





	<p>SWT will be issuing a formal Position Statement on Climate Change soon.</p> <p><u>Copthorne Meadows</u> SNCI; after umpteen emails to Andy Smith (NE) who didn't reply, <b>JE</b> then contacted Adam Wallace who is 'going to look into it...' (however, has subsequently left region).</p>	
4.	<p><b>Surrey 'Irreplaceable Habitats' schedule.</b></p> <p><b>MW</b> circulated a discussion document on this matter as 'Paper A' ahead of meeting. <b>JE</b> had sent <b>MW</b> a draft NE commissioned document (from Penny Anderson Associates) dated 2015, and Paper A forms both an essential precis and critique of this. <b>MW</b> has asked around and it appears there is no current NE intention to finalise this work. <b>MW</b> welcomed but expressed some disappointment with the fact that NE's draft document is guidance only and highly non-prescriptive, which does not offer much extra and equivocally help its planning sector audience. We would hope to therefore be more definitive in our product as derived for Surrey. <b>SC</b> - habitat attributes around unique location and thus its function in landscape connectivity are likely to trump rarity and species complement. Task-&amp;-Finish group will meet to discuss the NE paper, our product and a timeline for delivery soon. Meanwhile, all to provide any further comments by end September.</p>	<p><b>MW</b> <b>All</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Tree planting strategy in Surrey – A SNP Position Statement?</b></p> <p><u>Background</u> – <b>SJC</b> has asked <b>MW</b> to draft a PoS from the SNP on tree planting in Surrey, primarily in response to SCC Mike Goodman (Environment portfolio holder)'s announced aim for SCC to promote the planting of 1.2 million trees by 2030, to address global climate emergency. Our PoS would supply a measured review of available evidence for sequestration through afforestation (esp. vs. other habitats); reiterate Surrey-centric issues around % native woodland cover, veteran trees and lack of sustainable management; the comparative importance of our declining open habitats and competition for creation space; and end with a decision-tree to aid practitioners to implement principle of '<b>Right Tree, Right Place</b>', as the key message. <b>SC</b> - included borough-by-borough breakdown for tree/woodland sequestration would be useful baseline (similar to CEH PM2.5 pollutant removal model recently launched, see <a href="#">here</a>), to monitor change. Possible via Surrey Habitat Framework and averaged areal contribution by woodland type? <b>RB</b> - strategic importance of tree planting as new connective hedgerows/treelines (esp. as navigational corridors for bats). Also, risk of undermining primary importance of protecting existing trees &amp; woodlands. <b>Jay Doyle</b> (FE) reminded <b>MW</b> on this aspect prior to meeting; important programme of modelling work for spatial planning of woodland planting for biodiversity by <a href="#">Forest Research</a>. <b>HJ</b> - is tasked with drafting similar for Guildford. Is concerned with similar issues, important open habitats at risk, and also sees his as opportunity to plan adequately/strategically for future replacement and management of tree stock. <b>HJ</b> &amp; <b>MW</b> to liaise over drafts. Tree planting comes with its own not-insignificant carbon footprint - also water and plastics use. Further supports case for naturally regenerated woodland over planted (tends to be more resilient anyway). Several boroughs have also declared climate emergencies. Woodland Trust's experience (esp. at Langley Vale), would be informative. <b>FT</b> - important role of eg. wet woodland planting in Natural Flood Management projects too. <b>All</b> in favour to proceed with PoS.</p>	<p><b>MW</b></p>
6.	<p><b>Partner Updates:</b></p> <p><b>Helen Cocker</b> (SCC Countryside Partnerships)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Lower Mole Partnership</u>: working with volunteers on the Young Street verge this week, mowing and clearing scrub, after good display of chalk grassland plants this summer, including large numbers of Pyramidal orchids. Return visit will be made this winter to the A24 verge where Man orchids are present (see minutes 15/05). During summer volunteers mainly work on public access improvements, this included another fence around a pond at Stokes Field LNR in Long Ditton to keep dogs out and improve pond condition for pond dipping activities.</li> <li>• <u>Downlands Partnership</u>: The volunteers have been very busy pulling ragwort from hay cropped paddocks, seems to have been worse than usual possibly due to very dry weather last summer, however this also seems to have benefitted chalk grassland species. We have received some useful information re. Orthoptera on our chalk grassland sites, including nationally scarce/restricted Rufous grasshopper <i>Gomphocerippus rufus</i>.</li> <li>• <u>Surrey Heathland Partnership</u>: Heather regeneration is looking better this year, after the dry weather of last causing some patches of young heather to die off. Large areas of gorse/bracken/</li> </ul>	



bramble on heathland were sprayed off this summer, although the erratic weather conditions affected the amount completed. 25ha of scrub clearance is planned for Woking's heathland sites this autumn/winter.

