



# Biodiversity Working Group

## NT Warren Farm Barns, Mickleham

### Wednesday 9th January 2019

#### Minutes

1.	<b>Present:</b>	<p><b>Mike Waite</b> (Chair/Surrey Wildlife Trust); <b>Rod Shaw</b> (Mole Valley DC); <b>Stewart Cocker</b>, Sarah Clift (Epsom &amp; Ewell BC); <b>Simon Saville</b> (Butterfly Conservation); <b>Simon Elson</b>, Rachel Coburn, <b>John Edwards</b> (Surrey CC); <b>Helen Cocker</b>, Sean Grufferty (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); <b>Dave Page</b> (Elmbridge BC); David Olliver (Waverley BC); <b>Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield</b> (Surrey Bat Group); <b>Ann Sankey</b> (Surrey Botanical Society); <b>Bill Budd</b> (British Dragonfly Society County Recorder); Tracey Haskins (Woking BC). <b>Ben Siggery</b>, Shadi Fekri (Surrey Wildlife Trust: visiting)</p>	
	<b>Apologies:</b>	<p>Lara Beattie (Woking BC); David Watts (Reigate &amp; Banstead BC); Francesca Taylor, Jo Heisse (Environment Agency); Cheryl Brunton, Peter Winfield (Runnymede BC); <b>Sarah Jane Chimbwandira</b>, Leigh Thornton (Surrey Nature Partnership/SWT); Alistair Kirk (Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre); Georgina Terry (Natural England)</p>	
2.	<b>The minutes of the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018</b> were agreed, see <a href="#">here</a> (on SyNP website).		<b>Action</b>
3.	<b>Matters Arising:</b>	<p>3.1 <b>JE</b> will offer to present SLSP 'Terms of Reference' document to the Planning Working Group at its coming meeting (18/01) - after which a date will be fixed. SLSP webpage now carries downloads of the current schedule of selected SNCI/RIGS and the most recent SLSP Meeting Minutes (May 2017).</p> <p>3.2 <b>J10/M25 Improvement Scheme:</b> <b>BB</b> Boldermere lake proposed to be impacted by the A3 widening element of the scheme, losing a strip from the northern fringe. Dragonfly assemblage is a SSSI notification feature. Compensation for this is currently under discussion, with a meeting involving Atkins, NE and SWT agreed for 22/01. <b>MW</b> to request an invitation for <b>BB</b> to also attend. <b>AS</b> - need to be mindful of important botanical interest here also.</p> <p>3.3 Regarding Plantlife's '<b>Good verge guide</b>'; national case-studies dossier being compiled. <b>MW</b> has put forward the A246 Young Street verge management involving Lower Mole Project. <b>AS</b> - LMP is also proposing to work at the A24 cutting at Mickleham where a formerly strong population of Man orchid <i>Orchis anthropophora</i> requires restoration/recovery. <b>JE</b> has now contacted BC (Phil Stirling), who has offered to demonstrate novel equipment/approaches to verge management, especially arisings collection; <b>JE</b> is framing how this might be best received. Will solicit further interest via a circular.</p> <p>3.4 <b>MW</b> has revised 'Biodiversity &amp; Planning in Surrey' manual reflecting NPPF 2018 revision as well as both its Appendices 1 &amp; 2. All now available on the SNP website <a href="#">here</a>. Lists of Priority/SPI species can now be filtered by borough/district.</p> <p>3.5 Butterfly Conservation concern for the under-management of SWT reserves. <b>MW</b> updated on this. At <b>Brockham Quarry</b> - contractors are currently on site to carry out major scrub clearance work (c. 64 person days). Further voluntary works are also being undertaken on site including joint work parties with Butterfly Conservation. Works will achieve full compliance with HLS targets by the end of the winter management season. <b>Howell Hill</b> - contractors start work clearing scrub here following completion of above Brockham work. We also have a number of volunteer tasks scheduled this winter, including some Corporate Work days. Grazing will start 9/01; animals there for 1 month. Works will also achieve full compliance with HLS targets. <b>SE</b> has offered help of <a href="#">Reigate Area Conservation Volunteer</a> group, but appears to have been rebuffed. Is also concerned that contractors have overtaken RACV work programme with considerably less sensitivity at SWT's Kitchen Copse reserve. <b>RB</b> has some concern for potential noise/waste bonfire disturbance to hibernating bats in Brockham limekilns. <b>MW</b> to raise both these concerns at SWT. <b>SS</b> - site access has been a problem currently at Brockham, as SCC is in dispute over RoW with landholder blocking approach from the south.</p> <p>3.6 <b>Oak Processionary Moth</b>. Update requested by <b>RB</b>. <b>JE</b> has replied to Defra regarding possible Surrey pilot for risk-based approach to managing OPM, but the meeting was set up as a workshop in Woking regardless of his offered dates. <b>SC</b> attended; mainly aimed at Tree Officers (also with regard to</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>JE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>JE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MW</b></p>



