



Biodiversity Working Group

NT Warren Farm Barns, Mickleham

Wednesday 15th May 2019

Minutes

1.	<p>Present: Mike Waite (Chair/Surrey Wildlife Trust); Rod Shaw (Mole Valley DC); Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC); Simon Elson, Rachel Coburn, John Edwards (Surrey CC); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Ann Sankey, Susan Gritton (Surrey Botanical Society); Lara Beattie (Woking BC); Jo Heisse (Environment Agency); Leigh Thornton (Surrey Wildlife Trust)</p>	
	<p>Apologies: Simon Saville (Butterfly Conservation); David Watts (R&BBC); Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency), Cheryl Brunton, Peter Winfield (RBC); Sarah Jane Chimbwandira (SNP/SWT), Alistair Kirk (Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre); Georgina Terry (Natural England) Dave Page (EBC); Bill Budd (British Dragonfly Society); Tracey Haskins (WoBC); Roger Comerford (TDC); Steve Price (SpBC)</p>	
2.	<p>The minutes of the meeting of 9th January 2019 were agreed, see here (on SyNP website).</p>	Action
3.	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>3.1 JE, MW and Alistair Kirk presented SLSP 'Terms of Reference' document to the Planning Working Group on 08/03/19. Some important discussion regarding procedures for final decision-making around SNCI boundaries in the event of non-adoption by LPAs. Example discussed concerned Wisley Airfield. The document has been clarified accordingly and was taken back to the PWG on 8/05 with no further amendments required; so that version circulated with papers is the Final Draft. This will be replaced on the LSP webpage.</p> <p>3.2 J10/M25 Improvement Scheme: BB & MW both attended site meeting at Boldermere with Atkins on 22/01. It is understood Highways England is due to submit its Development Consent Order proposal in June.</p> <p>3.3 A meeting to discuss road verge management for biodiversity took place in March, involving JE, RS and brokered by Dawn Fielding from SWT. Only Tandridge & MV's verges are managed directly through SCC; other districts have own contracts. Appears to be an opportune time for adjusting SCC highways management contracts. Finding 'right' person in SCC to invoke change has been problematic, but now achieved. So JE now proposes a meeting in June to involve BC, Plantlife, SWT, SCC & MVDC to concentrate on practicalities of contract management to best protect highway verge biodiversity interest, inc. sourcing equipment, site-line requirements etc. HC, AS - LMP has now undertaken necessary work on the A24 cutting at Mickleham to benefit previously-mentioned Man orchid population; results so far are encouraging.</p> <p>3.4 MW has again revised 'Biodiversity & Planning in Surrey' manual reflecting second minor NPPF revision in February 2019 (necessitated by the 'Sweetman ruling' regarding Habitats Regulations Assessment). To be replaced on SNP website.</p> <p>3.5 MW had an action to raise several concerns regarding management of sites with SWT. LT confirmed the management enacted over this winter as well as that scheduled for next, picking up several queries on access to Brockham etc. Access remains an issue for several chalk scarp sites. Agreed to have a separate conversation, including on communication over site management, on this.</p> <p>3.6 LW has organised an Oak Processionary Moth SE regional CIEEM workshop, in London on 05/06. Open to non-CIEEM members. Several Surrey speakers inc. Hamish White from EBC. Possibility for Surrey LAs to approach FC as a group to lobby for adequate consideration of wider biodiversity interests in the future approach to control/containment.</p> <p>3.7 Molesey Wetlands (update requested by RB). SE; 31/12/19 is expiry of period for aftercare of site, representing a hiatus for the future of the site. Planning obligations still to be completed; SCC is considering formal action with Cemex and Thames Water. SWT commitment to long-term management of site remains conditional on forward-funding matters related to this. If Trust declines, a 'Plan B' may</p>	<p>MW</p> <p>JE</p> <p>MW</p>



