



Biodiversity Working Group

Wednesday 11th May 2022: Video Conference using Zoom

Minutes:

1.	<p>Present: Mike Waite (SWT/Chair); Dave Page (Elmbridge BC); Sarah Clift, Stewart Cocker (EEBC); Rachel Coburn (SCC); Ann Sankey (Surrey Botanical Society); Vivienne Riddle TDC; Bill Downey (Surrey Branch-Butterfly Conservation); Lara Beattie (WoBC); Jane Smith (MVBC); Paul Davey (EA Biodiversity Officer Wey Catchment); Bronwen Chinien (Natural Environment Officer, SCC); Hendryk Jurk (GBC); Susan Medcalf (NE/SBS); Helen Miller (FE).</p> <p>New member introductions; Andi Roy (Spelthorne BC); Christa Emmett (Surrey Hills AONB Board); Hannah Fahey (EA Biodiversity Mole Catchment); Sophie Sykes (Natural England); Molly Easton (NE/LNRS Coordinator for Surrey).</p>	
	<p>Apologies: Lisa Creaye-Griffin (SyNP Director); Simon Elson (SCC); Ross Baker/Lynn Whitfield (Surrey Bat Group); Helen Cocker (Surrey Countryside Partnerships); Alistair Kirk (SBIC); Leigh Thornton (SWT); John Devonshire (RuBC); RSPB; David Watts (R&BBC).</p>	
2.	<p>The minutes of the meeting of 19/01/2022 were agreed, subject to correction of a budgetary reference at the E&E partner update, see here.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNCI Selection Committee (Surrey Local Sites Partnership) meeting; No action. Update from SBIC; “John and I had planned to meet before he left and dates were due to be circulated when I came back from holiday. Unfortunately, events intervened and we weren’t able to follow through. We did however speak before he left and were able to discuss mechanisms by which the SLSP could look at the most urgent sites before his replacement comes into post.” Regarding the SNCI selection criteria review; SNP budget is available for this (although not specified), so SWT Ecology Services can make a start on coordinating this in May/June this year. Action BC to confirm SCC financial contribution towards this. • Biodiversity & Planning Conference 2022. – successfully completed in February. More people attended than for previous x2. Feedback all positive and intention to hold again in late winter 2023. • Biodiversity Action Reporting Project 2011-2020: completed and available as download form SNP website, here. Thanks to all members contributing to this. • The proposal for a BioWG field meeting this year has not been progressed – suggestions please, and possibly even offers for the organisation of would be very welcome. • Any response to previous suggestion for SCC to declare a dual ecological/climate emergency going forward? BC – matter has been discussed internally but resource required for to be meaningful beyond just a rhetorical press release should probably be directed at LNRS and other deliverables under the Env. Act. 	<p>BC</p> <p>All</p>
4.	<p>Surrey Habitat Classification project & LNRS appointed Responsible Authority – update & discussion. Bronwen Chinien SCC:</p> <p>Presentation available here with these minutes. Land App commissioned to produce a dataset bringing together all nationally available land-use data and translating this into the UK Habitat classification typology, for the 11 boroughs & districts of admin. Surrey. Essential for BNG valuation via the Defra Metric 3.1, for use by planning sector, consultants and developers. Consists of a GIS layer and dashboard of information. To be made available following a workshop to interpret the information for intended users.</p> <p>Q&A: AS enquired after the dataset offering any new information on quality grassland habitats. Essentially it doesn’t, as the perennial drawbacks re. interpretation of grassland quality via aerial photography is retained here. SC asked about the detail level of UK Habitats – 2 vs. Level 3? Assumed to Level 2 (ie. relatively low resolution). JS – please include planning rep’s from this group when releasing to LPAs, not just GIS tech’s there.</p>	<p>All</p>