	<p>Ash Dieback). <b>SS</b> attended similar by Forestry Commission in November. Challenge to a requirement for eradication treatment in non-public H&amp;S situations, as has less impact on Oak as a defoliator than previously thought. Therefore FC proposes to formally downgrade OPM 'pest' status, but requires parliamentary consent to an evidence-based case for this. Suspected that pesticide industry lobbyists seek to delay this, and could take c.2-3yrs. Main H&amp;S 'risk' is to pest control operatives. Concern also for non-target invertebrates, esp. RDB3/SPI Heart moth <i>Dicycla oo</i> declining in 'stronghold' <b>Ashtead/Epsom</b> area. BC targeted survey for this species in 2018 but failed to find any there (also with minimal success elsewhere in Surrey). Biodiversity lobby must maintain these issues within the debate.</p> <p><b>3.7 Molesey Wetlands.</b> A meeting between SWT and <b>SE</b> is imminent to discuss management costs and likelihood of availability.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>A GIS methodology to measure &amp; prioritise Priority habitat connectivity interventions</b> (presentation by Ben Siggery of SWT - see attached pdf.)</p> <p><b>SWT</b> is working to its current 2018-23 Strategic Plan. This focuses landscape scale conservation pro-activity (aka 'Living Landscapes') on x3 selected meta-BOAs; TBH01-04 + 06, ND02-03 &amp; WG11. SWT has adjusted for some unilaterally-delivered BOA objectives &amp; targets, and added another to 'enhance ecological connectivity'. A base-line for this is required to monitor progress, and also to inform intervention strategy. A GIS analysis has thus been undertaken, primarily using existing SWT reserve surveys and the CEH Land Cover Map 2015 to map all habitats (classified through the newly-launched consolidative '<a href="#">UK Habitat Classification</a>', up to Level 4 as available) within all x3 areas. From this existing spatial connectivity may then be interpreted and quantified, using various representative 'focal/umbrella' species' compatibilities with the habitats presented as a proxy for connectivity. Values for the habitats' 'resistance' (to be gained via expert opinion on the strength of focal species' preference/rejection) requires input to the connectivity calculation model. SWT proposes to add reliability to this expert opinion quantitatively, by inviting responses from the broadest possible peer-group to a designed questionnaire, which will compare relative attraction of habitats from the perspective of the focal species. In return for this assistance, our trialling of the finished and refined model is essentially a pilot and will eventually be available to anyone as a transferable methodology applicable to any other BOA or section of the county, or for an analysis of connectivity for other targeted species interests.</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A. RB/LW;</b> applicability to an analysis of 'functional' connectivity, eg. light pollution as a barrier to bats movements? <b>BS;</b> this could be possible if one had access to a GIS layer showing a 'heat-map' of artificial (night) light pollution to overlay onto habitat mapping, or if not, by simply making assumptions for urbanised land-uses as being a potential light-barrier. So the model is theoretically transferable by weighting resistance for other habitat qualities more relevant to particular species. <b>DP;</b> choice of focal species is quite critical if aim is to represent 'average' dispersal behaviour/ability of a whole habitat community. <b>BS/MW;</b> this is acknowledged, but remember for our purposes this is only to provide a proxy value, which if used consistently can still usefully gauge and track future connectivity <i>changes</i> (and not to analyse an actual autecological scenario - although this is also achievable, in fact is easier if one is only interested in a single species). As such it can still be used to guide connectivity enhancement interventions, depending on one's faith in the representativeness of the focal species. <b>SC;</b> some consideration of these aspects went into the workshops originally identifying BOA boundaries - could this be relevant? <b>MW;</b> certainly for personal site-based knowledge to improve habitat classification/continuity. <b>JE;</b> are we aware of other counties attempting similar? (eg. Warwickshire) <b>BS;</b> several county WT's are attempting similar exercises. We have researched available models inc. <a href="#">CONDATIS</a>, all have limitations and rely on quality/compatibility of habitat data inputted. 'Surrey Habitat Framework' (SBIC) unfortunately not yet in a state of readiness to use.</p> <p><b>MW</b> to include the full questionnaire &amp; protocol/instructions with the draft minutes of this meeting. These will also be sent to further specialists within the Surrey recording community; this is important as we do need to view this from a Surrey-centric perspective on species' qualities. Of course academic literature sources observing inter/national autecology can also be factored in (most likely reflected in expert opinion anyway). Open also to suggestions of 'better' focal species, if any are suggested. A respectful request for some indication of participants' knowledge/experience with the focal species will also be included. Offers also of further quality-controlling expertise input to the habitat mapping (<b>SE</b>). <b>SC;</b> important for planning sector to be made aware of this work, and wider application to inform eg. Green Infrastructure strategic policy and implementation.</p>	<p><b>MW</b></p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Defra's consultation on adoption of <a href="#">Biodiversity Net Gain</a> into the planning system</b></p>	