**Rod Shaw (MVDC)**

- Last few months has focussed on getting a draft local plan ready for the Regulation 18 consultation. This includes various supporting documents, including a Green Infrastructure Strategy. However June/July consultation was cancelled following a change in administration and now the October/ November consultation has also been cancelled because of the likely clash with a General Election. The likely period for formal consultation now looks like February/March.
- The review of the **Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan** is currently being separately considered for adoption by the seven AONB authorities (including Surrey). A report recommending adoption will be considered by Mole Valley's cabinet later in September. If all goes well the new plan will be launched on 27th November. The review has been a light touch exercise of improving the readability of some policies and reflecting the provisions of the NPPF 2019, including the references to biodiversity net gain. There are also more specific mentions of wetlands, hedgerows and veteran trees. The light touch is justified by the fact that a review (the Glover Review) of National Parks and AsONB is expected in November which may say something about governance, purposes and financing of landscape designations. In a July letter from Glover to Michael Gove (then still Environment Sec.), he considered that designated landscapes should lead the recovery of nature.

**Dave Page (EBC)**

- 'Shaping Elmbridge', ie. the new local plan. There are 5 options, 3 of which include green belt releases. The Esher Commons SSSI has green belt release as an option right up to its western boundary at Fairmile Common (a Silver-studded Blue colony and reptile hot-spot), which is a major concern. Link [here](#). Interactive map to view the areas potentially released [here](#). Closing date for consultation responses is 30/09.
- Elmbridge has signed a new Higher-Tier Countryside Stewardship agreement which covers the Common Land within the countryside estate. This covers woodland management, heathland management and ponds. Active management of all our sites continues. Extensive woodland thinning continues on West End Common and Esher Common north this autumn.
- Plans are forming for a reptile accessible tunnel to be constructed under the A309 Portsmouth Road/A3 Trunk road overbridge to allow potential migration of reptiles to suitable habitat across a 25m paved area. The response to the proposal has been positive from the ecologist at Connect Plus M25 (the contractor responsible) suggesting a suitable design.
- Nightjars have been churring on Esher Common's restored heathland for the first time in 45 years, with a male south of the A3, and a pair later seen on 2 occasions on the north side of the A3.
- The Internationally threatened Starfruit *Damasonium alisma* has made a re-appearance at Chequers Pond. A single plant flowered and seeded for the first time since 2014.

**Ross Baker (SBG)**

- Barbastelle radio tracking: the female bat was tracked in May from a foraging area in Wanborough Wood as far south as Witley/Thursley area but then lost. However, another bat trapped in May and two more caught in August led to the discovery of the first recorded maternity colony in Surrey, with roost trees found in Durfold Wood, Chiddingfold Forest and a private wood just south of the Surrey/Sussex border. Two subgroups with maximum counts of 22 and 26 bats were identified in August.
- Prior to felling of Ash trees by SWT because of ash dieback, all 26 bat boxes at Combe Bottom had been removed in stages during summer, and 32 replacement boxes erected at an adjacent site under EPS licence to compensate. Natterer's bats occupying the boxes to be removed were ringed during summer visits, under licence from NE, in order to monitor whether they use the new boxes. During a check of the new boxes only a few weeks after erection, bat droppings were found in the boxes, and also a Common dormouse nest with a breeding dormouse and young.
- Light pollution of Wey Navigation Canal at New Haw: **RB** and **LW** have carried out NBMP surveys along this stretch for 20 years and have seen a huge decline in Daubenton's bat activity over that time. It is suspected that this is due at least in part to increased light pollution of the waterway from adjacent houses, and a new development this year has a particularly bright floodlight illuminating the waterway and opposite bank. (After the meeting a similar problem on the River Wey at Eashing was raised.) **IC** - will investigate planning status of this development. SNP members were asked for

IC



thoughts on solutions to these issues.