	<p>involve another operator (confidential). Agreement needs to be reached & contract signed to enable management plan to be drafted, directed at future operator. Important that there is action soon as this is a flagship project of long-standing for the county. Also EBC has large SWT membership but no Trust nature reserve in borough. MW to speak to SJC stressing approaching deadline.</p> <p>3.8 SWT Connectivity Model. SWT GIS team currently engaged in the data processing for this. Slightly behind schedule, but this partly due to the sheer size of the computing task as well as late improvements in priority habitat data coming in. Should be able to share initial results next month. Good response from 'focal species' experts, which further enabled model to run adequately. On advice from these, one species substituted (Adonis for Small blue butterfly as calcareous grassland focal). JH – will River Mole be included? as Priority Habitat Inventory is very inaccurate here. MW yes, within the Mole Gap and at immediate base of scarp (Tillingbourne/Pipp Brook). Question on state of readiness of 'Surrey Habitat Framework'? MW to query this further with SBIC and report back.</p> <p>3.9 Biodiversity Net Gain; BioWG's final response to Defra consultation was submitted and circulated in interim. MW will upload to website with these minutes as 'Paper A'. Unclear when we will see final Defra response to consultation and the resulting framework for BNG; we are aware that Govt., has indeed committed to make BNG mandatory (announced in Chancellor's Spring Statement - see 'Clean Growth', here), but as yet no detail. The Defra Metric (metric v.2) is due to be launched by NE next month (June).</p>	<p>MW</p> <p>MW</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>SWT Draft Research & Monitoring Framework.</p> <p>MW circulated this document ahead of meeting. Purpose is to set out a prescriptive framework for future monitoring of entire SWT estate, with a detailed plan for the high-level deliverables of the current Strategic Plan 2018-23. Also includes a discussion and recommendations for future related research. Ask is for the group to view and comment where it feels able, specifically on the background to monitoring and research to date in Surrey, and any further suggestions for research topics welcome. Group comments by 10/06 please.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>2019 Workstreams; formation of task-&-finish groups.</p> <p>5.1 Potential Biodiversity & Planning seminar for the South East region (suggestion for SNP to host this, similar to East Anglia's). RS if key audience is planning sector, necessary to ask what it would want from event. Task-&-finish Group to include MW, JE, SJC, RS & SE. MW to Doodle an initial meeting to discuss feasibility and scope, publicity etc.</p> <p>5.2 'Irreplaceable Habitats' schedule for Surrey. Will be an important 'distinctiveness' feature of Defra Metric v.2. Task-&-finish Group to include MW, JE, AK. Draft list begun by Tom Butterworth when at Natural England - JE to send to MW. MW to begin discussion within T&FG.</p> <p>5.3 Review of SNCI selection criteria. For discussion by SLSP at its next meeting. When is this? JE has shared dates with AK, but needs chasing (MW). Likely that revision work can be distributed across specialist species groups to look at their respective criteria cross-ref'd. with revised statuses, <i>State of Surrey's Nature</i>, etc. Important for EA presence to review Rivers & Streams criteria both JH and FT to be involved. Current criteria on SNP website here.</p>	<p>MW</p> <p>MW</p> <p>MW</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Partner Updates:</p> <p>Ann Sankey (SBS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Copthorne Meadows SNCI</u> (TDC) currently threatened through change of influence within landownership (even prospective partial development site). Scrub has been cleared, horses now on site. AS concerned for possible damage to botanical interest and has written to NE for advice on this (but so far no response). Suggestion to go higher (Andy Smith - JE to contact). Development would be prevented through planning policy in theory, but habitat degradation not. • <u>West Vale</u> development, Meath Green (Horley) close to River Mole, where some botanical interest. EA; JH - wide buffer strips have been advised and masterplan still under discussion. • <u>Earlswood Common SNCI</u> - golf course has gone into administration; important to continue management observing LNR status. Concern for important Chamomile population. SE is privately involved to ensure continuity of positive SNCI management. • <u>Horse Hill, Hookwood</u> (Horley) oil exploration (ie. not fracking) site. Application now in to exploit 	<p>JE</p>



