



Biodiversity Working Group

Ewell Court House

Wednesday 26th September 2018 10:00-13:00

Minutes

1.	<p>Present:</p> <p>Mike Waite (Chair/Surrey Wildlife Trust); Sarah Jane Chimbwandira (Surrey Nature Partnership/SWT); Cheryl Brunton (Runnymede BC); Rod Shaw (Mole Valley DC); Stewart Cocker, Pete Howarth, Sarah Clift (Epsom & Ewell BC); John Edwards (Surrey CC); Simon Saville (Butterfly Conservation); Rachel Coburn (SCC); Simon Elson (SCC); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency); Roger Comerford (Tandridge DC); Dave Page (Elmbridge BC); David Watts (Reigate & Banstead BC); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Peter Winfield (Runnymede BC); Lara Beattie (Woking BC)</p>	
	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Alistair Kirk (Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre); Ann Sankey (Surrey Botanical Society); Georgina Terry (Natural England); Hendryk Jurk (Guildford Borough Council)</p>	
2.	<p>The minutes of the meeting of 9th May 2018 were agreed, see here (on SyNP website).</p>	Action
3.	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>A Surrey Local Sites Partnership webpage has recently been created on the SNP website. It carries as downloads the now finished SLSP 'Terms of Reference' document, as well as the SNCI selection criteria document. Further information to be added in time, including a current schedule of all SNCI/RIGS, and the current Single Data List annual report when available (currently being prepared for 2018). SLSP 'Terms of Reference' document will now be presented to the Planning Working Group - future date to be fixed.</p> <p>CB - Runnymede BC has committed to reviewing its SNCIs in FY2019-20.</p> <p>JE - the proposed SCC Landscape Conservation post partnered with Historic England; unlikely this will now happen.</p> <p>J10/M25 Improvement Scheme - Green Bridges; funding now secured by Highways England to design these; SWT has been involved in early discussions with Atkins (HE consultants). Reference has been made to a recently-constructed bridge over A556 in Cheshire, which is less than recommended minimum width to be effective, especially as also required to be multi-functional. Construction funding will inevitably be an issue; also looking less likely now for a second green bridge over the M25. Enhancement opportunity for Hatchford Wood SNCI could well become part of the compensation package; ownership transfers will require resolution.</p> <p>Proposed letter from SNP to Chief Planners regarding SNCI re-survey and general responsibility under NERC Act Biodiversity Duty. SJC in agreement – would tie-in well with planned presentation to Planning Working Group (above).</p> <p>Natural Capital Investment Plan – SJC provided update on project pipeline development; has been initiated and is underway at the moment with Catchment Partnerships s and other partner/advocacy meetings.</p> <p>Esso Southampton-Heathrow replacement pipeline. Esso is presently in consultation (to 19/10) on their preferred route (with sub-options) for the pipeline, which largely shadows the path of the existing pipeline. Potential issues include those on several SNCI, including Chertsey Meads LNR.</p> <p>Park Pit, Buckland outdoor activity/watersports centre proposal has been granted permission by SCC, despite recommendations of officers, MVDC and others. Unlikely that multi-functional aspiration can be realised given the limited size of the site. LEMP has been conditioned.</p> <p>Picking up from the Plantlife 'Good verge guide'; opportunity to further actions of the former Road Verge HAP. SWT planning to push this where relevant in BOA ND02. SS - Dorset has some good case-studies where adjustments to management contracts have also reduced costs. JE will contact Phil Sterling of BC. Initial capital costs and disposal of arisings are challenges (but latter could possibly link with SNP biomass project).</p>	<p>MW</p> <p>JE</p> <p>JE</p>



