



Biodiversity Working Group

Wednesday 17th September 2025 1.30-4.30pm

Hybrid: Teams and Surrey County Council,

Eagle Room, Woodhatch, Reigate, RH2 8EF

Minutes (Approved)

Present:

Lisa Creaye-Griffin **LCG** (SNP) Chair, Sophie Holt **SH** (SNP) – Admin

Ann Bailey **ABa** (SCC), David Hatcher **DH** (BanCC), Helen Cocker **HC** (SCC), Hendryk Jurk **HJ** (GBC), Tom Childs **TC** (GBC), Ross Baker **RB** and Lynn Whitfield **LW** (SBG), Sarah Clift (EEBC) Simon Elson **SE** (Ind), Stewart Cocker **SC**(EEBC), Zoe Belton **ZB** (RBBC)

Online:

Adam Brown **AB** (SCC), Alistair Kirk **AK** (SWT/SBIC), Andi Roy **AR** (RBC), Anna Fjortoft **AF** (SBC), Bridget Fox **BF** (WT), Isobel Girvan **IG** (SWT), Mike Waite **MW** (SWT), Zeno Wijten **ZW** (RSPB),

Guests:

Peter Hewetson PH - Buglife

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Welcome and Apologies Lisa CG Chair today in Mikes absence. Apologies received from Ann Sankey, Bill Downey, Bronwen Chinien, Catherine Kerr-Smith, Henri Brocklebank, Ian Dunsford, Lucy Shea, Paul Davey, Tasha Feddery</p> <p>2. Announcements: Catherine Cosgrove will join from the January Meeting to represent Natural England.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes from 21/05/2025: Approved subject to some minor corrections.</p>	
<p>4. Matters Arising Hogs Back Layby – C/F.</p> <p>Urban BOA's. Form part of the LNRS – Good to publish online on the SyNP website. Contact SCC for digital copy. (Copy Grasslands Protocol) Action: Coordinate Information to go onto SyNP Website</p> <p>Local Sites reporting – Indicator 160 (AK) Page 5 Action: DEFRA are collecting/reporting this year but have only recently provided the background info. Submission end of October 2025. NE provide information on agri-environment schemes. Boroughs and districts may be asked to provide updates on SNCl. Any site-specific issues aside, should be ok to meet deadline. A call for information may replace formal consultation depending on timelines.</p>	SH



<p>5. Chalklines Presentation – Peter Hewetson Please see presentation Appendix 1</p> <p>Space4Nature: Collaborative project with Surrey Wildlife Trust, University of Surrey, and others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Created 62 hectares of habitat across 22 sites.• 10-year habitat management plans in place. <p>‘Chalk Lines’ Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposed follow-on project focused on chalk grassland restoration.• Targeting 30 hectares, including 15 hectares of chalk downland.• Community engagement includes prisons and care homes.• Funding application submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund.• Focus on 7 threatened invertebrate species.• Baseline surveys and monitoring planned.	
<p>6. LNRS Update – Adam Brown LNRS is now in public consultation (End 25th September 2025) Strategy includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of strategy area.• Statement of biodiversity priorities (18 priorities across 5 themes).• 68 mapped and unmapped measures. <p>Local Habitat Map:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 19 measures mapped.• Public can drop pins to suggest or correct mapped areas.• Consultation platform: Surrey Nature Recovery Commonplace. <p>Feedback Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerns about deliverability.• Mapping errors and accessibility. <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation ends 25 September.• Redrafting through October–December.• Submission to County Cabinet in early 2026.	
<p>7. Surrey Old Grasslands Update – Mike Waite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successful field season – MW dedicated June to visiting 140 Sites which will influence the published 1.0 version.• Title of the Project has caused some issue. Species- rich grassland that needs to be included in the inventory but aren’t “old”. Criteria for selection is based around species-richness, currently exempting e.g. grassland over restored minerals. But now want to include this type of grassland. Requires a possible re-brand of the projects title.• Meeting of steering group to discuss criteria and rename. Workshop of the steering group in December where all sites will be reviewed and the inventory list. Publication by 31st January 2026.• Inventory has been discussed across the different planning groups via presentations. Generally has been well received, recognise the weight of the load on planners. <p>AB – Do you have spatial data or site boundaries? Yes – Shape Files summarised for the report. Summary Maps. Separate detailed shape files available on demand – following licence agreement. Requests can be made via the SyNP partnership webpage.</p>	



