

DRUG STORE

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Councillor Keith Driver - Neighbourhoods and Community Safety portfolio holder
Leader of the Council, all Councilors, MP Norwich South, MP Norwich North
City Hall, St. Peter's Street
Norwich NR2 1NH

Ref: NCC6
24th November 2014

Dear Cllr Keith Driver,

We received today the revised proposal for a by-law banning skateboarding and the corresponding press release issued by Norwich City Council.

We have noted that while you had time to revise your proposal, you have not made the time to answer any of our letters or provided us with any of the documents we requested.

There are many items in both your revised proposal and press release that we find of great concern and will set them out in this letter.

1. Unsubstantiated claims of damage by skateboarders

You are still apportioning complete blame on skateboarders without any evidence to support your claims.

2. Generalisation, misrepresentation and vilification of skateboarders

You are perpetuating an image of 'all skaters are the same' and that all are to blame and a guilty of 'nuisance' as part of a smear campaign.

3. Claiming skateboarding is 'ant-social behaviour'

Your wording infers skateboarding and anti-social behaviour go in tandem.

4. Failure to action consultation

You have not consulted skateboarders, local residents or relevant stakeholders while pushing through your proposal, despite your own council recommendation.

5. Failure to understand broad and varying skateboarder needs

You have failed to take on board the information given to you regarding the difference between skate parks and street skating, and that 'sending everyone to the skatepark' is not a solution and is impractical.

6. Flawed 'consultation'

You cite the single question 'Do you think the area should be made bigger than outlined in the current proposal?'

You are misleading the public and putting across that it is a forgone conclusion that a by-law will be implemented and censoring people from the ability to address whether they even want a by-law and ban.

7. Ignoring of data

You appear to be completely ignoring the statistical data including your own poll of 92% opposition, the petition of over 6,600 signatures opposing ban, and the numerous letters and representations of opposition.

8. Misleading unsubstantiated claims

You state there are 'opposed' views between 'city centre users, skateboarders, people who live and work in the city and those who visit', despite providing no specifics as to what and who the oppositions are.

9. Dismissal of data

You make the statement that the 'voice' against the by-law is 'mainly from skateboarding enthusiasts'.

Not only is this yet another theoretical and subjective assumption but it is completely irrelevant.

It would be like us saying those pro by-law are 'war memorial enthusiasts' – only we would not be so flippant, dismissive and disrespectful to people and their views and the time they had taken to express and register their views.

10. Dismissal of established measures

You claim more 'informal' measures have been 'unsuccessful' while not having explored the measures already available via established legislation.

11. Attitude toward skateboarders

You ask to for skateboard groups together with you while at the same vilifying, ignoring them and patronising them.

Community engagement is based on respect and trust and you have presently earned neither with your present attitude.

12. Omission of other relevant and pertinent data

You have not cited any other problems which effect the war memorial and gardens that have been highlighted by individuals and organisations such as litter, people climbing on the memorial during the turning on of the Christmas lights.

13. Pushing further unnecessary 'consultation'

You are suggesting another 12 week consultation process despite the public message being very clear.

You cannot keep pushing your agenda in the hope that you will exhaust the opposition to get the answer you want.

The 6,620 petition signatures signed a clear statement entitled;
Stop the Norwich skateboard ban

In addition to the recommendations and list of solutions sent you by Councillor Sandra Bogelein on the 23rd November, and as it appears you are avoiding and ignoring the clear message from the people of Norwich and beyond, we are setting out our position and requests clearly for you;

Requests

1. You cease with immediate effect the claims of damage by skateboarders unless based on provable and viewable evidence.
2. You cease with immediate effect your vilification of skateboarders.
3. You accept that like any other group or community, everyone is an individual and not all are guilty for the acts of others, including skateboarders.
3. You cease perpetuating the false claim and impression that skateboarding is anti-social behaviour with immediate effect.
4. The proposal for a by-law banning skateboarding is dropped and a solution based on legislation already in place is pursued instead.

We also notify you that we will be filming and recording the meeting, as per the guidelines set out on the Norwich City Council website.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Avery
Drug Store

Paul Richards
On behalf of Long Live Southbank