



Biodiversity Working Group
Video Conference using Microsoft Teams: view recording [here](#).
Wednesday 12th May 2021

Minutes:

1.	<p>Present: Mike Waite (SWT/Chair); John Edwards (SCC); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Simon Elson (SCC); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Izzy Soane (SpBC); Rod Shaw (Mole Valley DC); Dave Page (Elmbridge BC); Alistair Kirk (SBIC); Vivienne Riddle (Tandridge DC); Lara Beattie (WoBC); Mike Coates (RSPB); Georgina Terry (Natural England); Sarah Clift, Pete Howarth (EEBC); Rachel Coburn (SCC); Penny Fox (EA)</p>	
	<p>Apologies: Lisa Creaye-Griffin (SyNP Director); Sarah Jane Chimbwandira (SyNP Chair); Peter Winfield, John Devonshire (RBC); Francesca Taylor (Environment Agency); Leigh Thornton (SWT); Stewart Cocker (EEBC); Ann Sankey (SBS); Simon Saville (Butterfly Conservation)</p>	
2.	<p>The minutes of the meeting of 13th January 2020 were agreed, subject to correction(s) to the update concerning the wildlife crime by SBG, and the location of the proposed crematorium in R&B, see here. Ann Sankey of SBS was wished a speedy return to action by all.</p>	Action
3.	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of SNCI selection criteria. See John Edwards partner update at (7) below. • Tree planting PoS BP supplement. MW has received only one case-study despite several reminders. He now proposes to delay this until such time as more material and editorial time is available. Group agreed. • Biodiversity & Planning Conference 2021. Very successful albeit online – all presentations are now available from YouTube; Day One’s are here & Day Two’s here. 6 of 11 + SCC PAs sent multiple representatives. Agreed to repeat again next year. • Wildlife Crime at Godstone – MW action to follow up with Surrey Police has yet to be satisfactorily completed (SP has yet to replied to his email). • M25 J10 Improvement Scheme – decision on the NSIP-led Development Consent Order due today, but notice issued for further delay until November (reasons given as ‘environmental’ issues still to be reconciled). MW has promised Highways England’s consultants, Atkins plc, that he would suggest to Surrey recorder community that to focus on Ockham & Wisley Commons either end of the bridge would be highly timely, to help inform ecological monitoring of the A3 green bridge going forwards. • Vision for Nature’s Recovery in Surrey – as suggested previously by HR. MW has discussed with LC-G; suggestion that this could be scoped in with Surrey LNRS. A kick-off meeting to discuss the LNRS governance is suggested – further on the suggested visioning piece following that. 	MW
4.	<p>Sustainable Golf Courses Project – Marie Athorn RSPB. Since our last meeting MW & JE met Marie Athorn of RSPB’s golf industry project online. We agreed that a presentation to the WG would be very useful. For Marie’s presentation here, please view the recording from 00:33:50 - 00:51:05 (see link above). Marie’s contacts are marie.athorn@rspb.org.uk, mob. 07734 717012.</p>	
5.	<p>Natural England, GCN District Level Licensing update – Nathalie Brett & Annabelle Phillips. Please view recording from 01:01:42 - 01:18:33. The Q&A follows at 01:18:50- 01:34:00. See also the ppt. slides appended to these minutes. Also, NE Team has prepared a series of online presentation directed at CIEEM members. They can be viewed on YouTube via the following links: District Level Licensing: How the NE-led scheme works; District Level Licensing: eDNA Survey and Data Collection; District Level Licensing: Species Distribution Modelling; District Level Licensing: Habitat Delivery for the NE-led scheme; District Level Licensing: How to apply; District Level Licensing for great Created Newts – Early Outcomes; District Level Licensing for Great Crested Newts – Scheme Improvements.</p>	



