

SURREY HILLS BOARD

Minutes of meeting held on 21st March 2018 at Warren Farm Barns

CORE MEMBERS

* Cllr David Wright	Guildford Borough Council
* Cllr Mike Band	Waverley Borough Council
* Cllr Lindsey Dunbar	Tandridge District Council
* Cllr John Stephenson	Reigate & Banstead BC
Cllr David Mir	Mole Valley District Council
*Mike Goodman	Surrey County Council
Stephanie Fudge	National Trust
Adam Wallace	Natural England

ADVISORY MEMBERS

* Scott Pepé	National Farmers Union
* Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira	Surrey Wildlife Trust
* Tim Bamford	CLA
* Liz Cutter	SALC
* Chris Howard	Surrey Hills Society
* Simon Whalley	Surrey Hills Enterprises CIC
* Kristina Kenworthy	CPRE
* Gordon Jackson	Surrey Hills Trust Fund
* Nigel Davenport	Surrey Wildlife Trust

* Members present

IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Fairbanks	Surrey Hills AONB Director
Jane Garrett	Surrey Hills AONB Office Support (Notes)
Clive Smith	Surrey Hills AONB Planning Adviser
Ken Bare	Surrey Hills Society
Caroline Price	Surrey Hills AONB Comms Lead
Bert Broom	Surrey NFU for item 5

		ACTIONS
1.	INTRODUCTIONS	
	David Wright welcomed everyone and round the table introductions were made.	
2.	APOLOGIES	
	Dave Mir, Adam Wallace	
3.	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING	
	The minutes of the last meeting held on December 6 were agreed.	

4.	MATTERS ARISING	
4.1	Rob Fairbanks reported that David Munro, Police and Crime Commissioner, will be invited to attend one of the next AONB Board meetings.	RF
5	PROJECT PRESENTATION: DEFRA PILOT LAND MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL	
5.1	David Wright introduced the item as an opportunity to test a new environmental land management scheme, put a cost to measuring natural capital and so demonstrate to Government the reason to invest public funds.	
5.2	Hugh Broom said this was a post-Brexit opportunity. There was some urgency as the CAP payment structure would only run to 2020. This left a big question-mark over future support for farmers and landowners. He stated the bottom line was that there will be less money. As 40-50% of existing farm income came from direct farm payments, any new proposal would have a big impact on farm viability.	
5.3	Hugh explained that the Surrey Hills AONB proposal was to pilot a scheme through the North Downs Facilitation Fund and perhaps to extend the proposed area south to include a more diverse range of farm businesses and landscapes. Professor Richard Murphy, Director at Surrey University, is designing the research framework to help quantify and measure 'natural capital'. There were some obvious deliverables such as hedgerows and field margins, but there were other new possibilities such as getting paid for looking after rights of way across countryside. It was a very broad canvas and there were lots of things that could be bought into consideration for payment. Hugh suggested that soil sampling, worm counts and other features of good husbandry might become part of a shopping basket qualifying for payments.	
5.4	Hugh believed this to be a unique opportunity that came with Brexit and that we needed to give every attention. The main selling point of a Surrey Hills scheme was our position close to London, with more visitors than most National Parks, plus the habitat diversity and quality of our landscape. He emphasised the importance of building a relationship with Surrey University across its departments including the Vet School.	
5.5	Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira said good land management was the key to delivering natural capital investment, which was a key concept in the Government's 25-year Environment Plan. She said that working with the University gave the opportunity to come up with a scheme that was replicable and scalable to roll out across the country. She stated that the Office of National Statistics was about to bring natural capital into its accounting criteria. Of the billions credited to natural capital nationally, 58% relates to recreational activity and this is therefore key to what the Surrey Hills AONB can offer in terms of putting forward its pilot scheme.	
5.6	David Wright pointed out that if money was taken away from farmers, many businesses would go under. Bert Broom said the figures provided by Philip Hammond showed the impact on farm businesses would be huge and as a result the impact on the Surrey Hills AONB was potentially huge too. Tim Bamford said the CLA was the first organisation to propose payments for public goods through land management contracts. They had identified the opportunity of creating more permissive access, for example creating circular routes, but they were wary about taking on commitments for statutory public rights of way. Hugh Broom said another USP was the value for money the AONB offered through its administration.	
5.7	Scott Pepé regretted the Government's lack of recognition of the importance of safe and reliable food production, which the NFU would like to see at the centre of the Government's thinking. He warned that Brexit could open the gates to a flood of cheap food imports that would potentially undermine British farming. Bert Broom agreed that there could be a race to the bottom for cheap prices which would undervalue our high standards of production and welfare. Tim Bamford said the important thing was educating the public. Scott Pepé said food should be regarded nationally as of strategic importance. Mike Goodman said working with Surrey University could be an opportunity to advise on how best to educate the public about the environment.	

