



Biodiversity Working Group Video Conference using Microsoft Teams: Wednesday 8th September 2021

Minutes:

1.	Present: Lisa Creaye-Griffin (SyNP Director); Simon Elson (SCC); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Dave Page (Elmbridge BC); Sarah Clift , (EEBC); Rachel Coburn (SCC); Conor Morrow (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Peter Winfield (RBC);(SCC) Jane Smith (MVBC); Cara Thomas (SCC Countryside); Susan Medcalf (Surrey Botanical Society)	
	Apologies: Mike Waite (SWT/Chair); John Edwards (SCC); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Georgina Terry (Natural England); Alistair Kirk (SBIC); Lara Beattie (WoBC); Sarah Jane Chimbwandira (SyNP Chair); Leigh Thornton (SWT); Stewart Cocker (EEBC); Ann Sankey (SBS); Simon Saville (Butterfly Conservation); TDC ; Izzy Sloane (RBC); Hendryk Jerk (GBC)	
2.	The minutes of the meeting of 12th May 2021 were agreed, see here .	Action
3.	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife Crime at Godstone - The Police Wildlife Officer has been on long term sick leave, but is now back and is expected to report back soon. • M25 J10 Improvement Scheme – Confirmed that there is a lot of botanical data for either end of the proposed bridge. Highways England DCO is expected to be ready in November 2021. STOP PRESS/UPDATE; DCO decision recently delayed again to May 2022. • Vision for Nature’s Recovery in Surrey – An extra category has been added to the Wilder Surrey Art and Photography Competition, which closes in March 2022. The category ‘Vision for Surrey’ is sponsored by the Surrey Nature Partnership and asks entrants to submit a piece of art showing their vision for Surrey’s Future Nature recovery in; https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/whatson/wild-surrey-art-photography-competition The winners in this category will be used to inform a new vision for nature in Surrey that we can use to engage people and form our goal for the future. • More information was requested from partners on projects undertaken in Surrey in and around BOAs, ie. for the Biodiversity Action Reporting Project 2011-2020. 	
4.	<p>Farming In Protected Landscapes (FiPL) A new grant scheme has opened, funded from Defra, administered through the Surrey Hills AONB. A three year programme running from 2021-2024, the first application window opened in July and runs until 31st Jan 2022. Grants will range from £500-£50,000 except in exceptional circumstances. The AONB has also published its Nature Recovery Strategy for allocation of the funds ‘Making Space for Nature’; https://www.surreyhills.org/nature-recovery-strategy/ https://www.surreyhills.org/farming-in-protected-landscapes/ Funding is available for projects that cover their priorities under Climate, Nature, People and Place.</p>	
5.	<p>Partner Updates:</p> <p>Ross Baker, Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle tracks/paths: we have heard nothing further from NT or NE about measures to control illicit cycling around Westhumble mine, and would welcome an update. New lighted cycle track along the edge of a SSSI in Guildford (Dagley Lane): we heard recently about an online consultation for locals but that the opinion from NE had not been received as yet. • Chiddingfold Forest rare bats: SBG has just completed a short radio tracking study (following updated IUCN covid guidance), identifying several new Bechstein's bat roosts, including recording some within the SSSI for the first time (two in or adjacent to Firtree Copse), which should enable these and Barbastelle to be added to the SSSI citation. Indeed, we believe the area qualifies for SAC status given the presence of breeding colonies of these rare Annex II species, but we are unclear as to how this will work post-Brexit. More work is planned for next year as we have evidence to suggest further colonies of Bechstein's and sub-groups of Barbastelle are present. 	



Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)

- Countryside Liaison Officer post has been deleted which leaves us with no schools programme. The Officer was made redundant. Financial positions of LA's are a worry.
- EBC Countryside Officers soon to have meeting to commence GCN District Licencing involving planners and SCC countryside partnerships.
- Lower Mole Flood Alleviation Scheme decision awaited after public consultation. A group of riparian owners are demanding no drop in the water level at Esher. If this scheme goes ahead in full it will be a huge opportunity for biodiversity gain in Elmbridge.
- Elmbridge Local Plan update. There will be a 6 week consultation period in Autumn 2021 with examination in Spring 2022 and adoption Autumn 2022.
<file:///C:/Users/djp/Downloads/DRAFT%20Local%20Development%20Scheme%202021-2024.pdf>
- Nightingale was singing on Field Common for a few weeks in June.
- A number of closed churchyards have altered their cutting regime to cut and collect with positive results for wildlife. Meadow Saxifrage is still found on one site.
- The only Adders tongue fern colony produced fertile fronds for the first time in years.
- Esher Common SSSI woodland management programme continues with 20 ha being thinned this autumn. With high prices and demand for timber we are getting improved habitats with the benefit of significant income to reinvest in our sites.

Sarah Clift (Epsom & Ewell BC)

- EEBC has confirmed they will be using NatureSpace to carry out their District Level Licensing for GCNs.
- I attended an online launch of the new Nature Tool recommended by the Ecosystems Knowledge network. It looks very useful and helps to assess a development's impact on the land's ecosystem services. It works alongside the biodiversity metric and uses the score as part of the assessment. Perhaps it is something that local authorities could request developers use to assess the impact of their development?
- Volunteers have been assisting in surveying for all 5 hairstreaks on Epsom Common and all 5 were found again this year. Black Hairstreak also found on adjacent Ashted Common and nearby Horton Country Park LNR.
- A PhD student from Newcastle has taken samples of OPM caterpillars to assess the level of parasitism by the parasitic fly. The JNCC have also been in touch about the information from surveying OPM in the Borough in regards to researching nature based solutions to controlling OPM.
- The planning application for the wetland creation project at Chamber Mead within the Hogsmill LNR has been validated. (I'm afraid I was wrong in the meeting when I said it had been granted planning permission. Unfortunately still only at the validated stage. Notices will go up on site in due course for people to comment on it.)
- New sightings include Hairy Dragonfly and Bladderwort on Epsom Common. On Horton Country Park, new records include White-legged Damselfly, Black Darter, Willow Emerald, Southern Marsh Orchids and Reed Warblers nesting in the wetland (created as part of the Noble Park housing development.)
- NoFence satellite tracking was used along with the usual electric fencing as an extra back up in case of vandalism. It has been very successful and is far easier to find the cattle and provides interesting heat maps as to where the animals prefer to graze. The cattle will be leaving Epsom Common at the end of the month.

Jane Smith (Mole Valley DC)

- Jane is now the representative from MV for BWG and the Surrey Hills AONB,
- MV Draft Local Plan. About to be published and will be first plan to put forward a proposed 20% BNG requirement. The plan goes to MV Cabinet on 15th Sept. It also includes more explicit weight on maintaining and increasing open spaces, and makes a strategic point on Natural Capital.

Simon Elson (Surrey County Council)

- Holmesdale – continues to be active promoting mineral restoration and enhancement through the area, building on the RESTORE project legacy and supporting SWT in their championing of the BOA.
- Molesey reservoirs – ongoing, but it appears Thames Water failed to reach any agreement with any NGO, so Plan B now being looked at involving a multi organisational Management Board.
- A number of SCC Officers visited Knepp Estate in Sussex with regard to considering Rewilding approaches in Surrey.
- A reminder that there will be a third Surrey Planning & Biodiversity Conference in 2022, planning for



which has started

- Reigate Heath – Natural England & the Environment Agency been exploring issue of recovering water levels and their monitoring
- Surrey commenced review of Mineral & Waste Plans, with a view that will become a single integrated Plan. Consultation on Issues & Options expected later in the year.

