

# The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

## Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum Bourne Room, Merrow Depot, Guildford Monday, 22 April 2024

### Present:

#### Members (and their primary interests):

- Elliot Cairnes, Chairman (Walking)
- Gail Brownrigg (Equestrian)
- Paul Marshall (Mountain Biking)
- Avril Sleeman (Equestrian)
- Pamela Lyman (Landowner)
- Neil Baker (Commons)
- Yasmin Broome (Surrey Coalition of Disabled People)
- Lawrence Wells (Surrey Leadership Group)

#### Officers:

- Jonathan Wall, Countryside Access Officer (Secretary)
- Dan Williams, Countryside Access Senior Officer (Legal Definition)
- Kathleen Letch-McMillan, Ministry of Defence Liaison Officer
- Sam Jones – Access Lead, Surrey Hills AONB
- Justine Glynn – Flood Risk Advisor, Environment Agency
- Mark Newbery - Environment Agency
- Ivan Parr – Environment Agency
- Nicola Ford – Environment Agency
- Lewis Tree - Environment Agency

### 1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. Apologies

2.1 Gareth Jex (Motor Vehicles), John Barber (Motorcycles), Ian Wilks (Walking)

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 were confirmed.

### 4. Matters arising / Action points

4.1 ROWIP subgroup has been arranged and met on several occasions to formulate SCAF response.

4.2 Disabled Access Subgroup – **Action:** review DEFRA presumptions guidance and look to formation of subgroup.

4.3 Junction 10 ongoing works noted – Non-Motorised User meeting was held week prior

- 4.4 Ongoing situation with Wisley Airfield noted. Public inquiry is expected soon. No further updates as of this meeting, outcome is not foreseeable.
- 4.5 Stringers Common meeting has occurred.
- 4.6 Discussion of SCAF Facebook group to be established. The current page is out of date and cannot be edited due to lack of permission. Agreed that a replacement is required. Action: Create a SCAF Facebook page, Neil may lead on this.
- 4.7 East/West area meetings discussed. There is some demand for this from user groups to help address maintenance issues. Point is made that more direct meetings will be helpful.
- 4.8 WACT – further update received from Tony Ford, discussions ongoing.

## **5. Matters dealt with since the previous meeting**

- 5.1 Response to E-bikes Consultation – to be discussed later in the meeting.

## **6. Environment Agency – Sanway/Byfleet Scheme**

- 6.1 Justine Glynn from the Environment agency joins the forum to give an update on the Sanway/Byfleet flood alleviation scheme. The primary aim of the Scheme is to protect 236 properties at risk of flooding in Byfleet and regenerate the area for public amenity.
- 6.2 A presentation is given on the structures to be put in place. A sheet pile wall is to be erected from the M25 with an earth embankment to shield from flooding. A storage area for excess water is to be constructed with an area set aside for meadow. This will help to alleviate risk while contributing to a net gain in biodiversity. A community orchard will also be established, residents will create a group to help preserve it. There is strong community support for this.
- 6.3 Yasmin asks if the orchard will be accessible to disabled members of the community. Justine says it will be wheelchair accessible, with matting on grass for easy access. There will also be an outdoor classroom area for learning and naturalised benches for people to rest.
- 6.4 The proposed bridleway passing through will be above ground level to avoid issues with flooding, especially in the winter months. The step will be raised 300mm above ground level which will protect it from all but the most severe and exceptional events. The bridleway will link into 2 others, which will provide a link across the M25 to Wisley. Fencing on Muddy Lane is to be removed. The BW will have a flexipave surface to best accommodate multiple user groups.
- 6.5 Pamela enquires if Biodiversity is being monitored for this section of the project. Response that the working target is a 20% net biodiversity gain. They are working with the Surrey Wildlife Trust, who are under contract for a 30 year period to help maintain and monitor the area.
- 6.6 There is intention to working on improving the underpass of the M25 to make it more pleasant to pass through. This involves a more natural 'cave' look with flexipave. West of the underpass, BW will be slightly lowered by 130mm although this will be mitigated by resurfacing. There will be a pedestrian bridge, wheelchair

accessibility with non-slip surfacing. Questions are raised about ramps and a mounting block, EA will consider these.

