

## Item 3(b)

Draft **MINUTES** of the meeting of the **SURREY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY BOARD (SURREY HILLS BOARD)** held at 2.00 pm on 22 June 2021 in the Council Chamber, Woodhatch Place, Reigate, and remotely via Microsoft Teams.

(These minutes are subject to confirmation by the AONB Board at its next meeting on Wednesday, 1 September 2021.)

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Chair:**

Heather Kerswell Independent

#### **Core Members:**

Councillor Geoff Duck	Tandridge District Council
Councillor Susan Parker	Guildford Borough Council
Councillor Claire Malcomson	Mole Valley District Council
Councillor Rosemary Absalom	Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
*Councillor Ruth Reed	Waverley Borough Council
*Councillor Marisa Heath	Surrey County Council
Andrew Smith	Natural England
Stephanie Fudge	National Trust

#### **Delivery Partners:**

Martin Cantor (substitute for Gordon Jackson)	Surrey Hills Society
*Simon Whalley Company	Surrey Hills Enterprises Community Interest

#### **Advisory Members:**

Hugh Broom	National Farmers Union
Lisa Creaye-Griffin (substitute for Tim Bamford)	Country Land and Business Association
*Mike Waite (substitute for Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira)	Surrey Wildlife Trust
*Kristina Kenworthy	Campaign to Protect Rural England

#### **Observer:**

Alistair Burtenshaw Surrey Hills Arts

#### **In attendance:**

Rob Fairbanks	AONB Director
*Carolyn McKenzie	Environment Director, SCC
Paul Evans	Head of Law and Governance, SCC
Andre Ferreira	Regulatory Business Manager, SCC

\*Attended remotely via Microsoft Teams.

## **1. CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR**

The Board confirmed the appointment of Heather Kerswell as Chair of the Board, as approved by the Board on 4 December 2019.

## **2. CONFIRMATION OF VICE-CHAIR**

As per a previous Board decision, the position of Vice-Chair would rotate between Core Members, and the Board confirmed the appointment of Councillor Geoff Duck as current Vice-Chair of the Board.

## **3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Heather Kerswell thanked Board members for confirming her appointment as Chair of the Board and welcomed everybody attending in person and remotely.

She specifically welcomed Claire Malcomson and Marisa Heath as new members and thanked Natalie Bramhall and Hazel Watson as outgoing members of the Board.

She noted that whilst the Council chamber was not the ideal venue for a meeting of the AONB Board, these were exceptional circumstances and in order to keep members safe and comply with Covid requirements, this was the best possible venue at the moment. It was hoped that in future Board meetings could be held at appropriate venues around the county in line with the Board's wishes.

The agenda contained two reports which updated members on two of the Board's most important projects this year: the AONB boundary review and the introduction of farming in a protected landscape, which will take forward the nature recovery work which was at the heart of the Board's strategy.

Board members introduced themselves and noted which organisations they represented.

## **4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The following apologies for absence were noted:

Gordon Jackson	Surrey Hills Society and Surrey Hills Trust Fund
Liz Cutter	Surrey Association of Local Councils
Tim Bamford	Country Land and Business Association
Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira	Surrey Wildlife Trust

## 5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

## 6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 3 March 2021 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

## 7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Six questions from members of the public were received and these, as well as the replies, are attached as Annex 1.

*Question 1: Jenny Desoutter.*

*Supplementary question:* In the reply it was mentioned that the signs already commissioned were about sharing and caring, but they did not make the legal position clear. Nobody wanted to cover the countryside with unnecessary signs, but given the number of bikers in the Surrey Hills area which go much faster than walkers, sometimes with a culture of entitlement, is the Board of opinion that specific informative signs could be a useful reminder of the legal position. Whilst not against cyclists using paths, they should give way to walkers and horse riders, something which does not always happen.

*Reply:* Rob Fairbanks said that he would convene a meeting with Jenny to discuss the issue.

*Question 2: Jill Richardson-Jones.*

No supplementary question.

*Question 3: Sarah Billingham.*

No supplementary question.

*Question 4: Andrew Gibbons.*

No supplementary question.