<p>6.</p>	<p>Progress reporting on BOA Targets 2010-2020 – See Paper A (Chair).</p> <p>MW presented his paper circulated prior to meeting as Paper A (appended). For background to this item, see AOB from Minutes 13/01/21. MW sought confirmation/comment on his approach as drafted: JE suggested we might use opportunity to establish ‘loss’ statistics as well as ‘profit’; MW reiterated two essential features – i) <u>that reporting should be pan-Surrey (not just within BOAs)</u>, and ii) <u>reporters must not worry about initiating any double-counting</u> (this to be eliminated by the coordinator/author for the final report). AK affirmed this report is opportunity to adjust/correct any BOA maps, and that SNCI (LWS) targets for achieving positive management is not being researched for Defra’s indicator in 2021 (same in 2020), but Defra is proposing to reinstate this in 2022; if our report refers to 2010-2019, is best we can do therefore. SE offered his experience, as has carefully kept account of WG11 Holmesdale target progress (most exceeded); also reminded that Surrey’s BOAs approach is held-up nationally (externally confirmed at Bio & Planning Conference), so all the more important to maintain, report etc. MW pushed for an opinion on method for setting future targets (see paper 3./3rd bullet); group collectively favours the subtraction of achieved total from a x2.5 expanded future target. For species, it will be made clear that any S.41/priority spp. is eligible for reporting conservation action undertaken 2010-20, and that new target should respect/build on such achievements. MW has clear mandate to now proceed with drafting and distribute reporting protocol, plus a time/deadline schedule towards completion of report.</p>	<p>MW</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Partner Updates:</p> <p>Ross Baker, Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of proposed meeting (inc. NT, NE, SBG) to discuss addressing unofficial off-road cycling tracks erupting across county, North Downs in particular. One involves Chapel Wood and Westhumble Mine (part of SAC). Also the programme of official cycle network expansion, sometimes adjacent/on protected sites, can be of concern, especially when safety lighting is being included (ref. bat impacts). Much of this work is proceeding without necessary biodiversity ECLA, as deemed ‘permitted development’. Is clear that WCA/ConsHabsRegs species protection applies whenever any illegal action is threatened. <p>Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse <i>Ulex spp.</i> die-back this year across lowland heathland sites and elsewhere. Jury’s still out on exact cause – various theories have inc. bacterial (<i>Xylella</i>), or simply freak climatic response to unique dry/frosty spring weather. Latter is gaining support, as growth apparent at base of plants and wetter regions of UK not affected. • Lower Mole (FA) Scheme – EA reviewing consultation responses presently; a decision due very soon. <p>Sarah Clift (Epsom & Ewell BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering is back, weekly on Thursdays. • Epsom Common grazing resolved - cattle fencing and satellite tracking this year. • Chamber Mead project is proceeding through its planning process. • Tree planting plan published for Borough, including caveats. • Black Hairstreak MSc looks like it is going ahead – an autecological study, in relation/comparison to other hairstreaks present. • Management plans almost complete for Nonsuch Down, inc. hay-making going forwards, Epsom Downs & GC. • A further PhD from Newcastle Univ. looking at parasitism in OPM, on study sites in Epsom & Ashted Commons. • Restructure at E&E has put team into Place Making (Planning) Directorate. • Team is pushing for agreement to go with NatureSpace for GCN district licensing. <p>Vivienne Riddle (Tandridge DC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiatus continues on future direction of Tandridge Local Plan 2033, pending any plans for traffic capacity improvement around M25/A22 J6. <p>John Edwards (SCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNCI Sites Review – an online meeting proposed in June, certainly to cover Guildford revisions. Criteria review – SWT Ecological Services will be commissioned to undertake this for SyNP. • In E&E, the emerging project to enlarge/extend/buffer Howell Hill NR, will again involve SWT ES to update botanical surveys – SCC commission. • ‘Urban BOA project’ is a further SCC commission of SWT, to finally research and publish BOAs within urban areas of county (by end FY). • GCN DLL update – SCC, Mole Valley, Tandridge, R&B & Guildford are now fully signed up to NatureSpace’s scheme (other schemes are available). Woking has its own; E.Sussex & Berks are also with NatureSpace. • MW – ‘SNCI (owner) Champions’ idea, has kept a working list for this; JE added Forest Green PC could be another. 	



Rod Shaw (Mole Valley DC)

- MV Draft Local Plan. Forward Planning team working on Regulation 19 draft; probably out to consultation in mid-late summer. SNCI list will require some consolidation/revision, to address pSNICs also.
- Surrey Hills AONB boundary review. Natural England has issued its review process and is issuing a press statement on this. Review to take on outcome recommendations of Glover Report, ie. criteria to inc. not just aesthetic values; overlap with BOAs might match up. Jane Smith will be replacing Rod on this group going forward, as Rod is retiring end-May. Everyone wished him well in his retirement and thanked him for his solid and continuous support for the BioWG.

Alistair Kirk (SBIC)

- Still very busy at SBIC – >530 data-search queries in 2020, same rate this year.
- New SLA recently agreed with Affinity Water.
- No Recorders online talk by Erica McAlister NHM Dipteran curator was a great success >120 attendees.
- Recent data sharing agreement with PTES.
- Mike Hordley has recently moved on to JNCC, where it is hoped he will use past contacts to inform his LRC liaison work.

Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships)

- Normal volunteering scheme to resume next month it is hoped.
- Downlands Partnership has gained 77 lambs this year to add to conservation grazing flock.
- Grazed Headley Warren this year with sheep as a trial; impact on Tor-grass so successful, to be extended in 2022.
- Restructure at SCC – is now in Natural Capital Team.

