



## Surrey Hills National Landscape Board

18 July 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. Note the progress and outline 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.
- 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 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 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 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 and resources can be secured

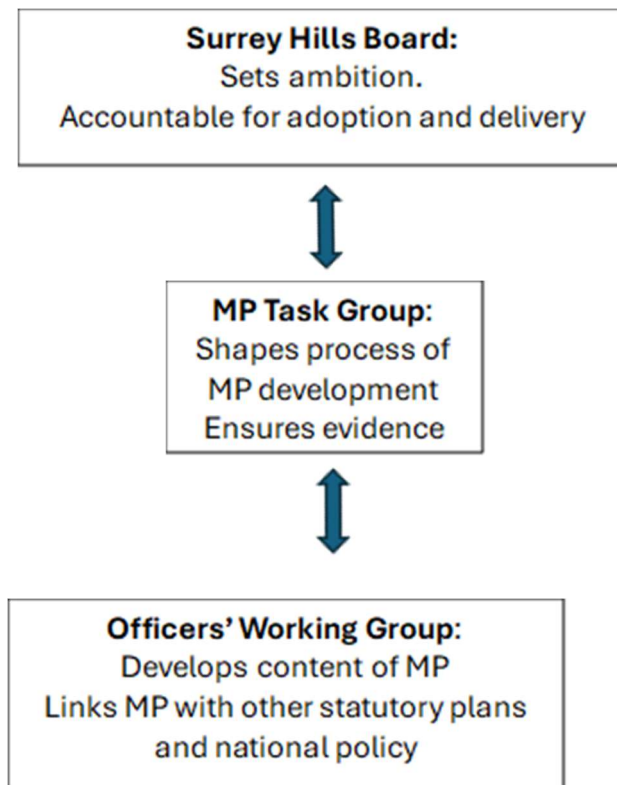
1.5 As Natural England is currently undertaking the boundary review process, it is proposed that the Management Plan is flexible in being and vision and policy framework for the Surrey Hills National Landscape and the Candidate Areas that may come into the designation. This is subject to confirmation from the Secretary of State and there will be a need to engage new local authorities and partners, as appropriate.

## 2. Outcomes, Targets and Evidence

1.1 In February, Defra published the Outcomes and Targets Framework for England's National Parks and National Landscapes, taken from the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP). Kieran Foster consultancy is supporting the process of gathering evidence but we are still awaiting the respective baseline targets and how these will be apportioned to each National Park and National Landscape area, but it is understood that Defra's intention is that these outcomes and targets will need to be set out in the adopted Management Plan and reported annually as part of the Defra grant agreement

## 3. Surrey Hills Management Plan governance 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:



**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

3.2 A provisional budget of approximately £20,000 is being assigned to supporting the Management Plan process that will cover outreach and engagement; consultancy support; web platforms; visualisations and artists; design, promotion and publication. This will be allocated from the additional core budget made available this year, and opportunities will also be taken by integrating the Management Plan with other work streams.

3.3 The Task Group, supported by Kieran Foster consultancy, is preparing the evidence base and arrange visits key sites to discuss Nature, Climate, People and Place agenda in setting 75 Year Vision and targets. 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.

3.4 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.

#### **4. Engagement, Discovery and Postcards from the Future Campaign**

4.1 In April, Julian Glover attended 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, He also launched the `Postcards 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. These postcards can be created online or physically at Surrey Hills attended events. The postcards will be `synthesised` using AI to create an artist brief to illustrate what the landscape may look like, and to create animation and soundscapes.

4.2 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.

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

5.1 In August the Task Group will appraise the Postcards from the Future engagement programme, Defra Outcomes and Targets (where available) and the Natural England Guidance on Management Plans and draft the consultation Management Plan for consideration at the Board meeting in September. The consultation will take place over October and November, and the Surrey Hills Symposium will be themes on Nature Calling – a 75-Year Vision for a Thriving National Landscape. 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 Extension project.

5.2 The report of consultation and the draft Surrey Hills Management Plan will be considered by the Surrey Hills Board in December. It is anticipated that this will be a 12 week consultation to agree the document that the Board will consider in March 2025 to recommend to the constituent local authorities to formally adopt as a statutory plan setting out how they will seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the National Landscape.

<b>DEFRA Outcomes Framework for National Landscapes (aggregate)</b>
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### 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