



Surrey Hills
National
Landscape

SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE GOVERNANCE REVIEW

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Resources
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Surrey Hills National Landscape (SHNL) Board recruited consultants from [Resources for Change](#) to support the review of the existing Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) constitution and to draft a new version for consideration by the SHNL Board.

The review was prompted by recognition that the current governance model needed amending to ensure it was fit for purpose to better support the new SHNL Management Plan due to be published in autumn 2025.

This review comes at a time of change for National Landscapes, which was prompted by the [‘Landscapes Review: National Parks and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(AONBs\)’](#) report by Julian Glover in 2019, including the subsequent change of name and aspirations of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to become National Landscapes. There is an anticipated change to the statutory duties of National Landscapes and work is in progress to extend the boundary of the SHNL, which will change the dynamic of relationships going forward.

Surrey County Council and District Councils are involved in the first phase of Devolution in Surrey, which will result in two or three Unitary Councils and means that any proposed governance amendments will need to be flexible enough to incorporate future changes.

SHNL is impacted by significant urban pressures and there is considerable interest from the community, which will increase if the extension of the boundary goes ahead. The governance of the National Landscape should therefore consider how to best ensure all voices are heard, and to encourage and incorporate diversity. This will involve engaging stakeholders beyond the current JAC that are collaboratively contributing to the delivery of the Management Plan and furthering the statutory duties of the National Landscape.

The current JAC constitution is complex, with a Partnership, Board (with Core Members, Delivery Partners and Advisory Members), Members Advisory Group and Officers Working Group. It was last formally updated in 2013 and since then there have been some subsequent changes, including the appointment of an independent Chair, ceasing the annual Partnership meetings, delivering an annual symposium with Surrey University and, Surrey County Council now acting as Secretariat for the Board. There is an aspiration to include Patrons for the SHNL.

In conducting this work, good governance practice from other organisations, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), has been considered, along with thinking from outside the National Landscape family.

Given the importance of good governance, and the scope of national and local changes that are being proposed, this review has included looking beyond the constitution of the JAC to consider broader governance arrangements.

This report summarises the findings from an online survey, desk research and extensive engagement with a range of national and local partners. It recommends a new approach to governance for the SHNL, which aims to address the challenges identified and enable the SHNL to better deliver the statutory purposes and Management Plan in the future. It has been shared with the Steering Group and SHNL Board for consideration and execution of their preferred next steps.

Insights included identifying several challenges with the existing governance which has led to a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, insufficient strategic performance management, and a lack of diversity.

Risks associated with ineffective governance include criticism from external bodies, conflicts between partners, ineffective delivery and poor resource allocation, stifling innovation, alienating stakeholders, undermining brand status and legitimacy, and hampering the ambitious delivery of the Management Plan. Ultimately, this could undermine the furthering of the statutory purpose of the SHNL.

Recommendations include

- Adopting new governance principles such as being enthusiastic, Management Plan-focused, strategic, knowledgeable, accountable, inclusive, and innovative to guide the new governance model.
- Simplifying the structure, with clear roles, a business plan, and mechanisms for broader participation and transparency.
- The introduction of an Executive Management Board (EMB) with Delivery Groups and a Partnership Forum, replacing the current JAC structure.
- The introduction of a Hosting Agreement between the EMB, SHNL Team and Surrey County Council, agreed by Defra and Natural England.

The new governance structure can be thought of in the following way:



View- A **Partnership Forum** engages a diverse range of partners, gathering feedback and good practice to capture a broader view of progress in delivering the Management Plan.



Glue- The **Executive Management Board** facilitates the strategy to deliver the Management Plan, focusing on strategic oversight, financial management, performance reporting, and fostering collaboration.



Do- **Delivery Groups** engage sector experts to advocate for and deliver against Defra's three core outcomes: Thriving plants and wildlife, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

To ensure transparency, scrutiny and finance roles will need to be defined, this could be as a dedicated sub-group, incorporated into the wider governance or through existing Accountable Body structures. Scrutiny is needed of decision-making, financial control, and other processes.

The governance model should be reviewed once the SHNL boundary extension, devolution of Councils in Surrey, and changes to statutory duties are completed, with potential consideration for Conservation Board status.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Surrey Hills National Landscape (SHNL) Board recruited consultants from [Resources for Change](#) to support the review of the existing Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) constitution and to draft a new version for consideration by the SHNL Board.

The review was prompted by recognition that the current governance model needed amending to ensure it was fit for purpose to facilitate the delivery of the new SHNL Management Plan, due to be published in autumn 2025.

The brief asked for:

- A review of the recommendations and existing guidance for National Landscapes, and of the existing governance arrangements for SHNL
- Interviews with a selection of partners and interested parties.
- Identifying and overcoming barriers to diverse governance
- Drafting a new draft constitution for consideration, setting clear performance standards

In conducting this work, good governance practice from other organisations, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), has been considered, along with thinking from outside the National Landscape family.

Given the importance of good governance, and the scope of national and local changes that are on the horizon, this review has included looking beyond the constitution of the JAC to consider broader governance arrangements.

