

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum held online via Zoom Monday, 26 April 2021

Present:

Members (and their primary interests):

- Ian Russell, Chairman (Motor Vehicles)
- Pamela Lyman (Land management)
- Penny Carey (Equestrian)
- Sophie Gordon (Cycling)
- Paul Marshall (Mountain biking)
- Avril Sleeman (Equestrian)
- Elliot Cairnes (Walking)
- Thor Simpson (Walking)
- Romy Jackson (Farming)
- Corinna Osborne-Patterson (Landowner)
- John Barber (Motorcycles)

Officers:

- Joanne Porter, Countryside Access Assistant
- Debbie Jones, Senior Countryside Access Officer Legal Definition

Observers:

- Hollie Iribar (Wildlife and Rural Crime Officer, Surrey Police)
- Matt Sewell (Police Support Volunteer)
- Stuart Boreham (GLASS)

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies

2.1 Gail Brownrigg (carriage driving), Rosie Norris (Mobility Vehicles), David Bellchamber (Walking)

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record with minor amendments.

4. Wolvens Lane Proposed Traffic Regulation Order

4.1 Surrey County Council is holding a consultation about options for the future of Wolvens Lane after recent resurfacing work. The options are:

1. To promote a permanent TRO to restrict all motorised vehicles with 2 or more wheels and all horse drawn carriages exceeding a width of 1500mm (4'11") from using the BOAT.

2. To promote a permanent TRO as above for horse drawn carriages but only restrict those motorised vehicles with 4 or more wheels.

3. To promote an Experimental TRO, which would ban all motorised vehicles, except those who had been issued with a permit to use the BOAT. Or this could be reduced to just those with 4 or more wheels who would need a permit. Numbers of permits would be restricted. Horse drawn carriages would also be restricted as in option (1).

4. The BOAT has no restrictions.

4.2 Debbie said that she had received a few hundred emails in response to the consultation, and there has been a very mixed response. A few locals complain about the noise of motor cycles especially at night, but a number of walkers and cyclists would like the BOAT to be open to all users.

4.3 The discussions about the proposal included the following points:

- The British Horse Society would like option 3 as there would still be access for emergency vehicles.
- Horse drawn carriages can usually fit through a 1500mm gap, but a 4 wheeled motor vehicle can't.
- Police can enforce a permit system as it would be a criminal offence to be driving along the BOAT in a motor vehicle without one.
- There is a permit scheme in Kent with a code on the gates, and there is a step that horses can step over to be able to use the BOAT.
- The TRF is against any restriction as responsible users should not be penalised because of a few antisocial users and feel that permits would be onerous.
- A local carriage driving business would be badly affected if they were not permitted to use the BOAT any more.
- A number of local ramblers and cyclists would like the route closed to motorised vehicles.

- Debbie would need to look at what happens in Kent to find out how they decide who is eligible for a permit.
- It was asked if a seasonal TRO had been considered – Debbie said that it is a valid option and they have been used elsewhere in the county and they have worked well.
- Debbie said that a lot of other suggestions had been made and they will be considered.
- Stuart said that there are concerns about vehicles going off the path onto adjoining land and causing damage, but from his experience work can be done to prevent damage to adjacent land by clamping down quickly on it and blocking off any new areas of incursion.
- Stuart said that there is no evidence of any risk or danger to other users from vehicles using Wolvens Lane.
- If Wolvens Lane is closed to motor vehicles it will concentrate these users onto fewer and fewer routes which could cause problems on these routes.
- The width of Wolvens Lane is 10-15 feet in most places, although some sections are 7-8 feet wide, and it is a rough metalled surface.
- Avril supports all legal users using rights of way.
- Elliot has no problem with responsible users but is concerned about irresponsible users. He is concerned that the Surrey Hills AONB is promoting access to the Surrey Hills but not responsible use.
- Wolvens Lane is part of the new Leith Hill to Box Hill multi-user route.
- Private right of access will not be affected.
- Thor is concerned about enforcement if a TRO is made, and that people should be informed of the rules of using these routes.
- Signage at the ends of BOATS outlining the rules may be useful but should be worded in a positive way.
- A wallow on Wolvens Lane has been fixed by Surrey County Council and is still OK now, so improvements can be maintained.
- Stuart said that GLASS is proposing a fifth option which is a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which increases the ability of Police to arrest people and would help with enforcement. Debbie said that the Surrey Hills report

recommended this option. A PSPO is time limited, but a new one can be made if required.

- Use by 4 wheeled vehicles should compact the new surface rather than damage it as it is a hard-wearing surface.
- A speed limit was suggested to be put on the BOAT as at the moment it is national speed limit.
- There is a code of conduct for motorcyclists that says they should not travel in groups larger than six and should give way to horses etc.
- Would there be a trial /review period to see how things go to see if whatever is decided works? Debbie said that if it is decided to make a TRO it could initially be an Experimental TRO.