*Question 5: Sally Blake.*

*Supplementary question:* Your response about the 8 mass off-road cycling and mountain biking events in the Surrey Hills AONB says events in National Parks must minimise harm to the environment. The Surrey Hills is not a National Park. National Parks have a different purpose to AONBs, that of providing recreational facilities. These off-road events are mainly going through Nature Reserves that have some of the rarest habitats and species in the UK. These are the Key Habitats and Key Species you have tabled today in paragraph 9 of your Nature Recovery Strategy. The mountain biking Facebook page 'Surrey Hills MTB' now has 8,200 members. Members are heading from around the UK to your Key Habitats for timed runs, trails and jumps among your Key Species – including nightingales, nightjars and bee orchids. The AONB can work

with landowners to prevent these off-road events and to restrict ongoing use, but instead it is promoting them. Biodiversity is in crisis. Will the Board members, (and it would be good to hear from the Board members), please take action to change its policy, work to prevent these mass events and protect biodiversity – and, if not, why not?

*Reply:* The Chair noted that question time was limited to questions and replies and was not open for debate, hence individual members could not reply. Rob Fairbanks said that the concerns raised about events were accepted, although there is little evidence to suggest that these events themselves caused significant damage to nature conservation, particularly compared to off-road vehicles and motorbikes. The Board also had to act within the law and work with the Surrey County Council on guidance for best practice to minimise the impact on the environment.

*Question 6: John Oliver.*

*Supplementary question:* It was disappointing from Board members that they considered it inappropriate to encourage local authorities to remove wasps from their list of pests. The reply notes that most pest control of the type discussed is connected with domestic and industrial settings for health and safety reasons, rather than directly connected to the wider remit of the AONB Board to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Other than Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, local authorities state nothing on their websites concerning wasps threatening their health or safety. Residents can use discounted contractors to get rid of wasps for whatever reason they think fit. The Surrey Hills AONB had numerous domestic and industrial properties within its boundaries and the wasps which live in them contribute to the wider biodiversity, conservation and food production for humans and animals alike in the surrounding countryside. Given the importance of wasps as pollinators, their natural beauty and the fact that their numbers are declining, can it please be explained why wasps do not fall within the Board's remit and why the Board talks to farmers about pollination and not to local authorities or commercial and domestic property owners in order to persuade them not to kill nests which are absolutely necessary?

*Reply:* Rob Fairbanks noted that whilst the starting point of the nature recovery strategy was working with landowners and farmers in identifying key species, there was concern about pollinators and all kinds of insects. The reply to the question referred to this being a duty of local authorities as opposed to it being an AONB Board matter. Hugh Broom stated that from a land management point of view everything possible was done and many farm and landowners across the AONB work hard to encourage and enhance biodiversity and habitats; the number one priority was to help pollinators where possible. On his own farm there were solitary beehives and he bent backward to look after them. Mr Oliver's question was clearly understood, it made good sense for local authorities to liaise with their local constituents as to what they should do with wasp nests. This was a growing message for landowners and in urban settings people were encouraged to live and let live; it was down to local authorities to let people know how they should treat the nests.

## **8. SURREY HILLS AONB BOUNDARY EXTENSION PROJECT**

The Chair said that whilst the Board had been designated to protect the Surrey AONB, the area was extremely fragile, especially the east end. The Board was therefore delighted to be invited to work alongside Natural England on this project.

Andrew Smith introduced the report and noted that while it had taken some time for the report to be submitted to the Board, this project was time consuming, complex and resource intensive.

During the last year Natural England and the AONB Board Chair and officers had done considerable work on this; specifically preparatory work to ensure that once the Government announcement was made that work could continue in full swing.

The approach was to work collaboratively and involve as many stakeholders as possible to be able to undertake a comprehensive review of the AONB boundary.

The report detailed the legal framework and scope within which the possible expansion of the boundaries could be considered and once identified, a full public consultation would be allowed before the Natural England Board made a decision to be submitted to the Secretary of State.

The appendices to the report detailed the terms of reference of the Management and Advisory Group, the Technical Advisory Group and a flow chart for the project.

At this stage the governance had been set; a clear process had been proposed; what is in scope and what not, as well as the specification for the consultancy which would do most of the stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering in the coming months.

