

Redevelopment of Ranmore BMX/MTB Track

Mole Valley Cycling Forum (MVCF) is extremely concerned to recently learn about the potential loss of the Ranmore BMX/MTB park as free-to-use community asset for local youngsters. We would have appreciated earlier consultation about this initiative which we understand has been under consideration by MVDC for some time.

We understand that the proposal for the development of the BMX/MTB track at Ranmore by Trail Academy will be considered at the Cabinet meeting tomorrow. We feel that potentially removing open access on community-owned land needs particular and careful consultation with existing users and other key stakeholders who may be impacted by change of ownership of the facility.

This place is an important local facility for children, allowing them to interact and develop social skills, get exercise and have a place to gather to focus on bike riding and handling skills. We believe it is vitally important to maintain this ethos. In a conversation that I had yesterday with a mother and her young son, who is a user of the facility, it was emphasised by the mother that the knowledge of knowing where to find her son and to keep him safe from cycling on local roads (which she considered to be dangerous) were particularly important benefits of the facility. The space and freedom this place gives is a priceless community asset.

We are in full agreement with the concern expressed in a MVDC briefing document which states that: ***"...a key risk is around accessibility to the site. It is currently free to use and available to all....."*** and that ***"The proposal will make it a paid for service, and therefore there is a risk that it becomes inaccessible to some people, as well as being a potential reputational risk."***

Loss of open access to the track would be a loss of public amenity at a time where we need to encourage people to cycle more. This is not likely to happen if they are priced out of local facilities. We understand the Trail Academy is proposing an annual membership of £90/year, an 'after school' pass of £3.50 or a full day pass to be £10/day. This may well prove to be a deterrent for some and we fully concur and support the point expressed in the MVDC document that- ***"We would not want the cost to restrict usage and it is vital that the site remains accessible e.g. through providing a discounted rates for families on low income."***

Development of the site will encourage riders from more distant locations which in turn will lead to increased traffic with subsequent impact on the limited parking available to the walkers and allotment holders. In the summer, the car park can be completely full. Other stakeholder concerns will also need to be addressed eg: How will access to the Community Orchard be maintained?

John (Arnold)

Chair - Mole Valley Cycling Forum