	<p><b>MW</b> ran through some of the background to the current consultation on formalising Net Gain into the planning system, the structure of the consultation itself, and posed the question how/if the WG should respond as a 'partnership organisation'. General consensus was for a SNP response, as this is likely to be anticipated from LNPs, implies broad consensus and will also carry some authority. <b>SC</b> - should we also send out a reminder letter to Chief Planners? <b>JE</b> - can mention this at the imminent Planning WG meeting. <b>BB</b> - 'insider' information suggests the likely persuasive power of sheer quantity of common responses agreeing on the same issue. <b>AS</b> is 'Biodiversity Accounting' (as per. article in current issue of British Wildlife' vol. 30/2) the same/similar as Biodiversity Net Gain Metric calculation? <b>MW</b> yes it is, and the BW article is worth reading as it does flag many of the sector's reservations (mainly resulting from direct experience of using metric/accounting in pilot Biodiversity Offset counties). All of these concerns are however covered in the consultation document, and opinion is requested on the presented (as well as any further ideas for improved) solutions to these. Further aspects include exempted site-types and sizes; inclusion of a consultation question on how species recovery might be addressed as net gain (inc. the district licensing issue); stressing the primacy of the 'mitigation hierarchy' with net gain as mandatory compensation on principle.</p> <p>Discussion on merits of proposed mandatory Net Gain model: <b>RS</b> feared for a potentially serious LPA skills shortage to both regulate it adequately, and in capacity to enforce it given current resource limitations. Suggests introduction should be staged to provide for necessary up-skilling of planning sector. <b>SC</b> - how to work with existing developer contribution/planning gain mechanisms, eg. S.106, CIL, etc. <b>MW</b>; alignment of these is also covered in consultation with opportunity to comment. In Surrey we will need to address interface with the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Avoidance Strategy developer tariff collection also. <b>SE</b> - we need this to properly operate NPPF requirement for biodiversity net gains, so making it mandatory is simply the next step to a robust implementation of policy. <b>MW</b> - what % uplift in biodiversity 'units' should the concept of gain be aiming for? (consultation recommendation is 10%). Is this enough? <b>AS</b> - accuracy in evaluation of impacted biodiversity resource is crucial, or at risk of being undervalued in the metric. <b>MW</b> - agreed, robust (adequate, expert) regulation must be assured. <b>TH</b> - regarding the Woking district licensing pilot for GCN, there have been important lessons learned and yr. 2 report will soon be available on WoBC website.</p> <p>Timeline; <b>MW</b> to draft SNP response by 31/11 latest - then circulate for comment by 8/2 and submit be closure (10/2).</p>	<p><b>JE</b></p> <p><b>MW</b></p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Working Group priorities 2019</b></p> <p>6.1 Potential <b>Biodiversity &amp; Planning seminar</b> for the South East region; suggestion by <b>JE</b> for SNP to host such an event, similar to <a href="#">East Anglia's</a>. To inc. Hants, Sussex, Kent, Surrey, Berks. at least. Most likely autumn. There was broad agreement - would require event sub-WG. <b>MW</b> &amp; <b>JE</b> to discuss feasibility further with <b>SJC</b>, and think of possible content (which could include notice of the connectivity modelling above). Could also align with <b>2019 'Year of Green Action'</b>.</p> <p>6.2 <b>Irreplaceable Habitat schedule</b> for Surrey (need identified at previous mtg.) Future mtg. discussion topic following a draft schedule. More topical now to influence local habitat 'Distinctiveness' in the Biodiversity Metric.</p> <p>6.3 <b>Review of SNCI selection criteria.</b> More one now for the SLSP, although overlap in personnel effectively keeps this a BioWG workstream. Is definitely overdue, but also need not be too drastic. Work division into specialist species groups to look at their respective criteria (cross-ref'd. with revised statuses, <i>State of Surrey's Nature</i>, etc.). Habitats would also reflect Biodiversity Metric's 'distinctiveness' and identified elevated local priorities (as above). <b>JE</b> to initiate with SBIC and perhaps scope out work?</p>	<p><b>MW/ JE</b></p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Partner Updates</b></p> <p><b>John Edwards (SCC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">'2019 Year of Green Action'</a> - may be useful to brand events with this to show solidarity, linked to implementation of 25YEP.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stewart Cocker (Epsom &amp; Ewell BC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attended the SNP open invite event in December, received useful presentation on Natural Capital Investment Plan. Message to LPAs from this is to get Natural Capital concept considered within planning documents. <b>SC</b> therefore wrote to his CEO &amp; Chief Operations Officer on this matter.</li> <li>• Chamber Mead wetland project (Hogsmill Catchment Partnership). South-East Rivers Trust have</li> </ul>	



