

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum held online via Zoom Monday, 18 October 2021

Present:

Members (and their primary interests):

- Ian Russell, Chairman (Motor Vehicles)
- Pamela Lyman (Land management)
- Elliot Cairnes (Walking)
- Thor Simpson (Walking)
- Romy Jackson (Farming)
- John Barber (Motorcycles)
- Sean Harrison (Countryside management)
- Sophie Gordon (Cycling)
- Corinna Osborne-Patterson (Landowner)
- Ian Wilks (Walking)
- Paul Marshall (Mountain biking)

Officers:

- Daniel Williams, Senior Countryside Access Officer Legal Definition
- Joanne Porter, Countryside Access Assistant
- Rob Fairbanks, Surrey Hills AONB director
- Emma Cole – Surrey Hills AONB Communications Lead

Observers:

- Hugh Broom (Farmer)
- Paula Matthews (Farmer)
- Mark Sumnor (MoD)
- Clive Catherall (Rambler)

1. Minute's silence to remember David Bellchamber

2. Membership of Forum 2021/22

- 2.1 Surrey County Council has reappointed Gail Brownrigg, Elliot Cairnes, Penny Carey, Sophie Gordon, and Romy Jackson to the Forum.
- 2.2 Rosie Norris decided that she did not want to be re-appointed to the Forum. The Surrey Countryside Access Forum thanks her all her work and contributions over the years.
- 2.3 David Bellchamber sadly died during the year.
- 2.3 Vicky Keller (countryside management) and Ian Wilks (walking) have been newly appointed to the Forum
- 2.5 The Forum has 19 out of a possible 22 members, so there are 3 vacancies.

3. Election of Chair and Vice-chair

- 3.1 Elliot Cairnes nominated by Gail Brownrigg before the meeting and seconded by Ian Russell was unanimously elected as Chair for the forthcoming year.
- 3.2 Corinna Osborne-Patterson nominated by Elliot Cairnes and seconded by Ian Russell was unanimously elected as Vice-chair for the forthcoming year.

4. Declarations of Interest

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. Apologies

- 2.1 Gail Brownrigg (carriage driving), Avril Sleeman (equestrian), Penny Carey (equestrian), Lesley Steeds (local government), Claire Saunders (Surrey County Council)

6. Mark Sumnor – Ministry of Defence update

- 6.1 Mark is the Access and Recreation Advisor for the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. He manages the access to MoD sites and works with user groups.
- 6.2 Mark said there is no update yet regarding the MoD byelaw review, although there has been positive feedback.
- 6.3 The delay caused by Covid has meant there has been more time to look at the review and the responses. The consultation was also delayed due to local elections.
- 6.4 The revised byelaws need to go to the Secretary of State for sign off before there is a public consultation.
- 6.5 Mark said that the MoD is very close to being able to carry out the public consultation and apologised for the delay.
- 6.6 Elliot asked why the definition of land boundaries is a problem. Mark said that there is a lot of history related to MoD land and the land has changed a lot over the years in terms of what has been bought and sold. There have also been land use changes such as land now used for Garrison's, and internal boundary changes such as for training area boundaries. The scales on some of the existing maps were also not good enough and it was hard to figure out, for example, on some maps what side of a hedge a boundary runs.
- 6.7 Ian asked if there is a problem with SSSI/SPA status and access for cyclists. Mark said there isn't presently, as it is prohibited and moving forwards the boundary issues are more important.

7. Hugh Broom – landowner - public access and how this is managed

- 7.1 Hugh introduced himself as a landowner who farms land near Westcott in the Surrey Hills AONB
- 7.2 Hugh has 8km of rights of way on 800 acres of land, and also has the Dorking to Westcott cycling route crossing his land.

- 7.3 It was very busy during the lockdowns of the past 18 months with 80 – 100 regular dog walkers, 20 – 40 regular cycle users according to the cycle count. There are also leisure cyclists in addition to the regular cyclists.
- 7.4 Hugh has 23 or 24 separate fields and there are only 2 fields that have a right of way going through the middle of them. The rest have the path going around the edge of the field and they are now fenced off. This has really helped with the biggest problem he faces as a landowner with public access, which is dogs.
- 7.5 Despite this, dogs are still the biggest cause of issues on the farm. A big problem apart from sheep worrying is caused by dog faeces. This includes bags of faeces that have been left in trees by the side of the paths. Dogs can also cause upset to other users by going up to them.
- 7.6 Hugh said that he has done a lot of work on the farm including putting up signage, fencing and gates which means he doesn't have as many issues as other landowners.
- 7.7 Hugh has fenced off the paths to wider than the statutory minimum width which enables him to cut the path with his tractor which helps to keep people to the paths. A minority of people will wander off the paths, but the vast majority are OK. There are also a small minority of cyclists that are not considerate to other users, but most are also OK.
- 7.8 Litter is a problem, caused mainly by school children walking to school.
- 7.9 Hugh has done some surfacing works on the rights of way - this mainly consists of putting chalk down and packing it in and then covering with road planings. This has resulted in a good surface and users are very happy.
- 7.10 There is the occasional incident of vandalism but not too much compared to other landowners.
- 7.11 Paula said that her problems as a landowner are because she farms open access land near the North Downs Way. Her cattle have suffered from a disease that is carried in dog faeces called Neospora which can cause miscarriage and infertility in cattle. Because of this she must calve indoors which adds a lot of expense.
- 7.12 Fireworks are also a big problem for her cattle.
- 7.13 Sean agrees with everything that Hugh and Paula have said. He said there is a video that has been made by the tenant farmer at Norbury Park that people may find of interest. It talks about a lot of the problems mentioned.
- 7.14 Sean said these problems are not helped by there being fewer wardens on the larger countryside estates such as Surrey County Council and National Trust owned land.
- 7.15 Paula agreed and said she had a problem when National Trust staff were furloughed, and she had to pick litter herself.
- 7.16 Hugh thinks that there should be a pick educational campaign aimed at dog owners which highlights the problems that dogs can cause.
- 7.17 Hugh also has a problem with sky lanterns and helium balloons landing on his land.

