



Surrey Hills National Landscape Board

11th December 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) Consider the pre-Consultation Draft Management Plan
- 3) Agree to delegate to the Surrey Hills Board Chair and the Surrey Hills Officers Working Group Chair to sign off the Surrey Hills Management Plan for Consultation.

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 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

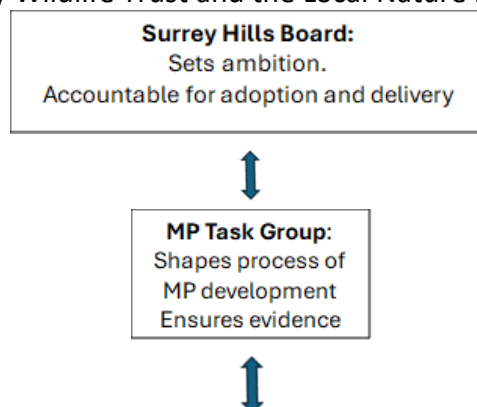
- bringing people together, build relationships and grow commitment
- building consensus around a vision for the future
- establishing a Management Plan around which joint action can happen and resources can be secured

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.

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. 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 2. 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.



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

3.1

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 Wealden Heath 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 financial year, and opportunities have also been taken to integrate the Management Plan within other work streams.

3. Preparing the Management Plan

3.1 The 75th Anniversary of the seminal 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act has provided the inspiration for this Management Plan. It is an opportunity to consider how the landscape has been conserved and enhanced over the past 75 years and to consider the vision, principles and priorities for the Surrey Hills over the next 75 years, to the 22nd Century. In May 2024, a Postcards from the Future campaign was launched by Julian Glover, Chair of the 2019 Designated Landscapes Review. This campaign encouraged the public to describe the Surrey Hills as a thriving place for people and nature in a changing climate by 2200. Over 200 submissions were synthesised using AI to help create vision statements and to help identify the strategic priorities to deliver the vision. This created an online public survey that was launched in September 2024 which received over 2000 submissions identifying the pressures, appraising the vision statements and rating the priorities. Workshops were held in November with landowners and farmers; partner organisation; and the Surrey Hills Planning Officers to consider the survey findings. This was used to inform this Consultation Management Plan.

3.2 The Surrey Hills Symposium, entitled Nature Calling, at Surrey University attended by 300 people was another opportunity to develop the 75 year vision for the Surrey Hills as a thriving place for people and nature. Contributions from the speakers, panellists and guests identified their respective visions, the barriers and priority actions. The performance artist Rosie May recited her poem, The Year Twenty One Hundred, which was based on her appraisal of the Postcard campaign and is featured in the Management Plan.

3.3 This consultation Management Plan has followed the draft guidance prepared by Natural England and in delivery of the relevant themes in the Local Environment Act. Section 6 on Monitoring and Review sets out the outcomes that the Surrey Hills will

need to deliver as part of the Protected Landscape network of National Parks and National Landscapes. The baseline and targets for the Surrey Hills National Landscape are expected to be apportioned by Spring 2025 and this will be included within the final Management Plan for adoption.

4. Programme for Consultation and Adoption

4.1 The Pre-consultation draft Management Plan will be sent out to the Board ahead of the 11th December meeting and will be presented at the meeting. Its structure is:

- Introduction that sets the scene regarding the 1949 Act, the National Landscape designation, the status of the Management Plan and the Core Principles at the heart of securing the long term vision.
- Vision and the Strategic Priorities for Nature, People and Climate
- The Policy Framework
- Targets and monitoring of the Defra Outcomes and how we will use the Doughnut Economici's toolkit

4.2 It is proposed that the Board provides feedback on the Management Plan by 13th January. This will be considered by the Surrey Hills Chair and Task Group on 21st January and a meeting of the Surrey Hills Officers Working Group on 23rd January. It is proposed that the Board delegates this to the Surrey Hills Chair and the Chair of the Planning Officers Working Group to sign off the Consultation Management Plan.

4.3 A six-week consultation will be launched at the end of January. The Consultation will be led by a proactive marketing campaign to ensure that a wide range of audiences have the opportunity to input. This will investigate the opportunity to create Pledges (Joint Accords) which can demonstrate how partners will 'seek to further the purpose of the designation' in implementing the Plan, aligning to the new Levelling Up and Regeneration Act Duty. This exercise will include the following sectors which key representative organisations being identified for:

- Landowners and farmers
- Young people
- Health and well-being sector
- Visitor
- Business
- Access
- Ethnicity

4.4 This period will include a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to assess the impact that the Plan's Priorities and Policies would have on designated habitats, and an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that no section of society is unduly disadvantaged.

4.5 Progress will be reported to the next Board meeting in March. This will be followed by writing up the Report of Consultation and proposed amendments to the Plan to be considered by the Task Group and the Planning Officers Working Group. The Planning Officers will coordinate the adoption by their respective local authorities, including consideration of Natural England's Formal Observations and the proposals for Governance.

Annex 1. Summary of Engagement, Consultation and Adoption Programme

Activity	Content	Timescale
Management Plan Survey	Evidence and engagement 75 Vision Pressures and threats Priorities for Nature Priorities for People Priorities for Climate	October to November
Landowner and farmer workshop	Discuss issues and priorities	6 th November
Surrey Hills Symposium	A public forum to develop the 75-year vision, identifies the barriers and 5-year priorities	13 th November
Management Plan workshops	Review the survey and Management Plan policies	22 nd November
Planning Officers Working Group	Review policies and programme	29 th November
Surrey Hills Board	Agree the Consultation Management Plan arrangements	11 th December
Governance workshop	Surrey Hills Board and Partners to consider the governance arrangements for the National Landscape	Feb 2025
Management Plan Consultation	Public consultation online-survey Targeting interest and amenity groups	Jan – end Feb
Management Plan adoption	Local authority roadshow Adoption by Local Authorities	May - June
Launch	Surrey Hills Partnership Installation of 75 year markers	July

Annex 2.

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