This report summarises the findings from desk research, an online survey and extensive engagement with a range of national and local partners and recommends a new approach to governance for the SHNL, which aims to address the challenges identified and enable the SHNL to further the statutory purposes and better deliver the new Management Plan. It has been shared with the Steering Group and Surrey Hills National Landscape Board for consideration.



2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 ABOUT NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

National Landscapes are protected areas, which, along with National Parks, are the Nation's Protected Landscapes.

The [statutory purpose](#) of a National Landscape is **to protect land within the area to conserve and enhance its natural beauty**.

The [natural beauty criterion](#) that areas must meet to be designated an AONB is a combination of factors:

- Landscape quality, where natural or man-made landscape is good quality
- Scenic quality, such as striking coastal landforms
- Relative wildness, such as distance from housing or having few roads
- Relative tranquillity, where natural sounds, such as streams or birdsong are predominant
- Natural heritage features, such as distinctive geology or species and habitat
- Cultural heritage, which can include the built environment that makes the area unique, such as archaeological remains or historic parkland

The formal designation for a National Landscape is 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB), which were originally designated under legislation in the [National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949](#), with additional legislation added in the [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(CROW Act\), Part IV](#).

National Landscapes can also be designated as independent Conservation Boards under the CROW Act. The legal purposes of a Conservation Board are:

- (a) the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty, and
- (b) the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty,

Defra's mission for National Landscapes:

'A coherent national network of beautiful, nature-rich spaces that all parts of society can easily access and enjoy. National Landscapes will support thriving local communities and economies, improve our public health and wellbeing, drive forward nature recovery, and build our resilience to climate change.'

Defra expects all Protected Landscapes to achieve three key outcomes from the [Environmental Improvement Plan, 2023](#):

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

There are 46 National Landscapes in the UK, which collaborate through the National Landscapes Association (NLA). The NLA strategic ambitions are:

- Place: protect and restore beautiful landscapes - for nature and for people
- People: bring natural beauty into people's lives and give people a stake in natural beauty
- Partnerships: inspire and empower strong coalitions to deliver

National Landscapes are funded by Defra (75%) and Local Authorities (25%) to develop and deliver five-year Management Plans for the areas.

2.1.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 84 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 sets out the powers of **Local Authorities** responsible for National Landscapes.

(4) A local planning authority whose area consists of or includes the whole or any part of a National Landscape has power, subject to subsections (5) and (6), to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape or so much of it as is included in their area.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affects AONBs in England, to '*seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*'.

Every National Landscape must have a **Management Plan** agreed and published by the relevant Local Authority (the Accountable Body), which is reviewed every five years.

In the Defra [Guidance for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#), it specifies that relevant Local Authorities can delegate authority to 'AONB Partnerships' to create and manage a Management Plan. This **could be** a Joint Advisory Committee or an AONB Committee (which is taken to mean a Joint Committee).



2.2 ABOUT SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The SHNL was designated in 1958, as one of the first Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It covers a quarter of Surrey.

There is a small core team of 3.4FTE includes the SHNL Director, plus a Programme Manager (1FTE) and other staff funded through additional grants. The core budget for the SHNL team was £240k in 2024/25, with significant grant funding secured in addition to this.

The Accountable Body for SHNL is Surrey County Council (SCC), who employ the staff team and provide back-office services and support, along with a financial contribution towards the delivery of the Management Plan. SCC Democratic Services provides secretarial support to the Surrey Hills National Landscape Board.

There are some funding agreements in place between the Surrey Hills Society and the Surrey Hills National Landscape Board (vis Surrey County Council) to fund staff to deliver Farming in Protected Landscapes and Access funding from Defra.

2.2.1 THE SURREY HILLS FAMILY

As the remit of National Landscapes is so broad and the funding for the SHNL team is limited and focused on Defra outcomes, the Surrey Hills Family has been developed to deliver wider outcomes for businesses, the community and the arts. There are three bodies involved in this:

- [Surrey Hills Enterprises](#)- an independent membership organisation supporting local enterprises to develop a thriving rural economy, promote sustainable tourism, increase environmental sustainability and motivate the community to buy local.
- [Surrey Hills Society](#)- an independent charity encouraging people and families to explore the outstanding landscape of the Surrey Hills.
- [Surrey Hills Arts](#)- Surrey County Council working in partnership to deliver a programme of arts events, installations and experiences in the Surrey Hills to connect people to the special landscape.



These groups are licensed to use the Surrey Hills trademark, with the aim to promote the Surrey Hills National Landscape, and to develop and support initiatives to encourage economic activity and improve social or environmental well-being within the Surrey Hills community and its neighbouring

counties. The National Landscape Association has now registered the Surrey Hills as a trademark, alongside other National Landscape brands, and SHNL are awaiting the licence agreement from them. Once they have this, the licence can be applied to users. This is important in terms of developing and controlling the brand and managing relationships.

Surrey Hills Enterprises and the Surrey Hills Society are not funded through the SHNL funding agreement. Surrey Hills Arts staff are jointly funded through SCC and the SHNL funding agreement. All three groups secure external funding to further their aims.

