



**Surrey Parks and Countryside Forum**  
**Meeting Minutes - Approved**  
**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025**  
**Location: Online**  
**2pm – 4pm**  
**Engaging Youth in Nature**

<p><b>Present</b></p>	<p><b>Chair :</b> Lisa Creaye-Griffin (Surrey Nature Partnership/SyNP) - LCG  <b>Admin:</b> Sophie Holt (Surrey Nature Partnership/SyNP) - SH  Sally Astles, Parks Asset Officer, GBC - SA  Justin Sander, Parks and Green Spaces Manager, RBC - JS  Morgan Brownlow, SHBC - MB  David Hatcher, Banstead Commons Conservator - DH  Andi Roy, RBC - AR  Rob Fairbanks, Lead for SHNL - RF  Anna Fjortoft, Biodiversity Officer, SBC - AF  Andy Thwaites, Head Ranger Ashtead Common, City of London - AT  Farozah Mahmood, SWT - FM  Thomas Carmona, RBBC - TC  Elliot Cairnes, Chair, Surrey Countryside Access Forum - EC  Lucy Shea – Clerk and General Manager, Banstead Commons - LS  Jenny Price, Site Manager Langley Vale NT - JP</p> <p>Guests:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Katie Daw – Care Farm Coordinator, Surrey Hills Society</li> <li>2. Ferozah Mahmood, Surrey Wildlife Trust</li> </ol>
<p><b>1. Apologies</b></p>	<p>Helen Cocker, SCC  Alice Unmat, SCC  Ben Sword, SCC</p>
<p><b>2. Minutes and Matters Arising</b></p>	<p>Minutes from the last meeting.  Approved.</p> <p><b>Matters arising from previous meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter Hewetson is the new contact for Buglife.  peter.hewetson@buglife.org.uk</li> <li>• Call for contacts in Landscape (Landscape Types) within District &amp; Boroughs and any other organisations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> Please email Sophie/Lisa with contacts.</p>



		<b>Action Owner</b>
<p><b>3. Themed Presentations</b></p>	<p><b>Presentation Katie Daw – Care Farm Coordinator, Surrey Hills Society</b></p> <p>Katie shared a presentation – Appendix 1</p> <p>Overview: The Care Farm project supports mental health and well-being by connecting vulnerable individuals with working farms.</p> <p>Farms Involved: Norbury Park (dairy), Pontail (beef), Pitch Point Farm (Sussex cattle), Harewood’s Home Farm (National Trust).</p> <p>Participants: Over 150 individuals supported, including those from Surrey Choices, Amber (homeless project), Extended Hope (social services), and Way Through (adult mental health).</p> <p>Benefits: Improved mental health, increased interest in education and agriculture, positive feedback from participants and farmers.</p> <p>Challenges: Sustainability, farmer support, transport logistics, and last-minute cancellations.</p> <p>Media: A short film was shared showcasing the project’s impact – video not yet publicly available.</p> <p>Plans: To add 2–3 more farms in the next six months. Emphasised the need for suitable farms due to the vulnerability of participants. Long-term goal: create a replicable model for wider use.</p> <p><b>Presentation Lucy Shea – Clerk and General Manager Banstead Commons</b></p> <p>Lucy shared a presentation about the Nature Detective Day – Appendix 2</p> <p>Projects: BioBlitz events aimed at engaging children and families with nature began their structured interaction with public and built up to the Nature Detective Day in August 2025. Supported by Volunteers to help run the day. Really successful event with 150 people registered to come along.</p> <p>Funding: £2,500 grant from Surrey County Council.</p> <p>Events Held: Three events in 2024, one larger event in 2025. Activities: Nature walks, bug hunts, tree walks, arts and crafts, self-guided trails.</p> <p>Volunteers: Crucial to success; supported activities and logistics.</p>	



