



Biodiversity Working Group

SWT Nower Wood EE Centre, Leatherhead

Wednesday 15th January 2020

Minutes

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| 1. | <p>Present: Mike Waite (Chair/Surrey Wildlife Trust); Lisa Creaye-Griffin (SNP Director); Rod Shaw (Mole Valley DC); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Stewart Cocker (EEBC); Simon Elson, Rachel Coburn (Surrey CC); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Peter Winfield (RBC); Hendryk Jurk (GBC) Georgina Terry (Natural England); Ann Sankey, Susan Gritton (Surrey Botanical Society); Leigh Thornton (Surrey Wildlife Trust); Dave Williams (WSBG/SDG); Jack Thompson (RSPB); Ben Siggery (SWT- minutes).</p> <p>LC-G introduced herself in her new role as Director of the SNP. All welcomed her at the meeting.</p> | |
| | <p>Apologies: David Watts (R&BBC); Bill Budd (British Dragonfly Society); John Edwards (SCC); Jo Heisse (Environment Agency); Lara Beattie (WoBC); Simon Saville (Butterfly Conservation); Jo Heisse & Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency); Steve Price (SpBC); Isabel Cordwell (RBC), Andrew Jamieson (SWT); Steve Langham (SARG); Alistair Kirk (Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre); Dave Page (EBC)</p> | |
| 2. | <p>The minutes of the meeting of 11th September 2019 were agreed, see here (on SyNP website).</p> | Action |
| 3. | <p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brockham Limepits. Latest from SCC legal team has established there is free public right of access into the site from the south. Meetings with the landowner disputing this are imminent. SWT will update as required. In the meantime SWT have established a precarious vehicular route in from Box Hill Farm to the west for grazing purposes, and also limited pedestrian access from the north for small volunteer groups. • Biodiversity Net Gain; Defra has extended their consultation on the Defra Metric v.2 until the end of February (see here). On this matter, Guildford BC is proposing to set its minimum BNG requirement at 20% (cf. 10% indicated in forthcoming Evt. Bill). This is not wholly unprecedented – ‘leader’ LPA Lichfield DC has previously set this. GT added that EA’s River Thames FA Scheme is also aiming for 20% BNG. Important if GBC is successful in adopting this, as could then ‘set the bar’ for rest of Surrey. • SWT Draft Research & Monitoring Framework is now published and available as a download here. Hard copies available to partners by request to MW. • Biodiversity & Planning seminar is set for 13th February at Dorking Halls; full programme now secured (see here). Marketed to group separately. • Review of SNCI selection criteria. SLSP meeting still not fixed; MW to chase AK/JE. Action c/f to 2020 (see item 6 below). New selection criteria to address important ‘assemblages’ of single/multiple taxonomic groups intended (reflecting ‘bio-diversity!’). • MW has now revised SNP BOA document. This is now finally complete, including the remaining policy statement maps for the Low Weald & Rivers BOAs, see here. • SWT has issued its formal Position Statement on Climate Change, see here. • Copthorne Meadows SNCI; GT advised that case is beyond responsibility of Andy Smith; instead recommends contacting Marc Turner (Senior Planning Adviser, Thames & Solent Team). If this Lowland meadow HPI/SNCI is significantly threatened, could indeed necessitate NE’s intervention under strict site protective remit. Action JE/AK- to submit SNCI map, selection criteria/citation to Marc T. asap. • Light pollution on Wey/Wey Navigation Canal: RB has chased both EA and site owner on the affected Eashing stretch, but no further action from them. IC (RBC) to investigate planning status of | <p>MW</p> <p>JE/AK</p> |