<p>asset. Haul road has damaged ancient woodland - possible breach of condition/consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Clockhouse claypit/brickworks</u>. SE - now closing due to foreign competition in brick market. Restoration strategy for worked area could be more biodiversity-oriented (wetland creation) and SE is currently working on this with ex-operator Suez. GCN present. Remainder of site may host prospective development – as yet unclear. • <u>Albury Sandpit</u>. Update from SE - now largely restored, topographic profile & capped with stored soils. Tree planting has suffered - possibly a good thing as acid grassland flora (inc. rarities; Small-flowered buttercup) is developing. Public viewpoint to be designed with access to NDW & Albury. Some further negotiation is ongoing - AS to liaise with SE on this. <p>Helen Cocker (SCC Countryside Partnerships)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Lower Mole Partnership</u> has undertaken several pond restoration projects across E&E over the late winter. Has included fencing to exclude dogs and resulted in several new records for GCN and a first for Brackish water-crowfoot. • At Warren Woods in Langley Vale SDG have recently erected a dormouse box array. • <u>Downlands Partnership</u> has been working with BC Small Blue Stepping Stones Project; recently noted both Dingy & Grizzled skippers at Caterham view-point (a possible cSNCI?). • Just across our border Farthing Downs/Happy Valley SSSI complex owned by Corp. of London/LB Croydon has been declared as a new NNR. <p>Rod Shaw (MVDC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>MV Local Plan</u> hopes to go to Regulation 18 consultation on emerging in June/July, but with its new administration (Lib-Dem) this may be delayed until autumn. • <u>Langley Vale WT Project</u>; planning application for site infrastructure to be considered by planning committee in June. MV will be first LPA to determine - R&B & E&E to come later. <p>Ross Baker (SBG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBG has successfully obtained necessary licences to radio-track bats. Preceding Friday (10/05) caught a female Western Barbastelle in Wanborough Wood SNCI and is currently attempting to re-find it; picked up feeding back at Wanborough but still no sign of a daytime roost. As an Annex 2 Habitats Directive species - a roost would qualify roost site as cSAC. • <u>Planning and bats</u>. Many boroughs/districts continue to approve some applications conditional to outstanding bat surveys, contrary to best practice and specialist guidance. This is also a national issue. Consistency in best practice across county should be the aim; RB could advocate for this at the proposed Biodiversity Planning Seminar (see 5.1). <p>Lynn Whitfield (SBG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have met with SWT to discuss its <u>Ash Dieback</u> H&S strategy; completed at Norbury Park but work at Sheepleas and other sites will now be delayed pending further survey work for bats and dormice, as well as notified plants. LT - SWT has used Tree Council's assessment tool to further inform future strategy. • At Baynards Estate on Sy/Sx border; fear that Ash Dieback clearance work around tunnel hibernaculum may affect local bat populations (inc. Bechstein's & Alcatheo bats both in area). • SWT will be applying for EPS licence to re-locate the bat box array at Combe Bottom SSSI (cf. West Hanger Woods), this summer in preparation for Ash Dieback management. <p>Simon Elson (SCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tice's Meadow/Farnham Quarry exemplary post-minerals restored open water nature reserve continues to win awards. Recently held annual Bioblitz. • Wetland restoration ongoing at SNCI West of Queen Mary Reservoir by Bretts, including reedbed creation. MW- Exxon pipeline replacement impacts here? SE - no, will be avoided, as also at Littleton Lane. • Involvement in River Thames Scheme and Heathrow 3rd Runway schemes; interestingly these two were discussing scope for 'trading' their BNG compensation project opportunities. • SE recently in Sweden to view best practice through the European Life-funded Urban Links to Landscape project. <p>Jo Heisse (EA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water levels are averaging very low at present in the Mole catchment; no official statement concerning a water-usage ban yet, but watch this space. 	AS/SE
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">Concerning the Natural Flood Management project in Forestry Commission estate, on Pipp Brook north of Coldharbour; various ecological survey reports coming in, inc. plants. Brook lamprey, Bullhead & a natural Brown trout population have all recently been discovered. Suggestion for the BioWVG to have a presentation and/or field visit on this project. MW to approach Jay Doyle.Increasing numbers of Otter sightings in the Mole catchment, esp. in the Lower Mole water-body around Betchworth. JH keen to target surveys to gain better idea of what is going on here. <p>Lara Beattie (Woking BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">In contact with Buglife concerning their Bee-lines mapping project. MW- we need to link-up here, as SWT has also been