

## **Surrey Hills AONB Meeting 3 March 2021**

### **Public Question from Andrew Gibbons**

This question is directed to the Chair of the Surrey Hills AONB for public questions at the Board Meeting on 2 December 2020, as per the protocols on your website.

Can you give details of any safety or environmental impact assessment and public consultation undertaken for the Leith Hill Greenway or Cycling UK's longer Surrey Strategic Greenway project?

Andrew Gibbons

### **Draft AONB Board Response**

Dear Mr Gibbons

Thank you for your Question.

The Leith Hill Greenway project was subject to extensive consultation with landowners and land managers along its 7 mile stretch. A business case and detailed plans were approved by Defra for the European Fund for Rural Development. The implementation of the project was undertaken by an experienced and qualified Surrey County Council Countryside Access team and delivered contractors under its supervision. The substantive investment was in surfacing of tracks, particularly the Wolven's Lane Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) with a sub base 4' deep in places. There was then a limestone wearing course of between 6-8" depending on the location, and the dangerous wallows have been completely engineered out. There has been a Temporary Regulation Order (TRO) in place that banned motorised vehicles to allow the new surface to bed down. Surrey County Council is now consulting on making the TRO permanent to protect the environment and enhance safety of the Greenway users.

Where other less intrusive surfacing improvements were undertaken, this involved soil spread neatly and thinly to the side to allow the verge areas to regenerate naturally with soil rich in biodiversity that reflects the natural flora for the area and not to introduce unsuitable species.

The general encouragement of users on an extensive, predominantly off-road network is to provide a relatively safe, enjoyable experience for countryside visitors. The Leith Hill Greenway has created a new permissive access through a tunnel under Ranmore Common Road utilising the historic estate track that links the Denbies Estate and Westcott. The busiest road section is Balchin's Lane, Westcott, which is already on the Sustrans National Cycle Network 21. The crossing of the A25, although having good sightlines, will have temporary warning signs whilst discussions are ongoing with Westcott Village Association and Surrey Highways about more permanent measures that can address traffic safety issues through the village. Finally, the signage will include the 'Be Nice, Say Hi' BHS and Cycling UK campaign promoting shared and safe countryside access for all users.

There has been no formal consultation on the Cycling UK Surrey Strategic Greenway proposal. The strategy was presented to the Surrey Hills AONB Board in June 2020 and the discussion was reported in the minutes. The AONB Board agreed to take forward the principles in acknowledgement that specific proposals would be subject to appropriate consultation and assessment. The Strategy has been discussed in various fora, including the AONB Director presenting it to the Surrey Association of Local Councils AGM in October 2020.

Heather Kerswell

Surrey Hills AONB Board Chair