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| | <p>development causing issue at New Haw stretch; PW will chase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group's Pipp Brook NFM project field visit took place on 12 November; well attended and went very well. Thanks again to Jay Doyle (FE) who guided on the day together with the EA's Nick Philpott, and Jo Heisse for pre-event organisation. Possibility of repeating this later this year perhaps. | |
| <p>4(i)</p> <p>4(ii)</p> | <p>Tree planting for climate mitigation in Surrey Position Statement</p> <p>For background, see previous meeting minutes at 4.1. Primarily motivated by SCC aim to promote planting of 1.2 million trees by 2030, to address global climate emergency. Successive drafts already circulated to group; now seeking approval on tabled draft (paper A) for onward sign-off by SNP Board asap.</p> <p>Several discussion points, inc. comment from several LPA partners requesting clearer alignment with strategic & local policy promoting tree planting. Made possible by simply deleting 'but' from first bullet of summary and adding an appropriate sentence to section 3. Also, the decision-making tool is perhaps over-prescriptive (unrealistic?) in requiring a full EclA for every project - consensus that remains necessary however. Possibility for inclusion of case-studies? Would slow document down - but perhaps a best practice illustrated supplement could be produced, referenced 'in prep.'. Actions: all to send ideas for positive case-studies to MW by DoNM. MW to make changes as discussed and forward to LC-G for Board sign-off. Draft SCC Tree Strategy document (paper B) was discussed; several partners have seen via other avenues. Very much a preliminary draft – a wider, formal consultation process is expected fairly soon. MW has already commented from the group.</p> <p>Surrey 'Irreplaceable Habitats' guidance</p> <p>MW circulated his discussion draft as 'paper C' ahead of meeting. Has incorporated several T&FG comments and all points as discussed previously. HJ - will be an important decision-making document, so probably merits further consideration. SE - could be taken to both the Surrey planners' Planning Working Group, and Development Management Group for their endorsement and awareness? Agreed this should happen. Clear that group needs more time to comment. Action; all to forward comments to MW by 13/02. MW to then circulate further draft by DoNM.</p> | <p>All/ MW</p> <p>All/ MW</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Update on Surrey Wildlife Trust Connectivity Model</p> <p>BS provided an informative update on progress with the SWT Habitat Connectivity Model, previously introduced to the group at our January 2019 meeting. His presentation is <u>attached to these minutes as Paper A</u>. A document summarising the project and its findings to date was circulated prior to this meeting ('A methodology for quantifying and measuring connectivity across Surrey and beyond', Siggery B. et al 2020).</p> <p><u>Discussion</u> included;</p> <p>(i) Explanation for non-use of the <u>Surrey Habitat Framework</u> (SHF) data-set (esp. relevant to calcareous grassland modelling).</p> <p>(ii) <u>Comparable elsewhere in the country?</u> - within the Wildlife Trusts, several others are attempting habitat connectivity modelling, using various methodologies to underpin their approach to mapping their 'Nature Recovery Networks' (NRN), ranging from simplistic to more complex. Ours is towards the 'more complex' end of this spectrum.</p> <p>(iii) <u>How does model account for habitat mosaics?</u> Relatively well, as by using a focal species approach, the relative size of the component habitats of mosaics can be taken into account. Only as good as habitat mapping data inputted however; and can thus be enhanced as this data is improved, or new data comes available (eg. the SHF).</p> <p>(iv) With reference to the example of model's application to informing a <u>Water vole reintroduction project</u>, how would presence of Mink be incorporated? If presence/absence of Mink was available as a data-set, this could be inputted and expressed as a high(est?) resistance factor to connectivity.</p> <p>(v) <u>How close are we to enabling use of this by developers/LPAs to inform the regulation of biodiversity matters in the planning system?</u> Elsewhere (eg. Somerset) such modelling has indeed gone in this direction; there is certainly an aspiration for this in Surrey dependent on the scale & habitat data quality of the focus area. At present the model has only been 'piloted' for the SWT current Strategic Plan priority BOA clusters - but in principle this could certainly be done. Costs involved? - yet to be</p> | |



