

Item 5

Public Question from Sally Blake

The Surrey Hills AONB management plan and monitoring framework do not reflect the now-clear evidence of the devastating impact of climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution and unsustainability. Climate change is barely mentioned. Nor do they reflect the findings of the Glover report.

Does the Board agree that the Management Plan and its objectives need to be changed urgently to include the following and, if not, why not:

1. Giving clear priority to those objectives which focus on the protection, conservation, extension and connection of natural habitats, with particular emphasis on those designed to deal with the potential effects of climate change.
2. Ensuring all planning applications adopt best practice in respect of 1.
3. Proposals for coordinating and supporting measures for:
 - the quiet use by people for the purpose of seeing natural habitats and their flora and fauna;
 - quiet exercise, for health and wellbeing; and
 - education and quiet enjoyment

which are commensurate with the priority objectives.

This could include innovative rewilding projects now taking place in many other counties.

4. Coordination and support of landowners, farmers and public and private organisations in their efforts to meet the objectives.
5. Supporting measures to keep visitors to our natural countryside sites to a sustainable level, to avoid damaging the habitats of the, often rare or endangered, flora and fauna.
6. Avoiding countryside sites being degraded by artificial features, tarmac trails, buildings or visitor centres, and recognizing that the countryside, and its wildlife, as it is, is the attraction.

Draft AONB Board Response

Thank you for your time and interest in putting a question to the Surrey Hills AONB Board.

The local authorities adopted the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan (2020 – 2025) in November 2019 in accord with their statutory duty to keep under review and adopt a new AONB Management Plan no less than every 5 years. The Plan was subject to public consultation, with over 300 responses, a full Environment Report, a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) and a Habitat Regulations Assessment. This process ensured that many of the environmental objectives highlighted in your question relating to climate change have been assessed as part of the Plan making process.

Julian Glover concluded in his review that ‘Our country is changing fast. It is becoming more diverse. More urban. Much busier. New forms of farming, carbon emissions, the sprawl of housing, new technology and social shifts have changed the relationship between people and the countryside, and left nature and our climate in crisis. Our Designated Landscapes cannot carry on as they do now.’ The Glover Review went on to make 27 substantive proposals under the themes Landscapes alive for Nature and Beauty; Landscapes for Everyone; Living in Landscapes; and New Ways of Working. The Government is yet to formerly respond to the Glover Review. When it does, the National Park

Authorities and AONB partnerships will need to take account of the impact of any new government policies, programmes and funding settlements on their respective National Landscapes. In the meantime, the AONB Board will continue to provide overview and scrutiny of the activities of the AONB Board through the Management Plan Monitoring Framework.

As the Surrey Hills AONB Board relies on the trust and good will of its partners and community to deliver the AONB Management Plan, the AONB Chair and AONB Director would welcome the opportunity to discuss the specific issues outlined in your letter. Please email Rob Fairbanks to arrange a convenient time and location.

Heather Kerswell

Surrey Hills AONB Board Chair