- 7.18 Romy said that Surrey Fire and Rescue has asked the National Farmers Union for information about problems relating to sky lanterns – she thinks they are going to launch an information campaign.
- 7.19 Paula said that another problem farming in the AONB was when events are organised that cross land she farms. Sophie asked who should event organisers contact? Dan said that Surrey County Council has an interest if the event is held on a right of way, but the organiser should contact the landowner as well.
- 7.20 Corinna was concerned that over the lockdowns she was having problems with people climbing over fences and accessing her land. She was concerned about their safety with volatile cattle in the field. Hugh advised that appropriate signage should be put up and if people still choose to do what they want then that is their problem. Hugh said that he has an Arlo G camera that is set up to record. Sophie queried the use of CCTV. Hugh said that there is information about CCTV on some of the signs.
- 7.21 Pamela asked about guerrilla seeders from extinction rebellion that have organised mass-trespasses. They also leave a trail of chalk or flour.
- 7.22 Dan said that the Surrey County Council countryside estate has experienced a lot of the same issues as Hugh and Paula due to the increase in numbers of visitors.
- 7.23 Hugh said that there should be some in-depth work carried out to find out who the users are and where they're coming from so the increased number of visitors can be managed better.
- 7.24 Rob said that there are companies that have carried out that type of work. He said that the AONB has a fund to enable better communication. Emma said that social media is a good platform to get educational messages across, although it was pointed out that young people tend to use different platforms to older people.
- 7.25 Ian W said that signage is very important for people who aren't good at reading a map.
- 7.26 Pamela asked when will there be enough promotion? Too many people are being encouraged to visit Surrey.
- 7.27 Paula said that she has had people pull signage down, and that people insist that if a track is on Google maps then they can use it, saying they have a 'right to roam'.
- 7.28 Sean said that he doesn't think that Surrey County Council tenant farmers should be lumbered with increased work caused by an increase in visitor numbers.

8. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 8.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

9. Matters arising / Action points

- 9.1 Rob thinks that the problem with the cycling event at Denbies was a lack of communication between organisers and landowners. Gail provided an update by email:

I have met with the organiser of the cycling event, just-pedal.com. He says these are not timed events, but pleasure rides. He sends information to all participants on how

to behave around horses. He was in touch with the British Horse Society before the event and it seems nobody took the trouble to inform the local equestrian groups. He will try to ensure that local riders are informed before a similar event takes place in the future.

- 9.2 Sophie thought the event was well organised and the participants appeared considerate of other users
- 9.3 Claire Saunders of Surrey County Council is putting together a best practice guide to sportive / event organisers.
- 9.4 Paul asked if there has been any negative feedback to Cycling UK regarding the King Alfred's Way cycling route. He's only heard good things about it. Sophie said that she has heard that there are two or three issues that are trying to be sorted out.

10. Wolvens Lane proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO)

- 10.1 Ian is disappointed as a 4x4 driver with the decision of the Local Committee, which was to go ahead with publishing the Intention to Make an Order which is the first stage of making the TRO.
- 10.2 Ian spoke against making a TRO as outlined in the SCAF response to the consultation, but the committee agreed with the report presented which was to prohibit 4-wheeled motor vehicles from driving on Byway Open to All Traffic 526 (Capel/Wotton) also known as Wolvens Lane.
- 10.3 Ian disagrees with the outcome as he thinks the surface would be OK to drive on and would become more compacted with use. He was also disappointed that motorcycles would still be able to use the BOAT as they would be more dangerous than a 4-wheeled vehicle.
- 10.4 Ian can understand why the decision was made given the way the evidence was presented. Ian understands that the bollards restricting the width have already been removed.
- 10.5 Dan explained that the decision made by the committee was to advertise the intention to make the order, so the order hasn't been made yet. There will be a chance to object to the making of the order at this stage, and if there are objections it could go to a Public Inquiry.
- 10.6 Paula is concerned that if the barriers have been removed then this will increase fly tipping. She also said that users of the BOAT have also been damaging the historic banks along the Byway as well as accessing adjacent land and causing damage by driving around in the fields.
- 10.7 Ian asked Dan for SCAF to be consulted for the next stage of the order making process.

Action – Dan to send SCAF the Notice of Intention to Make an Order consultation.

11. Forward Plan

- 11.1 The forward plan was discussed and amended accordingly.

11.2 Pamela asked what the Surrey County Council Countryside Estate do.

Action – Joanne to add this to the list to consider discussing

11.3 Rob said that he can put together something outlining the different projects and initiatives are taking place in the Surrey Hills AONB.

Action - Joanne to add this to the list to consider discussing

12. Outstanding consultations

12.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

12.2 Ian W said that he has heard that Waverley Borough Council has given permission for the Wey and Arun Canal to be put through the route of the Downlink which would narrow the right of way next to it. Ian asked if Surrey County Council had received an application for the diversion of Bridleway 566. He understands that there will be other proposals for other sections of the canal that would also affect access to the Greensand Way for five years.

Action - Ian and Elliot will liaise and respond to the new application

Action - The Wey and Arun Canal should be a future agenda item

13. Any other Business / urgent questions

13.1 Joanne received an email from the Vanguard Way Route manager about a 'Graham Butler mile' to commemorate Graham Butler who was also SCAF chair for many years.

Action - Joanne to forward the email to members with the details

14. Date of next meeting

14.1 Monday 24 January 2022 1.30pm
Venue to be confirmed.