

**Draft MINUTES of the SURREY HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (NATIONAL LANDSCAPE) BOARD (SURREY HILLS BOARD)** held at 10:00am on 18 July 2024 at Myrtles Courtyard, Hamptons Estate, Surrey

**PRESENT:**

**Chair:**

Kathy Atkinson

Independent Chair

**Core Members:**

Councillor Marisa Heath

Councillor Catherine Sayer

Councillor Ruth Reed

Councillor Claire Malcolmson

Stephen Rudd

Stephanie Fudge

Surrey County Council\*

Tandridge District Council

Waverley Borough Council

Mole Valley District Council\*

Natural England

National Trust

**Delivery Partners:**

Gordon Jackson

Surrey Hills Society and Surrey Hills Trust Fund

**Advisory Members:**

Mike Waite

Lucy Charman

Tim Bamford

Jim Simmonds

John Goodridge

Surrey Wildlife Trust\*

Country Land and Business Association

Country Land and Business Association

NFU

CPRE

**In attendance:**

Rob Fairbanks

Emma Cole

Oliver Wild

Theah Dix

Sarah Thiele

Clive Smith

Carolyn McKenzie

Sarah Quinn

Joss Butler

Sally Blake

Jenna Emmerton

Patrick Bisgood

Katie Daw

Surrey Hills National Landscape Director

Surrey Hills National Landscape Communications Lead

Surrey Hills National Landscape Business Support Officer

Arts Officer, Surrey Hills Arts\*

Surrey Hills National Landscape Programme Manager

Surrey Hills AONB Planning Adviser

Director of Environment, SCC

Democratic Services, SCC (Minutes)

Democratic Services, SCC

Save Surrey Countryside\*

Environmental Land Management Advisor

Fetcham Residents Association\*

Farm Care Co-ordinator, Surrey Hills Society

\*Attended remotely

## **1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed the Board and observers to the meeting and asked those present and attending remotely to introduce themselves.

The Chair made the following announcements:

- The event held at Denbies at end of April had been a success. Julian Glover was in attendance and the Postcards from the Future campaign was launched. She thanked the team for their work on this.
- Following the General Election, Steve Reed MP is the new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. His constituency is Streatham and Croydon North, close to the potential new National Landscape Boundary, and he is said to have an interest in nature. The Chair looks forward to meeting him in due course.
- Planning reform and the definition of the "Grey Belt" were key issues in the King's Speech on 17 July.
- The General Election and subsequent King's Speech had meant that the publication of the Boundary Extension report had been delayed, Stephen Rudd would provide a verbal update at this meeting.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Catherine Young, Simon Whalley and Alison Clarke.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared.

## **4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Board's meeting on 6 March 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

## **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No written public questions had been received by the deadline.

Sally Blake asked an informal verbal question regarding filming at Thursley Common Nature Reserve and the process for consultation and approval, as filming had generated noise causing concern to local residents.

Stephen Rudd responded that Natural England own the site, and filming is a common activity. Natural England work with film companies via a brokering company, and filming provides an important source of revenue,

enabling improvements to the nature reserve such as repairing tracks, vegetation cutting and fire resilience. However, he stated that nature always comes first, and all activity is risk and impact assessed, with an ecologist on site to monitor and ensure impacts are negligible.

Mike Waite asked a supplementary verbal question regarding consultation with the community.

Stephen Rudd responded that some filming contracts have prohibited any wider form of consultation due to keeping details confidential for security and health and safety reasons. He appreciated this is at odds with it being a National Nature Reserve. With regards to this specific example, the film company had contacted the community to provide details of the filming without the knowledge of Natural England.

## **6. NATURAL ENGLAND AONB BOUNDARY EXTENSION UPDATE**

Stephen Rudd provided a verbal update on the Boundary Extension:

- The publication of the report had been delayed owing to the General Election. He thanked the Board for their understanding. It was noted that a new Government had resulted in many changes, including new Ministers which meant an increased number of briefings.
- The King's Speech had included many announcements regarding housing provision and review of the Green Belt; it was therefore important to let these priorities settle before publishing the Boundary Extension report.
- Once the report is published, everyone who submitted a response to the consultation will be notified via email, and the report will also be circulated to Board Members and more widely by the Surrey Hills National Landscape Team.
- It is hoped that the project could be completed next year, dependent on the requirement for further consultation.
- This would be followed by the creation of a legal order to be approved by Secretary of State, with a 30 day period prior to this for representations. The Secretary of State has the option to call a public inquiry.

During discussion, the following key issues were raised by the Board:

- A question was asked regarding the method for releasing the report. Stephen Rudd confirmed that the report would be available via the Citizens Space Platform, with a web link sent to all those who responded to the consultation. There would be no proactive communication by Natural England until the launch of the formal consultation period, but the Surrey Hills National Landscape Team would publicise more widely.

- The Chair suggested that it would be helpful for an informal session with the Board to look at the maps. Stephen Rudd agreed that this could be organised following publication of the report.
- Stephen Rudd clarified that the decision to publish the report sits at the director level of Natural England.
- A question was asked regarding the timescale and process for any further consultation. Stephen Rudd explained that if new land was proposed for inclusion, the same type of consultation as held previously would take place. The scale of consultation would depend on the size of the area proposed but the timescale would be the same.
- The Chair thanked Stephen for his hard work on this and for keeping the Board informed.

The Board **NOTED** the verbal report.

## 7. MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Rob Fairbanks gave a presentation updating board members on the Surrey Hills Management Plan (attached as **Appendix A**).

The following phases were noted:

- Engagement Phase (current) – May to September 2024 – this includes the Postcards from the Future campaign.
- Consultation Phase – September to December 2024 – Board to agree consultation document; Symposium to take place on 13 November; Governance Review aligning with proposed Boundary Extension, which may bring in other local authorities; different funding package with Defra if area is extended.
- Adoption Phase – January to May 2025 – Board to agree report of consultation and Draft Management Plan. Statutory duty for each local authority to adopt. New Governance proposals agreed.

The Chair thanked Rob for the update.

The Board **NOTED** the progress and outline programme for developing a new Management Plan for the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

## 8. SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE FORWARD PLAN 2024-25

Rob Fairbanks, Surrey Hills National Landscape Director gave a presentation updating the board on the Forward Plan (attached as **Appendix B**).

During discussion, the following key issues were raised by the Board:

- A question was asked regarding the possibility of an extended boundary bringing about an increase in the number of planning applications received, and how this would be dealt with. The Chair suggested that additional resource would be required to work alongside Clive Smith and noted that it may be a year or two before this was required.
- It was noted that the London Borough of Croydon may become part of the National Landscape Area, and as the new Secretary of State was a Croydon MP, whether there was any lobbying potential. Rob Fairbanks responded that Steve Reed MP had been invited to visit the Surrey Hills by the National Landscape Association. He noted that there were no funding commitments beyond next March, but that the team were working with Defra to establish the baseline budget. The governance review would look at future staffing.

The Board **APPROVED** the work plan for 2024-25.

## **9. MEETING DATES FOR 2024**

Thursday 26 September 2024 VENUE TBC  
Wednesday 11 December 2024 VENUE TBC

All scheduled 1.30pm – 4.30pm; venues to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at: 11:15

---

**Kathy Atkinson**  
**Independent Chair**