



## Biodiversity Working Group

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025 1.30-4.30pm

Hybrid: Teams and Surrey County Council, Peregrine Room, Woodhatch, Reigate,  
RH2 8EF

### Minutes (Draft)

**Present:**

Ann Sankey **AS** (SBS), Bridget Fox **BF** (WT), Dave Page **DP** (EBC), David Hatcher **DH** (BanCC), Helen Cocker **HC** (SCC), Jessica Ferguson **JF** (RBBC) Lisa Creaye-Griffin **LCG** (SNP), Mike Waite **MW** (SWT) - Chair, Ross Baker **RB** and Lynn Whitfield **LW** (SBG), Simon Elson **SE** (Ind), Stewart Cocker **SC**(EEBC), Sophie Holt **SH** (SNP) – Admin., Tom Childs **TC** (GBC), Viv Greenough **VG** (SCC)

**Online:**

Adam Brown **AB** (SCC), Andi Roy **AR** (RBC), Anna Fjortoft **AF** (SBC), Toneisha Williams **TW** (WaBC),

Agenda Item	Action
<p><b>1. Welcome and Apologies</b> Ann Bailey, Alistair Kirk, Bronwyn Chinien, Catherine Kerr-Smith, Dan Knowles, David Olliver, Ian Dunsford, Lydia Pitcher, Paul Davy, Sebastien Crichton, Steve Bailey, Tasha Feddery Georgina Terry (NE) no longer part of the group as moving on.</p> <p><b>P.S</b> Bill Downey <b>BD</b> (Ind) and Luke Dickson <b>LD</b> (MVDC) via email post meeting.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Need to establish new contact at Natural England.</p>	<b>MW/ LCG</b>
<p><b>2. Announcements:</b> None reported</p>	
<p><b>3. Minutes from 21/01/2025:</b> Approved subject to some minor corrections.</p>	
<p><b>4. Matters Arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hogs Back layby</b> – Update from Bill Downey and Ann Bailey (neither present)</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> Follow Up via Email</li> <li>• <b>Devolution/LGR</b></li> <li>• Discussion covered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Impacts of unitary authority formation in Surrey.</li> <li>○ Concerns over loss of influence, unclear structures, and funding.</li> <li>○ Strategic authority (with a mayor) will oversee delivery. 2 options officially submitted to government.</li> <li>○ Reigate &amp; Banstead &amp; Crawley Proposal – Contravenes Government Guidance to cross border, potentially special case for sensible economic geographies.</li> <li>○ Potential Creation of many more Town Councils/Parish Councils (Although unclear and there is concern that new PCs or TCs may not have powers to raise a precept)</li> <li>○ Strategic Authority over Surrey (whole of County). Funding will come from the top. LNRS will sit under the Strategic authority.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>VG</b>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>AS</b> - (SBS) Concern over the changes to government and effect on communications with land managers. E.g. Mismanagement of conservation verges, inappropriate tree plantings, unmanaged sites, strimming conservation verges. VG aware as of 2 weeks ago working with SurreyCC teams.</li> <li>○ <b>SC</b> (EEBC) - Countryside Management Partnerships could be a good solution across the county. Concern over funding going forward and how the changes will affect that. Contractors model is not working due to deliberate under-resourcing to win the contract. Business Model needs to change. External Contractors end up costing more.</li> <li>● <b>Action:</b> Identify and share good practice models (e.g., Epsom &amp; Ewell Countryside Management).</li> <li>● <b>Action:</b> Be ready with a manifesto to take to the new authorities. Evidence with Case Studies/Success stories are key to present the case.</li> <li>● <b>BNG Monitoring</b></li> <li>● Discussion:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BNG is still in its early implementation phase across Surrey.</li> <li>○ There is a learning curve for local authorities and stakeholders, especially around legal agreements, monitoring, and registration processes.</li> <li>○ Concerns were raised about delivery, compliance, and regulation of BNG commitments by developers.</li> <li>○ Conclusion: still early days in BNG, coupled with the local churn and change.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>TC</b> (GBC) – GBC to outsource ecology advice. Have their own Habitat Bank – struggling to get off the ground. Wisley airfield have BNG now.</li> <li>● <b>VG</b> (SCC) – S106 First site underway. SHBC have a habitat bank. SCC to have a legal agreement with SHBC and will regulate. It will go live once the legal agreement is in place.</li> <li>● <b>AB</b> (SCC) – There’s an issue with the register meta data – 2 sites in Waverley registered but not showing. <a href="#">Search the biodiversity gain sites register - GOV.UK</a></li> <li>● <b>RB</b> (SBG) – Concerns about compliance checks.</li> <li>● <b>Action:</b> Agree in principle to do a research register on how BNG is working in Surrey – probably in 5 years’ time.</li> <li>● <b>Surrey Old Grassland Inventory (SyNP)</b></li> <li>● Interim report will be launched first (May/June) to enable flushing out of any errors. Version 1.0 at the end of 2025/early 2026. It is timely to get the document out to the planning authorities now. Version 1.0 will include results of field season ‘25 ground truthing.</li> <li>● <b>Urban BOA’s (SE (Ind) raised query)</b></li> <li>● Discussion:</li> <li>● Urban borough data not yet public. Held off due to LNRS, draft map due to be released for public consultation in July. The coinciding report could be shared publicly too, showing where the data has come from.</li> <li>● <b>Action:</b> Review whether coinciding report should be shared and if so where it should be hosted.</li> </ul>	<p>All</p> <p>All</p> <p>BWG Chair 2030</p> <p>AB</p>
<p><b>5. Field Day</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet up on site and learn about a case study site.</li> <li>● Site suggestions were discussed. Including Hampton Estate, Puttenham Common, Banstead Heath (perhaps 2026), Epsom Common, Ashted</li> </ul>	



