



Biodiversity Working Group

Boardroom, Woking Borough Council

Wednesday 10th January 2018 10:00-13:00

Minutes

1.	Present:	Mike Waite (Chair/Surrey Wildlife Trust); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Lara Beattie (Woking BC); Susan Medcalf (SBS); Dave Page (Elmbridge BC); Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnership); Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency); John Edwards (Surrey CC); Simon Saville (Butterfly Conservation); Rod Shaw (Mole Valley DC); Sarah Jane Chimbwandira (Surrey Nature Partnership/SWT)	
	Apologies:	Alistair Kirk (Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre); Cheryl Brunton (Runnymede BC); Peter Winfield (Runnymede BC); Simon Elson (Surrey CC); Ann Sankey (Surrey Botanical Society); Jim Jones (Surrey Wildlife Trust); Georgina Terry (Natural England); James Power (NT)	
2.	The minutes of the meeting 27th September 2017 were agreed, see here (on SyNP website).		Action
3.	Matters Arising:	<p>Surrey Local Sites Partnership webpage on the SNP website - no action. Ability of SNP website (a wordpress-hosted site) to support ideal model to be investigated.</p> <p>Langley Vale Centenary Wood. BioWG query re. further flexibility on ratio of open: wooded habitat in site masterplan - MW now has clarification; area of open habitats is indeed now fixed. The draft Management Plan is currently on consultation (to 19/01). Plantlife prescriptions for unique botanical interest are fully incorporated. MW (as member of OSWG) will be responding for SWT - members are interested in seeing his current draft response. MW to circulate. Planning application with supporting EIA for public access facilities has been submitted - consultation period with E&EBC by 29/01 (all x3 LAs have consulted and can receive comments however; R&BBC & MVDC. <u>Note: please make sure any response is copied to other x2 LAs, to ensure cross-referral</u>). JE emphasised need to scrutinise ecological input to EIA, is it comprehensive around impacts of eg. car-park location?</p> <p>Woodland Trust intends recruiting a post to 'help facilitate the infrastructure aspects of the project' (sic.), for c.18 months then moving on to other of WT's national 'destination sites'. WT also hopes to recruit a dedicated 'Visitor Experience Officer' for LVCW later in 2018.</p> <p>River Thames Scheme: JJ recently attended the Surrey Flood Forum, where estimated cost of £558m was discussed - participating LAs (SCC, RBC, EBC, SBC) now being asked to make significant contribution.</p> <p>Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - Review Programme: Final draft of Surrey Local Sites Partnership 'Terms of Reference' document not quite finished. Required for presentation to/adoption by Surrey Planning Working Group. MW to chase.</p> <p>Follow up to previously discussed Surrey ancient/veteran tree inventory compiled by Dick Alder/Brian Spooner. This exists as an Access database and is essentially ongoing with no clear publication end-point, but may still be interrogated by anyone interested.</p> <p>JE mentioned lack of current work-stream engaging historic landscapes, hence is preparing a bid with Historic England to fund a project post. This might be able to improve access to veteran tree inventory as part of a wider historic features database. SC - E&E is currently attempting to map all veteran trees in borough to underpin emerging protective policy in planning. Looking for endorsement by Ancient Tree Forum and keen to link with other sources.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MW</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MW</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MW</p>