	<p>Update on Surrey LNRS: SCC remains <u>provisional</u> Responsible Body/authority, ie. still to be confirmed. Govt consultation on LNRS feasibility with strategic authorities last year, result of which should be reviewed/issued alongside essential, detailed guidance on deliverables pertaining to LNRS. Due out this summer, after which SCC will firm up, in consultation with stakeholders, on the forward timelines to full production of a Surrey LNRS. LNRS are to be monitored for progress quinquennially and must combine strict biodiversity/bio-abundance recovery with parallel measurables of natural capital investment. Several pilots across the country have provided useful do/don't lessons on going about this.. Large partnership of stakeholders anticipated to engage in production, and of course delivery – SNP will be key. All sorts of evidence documentation being assembled currently in preparation. Still early days, but next steps will be formally appointing the governance structure going forward. Possibly via a launch event of some kind.</p> <p>Q&A: 5-yr reporting – who? Responsible Authority (ie. SCC) or every LPA? Need to check Evt. Act on that... HJ – is being asked by Members/executive alike about future resourcing needs – somewhat in the dark? ME/MW – not alone here; Defra guidance much needed to address such questions. BC – recommends looking at report on piloting experience, here¹. DP – echoed already squeezed resources of LPAs. Financial resource support to LPAs still to be decided (cf. £10k/district for 'BNG implementation' – received with some bemusement).</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Surrey Urban BOA Project:</p> <p>Presentation available here with these minutes. This is another SCC commission, from SWT Ecology Services. Essentially undertaken to finish Biodiversity Opportunity Areas programme - will become an important element of the LNRS.</p> <p>Brief was to identify 'best' routes for protecting and enhancing Green Infrastructure wildlife corridors between 'rural' BOAs abutting larger urbanised areas of Surrey. Arrived at x15 urban units for the study.</p> <p>Q&A: JS – example UrBOA maps are very detailed, can messaging be very clear around their purpose as indicating opportunity vs. strict safeguarding? Also, in view of Local Plans currently in process, Bs&Ds probably need these asap & ahead of planned availability/release to public. PD – How do these corridors echo/identify connectivity constraints to eg. fish passage in riparian corridors? MW: corridors are identified complete with existing known connectivity constraints, eg. weirs etc. In this respect, they merely present previously known opportunities (eg. in catchment plans) for enhancements by removal of barriers to fish passage. BC: How does the group feel the report/its findings should be made available – the SNP website possibly? AS: maps to be used for community action focus to enhance/augment wildlife corridors in urban realm? If so, they need to be made aware of maps through signposting to wherever. Discussion on wider communications strategy for LNRS if/when appropriate. Essentially awaiting Defra guidance, seed funding could cover communications strategy budget.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Partner Updates:</p> <p>Ann Sankey (SBS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unimproved Grasslands Inventory project – identification and safeguarding objectives. • SCC esp. at Norbury Park SSSI/SAC. • Buckland Countryside Park Pit – SBS invited to survey; some interesting spp. there and on adjacent Buckland Est. • Longcross Garden Village; recent consultation; where is this in regards to planning? MW to find out with RuBC. • Former Wisley Airfield – new application believed imminent. • BSBI has issued floral biodiversity heatmaps for concentrations open habitats axiophytic indicators, where tree planting schemes should be avoided, see; https://bsbi.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2022/04/BSBI-News-150-pp40-44-tree-planting-heat-maps.pdf. <p>Andi Roy (SpBC):</p>	<p>MW</p> <p>RC</p>

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-nature-recovery-strategy-pilots-lessons-learned/local-nature-recovery-strategy-pilots-lessons-learned>