2.2.2 CURRENT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

According to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Constitution for the Surrey Hills National Landscape Board, the current governance is complex and would require significant administration time to be managed effectively.

CURRENT CONSTITUTION:

The current constitution includes four key governance groups, plus representatives from some of the Surrey Hills Family.

- Surrey Hills Partnership- advise and scrutinise work of the Board. Meets twice per year.
- Surrey Hills AONB Board- JAC. Meets four times per year.
- Members Advisory Group- supports the preparation for Board meetings and implements Board decisions. Meets four times per year before Board meetings. Meeting are minuted and circulated to Board members.
- Officers Working Group- Provide professional advice in relation to the terms of reference, work and activities. May set up task groups. Meet as and when needed.
- Surrey Hills Family
 - Surrey Hills Enterprises Community Interest Company
 - Surrey Hills Society
 - Surrey Hills Arts

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the SH Board is as follows:

- Representatives of the principal funding partners (“the Core Members”)
 - Natural England, on behalf of Defra
 - Guildford Borough Council
 - Mole Valley District Council
 - Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
 - Surrey County Council
 - Tandridge District Council
 - The National Trust
 - Waverley Borough Council
- Representatives from the Surrey Hills Family (Delivery Partners)
- Up to four representatives of the Advisory Members of the Surrey Hills Partnership

- One representative of the Surrey Association of Local Councils.

ROLES AND PROCEDURES

The JAC constitution states that it was established under the Local Government Act 1972 and 2000 to oversee and scrutinise the work of the SHNL. The JAC is therefore not a decision-making body.

Current procedures:

- Only Core Members vote on statutory or financial matters.
- The Board appoints the Surrey Hills Director, with SCC being responsible for HR functions and back-office.
- The Board oversees a five-year rolling business plan for staff, with financial contributions agreed annually.
- Agendas need to be sent out 7 days in advance and all members need to declare conflicts of interest.

The constitution was last formally updated in 2013 and is not manageable within current resources. There have been subsequent changes, including the appointment of an independent Chair, ceasing the Partnership meetings and Members Advisory Group, delivering an annual symposium with Surrey University, and Surrey County Council now acting as Secretariat for the Board. The Officers Working Group has become a specialist Planning group. There remains an aspiration to include Patrons for the SHNL.



3.0 METHODOLOGY

This review was conducted between November 2024 and March 2025. The methodology included several stages:

- Desk research into national and local context.
- An online survey which was conducted with Surrey Hills Board Members and the Officer Working Group- the survey can be found in appendix 1.
- The results of this survey were shared with the Surrey Hills National Landscape Board for discussion.
- One-to-one or small group online structured discussions with partners and stakeholders, as shown in the table below.

Organisation	Discussion
<i>National Landscape Association</i>	National approach to National Landscapes
<i>Independent</i>	Broader governance discussions and IUCN
<i>AFA Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning</i>	Proposed SHNL boundary extension
<i>Independent</i>	Findings about governance from engagement for the Landscape Review, 2019
<i>Defra</i>	Current thinking about National Landscape governance and thoughts for the future
<i>Natural England</i>	Current thinking about National Landscape governance and thoughts for the future
<i>Chilterns Conservation Board</i>	Experience of Conservation Board status
<i>High Weald National Landscape</i>	Current governance and thoughts for the future
<i>Surrey County Council</i>	Feedback on current SHNL governance and thoughts for the future
<i>Surrey Hills Family</i>	Feedback on current SHNL governance and thoughts for the future
<i>SHNL Team</i>	Feedback on current SHNL governance and thoughts for the future

This review has been overseen by a Steering Group with representatives from Natural England, the National Landscape Association and the SHNL Board. The findings from this research were shared with the SHNL Steering Group, Defra and Natural England, and a preferred option is included in this report.

4.0 FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW

The online survey was made available to the SHNL Board and Officers Working Group but was only completed by members of the Board. There were 14 responses in total. A detailed report showing the results of survey can be found in appendix 2.

The desk research and structured discussions were interesting and resulted in an in-depth understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by the SHNL.

A summary of findings from the survey, structured discussions and desk research are presented below as answers to four key questions:

- What's happening elsewhere that plays into this review?
- What's going well?
- What's not going so well?
- What need to change and how?

4.1 WHAT'S HAPPENING ELSEWHERE THAT PLAYS INTO THIS REVIEW?

The review has resulted in a better understanding the international, national and local strategic drivers, which will help ensure that the findings from local discussions can be set in this context.

4.1.1 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has issued [governance guidance](#) for the Green List, which been agreed as an international standard for the accreditation. A 'Green List' site is a protected or conserved area that reaches the IUCN Green List Standard and is certified and recognised as achieving ongoing results for people and nature in a fair and effective way. The Green List Criteria for Good Governance are shown in appendix 3. This offers some key principles, which are incorporated into the governance review for the SHNL in the Governance Principles section in 'Findings' in Section 4.4 below.

