



## Surrey Hills National Landscape Board

6<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### Management Plan - A 75 year vision for a thriving Surrey Hills National Landscape

#### Purpose of the report:

To update the Board on the programme for developing the Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025 – 2030)

#### Recommendations:

Members are asked to

1. Participate in the exercise to help identify the environmental ceiling and social foundation for a 75-year vision for the Thriving National Landscape
2. Agree the programme for developing a new Management Plan for the Surrey Hills National Landscape

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The statutory Management Plan is the primary document through which the purposes of the National Landscape can be achieved. It sets out the ambition, strategy, and guidance to achieve the purposes of the designation and enhancing people's quality of life through it.
- 1.2 The current Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan has been adopted as a statutory document that sets out the vision and policy framework for the period 2020 to 2025. It was adopted by all the constituent local authorities. A new Management Plan for the Surrey Hills National Landscape will need to be adopted for the period 2025 – 2030.
- 1.3 2024 is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1949 National Park and Access to the Countryside Act. This presents an opportunity to look back at how the landscape has been protected and cherished, and to consider a positive vision of what a thriving Surrey Hills landscape could be like in the next 75 years (2025 – 2100); a 22<sup>nd</sup> Century vision. This vision will be the basis for reviewing progress on the targets and outcomes every 5 years.
- 1.4 As Natural England is currently undertaking the boundary review process, it is proposed that the Management Plan is flexible in being a vision and policy framework for the Surrey Hills National Landscape and the Candidate Areas that may come into the designation. This is subject to confirmation from the Secretary of State and there will be a need to engage new local authorities and partners, as appropriate. Because

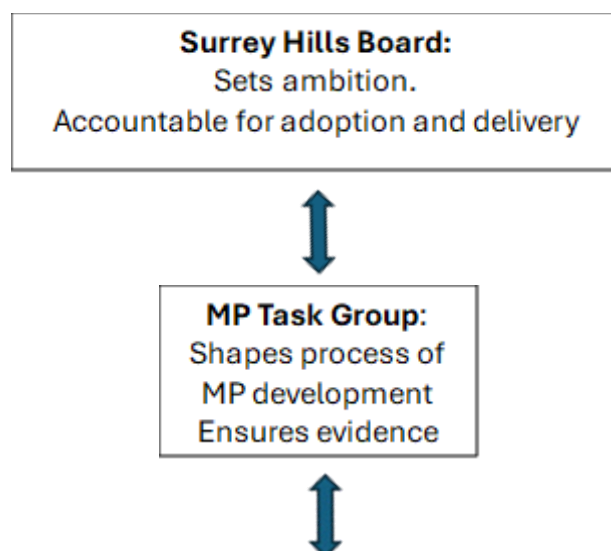
any boundary extension is unlikely to be confirmed by the end of the Management Plan development period, there may be the need to “re-run” certain parts of the consultation and engagement with new partners that will need to adopt and have to help deliver a new Plan. This has resource implications which are unknown at present.

## 2. Outcomes, Targets and Guidance

- 2.1 In February, Defra published the Outcomes and Targets Framework for England’s National Parks and National Landscapes. These are taken from the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP), as set out in Appendix 1. The respective baselines for each National Park and National Landscape have been promised by the end of March 2024. It is not clear at this stage how the targets will be apportioned but the intention is that these outcomes and targets will need to be integrated into the Management Plan and reported annually as part of the Defra grant agreement.
- 2.2 The protected landscapes are still awaiting the Natural England Guidance for producing and delivering a consistent suite of statutory National Park and National Landscape Management Plans across England. As resourcing varies greatly between the 10 National Park Authorities, the 2 Conservation Boards and the 32 National Landscape Partnerships, the respective Management Plans will need to reflect local circumstances and structures.
- 2.3 Producing the Management Plan is both an opportunity and an obligation for National Landscapes. Effective management planning enables those involved with the National Landscape to set the agenda for change and manage change effectively. ‘Management planning’ is how Plans are produced, reviewed, and delivered by
- bringing people together, build relationships and grow commitment
  - building consensus around a vision for the future
  - establishing a Management Plan around which joint action can happen, decisions made and resources secured

## 3. Surrey Hills Management Plan process

- 3.1 The outline programme for the Management Plan is set out in Appendix 2. The current and proposed governance arrangement for its development is:



**Officers' Working Group:**  
Develops content of MP  
Links MP with other statutory plans  
and national policy

**3.2 Management Plan Task Group.** An in-person or online task and finish group to meet every 2 weeks beginning from March:

- Surrey Hills Chair
  - Director
  - Consultant on Evidence gathering and analysis
  - Comms (Engagement) Lead
- To be supported as appropriate by
- Chair of Officers Working Group
  - Natural England
  - Surrey Wildlife Trust
  - LNRS Lead
  - Surrey CC Adaptation Lead
  - Additional invitees as appropriate, dependent on activity and need

#### **4. Evidence, Exploration and Planning**

**4.1** The Task Group will prepare the evidence base and arrange visits key sites to discuss Nature, Climate, People and Place agenda in setting 75 Year Vision and targets. This is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1949 National Park and Access to the Countryside Act. This was seminal post-war legislation, along with the 1946 NHS Act, which acknowledged the importance of safeguarding the countryside for the nation's health and well-being. This provides an opportunity to research what the Surrey Hills were like when the Surrey Hills was designated in the 1950s.

