



Surrey Hills National Landscape Board

26 September 2024

The Surrey Hills Management Plan - A 75 year vision for a thriving National Landscape for people and nature

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
2. Agree to participate in one of the Expert Panel meetings and promotion of the Surrey Hills Symposium

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 22nd Century vision. This vision will be the basis for reviewing progress on the targets and priorities 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

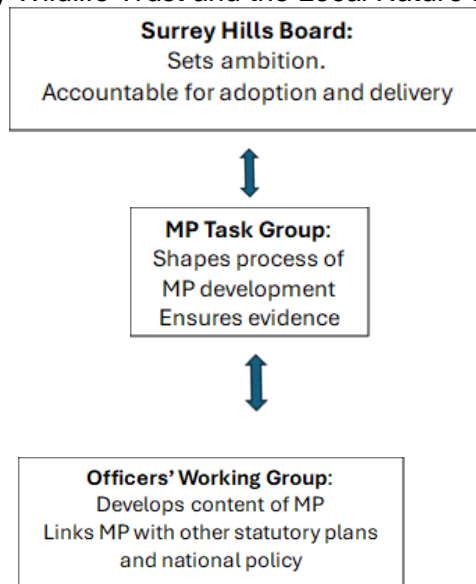
- building consensus around a vision for the future
- establishing a Management Plan around which joint action can happen and resources can be secured

1.5 As Natural England is currently undertaking the boundary review process, it is proposed that the Management Plan is flexible in being 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.

1.6 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

2. Surrey Hills Management Plan process

2.1 The outline programme for the Management Plan is set out in Appendix 1. The National Landscape Director has led a small and flexible task group to develop the new Management Plan reporting to the Surrey Hills Chair. This is supported by a consultant, Kieran Foster, and the Surrey Hills Communications Lead. The process has engaged the SCC Greener Futures team, Chair of the Officers Working Group, Natural England, Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Lead.



2.2 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.

2.3 A provisional budget of approximately £20,000 has been 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 has been allocated out of the additional core budget made available by Defra this year, and opportunities will also be taken by integrating the Management Plan within other work streams.

3. Describing the Future

3.1 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, including Hampton Court and some educational activities. The postcards have been 'synthesised' using AI to create a Vision for the Surrey Hills and the priorities for Nature, People and Climate. This will be the subject of the public survey.

3.2 An artist has also been commissioned to illustrate the special qualities and features within the Surrey Hills landscapes that the Management Plan will seek to conserve and enhance over the next 75 years. 5 sculptural posts will be commissioned to locate at viewpoints that span the Surrey Hills. These will be used for fixed point photography that will monitor the condition of the National Landscape every 5 years, linking to a website platform that will identify specific features within the landscape, for example ancient trees, ponds and heritage buildings, such as churches.

3.3 The Surrey Hills Partnership in July was also an opportunity for the Surrey Hills Board and partners to consider the 75-year vision for the Surrey Hills. The visit to the Hampton Estate described heathland, commons, chalk downland, pasture, forestry and horticulture, which are the main land uses across the Surrey Hills. Partners also undertook a Doughnut Economics exercise about identifying the social and nature foundation for the area, and where we are exceeding the environmental limits. This has contributed to the vision work.

4. Programme for Consultation and Adoption

4.1 In August and September, the Task Group appraised the Postcards from the Future campaign programme and the Defra Outcomes and Targets and the draft Natural England Guidance on Management Plans. This still has not been finalised and we are still awaiting confirmation of the Defra Environmental Action Plan Outcomes and Targets that the Surrey Hills Management Plan will need to adopt.

4.2 It is proposed that the consultation will take place over October and November. This will include a public survey to inform and get feedback on the emerging 75 vision; the special qualities; the activities associated with the Surrey Hills; the pressures and threats; the proposed core principles and the:

- Priorities for Nature
- Priorities for People
- Priorities for Climate

4.3 From 29th October - 12th November a series of panel meetings will be held to get technical and expert input into reviewing the evidence base, Management Plan policies, targets and programmes. Board members will be expected to contribute to at least one of the panels on:

- Farming
- Woodland, hedgerows and veteran trees
- Biodiversity and water resources
- Recreation, health and well-being
- Planning
- Transport and Traffic
- The Economy, Tourism and Community Development

4.4 The annual Surrey Hills Symposium on 13th November at Surrey University will be an opportunity to inspire and engage a wider audience in debating the future. The theme is Nature Calling – a 75-Year Vision for a Thriving National Landscape for People and Nature. It will build on the doughnut economics work and be hosted by Professor Lorenzo Fioramonti, Director of the Institute of Sustainability, and chair by Kathy Atkinson. A range of panellists will present their (75 year) vision for a thriving landscape for people and nature, identify the key challenges/ barriers, and their priorities over the next 5 years. This includes

- John Watkins, CEO, National Landscapes Association
- Tim Crawshaw, ex President RTPI and Director of Planning and Placemaking at Surrey CC
- Still Shady, Mobo Award winning rapper and Nature Calling artist
- Molly Biddell, Hampton Estate and Natural Capital Manager for Knepp

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

Annex 1. Summary of Consultation and Adoption programme

Activity	Content	Timescale
Survey To get public feedback and engagement 1.	75 Vision Special qualities Activities Pressures and threats Core principles Priorities for Nature Priorities for People Priorities for Climate	26 th Sept to 28 th October
Panels To get technical and expert input into reviewing the evidence base, Management Plan policies, targets and programmes	Farming Woodland, Hedgerows and Veteran Trees Biodiversity and water resources Recreation, health and well-being Planning Transport and Traffic The Economy, Tourism and Community Development	29 th October - 12 th November
Symposium A public forum to develop the 75-year vision, identifies the barriers and 5-year priorities	Kathy Atkinson, Chair, Surrey Hills NL Professor Lorenzo Fioramonti, Director Institute of Sustainability Still Shady, Artists and Rapper John Watkins, CEO, National Landscapes Association Tim Crawshaw, SCC Director of Placemaking and Planning (ex RTPI President) Molly Biddell, Hampton Estate and Head of Natural Capital, Knepp Estate	13 th November
Governance workshop To consider the governance arrangements for the National Landscape	Surrey Hills Board and Partnership	End of November
Surrey Hills Board	Agree the Consultation Management Plan	11 th December
Management Plan Consultation	Public survey Targeting interest and amenity groups Local authority roadshow	Jan – Feb 2025
Management Plan adoption	Report of Consult and proposed amendments agreed by Surrey Hills Board Adoption by Local Authorities	March to April
Launch	Publication Civic Reception Installation of 75 year markers	April - May

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