4.1.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT

In 2019, there was a major review published about National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England. It was commissioned by the Government and completed by Julian Gover: [The Landscape Review](#). The Review made several recommendations, which are still being considered by Defra. The first change that resulted from the Review was to change the name of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to National Landscapes (NLs).

GOVERNANCE

According to the CRoW Act:

'(2) Subject to subsection (3), the relevant local authority in respect of an area of outstanding natural beauty shall, before the end of the period of three years beginning with whichever is the later of—

(a) the commencement of this section, or

(b) the date on which the area is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty,

prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

(4) A plan prepared under subsection (1) or (2) is to be known as an area of outstanding natural beauty management plan.

(5) A conservation board or relevant local authority may, instead of preparing a plan under subsection (1) or (2),—

*(a) **review** any plan for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty which has been prepared before the commencement of this section—*

*(i) **by a local authority**, or*

*(ii) **by a joint committee** established by two or more local authorities, and*

*(b) **adopt the plan** as reviewed as their area of outstanding natural beauty management plan, and*

*(c) **publish it** under subsection (1) or (2) within the time required by that subsection.'*

This suggests that, where there is more than one Local Authority, the Management Plan and its implementation must be prepared by a Joint Committee of relevant Local Authorities and adopted by relevant Local Authorities.

In the Defra [Guidance for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#), it specifies that relevant Local Authorities can delegate authority to 'AONB Partnerships' to create and manage a Management Plan. 'This **could be** a Joint Advisory Committee or an AONB Committee' (which is taken to mean a Joint Committee). The legislation for these committees is set out in the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972.

- **Joint Advisory Committee**- Two or more Local Authorities may join in appointing a committee, to **advise** the appointing authority or authorities. i.e. is not decision-making.
- **AONB Committee (Joint Committee)**- Two or more local authorities to **discharge** Local Authority functions. i.e. is decision-making. Decision-making for financial purposes rests with the Local Authorities.

Membership of these can include individuals who are not members of the appointing authorities.

The statutory National Landscape Management Plan, and its implementation, would need to be formally agreed by the relevant authorities through a Joint Committee.

It is not clear whether other governance arrangements would meet legal requirements, and legal advice would need to be sought by the Accountable Body. However, Defra are open to other models being proposed and this has prompted the recommendations below.

The Landscape Review highlighted that the governance of AONBs suffered many of the same traits as National Park Authorities, these included that governance:

- Involved too many members to be effective
- Lacked diversity
- Lacked people who emphasise the purposes of securing nature and connecting people
- Were too focused on planning and day-to-day administration
- Were too bureaucratic
- Felt remote to local people

It has been recognised that the legislation and governance for National Landscapes is outdated and bureaucratic and that governance is generally disproportionate to the funding and staffing available. This will be addressed nationally by a planned change to the statutory purposes of National Landscapes, and refreshed guidance on Protected Landscape governance.

There have been discussions about independent models for National Landscapes. As National Landscapes differ considerably in scale and complexity, it is felt that there isn't a 'one size fits all' solution and a more flexible approach is needed.

The most obvious independent model would be a Conservation Board. These were set up specifically to enable AONBs to become independent through the CROW Act in 2000. There are only two Conservation Boards in England: The Chilterns and The Cotswolds. When these were set up, additional funding was made available to them to secure back-office support.

New Management Plan Guidance for Protected Landscape in England from Natural England is in development. Appendix 4 sets out the principles for the effective delivery of Management plans. These will be considered in the context of governance principles for SHNL.

Given the fact that Local Authorities have delegated statutory duties to SHNL, it is important that the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (Nolan Principles) are considered in the development of governance principles, given SHNL is delivering activities with public monies. These are:

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity:** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

PURPOSES

Withing the next 12-18 months, it is likely that the statutory purposes of the National Landscapes will change to better deliver Defra's outcomes:

- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Whilst the Landscape Review stressed the need for Protected Landscapes to recover and enhance nature, it also highlighted their other key roles, which include proving enjoyment, spiritual refreshment, support for health and wellbeing, sustainable tourism, and working for vibrant communities, with meaningful social and economic support.

The Defra outcomes above, therefore, do not appear to focus on the entire scope of the National Landscape remit. Management Plans and the aspirations of the NLA both address the broader definition of 'natural beauty' reflected in the Landscape Review. It seems that involvement and funding from other departments, such as the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) or Housing, Communities & Local Government (HCLG) may be needed to fully realise the potential for communities, health and wellbeing, place making, economic growth and culture.

Government funding is under increasing pressure and, whilst the importance of core funding is acknowledged, there is an aspiration for all Protected Landscapes to secure longer-term funding from a range of sources, which could help address the broader remit and encourage wider innovation opportunities.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There is considerable focus on the environment currently as a result of the Environment Act, 2021, which has led to several relevant changes to legislation, including:

- [Strengthened Biodiversity Duty](#), which requires all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- [Biodiversity Net Gain](#) mandatory requirement for new developments.
- [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#), which tasks responsible authorities to agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions to achieving those priorities. One of the recommendations from the Landscape Review was that Protected Landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries.
- [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework](#), which sets out the ambition for how Protected Landscapes are expected to achieve three outcomes from the Environment Improvement Plan 2023:
 - Goal 1- Thriving Plants and wildlife
 - Goal 7- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Goal 10-Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- [Land Use Framework 2025](#), which will set out a vision for land use in England, and act as a tool to drive better decision-making on how land is used and managed, by farmers and landowners right through to local authorities and developers.