The report also referred to the types of evidence to be considered, such as the landscape character assessment; local planning documents; existing designations depending on the scope of the area; local history; tourism guidance, etc.

Once the Government announcement on the possible boundary extension had been made, more detailed information would be shared with the Board.

In response to Geoff Duck on when the government announcement would be made, Andrew Smith said that every indication was that the government would make an announcement on 24 June 2021 and Natural England was ready to engage with all stakeholders once that is made.

Susan Parker said that the boundary extension was a matter of huge public interest and noted that the membership of the advisory groups was restricted. She asked that the scope of the review be made public as it would inform the public consultation. When the process was started years ago, maps were made available of target areas, which were also

designated in local plans. She did not know the proposed scope of the extension and whether the proposed area was bigger than that on the original maps. During the local elections certain candidates suggested that the area could be extended, but the AONB board was not engaged in discussions on the area to be considered.

The Chair noted that the report was already in the public domain and at this stage nobody knew where the boundaries would be drawn as the evidence had not yet been gathered; the final report would be part of the evidence.

Andrew Smith commented that the work done to date was preparatory and related to the process and the terms of reference of the governance. There was a commitment to fully engage with the public and the AONB Board on the process which was open and transparent and more than required in the legislation.

Kristina Kenworthy noted that CPRE members were keen to be involved in the process and as the report was in the public domain, it would be put on the CPRE website.

Ruth Reed said that most stakeholders had the protection of nature and the preservation of the natural habitat at the heart of what they were doing and asked for reassurance that this was also the case in this project. Whilst the Covid pandemic could have caused a shift in some priorities, but it was important that the focus remained on the protection of nature. The Chair stated that Ruth expressed the thoughts of the Board and Andrew confirmed that this was at the heart of the boundary review.

Rosemary Absalom commented that some years ago she arranged for a survey of an area in the Reigate and Banstead area to possibly be included in the AONB. Given the time it took for surveys to be done, she asked if there was anything that could be done by local representatives to expedite the process and assist Natural England in the process. If local representatives knew in advance the kind of information needed, it could help with the preparation. The Chair said that this was a very good suggestion and could be replicated by all stakeholders.

Andrew Smith said that Natural England wanted to keep the process moving and did not want to duplicate work. If there was relevant evidence available that could assist; a call for evidence would be made and taken into consideration. Two of the main considerations in assessing an area was if it was an area of outstanding natural beauty and whether it was desirable to designate it as part of an AONB. Any available evidence would therefore be considered.

The Chair suggested that central gathering points be set up to which information and evidence could be sent.

The Board **APPROVED** the recommendation in the report as follows:

That the AONB Board note and support the progress made so far and the proposed next steps in developing a collaborative approach between Natural England and the AONB team in planning the boundary review.

## **9. MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE – FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES AND NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY**

Rob Fairbanks introduced the report and noted that work was being done with farmers, land owners and conservation bodies on a nature recovery strategy which forms part of the new Environment Land Management (ELM) scheme and also took into account the DEFRA Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

In 2020 Surrey Hills was one of 11 AONBs that helped to design the new ELM scheme. Each project focused on a different area, with Surrey Hills being tasked to design a farmer and landowner led approach on how the ELM scheme could deliver nature recovery on a landscape scale. The basis of the Surrey Hills strategy was to work with the facilitation groups (farm clusters) and other consultation and land bodies to identify the seven key habitats within the Surrey Hills area. The species were selected on the basis that they were good indicators of the health of that habitat and that there was sufficient monitoring evidence from partners such as the Wildlife Trust. Most importantly, the species had to have real resonance with farmers and landowners and hopefully the general public.

The theory behind the strategy was that by managing the habitats of these species they should deliver a healthy environment, allow nature to recover and deliver the wider environmental benefits such as carbon capture, clean water and soil health.

It was fortuitous that at the same time that the strategy was published, DEFRA came forward with a funding for farming in protected landscape programme. Surrey Hills AONB had been offered funding of £438k in this year to manage the programme. The money would be available to all farmers and land managers as well as other organisations, as long as they worked in collaboration with farmers or groups of farmers and land managers. Most of the funding was expected to be provided for projects within the Surrey Hills area, but if projects could illustrate that they support the wider Surrey Hills AONB objectives, they could also be considered for funding.

