

The Surrey Countryside Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of the Surrey Countryside Access Forum held online via Microsoft teams Monday, 24 January 2022

Present:

Members (and their primary interests):

- Elliot Cairnes, Chairman (Walking)
- Ian Russell, (Motor Vehicles)
- Pamela Lyman (Land management)
- Avril Sleeman (Equestrian)
- Thor Simpson (Walking)
- John Barber (Motorcycles)
- Gareth Jex (Motor Vehicles)
- Ian Wilks (Walking)
- Penny Carey (Equestrian)
- Vicky Keller (Countryside Management)
- Corinna Osborne-Patterson (Landowner)

Officers:

- Joanne Porter, Countryside Access Assistant
- Adrian Riddle, Countryside Access Assistant
- Rob Fairbanks, Surrey Hills AONB
- Emma Cole, Surrey Hills AONB

Observers:

- Lisa Dunning
- Barbara Bulman
- Yasmine Broome
- Stuart Banfield
- Robin Grant

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies and introductions

2.1 Gail Brownrigg (carriage driving), Paul Marshall (mountain biking), Sophie Gordon (cycling), Claire Saunders (Surrey County Council), Lesley Steers (Local Government)

2.2 Vicky Keller and Gareth Jex introduced themselves as new members.

2.3 Ian Russell announced that he would be standing down from the Forum after the meeting. Elliot thanked Ian on behalf of all member for his work over the last few years.

3. Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Sub-groups

- 3.1 Rob Fairbanks, Surrey Hills AONB Director explained that the Surrey Hills AONB used to have working groups to cover issues from the Surrey Hills Management Plan and to look at ways of addressing them. Unfortunately, three members of staff have been lost from the AONB which means it is difficult to run the working groups. Rob was hoping to engage more with the Surrey Countryside Access Forum and the user interests present on the Forum to discuss issues from the management plan.
- 3.2 For example Mountain Biking and off-road cycling trails is a big issue and it would be good to try to find a way forward to accommodate the mountain biking community and landowners through the SCAF. Rob would also like to increase the equestrian community engagement and resolve issues such as height barriers and horse box parking in car parks.
- 3.3 There are also issues regarding multi-user routes, sustainable travel etc. and behaviours of the different user groups on these routes.
- 3.4 The AONB hasn't made much progress with the Byways Working Group and would like the opportunity to discuss the CPRE's idea of an area wide policy regarding BOATS.
- 3.5 Rob is looking for better connectivity within the Surrey Hills and will look at the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and take forward projects. The Surrey Hills AONB management plan is statutory and is reviewed every five years and should be considered by local authorities in Surrey.
- 3.6 Pamela asked about the minutes of the working groups. Rob said that should all be available on the AONB website.
- 3.7 Pamela also asked about some of the long-distance routes in the AONB such as the North Downs Way and Greensand Way and if they were being considered as multi-user routes, and if so, what would the surface be like and how wide would they be? Rob said they are looking at these routes and the Mole Gap Trail. Any surface on these routes would be to forest standard and not sealed. Rob said that they are not looking to upgrade the status of the paths on these routes and that any increase in width would need to be agreed by the landowner. Rob said the Greenways are more for recreational users and it will be important to make sure that users have the correct behaviours while using the routes. Users could also help to maintain the routes after receiving training. Pamela is concerned because the North Downs Way is currently tranquil and wondered how it would remain so if it were promoted as a greenway. She is also concerned about the promotion of routes from railway stations attracting too many people from outside the area to the AONB.
- 3.8 Avril is concerned about the use of electric bikes on scooters on the multi-user routes. Rob said there are efforts to try and manage the use of these machines. Information needs to be co-ordinated and provided to users about their rights and responsibilities. Rob said he would be happy to have a specific meeting / group to discuss issues.
- 3.9 Yasmine asked Rob about Disabled Access. Rob said he is very keen to engage and improve things for disabled access. He said there are opportunities at Newlands Corner and the new visitor centre.
- 3.10 Gareth said the Byways Working Group is not making much progress Rob said he is looking to take this issue forward through the Surrey Countryside Access Forum.

3.11 Rob said he is happy to discuss more offline to decide the best way to collaborate

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

5. Matters arising / Action points

5.1 Members do not recall receiving the consultation for the Notice of Intention of making a Traffic Regulation Order on Wolvens Lane.

