

Date: Wednesday 4 September 2019

Report: Surrey Hills Society – Summer 2019

Written by: Gordon Jackson - Chairman

Purpose of Report

To report on the activities of the Surrey Hills Society

Summary

The Surrey Hills Society continues in its main role of promoting and engaging with the public and raising awareness of the issues facing the AONB. It also leads on, and supports, relevant projects across the AONB, in partnership with key stakeholders. This report covers the period from 12th June 2019 - 30 August 2019.

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Following the Society's selection for this prestigious award, we are awaiting details of the arrangements for the Award Ceremony. It is hoped that this will be in the early Autumn.

The SHS Strategy

We are in the process of developing a detailed Action Plan to promote the implementation of the objectives identified in our Business Plan. This is still a work in progress, but we hope to have completed it by the end of the year.

In the meantime, we are actively pursuing many of the objectives and a summary of some of the key actions is set out below.

- Create Social Media presence and strategy
 - Caroline Price has created Twitter and Facebook sites for the Society and discussions are ongoing as to how to ensure that they are regularly populated. The trustees recognise that this is an urgent priority
- Joint Events with the Society for the Arts & Crafts Movement in Surrey, Surrey Hills Enterprises ("SHE"), Surrey Wildlife Trust ("SWT"), U3A, University of Surrey ("UoS")
 - We are liaising with the Society for the Arts and Crafts Movement in Surrey (ACMS) and are now signposting each other's events. A representative of ACMS now attends the Society's events committee and we are providing some online booking facilities. The Chairman and Secretary of ACMS, Carolyn Smith and Denise Todd will be guest speakers at our AGM
 - Earlier this month we visited Plantpassion, which is a SHE member and are arranging events early next year at the Clandon Burial Ground and the Surrey Copper Distillery, both introduced by SHE. We are also working closely with SHE in relation to the Surrey Hills Wood Fair and Society members have kindly been offered a 20% discount.
 - In addition to supporting SWT's youth engagement day with a contribution of £500, we promoted an extremely successful walk, which was led by one of the SWT rangers, on Ash Ranges. We hope to build on this cooperation going forward, with a particular emphasis on promoting biodiversity projects in the Surrey Hills.
 - We have close links with UoS and are heavily involved in the organisation of the forthcoming Symposium, which is being hosted by UoS.

- Numerous talks have been given to U3A, Rotary and similar groups by Ken Bare and Chris Howard on the Society's behalf.
- Astronomy/Night skies/Night train
 - Gordon Jackson has attended a number of meetings with Rob Fairbanks and representatives of the Surrey Astronomical Society, CPRE, SWT, the RSPB, National Trust and Surrey University in relation to a proposal to promote a Dark Skies Declaration. The intention is to support a campaign "to protect the fragile oases of natural darkness still to be found within the county and to seek a reduction in the prevalence and harmful effects of unnecessary, artificial light."
- Surrey Sculpture Trail
 - We are developing plans for the promotion by the Society of trails promoting existing sculptures in Surrey. The works of Lucy Quinell have been identified as the pilot project, although it will not be until next year that this will be fully developed
- Support Harvest Event with Surrey Hills Arts and NT in September
 - This event will take place on the evening of 28 September and Society members will be available to support.
 - The Society is also supporting the Inspiring Views Appeal for a new bench at Albury and is making available free membership for one year as part of the award scheme.
- Need for strategy to recruit and empower more volunteers
 - As part of the submission for the QAVS, we identified approximately 70 active volunteers. We continue to promote Walk Leadership and First Aid programmes and are constantly on the lookout for willing volunteers
- Support Walk Festivals and walk programmes
 - In May the Society supported Farnham and Walking Festival. In September, we are putting on ten walks as part of Guildford Walkfest. My particular thanks to Chris Howard and Ken Bare, who have taken the lead in organising these.
- Other SHS talks raising awareness of issues and projects in the Surrey Hills eg. recycling, climate change
 - We are organising a talk about biodiversity in the Surrey Hills at Clandon Burial Ground in conjunction with SHE and hope to continue this approach going forward.