<p>Common, Junction 10 area (not ready yet), Paradise Fields in Ealing but outside Surrey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July. Likely time: 10am – 2pm</li> <li>• Lunch included (SyNP to fund)</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> choice Puttenham Common Hampton Estate – Contact Bill and Molley Biddell</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice Heathland Connections (Possibly Thursley) – Contact Victoria Hawkins</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> Choice Esher Common - Contact Dave Page/ Hamish Elmbridge BC or 4<sup>th</sup> Choice Chobham Common (SWT)</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> Send example Risk Assessment to Sophie Holt</li> </ul>	<p>SH</p> <p>SH</p> <p>SH</p> <p>VG</p>
<p><b>6. Climate Change Adaptation - Lisa Creaye-Griffin</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for information in the group regarding climate change.</li> <li>• <b>BF</b> (WT) – Kew Species resilience research.</li> <li>• <b>LCG</b> (SyNP) – Suggested signposting page on the SyNP website to different sources of information on climate change.</li> <li>• <b>AS</b> (SBS) – Concerned about specific species – although it’s difficult to separate the causal influences. Extreme dryness linked to climate change.</li> <li>• <b>MW</b> (SWT) – Fire; Heathlands are getting drier over time, new re-wetting campaign is to try and counteract that to some extent.</li> <li>• <b>SC</b> (E&amp;E) – The grazing line created a fire break on Epsom Common. Benefit of grazing. Also update to the Epsom &amp; Ewell Climate Change group – now Climate Change and Biodiversity group.</li> <li>• <b>AB</b> (SCC) - Spatial data currently available for climate adaptation planning is primarily focused on NFM. This includes related concerns such as drought and wildfire risk. The main spatial interventions being considered are re-wetting heathlands, which address these issues. While the data is limited to these areas, it effectively covers the key adaptation priorities: flood, drought, and fire.</li> <li>• <b>AB</b> (SCC) - A major challenge in Surrey is the absence of a continuous north-south ecological corridor, which limits species' ability to adapt to environmental changes.</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> Please send relevant links to Sophie Holt</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> Create Signposting page on SyNP webpage with key information</li> </ul>	<p>All</p> <p>SH</p>
<p><b>7. Partner Updates</b></p> <p><b>i) In person</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LCG</b> (SyNP) - Land Use Consultation response now on our website. <a href="#">Land Use Consultation – Surrey Nature Partnership</a></li> <li>• Recently attended the DEFRA consultation. Noted low number of people in consultation group and in wider survey.</li> <li>• <b>MW</b> (SWT) – Also submitted a SWT response. Included commentary that everywhere is special and unique and no where can be treated with same approach.</li> <li>• <b>AS</b> (SBS) - Old Grasslands Inventory and VC17-wide recording are the key activities of the SBS currently.</li> <li>• <b>VG</b> (SCC) – Part of a certification requirement for dormouse licensing and to contribute to the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP). SCC initiative with support of volunteers from Surrey Dormouse group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In March the team put up 150 Dormouse Boxes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 Boxes in Norbury Park, Crabtree Lane</li> <li>• 50 Boxes in an area called Scrubs</li> <li>• 50 Boxes in Angels Camp</li> <li>• The boxes were installed in March, and the first dormouse was recorded in May, weighing 15.4 grams and appearing healthy. This quick occupancy is a positive sign for the habitat suitability.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