The most significant legal change to the delivery of Protected Landscapes in recent years was introduced in 2023 through Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA). Relevant authorities must now **‘seek to further’** the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes (previously ‘have regard to’). New guidance on this has been issued and this should have a positive impact on the delivery of Management Plans in Protected Landscapes.

4.1.3 OTHER PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

In considering the possible options for governance of SHNL, existing structures in other National Landscapes were investigated.

Structured discussions were held with the High Weald National Landscape and the Chilterns Conservation Board.

HIGH WEALD NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The [High Weald National Landscape](#) has the following structure:

- High Weald National Landscape Partnership- formed of the High Weald JAC and National Landscape Team.
- High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, does not have an independent Chair.
- High Weald Management Board.
- Officers Steering Group.
- Other specialist sub-groups, as required.

Secretariate is provided by the National Landscape Team.

Conservation Board status has previously been investigated but did not go ahead due to not all Local Authorities agreeing.

Whilst the governance is stable, supportive and active, there are concerns about not having a champion to raise the profile of the National Landscape, the membership is not diverse, and representatives of more specialist organisations are not involved.

CHILTERNS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The [Chilterns National Landscape](#) has a Conservation Board, which is an independent body. This has 27 members. Membership is governed by the CRow Act and Establishment Order.

Whilst the independent status of the Conservation Board is welcomed, challenges include having insufficient resources to administer the governance, the cost of providing back-office services and support, and insufficient specialist support. It is felt there is a disconnection to and lack of status with Local Authorities.

Internet research into other National Landscape shows that other governance models are utilised.

THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The [North Wessex Downs National Landscape](#) has a Council of Partners, which consists of 35 members in total. Natural England, as a member of the Partnership, represents central government. The nine local authorities whose areas make up the North Wessex Downs are represented by elected councillors and officers. Other members include The National Farmers' Union, Country Land and Business Association and community representation.

It also has a Management Working Group, which is accountable to, and reports to, the Council of Partners and helps take forward the work of the National Landscape team between Partnership meetings. Membership includes a representative of Natural England, independent specialists in areas such as land management, land use planning, archaeology and heritage, tourism and project management, and local authority officers appointed for their professional expertise. The Vice Chair of the Council of Partners, who must be an elected member of a partner local authority, also sits on the Management Working Group.

MENDIP HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The Mendip Hills National Landscape has a Partnership, which provides a strategic and co-ordinated lead, and a Partnership Committee, which co-ordinates several working groups:

- Farming in Protected Landscapes Local Assessment Panel
- Mendip Hills Advisory Panel
- Land Management Advisory Group
- Access Group

4.1.4 LOCAL CONTEXT

Several key drivers for change emerged from the research and discussions.

In 2024, the [English Devolution White Paper](#) set out the government's strategy to enhance devolution across England. Surrey will be in the first phase of this, with the county being split into two or three Unitary Councils, rather than one County Council and 11 District and Borough Councils. This will reduce the number of Local Authorities involved in the governance of SHNL and focus decision-making.

A [review of the boundary](#) of the SHNL has been undertaken and is planned to be presented to the Secretary of State for final agreement by the end of 2025. If successful, this would mean that parts of Greater London and Hampshire would be included, and consideration of their role in the governance structure would be needed.

A [new Management Plan](#) for SHNL will be published in autumn 2025, and the intention is to propose governance changes at the same time. The Management Plan is the key statutory requirement of National Landscapes and is a partnership document that relies on strong partnership relationships and processes to maximise delivery.

The revised Management Plan priorities are:

- A place for nature-enhancing nature conservation on land and in water
- A place for people- public access and engagement with nature and landscape, thriving rural community, protection of heritage and landscape
- In a changing climate- reducing carbon emissions

A new [Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Surrey](#) is being developed and should be published in 2025 and should be considered alongside the Management Plan, ensuring SHNL is leading this for the National Landscape and adding value rather than duplicating.

There is growing development pressure in Surrey, with planning permission for over 15,000 new homes in Surrey possible in 2025. This is controversial and ensuring that the governance model enables due consideration of the National Landscape will be essential.

4.2 SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE GOVERNANCE- WHAT'S GOING WELL?

Through the survey, structured discussions and meetings with the Steering Group and SHNL Board, several areas were highlighted that were going well currently, which have been included in the thinking behind the recommendations. These are presented in the table below.

