

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

**Report:** Surrey Hills AONB Board Business Plan (2014 – 2019)

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### **Purpose of Report**

To report on the draft Surrey Hills AONB Board's Business Plan (2014 – 2019) and to review progress on implementing the AONB Management Plan

### **Summary**

The Core Business Plan for the AONB Unit has been updated following the Statutory Members Group on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November. The Business Plan provides the basis for delivering our contract with Defra and the delivery of the AONB Management Plan. It sets the framework for the detailed Unit's work plan, budgets and individual work programmes.

Also attached is the monitoring report for the Family Delivery Plan that was also reviewed by the Statutory Members Group. This plan identified lead bodies including specific roles for the Surrey Hills Family, as follows.

- Surrey Hills AONB Board, as a Joint Committee, working through the AONB Unit, focusing on policy, strategy and fund raising
- Surrey Hills Society, as a membership charity, focusing on raising public awareness and supporting volunteering
- Surrey Hills Enterprises, as a Community Interest Company, focusing on building the Surrey Hills brand by working with and for the business community
- Surrey Hills Trust Fund, as a Fund within the Community Foundation for Surrey, focusing on generating income for projects and a permanent endowment to support the work of the AONB Unit in implementing the AONB Management Plan.

There will be a meeting of the Family Chairman on 14<sup>th</sup> December that will also review this document. A priority for 2018 is to start to undertake a review of the AONB Management Plan, Business Plan and governance, with agreed arrangements in place for 2019 – 2024. This is in line with other AONB partnerships and Defra funding.

### **Recommendations**

The AONB Board is asked to note the draft Business Plan (2014 – 2019) for the core work of the AONB Unit and progress in implementing the AONB Management Plan (2014 – 2019)

**DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN  
2014 – 2019**

**This Plan sets out the activity and costs relating to the  
core business of the Surrey Hills AONB Board**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is designated as a nationally important landscape to ensure its character and qualities are conserved and enhanced. As part of a national family of protected landscapes, the Surrey Hills AONB is a strategic national asset.

The Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan (2014 – 2019) sets out the vision, policies and targets for the future management of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty over 20 years. The Plan is prepared by the Surrey Hills Board (a Joint Committee) and adopted by the local authority partners as a duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Plan informs the policies and programmes of the local authorities and provides guidance to all the organisations and individuals that have a role in protecting and enhancing the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The AONB Board core partners agreed four years ago that future funding for all the 34 AONB partnerships in England was at risk over the next 20 years. It was determined that it would develop alternative sources of funding out with the national Government and local authority funding.

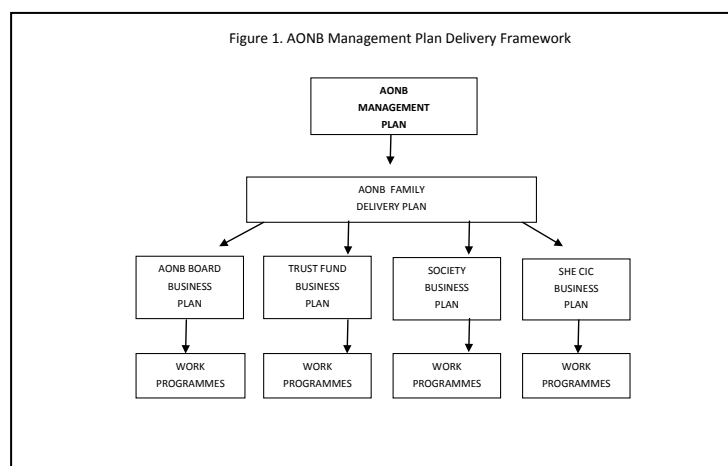
With this in mind, this Business Plan sets out the short to medium term priorities for the Board and is the basis for agreeing the Surrey Hills AONB Unit's annual work programme. The Plan aligns the work of the Board with a new Constitution and AONB Management Plan for the period 2014 to 2019. It is based on assumptions about the continued funding that the Board can attract from its core funding partners. These assumptions will be kept under continual scrutiny and subject to annual bids for funding. These are all matters relevant to the AONB Board's view that new sources of non-government funding must be developed. The outcome of any formal AONB Boundary review could also have significant implications on the Business Plan, Constitution and Management Plan.

### 1.1 Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan

The local authorities have delegated to the Joint Management Committee the preparation and review of the AONB Management Plan. This is a statutory document that 'formulates their policy for management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their functions in relation to it' (Section 86 CRow Act). For government, public bodies, agencies and other relevant authorities, the Management Plan is the key to their legal requirement to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of the AONB (CRow Act).