Lisa Creaye-Griffin (SyNP Director)

- The Vision work is starting with the Art & Photography Project and we will see what that produces next Spring.
- SyNP are working with the South East Nature Partnership (includes Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and Isle of Wight) to produce a draft Nature Recovery Strategy for the south east with expertise and help from the landscape lead at The South Downs National Park Authority. The aim is to produce a broad strategy using national datasets that shows the opportunities for joint working across the region. The maps and document will initially be internal for the Nature Partnerships to use in future work.
- Green Social Prescribing (GSP) -Surrey Nature Partnership is co-leading one of the work strands (on sustainability) in the Surrey Heartlands GSP. This work is at the initial stage with ideas for projects to test and learn from being put forward and looked at across the 7 work strands.

in absentia:

Lara Beattie (Woking BC)

- WBC Great Crested Newt Project is nearing completion of its fifth operational year. The Woking project team continues to work with Natural England to share lessons learnt to Natural England's wider DLL roll out. An article about the Pilot has this month been published in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management 'In Practice' journal.
- Work by WBC and local groups including Woking Environment Action (WE Act) has continued again this year to expand wildflowers throughout the borough.
- The Woking Peregrine Project has seen four young birds raised again this year. Sadly, in late July 2021, the adult male was found dead. This is being investigated however, the circumstances are not suspicious, the indications are it was a tragic accident. A new male bird (tiercel) has since been seen in the Town Centre.
- Brookwood Cemetery has recently seen the completion of a new wetland area with boardwalk.
- Further urban greening has been completed in the Town Centre with a second living wall at Dukes Court completed this summer, complementing the structure's green roof. An extensive green wall is currently being installed on the Red Shoppers' Car Park, adding to the new green roofs on the building. Meanwhile, the earlier Dukes court green wall and green roof and vertical planting at Middle Walk are establishing well.
- 24 September 2021 marks one year of the Planet Woking (www.planetwoking.co.uk) programme which provides a one stop shop for climate change and biodiversity communications. Work is underway on a Planet Woking Urban Garden Guide, to provide practical tips for residents on how they can turn their gardens into wildlife havens
- Woking Environment Action (WEAct) has arranged a series of activities and events as part of the Great Big Green Week this month, a national campaign celebrating action against climate change. The events, which run 18-26 September, feature a number of activities celebrating and supporting the local natural environment and encouraging people to get involved. See WEAct's webpages for the full calendar of events <https://wokingenvironmentaction.com/great-big-green-week/>

Vivienne Riddle (Tandridge DC)

- The emerging Local Plan is still under examination. A letter from the Planning Inspector, which is currently being reviewed and the issues raised being carefully considered. A response to the Inspector's letter will be made once councillors and officers have agreed our approach.

Georgina Terry (NE)

- Another busy Countryside Stewardship season is complete and the next round of aftercare visits to existing agri-environment schemes is now underway.
- A further round of the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) with £2.5 million is available, to create a further 30-plus collaborative groups of farmers and land managers (nationally) to learn more



	<p>about the natural environment and coordinate collaborative action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England is working to shift focus back to more frequent assessment of the condition of SSSIs. The aim is that we are better able to provide a commentary on how well (or not) we are collectively progressing towards the government target of having at least 75% of SSSI by area in favourable condition and secure for the future, by 2043. • To achieve this we have a dedicated survey team, we have agreements in place with partner bodies including RSPB, National Trust and Wildlife Trusts to undertake the work on our behalf, and are changing how we operate to increase efficiency and to place more emphasis on providing clarity to land managers on what needs to be done, or to give credit where it is due. We are focussing effort on re-assessing sites that have not been visited for over 6 years, especially where there is a high risk that the situation on the ground may have changed. • The work is highlighting some really positive success stories, but also inevitably sheds light on problems that need addressing. • Natural England are recruiting for Tree Planting Project roles, to support FC in the England Tree Planting Program. • Look out for the public consultation about the approach to the release and management of beavers into the wild in England. 	
6.	AOB: There was no AOB	
	<p>DoNM 2022</p> <p>Proposed dates: 19th Jan 14.00; 11th May 14.00; 7th Sept 14.00. All venues to be confirmed (offers welcome).</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 Chimbwandira (SNP Chair); SLSP - Surrey Local Sites Partnership; TBH - Thames Basin Heaths</p>	