	What's going well?
<i>SHNL Team</i>	The team were seen as delivering above expectation with such a small number of staff.
<i>SHNL Board</i>	The Board are enthusiastic about the Surrey Hills and its natural beauty. The role of an independent Chair has been welcomed. The Board feel they are well connected to communities and that there is a strong atmosphere of inclusivity.
<i>Surrey Hills Family</i>	The Surrey Hills Family add value to the SHNL by delivering on a range of broader outcomes for the economy, community and culture, with little or no funding. Regular Chair's meetings have helped with collaboration between organisations.
<i>Officer's Working Group</i>	It was felt that the Officer's Working Group, which now focuses on planning, was an excellent forum for discussion of planning issues and solutions.
<i>Partnerships</i>	There are strong relationships with key partners.
<i>Symposium</i>	The Surrey Hills Symposium, which showcases projects and ideas, promotes innovative thinking from good practice outside the SHNL, involves partners, wider stakeholders and the public, and gives a broader audience an opportunity to feedback to the SHNL, was seen as a resounding success.

4.3 SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE GOVERNANCE- WHAT'S NOT GOING SO WELL?

The current governance of the SHNL is considered to not be fit for purpose, hence the need for this review. There are several areas not going so well and these were the focus of this review. They are outlined in the table below.

What's not going so well?

<i>SHNL Team</i>	<p>With such as small core team, the administration of the governance, as written in the constitution has not been possible. This has meant that Partnership and Members Advisory Board meetings have not taken place.</p> <p>There is insufficient capacity within the SHNL Team, and opportunities to build capacity through external funding should be encouraged, including the proposal to create the Surrey Hills Foundation as an independent charity, or as part of the Surrey Hills Society. As part of this the future of the Surrey Hills Trust Fund with the Community Foundation for Surrey is being considered. One option is a NHLF Landscapes Connections bid, which would support organisation capacity and the delivery of the Management Plan by enhancing the ability to secure grant funding and encourage donations, corporate giving and legacies.</p>
<i>SHNL Board</i>	<p>Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities, especially around decision making and finance. SHNL need an Executive decision-making body that provides transparency and clarity around decision-making.</p> <p>The lack of formalised decision-making means that delivery relies more on relationships and good will.</p> <p>Some feel that the Board is too formal and therefore doesn't encourage innovation, felt disconnected, and Board members were not empowered to get involved outside formal meetings.</p> <p>There is insufficient strategic performance management or monitoring and a lack of scrutiny and financial oversight.</p> <p>There seems to be a lack of clarity on priorities, especially between statutory and voluntary aspirations.</p> <p>There is little diversity represented in the current governance.</p> <p>Whilst the annual symposium was well received, there were few opportunities for wider stakeholder involvement.</p>
<i>Surrey Hills Family</i>	<p>There are concerns about how well some of the SH Family are aligned to the priorities of the SHNL. It is important that, as the SH Family share the Surrey Hills Trademark, they need to ensure that their work is furthering the statutory duties of the National Landscape. There seems a need for more formal involvement with the development of the Management Plan and a</p>

	better understanding of priorities and how the SH Family can help deliver these.
<i>Relationships</i>	Whilst relationships with SCC are generally good, there is tension between the SHNL Team and Surrey County Council, as the Host Authority, with regard to budgetary and staff resources. This seems to be due to needing a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities, more focused delivery and a better understanding of each other's priorities, identifying where there are opportunities to develop a more collaborative culture and best add value.
<i>Partnerships</i>	Specialist organisations tend not to get involved in governance meetings as the agenda is too broad and does not feel relevant enough.

4.3.1 RISK ANALYSIS

It is useful to consider the challenges outlined above in terms of the risks these present to furthering the statutory duties of the National Landscape.

Challenge	Risk	Mitigation
<i>Lack of resources to administer governance effectively</i>	Governance is not administered as described in the Constitution, and is open to criticism, resulting in the reputation of SHNL being tainted.	Governance structure needs to be focused and manageable.
<i>Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities</i>	Tensions arise between organisations and individuals, which hamper progress on the Management Plan.	Roles and responsibilities to be clearly defined and easily available to all parties.
<i>Lack of formalised decision-making</i>	Lack of agreement on strategic direction and delivery, leading to conflicts. Authority rests with too few people and may not represent wider stakeholders. Key stakeholders responsible for further the duties do not feel involved and therefore deliver less. Decisions become reliant on relationships and good will.	Formal decision-making body, with appropriate, well-informed members.
<i>Structure is over formal</i>	Creativity and innovation may not be encouraged, resulting in less ambitious delivery.	Introduce more flexibility into the governance structure to enable the SHNL to respond to new opportunities and ideas.
<i>Lack of performance</i>	Decision-making is not evidence driven, and key activities are not	Decision-making body has key role in reporting against performance