There were four outcomes which DEFRA hoped to achieve with this, as detailed in the report: climate, nature, people and place. The people outcome was particularly relevant to Surrey Hills as the area was under tremendous pressure in relation to visitor numbers; this would enable a wide range of people to be consulted.

Paragraph 18 of the report listed the wide range of projects which could be funded through the programme. Where an applicant did not make

commercial gain through a project, 100% of the costs would be covered and where there could be commercial gain, between 40% to 80% of the costs could be covered.

To have the capacity to co-ordinate all the bids and to align with similar projects, the idea was to recruit a Nature Lead to manage the programme.

There would be a standard application form for all National Parks and AONBs throughout the country and applications of over £5k would be judged by a local assessment panel according to set criteria. The AONB Director would have discretion for projects under £5k. The AONB Board would be represented on the local assessment panel by a number of stakeholders.

This was a fantastic opportunity, in terms of the Making Space for Nature Strategy and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, in making a significant investment in building the important relationship with land managers and to deliver on the AONB Management Plan as part of a national programme.

The Chair reiterated that this was an important chance to deliver projects on the ground and the Board was very grateful for the funding from DEFRA, with Natural England's blessing. The Board was often involved with projects on a strategic level, but this was an opportunity to get involved with a project at ground level, and the Board was certainly looking forward to the opportunity. As mentioned, a lead officer would be appointed who would report to the Board via the AONB Director.

Lisa Creaye-Griffin asked how, from the point of view of Making Space for Nature Strategy, this linked in with the local Nature Recovery Strategy Network and the work of the AONB Board.

Hugh Broom highlighted the method of delivery of the funding, which was more locally targeted as opposed to a formula decided on at national level. There are some parts of the Government's rural policy which are unclear at the moment, such as the budget, and there is a lot of uncertainty amongst land managers on what will happen in the next few years. However, this project was a great opportunity to fund some stand-out projects, such as the work of the four facilitation groups.

A lot of the emphasis on these groups had been on how all the different work streams could be tied-up. It should be taken to the next level where projects like this could be used to 'spread the word' and help local communities to become aware of what is being done. For example, one area that could be addressed is the improvement of infrastructure: whilst it was good that visitor numbers to the AONB had increased tremendously, it put pressure on land managers.



Whilst this fund could assist with delivering infrastructure, there was not much insight into what visitors actually wanted and where they came from. The starting point could be to talk to the actual visitors. Once we knew what the client base wanted, their needs could be addressed and it would make it much easier for land managers to manage visitor numbers. Visitors would not go away, increasing visitor numbers are now the norm.

Another person to assist the AONB Director when there is so much going on in terms of policy would be very helpful. There were many pitfalls and an extra pair of hands to identify opportunities would be really valuable.

The Chair said that the closest equivalent to the project was the Catchment Sensitive Farming Scheme the simplicity of which could hopefully be replicated without too much bureaucracy.

Marisa Heath said that there were many opportunities and a myriad of policies on farming and the protection of nature at the moment. All these could be tied up to ensure that there was a connection between local food production and the areas where it was needed. Of course health and safety was also a key consideration and a project such as this provided scope to 'educate' people how everything linked together to see how food got to their plate.

The Chair said that this was a fairly straightforward and modest project and whilst everything would not be achieved, she shared the vision of linking all the policies. Surrey Hills Enterprises was building a market of local producers, suppliers and supply chains within the area and the benefit of that was particularly noticeable during lockdown.

Geoff Duck noted that the word 'evidence' had been mentioned a number of times during the discussion. As members would know, gathering of evidence was crucial; from that decisions could be made, policy could be established and forward planning could be done. The input from all stakeholders must be gathered in a sensible fashion; there was interest from a wide variety of people in this topic like never before. The Board had to lead the way to align what was going on and use the knowledge and expertise to influence local and national policy by setting the standard of how things are done. This was quite a job and he was concerned about how the resources for this project would be co-ordinated.

