

SURREY HILLS AONB BOARD

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2nd DECEMBER 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
*Natalie Bramhall	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
*Ali Clark	Surrey Hills Arts

*Members present

IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Fairbanks	Surrey Hills AONB Office Director
Denise Furlonger	Surrey Hills AONB Office
Clive Smith	Surrey Hills AONB Office
Ken Bare	Surrey Hills Society
Chris Howard	Surrey Hills Society
Mike Waite	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Carolyn McKenzie	Surrey County Council
Wendy Varcoe	Surrey Hills Enterprises
Ian Dunsford	Reigate & Banstead BC
Cllr Ramsey Nagaty	Guildford BC
Rod Shaw	Mole Valley DC
John Oliver	Member of public
Sally Blake	Member of public
Jenny Desoutter	Member of public
John Evans	Adviser
Adrian Byrtus	Member of the public

			ACTIONS
1		INTRODUCTIONS	
		<p>Heather Kerswell welcomed all to the meeting.</p> <p>Heather said that she had been really inspired that a Fox spider that was thought to be extinct in Britain had been rediscovered by Mike Waite of the Surrey Wildlife Trust on one of their sites, and invited Mike to give a brief presentation.</p> <p>Heather also thanked Kristina Kenworthy for the edition of Surrey Voice that had almost entirely featured the Surrey Hills.</p> <p>Heather asked if there were any conflicts of interest and none were declared.</p>	
2		APOLOGIES	
		Liz Cutter, Romy Jackson, Alistair Burtenshaw	
3		MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING	
	3.1	The minutes of the last meeting held on 2 nd September were agreed. Heather thanked Geoff Duck for standing in as Chair for her.	
4		MATTERS ARISING	
	4.1	<p>Item 4 Boundary Review. Heather updated that the MPs have received a letter from Lord Gardiner that states “I can confirm that Natural England will take forward the development of a programme of designation priorities in the coming year and this will include the consideration of the Surrey Hills extension”. He also said “thank you for making me aware of the breadth of support for this designation”. Heather thanked all of the Members for writing the letters that show the support of which he mentions. Heather asked Andy Smith if he wished to comment and Andy said he could not add much to what Lord Gardiner has said in his letter apart from the fact that Natural England has made the commitment and it is now down to checking the available resources as this is a big undertaking. Some preparation has already started and when work does start it needs to be done in collaboration in the most streamlined way possible. Heather thanked Andy for the update and said that she would be speaking with Chris Grayling MP as there was a possibility that parts of his Epsom constituency may be involved.</p>	
5		PUBLIC QUESTIONS	
	5.1	<p>Heather referred to John Oliver’s question and AONB Board response and asked John if he had a supplementary question.</p> <p>John thanked the Board for the response to his question and said that whilst he appreciates that the representation on the Enterprises Board might be useful it still remains that the AONB Board Director must give legal priority to Enterprises and not the AONB so this did not remove all of his concerns. John said that his supplementary question relates to a statement in the response that says “Surrey Hills Enterprises vision is a thriving rural economy that contributes to environmental sustainability”, and the website statement is that “it aims to increase environmental sustainability”. John felt that both statements are open to very wide interpretation and asked if Surrey Hills Enterprises provided the Board with it’s definition of sustainability, its strategy for measuring progress or failure against a baseline, and a quantification of when the vision will be fulfilled. If the answer is yes to any part of that John would</p>	

	<p>appreciate seeing a copy of it.</p> <p>Heather thanked John for his continued interest in Surrey Hills Enterprises and asked Rob if he would like to respond to the question at the meeting or follow up in writing. Rob said he would follow up in writing. John wished to add that the matter was not personally about the Director but about the position between the two organisations. Heather said that she also wanted the two organisations to work closely together and does not see that there should be any conflict of interest and having Rob on the Enterprises Board ensures we are all going in the right direction.</p>	<p>RF</p> <p>RF</p>
5.2	<p>Heather referred to Sally Blake’s question and AONB Board response and asked Sally if she had a supplementary question.</p> <p>Sally thanked the Board for the draft response but said she still had some concerns. The sole purpose of the designation of an AONB is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, yet the 8 pages of policies in the Management Plan do not mention climate change and do not prioritise the disastrous loss of biodiversity in Surrey. Would it be possible for the Board to go through each of the points she has made before the next Board meeting to decide what the policy should be on each and how to deliver it.</p> <p>Rob Fairbanks responded that he had not had time to do that but pledged to go back and respond under each of the points as requested. He added that he felt that nationally all the National Parks and AONBs fall short in doing our bit around nature recovery and it needs to be on the national agenda. Rob said he would get back to Sally and would meet with her when she is available again.</p>	<p>RF</p>
5.3	<p>Heather referred to Jenny Desoutter’s question and AONB Board response and asked Jenny if she had a supplementary question.</p> <p>Jenny thanked the Board for the response to her question but felt more needed to be done to manage the influx of visitors and in particular more needed to be done regarding to the impact on the wildlife. As the countryside is free and open to everyone and we can’t control the numbers of people who come here or their behaviour, or monitor the damage to the habitat and the environment, is it really wise or necessary to continue any publicity that may attract more tourists and would it not be wiser to pull back from all advertising other than focussing on a vigorous campaign to promote the Countryside Code that Marion Spain mentioned at the Symposium, with a strong emphasis on respect and an understanding that every inch of the countryside is home to some living creature or a nature reserve rather than just a vacant piece of ground, a playground or an outside gym?</p> <p>Heather responded by saying no, we want to support the Glover report but that we must encourage our visitors to respect the countryside and we will do everything we can to promote the new Countryside Code. We do very little in the way of advertising and we are encouraging people to visit by train and not to come by car. We are not the only body involved in visitors. Chris Howard responded that as Chairman of Visit Surrey they work with the National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust and local authorities and have taken down information and have not been promoting areas and the message has been for people to stay local. There has been some concern about the lack of knowledge of some of our visitors and they are trying to manage visitor numbers and expectations.</p>	
5.4	<p>Heather drew the public question time to an end and thanked John, Sally and Jenny for the questions and the interesting discussions that followed.</p>	