5.8	Members agreed: to support the submission to the National Association of AONBs for a Surrey Hills environmental land management pilot scheme; and to seek development funding from DEFRA for Surrey University to design the pilot scheme.	RF
6	SURREY HILLS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN (2019-2024)	
6.1	Rob Fairbanks reminded Members that the preparation of the AONB Management Plan was the core business of the Surrey Hills AONB Board and that there was a statutory duty on local authorities to adopt a new AONB Management Plan every 5 years. The Plan would set out the policy framework around a 25 year vision. There was a lot of guidance from the National Association for AONBs and Natural England to help the process. He had been on a two-day seminar with national colleagues to consider the structure of the plans and sustainability appraisals. As our existing Plan was fit for purpose, he proposed to keep to the same structure and a similar process of review and preparation.	
6.2	Rob said that the Officers Working Group had been reconvened to do the leg work regarding committee reports and presentations to the local authorities. He outlined the timetable for consultation, as set out in the report. He highlighted that Government was also committed to carrying out a 'fit for purpose' review of National Parks and AONBs in 2019 which could fundamentally affect the AONB Management Plan in the future. Mike Band pointed out that local council elections would mean new councillors would need educating about the AONB.	
6.3	Rob explained that a key part of the process was having expert panels chaired by members of the Board who would recruit expert advisers to provide the evidence base for policy. Members agreed the programme of review and adoption of the new AONB Management Plan and nominated chairs for the Expert Panel. The panel chairs proposed were Hugh Broom (Farming); Simon Whalley (Woodland); Nigel Davenport (Nature Conservation); Mike Band (Planning); David Wright (Heritage); Mike Goodman (Transport); Chris Howard (Recreation and Tourism); and Liz Cutter (Community Development).	
7.	SURREY HILLS ACTIVITY REPORTS	
7.1	25 Year Environment Plan. Rob Fairbanks referred to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and said that a lot of work had been undertaken nationally to align the AONB programmes with those of the National Park Authorities.	
7.2	HLF Strategy. Rob said that the HLF budget had been nearly halved and it was necessary to lobby about the importance of maintaining HLF investment in the countryside.	ALL
7.3	Surrey University Symposium. Rob stated that Max Lu, Vice Chancellor of Surrey University, was keen to sponsor a Surrey Hills Symposium looking ahead to the next 60 years, covering issues such as the impact of climate change, technology, health, recreation and development pressure.	
7.3	House of Commons reception. Rob reported that we had received acceptances from most of our Surrey MPs, the Minister and Chief Executives and Leaders. He encouraged Members to RSVP by the following week if they had not already done so.	ALL
7.4	Leith Hill. Chris Howard raised Will Travers', Chief Executive of the Born Free Foundation, statement regarding the Leith Hill oil drilling proposal which criticised the AONB Board for not taking sufficient action to oppose it. David Wright said he would be putting out a press statement on behalf of the AONB Board to refute this allegation. The AONB Board had consistently opposed the proposal since its inception.	CP/DW
7.5	Waverley Local Plan. Clive Smith stated that the Waverley Local Plan had included at the insistence of the Inspector some housing within the AONB. He had insisted that Waverley had to take on half of Woking Borough's housing shortfall. Clive pointed out that in recommending this, the Inspector had shown no evidence of having considered the importance of AONB protection. He was concerned the same Inspector has been appointed to deal with the Guildford Local Plan. At present, the Guildford Local Plan was making provision for new housing without touching the AONB.	
7.6	Mike Band said it was sensible for communities to take a few houses on the edge of	