The Management Plan and the Strategic Delivery Plan provide the context for the Board's Business Plan, however it is intended that the AONB policies are embraced and acted upon in the plans, strategies and actions of those organisations that have a role to play in the management of the Surrey Hills landscape and the well-being of its local communities.

### 1.2 The Surrey Hills Family Delivery Strategy



Although the fundamental purpose of the Management Plan will be to encourage co-ordinated action by all organisations, agencies and individuals, the Surrey Hills AONB Board has established a Surrey Hills group of organisations (the Surrey Hills Family) to help support the delivery of the AONB Management Plan. This will be achieved through growing the membership and activity of the Society; growing the business sector's involvement and revenue streams through Surrey Hills Enterprises; and generating income through the Surrey Hills Trust Fund in support of the implementation of the AONB Management Plan. The driver has been the recognition that Government funding is heavily constrained, so working collaboratively through the family provides an opportunity to diversify and broaden the resource base, including access to skills, funding and volunteering.

The Surrey Hills Family Delivery Plan details how the targets are delivered under the following Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan headings:

- Landscape Conservation and Enhancement
- Enjoyment and Understanding
- Growing the Surrey Hills Economy
- Partnership and Coordination

*Appendix 1* provides an overview of the Delivery Strategy, including monitoring and review.

### 1.3 The Surrey Hills AONB Board

The Surrey Hills AONB Board is a Joint Committee that has been established under sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000, by the following local authorities:

- Guildford Borough Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
- Surrey County Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Waverley Borough Council

The principal funding partner of the Board is Defra (contributing 75% of core costs). Defra's interests on the Board are represented by Natural England. The National Trust

hosts the Unit at its Surrey Hills Estate Office at Warren Farm Barns. In 2014, the Board's Advisory Members are the CLA, NFU, Surrey Wildlife Trust, CPRE, the Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC), and the Surrey Hills Society. The Membership however is being reviewed as part of a review of the Constitution.

### 3.2 The Surrey Hills Brand

The Surrey Hills is a designated landscape and place name that in itself cannot be protected. However, the Surrey Hills Board has developed an emblem for the Surrey Hills that has been protected by Surrey County Council as a trademark. In order to protect the reputation, the trademark must always be used in accord with the following **brand values**:

**Distinctive**; a high quality image of rural Surrey

**High quality**; the best of its kind

**Enhancing**; landscapes, life and business; and

**Fun**; positively engaging its communities, visitors and business

These brand values need to be reflected throughout all AONB communications in order to build understanding and to protect the reputation. The Surrey Hills brand needs to be used consistently by the Family.

### 3.3 Surrey Hills Family Communications

In order to recognise the inter-reliance of working together as a Surrey Hills Family, using the Brand, a Communications Group has been established to:

- Provide a synergy across the Surrey Hills Family
- Gate-keep Surrey Hills branding and messaging
- Protect the reputation of the Surrey Hills

The areas of activity to include:

- Overseeing the content, design and production of all marketing material (leaflets, newsletters, signage etc)
- Planning, developing and reviewing the website
- Engaging and using Social Media to communicate Family messages and pursuing PR & Media activity

## **4. THE SURREY HILLS AONB UNIT**

The Surrey Hills AONB Unit services the Surrey Hills Board and promotes the Management Plan policies, as a catalyst for action, and secures resources to enable partnership working. The AONB Unit is core funded by Defra to fulfil the following core functions that all AONB Units are required to deliver:

- a) Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRoW Act AONB Management Plan
- b) Promoting the AONB vision and management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside

- c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan
- d) Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service (attain the highest possible standards) in countryside management
- e) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets
- f) Monitoring AONB landscape condition
- g) Accessing resources for management activities
- h) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally
- i) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level
- j) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB
- k) Providing landscape related planning advice

These functions provide the basis of the work programme for the AONB Unit and agreed with Defra.

#### 4.1 The AONB Unit structure

The Surrey Hills AONB Unit Structure as of January 2015 is:

##### **Core staff (based on FTE)**

AONB Director	1
Office Manager	0.8
Marketing Communications Officer	0.6
Planning Adviser	0.6
Working Group and Grant Coordinator	0.3

The AONB Unit is hosted at the National Trust's Surrey Hills Estate Office, Warren Farm Barns, Mickleham. The current lease will expire at the end of 2017 and a new lease is in negotiation. The AONB has occupied office space rent free under the old lease but from 2018 will be required to pay for this. In an effort to minimise the cost the AONB Team will occupy a reduced office space in the lease with a license to use other areas of the building. This will provide the potential for closer working with The Surrey Hills Society through hot desking. There is a need to investigate the possibility of rotating Board meetings at other constituent local authority offices. The AONB Unit pays some service charges and IT is provided by Surrey County Council.