Susan Parker said that something not noticeable was the involvement of constituent councils as landowners. They were all significant landowners and often owned some of the wilder areas. She referenced the felling of mature trees along the A25 and while it was all and well to plant saplings, the felling of mature trees in wild verges had a significant impact on protecting nature. Preservation and protection had to be ensured and local councils should not be 'over-tidying', which in turn had an influence on carbon emissions, flood risks, resilience to climate change, protecting land for diversity and connectivity for habitats. There should be a

consistent message which was implemented in a consistent way. This was a good initiative and she was supportive of it.

The Chair concurred with Susan's comments and said that the Board relied on council representatives to spread the message in their own councils.

Stephanie Fudge stated that this was a fantastic initiative and congratulated Rob Fairbanks on it. She referred to education and communication and said that this was everybody's responsibility, not just local constituents. Many visitors to the Surrey Hills did not understand what they are coming to or what they are walking on. The Board had a clear responsibility to communicate to visitors what they were visiting as well as the importance of biodiversity. There had to be a way to inform visitors to minimise rubbish and damage to our habitat.

Hugh Broom said that policy was still in a state of flux, but there was a lot which could be done with the fund now, which was unlikely to be funded by future policy allocations. The best possible value should be obtained from this allocation and ensure that it was not covered by something potentially down the line at a later stage.

Rob Fairbanks summarised the comments made by members and noted that the project would be run within the framework of the Surrey Nature Partnership and all landowners would be consulted.

It was critical that details of visitors were analysed; current figures from Google Insights showed that approximately 85% of visitors to the Surrey Hills came from a London postcode. There were opportunities to encourage more visitors to travel by train. Compared to the 44 National Parks and AONBs, Surrey Hills was one of the smallest by area, but the 6<sup>th</sup> most popular in the country. More could be done to get visitor data.

Local authorities were part of the respective cluster groups and they were engaged regularly. One of the Board initiatives was to develop a new cluster to the east of the county to get more consistency.

The comments made in regard to education were very valid; nature recovery, habitat management and managing went hand in hand.

The Board **APPROVED** the recommendations in the report that:

1. Members note the work of the Nature Recovery Strategy and support its promotion as appropriate.
2. Members note the funding and management arrangements for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund and advise on what outcomes should be prioritised in the Surrey Hills.

## 10. AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN (2020 – 2025) MONITORING REPORT

Rob Fairbanks noted that the report reflected a huge effort from all partners and thanked them for their input.

### *Management Plan Pillars*

#### **Planning**

The Planning Adviser, Clive Smith, was dealing with a number of planning applications.

The Chair noted that concern had been raised with Trading Standards regarding the sales articles on the land which is being sold off in plots at Wanborough. Susan Parker had also been involved with this, where land was being sold off in very small parcels and being developed in an unauthorised way. Guildford Borough Council had served Article 4 directions and enforcement notices, but the new owners had taken no notice whatsoever. Trading Standards had fired a warning shot across the bows of the auctioneers as they had virtually stated that the land could be developed for housing. CPRE were very concerned about this as well and the Board was doing what it could, but it was very tricky. The Board had to maintain the integrity of our farms and estates and not encourage a plot by plot sale.

Ruth Reed referred to a similar problem which had occurred on a farm on the road between Cranleigh and Ewhurst where a letter had been sent by the council's enforcement department to purchasers of land which had been part of a farm which included ancient woodland, informing them that they could not build on the land.

#### **Landscape Conservation and Enhancement**

Rob Fairbanks highlighted the following:

There had been significant capital investment in the Network Rail Lineside Habitat Action Plan.

Surrey County Council had commissioned EFTEC to undertake a natural capital account for the Surrey Hills AONB. Hopefully some of this methodology would be extended to inform some of the evidence behind the extension work.

The Surrey Hills Society was currently recruiting for a Conservation Volunteer Co-ordinator. The role was to advise and support the co-ordination of volunteers to take practical action, which is often labour intensive, that improved biodiversity and access across the Surrey Hills APNB area. Martin Kantor said that five candidates were being interviewed, who had been shortlisted from 40 applicants. The Chair thanked the Surrey Hills Society for undertaking this task and the Surrey Hills Trust Fund for sponsoring a large chunk of the project.

