

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum Maple Room, Woodhatch Place and online via Microsoft teams Monday, 25 April 2022

Present:

Members (and their primary interests):

- Elliot Cairnes, Chairman (Walking)
- Avril Sleeman (Equestrian)
- Thor Simpson (Walking)
- John Barber (Motorcycles)
- Ian Wilks (Walking)
- Penny Carey (Equestrian)
- Vicky Keller (Countryside Management)
- Corinna Osborne-Patterson (Landowner)
- Paul Marshall (Mountain Biking)
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Officers:

- Joanne Porter, Countryside Access Assistant
- Steve Mitchell, Countryside Estate Operations Manager
- Carolyn McKenzie, Director, Environment
- Emma Cole, Surrey Hills AONB

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 Elliot declared that he is a member of the Ramblers.

2. Apologies and introductions

2.1 Sophie Gordon (cycling), Gareth Jex (motor vehicles)

2.2 Joanne said that Neil Baker who has an interest in Common Land and the Wey and Arun Canal has been added as a member since the last meeting.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2022 were confirmed.

4. Matters arising / Action points

4.1 Elliot said there were some comments that followed by email following Rob Fairbanks presentation at the previous meeting. These can be addressed by Rob at the next meeting.

4.2 Elliot reported that contact had been made with representatives of the Wey and Arun Canal and it is hoped that they will be able to attend a Surrey Countryside Access Forum meeting in the future to explain what their plans are for the canal.

4.3 Avril has emailed Mary-Ann Edwards regarding the paths across North Park Farm Quarry but is still awaiting a response.

Action – Joanne will chase Mary Ann.

- 4.4 Joanne will resend the CAMS presentation that was given at the previous meeting.

Action – Joanne to resend presentation

- 4.5 Penny and Ian both report that they are still having problems with the public facing side of CAMS on the Surrey website. Joanne said that she did report the previous issues to the contractor that looks after the system and he did some work to correct the problems which were quite major issues. Ian asked who the contact in Surrey County Council for CAMS is?

Action – Joanne to forward information in Penny's email to Dan and Claire in the Countryside Access team and the contractor.

- 4.6 Elliot said that there were concerns at the last Ramblers meeting about how CAMS is working at the moment for external partners. At the moment it is making it hard for the partners to help Surrey County Council. Penny echoed those comments as the same issue had been discussed at a recent BHS meeting.

Action – Joanne to pass these comments on to Dan and Claire.

- 4.7 Ian and Avril expressed concerns about the lack of staff resources in the Countryside Access team, for example Mary Ann has been doing two jobs for several months, and the team has not been fully staffed for a couple of years. Joanne said that although positions within the team have been filled over the last year or so, it has been with other people from within the team which means the team has still not been at full capacity. Interviews are being held this week to fill three positions within the team, and a couple of new positions have also been created that will be filled soon. This should mean that there will be more staff resources to be able to deal with the backlog of issues and other work and start moving forwards.

- 4.8 Elliot reported that Network Rail has a new design for bridges over the railway which will hopefully mean replacing a level crossing with a bridge will be a more viable option in the future.

Action - Joanne will circulate the Network Rail level crossing strategy and the information about the new 'Flow bridge' that Network rail has designed.

- 4.9 Medium kissing gates installed in Surrey recently and gates installed by Hampshire County Council.

Action – Carry forward these actions

5. Matters dealt with since the previous meeting

- 5.1 Avril queried the response to the Surrey County Council Minerals and Waste Consultation as it is recorded that no response was sent. Avril said she sent a final version to Elliot. Elliot said this must have been when he was in hospital so it must have slipped through and wasn't submitted.

Action – Joanne to send in the response to Surrey County Council with apologies and hopes that it will still be considered.

6. Surrey County Council Countryside Estate Update – Steve Mitchell, Countryside Estate Operations Manager

- 6.1 Steve gave a presentation detailing what is happening with the Surrey County Council Countryside Estate.