The ability for the AONB Unit to build a restricted reserve is self-evidently limited. The main funding for the Unit comes from Defra, which has to be restricted to projects and cannot be spent on reserves. The Statutory Members Group will therefore be considering the reserves policy related to covering perhaps 3 months running costs of the AONB Unit and arrangements to reduce Surrey County Council's potential liability regarding staff redundancy. The Statutory Members Group has already advised that as a matter of policy the AONB should in future avoid, if practicable the direct employment of staff outside the core business of the AONB Unit to avoid the cost and complications of redundancy. In the meantime, the AONB Board agreed to allocate one day a week of its

Office and Finance Manager's time to support the Surrey CC Countryside work. This will be flexible to ensure that the AONB Unit has enough time when it is needed.

## **5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2014 - 2019**

The strategic priorities identified by the Surrey Hills AONB Unit for the next 5 years are to:

- L1 - Support Natural England in the process of the AONB Boundary Review
- L4 - Influence planning policy and decisions by advising on the preparation of Local Plans and major developments affecting the AONB
- L5 - Raise awareness among the public and relevant bodies of the pressures on the Surrey Hills and the need for tight controls on development through, amongst other channels, regular reports in the Surrey Hills newsletter
- L6 - Develop and deliver a mountain bike and cycling strategy for the Surrey Hills as part of the Surrey Cycling Strategy.
- L8 - Develop and implement projects for Tales and Trails of the Tillingbourne Valley for submission of Heritage Lottery bid
- L9 - Reduce impact of overhead power lines in the Surrey Hills by implementing schemes with SSE and UK Power Networks
- L10 - Implement proposals for communities that promote and reinforce the rural character of the Surrey Hills country lanes and villages
- E1 - Develop and implement an Inspiring Views programme to open up and maintain important views to and from the AONB
- E2 - Increase the membership, profile, events programmes and volunteering opportunities through the Surrey Hills Society
- E4 - Deliver the Frontline Surrey Hills HLF funded military heritage project and seek to extend across the Surrey Hills
- E6 - Inspire and engage new audiences through a Surrey Hills Arts programme with an agreed development plan
- G9 - Develop relationship and investment opportunities through the Local Enterprise Partnerships Coast to Capital and Enterprise M3
- P1 - Ensure sound governance, reporting and monitoring of the AONB Management Plan through quarterly meetings of the Surrey Hills AONB Board
- P2 - Establish a Surrey Hills Trust Fund with the Community Foundation for Surrey
- P3 - Establish the annual Surrey Hills Partnership as an opportunity to oversee and scrutinise the work of the Surrey Hills family
- P4 - Establish a revised constitution for the Surrey Hills AONB Board and secure funding support from Defra and local authority partners
- P5 - Review the AONB Management Plan and deliver a new Management Plan for adoption
- P6 - Develop policy and strategy with central and local government through active membership of the NAAONB, attending Conference and AGM
- P7 - Second the Regional Coordinator to the National Association of AONBs as its Development Manager



- P8 - Establish a methodology and a baseline to monitor landscape change to help identify the types of change taking place and how these are affecting the landscape character and natural beauty of the Surrey Hills AONB

### **Project Priorities for 2018/19**

Specific priorities for the Unit, Working Groups and Projects in 2018 are:

- Begin review and consultation of the new Management Plan with local authority officers
- Ensure consistent AONB Policy in Local Plans
- Delivering the 60th anniversary of the AONB designation for 2018
- Identifying, funding and promoting hacking trails through the Equestrian Working Group
- Ensure the legacy of the Tillingbourne HLF Project with the Society, including Gallery, walk leaflets, videos, booklet
- Developing the Discover section on Walks; Cycling; Horse Riding; and Arts and Heritage on the website
- Developing and implementing pilot Quiet Lane Zone with Guildford, Waverley and Mole Valley Local Committees
- Surrey Hills Arts, Surrey Unearthed roll-out and enabling the North Downs Way National Trail 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Develop proposal and bids to implement 70km Cycle Surrey Hills network with Cycling UK and London Marathon Charitable Trust
- Develop and implement 35km single track mountain bike network across Leith Hill, Holmbury and Peaslake, to manage mountain biking and reduce land owner liability working with Friends of the Hurtwood
- Dress the RideLondon Surrey route as part of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations
- Work with partners, like the Surrey Countryside Partnership, to develop a list of landscape conservation, access and outreach projects, including opportunities for CIL
- Develop Trust Fund strategy including new website and events programme with the Community Foundation for Surrey, including support for the Surrey Hills Challenge and Festival of Outdoor Sport at Denbies
- Implement Into The Hills programme with Surrey Youth Focus subject to Young Roots funding from Heritage Lottery Fund
- Living Landscapes delivery of the North Downs Escarpment Facilitation Fund and the Greenscapes woodland project (if bid successful) and the development of a Heathland bid for Wealden Heath area.