Action – Joanne to find out what stage the process is at.

5.2 Ian Wilks wants to ensure that the Wey and Arun Canal Trust put in the application correctly to divert a section of the Downslink to enable the reinstatement of the canal and that there will be a proper consultation. Penny said that the BHS has sent lots of information to the Canal Trust regarding this issue.

Action – Joanne will find out if anything has been submitted to the county council yet and that Surrey County Council will ask colleagues to ensure that the Wey and Arun Canal Trust follow the correct procedure when making an application to divert the Downslink.

Action – Joanne to invite someone from the Wey and Arun Canal Trust to a SCAF meeting.

5.3 Rob Fairbanks will attend further SCAF meetings to ensure that Interests are involved in issues in the Surrey Hills AONB.

6. Matters dealt with since the previous meeting

6.1 Avril explained the background to the response regarding North Park Farm Quarry consultation that was sent to Surrey County Council. Avril said that a part of the quarry that has had working completed on it could have the rights of way that were diverted reinstated now and that would make future consultations easier to deal with.

Action – Joanne to find out from Mary Ann Edwards, Senior Countryside Access Officer if she knows if the paths can be reinstated / dedicated now.

Action – Avril and Ian will look to see if they can agree routes for the rights of way across the site.

7. Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) demonstration

7.1 Joanne provided a demonstration of how to report issues into CAMS through the Surrey website, how these issues then appear in CAMS internally and how they are dealt with

Action - Joanne to circulate presentation

7.2 Yasmine asked if the web reporting page has been tested by anyone with a visual impairment?

Action - Joanne to find out if the page has been tested

- 7.2 Avril said that a BHS member told her that she couldn't see details of when an issue had been reported which you used to be able to do on the reporting page. Penny said that she had also heard that details of faults reported by someone else weren't visible anymore.

Action - Joanne said that CAMS had been upgraded last week and there are a few teething issues at the moment which those issue could also be. Joanne will report to the people implementing the upgrade so the issues could be looked at.

- 7.3 Ian W asked who has taken over from Steve Mitchell as the lead on CAMS.

- 7.4 Thor said that it is important that people keep their own record of issues that have been reported as well.

8. Surrey Mineral and Waste Plan Consultation

- 8.1 Avril has looked at the plan and Rights of Way was only mentioned once. Avril would like the response to say that SCAF is disappointed to see little consideration given to countryside access and landscape.

Action – Avril will draft a response.

9. Network Rail Level Crossing Strategy

- 9.1 Elliot just wanted flag a potential huge issue for rights of way in the future which is Network Rail's Level Crossing Strategy which will need to be discussed in greater detail at a future meeting. It is unclear at the moment which level crossings in Surrey will be effected.

- 9.2 Members already have concerns about the future of a couple of crossings in Surrey such as Peasmarsh Lane level crossing.

Action – circulate the strategy to members

- 9.3 Penny asked what had happened with the Stanwell Moor level crossing.

Action – Joanne to find out what the latest is regarding this.

- 9.4 Avril said that she has felt for many years that horseriders were being discouraged from using level crossings.

10. Forward Plan

- 10.1 The forward plan was discussed and amended accordingly.

- 10.2 Suggestion for the forward plan included:

- Electric bikes/scooters and their impact
- Kissing gate design
- Green social prescribing

Action - Ask John Baker where a medium kissing gate was put in recently

Action – Find out what gates Hampshire County Council have been putting in recently

11. Outstanding consultations

11.1 Outstanding consultations were noted.

12. Any other Business / urgent questions

12.1 Concerns were raised about how to access the SCAF Facebook page after the sad death of David Bellchamber, and how it would then be kept updated.

12.2 Joanne will forward emails received from Gail that may be of interest to members.

12.3 Penny highlighted concerns about how the paths through Highridge Woods, Brockham were allowed to get in such as state that they are impassable even for forestry vehicles which have ended up getting stuck for several weeks. Joanne said that there is a temporary closure on the paths now and the paths will be reinstated by Forestry England.

13. Dates of next meeting

13.1 Monday 25 April 2022 1.30pm
Hybrid meeting
Woodhatch Place, Reigate

11 July 2022 1.30pm
Venue to be confirmed

17 October 2022 1.30pm
Venue to be confirmed