A new 'Nature' section had been added to the Surrey Hills website which featured a 'How to help Nature' in your garden.

### **Access, Enjoyment and Understanding**

Rob Fairbanks highlighted the following:

Work was being done to launch a new Surrey Hills website to include a better visitor offering and community hub element.

There had been a lot of interest in the Surrey Strategic Greenway Strategy. Kieran Foster of UK Cycling had been very supportive in developing policy and strategy and doing presentations to the Mole Valley, Guildford and Waverley Cycle Forums. A specific issue regarding Wolvern's Lane had also been addressed and the Board supported a permanent ban on motorised vehicles, including motorbikes. There had also been significant concern, as seen in the public questions today, about the damage caused by motorised vehicles and the impact on both the cultural and natural landscape.

Stephanie Fudge referred to the damage done by off-road vehicles and motorbikes, and mentioned examples of where vegetation had been destroyed through motorised activity. Something would have to be done about enforcement. Rob Fairbanks noted that this had been highlighted in the public question on Ranmore Common; he had made an in-person visit and the damage done was devastating. He would visit the common again with the Chair and discuss what could be done with residents; it would be helpful if representatives from Natural England and the National Trust could attend that meeting.

Hugh Broom mentioned that over the New Year a group of quad bikers 'terrorised' residents in the Dorking and Guildford areas and after continued pressure on the local police to take action, it seemed to have stopped. Everybody should lobby for more police resources at every opportunity, which was the only way to crack down on such activity; it was a waste of time to install signs and blocks, these were just ignored.

Alistair Burtenshaw thanked Alison Clarke and the Surrey Hills Arts Advisory Board for the work that they did and highlighted current and future projects undertaken by Surrey Arts. The Chair highlighted the work undertaken with women at the Tilford Mosque, where women were guided on walks around the area after which they create an embroidery map of their walk. The embroidery would be exhibited at the University of Creative Arts in Farnham. The project tied in with the policy of encouraging different groups to visit the countryside.

Susan Parker said that while she supported the initiatives to encourage cycling, the concerns regarding cycling events, as raised in some of the public questions, should be addressed in the context of the policy as it is being developed. There are areas on potential conflict, and perhaps there

might have to be routes earmarked for walkers only in future. Some routes were not suitable for cycling, although the damage done by cyclists was nothing as bad as that caused by off-road vehicles and quadbikes. However, in some areas there was erosion by cyclists who carved new routes through the vegetation. There should be more way marking to indicate permissible cycle routes.

With reference to engaging new audiences, the development of a new discovery centre at Newlands Corner had been a matter of huge controversy and the creation of large new infrastructure could not be supported. It should be set back, low key and away from the ridge as anything too prominent would be hugely unpopular and counter to the general philosophy. The Chair noted that the Board would visit the site in July on its annual tour and could then express an opinion.

### **Growing the Surrey Hills Economy**

Rob Fairbanks thanked Caroline Price for her work on the AONB website, the social media accounts, community development partnerships and Rail to Ramble project.

The Conservation Volunteers had submitted a bid of c£450k to the Green Growth Recovery Fund, in conjunction with the High Weald, Kent and Surrey Hills AONBs for a project to work with landowners to promote countryside access points by rail and foot from urban centres to trail and wildlife sites.

Simon Whalley noted that Surrey Hills Enterprises was addressing the issues mentioned by Marisa Heath. Collaboration with key partners had been one of the successes emanating from the Covid pandemic. The concept of working together had not only been strengthened amongst members of Surrey Hills Enterprises, but also amongst other organisations that support the AONB. Despite the pandemic, the CIC membership had grown to 140 members and it was expected that this would continue to grow. The way members were working together was hopefully part of the inspiration which was translated to the rural economy. Specific projects included the Artisan Festival, although sadly the Sustainable Business conference scheduled for 16 July has been postponed. The CIC was getting involved in local farmer's markets; years ago no local produce was sold at farmer's markets, which was one of the reasons why the CIC was established, and the CIC involvement was now beginning to make a difference. The CIC also had a stand at the Farnham farmer's market and would soon have a presence at the Cranleigh farmer's market. Many of the CIC partner websites were being reviewed which had made the CIC realise that all those interested should be involved in a more structured way. As a first step, the Surrey Hills Champions project had been started working with the Surrey Hills Society. Sponsorship had been obtained to publish a guide on the Surrey Hills which should promote local purchasing. The Wood Fair, which would be held in September in Cranleigh, had been very successful in educating people on the preservation of woodlands, planting trees and

showcasing businesses and artisans which work in this field. Despite the chaos of the last year, the CIC was positive for the way ahead and promoting opportunities.