## **6. CORE BUDGET SUMMARY FOR 2017 - 2022**

The following table shows the 5 year estimated core budget for the Surrey Hills AONB Board. It is based on the confirmed Defra funding agreement from 2016/17 to 2019/20, and continues with the 75:25 funding formulae between Defra and the local authorities, as in the Constitution agreed by the Board.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Core budget</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Defra (75%)	144,050	144,050	144,051	144,051	144,051
Surrey CC (13%)	26,900	26,900	26,900	26,900	22,900
Guildford BC (3%)	5,279	5,279	5,279	5,279	5,279
Mole Valley DC (3%)	5,279	5,279	5,279	5,279	5,279
Waverley BC (3%)	5,279	5,279	5,279	5,279	5,279
Reigate and Banstead (1.5%)	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640
Tandridge DC (1.5%)	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Core Staff	170,764	169,298	174,169	173,951	173,822
PR and Publicity	5,364	9,912	4,960	5,008	5,057
Running Costs	15,939	12,857	12,938	13,108	13,188
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>	<b>192,067</b>

Defra Project funding:					
Defra (SDF)	36,299	39,401	42,557	42,557	42,557
Total	36,299	39,401	42,557	42,557	42,557

In light of the tremendous pressures on public finances, the above figures represent a best-case scenario in terms of support for core costs. The Board will need to work with the Surrey Hills Family to ensure that contingency arrangements are in place should the availability of core funding from Government sources be significantly reduced.

The Core AONB Budget carries forward a surplus of circa £16,000 that is a restricted fund to cover eventualities like redundancy.

### 6.1 Project Budgets

The Board will seek to secure funding for project staff through external sources, eg the Heritage Lottery Fund, and by working with a range of partner organisations, the Surrey Hills Enterprises Community Interest Company, and the Surrey Hills Society, in

delivering the projects identified in the Management Plan and funded through the Trust Fund.

The Defra Project Fund will prioritise expenditure on Working Groups and Projects.

The strategy is not to take on more staff within the Surrey County Council unit structure.

## **7. FUTURE CAPABILITIES**

The AONB Board will require the capacity to address the demands and challenges over the next 5 years. Following the Surrey Hills AONB Unit development day, the following ranking identifies the most important capabilities and behaviours that the team consider is required to effectively deliver:

- Effectively uses all the resources at its disposal
- Creates an environment where people want to work and do their best
- Delivers to plan within budget
- Communicates clearly and effectively
- Articulates a clear vision
- Creates an environment that encourages creativity and experimentation
- Is receptive to fresh ideas
- Seeks to understand the views and needs of others

## **8. MEETING THE CHALLENGES BEYOND 2019**

Within this Business Plan period, the Board will need to be aware of, and plan for, the following challenges:

- Need to balance the expected increase in visitor pressure, particularly cycling, and the aims to bolster the rural economy whilst safeguarding the primary purpose of the AONB designation to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape
- Continued pressure on central government finance's ability to support the core work of AONB partnerships, and being able to address issues and opportunities arising through Brexit
- Viability of the Board as a Joint Committee with pressure on local government funds and the position of Surrey County Council as host authority with the increasing exposure to redundancy costs
- The need to generate income through the Surrey Hills Trust Fund to support the delivery of the Management Plan
- Delivery of the Management Plan priorities through coordinating the activities of Surrey Hills Enterprises and the Surrey Hills Society working with businesses and the community
- Location and working arrangements of the Surrey Hills Unit in relation to Surrey County Council IT support (subject to the lease with the National Trust at Warren Farm Barns)
- The ability of the Board to develop and enhance the equity value of the Surrey Hills brand and reputation by influencing and directing the Surrey Hills Family of the Society, Enterprises and Trust Fund

## **9. BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This Business Plan is based on assumptions about the continued funding that the Board can attract from its core funding partners. These assumptions will be kept under continual scrutiny and subject to annual bids for funding. The outcome of any formal AONB Boundary review could also have significant implications on the Business Plan, Constitution and Management Plan.