

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum held at County Hall, Kingston-upon-Thames Monday, 14 January 2019

Present:

Members and their Primary Interest:

Ian Russell (Chairman)	Motor Vehicles
Rosie Norris	Mobility vehicles
Avril Sleeman	Equestrian
David Bellchamber	Walking
John Barber	Motor cycling
Richard Billington	Local Government
Pamela Lyman	Land management
Penny Carey	Equestrian
Leigh Thornton	Land Management
Sandra Nichols	Farming
Barry Holland	Walking
Andrew Povey	Local Government
Thor Simpson	Walking

Officers:

Lisa Creaye-Griffin	Countryside Group Manager
Steve Mitchell	Countryside Access and Operations Team Manager
Joanne Porter	Countryside Access Assistant

1 Declarations of interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 Apologies

2.1 Apologies were received from John Whitaker (carriage driving), Gail Brownrigg (carriage driving)

3 Minute's silence

3.1 A minute's silence was held to commemorate Graham Butler, long-time member of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum and former Chairman who died in November.

4 Natural Capital

4.1 A presentation was given by Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira, Chief Executive of the Surrey Wildlife Trust and Director, Surrey Nature Partnership, explaining about the Natural Capital Investment Plan for Surrey.

Action: Joanne will circulate the presentation around members.

- 4.2 Sarah-Jane said that there is currently a consultation being run by Defra for a policy of 'net gain development'
- 4.3 Pamela asked Sarah Jane to explain green bonds
- 4.4 Sarah Jane said that part of the repayment of the bond has to go towards a green project.
- 4.5 The Surrey Nature Partnership tries to link in with the local economic partnerships. Investment in and enhancement of natural assets improves the chances of having a healthy local economy.
- 4.6 Andrew asked if the Surrey Nature Partnership is consulted on developments and if it receives CIL money.
- 4.7 Sarah Jane said that the SyNP is consulted on strategic plans, and it is also a Statutory Consultee. The SyNP has raised awareness of the debate in the local plan making process.
- 4.8 Sarah Jane said that it is not appropriate at the moment for the SyNP to receive money as it is not set up to receive money, although some Nature Partnerships have been set up to do this.
- 4.9 At the moment the SyNP has very little resource.
- 4.10 Richard Billington asked about the threats to Surrey woodlands from disease such as Ash dieback. These could impact negatively on the value of the asset to the community. Is there an upward voice to report these types of issues?
- 4.11 Sarah Jane said that the Nature Partnerships do have a voice, such as through the new 25 year Environment Plan being prepared by Defra.
- 4.12 Avril asked if the SyNP had been consulted on the Tandridge Garden Village proposals.
- 4.13 Sarah Jane said that it had been consulted on this, and that is why the net gain approach for biodiversity when considering developments is important. It would be good if this were mandatory for all developments.
- 4.14 Avril asked about the make-up of the membership of the Surrey Nature Partnership, and commented that there weren't any users involved. Sarah Jane said that the membership was not a closed shop and that if anyone did want to become involved then they would be welcome to apply to join.

5 Feedback from: Caring for the Countryside Consultation; Workshop on the Strategy for Countryside Estate; Surrey Hills AONB symposium at the University of Surrey.

- 5.1 Lisa gave a presentation outlining the results of the Caring for the Countryside Consultation.

Action – Joanne to circulate the presentation around members.

- 5.2 Ian and Pamela attended one of the workshops related to the Strategy for the Countryside Estate.
- 5.3 Lisa said that it was a good opportunity for users to realise the wider issues related to the countryside estate and not just the ones on their local site.
- 5.4 Pamela felt that the biodiversity assets of the sites weren't considered, and the aim was to find ways to increase visitor numbers which could have a negative impact on biodiversity. She felt that the Sandford principle should apply.
- 5.5 Lisa said that the biodiversity value of the sites is well known, but accepts that this was not discussed in great depth at the workshops.
- 5.6 Lisa said that it was interesting to see the difference in the opinions of the younger and older age groups. The younger age group was more willing to accept that they had to pay for things such as car parking as long as the reason why was explained. The older age group was more against paying extra for things in principle.
- 5.7 Rosie commented on the number of people in the consultation who asked for more accessible routes –does this mean that people would prefer gates to stiles?
- 5.8 Ian reported that the Surrey Hills Symposium was to celebrate 60 years of the Surrey Hills AONB.
- 5.9 The main discussion was about whether the Surrey Hills should remain an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or a National Park.
- 5.10 One of the speakers spoke of the idea of London and the south east becoming an urban National Park.
- 5.11 A local farmer, Hugh Broom also spoke – he has an estate with lots of access. Ian said that it was interesting how he keeps the various users from conflicting with each other. Hugh Broom spoke about a lot of issues that are relevant to SCAF.
- 5.12 Ian is arranging a meeting with Hugh Broom to discuss the issues and to see if he would give a presentation to the SCAF in the future.
- 5.13 Sarah Jane said that it was important that there was a discussion and debate with the general public. It was valuable to hear lots of different voices and opinions.
- 5.14 Sarah Jane said that no decision was made at the end of the event about whether the AONB should become a national park There are pros and cons to becoming a national park, and also there isn't as much money available as there used to be.