<i>monitoring and financial oversight</i>	prioritised, resulting in less effective delivery on key priorities. Resources are not allocated effectively, resulting in poor delivery of priority activities.	and finance, with learning informing the delivery of the Management Plan.
<i>Lack of clarity on priorities</i>	Assumptions are made about who is delivering priorities, which may not be correct. Priorities could be missed, or conflicts arise due to key partners not being on board.	Business Plan for the decision-making body, which collates Delivery Group action plans to ensure clear accountability.
<i>Little diversity and insufficient opportunities for wider stakeholder involvement</i>	The view of wider stakeholders is not represented. This could stifle innovation and risks alienating those who think the SHNL is not for them.	Ensure there is a formal mechanism, such as an annual survey, for a diverse range of stakeholders to feed into the delivery of the Management Plan. Invite under-represented groups to partake in Delivery Groups where appropriate.
<i>Lack of alignment of the SH Family to the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan</i>	Brand status and legitimacy is undermined and open to criticism, negatively impacting the reputation of the SHNL.	SH Family brought into the governance structure and part of the Delivery Groups, contributing to action plans to help deliver the Management Plan.
<i>Tension between Accountable Body and SHNL Team</i>	Lack of good will and disagreements resulting in less time and effort being invested into furthering the duties of the National Landscape.	Clearly defined Hosting Agreement between the Accountable Body, the decision-making body and SHNL Team, agreed by Defra and Natural England, setting out roles, responsibilities, delegated authority and funding.
<i>Lack of involvement of specialist organisations</i>	Ambitious delivery of the Management Plan is hampered by lack of involvement of those who could have most impact.	Delivery Groups focus agendas to ensure they are relevant to specialist organisations who have the most significant impact on Management Plan delivery and furthering the purpose of the National Landscape.



4.4 WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE AND HOW?

The sections below set out proposed solutions to the issues raised, which considers the findings from the survey and discussions, learning from the desk research and the experience of the consultants from within and outside the Protected Landscape sector. The proposed solutions are subject to agreement by relevant parties, and legal advice, where required.

4.4.1 GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW

It was felt that the principles under-pinning good governance were as important as the model chosen. The following principles were raised through the discussions:

- Governance should reflect ‘convene, enable, deliver’- bringing people together to build partnerships.
- The governing body needs its own set of goals and action plan in supporting the delivery of the MP, with processes and procedures that enable partnership working.
- With the upcoming changes in remit, boundary and devolution, the governance will need future proofing.
- There was a desire for reduced bureaucracy and complexity leading to more innovation.
- Cultural change was needed to ensure all Statutory Authorities and NL are working together to achieve common goals.
- Governance, team structure and resource allocation should respond to changing priorities.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION

The following suggested governance principles are adapted from the Natural England Management Plan guidance and the IUCN Green List criteria, with consideration of the Nolan Principles and findings from the review above.

Governance principles

<i>Enthusiastic and committed</i>	Members of National Landscape management bodies are enthusiastic, with a genuine appreciation of natural beauty and their area and be committed to furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.
<i>Management Plan focused</i>	Governance is focused on the stated outcomes in the Management Plan and facilitates the joint strategic delivery of the Plan, thus furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.
<i>Strategic and focused on implementation</i>	National Landscape governance should be manageable and agile, focused on driving the ambitious delivery of Management Plans, and not overly burdened by procedures and processes.
<i>Knowledgeable and experienced</i>	<p>Membership of the governance structure should ensure that the National Landscape has the right expertise to deliver the ambitions of the Management Plan. Representatives are selected for their passion, skills, and experience reflective of the Management Plan outcomes.</p> <p>Knowledge should include scientific, experiential, local and traditional, and reflect an understanding of national and regional context, considering historical changes and future projections in social, ecological and climate conditions.</p>
<i>Accountable and legitimate</i>	The governance is fully transparent, legitimate and accountable.
<i>Forward-facing, positive and co-operative</i>	Partnership working is positive, co-operative and outward-looking, fostering a positive culture to seek all opportunities to collaborate to deliver Management Plan outcomes.
<i>Inclusive and diverse</i>	National Landscapes management bodies reflect and account for diversity in their society – welcoming young voices, people from cities and beyond, bringing together stakeholders of all kinds to ensure Boards are well informed about a wide range of interests and specialist expertise. Every effort should be made to achieve diversity of social background, gender, age, ethnicity and (dis)ability.
<i>Innovative and enterprising</i>	Governance structures aim to deliver Plans innovatively, being creative with core funding, leveraging other sources of income at scale, including through charitable routes.
<i>Inspirational and ambitious</i>	Representatives should be inspirational leaders in their fields, able to advocate and champion action to deliver ambition.
<i>Self-critical and adaptive</i>	Representatives strive for improvement, learning from each other and partners and working with designated landscapes elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe.
<i>Influencing the conditions to support delivery</i>	Representatives should have the authority to use their collective influence to shape the agendas of local, regional, and national organisations to further the purposes of the Protected Landscape, for example advocating for the appropriate targeting of fundamental delivery mechanisms.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

The following processes are suggested to help with the successful implementation of the governance principles:

Implementation of Governance Principles

All forums, from board level to working groups are structured in such a way as to enable a strong focus on delivering the outcomes of the Management Plan and furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.

The governance structure and process for establishment and membership is clearly defined and documented, in accordance with statutory purpose, promoted to the public and widely accepted.

A business plan for the managing body clearly sets out their roles and responsibilities, actions, timescale and performance indicators used to measure success. Progress towards this is published annually.

Responsibilities for Management Plan delivery are clearly defined and publicly available.

Results from monitoring, evaluation and consultation are used to inform management and planning processes.

Key documents, such as the Management Plan and financial oversight, are easily accessible and presented in a way that is easy to understand.