Action – Joanne will circulate the presentation

- 6.2 Elliot asked how the Countryside Estate relates to the AONB and its projects to encourage more visitors to the Surrey Hills and how the impacts of these visitors is managed. Steve said that the Estate and the AONB share a lot of the same objectives. Any initiative has to be appropriate for the site. For example Newlands Corner gets very busy at weekends. Mountain biking is very popular but it causes a lot of problem such as building unauthorised trails. Emma said that any work that included the Estate would have to be done collaboratively. For example the AONB works with Surrey Choices (an organisation that supports disabled people, autistic people, those with sensory needs, those with mental health problems and older people improve their independence and confidence) for habitat management and clear vegetation to improve views.
- 6.3 Penny said that height barriers at car park entrances prevent horse riders from using sites as they can't be accessed with horse boxes. Steve acknowledged that this is problem he is aware of, and he would like to take out some of them. Barriers prevent fly tipping and access by travellers which are both issues that are very expensive to deal with. The estate is looking to replace some old barriers with a new design that could be easier to open. It is being looked at as an option at one of the car parks at Chobham Common to create some spaces outside the car parks for horse box parking. Penny said that the BHS may have some funding to help increase the number of equestrian visitors.
- 6.4 Ian asked who manages the Downslink. Steve said that the Downslink is partly owned by Surrey County Council and partly by Waverley Borough Council, although some of the Waverley owned parts have now been sold or gifted to the Wey and Arun Canal. It is not part of the Countryside Estate. The whole width of the Downslink is designated as a bridleway and is managed by the Surrey County Council Countryside Access Team. Waverley Brough Council would have information about what sections it has sold. Vicky said that she was not aware of the gifting of sections of the Downslink.
- 6.5 Elliot asked how the Estate team interacts with the Access team and splits its resources. Steve said the Estate and Access teams work closely and share some resources such as carrying out some works and site visits. Steve said the Estate team is starting to get more reports about issues on the estate now.
- 6.6 It was asked how issues out of hours are dealt with as there are very few staff to look after the estate, and how is fire risk dealt with. Steve said that the team are able to manage at the moment. They work closely with Fire and Rescue and Surrey Wildlife Trust takes a lead on this as fire risk can be linked with a lack of habitat management which increases the fire loading in certain habitats.

7. Wolvens Lane Traffic Regulation Order

- 7.1 Joanne highlighted the fact that the statutory consultation period for the Traffic Regulation Order had begun and if SCAF wants to continue its objection to the order

then they should submit something to Daniel Williams before the deadline.

Action - Elliot will look at Ian Russell's response for the Local Committee and amend and update it for the statutory consultation.

- 7.2 Avril asked if a speed limit had been considered along Wolvens Lane. Steve said that it would need to be enforced, and that the signage required could be an issue as it would need to meet statutory standards. Advisory signs have been used in the past.
- 7.3 John said that the Trail Riders Fellowship has a code of conduct that includes recommended speeds. John also said that other Byways have recently been surfaced so he hopes that this doesn't result in a TRO having to be made on these Byways as well.

8. Wey and Arun Canal Planning Applications

- 8.1 Ian said that there are two planning applications relating to the restoration of the Wey and Arun Canal along two sections of the Downslink.
- 8.2 One of the applications went to the Waverley Borough Council planning committee for decision and the planning permission was granted. However, Friends of the Earth took WBC to judicial review as incorrect procedure was followed. The application went to the committee again and was turned down. The Wey and Arun canal have until 17 September to appeal against the decision. Not sure what this outcome means for the future of the project and the other planning application.
- 8.3 Penny asked what would happen with the bridleway if the canal is restored in these sections. Ian said that the bridleway will be squeezed between the canal and the boundary of the bridleway. It is unlikely that more width from the adjacent landowners.
- 8.4 Elliot said that he hopes someone from the WACT will come to the next meeting so the SCAF can find out what their overall objective is regarding the canal and also issues such as where the water will come from.

9. Forward Plan

- 9.1 The forward plan was discussed and amended accordingly.
- 9.2 Suggestion for the forward plan included:
- Add Map Modification User Evidence Forms formatting / questions

10. Outstanding consultations

- 10.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

11. Any other Business / urgent questions

- 11.1 Ian will circulate his concerns regarding the forms Surrey County Council uses for Map Modification Order user evidence forms. He said they have recently been updated and will make it harder for user evidence to be used / collected.
- 11.2 Penny has circulated an email regarding a webinar that is being held jointly with Surrey County Council and East Sussex County Council regarding connectivity along

the A24 corridor. This could be an opportunity to address issues that have existed since the A24 was built such as improving crossings and links for access.

Action – Joanne suggested that if there are concerns from members and Surrey Highways don't have plans to improve links / connectivity then SCAF could write a letter highlighting its concerns.

- 11.3 Corinna gave an update regarding Trigg Street and the upgrade of the footpath. There will be a meeting about this soon as it was delayed due to Covid.
- 11.4 Penny circulated an email about access to Ash ranges. There has been a small partial reopening of Ash Ranges from the Wey and Arun Canal for public access when the flags are not flying. The reopened stretch can't be used by horses yet. This has been raised with the MoD.
- 11.5 Elliot says that there hasn't been any MoD Liaison meetings and he hasn't heard anything about there being one. He would like to raise concerns about people having to turn back when they access MoD land.
- 11.6 Penny said that she had heard that Mark Sumnor is unfortunately leaving the MoD so this may be why there has been no contact recently or progress on the various consultations.
- 11.7 Joanne hasn't been able to find out how to control of the SCAF Facebook page after David Bellchamber's death but will look at it again.

12. Dates of next meeting

- 12.1 11 July 2022 1.30pm
Woodhatch place and online.

- 17 October 2022 1.30pm
Venue to be confirmed