

South East Regional Report

Oct - Dec 2023

SOUTH EAST EVENTS

Forestry Conference 11/10/23

Our annual Forestry Conference was once again held at Newbury Racecourse, on Wednesday 11th October and this year, not only did we have a record number of attendees (164) but quite a long waiting list too, so if you think you might like to attend next year, our advice would be to buy your ticket as soon as bookings open!

Delegates were treated to talks from the forestry minister, The Royal Forestry Society and many other leading innovators in the forestry sector who updated delegates on how science and technology are helping landowners to ensure their forests are resilient and ready for the future. There were plenty of networking opportunities throughout the day and a delicious lunch which included warm and comforting venison pie (needless to say, deer management was mentioned a few times on the day!). Feedback was resoundingly positive, and we're already looking forward to next year's event.



Sustainable Farming Incentive Event - Hosted by Wight Rural Hub, 18/10/23



By kind invitation of Wight Hub, and in spite of storms and delayed ferries, Lucy and I attended an evening event on the Isle of Wight to talk through the latest SFI news and updates, alongside DEFRA who attended virtually. It was a joy to see such a good turn out and have an audience who were keen to listen and engage with the subject. After Defra's presentation, Lucy and I delivered ours which went into a little more detail about the ins and outs of the scheme and how various options can stack with others in CS. Once the talks were completed, we stayed to answer questions from attendees whilst they were treated to a lovely pie and mash supper. Although it was a late night, we enjoyed this trip to the island and would like to extend our thanks to Robyn and

Estee from the Wight Rural Hub for both the invitation to speak and their excellent organization/ hosting.

Natural Capital Roadshows @ Abingdon, Winchester and Wadhurst (various dates)

This year, our autumn advice roadshow centered around natural capital and new/ emerging markets for Biodiversity Net Gain, Carbon and Nitrates. Useful case studies were shared by our key sponsor Carter Jonas and feedback from the event has been incredibly positive. In total across the region, we saw 180 members and guests

- Oxfordshire – Millets Farm 60
- Hampshire – Sparsholt College 71
- Sussex – Wadhurst Castle 49



Yarn In a Barn with Hampshire Police and Farming Community Network 30/11/23

The program of Yarn in a Barn events was reinstated with a meeting in North Hampshire. FCN, NFU and Hampshire & IOW Police gave informative presentations about ELMS, FCNs work and a rural Policing update. Approximately 60 attendees were treated to sausages from Flavian Obiero from Tynefield Farm and cakes baked by the local vicar. Summerdown Farm donated some of their delicious mint products and BASC donated sloe gin as quiz prizes. BASC, RPA, FCN, RABI, CLA, Forestry Commission, Police Crime Commission, Hants Police, Hants CC Countryways, Hants CC Trading Standards and Hants CC Net Zero team all attended with information stands.



SOUTH EAST MEETINGS

Arun & Rother Catchment Partnership Workshop 6/10/23

This was a partnership meeting intended to agree future ways of working for the catchment partnership and recognize key objectives. The meeting was held at the South Downs National Park Authority Head Office and also included a walking tour of the proposed Watermeadow project at Cowdray Castle, to be funded partly by Southern water who also attended the meeting. Key takes included the use of Citizen Science projects, educating the general public on water quality improvement measures, grant funding opportunities, website improvements and future events.



Surrey Hills Partnership Meeting - Sondes Place Farm 17/10/23

Hugh Broom kindly hosted a partnership meeting with some members of the Surrey Hills AONB team and Cllr Claire Malcomson (Mole Valley and the Lib Dem PPC for East Surrey) and Marisa Heath (SCC and Cons PPC for Dorking). The visit was highly informative, looking at the key issues concerning farmers in the Surrey Hills including the agricultural transition, assurance schemes, planning, access, grant funding and green prescribing.



ELM Convenor Test & Trial 7/11/23

2nd Meeting of the local convenor trial, looking at ways to deliver ELM and nature-based solutions at a local level – using Hampshire County as a basis and the National Character areas within it. There are 20 different participants in the project and this meeting saw the introduction of EFTEC as a facilitator and The Land App being proposed as an addition to the team.

CLA & Natural England Meeting 13/11/23

Tim Bamford, Lucy Charman and Rosie Salt-Crockford met with some of the senior NE managers for the Southeast to continue building relations. Points of discussion were the LNRS, AONB extensions and new National Parks, as well as Countryside Stewardship and the high level of NE staff turnover. From this meeting, we were able to be reintroduced to the Chilterns AONB board, and Rosie in collaboration with NE has written an LNRS focused article for the January L&B magazine.

CLA & National Parks Meetings 15/11/23

Tim Bamford and Lucy Charman met with the South Downs National Park and the New Forest National Park separately to continue building relations and understand key strategies and challenges for the parks and CLA members.

Both meetings discussed Nature based solutions, the agricultural transition, planning and the recent Defra planning Consultation regarding Permitted development and highlighted opportunities to promote joint engagement in the future.

Hampshire Flood and Water Management Conference - Hampshire county Council 16/11/23



A half day conference held at Hampshire Council Offices in Winchester brought together key members of the counties local authority network, water companies, catchment and Solent Representatives, Natural England, the Environment agency, Forestry commission, Southern Coastal Partnership and many others in an informative session that explored the EA strategy for flood resilience, introduced the new [Hampshire Council flood risk mapping tool](#) and offered the opportunity to workshop some of the key threats and challenges around water across the county, from skills and education to how nature based solutions can offer answers.