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| | <p>ascertained.</p> <p>(vi) <u>Compatible with Buglife's B-Lines project?</u> Different modelling approach involved, so not compatible as such, but early sight of the draft B-Lines map for Surrey (currently in process) shows a predictably high degree of alignment with our BOA and protected sites distribution, etc.</p> | |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Working Group priorities in 2020</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SNCI selection criteria – carried forward from 2019 (with SLSP; see Matters Rising above). Biodiversity Net Gain. SNP could position itself at the forefront of facilitating LPA training in regulation of BNG; formally piloting its implementation if opportunity arises; advocacy for adopting 20% 'gain'; establishing an 'off-set' project register (aka Natural Capital investment 'pipeline'). A formal, county-wide 'Call for Sites' consultation approach may provide results here. Without this, risk that a falsely-perceived lack of local off-set projects could drive BNG-driven opportunities beyond county. Relatedly, a re-invigorated programme of land/estate-owner engagement could follow, to warm them up as potential providers of BNG off-set projects. TBH Avoidance Strategy/developer contributions requires consolidation with BNG in Surrey too – a further USP. Local Nature Recovery Strategies. LPAs likely to be charged with preparing these alongside a map of their respective 'piece' of the national Nature Recovery Network, as required by the Environment Bill. Again, SNP could position itself to guide delivery of LNRS. Golf Courses advocacy - 'Peak golf' has passed. So time for another push? Golf appears to be in a bit of a crisis presently, with several courses intending closure. Possibly the right time for a strategic approach to bend inevitable changes-of-use towards biodiversity conservation outcomes. MW to speak to LC-G. Reporting into Biodiversity 2020 achievements, including against BOA targets – by end of this year. | <p>MW</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Partner Updates:</p> <p>[*tbc = to be completed.]</p> <p>Leigh Thornton (SWT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sizeable funding from Coast-to-Capital LEP to pilot Natural Capital investment coming into the Holmesdale BOA. Hedgerow Heritage project – funded by HLF, notified that bid accepted before Xmas - looking forward to working with land managing partners in the North Downs to deliver this. SCC - emergence of a future contract to manage countryside estate. In line with current Strategic Plan, this will now be focussed entirely on conservation habitat management and not the public access aspects of this. Possibilities of several new site acquisitions via the Land Trust. Also, on eg. local implementation of TWT Action for Insects campaign, including reviewing our position on use of pesticides. <p>Dave Williams (SDG/WSBG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WBPS commenting on planning applications to resist erosion of habitat, becoming increasingly more difficult. Dormouse Group is fully-stretched monitoring box-schemes; recently taken on boxes at Hindhead resulting from tunnel mitigation. MW is hoping to soon call a meeting with SDG to review future monitoring/research on SWT estate. <p>Hendryk Jurk (GBC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GBC signed up to SWT's HH project (above) for delivery of hedgerow restoration/creation. Shalford Common & Stoke Park, Guildford; shortly consulting on proposed infrastructure upgrade projects at these sites, to incorporate biodiversity enhancements wherever possible. <p>Peter Winfield (RBC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning has recently contracted Chris Blandford Associates to produce a SPG on Green & Blue Infrastructure. Aim is to provide practical guidance to householders & small-medium sized developers, encouraging them to understand the impact that their interventions will have on the surrounding area, albeit road or neighbourhood. We are currently working towards adoption of the | |



SPD during June/July, so expect consultation request shortly; another is scheduled that will revise the RBC TBH SPA policy.

- Chertsey Meads LNR/SNCI is about to be designated as a SANG; will bring in funding for long-proposed habitat enhancements.

Ann Sankey (SBS)

- The Surrey Rare Plant Register is being proof-read currently – watch this space! (publication imminent).
- 2019 was an incredibly busy recording year, partly responding to the last year to contribute to BSBI's new national atlas project. Next up is a new Surrey Flora.
- Wants to re-start idea to undertake a comprehensive Surrey Lowland meadow HPI/Neutral grassland survey/inventory - this could be another focus for 2020.
- Reigate Heath SSSI. Good news here - NE has recently concluded that the proposed denotification of the two failing management Units will not go ahead, as it now appears that recovery is possible and indeed ongoing. Will the proposed extension still go ahead? SE believes so (to confirm).

SE

Jack Thompson (RSPB)

- Following the RSPB restructure our new Area 3 Team covers Surrey along with Sussex, London, Berkshire and East Hampshire – JT is new officer for Surrey. RSPB wants to become more locally focussed – and is currently developing strategy for how we can have the biggest impact across our priority landscapes.

Ross Baker (SBG)

- Hibernation checks 2019-20; yard at Betchworth Quarry/Lime-kilns has a new tenant. Car-breakers have gone and now a scaffolding company and a tree surgeon. Latter may present an issue for bats from processing of green waste (bonfires, noise, etc.). Has chased planning to view any conditioning for this, also enquiry with SWT for any information. SE; SCC involved with green waste issue as well as obstruction of PRow through site. LT; SWT Lucy Bryce's site, who is very recently returned from maternity leave and should reply soon.
- NT Box Hill Fort - has suffered security issues. NT solution has welded access gate shut. Also a shutter left open, so microclimate altered. Possible reason for lack of any hibernating *Barbastelles* this winter (but also very mild). GT to investigate with NT.
- BCT National Woodland Bat Symposium at WWF Woking on 18/03/20. Theme is woodland management for bats. SBG will consider sponsoring delegations from eg. LPA arboriculture officers not fundable by their employer. See BCT [website](#).

GT

Simon Elson (SCC)

- Molesey Wetlands; Thames Water has recently switched personnel involved, which has had a significant impact on negotiations. SWT still interested in the site going forward. So long-standing impasse could soon be by-passed.
- Tice's Meadow, Farnham; Hanson plc (tbc)...
- C₂C at Holmesdale; SE would be interested to see any modelling SWT (BS) could undertake re. connectivity for Dormouse.
- River Thames Scheme; latest developments could impact Laleham GC and Queen Mary Reservoir.
- Brockham pit water-sports application; attention on ecology has revealed Sand martin colony and interesting aculeate Hymenopteran assemblage.