been working on natural flood attenuation measures here..

- Stones Road Pond SSSI GCN report commissioned over this summer by EEBC - nothing back yet from Natural England on this.
- Oak Processionary Moth - preferred contractor for veteran tree surgery has refused to work where OPM is present. E&E have therefore contracted a second provider to survey/remove any OPM nests ahead of essential tree preservation works, with implied added delays and expense.
- Countryside team's Pete Howarth's input & advice to DM planning team has reaped benefits to biodiversity recently.

**David Olliver (Waveley BC)**

- EA's Godalming Flood Alleviation Scheme well underway (most of piling now in place), implications for WaBC's Lammis Lands. Some concern for possible impact on botanical interest from compaction evidenced by standing water despite so far 'dry' winter. Will aim to have rectified in eventual exit procedure.
- Significant Rhododendron control at Axe Pond, Frensham Common. Has been resisted locally in the past, but controversy now overcome and all agreed with NE – very positive change.
- Planning permission gained for the proposed new visitor/ranger centre at Frensham Common. Comments to necessary PINS application by 31/1.
- eDNA GCN surveys with SARG ongoing at Cranleigh, part of pond restoration project on Ewhurst Common. GCN appear to be present in a significant majority of WaBC's ponds.
- Blackheath SSSI – ongoing Surrey Heathland Project partnered management work there and at Mare Hill and Frensham Common.

**Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)**

- Oxshott Heath (part of Esher Commons SSSI); management has recently been taken over by EBC from Oxshott Heath Conservators (now folded after 110 yrs.). As implies 15% increase in estate, have asked for equivalent raise in management budget. Asked to bid into CIL for this however.
- Pollution incident on River Rythe (Littleworth Common) - EA presently on the case.
- SARG is intending to target Elmbridge for a borough-wide herptile survey in 2019.

**Ross Baker (Surrey Bat Group)**

- Planning for ambitious radio-tracking programme next summer - is key to roost identification. Awaiting necessary licences from NE.
- Launch of the Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning's new [Wildlife Assessment Check](#) toolkit. Originated with BCT's Biodiversity Planning Toolkit, and has developed considerably from that. Is designed to be a guide for development & planning sectors to regulate when eg. protected species ought to be surveyed in proposed development scenarios (particularly smaller). SBG could test and provide a review at a future mtg. PBP welcomes feedback on its use/fitness.
- **Ash Dieback**; SWT consultation on its proposals for ensuring public safety in open access sites and PRoW, following FC recommendations. However scale and speed of introduction is concerning (has already started in Norbury Park). Obvious implications and therefore concerns for protected species, esp. Dormice and bats. SWT has consulted and is taking advice (**AS** has observed Dormouse Group in attendance at Norbury), but it is difficult/impossible to ascertain absence during hibernation period. Machinery could also have impact on eg. rare flora (esp. at Sheepleas). At Coombe Bottom most of the bat box scheme is mounted on dead/dying Ash, alongside footpaths.

**Simon Elson (SCC)**

- Tice's Meadow/Farnham Quarry exemplary post-minerals restored open water nature reserve, recently awarded HeidelbergCement's [Quarry Life Award 2018](#). Community involvement (eg. Bioblitz) esp. commended.
- Major Infrastructure Schemes - Heathrow proposed expansion and River Thames Scheme; expect to see more on these in 2019.
- SCC has recently secured European project funding minerals restoration from INTERREG Fund, looking at best practice cf. that of European partners.

**Simon Saville (BC Surrey Branch)**

- Gail Jeffcoate has received Lifetime Achievement Award at recent BC AGM.
- Phil Stirling's project 'Building Sites for Butterflies' - grassland/road verge enhancements for butterflies/invert's generally. Funded national project – provision of management advice to willing partners.