<p>4.</p>	<p>Revised National Planning Policy Framework - better or worse?</p> <p>The final version of the revised NPPF was released in July. Removal of reference to Local Wildlife Sites (as 'locally designated sites') proposed in the consultation draft version has been reversed and is now included in the new chapter 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Presumption in favour of sustainable development 'exemption list' at footnote 6 has grown considerably as a definitive list, and includes 'irreplaceable habitats', which are further defined in the glossary. SPAs & SACs are now referred to as 'habitats sites' (possibly quite confusing to the uninitiated), ie. with reference to their European-driven status removed. JE suggestion for this group to further define the list of 'irreplaceable habitats' applying to Surrey to be ahead of inevitable call for advice on this matter.</p> <p>Most Surrey Local Plans will remain referable to the 2012 NPPF under the described transitional arrangements (ie. if submitted to the PI before 24/01/2019). They would then need to review policies (presumably including in respect of 2018 NPPF) every 5 years.</p> <p>Net Gain is now referenced in relation to biodiversity enhancements; as is Natural Capital – both are reflections of regard for the goals and policies of the 25YEP. On Net Gain – discussion on the revision of the Net Gain/Offsetting metric currently underway (by NE), as well as the intended DEFRA consultation on a proposal to make its use mandatory in impact analysis, mitigation and compensation.</p> <p>In summary, some improvements on the 2012 NPPF offering better clarity, but the heavy emphasis on accelerating housing development will no doubt further advantage this in practice. MW is currently revising 'Biodiversity & Planning in Surrey' document to reflect NPPF revision.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Site management issues; new constraints and opportunities</p> <p>DP raised the issue of how to manage/control bracken in view of the new ban on use of asulam (Asulox). Mechanical methods include cutting and rolling, but the latter especially has implications for ground-nesting birds and reptile populations (Adder in DP's case). If there are any solutions offered, would members please contact DP directly. A useful (though now out-of-date) reminder of the methods available is NE's Technical Advice Note, here.</p> <p>SS (BC) has raised the concern of BC for the apparent under-management of several SWT reserves emergent over past 18 months. This effects several North Downs chalk downland sites with important butterfly interest, including Brockham Quarry & Limeworks (part of the Mole Gap-Reigate SAC) and Howell Hill. BC is offering its assistance if SWT remains compromised by an ongoing lack of resource. Other members also joined with their concern for the recent deterioration of the chalk grassland habitat on these sites. HC suggested the formation of a specialist Chalk grassland working group, to examine the potential for deploying pooled resources to the most urgently deserving sites – this received some degree of support. The extent to which SWT is aware of the problem was queried, as well as clarity around whom to approach to be most effective with concerns and offers of support. MW said he would take this back to SWT for internal discussion and a response. There is already scheduled a SWT/BC meeting in October where this may be discussed.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Partner Updates</p> <p>John Edwards (SCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JE has been contacted by DEFRA to see if Surrey might act as a pilot for a risk-based approach to managing OPM. • JE is meeting Mark Jones of Natural England to discuss District-Wide Licensing for EPS. • SDL-160 (Local Sites in positive conservation management) report for 2018 should be ongoing presently but essential data from NE not yet received, so call for information by JE and its deadline will be delayed from usual 31st October. <p>Cheryl Brunton Runnymede BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Plan submitted to Planning Inspectorate for independent examination. Inspector has been assigned to examine the submission Local Plan, with hearing sessions yet to be determined. • The Council successfully bid for Design Quality Fund grant from the Government. Part of the funds will pay for consultants to produce Design supplementary planning guidance, which is hoped will include guidance on the provision of net gains for biodiversity in new residential development. <p>Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A New Head of Planning at EEBC; Ruth Ormella appointed. • EEBC forty year vision; SC is ensuring the vision includes biodiversity as input from the E&E 	



Biodiversity Working Group.

- Chamber Mead wetland project. Hogsmill Catchment Partnership lead South-East Rivers Trust have received additional funding from the EA to work up the project that will provide flood attenuation, pollution control and biodiversity benefits.
- Stones Road Pond SSSI GCN report commissioned over this summer by EEBC. A medium population has been confirmed and results are being assessed with regard to the future management of adjacent disused Stones Road Allotment.
- Ewell's largest bat roost has been discovered at Chichester Court; x116 Soprano pipistrelle recorded exiting a roost in the flat roof of a 1960's block of flats.
- SC has met Brian Spooner & Dick Alder from Ancient Tree Forum re. veteran tree survey work in E&E. The project is mapping veteran trees across the borough to inform future planning applications as a planning alert GIS layer.
- CIL is looking to be a way of securing future funding for biodiversity enhancements via site management plans.
- Langley Vale (see below **RS**)
- First example in Epsom & Ewell this summer of OPM infestation delaying scrub management work on part of Epsom Common, as declared out-of-bounds on safety grounds.

Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)

- The suitability for reptile translocations of extensive restored heathland on the Esher Commons SSSI is being discussed with SARG. On inspection it was found that dry heath areas on the south-facing Longy Down looked suitable for Sand lizard. Despite Esher Commons not having historical records for this species, it could be viewed as a strategic site given its proximity to the isolated re-introduction site at Chatley Heath, Wisley Common.
- EA has not cleared Floating pennywort in the old Mole channel this year due to funding for flood alleviation only. EA has concentrated on the Lower Mole FAS channel. EBC are liaising with fellow riparian landowners Thames Water and Bretts to produce a coordinated plan including bankside scrub clearance to enable more efficient control. EBC funding for this £100K project is being discussed at board level.

David Watts (Reigate & Banstead BC)

- Reigate Heath SSSI; DW has recently sent photographic baseline land management evidence for the Higher Level Stewardship application to Natural England. Will wait to hear if evidence meets their requirements.
- High rate of branch drop observed in RBBC trees over the summer effecting public safety in parks and open spaces.

Ross Baker (Surrey Bat Group)

- Further work with Woking BC and NE on district licensing for bats (Woking Bat Project); but recently informed that NE now wants to focus on Bath area for pilot.
- Woodland Bats Survey has had another successful season; target species Barbastelle has been captured in Wanborough Woods SNCI, all males though so not traceable to a maternity roost.
- Nathusius' pipistrelle Survey has also been very successful this season.
- The new IUCN [Red List for UK Mammals](#) published this spring has some interesting findings for bats. For example Serotine is listed as Vulnerable, Leisler's bat is Near-threatened, and the cryptic 'whiskered' group of *Myotis* species are all Data Deficient. Important to remember IUCN listing criteria are different from those driving Priority/SPI selection.

Roger Comerford (Tandridge DC)

- Local Plan: Regulation 19 consultation finished 10/09. Plan to be submitted early Jan 2019.
- The plan includes the allocation of a 100ha Green Infrastructure site alongside the new Garden community at South Godstone, justified by Natural England's ANGSt standards, BOA R02 Eden (& tributaries) aims, achieving a plan-wide net gain in biodiversity and reducing recreational pressure on relevant international sites (Mole Gap-Reigate SAC & Ashdown Forest SPA). The details of the Garden Community, including the exact location of GI will be taken forward in a subsequent Action Area Plan. The GI should provide opportunities for creation of priority habitats.
- Other key policies include TLP35 'Biodiversity, Ecology & Habitats' which protects priority habitats, SNCI and pSNCI; and Policy TLP30 'Green & Blue Infrastructure' which commits to net gain and a forthcoming GI SPD.

Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships)



- Lower Mole Partnership - Road Verge HAP not forgotten by the Moles; been working for a few years on A246 Young Street verge (owned by SCC Highways) by Bocketts Farm, where this year there was a good display of Cowslips and later Pyramidal orchids, the Moles have worked there again this year funded by MVDC and the Lower Mole Countryside Trust.
- The Moles have a new privately owned site this autumn, Beaverbrook woodlands, where they will be clearing Rhododendron.
- Downlands Partnership - after many years of habitat management at Caterham Viewpoint (owned by TDC) are hopeful to have the SNCI designation extended to include a restored area of chalk grassland. Long Hill is another chalk grassland site where Downlands work (owned by Woldingham Residents CIC), has been suggested as a new LNR - so will be working with local residents on this.
- Have been x2 successful prosecutions of dog attacks on our sheep earlier this year. It is Downlands 30th Anniversary, everyone welcome to join us at Addington Hills, Croydon for heathland restoration on 13/10.
- Surrey Heathland Partnership - heathland restoration adversely affected by this summer's weather, with invasive species due for spraying dying back before spraying could take place and young regenerated heather being scorched.

