

SURREY HILLS AONB BOARD

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17th JUNE 2020 BY ZOOM

CHAIR

*Heather Kerswell Independent

CORE MEMBERS

*Cllr Susan Parker Guildford Borough Council
*Cllr Hazel Watson Mole Valley District Council
*Cllr Rosemary Absalom Reigate & Banstead BC
*Alison Griffiths Surrey County Council
*Cllr Geoffrey Duck Tandridge District Council
*Cllr Ruth Reed Waverley Borough Council
*Stephanie Fudge National Trust
*Andrew Smith Natural England (Defra)

ADVISORY MEMBERS

*Romy Jackson National Farmers Union
*Kristina Kenworthy CPRE
*Sarah Jane Chimbwandira Surrey Wildlife Trust
*Tim Bamford CLA
*Liz Cutter SALC
*Gordon Jackson Surrey Hills Society & Surrey Hills Trust Fund
*Simon Whalley Surrey Hills Enterprises CIC

*Members present

IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Fairbanks Surrey Hills AONB Office Director
Denise Furlonger Surrey Hills AONB Office
Caroline Price Surrey Hills AONB Office
Ken Bare Surrey Hills Society
Chris Howard Surrey Hills Society
Clive Smith Surrey Hills AONB Office
Alistair Burtenshaw Surrey Hills Arts
Chris Smith Surrey County Council
William Mace Tandridge District Council
John Oliver Member of public
Colin Davis Adviser

			ACTIO NS
1		INTRODUCTIONS	
		Heather Kerswell welcomed all to the meeting.	
2		APOLOGIES	
		Natalie Bramhall	

3		MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING	
	3.1	The minutes of the last meeting held on 4 th March were agreed.	
		MATTERS ARISING	
	3.2	Item 4.1 Rosemary Absalom enquired if there had been any progress with the Boundary Review. Heather responded that she and Geoff Duck had spoken with Claire Coutinho, the MP for East Surrey, who was taking up the issue. She had written to Natural England and would progress to a Parliamentary Questions if necessary.	
	3.3	Item 4.3 Incorrectly named Colin Smith. Change to Chris Smith.	DF
	3.4	Item 4.4 Ruth Reed apologised that the presentation at Waverley BC had to be postponed and that a new date needed to be arranged.	RR
	3.5	Item 4.6 Susan Parker stated that she would continue to object to oil drilling and would like to keep this matter on the agenda.	
	3.6	Item 4.7 Heather Kerswell was hopeful that we would be able to hold future AONB Board meetings at other venues but we are still reliant on government guidance.	
	3.7	Item 7.3 Susan Parker expressed concern about introducing inappropriate trees through the tree planting scheme and that this needed to be monitored.	
	3.8	Item 7.4 Susan Parker said there was some public concern about the design of the bench and tree felling at Newlands Corner. Rob Fairbanks responded that a planning application has been submitted to Guildford BC. The closing date for comments has now passed so it will be up to Guildford BC to determine the application. Rob stressed the conservation works were undertaken with SWT and Butterfly Conservation. Rob added that he will let the Members know the outcome.	RF
	3.9	Item 8.1 Partnership Tour will not go ahead on July 3 rd but it is hoped we can do something later in the year, depending on government guidelines on numbers of people meeting outdoors.	
	3.10	Item 8.2 Heather made Members aware that the Cotswolds was proposing to change their name from AONB to National Landscape in line with the Glover recommendation. The Members felt in general this was an interesting opportunity for the Surrey Hills but would require careful consideration before committing to anything. Geoff Duck said that we should cautious about the implication on the AONB boundary. Heather stated that a change in name would not change the legal status as the designation would still be AONB. Gordon Jackson and Hazel Watson were concerned that any change in name could cause confusion and involve a lot of expense for all members of the Surrey Hills family around change of logos and signage, website, printed papers etc. Tim Bamford asked what other AONBs were thinking. Rob responded that the DEFRA team that sponsors National Parks and AONBs had already changed its name to National Landscapes Unit. Discussions will include if DEFRA would cover costs of rebranding.	