- Postcode Lottery funded bid with London WT and NHM at Hutchinson's Bank (Croydon).
- HLF funding bid for £500k Wood white project in Chiddingfold/Dunsfold area and into West Sussex. Proven beneficial management at Oaken Wood NR would be rolled out across this area.

#### **Ann Sankey (SBS)**

- Langley Bottom Farm; WT have provided extra documents to planning process (see **RS** below), but these apparently continue to perpetuate relevant data-absence issue, inc. SBS records and their own most recent 2018 rare plant survey report, and appears to ignore their botanical consultant's advice. Possibly their planning consultants is where the problem lies.
- Surrey Rare Plant Register project – almost compiled and we can anticipate publication later this year. Following this, aspiration for the Surrey Grasslands Inventory, also continuing to survey in 2019 (ie. the last year) for the new (2020) BSBI Atlas. A new Surrey Flora could also be a product of this.

#### **Bill Budd (BDS)**

- Involvement in advice on impact from J10 Improvement Scheme to Boldermere Lake.
- Introduced as BDS VC17 Recorder since Feb 2018. Is currently concentrating on review and management of records database. This has been domain of SBIC (unusual, as in most other counties is managed directly by BDS), but concern that management has declined since Catherine Burton's departure from SBIC (x5 yrs of data require input). Also trying to incentivise increased Odonata recording generally. Propose also to update *Dragonflies of Surrey*, one of earliest of Surrey Atlas Project (1996) as many statuses have changed.
- [White-legged damselfly](#) *Platycnemis pennipes* is a current national BDS survey focus in response to fears of a decline, especially on rivers (more recently detected than research eg. for SoSN report). Scarce chaser *Libellula fulva* in Surrey - a new record this year from Tillingbourne.
- National work to produce a trend analysis report 'State of Dragonflies 2020' (last recording season again 2019), to update on national atlas pub. in 2014.
- Currently selecting Dragonfly 'hotspots' mainly for educational/interpretational applications. Thursley Common in Surrey is a local one.

#### **Tracey Haskins (Woking BC)**

- GCN District Licensing pilot project, now into its 3<sup>rd</sup> year - new ponds being created on Westfield Common LNR.
- Woking has published a handbook on creating [Rainwater Gardens](#), directed mainly at developers and the public (available on website) – also creating their own in town centre, directed at surface water flooding alleviation.
- WoBC's [Tree Strategy & Tree Management](#) policies documents were adopted in October, published on website. **TH** also drew attention to current [Defra consultation on Protection of Trees & Woodlands](#) (closes 28/2). Mainly regarding street trees.
- [Woking Peregrine Project](#) - birds already getting interested in breeding /activity.

#### **Rod Shaw (MVDC)**

- Local Plan update; officers are considering potential site allocations and propose to consult on preferred options (Regulation 18) on these in June for c.x2 months.
- **Langley Vale:** Woodland Trust has submitted additional planning material before Xmas, RS is currently working through this and unable to say yet if it addresses various issues relating to traffic, access, archeology & ecology. WT's CEO recently met with MVDC to discuss various issues, including Langley. Also Gatwick Greenspace Project & SSC Countryside Partnerships currently manage several WT sites without any contribution from them. This acknowledged by WT, and may change.

#### **Absentee submitted updates:**

##### **Jo Heisse (EA)**

- The Natural Flood Management project on the Pipp Brook (within Forestry Commission estate) is progressing with a view to beginning construction of interventions on site in August 2019. Is happy to provide a quick overview of the project at a future meeting.
- EA is progressing a major flood risk management project looking at options for the Lower Mole Flood Alleviation Scheme. EA is currently shortlisting options but with an overarching aim to enhance habitats and ecological value of the Mole in that waterbody.
- Nationally EA is about to adopt an internal Floating Pennywort Policy, which will guide our decisions on managing this N-NIS on the Mole. **DP** - Thames Water due to begin clearance work in April on



	Old Mole Channel.	
	<b>AoB:</b> Congratulations are due to <b>SJC</b> , who has been appointed as the new CEO of SWT and will take up post in February.	
	<b>Date of remaining 2019 meetings:</b> <b>Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May</b> 10.00-17.00 at NT Warren Farm Barns. <b>Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September</b> 10.00-17.00 venue tbc. <b>Abbreviata:</b> 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; SLSP - Surrey Local Sites Partnership; NR - Nature Reserve; GCN - Great Crested Newt; CEO - Chief Executive Officer; SoSN - State of Surrey's Nature; PRoW - Public Right of Way	