Simon Elson (SCC)

- Welcomed Rachel Coburn's appointment onto his team.
- Tice's Meadow/Farnham Quarry continues to develop as an exemplary post-minerals restored open water nature reserve. Runfold Quarry (operator is SUEZ - ex-Sita UK) also in partial restoration phase and is a potential SANG.
- River Thames Scheme; SE pressing for better coordination with Minerals Plan.
- Reigate Heath proposed denotification of SSSI units 1 & 3 update; there is a proposed extension to involved here also, but NE still to go to public consultation on this. Dewatering of adjoining sandpits is undoubtedly improving water-levels on site. NE must prove conclusively that units cannot be restored.
- SE also welcomes appointment of DW by R&BBC.
- Molesey Wetlands: **RB** asked if any progress had been made towards opening the reserve under SWT's management. **SE** replied that the current impasse on future management remains, and referred to the regrettable loss of a timed-out offer of £10k EBC 'offset' towards management enhancements to benefit bats at the site. **SJC** referred to a recent (October) meeting of SWT and site owner Thames Water where management funding requirements were clearly laid out, in anticipation of moving things forward.

Simon Saville (BC Surrey Branch)

- Small blue project along the North Downs, Guildford-Betchworth. Led by Fiona Haynes, this has been going very well, especially on NT land. Lots of scrapes have been created, and large areas of chalk grassland habitat cleared of scrub. The butterfly responded well this summer, with x2 good broods. We are now planning for the post-project legacy.
- Wood white at Oaken Wood, Chiddingfold. Work parties held over the winter have significantly opened out the rides. The Wood white also had an excellent year, appearing in very good numbers. More work is planned this winter.
- Adventive moths continue to spread: OPM, Box Moth, Jersey tiger and Gypsy moth all appeared in larger numbers than last year, and over a wider range.
- More hard copies of the Butterfly & Moth Report 2017 (covering VC17) are available on request. (It's online at www.butterfly-conservation.org/surrey).

Lara Beattie (Woking BC)

- The first development proposed to participate in the GCN pilot (the Ten Acre Farm site in Mayford) secured a resolution of approval at Planning Committee in July 2018.
- Woking LA21's AGM will take place at 7pm on 15 November 2018 at the WWF Living Planet Centre and will feature presentations by RHS experts and experienced community volunteers on the topic 'Gardening in a Changing Climate'. Free places can be booked via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).
- In July 2018, planning permission was granted for a Town Twinning sign outside the Civic Offices, which will feature swift nesting and bat roosting chambers.
- WoBC's Tree Strategy & Tree Management policy documents are due to be considered by Council in October 2018. Subject to discussions at the meeting, it is proposed to publish and promote the documents during National Tree Week (24/11-2/12).
- The Woking Peregrine Project had a successful year; x4 young were raised in the nest box at Export



House. One juvenile bird has experienced injuries this year and is currently being looked after by the Hawk Conservancy Trust.

Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency)

- **FT** updated on several of the projects mentioned under her report from the last meeting, including that the Hell Ditch fish-pass at the Lammas Lands in Godalming is now completed.
- The Wey Landscape Partnership recently held a well-attended workshop to promote and publicise the Wey FWD (Forward) Project, the multi-benefit programme of works aiming to improve fish passage and floodplain connectivity across the Wey catchment.