Simon Elson (Surrey County Council)

- Restoration continues apace on minerals sites across county.
- Perennial Molesey Wetlands Q.? Yes – continues to move in the right direction. Latest here is BC Surrey Branch has recently set up a UKBMS transect across the site.
- On BNG, Simon has responded for Mineral Planning Officers Soc. into consultation coordinated by Hants LRC.
- Reigate Heath SSSI – NE no longer proposing to denotify any units, conversely an extension is now proposed.
- Earlswood area – Wild Earlswood, new climate concern community initiative, SE is helping them launch.
- BDS VC17 Recorder Bill Budd has recently died and is replaced by Linda Bright.

in absentia:

Simon Saville (Surrey Branch BC)

Projects: Fiona Haynes is leaving BC to take up a new, permanent role of Weald Field Officer at ARC Trust. Recruitment is underway to replace her as Project Officer for the "Saving the Wood White" project based around Chiddingfold. The Big City Butterflies project in London is now fully staffed (2 project officers) and work is getting underway. Launch events being held on 1st June onwards.

OPM: The FC control programme has continued this year. BC have been fielding questions from land managers in SW London and Surrey about when and where treatment is mandatory and what the impacts are. A more proactive approach is planned for next season.

Zoom talks: Branch has run a series of Zoom talks through the winter. Recordings of these are available on YouTube via the Branch website: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/surrey-and-sw-london-branch/zoom-talks>.

Lara Beattie (Woking BC)

- Woking Peregrine Project: x4 chicks have hatched and are happily feeding. Live stream of the nest webcam is available at <https://www.wokingperegrines.com/>.
- The Planet Woking programme continues and the website (www.planetwoking.co.uk) and social media channels are being continually updated to encourage residents to support biodiversity by doing what they can in their own gardens (eg. No Mow May; hedgehog conservation etc.), as well as publicising nature conservation volunteering opportunities. Next Planet Woking webinar takes place at 6.30pm on 26 May. The theme is Urban Life: Adapting to Climate Change. Details are on the events page of the website (www.planetwoking.co.uk/events).
- WoBC is expanding its online resident engagement programme and as part of this there's the opportunity for us to further engage the public on the various topics. One idea is to set up a nature and green space gallery through which residents can share their photos of local biodiversity and green infrastructure in the borough.
- Also wondered if WG could recommend a particular method by which we could invite the public to formally record/report their wildlife and native plant sightings. Is there a recommended app and is it accessible by ecologists so can also benefit from data too? **SBIC?**

AK



	<p>John Devonshire (RBC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work still progressing towards a draft G/BI SPD which we hope to be presented to our Working Party of Members end-June with consultation in the Summer. The GBI includes a section on biodiversity and refers to the Environment Bill and BNG and how developers can achieve this. Also refers to the Surrey Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas as a resource. • We have also recently received two planning applications for new SANG. Both linked to two of our housing allocation sites (Chertsey Bittams A and Ottershaw East) but should have sufficient capacity, if approved, to not only mitigate for the allocation sites but also allow other developments to buy into these SANGs. These would be the first third party SANG in the Borough. <p>Lisa Creaye-Griffin (SyNP Director)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was proposed for two MP engagement events; in July to lobby the amendment to the Environment Bill and in Oct/Nov around Nature-based Solutions - agreed in principle yesterday by the 'Chairs' of SENP. [July event since dropped]. It would be useful to know of any members' organisations have examples of NBS that we could be using? • Has also raised idea of 'NRN vision' as part of the proposed regional NRN work with the 'chairs' and that was supported (regional NRN clearly involves the region's protected landscapes. SDNP and New Forest NP have already begun their NRN research pieces, which should be available in the near future. More thought required on the format of a regional NRN, and to ensure all the relevant players involved. Aim to have the NRN largely worked out ahead of LNRS, so that there is a spatial framework for them to deal with implementation. 	
<p>6.</p>	<p>AOB:</p> <p>MW Proposal for an extraordinary meeting, perhaps hosted by SyNP in combination with Sy Parks & Open Spaces Forum, timed for autumn, on the topic of shared experience of public visitor access management in response to the huge spike in demand across the county, as driven by COVID-19 lockdown conditions. MW to take up with LC-G and/or PW (Chair SPOSF). To include resourcing implications (funding has been cut when demand increasing).</p>	<p>MW</p>
	<p>DoNM: 8th September 14:00-16:30 – hopefully in forum, but tbc.</p>	
	<p>Abbreviata:</p> <p>ALERC – Assoc. of Local Environmental Record Centres; ALGE – Assoc. of Local Govt. Ecologists; BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain; EEBC - Epsom & Ewell; EBC - Elmbridge; GBC - Guildford; GCN – Great Crested Newt; MVDC - Mole Valley; RBBC- Reigate & Banstead; RBC - Runnymede; SBC - Spelthorne; WoBC - Woking; SCC - Surrey County; NFM - Natural Flood Management; NNIS – Non-Native Invasive Species; NR - Nature Reserve; NE - Natural England; NT - National Trust; RAWI - Revised Ancient Woodland Survey; SANGS - Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space; SJC - Sarah Jane Chimbwandra (SNP Chair); SLSP - Surrey Local Sites Partnership; TBH - Thames Basin Heaths</p>	