- Biodiversity Duty reporting deadline – legal duty to now report on the Councils Actions. First report due in March 2026. Data collection exercise ready for publishing.
- BNG text on the Surrey County Council website. [Biodiversity Net Gain - Surrey County Council](#)
- Team are updating surveys on the conservation verges. Challenging to manage as some are on high speed roads.
- **Q: AS** Roll out suggestions for marking conservation verges?  
**A: VG** - It has been rolled out. For every verge they have found the target species. Data is available to share if anyone would like to see it.
- Ash Die Back – More tree felling in the Autumn. Arb team are currently surveying ready to plan the felling. Norbury park finished in December – anything not done will be done later this year e.g. Kingfisher trail).
- **TC (GBC)** – Getting sites mapped with GIS. Works in different priority habitats. Biodiversity is being brought back in with Climate Change Group which is positive.
  - Bat conversion of a building on Tyting Farm. Also, a habitat bank. Improve conditions for species on sites. Bat boxes are in use. Swift in Shalford – video just received. Comms plan for comms team – countryside projects to be publicised better. Tyting Farm signage has gone up. Sadly, they had 1 Cow killed and butchered for meat.
- **BF (WT)** - Working on improving advice to LPA – how to categorise and identify veteran trees. NPPF protects Veteran trees – but only if correctly identified. Not all LPAs have inhouse resource. Updated guidance has a more nuanced pallet on different life stage and different tree species (as previously based on size – Raven Metric which in not best practice) and is being sent out to LPAs shortly.
  - State of the trees report is imminent.
  - Revived National Policy requested National register of Heritage trees (akin to listed buildings registry Hoping it will be tabled as an amendment to the P&I bill.
  - Forests campaign making a separate case for restoration to be seen as a key Biodiversity Gain because its not new habitat it doesn't count particularly highly in the BNG metric, bringing advocacy nationally and using great examples.
- **DP (EBC)** – Retiring on 6<sup>th</sup> June after 33 years. When he started there was no Dartford warbler and nightjars and adders, they are all doing well now and feels he has contributed a small legacy.
  - **MW** Thanks to DP for being a stalwart member of this BWG. **SE** expressed personal thanks for DP's support.
- Further information submitted via email:
- Attached is most recent draft of Elmbridge's Statement of Biodiversity Priorities (Appendix 1). We are still in the process of adding additional guidance and context for each potential measure so some may change slightly.
- I'll sign off with this: the Esher Commons SSSI was left out of the Thames Basin Heath SPA for political and logistical reasons (great disappointment), and shortly after that Esher Common was even made a SANG (a complete nonsense, surely the only SSSI to be so treated). I am therefore delighted to report that the restored heathland of Esher Common now has breeding Dartford Warblers, nightjars churring, hobbies chasing golden ringed dragonflies, adders reintroduced and thriving, plus many of Surrey's signature heathland species once again present!