Oxfordshire Place Narrative - Natural Word and Environment Focus Group - 22/11/23

We were asked to feed into Oxfordshire's work on creating a 'place narrative' for the county and as part of this were asked a series of questions about Oxfordshire by a facilitator on behalf of the county council. Questions included things like "what 3 things come to mind when you think about Oxfordshire" and "what are the best

South East Regional Report

Oct - Dec 2023

things about Oxfordshire” etc. Given the lack of rural representation on this call for what is a predominantly rural county, we felt this was in fact a worthwhile meeting to sit in on.

Most noticeably when a question around inclusivity and equity for the residents of Oxfordshire was raised, it allowed for us to raise the point that the council’s stance on serving only vegan foods is probably quite alienating to the farmers on their doorstep who are working hard to rear top quality, high welfare, low food-mile meat whilst doing their best to improve the landscape and environment of the county. Points which worryingly, the council’s facilitator admitted to not having even considered before.

Isle of Wight – Rural Partners Meeting with IOW council – 22/11/23

After numerous attempts to secure a meeting, the rural partners managed to secure a meeting with the Director of the IOW council, Colin Rowland, representatives of the council’s Economic Development team and Cllr Julie Jones- Evans. This joint meeting was kindly facilitated by Graham Biss of Natural Enterprise partnership and attended by the CLA, IOW AONB, NFU, White Rural Hub and Isle of Wight Agricultural Society.

The meeting discussed in detail the Rural England Prosperity fund and the councils proposed use of the fund and its interpretation of the parameters of the fund. The rural partners gave further insight, guided by the CLA senior economist Charles Trotman.

The meeting provided valuable insight for the councilors into the challenges and priorities for funding for the land-based sector on the island and emphasized the need for a capital grants scheme that is open to all rural businesses and not just centered around tourism. Further actions from the meeting and updates on the fund to follow in the spring.

JAC Surrey Hills AONB 6/12/23

The Committee was updated with the LNRS progress, Surrey are in the process of planning their engagement strategy – more to follow in the spring with a draft plan hopefully by March. Priorities for the group are that this is kept alive and locally owned. How can the strategy be linked to accessing funding for recovery.

The National Landscapes rebranding was announced and reiterated that authorities now have to “seek to further the aims of the AONB” rather than just have regard to it which the board felt would add significant weight to their influence.

Boundary Review updates – over 1500 responses were received to the consultation and so the process is taking longer than anticipated. There may be some additional tweaks to the boundary following assessment of all of the evidence provided in the responses, but unless the amends are deemed “significant”, these will not have to be reconsulted on. There are concerns about the final report being issued either at a change in government or during purdah. Final report is expected in late spring 2024.

Surrey Hills are bidding for some new funding available for National Flood management – updates to follow.

FRIGSE Meeting Alice Holt 7/12/23

The Farming and Rural Issues South East Group meeting was held at Alice Holt Research Station Forestry Commission and attendees heard from a number of speakers. Jane Hull from the Forestry commission gave an overview of the work conducted by FC and at Alice Holt in particular. This was followed by an interesting presentation on Soil carbon by one of the research team, giving real insight into the carbon storage abilities of different trees, soils etc. The meeting concluded with a presentation from Richard Bowe from Re- Generation earth, consultants in natural capital and circular economies for farmers and land managers.

Discussions surrounding next generation skill sets and ELMS followed.

Hampshire Fly tipping Partnership Meeting 13/12/23

Online meeting that was well attended by Hampshire Council members and a number of other rural partners. New trends for tipped waste include roofing materials, tyres and building waste. There is also evidence of issues where refuse contractors refuse to take side waste. Hotspots around the county include Dummer and Rowlands Castle.

Hampshire council are deploying CCTV in hotspot locations and are seeing some success. Hampshire Horse Watch are to be notified of hotspots so that they can increase reporting. The EA are making regular visits to hotspot locations in an attempt to disrupt activity and increased CCTV coverage is being promoted at recycling centres.

The low-level category of offences is unlikely to result in prosecution despite the frequency of offences. Hampshire are working cross-border with Sussex and Wiltshire to try and prevent cross border offences.

The progress of the proposal for a change in law for "Aggravated fly tipping" is still progressing and is currently sitting with the criminal justice board. Fines secured from this additional legislation could help with prosecution and clear up costs for both public and private land.

It was reiterated that we are still seeking support by councils for clearing fly tipped waste on private land as this costs landowners thousands of pounds annually.

Sussex and Dorset are already running a #SCRAPflytipping campaign relating to waste outside charity shops Hampshire will look to join in 2024.

Hampshire CC are removing charges for DIY waste as of 31st December 2023, however there may be charges if the waste exceeds a certain volume. Parameters and process are yet to be defined by the waste contractors. It was hoped that no one would be turned away initially as this could result in further issues.

OTHER NEWS

High Weald AONB Consultation – CLA responded

IOW AONB consultation is due to open in January.

[East Hampshire Local Plan consultation launches on January 22nd](#)

[Surrey Hills are seeking views on Public Rights of way](#)

Hampshire County Council are consulting on [Minerals and Waste Plan](#)

October Member visits undertaken – 1 in Oxfordshire, 1 Hampshire

November Member Visits – 2

December Member Visits - 1

SUMMARY OF ADVICE ACTIVITY

October - December 2023 Advice Cases