Martin Cantor referred to communication and websites, and said that an AONB Wiki site had been set up, which was part of a wider set of websites; since it had been set up in February it had attracted thousands of views. This could for instance be a place where evidence relating to the AONB boundary extension could be assimilated as well as information relating to many of the topics discussed.

Ruth Reed mentioned that she was on the board of the Cranleigh and South Eastern Agricultural Society and that farmers were very sympathetic to the environment. Whitby Farm in particular did a lot of conservation work. She referred some of the work which the society did and thanked Simon Whalley for the work done by the CIC in the Cranleigh area.

### **Advocacy, Partnership and Co-ordination**

Rob Fairbanks highlighted the following:

- The Glover Review was still awaiting a formal response from the Government.
- The National Association for AONBs had launched a Collaborative Climate Change Action Programme
- The Surrey Hills Community Forum would take place online on 29 July and Board members were encouraged to attend.
- The Surrey Hills Symposium was scheduled for 24 November at Surrey University and the theme was 'Climate Emergency – Inspiring Communities into Action'.
- The Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership had been successful in securing one of seven Green Social Prescribing 'Test and Learn' pilots which would work with a number of partners.
- The Surrey Hills AONB and Surrey Hills Enterprises databases had been merged into one to help streamline communications.

Rob thanked the AONB team for all their hard work, especially in working within a small budget.

The Chair said that the problem of motorised and generally unauthorised users was at the top of the priority list and a way had to be found to cut down on this usage.

Hugh Broom agreed that this was a big problem, but noted that many of the problems were also caused by dogs. Whilst a concerted campaign was needed to address all users at all levels, motorised users were in the minority and problems should be seen in this context.

Susan Parker referred to a comment in one of the public questions that the Board would discuss a refresh of the Management Plan Monitoring Framework with Surrey County Council. The Board was independent and requested that the Board discuss and consider any proposed changes as they evolved. Rob Fairbanks said that the response to the public question was the Board's position in relation to the Management Plan.

The Board **APPROVED** the recommendation in the report that members note the activities of the Surrey Hills Family and partners in delivering the AONB Management Plan (2020 – 2025).

## 11. REVIEW OF THE AONB CONSTITUTION

The Chair introduced the report and noted that the Constitution had last been reviewed in 2013. Whilst the response to the Glover report was being awaited, there was a need to 'tidy-up' the Constitution. If a more extensive review was needed following Government guidance, it would be done.

Recommendation 3 in the report was to appoint a working group to review the Constitution and whilst the recommendation proposed certain members, any nominations would be welcomed.

If the working group was not able to complete the review by the Board's next meeting in September, a progress report would be submitted. There was no rush to do a final review and the lead would be taken from the working group.

Susan Parker said that if there were minor amendments, the working group could probably make recommendations, but if there were significant changes, it would need public consultation, as with the 2013 version of the Constitution.

After discussion, the Board **APPROVED** the following recommendations:

1. Agree the proposed process for reviewing the AONB Constitution.
2. Note that the Government response to the Glover report was imminent, which could assist with the strategic review of the Constitution.
3. That the following persons be appointed to the working group: Heather Kerswell, Geoff Duck, Rosemary Absalom, Susan Parker, Gordon Jackson, Simon Whalley, Kristina Kenworthy, Steve Rudd. The working group could include further members if needed.
4. Once the Board had reviewed and agreed any proposed changes to the Constitution, the amended version be submitted to the constituent local authorities for approval.

## **12. SURREY HILLS ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP TOUR: 2 JULY 2021**

Rob Fairbanks provided details of the proposed tour and the Board agreed the outline arrangements.

## **13. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Board meeting was noted as 1 September 2021.

The meeting ended at 4:03 pm.

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**Chairman**