- The manager of the Peacock shopping centre in Woking had recently asked SBG for advice on erecting bat boxes and cameras to enable the public to view bats on the roof of the centre. As a first step RB and LW had put up a static bat detector to check for bat activity in the rooftop car park, to be collected and analysed; Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle and Noctule recorded.

#### **Lara Beattie (Woking BC)**

- Town twinning sign incorporating swift nesting chambers and bat boxes outside the Civic Offices was officially unveiled last month. Cameras inside the chambers will enable the public to view the nesting birds online when they arrive usually between April - July.
- The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency on 25 July 2019.
- Our partnership working with RHS Wisley continues, with a wildflower workshop for officers, volunteers and contractors planned for Nov 2019.
- Construction for a new pedestrian/cycle bridge creating improved links from the Basingstoke Canal into the Town Centre begins in Nov 2019. Advice has been sought from Surrey Bat Group on sensitive lighting solutions.
- River clearance is planned on the Hoe Stream on 26 Sept as part of Rivers Week.
- *GreenBlue Urban* ran a very useful CPD officer training session on designing trees into urban environments in the summer - highly recommended.

#### **Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC)**

- **SC** along with others from the working group attended the SCC-organised and hosted meeting (16/07/2019) on positive **grass verge management**. Dr Phil Sterling former Head of Countryside at Dorset CC talked through his experience of changing to a cut & clear approach for urban grass cuts. Using soil fertility as a controlling factor he had managed to very significantly lower the number of cuts, on average from 7 to 2. There have already been substantial ££ savings of almost 1/3 of the county's grass cutting budget and the spin off benefit of more botanically diverse and flower-rich verges which are getting noticed and praised. Sterling is currently working for Butterfly Conservation and is available to give his talk. In E&E SC has briefed the Head of Operational Services and colleagues are willing to trial the approach, and a capital bid for grass cutting machinery that can cut & clear was submitted in August.
- The first draft of the next E&E Biodiversity Action Plan is progressing as planned.
- The Hogsmill Catchment Partnership is continuing to focus on water quality & quantity in the Hogsmill River, with EEBC hoping to raise capital funds to repair a significant leak in the Upper Mill Pond at Ewell; South East Rivers Trust are moving forward with planning and public consultation for the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve (Chamber Mead) wetland project; Thames Water making some moves to improve the operation of the storm overflow tanks that regularly spill raw sewage into the Hogsmill and also to inform the public of the health danger this poses.
- **OPM**: EEBC adopted a risk-based approach during summer 2019 where only nests below head height and those in trees above where people congregate were removed. Largest number removed from Epsom Common, in part due to the need to remove nests (Approx 60) from the grazed pasture woodland areas where cattle were at risk, as well as people and pets. The cost was modest but the rates charged are high (£140 per hour). Removal of lower down nests is very straightforward requiring just a couple of minutes on average, and costs were significantly reduced by staff who marked trees accompanying contractor who otherwise would have had to rely on maps to navigate a densely wooded landscape. The parasitic fly *Carcelia iliaca* has been photographed and filmed on Epsom Common and EEBC staff have witnessed a Great Tit removing a caterpillar from a nest (many nests showing similar signs of predation with golf ball sized holes). This information and photos have been passed to the Forestry Commission.

#### **Steve Price (SBC)**

- 2019 trial areas to alter road verge management through a cut and collect regime (April & September) - greater insight needed internally to deliver on a larger scale in 2020.
- Continued programme of wildflower establishment in our parks to offer increased value for pollinating species within 'recreational' dominant sites; internal wildflower establishment trial proved successful.
- SP is re-drafting a Biodiversity Action Plan for 2020-2025, in conjunction with a new Sustainability Strategy and Local Plan.
- River restoration and floodplain connectivity project along the River Ash, Ashford in conjunction



with the Colne Valley lottery bid (Groundwork South) 2019-20. Ambitions of site reclassification to a LNR post works & proposing as a reptile receptor site (for Common lizard and Slow-worm); reptile absence is established. **SP** to contact (SARG)

- Grazing of Sunbury Park SNCI within its fourth year, after initial concerns from residents the cattle have now become 'part of the furniture'. Botanical and invertebrate surveys undertaken 2019 to determine site progress and inform management plan.