	<p>MW - previously distributed new NE Standing Advice on ancient woodland and veteran trees. Briefly outlined changes and additions, esp. to buffer zones during development, but apparently this has been hastily revised back again (ie. x2 changes in as many months!), in response to push-back from development sector. See here for latest.</p> <p>J10/M25 Improvement Scheme - Highways England has published its preferred scheme option (Option 14), which is least damaging ecologically to land-take. The formal public consultation will proceed on this option imminently. An EIA scoping consultation from SCC is about to close. SWT as major stakeholder are in ongoing discussions with Atkins, Highways England consultant, and is pushing for maximum Net Gain from this project. RB - opportunity for Hatchford Wood (SNCI) transfer to SWT? (contains an historic icehouse with past bat interest). MW to raise this next opportunity.</p>	MW
<p>4.</p>	<p>Surrey Nature Partnership - current & future emphases, including Surrey's Natural Capital Investment Plan (NCIP).</p> <p>Informative and interesting presentation by SJC - see attached Paper A. Essentially the NCIP needs to develop a system for investing, ie. as financial products, in Surrey's Natural Capital; not one-off, short-term opportunities, but a continual project pipeline to meet the potential funding stream that could be released given the positive conversations and advocacy effort ongoing. MW has begun process of reviewing and merging existing project registers (eg. BOAs doc Appendix 2; WFD catchment plans, etc.)</p> <p>Following discussion included;</p> <p>SC - Ref. E&E BAP (Objective 7 - Ecosystem Services); is it possible to do a Valuing Surrey cut for woodlands in borough? - Yes, and SJC very happy to talk to/with any members' supporting groups, inc. specialist/topic committee groups.</p> <p>SJC - Challenges around getting actual investment ££ from health sector; arguments around natural envt. benefits to health are now well proven and widely accepted, but complexity of funding structure/crisis in NHS funding both very challenging. 'Social Impact Investment Bonds' model may be a way forward. SNP in a good position to test-drive/ground-truth theoretical Natural Capital strategic investment models to finance the 25 year <i>Environment Plan</i>, currently driven by Defra. SJC & Paul Wickham met recently with Environment Secretary (Michael Gove) to update him on progress on NC investment in Surrey.</p> <p>RS - MV would be interested in guidance with their Green Infrastructure Strategy, specifically to articulate how NC investment ought to drive and assist with justifying the role of appropriate/adequate GI planning. SJC- we acknowledge this is very much an area under development, climate change/carbon trading has been leading the way to date. Large asset mgmt. companies are now usefully becoming involved (eg. Deutsche Asset Mgmt.), as they know how the global economic investment market works, but we also need to be careful that the outcomes are genuinely delivering for NC/biodiversity conservation. A more understandable way-in may initially be to interpret as Climate Change resilience/adaptation strategy. SJC to think about what can be sent to Rod.</p> <p>MW/SJC - brief discussion around potentially limiting brake on NC investment opportunities/incentives resulting from existing developer contribution mechanisms eg. TBH mitigation strategy. Could be far more aspiring, eg. around priority habitat creation opportunities within SANGs (needs to be NE-driven). SJC - TBH strategy probably overdue some sort of fitness review anyway.</p> <p>SC - focus to stay within BOAs? SJC - BOAs provide county-wide strategy and a clearly reasoned argument for benefits to biodiversity from achieving a NI uplift, measured to Net Gain. But compensation/'offset' projects can actually be anywhere. LW - given potential scale of development & major infrastructure projects coming up, are we confident that there is enough land available to absorb the total offsetting requirement? SJC - some work done to address this question when Offsetting first being piloted c.2014/5; would need re-visiting but a</p>	SJC