	<p>Resources: FSC guides, educational boards, apps (Seek, Merlin), and custom materials created with volunteer photographer Peter Taylor Medhurst.</p> <p>Impact: High engagement, educational value, and inspiration for children and families.</p> <p>Safeguarding: All events ensured safeguarding through group leaders and organisational oversight, despite no DBS checks for volunteers. Don't let it put you off doing events – with careful planning it can be managed successfully.</p> <p>Confirmed the event will become <b>annual</b>, with sufficient resources now available. Open invitation for others to join next year's event. Please get in touch with Lucy directly.</p> <p>David Hatcher - Highlighted work with Leatherhead Youth Project and the positive response from teenagers engaging in conservation activities.</p> <p><b>Presentation - Ferozah Mahmood, Team Wilder Engagement Officer, Surrey Wildlife Trust &amp; YAC Coordinator</b></p> <p>Ferozah shared a presentation the Wilder Schools Programme – Appendix 3</p> <p>Recently appointed as Team Wilder Engagement Officer. Outlined current youth engagement initiatives:</p> <p>Wilder Schools Programme: Now expanding to secondary schools (11–16) with support from the Prudence Trust. Youth Action Committee: 15 active members aged 16–30; involved in events, decision-making, and community projects. Youth Events: Including a Youth Action for Nature event at Royal Holloway University (6 November). Student Placements: Summer work experience and university research opportunities. Duke of Edinburgh Award: Students can complete volunteering and skills sections through nature-based activities.</p> <p>Challenges Identified: Accessibility and transport. Staff capacity and lack of dedicated youth engagement teams. Diversity and career pathways in the sector.</p> <p>Future Goals: Streamline youth offerings. Host dedicated youth events. Improve career visibility and collaboration across Surrey.</p> <p>Event 9<sup>th</sup> November (free): Youth Action for Nature 2025 event</p>	
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<p><b>4. Round table updates</b></p>	<p>Thomas Carmona RBBC – Preparing Autumn Work Programmes and Winter Work Programmes. Dog Policy roll out seems to be going well.</p> <p>Lucy Shea BCC – Introduced professional dog walking licence on Bansted Commons. It has displaced people walking more than 4 dogs. Compliance on open spaces – it has achieved what it was intended to.</p> <p>David Hatcher BCC – Community Engagement meeting with Police to discuss issues with trail bike riders on the SSSI at Bansted Downs. Lots of people turned up. Dangerous to dog walkers, horse riders and people as well as the SSSI nature status. Police seem to have taken public concern on board.</p> <p>Goats and Sheep now on the downs. Brilliant community of stock checkers. Youth got into the enclosure and were disturbing the wildlife. Dog walkers tried to get them out but couldn’t. Found out which school they were from and reported it to the school (as identified), who came back and asked for any further incident to be reported it to the Police.</p> <p>Increasing number of volunteers on the commons.</p> <p>Leatherhead Youth Project – will reuse posters and information notices at their half term event. Happy to share design with anyone.</p> <p>Sally Astles GBC – Brand new history signs for Stoke Park (100 Years old). Funding to refurb a playground. Funding concern going forward</p>	



	<p>for Parks. Decision on LGR has been moved to the end of October. GBC looking to join up services with Waverley.</p> <p>Lisa Creaye-Griffin SyNP. <b>Action</b> SyNP will host a LGR Webinar - to be announced soon.</p> <p>Justin Sander RBC – Rebuilding the service. Playgrounds – had to redo the Inspection and Maintenance programme on a limited budget. Playground Officer has been trained on the latest standards. Software upgrade on Tree. Maintenance for Runnymede will go out to Open Tender next year. External Tree Safety Audit. Glendale Inspection of entire tree stock - circa 150,000 trees. Building up organisational capabilities. More planting schemes to follow. Improving Parks, 25 over 6 months– lack of policies and standardisation of green and blue infrastructure (e.g. mapping of utilities, signage, benches, playgrounds). Recruitment of team members.</p> <p>Andrew Thwaites CoL– No work on Ancient Trees at Burnham Beeches and Epping because of the stress caused by the dry summer. Volunteer numbers remain good. Leaky Dams are being looked at with the Catchment Partnership and wetland installation to filter polluted water.</p> <p>Rob Fairbanks SHNL – Capital Programmes – Big Chalk, All Inclusive Access to the countryside, Approved consultation on next phase to increase SHNL area by 30% – to include Croydon, further Heathlands and Hampshire. Governance review. 75 Year Management Plan being launched (going through adoption process currently) on 19<sup>th</sup> November.</p> <p>Finding Purpose <a href="https://surreyhills.org/event/growing-together-surrey-hills-symposium-2025/">https://surreyhills.org/event/growing-together-surrey-hills-symposium-2025/</a></p> <p>Heritage Lottery Funding Programme over next 5 years. Nature Recover, Engagement, Resilience. South Downs have a fund that turns over £2M pa supporting their plan.</p> <p>Biochar - opportunity working with Farmers. Ash Die back is presenting opportunities for creating BioChar that then goes on fields as soil conditioner. Opportunities around ancient/veteran trees. Could be water stress – Biochar can help reduce the water stress.</p> <p>Lisa Creaye-Griffin SyNP – Lots of Engagement work for the LNRS and Public Consultation and Community Workshops. Encouraging more people to get involved. Priory Park, RHS Wisley, Adam Brown gave talks at the LNRS/ Key interest with people about the LNRS.</p>	<p><b>LCG</b></p>
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	<p>Sophie Holt – New Communications and Engagement Group to improve consistency of messaging – contact Sophie if interested in joining.</p> <p>New Nature Recovery Grants for Communities up to £5000  <a href="#">Nature Recovery Grants for Surrey Community Groups</a></p> <p>SCC Community Marketplace – just relaunched – for connecting organisations and volunteer needs. They have also recently purchased a volunteer database programme – soon to launch. To create Surrey Wide Volunteer Passports.</p> <p><a href="#">Surrey Community Marketplace - Home</a></p> <p>Lucy Shea – Can’t share tools due to insurance restrictions. Could do with help on being able to borrow larger items. SHNL potential to facilitate loans. Countryside Management Partnerships may also be able to look after machinery and tools and loan them to other organisations, subject to insurance.</p>	
<p><b>5. AOB</b></p>	<p>Next Years Meetings – 3 online. 1 In person with a nature walk or experience to be planned in conjunction.</p>	
<p><b>Dates for next meetings</b></p>	<p>Meeting closed 15:30</p> <p>Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 10am-12noon (online)</p> <p>Teams link to be shared via Calendar Invite</p>	