		The Members asked Rob Fairbanks to bring a report to the next meeting.	RF
4		SURREY STRATEGIC GREENWAY PROJECT	
	4.1	Heather introduced Kieran Foster, the National Off-Road Advisor for Cycling UK, who provided a presentation. During the presentation Members were invited to make comments via the “chat” function on Zoom. Heather asked that the questions focussed on the principles rather than the details, but that Kieran would to respond queries after the meeting.	
	4.2	Alison Griffiths said it was an excellent idea and providing safe, green travel was a priority for Surrey County Council’s environmental agenda. Chris Smith said if SCC was to take it forward it would need a definitive plan. He was concerned at where the funding would come from as it would be very expensive to deliver. He added that in rural locations a diversion route could add miles to a journey which might not be supported by communities and that land owners have different approaches to the right of travel over their land. Alison responded that we have to change the way we work and stressed the importance of partnership working. The Cabinet will be looking at new ways of working. It is unlikely SCC would be able to fund it but we need to look at ways it can be done. Alison said she would like to invite Kieran to deliver his presentation to SCC Cabinet Members who would be able to say if there is an appetite to take this forward.	AG
	4.3	The Members were generally very positive and stated the importance of retaining access for all, including sharing space for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and wheelchair users. Sarah Jane Chimbwandira said that Surrey Wildlife Trust would be very supportive of a coordinated approach and that partners could lead on different elements. Tim Bamford said he had seen some very good and some very bad examples. It was important to liaise with landowners, and he also mentioned that with the easing of Covid 19 restrictions had demonstrated that the public needed to be educated on visiting the countryside. In terms of greening the routes, Susan Parker commented that she would be nervous of generic wild flower seeds being spread on verges where there is already an established ecosystem. Stephanie Fudge expressed the National Trust’s support for developing sustainable access to the countryside and its properties. Liz Cutter and Gordon Jackson stated that there was an opportunity to co-design and co-fund with local councils.	
	4.4	It was agreed to take forward the principles in the Cycling UK presentation through the Working Group chaired by Liz Cutter to propose this as a major project for Surrey County Council in partnership with Cycling UK, parish, district and borough councils, and landowners.	
5		AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REPORTING	
	5.1	Heather congratulated Rob and the staff on producing the improved Monitoring Framework. It provided an insight into where we are making progress and where risks and problems are in delivering the AONB Management Plan.	
	5.2	Gordon Jackson, Chairman of Surrey Hills Society, took issue with some of the Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings. He reported that the Society’s social media follower numbers had increased significantly under lockdown and that the Society was still attracting new members. Many events had been curtailed but he hoped that limited events could take place from August/September onwards. An e-newsletter had been issued which could be reaching new audiences. The Society would like to work with Caroline Price and Surrey Hills Enterprises to see how they can work to get the message out to more people than just the Society members. The Annual Review has been published electronically and Gordon will provide a link for Denise Furlonger to attach to the minutes. See	GJ/DF