## **7. Junction 10 Non Motorised User update/ MoD update**

- 7.1 Elliot gives a briefing on a recent NMU meeting called by SCC and National Highways.
- 7.2 Issues persisting with questions regarding the Red line DCO at the Ockham/Ripley Roundabout and the establishment of a footway/cycleway. There is an issue due to higher volume of traffic to be associated with the new access road to Wisley from the Roundabout, and if the Wisley airfield development is realised this may lead to greater conflict between NMU's and vehicles.
- 7.3 An audit has taken place on safety issues by an independent team which has passed. There was a request for more clarity from Highways auditors and if the area of concern has been looked at.
- 7.4 Kathleen is requested to give an update on the MoD. Aims for improved waymarking and signage and the establishment of the Pirbright Military Trail and Remembrance Trail. 33-34Km of infrastructure is to be put in place. Enhanced signage is to be put in at Hankley Common and there are further development plans for sites on the Surrey/Hampshire border.
- 7.5 Neil asks about flooding on the Bridleway on Thursley common. Says that Natural England are refusing works as deemed unnecessary. NE say this is a problem with the Bridleway, the area commander hoping to go ahead with work as soon as permission is granted to do so.

## **8 Rights of Way Legal Definition Team Update.**

- 8.1 Dan Williams, Manager of the Legal Definition Team, gives an update on the current status of the team and workloads. There has been a period of Staff turnover. Katy Valiant is now Commons Registration Officer, Rik Catling and Jonathan Wall Countryside Access Officers, two new Access Assistants have been recruited, Neil Sawyer and Eliza Wyrzykowska.
- 8.2 There has been a buildup of backlogs during Covid, with MMO claims increasing over this period by up to 500%. There are 41 active DMMO applications, 3 currently with the Secretary of State. 25 PPOs, 2 are with the Planning Inspectorate. A Town and Country Planning Act Inquiry is ongoing in Sunbury, and 10 dedications are currently in discussion with landowners.
- 8.3 45 Temporary Closure orders are in process, and there have been 70 over the past year. There are 3 ongoing Town and Village Green applications, including a decision due on Stokes Field in Ditton. A permanent TRO is in effect on Wolvens Lane, and 20 enquiries have been received to close level crossings.
- 8.4 TRO policy has been rewritten, and a priority statement is proposed for Legal. Neil emphasises transparency as important. Suggest notices and closures are advertised more prominently. Dan says temporary closures are displayed on the website, this is being considered for planned works notices.
- 8.5 ROWIP is touched upon. Over 4000 responses from members of the public, Sharon is currently parsing this information. Yasmin speaks about the need for

infrastructure on promoted routes. Workshops with different user groups are taking place, SCAF workshop is due later in the summer.

## **9. E Bikes consultation response/discussion**

- 9.1 Discussed SCAF response to Ebike usage in the countryside and AONB. There are concerns from members of the forum about safety and impact on other users, especially the potential for misuse or illegal modified bikes.
- 9.2 Question is asked at which point an E-bike might be considered a motor vehicle. Neil is a user of E-bikes and argues that their speed is limited, the assist function is for uphill cycling and they provide valuable opportunities for people to access the countryside by bike, especially for those who may not usually cycle or may lack ability to ride unassisted.
- 9.3 Concerns remain regarding interface between user groups and E-bikes, especially equestrian users. A focus of the AONB going forward will be to work on managing and reducing conflicts.
- 9.4 Resolution to amend consultation and produce a further draft.

## **10. AONB update**

- 10.1 Introduction of Sam Jones, new Access Lead at Surrey Hills AONB. Sam is new in post and familiarising himself with the issues and concerns in Surrey. Discussed intentions going forward.
- 10.2 Priority is looking after user groups, and establishment of promoted routes for user groups. There is intent to increase outreach in the future to various user groups. Elliot asks how SCAF can help with working parties. Sam says there is a role for SCAF in contributing to access projects going forward.
- 10.3 75 Year plan for the AONB, users can shape how this develops. Pamela suggests that AONB can liaise with landowners to agree promoted routes and suggests these should avoid residential properties. Gail asks about permissive routes that could be established for horse riders. Sam says he will be getting to grips with issues and meeting key stakeholders in the coming months and will take suggestions and questions on board. Expected further update at the next meeting.

## **11 Forward Plan**

- 11.1 Forward Plan agreed.

## **12. Outstanding consultations**

- 12.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

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

The date for the subsequent meeting is as follows:

- **Monday 22 July 2024, Bourne Room, Mellow Depot 1:30pm**
- **Monday 21 October 2024 1:30pm**

**Location TBC**