4.4 Members voted on the options, plus the option of making a PSPO, and agreed that the Surrey Countyside Access Forum's preferred option should be that Wolvens Lane is kept open to all traffic. The second option should be making a PSPO, and the third option should be a permit system.

Action – Ian will prepare a response to circulate around members to agree and then send to Debbie.

4.5 Ian asked Hollie if she had any comments to make regarding byways.

4.6 Hollie made the following points

- Surrey Police would like to enforce more on byways, but officers need to be trained in driving 4x4s and all driving tests have been cancelled because of Covid which has caused an issue.
- An officer broke their arm when training to use motorcycles off road which has meant that all training has been suspended.
- It is difficult to reach a lot of byways.
- There was an incident in Mole Valley where a vehicle was towed away from a byway.
- Hollie covers the west of Surrey and Laura Rowley covers the east of the County.
- Hollie suggested that Matt Sewell attends SCAF meetings and be a liaison between the police and SCAF.
- Countrywatch is still in operation

- Hollie recommends signing up for 'In the Know' website to find out what is going on in your neighbourhood and reporting issues, and you will get a faster response.

4.7 Matt introduced himself – he works in IT and has an interest in countryside and rights of way and works as a volunteer with Surrey Police in the rural crimes unit.

5. Surrey County Council update

5.1 Debbie reported that Environment Service is undergoing a restructure.

5.2 Countryside Access now sits in the Natural Capital Team with the Countryside Estate, Countryside Partnerships, Visitor Services and Arboriculture.

5.3 Debbie revealed that she is taking early retirement in June after 34 years at Surrey County Council, and that Steve Mitchell is now the Countryside Estate Operations Manager so there will be two vacancies within Countryside Access, and they will be recruited into.

6. Matters arising / Action points

6.1 David Bellchamber is not here to update about the parking issue at Esher Common

6.2 Penny has sent the Pirbright Memorial Loop email again

6.3 Hollie said that there is no new legislation regarding electric scooters – they can be seized just like any other vehicle on a footway.

6.4 Ian said that he had still not been able to get hold of Roger Geffen from Cycling UK

6.5 The public consultation for the new byelaws on MoD land should start by mid-May, as well as a consultation about new entrances to the sites.

6.6 There have been some additional concerns about access to the technical area on Ash Ranges and access has been restricted. Landmark have carried out some works to improve access in other areas for local residents.

Action – Penny asked Ian to send around a map showing these areas.

6.7 Carry forward the action relating to the £500,000 grant that Surrey Wildlife Trust have received from the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Forum

Action – Joanne to find out about the grant

6.8 Gail Brownrigg suggested re-sending the letter regarding the 2026 cut-off . Penny suggested waiting a few months due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, and for it to mention how long records offices have been closed in the last year.

- 6.9 Amy Cosgrave's presentation was circulated.
- 6.10 Nobody came forward to help the revision of the easy access routes on the Surrey County Council website.
- 6.11 Romy's presentation was circulated.
- 6.12 Facebook's move to host UK accounts in the US shouldn't have an impact on UK accounts.
- 6.13 Leave the issue for time being of how SCAF can get notified of planning applications that will affect access.

7. Matters dealt with since previous meeting

- 7.1 The Pegasus Horse crossing, Copsem Lane response was acknowledged. There will be a feasibility study carried out this year.
- 7.2 Swires and Lodge Farm Applications response was acknowledged. The application has been withdrawn and will be resubmitted with more information.
- 7.3 North Park Farm Quarry response was acknowledged. There are concerns about alternative routes and the surfaces of the reinstated routes.
- 7.4 Oxted Road Crematorium response was acknowledged.

8. Forward Plan

- 8.1 It was agreed to invite the Hampshire BHS representative to the July meeting.
- 8.2 Find out if Gail has a contact who could attend a meeting to discuss the Dogs in the Countryside topic.
- 8.3 Romy said that Hugh Broome would be happy to speak to the SCAF and the option of the July or October meeting should be offered.
- 8.4 Joanne to see if a Surrey County Council colleague can show the SCAF how issues are managed in CAMS.
- 8.5 Oak Processionary Moth / Giant Hogweed / invasive species should be added to the forward plan

Action – Joanne to update the forward plan as discussed.

9. Outstanding consultations

- 9.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

10. Any other urgent business / public questions

- 14.1 Sophie said that the Cycling UK policy document now has a note on it saying that it is out of date and directs people to a webpage that explains where people are legally allowed to cycle. <https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/cycling-guide/where-can-i-cycle-off-road>
- 14.2 Avril asked if there had been an increase in the number of schedule 14 applications in light of the 2026 cut-off. Debbie said there hasn't been an increase in the number of applications. Only three applications are using historical evidence, the rest (around 30) are using User evidence.
- 14.3 Ian thanked Debbie for her time supporting SCAF and wished her a happy retirement.

11. Date of next meeting

- 11.1 Monday 21 July 2021 1.30pm
Meeting to be held online