**4.2** The new statutory Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the Surrey Hills Management Plan will have a similar programme for engagement and adoption. The Nature section of the Management Plan will need to engage with the conservation bodies which supported the Surrey Hills Making Space for Nature strategy (species and habitat focused), and it would make sense that this aligned to the emerging Surrey LNRS and conversely that the LNRS provided the framework for the Surrey Hills Management Plan Nature section. Similarly, the Management Plan will need to align with the emerging strategy for Heathland Connections, which covers about 40% of the existing Surrey Hills designated area, and the potential of a Super Thursley NNR. There will also need to be a Climate Change Adaption Plan as part of the statutory framework.

**4.3** The Task Group will arrange visits for a multidisciplinary team to visit key sites to discuss Nature, Climate, People and Place agenda in setting a 75-year vision and milestones. This will take in landscapes across the Surrey Hills, to include:

- Hindhead and Puttenham Commons (Heathland Connections)
- Newlands Corner
- Box Hill
- Reigate Hill
- Farthing Down

#### **5. Engagement, Discovery and the Letters from the Future Campaign**

**5.1** On Wednesday 24th April, Julian Glover will be attending our event at Denbies to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the 1949 National Park and Access to the Countryside Act, sharing his vision for National Landscapes and, as a NHLF Trustee, announcing a

major grant award for the Society Growing Together – Inclusion and Conservation in the Surrey Hills. This will also be the launch of the `Letters from the Future` campaign. This is a project with Surrey University to target groups and the public to describe a 75 year (22nd Century!) vision for a Thriving National Landscape which is greener, happier, healthier and open to all. The letters will be `synthesised` using AI to create an artist's brief to illustrate what the landscape may look like, and to create animation and soundscapes.

5.2 The engagement in the Management Plan Letters from the Future campaign will be embedded into the work of the Surrey Hills team including Enterprise's events, Farming in Protected Landscapes, Access for All and the Society's Growing Together – inclusion and conservation in the Surrey Hills project. Budgets and capacity allowing, we will also reach out to partners to pro-actively promote the Letters from the Future campaign including community groups, interest groups and schools.

5.3 The Surrey Hills Partnership in July will be an opportunity for the Board and partners to visit the Hampton Estate in West Surrey which includes all the Surrey Hills habitats and land uses included heathland, commons, chalk downland, pasture, forestry and horticulture.

## **6. Appraisal, Consultation and Adoption**

6.1 In August the Task Group will appraise the engagement programme and draft the consultation Management Plan for consideration at the Board meeting in September. The formal consultation will take place over October and November, and the Surrey Hills Symposium will be themed on Nature Calling – a 75-Year Vision for a Thriving National Landscape. The report of consultation will be presented to the Surrey Hills Board in December, seeking local authority adoption in early 2025, for a launch in March 2025.

6.2 During this period, a priority for the Surrey Hills Board will be to undertake a review of the governance arrangements and the business plan for the Surrey Hills Team. This will be impacted by Defra advice on governance, funding formulas and progress with the Surrey Hills Boundary Extension project. It is likely that because any boundary extension is unlikely to be confirmed until towards the end of the MP development period, we are likely to have to "re-run" certain parts of the consultation and engagement with new partners that will have to help deliver a new Plan - effectively duplicating parts of the process. This has resource implications which are unknown at present.

## **7. Resources and Budget**

7.1 The principle will be for the Surrey Hills Team to take existing opportunities to convene project partners in the Management Plan development process. The small core team however is under tremendous pressure in 2024/25 to deliver large FiPL, Access and further capital programmes from Defra, as well as project work. This means that we will need to be flexible in assigning staff resources and budgets to help deliver the capital programmes and to create budget capacity for additional Management Plan development work including:

- Outreach and engagement
- Consultancy support
- Web platforms
- Visualisations and artists
- Design, promotion and publication

## **Appendix 1.**

### **DEFRA Outcomes Framework for National Landscapes (aggregate)**

#### **Thriving plants and wildlife indicators**

##### **Target 1**

Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).

##### **Target 2**

Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.

##### **Target 3**

For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.

##### **Target 4**

Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.