- 5.15 Andrew said that it was a very interesting evening, and he thought it was a shame that no decision was made.
- 5.16 Sandra said that the government is looking at a new land management scheme and the Surrey Hills is running a pilot scheme for this.
- 5.17 Avril asked if there was a discussion about whether the Area of Great Landscape Value was going to be incorporated into the AONB. Lisa said that it wasn't discussed but there is an application to incorporate parts of the AGLV into the AONB. Natural England will look at Surrey after they have dealt with Suffolk. It has been delayed due to Brexit.

6 Minutes of previous meeting

- 6.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2018 were confirmed as a correct record after amending section 10.4 and 10.5.

7 Matters arising/action points

- 7.1 Ian asked if there were any volunteers willing to be nominated as vice-chair. There were no volunteers so the SCAF will carry on without a vice-chair for the time-being.

- 7.2 David hasn't been able to take over the Facebook page yet.

Action – Joanne to talk to Kieran Foster again to try and sort out the transfer.

- 7.3 Ian has agreed to become the contact for the MoD liaison group

Action – Joanne to pass Ian contact details on to the group.

- 7.4 Joanne has spoken to Kieran and understands that the formal consultation for the Guildford Greenway is still to happen.

- 7.5 Lisa said that she is talking to the Surrey Wildlife Trust about issuing horsebox parking passes for the countryside estate car parks. If they are sold then it needs to be understood that there may not always be space to park a horsebox.

- 7.6 Avril said that that height barriers at other sites are also a problem, and she understands that there is a meeting arranged between SWT and horse riders to discuss the issue and try and find a solution.

- 7.7 Ian suggested inviting someone from the Surrey Hills AONB cycling group to a meeting. Ian said that he has been invited to a meeting of the Surrey Hills Byways working group.

- 7.8 Avril is concerned about the impact of the 2026 cut-off date for claiming historic rights of way on gaps in the network.

- 7.9 Avril is concerned that these gaps will be lost leaving big holes in the network if they are extinguished.

7.10 Thor asked if a claim is lodged for one of these gaps then would it be OK?
Avril thinks that it would be.

7.11 Steve said that a lot of the gaps will have user evidence so they will probably not be lost. Avril isn't so sure – she thinks that if any historic evidence is used the landowner can then say the claim should be discounted.

7.12 David said that he has looked at Avril's list of gaps for Elmbridge and said that there is an explanation for quite a few of the gaps. He is happy to look at other areas.

Action – Avril to draft a letter to Defra raising her concerns and asking for clarification.

8 Matters dealt with since the previous meeting

8.1 The forum sent a response to the Oxted Quarry planning application

9 Surrey Countryside Access Forum annual review 2017-2018

9.1 The forum approved the draft of the annual review.

10 Forward Plan

10.1 Ian proposed discussing the forward plan in more detail at the next meeting.

10.2 Ian asked members to look at the plan and decide what they would like to keep on and if there is anything that should be added.

Action – Members to look at the forward plan for review at the next meeting.

11 Outstanding Consultations

11.1 Details of outstanding consultations were noted

Action – Joanne to circulate the Surrey Waste Local Plan to members

12 Any other urgent business/public questions

12.1 There was no urgent business or questions.

13 Date of Next Meeting

13.1 It was confirmed that the next meeting will be held on:

- 1.30pm Monday 29 April 2019
Consort House, Redhill