6		DARK SKIES MATTER	
	6.1	Heather invited John Evans to make his presentation on Dark Skies Matter. John showed the Members a series of slides with some background to Dark Skies Matter and explained the effects that light pollution is having on people and wildlife. John has been working closely with the AONB Director and partners including CPRE Surrey, Surrey Wildlife Trust and RSPB to develop the initiative. John presented the case for Dark Skies Matter, the development of the website and promotional campaign and proposed that the Surrey Hills Board be identified as a Founding Supporter. The website is almost ready to go live but is waiting confirmation from the Board to become a Founding Supporter.	
	6.2	The Members followed the presentation with a discussion that highlighted getting the message across to members of the public and planning authorities.	
	6.3	Heather thanked John for the presentation. The Members noted the presentation and agreed to be a Founding Supporter of Dark Skies Matter. Rob Fairbanks to provide a link to the website here and to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dark Skies. https://www.darkskiesmatter.org.uk/dsm	RF
7		AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REPORTING	
	7.1	Gordon Jackson, Chair of Surrey Hills Society and Trust Fund, reported that the Surrey Hills Symposium had been a phenomenal success and focussed on Making Space for Nature. Gordon added that the AONB Team has been putting a huge amount of work into nature recovery and biodiversity through the Environmental Land Management Scheme test and trial with Ordnance Survey on identifying and attracting key species and improving habitat through farmers and landowners. He reported that Surrey University said it was one of the most successful events they had run online with over 700 registrations and around 450 who logged in on the evening. Around 150 questions were asked through the “chat” feature. A large number of people requested guidance and advice on making space for nature. Hazel Watson also stated that there was a need to provide advice to local communities following the event. Sarah Jane Chimbwandira said that the Surrey Wildlife Trust could help produce something with the Surrey Hills. Gordon said the the Trust Fund and Society would help with this. Heather noted that we have had a very welcome approach from a volunteer who has offered to collate advice and examples of rewilding for the use of parishes and community groups. Heather reported that the Community Forum had also been a success and focussed on work being done with the Forum which attracted nearly 90 people.	RF/ SJC/ GJ/AB
	7.2	Simon Whalley, Chair of Surrey Hills Enterprises, reported that it had been a difficult year but thanked to the whole Surrey Hills Family for working together in a much stronger way. Simon said he was impressed at how some of the businesses have been helping each other and sharing experience and skills. There have been 3 royal visits over the past year. Despite the problems that Covid 19 has caused membership was still growing. The Artisan Trail was launched at Denbies and work was being done to develop artisan markets in Cranleigh and Guildford but these would need to be revived in light of Covid restrictions.	
	7.3	Ali Clarke, Program Manager of Surrey Hills Arts, said the arts sector had also been having a difficult time this year. Outdoor events have been popular. Heathland Arts on Farnham Heath had been busy but was a safe experience as	

		<p>the artworks were all spaced out. The students were given a great learning opportunity as they were able to put together proposals, develop ideas, install the artworks and then promote them in a year where all the indoor events were cancelled so it gave them invaluable experience.</p> <p>Optohedron launched just before lockdown 2 and it has created nooks and crannies for insects plus the Butterfly Conservation have been busy keeping the newly created scrape area for wild flowers to feed butterflies in the spring.</p> <p>Gordon added that the new artwork going in at Denbies called Radius gave an opportunity for people to pay to have an inscription on it.</p>	
	7.4	<p>Rob Fairbanks, AONB Director pointed up the Environmental Land Management Scheme that is being funded by DEFRA and said that we will be producing a guidance document for landowners and farmers.</p> <p>He also stated that a priority was to take forward the Greenways Project that Kieran Foster presented to the June Board meeting, in a sympathetic way with local involvement.</p>	
	7.5	<p>Heather thanked everybody for their contributions and the Members noted progress.</p>	
	8	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	8.1	<p>There was none.</p>	
	8.2	<p>Heather thanked everybody for their contributions to the meeting and the members of the public for their questions. She suspected that the next meeting will be on Zoom again. Lastly she thanked the AONB team and Denise for putting the meeting together.</p>	
	9	DATES FOR 2021	
		<p>13:30 Wednesday 3rd March – Board 13:30 Wednesday 16th June – Board Friday 2nd July – Partnership Tour 13:30 Wednesday 1st September – Board AGM 13:30 Wednesday 1st December - Board</p>	

The above minutes are a true record of the Surrey Hills Board meeting held on Wednesday 2nd December 2020.

Signature of Chair

Date