#### **Simon Saville (BC)**

- All of Surrey's 42 species of butterfly have been seen this year. BC's Small Blue "Stepping Stones" project on the North Downs came to an end in July. Work is being continued by volunteers - work parties through the winter, and "scrape stewards" to monitor and maintain the scrapes that have been created.
- There is a new 3-year project targeting Surrey's rarest butterfly Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* in the Chiddingfold Forest area, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. See [here](#). Work parties to manage Oaken Wood (Chiddingfold) for the Wood White will continue through the winter. This site is also managed for our rarest micro-moth (only UK site), the Betony Case-bearer *Coleophora wockeella*.
- A total of 125 transects were walked in VC17 this year (about 25% in GLA area), and over 200k butterflies recorded (final data not yet in).
- **OPM**: BC is working with FE to provide a moth 'biodiversity indicator', so that spraying can be restricted in sensitive areas.
- Verge and grassland management, ref. presentation by Phil Sterling of BC in July (see **SC** above): details of this can be found at the web page for his "[Building Sites for Butterflies](#)" project. Phil is available to present to the WG if desired. **SS** will send PS presentation when available, but the website has basic information.
- "[Brilliant Butterflies](#)" - London WT, the NHM and Butterfly Conservation are working together to create and restore parts of south Croydon into chalk grassland for butterflies, insects and wildflowers. This includes grass areas outside SNCI, where the cut-and-collect approach to grassland management will be applied. Funded by a £1 million Dream Fund Award (People's Postcode Lottery). Launch date is 24/09.

#### **Mike Waite (SWT)**

- [M25 J10/A3 Improvement Scheme](#); separate to the proposed mitigation and dedicated compensation package, is a wildlife/Green Bridge over the widened A3 at Cockcrow Hill potentially fundable from Highways England's 'Designated Fund' (environment strand). SWT has drafted and sought targeted signatories for their support 'in principle' to assist HE in their bid for this funding.
- **MW** recently met Cath Shellswell of Plantlife at Clandon Chalkpit SNCI, to monitor recovery of Broadleaved cudweed *Filago pyramidalis* in preparation for seed collection and a related Surrey reintroduction project, via Priest Hill's WCA Sch.8 rare plant 'nursery'.

#### **Peter Winfield (RBC)**

- Noted that the Surrey Parks & Countryside Forum has drafted a position statement on Oak Processionary Moth (available on request).

#### **Andrew Jamieson (for SWT)**

Current SWT project development and delivery include:

- Water Environment Grant (WEG) funded work on Tillingbourne - working with landowners and consultant on technical options for removing barriers to fish passage in Shalford stretch.
- Thames Water/EA funded project in Cranleigh Waters - community engagement and river restoration.
- Coast to Capital Local Growth Fund bid submitted for habitat work in Holmesdale BOA (WG11) including Nutfield Marsh sites and de-silting of Bay Pond. Bid also includes consultancy work on natural capital investment development and carbon sequestration models. Outcome of bid will be known end Sept.
- HLF Hedgerow Heritage delivery phase bid submitted for work in BOA ND02 hedgerow rejuvenation and creation with emphasis on communities and developing younger skills base. Outcome of bid will be known in December.
- Road verges - SWT working with other regional WT's on potential funding for road verge liaison officer. Role would be to work with local authorities to facilitate change in approach to verge



management and build on recent momentum. For SWT this sits within wider family of pollinator focussed projects under banner of “Bees, Bugs and Butterflies”.

**Francesca Taylor (EA), Simon Elson (SCC), Isabel Cordwell (RBC), Hendryk Jurk (GBC)** [all tbc].

Absentee updates:

**John Edwards (SCC)**

- Re. RTP/ALGE Pilot Project on checklists for ecological reports has been delayed a bit, probably launching next year.