<p>8. Climate Change Adaptation - Lisa Creaye-Griffin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder: Ref climate change please do send links over so we can sign post from the SyNP website. <p>Action: Send links to Sophie Holt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Species Specific Groups – Butterfly Conservation will have key info on the websites. BTO – shift of ‘climate envelopes’ for UK breeding birds 	<p>All</p>
<p>9. Partner Updates</p> <p>i) In person</p> <p>SC – Water Voles released 30th July - Epsom Hogs Mill. Volunteer for Citizen Zoo – been out and recorded lots of activity noted. Rafts with cameras to capture activity. Also EA led project north of Guildford. Wrecclesham is the next project. (National Trust follow up in terms of level of transparency on location – Emma Pelham SWT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Ponds have been dug by Newt Conservation. 4 trial pits on Epsom Common. Submitted CS Application for Country Park. SC Leading Walk for Forestry Commission and Natural England – training day on how they have been grazing on the common. Biodiversity Action Plan agreed in June. Conservators’ approval for grazing on Epsom Downs. Development Proposal Langley Vale – on SNCI land. Hoping it will stop development. Bioblitz – July 2025. Elliot Newton - Beaver introduction - Discussion ongoing. Recorder Database issue – Pete Howarth – may have found a new Bryophyte. Struggling to record as its not working properly. AK – New development underway. <p>Action: Speak to James Alvarez – written new botanical database and working on a bat one. (Recommendation from SBG).</p> <p>SE – Lots of partnership working Reigate and Redhill. British Dragonfly Society – lots of work over the summer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asian Hornets found in Holmbury St Marys – destroyed - Had a significant impact on the bees. SCC offered 1% BNG on a local school. SyNP are disappointed that SCC only offered 1% BNG on a planning application relating to its own school site and feel this doesn't set a good example. <p>Action: Understand the situation.</p> <p>DH – Nature Detective Day was a huge success. Over 150 people visited and many gazebos. Thank you for everyone who contributed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers programme restarted. Cherry-laurel being removed. Pond clearance. Burgh Heath Depot has been cleared. Active Female Great Crested Newt found – no volunteers being allowed in that area. Hoping to put a pond in on the old depot once cleared (secure site). Goats and Sheep conservation grazing on the commons. Banstead Downs Golf Course, motorbikes affecting landowners and also an issue on the roads and pavements. Police also interested and local meeting raised awareness. They have to insist on a Crime Reference number. Section 59 – seize and crush. Can't yet take them straight away currently – notice has to be issued. 	<p>SC</p> <p>LCG</p>



- Took first crop of Hay from Bansted Heath. DH met Nick Bullen at the LNRS meeting – thank you!

ZB – Biodiversity Duty Report currently being put together and will feed in about this Biodiversity Partnership.

- HC** – SCP team have signed up to another year of delivering volunteer tasks at Langley Vale (WT Site) 2 Mondays a month until the end of July.
- FiPL funding paid for Mini Bailer, so far used at Nork Park, Reigate and Banstead BC site, will help dispose of cuttings as now compacted, so can fit more in the skip.
 - Downlands Grazing started sheep grazing at Fames Rough for SCC.
 - Grant from City of London to the Lower Mole Countryside Trust paying for LMP to carry out coppicing for Dormice at Ashtead Common for 3 years. Includes initial training for 3 people for dormouse handling.
 - Volunteer activities continue as usual, 4 days a week at Downlands Partnership, 3 days a week at Lower Mole Partnership. Heathlands were shut for August but now resumed 2 days per week.

TC – Water Vole release – having dealt with the Mink. Working well, Mink numbers have dropped right down and relies on covering a large area.

- Biodiversity Reporting. Mapped all habitats, recorded and compiling excel sheet with anything that contributes to biodiversity. Thames Water pipeline to sites.
- Great Crested Newts – test sites didn't hold water long enough. Scrapes in other sites trialled.
- Bats, completed work on a Bat Bunker on Tyting Farm. Bull House – conversion of bull house worked well as thick walls. Bat Bunker made from concrete “Lego” bricks. Bat roost creation in the roof – interesting to see what happens this season.
- Supporting Chalk Lines project.
- BNG Habitat Banks – some issues. Struggling with contractors to do works. Not a huge number of enquiries about it.
- Climate Change – joint strategy with Waverly, 2027 – links through LGR.
- SWT training day – Recorded 145 species.

MW - Hay productivity this year was low and SWT will be short for winter feed. Higher demand for Hay and Haylage.

HJ – Assessing Hedgerows, plans for improving hedgerow. Management Plans FiPL funding for Ancient Yew Tree – Merrow Downs. Cross boundary project with Newlands Corner.

SBG - Surrey Bat Group became a registered charity in June 2025.

- Wanborough Wood: A male Barbastelle was caught and radio tracked. Roosting near where caught.
- Banstead: Hoping to tag a known male Barbastelle. This represents the northernmost record of the species in Surrey.
- New Bat Colonies:
 - Staffhurst Wood:



- A female bat was radio-tagged in the Surrey County Council-owned section.
- Female Alcatheo Bat – radio tagged. Roost was in the WT part of Staffhurst Wood. Group of 12 females first roost and 17 in the second roost.
- Swarming Survey:
- West Humble Chalk Mine:
 - A female Bechstein's bat was caught and tagged.
 - Tracked movement of 14 km south to Okewood Hill / Walliswood area.
 - Newly discovered colony.
 - Roost site is on private land; forage area is accessible.
 - Follow-up surveys planned for next year.
 - An SNCI designation proposal will be submitted once further data is collected.