Rod Shaw (MVDC)

- Local Plan: following the greenfield call for sites, officers have been considering these and begun the process of whittling down the strategic (larger) housing sites, looking at constraints, infrastructure needs, deliverability over the plan period, numbers of units and fit in terms of our overall approach to providing for our objectively assessed housing needs. We are about 5 months behind where we would want to be but anticipate a Regulation 18 consultation in March/April next year.
- **Langley Vale**: a meeting was held in the spring between the Woodland Trust and the x3 local authorities involved in the application for the Centenary Wood; this discussed various issues raised by consultees and representations: traffic, access, archaeology, ecology, design of visitor paths. Since then nothing further has been heard from WT apart from a request for an extension of time to November.
- Headley Court: a site being sold by the MoD and previously used as a rehab centre for wounded soldiers. Site is large and includes significant areas of open space (between BOAs ND03 & 04). It is early days but there is the potential to bring the open spaces into a more sympathetic management as part of a redevelopment of the site.
- River Mole Discovery Day is to be held on 30/09 in Leatherhead and is a chance for the public to meet partners in the catchment and learn about what is required to manage the river.

(Absentee submitted updates)

Jay Doyle (Forestry Commission): recent activity on the Public Forest Estate in Surrey as follows:

- Forest Enterprise England (managers of the public forest estate in England) will be renamed and rebranded as Forestry England as of 01/04/2019. The private woodlands part of Forestry Commission England (known as Forest Services) overseeing advice, regulation and incentives to private woodland owners will be termed The Forestry Commission, with the demise of Forestry Commission Scotland no longer necessitating the use of England in the title. Emails for FE and FS staff have already changed accordingly. Rebranding will be phased to make wise use of public funds, see [here](#);
- Voluntary survey work by Surrey Bat Group at Alice Holt Forest (just over the border in East Hants) is providing significant data on the bat assemblage with records for both Barbastelle and Bechstein's;
- Forest Enterprise and Environment Agency staff are collaborating on the delivery of a DEFRA-funded Natural Flood Management (NFM) project in the Surrey Hills in and around the Pipp Brook with built in benefits for biodiversity including a continuation of wet woodland restoration;
- Winter conservation work programme is being tendered for our Surrey sites with bespoke conservation management for Chiddingfold Forest, Bourne Wood, the East Horsley Blocks, Ranmore Wood, Bury Hill & Redlands and the Witley Blocks (near the Hindhead tunnel);
- We are working up our part of a landscape-scale habitat enhancement project for Wood white butterfly that will include Chiddingfold Forest, Stroud Wood, Holmen's Grove and Frillinghurst Wood in BOA LW01 (Chiddingfold & West Weald Woodlands). Project being developed by Butterfly Conservation with FE functioning as a key delivery partner (Steve Wheatley at BC for more details). Will build on improvement to habitat connectivity at Chiddingfold Forest and extend the recovery effort into the PFE managed Witley Blocks further west;
- We are implementing a major planning gain linked habitat enhancement project in the vicinity of Lagfold Copse/Oaken Wood at Chiddingfold Forest funded by Berkeley Homes. This will provide off site mitigation for a development in the wider Borough;
- Lastly, our colleagues in the West England Forest District have undertaken the first Beaver release on the FE managed Public Forest Estate in the Forest of Dean, see [here](#).

AoB:

LW enquired what has happened with Guildford BC's Residential Extensions & Alterations SPD (SBG



	<p>responded to consultation).</p> <p>JE; the Surrey Recorders' meeting now been fixed for 20/10 at East Horsley VH.</p> <p>SE; now recommended that Sweet-chestnut is not used in planting schemes due to concerns for future tree health (chestnut blight <i>Cryphonectria parasitica</i> reported in SE London).</p>	
	<p>Date of next meetings;</p> <p>Wednesday 9th January 14.00-17.00 at National Trust Warren Farm Barns, Headley. Thank you to SC for organising today's venue.</p> <p>Abbreviata:</p> <p>EEBC - Epsom & Ewell; EBC - Elmbridge; GBC - Guildford; MVDC - Mole Valley; RBBC - Reigate & Banstead; RBC - Runnymede; SBC - Spelthorne; SHBC - Surrey Heath; TDC - Tandridge; WaBC - Waverley; WoBC -Woking; SCC - Surrey County; NFM – Natural Flood Management; NNIS - Non-native Invasive Species.</p>	