in contact with Buglife, discussing their multi-partnered, proposed 'Bees, Bugs & Butterflies' project, partly to offer continuity to BC's Small blue work across North Downs Guildford-Reigate.Designing-in Ivy buildings-screens to enhance redevelopment of Woking town centre. At Dukes Court in town centre a proposed 25m high Living/Green Wall s as well as other biodiversity enhancements, inc. bird boxes, planting etc.Ash Dieback being monitored across borough; OPM also surveyed and treated in high-risk areas.Woking Peregrine Project - five chicks this year..!Reviewing countryside mgmt. practices. <p>Leigh Thornton (SWT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Currently engaged in applying for x8 Countryside Stewardship schemes to replace a number of closing HLS schemes on several SSSI sites.A series of recent NE condition status upgrades to 'Favourable' on several lowland heathland SSSI units, inc. Wisley, Chobham and Whitmoor Commons. Wisley & Ockham now largely Favourable. Just <49% Favourable =substantial uplift on overall status in 2002 when SWT took over mgmt. from SCC (then 8.5%).Recently working with Butterfly Conservation's Small Blue Stepping Stones project team (now in its final year); on a number of downland sites, inc. Hackhurst Downs. Recent targeted scrub clearance on Chobham & Whitmoor for priority Window-winged caddis. <p>Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pete Haworth and Sarah Clift recently provided training workshop for Countryside Team on EPS, GCN & bats mainly.National community Orchard Project ("re-fruiting the country"...) designated two heritage orchards in Horton CP.Oak Processionary Moth - has a newly-arrived (in UK), recently-discovered egg-parasite tachinid fly Carcelia iliaca that overwinters in OPM nests; therefore important to leave some nests in order to observe impact of this in OPM population dynamics/regulation.SARG has recently surveyed Epsom Common; noting highest populations of Adder, Grass snake & Common lizard with areas where re-introduced grazing has been in place now for >20 yrs.Bill Budd (BDS) due to provide training to UKBMS butterfly transect workers.Tackling low flows on the River Hogsmill; working with EA, SERT, SSE Water to divert supply to Bourne Hall fountain direct to Upper Mill Pond at source. <p>John Edwards (SCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recently attended useful, positive meeting with NE, Tom Tew (of NatureSpace) and SWT Planning Services. Discussed district licensing for GCN and scope for roll-out across Surrey. LPA would be licensed and then issue these to developer. This would be an alternative to NE's model, where view of non-NE experts that on-site mitigation is not working. NatureScape's model could lever significant landscape-scale habitat enhancements as well as specialist expertise, and is worth consideration - for further info. see website and JE can send documents on request. LW - do we know how SARG feels about this? Should they be represented on BioWVG? MW they can but ask...Piloting a project to better regulate ecological consultancy sector involved in planning process. 'Planning checklists' regulated by non-experts in planning sector cannot be relied upon. Project would place onus back on consultants, inc. a cover sheet to tick-off/verify adequate coverage of likely issues. RTP1 is very interested in this and an extension to pilot across SE region (with CIEEM).JE, SWT Planning Services & NE met development management team at Spelthorne to discuss biodiversity issues recently.CIEEM has recently issued an advice note on 'shelf-life' of ecological survey information, see here.	<p>MW</p>
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	<p>Mike Waite (SWT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has been reviewing a Defra Discussion Document (for a restricted consultation) on the future development of the Nature Recovery Network, as promised in the 25YEP. Includes a useful insight on the current proposal for continuity of our national response to CBD beyond 2020 (“<i>a new strategy for nature to replace Biodiversity 2020..</i>”). Main thrust of MW’s response will emphasise continued role of BOAs as local basis for NRN, and requirement to work with SNP. 	
	<p>AoB: SM; re. Reigate Heath SSSI proposed de-notification of units 1 & 3. Can report that unit 3 is re-wetting very rapidly (despite a ‘dry’ winter..?) and NE should take note. SM reports that the unit has already been removed on MAGIC mapping website [Note: actually appears in red as ‘Unfavourable - Declining’; MW]. There has been no further word from NE regarding the necessary formal consultation on de-notification.</p> <p>SE; with Surrey Bird Club are proposing targeted survey to update status of Sand martin breeding sites in sand-pits, both working and restored.</p>	
	<p>Date of remaining 2019 meetings:</p> <p>Wednesday 11th September 10:00-13:00 venue Pippbrook Offices, Mole Valley DC, Dorking.</p> <p>Abbreviata: 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; NE - Natural England; GCN - Great Crested Newt; CEO - Chief Executive Officer; SoSN - State of Surrey’s Nature; PRoW - Public Right of Way; CIEEM - Chartered Institute of Ecologists & Environmental Managers</p>	