

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum Surrey Hills AONB Office, Warren Farm Barns, Mickleham Monday, 17 April 2023

Present:

Members (and their primary interests):

- Elliot Cairnes, Chairman (Walking)
- John Barber (Motorcycles)
- Ian Wilks (Walking)
- Avril Sleeman (Equestrian)
- Paul Marshall (Mountain Biking)
- Gail Brownrigg (Carriage driving)
- Pamela Lyman (Landowner)
- Neil Baker (Commons)
- Gareth Jex (Motor Vehicles)
- Thor Simpson (Walking)
- Pat Lewis (Walking)

Officers:

- Joanne Porter, Countryside Access Assistant
- Mary Ann Edwards, Senior Countryside Access Officer Maintenance and Enforcement
- Jonathan Wall, Countryside Access Assistant
- Rob Fairbanks, Director - Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Oliver Wild, Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Claire Saunders, Head of Countryside Access

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies

2.1 Sophie Gordon (Cycling), Corinna Osborne-Patterson (Landowner), Pat Lewis (Walking), Lauren Kyle (Walking), Yasmin Broome (Surrey Coalition for Disabled People), Laura Rowley (Surrey Police)

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2022 were confirmed with no amendments.

4. Matters arising / Action points

4.1 Avril asked for an update on North Park Farm quarry. Mary Ann said she could give no further update per se; she confirmed that agreement was reached for an additional bridleway but there was an objection due to quarry works.

- 4.2 Minutes from LAF chair meeting were circulated. It was noted that a new consultation was due with the MoD. The new liaison is Kathleen McMillan.
- 4.3 Ian has investigated the usage of velocipedes further to assist those less able to walk, to do so for longer. He has begun discussing this with Rob in respect of the AONB and also approached RHS Wisley and Winkworth Arboretum.
- 4.4 Trigg street was discussed. Mary Ann explained the proposal to upgrade the footpath to a Bridleway; there is an issue in that part of the dedicated way across the brickworks is Highway land. There has been an issue with resource, project is being led by Anne Woods, who is bank staff. SCC will meet legal and investigative costs, and specifications and pricing for the upgrade have been found – Mary Ann says department is considering how costs will be met. She has discussed with Highways about removing trees, they agree, providing finance is available. No tree removal can be countenanced in bird nesting season.
- 4.5 Gail mentions the 2026 deadline for lost ways, confirms this has been deferred until 2032. Avril has concerns about funding for recovering these. A discussion ensues as to the feasibility of the 2026 deadline given department resources. Pamela wants to know how many claims are ongoing.

Action – Set agenda item for discussion of lost/historic ways at next meeting.

5. Matters dealt with since the previous meeting

- 5.1 There were no matters dealt with since the last meeting.

6. Ongoing matters

- 6.1 Update on discussions with WACT. Delay on response to Tony Ford, which has been sent. A site meeting has been agreed for the 24th May. Potential that plans are out of date, SCAF would like to see an up to date planning request.
- 6.2 Kathleen Macmillan confirmed as new MoD contact. Kathleen introduced herself.
Action: Jonathan to circulate contact details.
- 6.3 Wisley Airfield; Penny to give update at next meeting.
- 6.4 Network Rail level crossing acknowledged as active.
- 6.5 Sandway/Byfleet Flood alleviation scheme. These plans join onto Junction 10 works and will impact rights of way. It was agreed that SCAF should be a mandatory consultee.
- 6.6 Dunsfold/Albury gas exploration discussed. Application at Albury was unanimously refused. It was mentioned that drilling at Dunsfold will have no direct impact on RoWs; however, Avril raised the issue of plant vehicles impacting on RoW usage.

Action: Add agenda item for Dunsfold development.

7. M25/A3 junction 10 further discussion

- 7.1 Issues discussed regarding the Highway 'red line.' Elliot raised a concern about the routes of Bridleways going around the roundabouts outside the red line and associated safety risk. Discussion ranged around liaison between SCC and National Highways. Important role for SCAF in getting best outcome for users, particularly NMU

Action – Draft letter to SCC Highways/Countryside Access and National Highways asking them to liaise on access issues.

- 7.2 Avril asks if the current RoWs are in a satisfactory condition. Elliot opines that the new routes will see more use.
- 7.3 The new road access to Wisley RHS garden will potentially increase traffic movement over road bridge. The stub roundabout was discussed and whether it is ancillary to the proposed Wisley new town development. A need for Pegasus crossings on the stub roundabout was highlighted.
- 7.4 The entrance to Wisley RHS is to be moved further down Wisley Lane. Some discussion on looking at moving existing RoWs away from unprotected road crossings. New RoW concepts are being looked at with NMU proposals from National Highways. Mary Ann highlighted a role for SCAF in scrutinising these.

8. Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) discussion

- 8.1 Rob reported on the AONB Boundary extension. 100 square km extension towards Croydon and Happy valley which is now at full consultation. Discussion as to the role of SCAF in consulting on this; as only appropriate for comment if there is a direct impact on Rights of Way.
- 8.2 10.2 Question raised about potential for National Park designation, Rob responds that there is no formal proposal from the AONB on this. The boundary extension and National Park are separate processes.
- 8.3 10.3 Gail asks about open access and equestrian accessibility, and the negative impact of larger visitor numbers. Rob states that that user traffic will be directed to mitigate impacts of access, via funding for gateway sites such as Box Hill, Newlands corner – there will be an emphasis on disabled user access at these sites. Also, lottery funding is being pursued, for education and engagement.
- 8.4 10.4 Further discussion on the interface and possible conflicts between equestrian and cycle access. Promoted routes are expected to be accessible from car parking sites, with Horse access expected. Proper conduct when walking dogs is also to be encouraged with signage along key routes.
- 8.5 10.5 Problems with dogs, illegal coursing, and unauthorised use with vehicles is discussed. Identified that there can be difficulties for police acting on reports, when illegal use is in a minority.

Action: Table discussion on dangerous dogs/police issues for further meeting.

9 Access for Disabled Users.

- 9.1 Yasmin from Surrey Coalition gave her apologies, she will be in attendance for the July meeting.
- 9.2 Neil raised accessibility on Thursley Common – the Boardwalk installed has been largely successful, issue is with different landowners to coordinate access for disabled users. Rob says SCDP is undertaking Audit on Thursley Common.
- 9.3 Gareth asks about downgrading of Bridleways. Rob raises concerns regarding funding. Mary Ann states that achieving a downgrade is difficult. Gareth has a concern with Traffic regulation orders, although these are separate from downgrading status, and usually act to restrict motorised traffic.

Action: Table agenda item for July meeting to discuss at greater length, with input from Surrey Coalition.

10 . Rights of Way improvement plan (ROWIP)

- 10.1 Claire Saunders introduced Sharon Bayne, who will be carrying out Surrey's ROWIP. The ROWIP must be reviewed every 10 years and is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to carry out, as set in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.
- 10.2 The ROWIP is intended to be a strategic document, looking at ways to improve the Rights of Way network in Surrey. Intent is to look at opportunities for exercise, recreation and enjoyment, and access for Disabled group. The review needs to be balanced on the needs of the public, identify which groups use the network to a greater or lesser extent, but not overrepresent any one group.
- 10.3 The ROWIP is in an initial stage. Over the course of the project, Sharon will be looking to engage with the public and other key stakeholders, including SCAF, landowners, parish and District/Borough Councils, minority groups, interest groups such as the Ramblers and BHS, and the AONB.
- 10.4 Considerations will be on Climate change, environment and visitor economy. Sharon highlighted key areas for engagement, assessment and evidence: Analysis, condition, demographics, infrastructure, economy, heritage, and 'Horizon scanning' – looking at the likely requirements for the network and public need in the future.
- 10.5 Opens to questions from the floor. Neil asks about the priorities of the review. Gail asks about connectivity, and that needs of public is demand for circular routes and gaps in the network. Avril queries the relationship with the ROWIP conducted in 2013, and how many recommendations have been followed. Ian asks about the timescale on the ROWIP, and if lost ways will be included. Pamela asks about active travel and 15-minute link to greenspaces.
- 10.6 Sharon/Claire answer that ROWIP is primarily a strategic document, looking at the network as a whole rather than focusing on specific routes. The ROWIP is a Surrey County Council document and the SCAF is a consultee. Preparation of a ROWIP is a lengthy process and it is still early in the planning stage. Sharon Bayne will contact the SCAF when she is ready to engage but until then, there is no recommended preparation that SCAF members can undertake. Claire expects the review to be complete and released by mid-2024.

Action: SCAF to establish a sub-group to begin working on response to the ROWIP.

11. Forward Plan

11.1 The forward plan was discussed, amendments made and new suggestion added.

Action – amend Forward Plan as discussed

11.2 SCAF to look at promotion of the forum on Facebook / social media platforms.

11.3 upcoming subgroup meeting with the Wey and Arun Canal Trust, to be reported back to July SCAF meeting.

12. Outstanding consultations

12.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

13. Any other Business / urgent questions

13.1 Pamela mentions Community infrastructure levy. Depending on size of development, funding put in pot for strategic routes. Authority can apply for CIL funding, Elmbridge and Tandridge are applying for this.

13.2 Mary-Ann gave an update about SCC reporting software, that tweaks are upcoming to the CAMS system. There is additional resource in the team to deal with the backlog.

The dates for the following meetings are as follows:

- Monday 17 July 2023 1.30pm
Warren Farm Barns
- Monday 16 October 2023 1.30pm
Venue to be confirmed