

# **The Surrey Countryside Access Forum**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum  
Wey and Bourne Rooms, Merrow Depot, Merrow Lane, Guildford  
Monday, 16 October 2023**

## **Present:**

Members (and their primary interests):

- Elliot Cairnes, Chairman (Walking)
- John Barber (Motorcycles)
- Ian Wilks (Walking)
- Penny Carey (Equestrian)
- Paul Marshall (Mountain Biking)
- Gail Brownrigg (Carriage driving)
- Pamela Lyman (Landowner)
- Pat Lewis (Walking)
- Thor Simpson (Walking)
- Gareth Jex (Motor vehicles)
- Vicky Keller (Countryside management)
- Yasmin Broome (Surrey Coalition of Disabled People)
- Lawrence Wells (Surrey Leadership Group)

Officers:

- Jonathan Wall, Countryside Access Assistant Legal Definition
- John Baker, Countryside Access Officer (West) Maintenance and Enforcement
- Rob Fairbanks - Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Kathleen Letch-McMillan, Ministry of Defence Liaison Officer

Guests:

- Peter Hattersley

## **1. Declarations of Interest**

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## **2. Apologies**

2.1 Neil Baker (Commons), Corinna Osborne Patterson (Landowner), Avril Sleeman (Equestrian), Carolyn McKenzie (SCC)

## **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 were confirmed.

## **4. Matters arising / Action points**

4.1 Action regarding Lost Ways – agreed that specific list would not impact upon the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

- 4.2 Ian spoke about his visit to Footpath 103 Farnham, an issue that was raised by guests at the previous meeting. His conclusion was that the footpath was carried along an access road used for the properties, and thus was a private matter.

## 5. Election of Chair/Vice Chair

- 5.1 Elliot Cairnes was re-elected as Chairman, nominated by Gail Brownrigg. Corinna Osborne Patterson was re-elected as Vice-Chairman, Forwarded by

## 6. Ongoing Matters

- 6.1 Next MoD liaison meeting scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> October.

**Action:** Kathleen to present an item at the next meeting on safety and other issues on MoD land.

- 6.2 Noted that next joint LAF chairs meeting is in December.

- 6.3 Elliot raised the issue of wildfires. Due to wetter weather over the summer, there were fewer incidents. Emphasised the importance of liaison between path wardens and Fire services, and that more promotional efforts are required to educate the public about wildfire prevention.

- 6.4 Wey and Arun Canal Trust – Meetings have occurred between the WACT subgroup and Tony Ford. Gail said she had had no further updates since the last meeting and that WACT was due to send outstanding planning applications.

- 6.5 The potential for a restoration of the Cranleigh – Guildford line was discussed. This would have a significant impact on the Downs Link and WACTs planning. Acknowledged that the plan is likely unfeasible and more aspirational at this stage.

## 7. Junction 10 improvements - discussion

- 7.1 Reported that Junction 10 Non Motorised User Forum met back in May to discuss plans. Elliot reported that feedback indicated meeting was generally unsatisfactory and questions were not answered.

- 7.2 Elliot reported his discussion with Claire. Surrey Highways have now embedded an officer into the J10 project to liaise on issues, including concerns from an NMU perspective. Questions were raised about the breadth of footpath closures. National highways have put a Development Consent Order (DCO) in place, which allows multiple closures on rights of way to take place over an area within the red line. Surrey have placed independent closure orders on paths not within this area.

- 7.3 Elliot reported areas of concern – Ockham roundabout, bridleways come down to the highway red line and become footpaths/cycleways. Stub roundabout – planning included in the DCO but becomes redundant if the new town is refused. Unprotected crossing at Wisley – RHS in discussions to divert onto their land. Painshill roundabout, a potential new Bridleway and development of safe crossings on the roundabout.

- 7.4 Sanway and Byfleet flood alleviation scheme was raised, Elliott queried coordination between scheme and J10. John Baker said several meetings including at the site took place. Benefits from scheme to be new routes and improvements to Muddy Lane. Gates will be removed, and vegetation cut back to provide 3m width.

Potential form more traffic as a link between Wisley and Byfleet. Issues with defacement of signage can be more easily protected against by more use of the Bridleway.