ABa - Adam and Ann are covering Viv Greenough's role during maternity leave.

- Planning queries should be sent to their shared inbox ecology.planning@surreycc.gov.uk
- Ann is working on tightening planning conditions to improve compliance and enforcement.
- Surveys on conservation verges have been conducted to assess target species and current management practices, in collaboration with Highways teams.
- A report is due, and there is a small pot of funding available for scrub clearance on overgrown verges.
- Blue Hearts scheme: Ann raised the question of whether conservation verges should remain separate from Blue Heart verges, which are community-nominated.

AK - Agreed it's worth having a chat to review the survey findings.

ABa - Clarified that the Blue Heart scheme is self-designating, whereas SCC conservation verges were selected based on specific biodiversity criteria.

- Expressed reluctance to merge the two schemes due to their different purposes and selection processes.
- Suggested that longer-term, conservation verges could be integrated into the SNCI process, but this would require criteria alignment and analysis. Issue for criteria for conservation verges is different to the SNCI selection criteria
- The surveys will help inform this discussion.
- Noted that Highways teams want clear, simplified data to guide their management decisions.
- Victoria Johnston will be leading Biodiversity Duty Reporting for the council.
- The reporting template is not mandatory and lacks standardisation, reflecting the varying resources across local authorities.
- BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) work is ongoing and involves tracking detailed planning scheme delivery.

SE – Raised a concern about a verge project involving NT/SCC/Community Conservation Group/Town Council, where a contractor cut the verge despite an agreed regime.

- Highlighted the issue of contractor compliance and the need to prevent incorrect cutting.



- Hedge creation – brown hairstreak started to colonise, reed beds.
- Royal Parks – Shire Horse rehoming charity. They work their horses, coming to cut the reed beds. Cheaper than contractors and better for the environment. SANG – Barrsbrook Farm with NE. 20 ha site – SANG will open it up on a nature friendly way with some BNG.
<https://www.operationcentaur.com/conservation>
andreas@operationcentaur.com
Their daily rate is around £850, about a quarter of what we were quoted for machinery to do the reedbed cutting
Note AK – Alternative option given on chat:
<https://www.oakwoodclydesdales.co.uk/>
- Corporate Business Plan under review. Priority 1 is Biodiversity. Funding is starting to come forward.

AF – Vandalism Dumsey Meadows SSSI – replaced fence. 100m fencing stolen during installation.

- Much improved with cattle grazing until December 2025. Grazing back to normal level after flooding and fence issues.
- Colne river – banks have been backfilled. Remove embankment long term to allow water to rise and fall.
- CS application – NE have said they need to wait to be invited.
- Biodiversity Duty Report and Action Plan. Considerations of what they already do, and actions to take in the short term. Put to Committee 18th September.
- In summer – wildlife crime. Staines Moore. Catapults. Swan injury. Spreading word to report to the Police. Won first Green Flag for Sunbury Park.

IG – Any sites that need looking at from the SBS please send to IG. If you've got any ideas, particularly if you've got any your own land or private landowners and you've got contacts that would be really useful.

SyNP – Awareness of LNRS – Public Engagement events been going on.
Tuesday 17th March 2026 Biodiversity & Planning Conference. – Pre-register online [Surrey Biodiversity & Planning Conference 2026 – Surrey Nature Partnership](#)

ii) **Email updates received:**

AS - My only comment is that, like most attendees etc, I am depressed about the number of planning applications that are popping up everywhere it seems.

BF

In Surrey

- We are working with Surrey CC to support their tree planting goals via our MOREWoods scheme
- Talking to NE/SWT about some joint work following up the Heathlands Connections project, exploring dates for a possible landowner event.
- Surrey Assoc of Local Councils conference 13 November: we will be sharing our policy advice and offers of support with town & parish councils.
- Welcoming the Surrey LNRS consultation, it's an excellent piece of work with strong priorities on ancient woodland restoration & management, wooded habitat creation, and action on invasive species and deer.

Nationally



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have been feeding into the review of NE/FC Standing Advice on Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees, arguing for stronger wording on buffers and root protection areas. Important to remind planners that 15m buffer is a minimum and that woodland condition is not a material consideration.• We have published our State of Woods and Trees report https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/state-of-uk-woods-and-trees/ sadly reporting a further decline in woodland wildlife. PAWS remains our priority for nature recovery: the Forgotten Forests campaign seeks to bring more plantation sites into restoration. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/campaign-with-us/forgotten-forests/	
<p>10. AOB SNP Annual Review – Tuesday 17th December 2025. Booking Link: https://SyNPAnnualReview2025.eventbrite.co.uk</p>	
<p>11. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 21st January 2026 1.30pm - Venue tbc</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;