**David Watts (RBBC)**

- Earlswood Common SNCI - The reduced mowing regime on the former golf course is thought to be increasing the population of Chamomile along the old fairways. I have started fixed point photography on areas on the common to monitor change. I am looking at restoring the acid grassland areas now that access has been made easier without the golf facility.
- Priory Park (Park Hill) SNCI - Restoration of acidic heath scheduled. A programme of opening lost viewpoints looking north across Reigate is proposed for the winter period; this will contribute to the Landscape Character of the area (Skimmington Greensand Wooden Hills GW11), comments/ advice from **Simon Elson** would be welcome.
- Reigate Heath SSSI/LNR - HLS and general site management works ongoing. The latest Management plan is still to be adopted by the Steering Group and Council.
- Chipstead Downs and Banstead Wood LNR/SSSI - A management group has been created to better manage the two sites (members include RBBC, Downlands, Woodchip Conservation Volunteers, Cannon Bird Group, SWT and Natural England). A site walk is scheduled for October. Countryside Stewardship works for Chipstead Downs ongoing and progressing well with an increased grazing regime to improve the species-rich grassland.
- Petridgewood Common SNCI - New cut and collect regime introduced on the largest land parcel this year to improve wildflower diversity. Scrub management proposed to improve grassland in areas surrounding the cricket ground.
- Wray Common SNCI - Coppicing of willows proposed around pond near the Wind Mill to maintain wetland feature. Application for works has been made to Planning Team/Conservation Officer. A new cut and collect regime was introduced in the meadows next to the Wind Mill to improve wildflower diversity.
- Tanyard Meadows - This is a new open space on former agriculture land in Horley that has been transferred to RBBC ownership following the development of the adjoining Acres residential estate. The site has a typical Low Weald farmland character featuring a patchwork of historic field systems, ancient hedgerows and ditches, wetland areas and ancient woodland. There is also a listed Scheduled Monument (a Tanning Pond) the only of its kind remaining in the south east. Works undertaken to begin improving the wildflower diversity of the meadows, wetland areas and to improve visitor access, safety and interpretation. RBBC are working with Horley Conservation Group and Gatwick Greenspaces to enhance nature conservation. A management plan for the site has been written by SWT Ecology Services.

**Bill Budd (BDS)**

- Thursley was recently officially designated a British Dragonfly Society (BDS) hotspot. There was a grand opening of which there is a video on [YouTube](#) including a speech from Natural England. BB's personal view is that Thursley is more of a honeypot than a hotspot. From a recording point of view it is over-recorded, whereas other potentially very good areas nearby tend to be neglected. However it would be important for educational activities if they actually had additional infrastructure to the boardwalks.
- Boldermere (ref. the M25/J3 Improvement Scheme). DCO application has been submitted.
- I delivered Dragonfly ID training for E&E butterfly transect workers (and some staff) which was well received and included a productive walk round Epsom Great Pond (under-recorded for a couple of decades). ID training was also delivered by other BDS members (David Hepper and Mike Thurner) for SWT RiverSearch volunteers monitoring the Wey and Mole respectively. One initial concern (and I am out of touch so it might have been resolved) is that their records were going to be submitted via SBIC and not necessarily into the national database on iRecord.
- Earlier this year BB produced an informal report summarising dragonfly records & distribution based



	on records submitted via iRecord (available from <b>MW</b> on request). Aspiration to complete similar for 2019. BDS will be producing their own formal 'State of Dragonflies 2020' report possibly in 2020.	
	<b>AoB:</b> The proposed Field visit to view the FE/EA's NFM project on the Pipp Brook, will be moved to early November, date pending the availability of Jo Heisse (and Jay Doyle, who's secondment has been slightly extended).	
	<b>Date of next meeting:</b> <b>Wednesday 15th January 2020</b> 10:00-13:00, venue tbc. <b>Abbreviata:</b> EEBC - Epsom & Ewell; EBC - Elmbridge; GBC - Guildford; MVDC - Mole Valley; RBBC- Reigate & Banstead; RBC - Runnymede; SBC - Spelthorne; WoBC - Woking; SCC - Surrey County; NFM - Natural Flood Management; SLSP - Surrey Local Sites Partnership; NR - Nature Reserve; NE - Natural England	