## **8. AONB Update**

- 8.1 Rob begins with Ranmore Common and issues with illegal use of off road vehicles, leaving the BOAT and driving around the woods. Arrangements for local community to assist in providing dead wood to help block off access points. Wood can be brought from Sheepleas, and AONB looking to liaise with Councillors, landowners and 4x4 user groups to help address issue. Gareth Highlights issue of lack of Cameras and data protection requirements. John questions if trespass or road traffic offence. There is a specific offence under S.34 of Road Traffic act for driving on land that is not a road, and the police are receptive to the issue.
- 8.2 Promoted route working group discussed – implementation of cycle network and 4 more promoted routes. More funding is available from DEFRA . AONB team are looking to promote sustainable access to the area, with car free travel and equestrian routes. There is also funding for access audits to evaluate availability of the countryside.
- 8.3 Mountain biking – position statement on mountain biking to be announced – looks to enshrine responsible culture, sharing, and address questions of liability.
- 8.4 Rob highlighted some issues whereby cyclists are creating their own ‘unofficial’ routes. Pamela had concerns about impact on landowners. Rob said that there were limited options to prevent this on open access land, best to work with user groups and landowners to work to a constructive solution. John pointed out that trespass is civil rather than criminal so is a matter for landowners. Hurtwood raised as an example of constructive engagement as they encourage cyclists on their land.
- 8.5 Rob updated the forum on proposals for extension of the AONB, for which consultation is underway – objections may proceed to public inquiry. Noted that proposals for national park status have been advocated. Rob also raised that levelling up bill may have impact, with regard given to conserving and protecting the AONB

## **9 Disabled Users Update**

- 9.1 Yasmin visited Frensham great pond in advance of the availability of Access for All funding. She reported that areas of the boardwalk are in a state of disrepair which is an example affecting disabled access. National Lottery funding can help to work together with Surrey to increase accessibility.
- 9.2 Yasmin raised the problem with availability and affordability of transport to countryside areas. Disabled people are often reliant on taxis and there would be a preference for community transport options which would be more affordable and preserve the social aspect of countryside outings. Idea could be to utilise voluntary car share schemes which are already used for things such as hospital visits, could this be extended?
- 9.3 Yasmin and the Surrey Coalition will be attending the Surrey Hills conference and will be running a stand.

- 9.4 Rob extends his thanks to the Surrey coalition on behalf of the AONB. He says they are generous in thinking about the needs of carers, the elderly and other disabled groups, and appreciates the challenges that they face in accessing and enjoying the countryside. He mentions Growing Together initiative and that the AONB are applying for funding to enhance outcomes for access for all.
- 9.5 Ian wants to make clear the distinction of those who have mild disability or mobility difficulties, especially those who are elderly but want to remain active, and that resources should be made available to these people in the areas in which they live. Rob agrees on this and Yasmin points out that initiatives to assist wheelchair users/those with significant mobility issues will be helpful to all. She says the goal is for people to be independent.
- 9.6 John notes that Countryside Access need to be informed about works that will take place on RoWs.

## **11. Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

- 11.1 Jonathan and John give an explanation of the ROWIP to the group. It is a strategic document, intended to last 10 years, which will assist Countryside Access in decision making. A survey open to general public will be sent out with individual workshops with statutory consultees to follow.
- 11.2 **Action:** SCAF to form subgroup to discuss the ROWIP.

## **12. Forward plan**

- 12.1 Forward plan discussed.

## **13. Outstanding consultations**

- 13.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

## **14 Any other business/ urgent questions**

- 14.1 Peter referred to the increased use of mobility scooters and sought assistance on a trail crossing the A246 with issues with a dropped kerb and stiles affecting access. Asked to report this to Countryside Access to investigate further.
- 14.2 Noted the promoted routes working group.
- 14.3 **Action:** Put agenda item at future meeting to discuss DEFRA presumptions guidance.
- 14.4 Concern about online engagement of SCAF and availability to new members. It is not possible to access the old Facebook account for SCAF. Gail highlights a need to raise awareness.
- 14.5 Share with Care initiative was noted – interest in ensuring that different user groups are respectful of each other on the RoW network.

The date for the subsequent meeting is as follows:

- Monday 22 January 2024 1:30pm  
Woodhatch Place, Larch Room