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>RB &amp; LW (SBG)</b> - Tyting Farm, Guildford: barn conversion as well as hibernaculum construction for bats under way. Hoping it will be successful. Trapping surveys in woodland around Surrey are not going well currently due to low nighttime temperatures, plummeting from the relatively high daytime temperatures. Banstead Heath survey – barbastelle presence now proven (male only). Planning to go back with radio tags to try to identify roost trees: normally reserved for females to i.d. breeding colonies. Males are more dispersed across the county than females: recorded at Hatchlands and Albury for example, but Banstead is the furthest north location for barbastelle bats in Surrey in recent years, so tracking could provide useful info on distribution. Females may be spreading more slowly: known roosts only around Chiddingfold, but females also caught at Wanborough: trapping there to be repeated this year.</li><li>• <b>SE (Ind)</b> - Wet meadows at Reigate Heath, Significant volunteer efforts since last meeting. SSSI and now heading back in favourable condition. Site is under the supervision of Susan Metcalf (NE). Coppicing for the Wildlife Trust. Upping Biodiversity Factors due to be published for public consultation. Surrey had 2 restored mineral sites, shortlisted for National Mineral Products Association, which is a trade body for the industry. (Tices Meadow and Glebe Lake)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Working with British dragonfly society to see what they can do. Lynda Pryke is the VC17 recorder. Looking at West Sussex Dragonfly Atlas.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>HC (SCC)</b> - From 1/4/2024 – 31/3/2025 Recorded 31,760 Volunteer Hours across the Countryside Partnerships Team equivalent to 19 Full Time Employees, equating to £417,644 using London Living Wage. We are very grateful for one of the Downlands Partnership volunteers setting up a detailed recording spreadsheet which is helping show the volunteer success. 8-9 volunteer task days held every week.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Just finished lambing – 87 lambs.</li><li>○ Goats at Brockham – using NoFence collars.</li><li>○ NE visited Woking and Guildford BC owned heathland sites – went really well. Pleased with the volunteer work.</li><li>○ SCP team being moved to the Countryside Estates Team and all Natural Capital has been moved to Land &amp; Property at SCC.</li></ul></li><li>• <b>SC (EEBC)</b> - Continuing to work with Newt Conservation Trust. Pond Test Pits have held water well and due to have 2 new ponds in Horton Country Park LNR summer 2025. Sarah Clift is doing a halfway update on the 2020 – 2030 Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Building in changes from the Environment Act 2021 and making sure they have evidence for the biodiversity duty reports.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Alistair and John used to coordinate to record the local sites and active management. Who’s moving forward with this as not heard anything. Should still be ongoing with Alistair.</li><li>○ <b>Action:</b> Get update from AK</li><li>○ Cattle on Epsom Common. Recorders day on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Citizen Zoo set to release water voles in to the Hogsmill River in July.</li><li>○ EEBC Countryside Team volunteers day out to see Beavers in Ealing was really inspiring – considering Horton County Park LNR as a possible future release site.</li><li>○ Change in law no longer needing an enclosure opens up new opportunities.</li><li>○ Working with Catherine Cosgrove (Natural England) on Countryside stewardship, putting the Woodland reserves towards habitat banks for BNG, managing grass scrublands, wetlands, ponds through the stewardship rather than Woodland.</li><li>○ Dog Owners – Posters informing that Flea and Tick Treatments may be harming insect life, especially in ponds have been put up in EEBC</li></ul></li></ul>	<p>MW</p>
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<p><b>Action:</b> Send mapping through to Adam Brown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>TW</b> – (WaBC) – Currently gathering evidence for new local plan. Greenspaces team at the council are reviewing the quality of the habitats of council owned land. Currently mapping the sang capacity.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>MW</b> commented SWT Ecology Services of SWT did a biodiversity strategy for a Waverley piece of land. Matt Lenk is the key contact.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>MW</b> (SWT) - Taken on a new site (long leased from Merton College) - Elm Farm (Northern Tandridge) part of the farm was over the border. Opportunity came up and short of land near Bramley. Restorable chalk grassland and making a habitat bank. If recorders want to come and survey on the site they would be very welcome.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Trustees at SWT. Great skill sets to add to the Trust.</li> <li>○ Old Grassland Inventory – launch to the Planning Fora in Surrey.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>iii) <b>Email updates received</b></p> <p><b>AK</b> (SWT) - <u><a href="#">New Guide to Surrey’s Rare Plants Aims to Protect Fragile Flora</a></u></p> <p>The Surrey Botanical Society and Surrey Wildlife Trust have released the <i>Surrey Rare Plant Register</i>, a comprehensive guide documenting 413 rare, scarce, and declining plant species in the county. Over a decade in the making, this is the first major flora publication for Surrey in over 35 years. It highlights species of national importance and those increasingly at risk locally due to habitat loss, pollution, and development.</p> <p>Surrey’s diverse habitats—from woodlands to wetlands—support rich plant life, making conservation efforts crucial. The register is intended as a vital resource for botanists, conservationists, planners, and developers to help safeguard these species and meet biodiversity targets.</p> <p>Contributors emphasize the importance of understanding and valuing Surrey’s botanical diversity. The book, a collaborative effort involving many volunteers, is available for £25 via the Surrey Wildlife Trust webshop.</p> <p><u><a href="#">Purchase Link - Surrey Rare Plant Register</a></u></p>	<p><b>AR</b></p>
<p><b>8. AOB</b></p> <p>Guildford Call for (Development) Sites – Consultation Closes 13<sup>th</sup> June.</p>	
<p><b>9.</b> Date of Next Meeting: 17<sup>th</sup> September 1.30pm – 4.30pm</p>	



## **Abbreviata**

### **Organisations**

**BanCC** – Banstead Common Conservators; **EBC** Elmbridge Borough Council; **EEBC** Epsom & Ewell Borough Council; **FC** Forestry Commission; **FE** Forestry England; **EA** Environment Agency; **GBC** Guildford Borough Council; **Ind** Independent; **MVDC** Mole Valley District Council; **NE** Natural England; **NSE** Nature South East; **NT** National Trust; **RBBC**; Reigate & Banstead Borough Council; **RBC** Runnymede Borough Council; **SBC** Spelthorne Borough Council; **SBIC** Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre; **SBG** Surrey Bat Group; **SBS** Surrey Botanical Society **SCC** Surrey County Council; **\*SDNPA** South Downs National Park Authority; **SHBC** Surrey Heath Borough Council; **SLSP** Surrey Local Sites Partnership; **SyNP** Surrey Nature Partnership; **TW** Thames Water; **WaBC** Waverley Borough Council; **WoBC** Woking Borough Council; **WT** Woodland Trust

### **Technical**

**BNG** – Biodiversity Net Gain; **GCN** – Great Crested Newt; **LNP** Local Nature Partnership; **LNRS** Local Nature Recovery Strategy; **NFM** Natural Flood Management; **NNIS** – Non-Native Invasive Species; **NR** Nature Reserve; **RAWI** Revised Ancient Woodland Survey; **SANGS** Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space; **SPA** – Special Protection Area;