##### **Target 5**

Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

The following indicators will measure progress on the 'thriving plants and wildlife' targets:

- extent of wildlife rich habitat created or restored within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites
- percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition
- percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition
- extent of priority habitat within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites, in favourable management through agri-environment schemes
- percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land

#### **Mitigating and adapting to climate change indicators**

##### **Target 6**

Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

##### **Target 7**

Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.

##### **Target 8**

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

The following indicators will measure progress on the 'mitigating and adapting to climate change' targets:

- the level of greenhouse gas emissions within Protected Landscapes

- extent of peat under restoration in Protected Landscapes
- extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes

## **Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment**

### **Target 9**

Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

### **Target 10**

Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

In future we intend to focus our access metrics on our EIP commitments that everyone should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space and we will work to remove barriers to access.

The following indicators will measure progress on the 'enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement' targets:

- improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme:
  - metres of accessible path as a percentage of total path
  - number of accessible toilets and rest stops
  - number of disability accessible parking spaces
  - number of accessible gates and gaps
  - number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment
  - number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the Protected Landscape boundary
  - number of volunteer days
  - number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved
  - policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers
- number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk. To separately cover the categories of:
  - scheduled monuments
  - registered parks and gardens
  - registered battlefields
  - listed buildings (grade I or II\*)
  - protected wreck sites

## APPENDIX 2

### Surrey Hills Management Plan – calendar and milestones

Date	Purpose	Outputs / Outcomes	Lead Participant
<b>January – April: Evidence, Exploration and Planning</b>			
February	Evidence survey to identify data sources relating to MP purpose.	Identify what data can be obtained	Consultant, Task Group and partner organisations
4 March	Joint Surrey Hills and Surrey Wildlife Trust Away Day to share approach, begin to explore evidence held by SWT and agree ongoing involvement	Support of Surrey Wildlife Trust for the process including use of doughnut  Opportunity to trail One Planet Living Framework  Exploration of data held by SWT  Common understanding of how the MP and SWT strategies fit together, inc LNRS and Heathland Connections	SWT  Potential to include LNRS and Heathland Connections
6 March	Surrey Hills Board to explore how doughnut can be used to develop the MP (active session) and agree key milestones	Common understanding of doughnut methodology for the Management Plan, and a shared ambition  Commitment by members to support own org contribution towards developing the MP	Surrey Hills Board and related staff
12 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> April	Review evidence, existing policies, and design engagement process	Review Natural England Guidance and prepare engagement process, Stakeholder, strategy, and plan mapping (eg LNRS, Heathland Connections and ROWIP)  Surrey Hills evidence base for Defra Targets and Outcomes  Review of existing Management Plan (2020 – 2025) policies in relation to new themes.	Task Group and extended Surrey Hills Working Group
<b>April – August: Engagement, Discovery and Campaigning</b>			
24 <sup>th</sup> April	Surrey Hills Celebration of 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 1949 Act and Landscapes Review with Julian Glover	Launch Management Plan engagement programme.	Surrey Hills Family Partners Civic guests Councillors (county, borough, district and parish)

11 May	Surrey Day	Letters from the Future campaign promotion	Visit Surrey, BBC Surrey
7 June	Surrey Hills Board	Review Progress	Surrey Hills Board
June	Task Group/ Panel Insight Days Perhaps 4 or 5	Multidisciplinary Teams to visit key sites to discuss Nature, Climate, People and Place agenda in setting 25 Year Vision and Milestones. Taking in landscapes across the Surrey Hills,	Task Group Respective land managers Climate LNRS Community rep Diversity Champ Access Champ
July	Surrey Hills Partnership – site visit/ tour and creative exercise	Potentially at Hampton Estate to look at Heathland (Puttenham Common), Chalk Downland (Hogs Back scheme), woodland, regen farming/ Pasture for Life, and Horticulture (Binton’s Farm, Hall Hunter	Biddells and farm manager,  Board Extended Partnership  Access Diversity
<b>August– September: Appraisal and Drafting</b>			
Aug	Appraisal and write up and drafting	Write up Report of Engagement Process and draft Management Plan Undertake a scoping report to confirm whether a Sustainability Appraisal is required by Natural England	Task Group
6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Surrey Hills Board	Approve draft and arrangements for Consultation	Surrey Hills Board
Sept	SH Comms	Design consultation document and platforms	
<b>October – December: Consultation</b>			
Sept	Launch of Consultation	Formal consultation on draft Management Plan.	Task Group
Oct	Governance	Review governance, staff structure and business plan	Task Group
Nov	Symposium	Inspire and Engage Feedback process	Surrey Hills Team Surrey Un
6 <sup>th</sup> Dec	SH Board	Report of Consultation and recommendations	Surrey Hills Board
<b>January – March 2025: Adoption and Promotion</b>			
Dec	Design	Developing assets for site interpretation Print and digital assets for Management Plan	Comms Lead
Jan - Feb	Local councils	adoption	Director, OWG
March	Surrey Hills Board	Launch	Board