The Society's AGM

The Surrey Hills Society AGM will be held-at 10:30 am on Saturday 12th October at the Evelyn Hall in Abinger Common followed by lunch and a short walk. Members of the Board are most welcome to join us for the meeting and may opt to sign up for the lunch and walk through our website - <https://www.surreyhillssociety.org/events/>

Staffing

Marika Elzinga left her role as Coordinator, which she has fulfilled for the last five years, at the end of July. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant contribution that she made to the Society. Our new Administrator is Lesley Crofts. Lesley has been working hard to learn the ropes since July and is now well versed in the various systems and procedures that she has had to absorb. Inevitably there are likely to be some areas that will take a little time to assimilate and she will be very keen to meet as many of the Board as possible over the coming months.

Funding and Charitable Objectives

The Society continues to be a totally self-funded organisation, with core funding coming from our membership fees, our events programme, donations and fund-raising events. The majority of our events make a small profit and any surplus over operating expenses is applied towards small charitable grants that support the Society's objectives.

The Society has supported the Haslemere – Godalming Rail to Ramble Leaflet with a donation of £500.

We are also acting as delivery partner for the Into the Wild Project by contracting with the independent consultant, Genevieve Lebus. Details of this project are in the report to the Board on behalf of the Surrey Hills Trust Fund.

Communications and Publicity

In addition to the priority emphasis on our Social Media presence, which I have mentioned above, we are looking at various minor changes to Society's website that will improve the user experience.

The Autumn newsletter will shortly be in circulation. The theme for this latest edition is Managing Surrey Hills Countryside and it contains some excellent articles on the challenges that are faced, and the excellent work being done to meet them.

Ken Bare is representing the Surrey Hills as a judge again this year in the Surrey Life Food and Drink Awards which will be announced at an Awards dinner on 26th September at GLive.

Chris Howard continues to write a monthly column in Surrey Life magazine on current affairs in the Surrey Hills. She also creates the monthly walk pages sometimes in collaboration with other Society walk leaders

Talks

Our Vice-President, Ken Bare, continues to deliver talks to various groups across the County. This not only fulfils our charitable aim to promote the SHAONB, but also brings us an income as often the organisations we speak to make us a charitable donation.

Shows

Since the beginning of June we have attended the Ripley Grape and Grain Festival, Pirbright Village Fair, Cranleigh Fete and Gatton Country Fair. Upcoming shows include the Surrey Hills Challenge, the Surrey Hills Wood Fair and We Are Surrey.

Walks

The Society continues to run a monthly free walk to engage wider public (particularly young people) to get out and enjoy the Surrey Hills and learn more about the AONB. We have around 20-30 people attending each walk.

Events

The Society volunteers organise and run over 40 events each year. The events are open to all with different prices for members and non-members. Most of the walks are free. All events are listed on our website and can be booked online.

During the reporting period the following events have been held:

- Explore Gatton Park - free, guided walk
- Discovering Cranleigh and a private visit to the Brooking Collection
- Chairman's Day - An Exclusive Visit to the Hampton Estate
- Explore Ash Ranges with Surrey Wildlife Trust
- Explore Compton - free, guided walk
- Pratsham Grange Garden Visit
- Growing Ventures in the Surrey Hills – a visit to Grace and Flavour and Plantpassion
- Discover Wanborough Great Barn

Forthcoming Events:

In addition to the various Walkfest Walks, details of which are on the website, the following future events are planned:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| • The Industrial History of Abinger | Sunday 15 September |
| • Return to Mane Chance Sanctuary | Tuesday 17 September |
| • A day on the farm at Wooton | Saturday 21 September |
| • Guided walk around Newdigate | Wednesday 25 September |
| • Sponsored Walk in aid of Guildford Street Angels | Saturday 28 September |
| • Explore Polesden Lacey | Sunday 6 October |
| • Pre-Raphaelite Women – Talk at Watts Gallery | Friday 11 October |
| • Saving our Bees | Thursday 24 October |
| • Tree and Fungi Identification Walk | Wednesday 30 October |
| • Explore Reigate | Sunday 3 November |
| • ACMS talk with Rod Hughes | Tuesday 28 November |
| • Pre-Christmas Walk | Saturday 7 December |
| • Christmas Wreath Making | Saturday 14 December |
| • Walk off your Christmas Pudding | Friday 27 December |
| • Walk around Godalming | Sunday 5 January |
| • Meet the Farmer Talk and Tasting | Thursday 27 February |

Recommendations

The AONB Board is asked to note the report.