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Esso Pipeline replacement scheme has successfully avoided an important pond. Thames Water-owned – any contact there? RC (SCC) thinks she can help there.• OPM now a growing issue for Spelthorne. All concerned to introduce themselves to Andi and offer experience/help. <p>Helen Miller (FE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Currently reviewing ecological management plan for the Chiddingfold Forest SSSI estate. <p>Bronwen Chinien (SCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Edwards retired end-April – replacement to be advertised in the future. Meanwhile SWT EPAS service has been contracted to supply ecological planning advice on a case basis.• Undertaking a BNG valuation for various sites in SCC estate.• Defra Local Sites Single-Indicator assessment to be undertaken this year; between SBIC & SCC – watch this space for routine B/DCs consultation. <p>Christa Emmett (SyHills Soc/AONB):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New in post with SHSoc. (6 months). Role is promoting community engagement programme with users/volunteers of the AONB. Has recently included hedgerow creation – >1.75km across AONB this planting season. Currently focussing on hard-reach groups. Is keen to collaborate with recording groups on Citizen Science applications. <p>Dave Page (Elmbridge BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CaBI are trialling a biological control for <i>Crassula</i> – a herbivorous mite called <i>Aculus crassulae</i>, see here. DP has offered Esher Common ponds supporting S.41/RDB Starfruit <i>Damasonium alisma</i>, so watch this space for positive results. Could be what we've all been waiting for..• Dartford Warbler is breeding on Esher Common, and Oxshott too. <p>Jane Smith (MVDC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MV Local Plan is now at Examination. Hearings to take place in autumn. Likely that MVDC will need SyNP support at which for evidence towards the policy for a BNG requirement of 20%. Has been challenged by a number of developers, particular those on smaller sites. <p>Lara Beattie (Woking BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wild About Woking event 21 & 22 May 2022. Thanks to SWT colleagues for working with us on this. Further information about the event and programme available online at Join us at Wild About Woking, 21 & 22 May 2022 - Planet Woking. If there are any organisations running relevant events/activities locally this month that they'd like to be included please drop Tracey a line to discuss and we would be happy to promote them.• Grass-cutting and wildflowers. We're currently working on more information for our website about grass-cutting and wildflowers. This will include topics like No Mow May and how and where we take part in Woking borough, plus promotion of SCC's Blue Campaign for verges.• Woking Peregrines. Pleased to report 3 chicks recently hatched – livestream available on the Woking Peregrine Project website.• Urban BOAs and Town Centre Masterplan SPD. Many thanks to you Mike for your assistance regarding the urban BOA research, which has been very helpful already to the work we've been doing to write the green infrastructure and biodiversity element of the forthcoming Woking town centre masterplan SPD. The Council will be bringing this forward this year with consultation details to be determined soon. <p>Molly Easton (Natural England):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New at NE – which has recruited c.50 senior advisers to work on LNRS. Support to RA's – building stakeholder partnerships, supplying technical resources – depends on need of RA.• Small related funding scheme; offers £10-25k bids for seed-corn funding (ie. looking for matches) towards NRN-related projects. Capital spend – by end FY 22-23. <p>Sophie Sykes (Natural England):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable Farming Incentive is rolling out this year - applications in June. See here; https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sustainable-farming-incentive-guidance.• New catchment sensitive farming adviser in post for Wey/Mole - Ed Baker.	<p>All</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team includes Susan Medcalf – engaged in accelerating SSSI condition assessment programme. • NE is working with stakeholders in SyHills AONB to address the problematic mountain biking issue. Engaged in developing a regulatory strategy with users, to prevent any further damage to SSSI notified features. • NNR extension of Ashted Common (see E&E report below). <p>Paul Davey (Environment Agency)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting update on Wey Forward ie. Wey Fishpass & Wetland Delivery Programme. Fish migration barriers to be addressed at Burpham Court Farm, at Somerset Bridge & Eashing Westbrook Mill, as well as Guildford Millmead. These will include 8th/9th weir addressed by project – soon no longer any major barriers remaining. • Working with Canoe England on a voluntary Floating Pennywort control project c.Papercourt area. Also has a biological control agent – here a weevil. <p>Rachel Colson (Surrey County Council)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree planting across many restoration sites this winter – particularly in western Hog’s Back sand-pits zone (Runfold Quarries). • Molesey Wetlands update – a recent meeting with Thames Water & Cemex – some progress at least. Tice’s meadow – new SCC ownership & management regime settling in. <p>Stewart Cocker (Epsom & Ewell BC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E&E Climate Change Action Group inaugural meeting; agreed to re-launch as ‘CC & Biodiversity Action Group’. • SC to manage/hold a BioBlitz event on Epsom Downs. • Hairstreak study on Epsom Commons – only site with all x5 UK hairstreaks. Gareth Tilly (discoverer of the Black H) will be conducting his MSc. on this – spp. interrelationships etc. • DLL – to be rolled-out in E&E. • NE approach E&E & CoL to undertake condition monitoring surveys of SSSI – inc. invertebrate & bird assemblages; linked to proposal to extend the NNR across the complete SSSI, as well as ground truthing for ‘Living England’ project. • Newcastle Univ looking at natural control of OPM via parasitic fly; ongoing monitoring of rates of parasitism. Report imminent. • Northey Fields, Ewell. Proposed landscape-scale linkage project could include some NFM benefits also. <p>Vivienne Riddle (Tandridge DC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The emerging Local Plan is still in Examination and discussions are still ongoing. nd is now becoming established in the Reigate/Redhill area, monitoring and control of both are underway. 	
6.	<p>AOB:</p> <p>MW; Major wildlife on Ash Ranges late April. 300ha of 700ha site. Has been promoted to Director of Research & Monitoring at SWT – happy to continue chairing the Biodiversity WG for now.</p>	All
	<p>DoNM; 7th Sept 14.00. Venue to be confirmed (offers welcome). Hopefully we will organise a field meeting ahead of this.</p>	
	<p>Acronyms</p> <p>BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain; EEBC - Epsom & Ewell; EBC - Elmbridge; FE - Forest England; GBC - Guildford; GCN – Great Crested Newt; MVDC - Mole Valley; RBBC- Reigate & Banstead; RuBC - 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; SLSP - Surrey Local Sites Partnership; SPA – Special Protection Area; TW Thames Water.</p>	