Helen Cocker (SCC Countryside Partnerships)

- Surrey Heathland Partnership engaged in winter contractor work programme, mainly involving tree removal from open habitat sites. Red Kite Conservation Services working at Sheet's Heath and Brookwood Heath for Woking BC; c.26 hectares open heathland restored.
- Downlands Partnership - RKC also working on Tandridge downland site. The regular volunteer work programme and grazing on chalk grassland sites continuing as usual.
- Lower Mole Partnership - as well as the regular volunteer work programme, they are also planning an enhancement project on the Rye Brook through Merton College-owned land.

Stewart Cocker (E&EBC)

- Intended Climate Change Action Plan – wide-ranging in scope, eg. will include pledge for Epsom Common to be NNR by 2025. Also to investigate Carbon sequestration by E&E's vegetation - has



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| | <p>bought the Bluesky 'National Tree Map' data for Borough, which calculates there are c.135k trees in Borough (90% accurate). Shows that vast majority of Borough's trees are privately owned. Can then calculate contribution to CC mitigation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Road verge management (tbc)...• SERT Chamber Mead restoration project at the source of the River Hogsmill is ongoing.• Grazed areas of Epsom Common surveyed by Jonty Denton this season. Amongst various discoveries he has found a Nationally Scarce comb-footed spider <i>Episinus maculipes</i> new for the Surrey list. MW found another specimen at WT Durfold Wood whilst with SBG on the Small woodland bats survey two weeks later. Under-recorded or expanding its formerly very restricted, largely south-west coastal range?• Re-mapping Borough using new UK habitat classification – as recommended by AK. <p>Georgina Terry (NE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in NE team structure. Is now 'Thames & Solent Team', which includes Hants & IoW. GT has gone part-time in her land management role (rest working on designing the new national Environment Land Management Scheme - ELMS)). In partnership with RPA, CS extensions are being offered to run up to intended ELMS roll-out.• New Facilitation Fund scheme underway in Surrey - Wealden Greensands, again led by Lantern (as with Greenscape).• Fish passes on River Wey – EA (tbc)...• Advising on BC Wood white habitat enhancement project – to involve ride & scrub management, also creation of bare ground removing <i>Carex pendula</i> in the Chiddingfold Forest SSSI.• [Tickners Heath WACT bridge discussion].• River Thames Scheme consultation – potential for some real gain. <p>Mike Waite (SWT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National ELMS Test & Trial project (Making Space for Nature) is operating in the Surrey Hills AONB, MW on steering group – ensuring all existing spatial targeting for biodiversity is recognised.• Farnham Town Council intends to produce a BAP; steering group has met several times. <p><u>Absentee updates:</u></p> <p>Simon Saville (BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteer working groups are continuing regular work on the North Downs for the Small Blue and other chalk grassland species (details on request). Volunteers are also working at Oaken Wood; main target is Wood White (details on request)• BC project at Chiddingfold - West Weald Wood Whites - see here. (Oct 2019 + 3 years)• New Moth Atlas published - a real milestone! See here.• 2018 Butterfly & Moth Report now available, see here. Hard copies on request. 2019 Report to follow.• NT Surrey Hills are planning a butterfly theme for their events in 2020. BC is in discussion with them.• Brilliant Butterflies partnership project (2y) with NHM and led by LWT is now underway just over the GLA boundary near Croydon, see here and here. <p>Bill Budd (BDS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small but significant population of Scarce chaser dragonfly (formerly RDB, now Near Threatened) has been recently discovered on River Tillingbourne between Albury & Chilworth. <p>Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing woodland thinning on Esher Commons SSSI was hampered by the extremely wet weather in the autumn and there remains a significant amount of reinstatement work to do.• Elmbridge BC Local Plan Consultation process continues. The pressure on Green Belt remains high, especially threats to Biodiversity Opportunity Area TBL03 at Fairmile Common (peripheral to Esher Commons SSSI). Engagement of partner organisations in this process is encouraged. | |
| | <p>AoB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Surrey Recorders Seminar Day</u> is on 22/02/20, at East Horsley Village Hall. All welcome – please register intention to attend with SBIC's mike.hordley@surreywt.org.uk. | |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SANGS proposal at Ash where potentially impacts SNCI ancient woodland; GBC Arb Officer recommended refusal, but Planning Committee approved anyway. Interestingly, revealing that various developers are questioning integrity of RAWI boundaries. | |
| | <p>Date of next meeting: Monday 11th May 2020 14:00-17:00, venue tbc.</p> <p>Abbreviata: 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; NR - Nature Reserve; NE - Natural England; NT - National Trust; RAWI - Revised Ancient Woodland Survey; SANGS - Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space; SLSP - Surrey Local Sites Partnership; TBH - Thames Basin Heaths</p> | |

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