissioning the feasibility study? Also, in light of the above, who is to lead on this work, with the working group of PASG having been tasked with a similar brief?

We note that National Highways is represented at both PASG and this working group and therefore have concerns as to whether there is a genuine desire to push things forward at the pace required.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Stu Bennett
on behalf of Rimrose Valley Friends and the Save Rimrose Valley Campaign

cc: Peter Dowd MP; Bill Esterson MP; Steve Rotheram - Mayor Liverpool City Region; Stephen Watson SMBC;
Peter Moore SMBC; Huw Jenkins LCRCA; Andy Sawyer LCRCA; Giles Jones LCRCA