		below https://mk0surreyhillss6iubc.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SHS-Annual-Review-2019-20.pdf	
5.3		<p>Gordon Jackson, as Chairman of Surrey Hills Trust Fund, reported that the Fund is focussing on 3 principal areas: Into The Wild, Inspiring Views and Making Space For Nature.</p> <p>Into The Wild - Genevieve Lebus had been contracted to develop nature based activities in the Surrey Hills and to develop a toolkit to identify providers of nature therapy. The Fund was planning a campaign to provide grants to for target groups affected by anxiety and depression. It is hoped that the Trademark for accredited providers can be used in conjunction with Surrey Hills Enterprises as some of the providers were already members.</p> <p>Inspiring Views - The idea of Inspiring Views was to attract a new audience to the countryside and enhance nature conservation and access. The Trust Fund was keen to promote the programme and look for new sites in the east of the AONB.</p> <p>Making Space For Nature – It was hoped to launch the concept for this later in the year. The idea was to work with parishes and SWT on community projects aimed at enhancing biodiversity. The Trust Fund had already provided a grant towards the swift tower in Shalford.</p>	
5.4		<p>Simon Whalley, Chairman of Surrey Hills Enterprises, said that in a difficult time the key positives were the collaboration and localism. The 2 key staff members had been largely on furlough but it was hoped that from July they would be back on half time. Simon expressed gratitude to Caroline Price who has been helping out in the meantime.</p> <p>Simon was pleased to report that there had not been too much of a loss in numbers of members. There have been lots of enquiries and even new members. A WhatsApp group has proven very successful at helping members work together with ideas on how to market and promote themselves. The Artisan Festival had been postponed but it was hoped that it could be combined with the Wood Fair at the end of September. There was also the possibility of a 2021 Spring festival.</p>	
5.5		<p>Alistair Burtenshaw, Chairman of Surrey Hills Arts, said that they were looking for opportunities in the current situation to support online arts activities. The new website had been launched. It had been a challenging time as 2 key funding applications had not gone ahead as Lottery funding has been repurposed to deal with the current emergency. Alistair said that the arts is a way of encouraging new audiences. There were still lots of opportunities to engage with people and communities who do not normally feel empowered to be out in the landscape.</p>	
5.6		<p>Heather thanked the Chairs for their updates. She said that the Management Plan Framework is a working document. She reported that the AONB Unit was making good progress with Making Space for Nature and was supporting funding bids including Rail To Ramble and the Surrey Hills visitor hub at Newlands Corner. Heather invited comments.</p> <p>Susan Parker said that she thought it was a useful and constructive document but she was a little uncomfortable about the vision and brand values. She stated that conservation of nature and protecting the environment was the fundamental objective. Economic growth and the Surrey Hills Family was good but the family needed to exist to help the Surrey Hills, not the Surrey Hills exists to support the Family. Rob Fairbanks responded that the Framework covered the priorities that are set out in the adopted AONB Management Plan. Progress depended on the resources available. A core part of the AONB team was Clive Smith in the planning role. He also added that all the other parts of the Family</p>	

	<p>were passionate about protecting the Surrey Hills. Susan also said that she would like to know more about the Natural Health Centre at Newlands Corner as she did not know much about it and she was not sure she was in favour of it. Rob Fairbanks responded that it was a bid being led by Surrey County Council which included moving parked cars to enhance the view from the centre and for an audio-visual installation inside the visitor centre to promote natural health, wildlife and to educate visitors. It was agreed that Rob should provide the members with a summary of what is being proposed. Heather also suggested that if Susan wanted to know more after seeing the summary she should contact Rob to discuss it and perhaps arrange a site visit.</p>	RF
5.7	<p>John Oliver asked what status he had as a member of the public in the meeting because he would have liked to have spoken in support of some of the points that Susan Parker had made. Heather responded that she believed it was as an observer but Mr Oliver suggested that as the AONB Board is a joint committee of local authorities he should be able to ask questions but the agenda did not allow for this. Heather said it was an important point so we would look into this.</p>	RF
	DATES FOR 2020	
	<p>Agreed dates for 2020</p> <p>The next Board meeting will be on the 2nd September at 13:30. If we are able to hold a physical meeting we may see if we can go to the Field Studies Council at Juniper Hall. Alternatively the meeting may need to be held again by Zoom.</p> <p>13:30 Wednesday 2nd September - Surrey Hills Board AGM & Meeting 13:30 Wednesday 2nd December - Surrey Hills Board</p>	

The above minutes are a true record of the Surrey Hills Board meeting held on Wednesday 17th June 2020.

Signature of Chair

Date