	<p>SNP scoping study for Surrey then estimated >1k ha priority habitat could be created, & an extra c.£1.5m generated for conservation management from potential offset projects. MW - Network Rail presently looking for receptor projects to offset/generate Net Gain from impacts of Crossrail 2. Although C2 not directly effecting Surrey but we are within the wider zone to benefit from this activity.</p> <p>FT - possibility to integrate the NC investment approach into the funding strategy for the Wey Forward project? (ie. the generic programme aiming to achieve WFD 'Good' water quality status on the River Wey catchment). Most costly sub-projects are for fish-passes on the many in-channel barriers, where private investment is considered to be key to delivery. SJC - held a workshop to work up the NCIP business 'pitch', EA were present at this. Must be careful to coordinate our collective pitch to eg. local business forums so as not to confuse, or worse induce CSR fatigue.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Potential 2018 business/discussion topics.</p> <p>FT - responding to Local Plans - a potential future item/workshop to discuss issues for co-ordination of consultation responses. How might this be delivered? Example of Wycombe DC (Bucks) where all water-related issues relevant to a single emerging plan were discussed - workshop took place hosted by EA. FT to find out more. Would have to use an appropriate plan then in open consultation. Mole Valley's or Spelthorne's could be candidates. Plans are required to be reviewed every 5 years in light of new legislation/policy/guidance etc. Would involve planning colleagues as well as ecologists, so potential cross-fertilisation of ideas/issues would be very welcome. Group approval in principle, pending detail.</p> <p>Something from AK on product development and the benefits/attraction of a SBIC Service Level Agreement with boroughs and districts.</p> <p>MW's work to develop this NCIP project pipeline (discussed under 4.); wider BioVWG's input will be critical as this goes forward.</p> <p>JE - we have link via GI into Surrey Infrastructure Study; how can we develop this further into developing a series of strategic GI projects. JE/SJC to discuss.</p> <p>'Landscapes in Transition..' - a recently launched land cover study by the European EA (see here for background & here for UK country fact sheet), can use to view land-use change (inc. losses to urban), by borough/district, across Surrey.</p> <p>LW - CIEEM Net Gain work-stream is progressing; MW has submitted Priest Hill as a case-study in the forthcoming WSP guidance doc.</p>	<p>FT/ MW</p> <p>MW/ AK</p> <p>JE/SJC</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Partner Updates</p> <p>Ross Baker (Surrey Bat Group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcathoe whiskered bat/Woodland Bats survey to continue into 2018. In 2017 LAs were very helpful in facilitating access to new sites, as was SWT Consultancy where SNCI rolling survey was involved. Hopefully can build further on this successful coordination. SJC - new 'cluster farm' Facilitation Fund landscape initiative in former West Weald Landscape Project area; SBG to be aware of. (GT may have alluded to this in her presentation at last meeting). SJC to provide link. <p>Lara Beattie (Woking BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woking to work with NE on piloting a landscape-scale study & EPS conservation strategy & action plan for Bats (akin to the GCN work of recent years). An all-interested-parties meeting on this to take place on 8/02. Update on Woking GCN project - second phase of habitat improvement works took place recently - x5 new ponds created. Current Green Walls initiative in town centre – looking for opportunities for installation. TBH SPA NE condition assessment; Brookwood Heath maintains favourable status, while Sheets Heath is now favourable (formerly un-/recovering). 	<p>SJC</p>



- WWF holding 'Pledge for the Planet' event 18/01 - locally-directed initiative promoting green life-styles in Woking area.

Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)

- Floating pennywort – big problem in Elmbridge especially; est. extends >15 ha in borough, esp. on R. Mole. Now out of control. DP interested in EA briefing note (see Paper B) and joining the Thames Area Action Group. FT - EA is prioritising areas for management by EA field teams, assisted by Land & Water doing mechanical removal. Long-term plan to strategise future control and containment. DP - EBC owns one bank (of the Mole) but not opposite, requires coordination & EA influence to involve private landowners. Must be impacting native wildlife; mild winters responsible for rampant spread in 2017.
- Esher Commons SANG - ongoing discussion with NE has created a large pond on Esher Common South. Concern for the principle whereby SANG is created on an already highly-used SSSI to mitigate visitor impacts on SPA. Ironically Dartford warbler has recently colonised Esher Common (already has Nightjar..)
- A footpath created via planning gain along Broadwater Lake (Weybridge/Walton) is proving very successful in terms of public access to wildlife. Community Groups are interested in restoration of the lake but this needs to be scoped first and implications for biodiversity interest assessed. Elmbridge Natural History Society aiming to carry this out in 2018.
- A Ranger post will be advertised with EBC imminently.

Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC)

- Orchard Trust - Bioblitz & Apple Day held at Horton CP. Orchard Tooth fungus *Sarcodontia crocea* discovered at the orchard (RDL Vulnerable and SPI/S.41 priority species).
- Hogsmill Catchment Partnership - hosted by SERT and EA - good conversation at recent mtg. re. low flows exacerbated by abstraction by Thames Water & SSEW. Opportunity with EA to adjust licensing. Borehole at springs - possible to increase pumping rate to address flow issues. Volunteering activity generated by HCP is very good.
- Dormouse found in Pond Wood – in a tube.
- Biodiversity annual report will be published in next few weeks.
- Working with Butterfly Conservation monitoring now covers a number of reserves - Juniper Hill, Priest Hill, Howell Hill etc. Juniper now supports 29 spp.
- Mtg. with GT shortly to look at declaring Epsom Common as NNR (as extension to Ashted Common).

Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships)

- Good news re. Sheets Heath condition assessment as this is all down to Surrey Heathland Project's work.
- Update on pond at Nonsuch Park - gate left unlocked, but dogwalkers largely absent. New species have returned to pond so policy appears to be working.
- x75 dormice found in boxes in Sanderstead-Whyteleafe Countryside Area (LB Croydon/Tandridge DC) – inc. 14 in one box! Has enabled Project Officer to obtain EPS dormice licence. Also Nightingales heard here. Also has x4 Hairstreak butterflies. Likely to become a future dormouse training venue.
- SCP's funding to be cut by SCC in 2018/19 so working on how to deal with this.

Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency)

- Appeal for volunteer assistance on Floating pennywort – all new records to be submitted to PlantTrack.
- Godalming Flood Alleviation Scheme - detailed planning application submitted this month.
- Hells Ditch fish pass will be first delivered under Wey Forward project (in February). Ham, Walsham and Newark fish passes to be delivered later this year.

John Edwards (SCC)

- Has mainly been working on SCC's involvement in the J10 Improvement Scheme, and also on proposed Heathrow expansion - both of which will require Development Consent



	<p>Orders (110's to be submitted towards the end of the year).</p> <p>Simon Saville (BC Surrey Branch)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butterfly Monitoring Scheme - 2017 a good year for recorded transects, also butterfly numbers appeared to be up by 50% on 2016. • Small blue Stepping Stones Project - Fiona Haynes is Project Officer managing this. Conservation work groups most Fridays. Lot of involvement from National Trust. Another project BC trying to start is on Wood white in Chiddingfold Forest area. However a Biffa bid failed unfortunately. • 2018 will be BC's 50th anniversary so several celebratory events to be held during the year. First one near here on Barnes Common (GL) on 10/03. Also looking to work with London WT on a London-based project. <p>Rod Shaw (MVDC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MVDC Local Plan 'Future Mole Valley' Issues & Options stage passed – now consulting on a Call for greenfield development sites, which will end mid-Feb. Future policy development – looking to publish a Heritage Strategy and a GI strategy. <p>Sarah Jane (for SWT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWT's new 5-year Strategic Plan. The new strategic focus will be on x3 selected 'cluster' BOAs, inc. Thames Basin Heaths (TBH01-4, 06, ie. exc. Woking Heaths & Barossa); North Downs Guildford to Reigate (ND02-03); Holmesdale (WGI1). These will include relevant sections of respective River BOAs - eg. Tillingbourne, Pipp Brook & Mole Dorking-Leatherhead, Hoe Stream & Addlestone Bourne etc. Some county-wide activities will continue eg. education, statutory land management commitments beyond focus BOAs, Planning Advisory & Consultancy Services. But eg. Catchment Partnerships will have to now concentrate within the strategic priority areas. This is as an alternative to trying to 'do everything everywhere' - we have been too stretched, so are trying to make a real, sustainable difference within these areas <i>first</i>; in theory future plans could then move on to fresh strategic areas. Will require different approaches across these; TBH is where we manage a lot of land ourselves, but N Downs will require far more of a partnership/supportive/advocacy role. Strategic Plan will be officially published by 01/04. Catchment work won't end – will be working with EA on a series of sub-catchment projects in both Wey & Mole. 	
	<p>AoB</p> <p>JE - is there a date for this year's Recorder Meeting? – no, but probably in late March.</p> <p>FT – Current review of EA permit charges (eg. flood consents). To be no special cases so no differential rate for collaborative restoration projects. Costs to significantly rise. Please try and respond if possible. JJ responding for catchment partnerships.</p>	
	<p>Dates of remaining 2018 meetings;</p> <p>Wednesday 9th May (venue Elmbridge BC tbc); Wednesday 26th September (all 10.00-13.00). Big thank you to LB for today's venue.</p> <p>Abbreviata: E&EBC - Epsom & Ewell; EBC - Elmbridge; GBC - Guildford; MVDC - Mole Valley; R&BBC - Reigate & Banstead; RBC - Runnymede; SBC - Spelthorne; SHBC - Surrey Heath; TDC - Tandridge; WaBC - Waverley; WoBC – Woking; SCC - Surrey County. ito = in terms of...</p>	