	villages. Clive Smith said that the Inspector had twice ignored his request to take part in the hearing. He was concerned that such a level of development in the AONB would set a precedent despite Government policy being to avoid building in AONBs.	
7.7	Kristina Kenworthy informed the Board that CPRE was considering challenging the Waverley Inspector's ruling and she asked for the support of the Surrey Hills Board. If CPRE Surrey did decide to take this on, it would not be a decision they took on lightly as it did not like opposing the policies of local councils. She explained that if it went unchallenged, the precedent set by the Inspector could wreak havoc in the South East of England. David Wright made it clear that the Surrey Hills AONB Board could not intervene in the internal policies of its constituent local authorities.	
7.8	Cycling. Rob Fairbanks reported that Jeremy Hunt would be launching the Cycle Surrey Hills network on June 8 at Hindhead. There had been discussions with landowners and the Surrey Hills Society about getting support for the principle of a sanctioned network of bike trails. He said Surrey had thousands of visiting mountain bikers that represented millions of pounds worth of public benefit. This should be considered as part of the Defra pilot scheme.	RF
7.9	Rural traffic management and HGVs. Liz Cutter mentioned the workshop on April 11 at Shalford Village Hall. Jason Russell and Colin Kemp, the Cabinet Member for Highways, would launch a de-clutter campaign to identify unnecessary signage in the parishes that could be scrapped or returned to the County Council.	
7.10	Travel Campaign. Rob reported on Caroline Price's progress with the rail and bus companies in promoting the summer travel campaign, including new signage on the North Downs Line.	
7.11	North Downs Way. Rob flagged the work on the North Downs Way National Trail that was celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2018. It included an international tourism campaign to get National Trails onto the European and American tourism map.	
7.12	Surrey Unearthed. Rob reported on Ali Clarke's progress with this Arts Council England funded programme that would generate a lot of work and publicity for the Surrey Hills as part of the celebration of the AONB anniversary.	
7.13	Surrey County Council Countryside Estate. Mike Goodman said that Surrey County Council decision to introduce car park charges will help fund a vision of future countryside management. Parking revenue would be used to fund improvements and projects suggested by the public. The County Council would be consulting the AONB, farmers, liaison groups, residents and organisations on their aspirations for the countryside for the next 25 years. All car parks will have signage describing where the parking income will be spent.	
	SURREY HILLS ENTERPRISES	
7.14	Surrey Hills Trademark. Simon Whalley said the trade mark for Surrey Hills Enterprises had now been agreed. The awards event had been rescheduled for May 11 with Michael Gove as part of the Surrey Rural Conference. He said recruitment of business memberships was increasing and new people were approaching Enterprises to join. They were developing new marketing material and updating the website. There were more member events and mentoring opportunities which would enrich the member experience.	
7.15	Surrey Hills Wood Fair. The Wood Fair will be held at Cranleigh Show Ground's woodland site this year as parking was no longer available at Birtley House. The Greenscape Project meetings will be hosted by different landowners to encourage people to work together and learn best practice from each other. Waverley had come forward as an enthusiastic partner and there was recognition that the public needed to be educated about the importance of actively managing woodland.	
	SURREY HILLS SOCIETY	
7.16	Chris Howard announced that Gordon Jackson was nominated to be her successor as Chairman in October. The business plan had been signed off and the Society had won an award for its contribution towards the Tales of the Tillingbourne project. This will be shared with Shere Museum. She said Surrey Hills Society was financially self-sustaining and was now in a position to give funding for Surrey Hills projects.	

	SURREY HILLS TRUST FUND	
7.17	Gordon Jackson referred to the report and highlighted that the Fund was supporting a Wey Valley community arts project. Mrs Mittal had agreed to host a reception on 21 st June. Rob reported that on September 23 the Surrey Hills Challenge at Denbies will include a festival of sport bringing together mountain bikers, horse riders and runners. He said it would be unique attempt to get all these outdoor sports together and this would hopefully attract major sponsors.	
8	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
8.1	Gordon Jackson raised the issue of changes to the Data Protection legislation and it was agreed that informal policies needed to be reviewed.	
9.	DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING June 13 AONB Board July 6 Partnership Tour	

The above minutes are a true record of the Surrey Hills Board meeting held on Wednesday 21st March 2018.

Signature of Chairman

Date