The governance structure has adaptive management, is monitored to consider how successful it is being and is reviewed every five years alongside the Management Plan to ensure it continues to facilitate the priorities identified.

Where there is an Accountable Body, a Hosting Agreements is created, clearly setting out roles and responsibilities of both parties to clarify the relationship. This should be approved by Defra and Natural England.

National Landscape Team roles and responsibilities are adapted to retain focus on the agreed priorities of the Management Plan.

An induction programme is available for new members to ensure they are aware of the Management Plan and how this relates to their responsibilities.

Mechanisms are introduced to ensure there are opportunities for broader participation in Management Plan processes, decision making and activities, recognising the rights of local communities and encouraging sharing of good practice.

Governance is transparent and open, incorporating performance, scrutiny, conflict resolution and risk management. Complaint and grievance procedures are easily available to the public.

4.4.2 GOVERNANCE CRITERIA

Based on the findings above the following key criteria for improved governance have been identified to help address the governance principles. These form the core of the recommendations of a new governance approach:

Criteria	Explanation
<i>Better decision-making</i>	Ensuring decision-making is clear, accountable and transparent, and is focused on strategic delivery and implementation.
<i>Reduced bureaucracy and complexity</i>	Reducing the layers of governance and simplifying processes and procedures to enable more focus on Management Plan delivery, whilst retaining representation.
<i>Reduced formality</i>	Encouraging an open and informal culture that encourages collaboration and a more ambitious and diverse approach.
<i>Reduced resource requirements</i>	Minimising administration, where possible, to enable more focus on Management Plan delivery.
<i>Enhanced specialist engagement</i>	Encouraging the engagement of inspirational leaders in their field, to advocate and champion actions that drive the delivery of the Management Plan.
<i>Enhanced scrutiny</i>	Ensuring the National Landscape is fully transparent, legitimate and accountable.
<i>Enhanced clarity</i>	Ensuring the governance is easy to understand, with clear roles and responsibilities.
<i>Enhanced diversity</i>	Reflecting and accounting for diversity in society.
<i>Enhanced innovation</i>	Encouraging creativity in terms of Management Plan delivery and funding.
<i>Enhanced collaboration</i>	Encouraging positive, co-operative and outward-looking partnership working.

4.4.3 POTENTIAL GOVERNANCE MODEL OPTIONS

Part of the solution to the governance issues raised could be the introduction of a different model of governance. There are several models available, which are discussed below.

As mentioned in Section 4.1.2 above, in the Defra [Guidance for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#), it specifies that relevant Local Authorities can delegate authority to 'AONB Partnerships' to create and manage a Management Plan. '*This **could be** a Joint Advisory Committee or an AONB Committee*' (which is taken to mean a Joint Committee).

It is not clear whether other governance arrangements will be acceptable, but Defra is open to considering other options.

FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW:

- Some people were interested in considering independence from the Accountable Body.
- A focused executive body should be introduced, selected for their skills, with strategic responsibility and decision- making powers.
- A wider partnership should reflect the community and a range of interests, encourage diversity and engage stakeholders- with a formal feedback mechanism.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Bearing in mind the feedback from the survey and discussions, and the context in which this review is taking place, the governance models that have been considered mostly retain an Accountable Body, with only one, a Conservation Board, being independent. Other independent models, such as a CIC or Charity were considered but discounted as they would share all the disadvantages of the Conservation Board, with fewer advantages, and risked making the National Landscape less relevant to public bodies who are tasked with furthering the purpose of the National Landscape. The remaining potential governance models are summarised in the table and schematics below.

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Option	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 0- Retain current governance structure.	Keep governance and constitution as is.	No resources required to advise on and undertake changes to governance. Remains a formal Local Authority Committee. Retains SCC as Accountable Body.	Existing governance is not fit for purpose and unmanageable with current resources.
Option 1- Retain current governance structure with Delivery Committee replacing the Members Advisory Group.	<p>The existing SHNL Board and Officer's Working Group would remain, and a Delivery Committee would replace the Members Advisory Group.</p> <p>Delivery Committee made up of members of the SHNL Board.</p> <p>Would meet quarterly before the Board meetings.</p> <p>Responsible for facilitating Management Plan delivery and making operational decisions to a delegated level, monitoring performance indicators and finance.</p> <p>Would share decision-making with the Board for advisory purposes.</p> <p>This is a model adopted by some other National Landscapes.</p>	<p>Introduces a dedicated decision-making Committee.</p> <p>Remains a formal Local Authority Committee.</p> <p>Retains SCC as Accountable Body.</p>	<p>Existing governance is not fit for purpose and unmanageable with current resources.</p> <p>Increases complexity and bureaucracy compared to current practice.</p> <p>Increases administrative burden and resource requirements compared to current practice.</p> <p>Reduces time spent on delivering the Management Plan.</p> <p>Unlikely to enable the engagement of sector leaders in Delivery Groups, as the remit would be too broad for key organisations to get involved.</p> <p>Successful delivery of this model would require extra resources.</p>
Option 2- Executive Management Board replaces the SHNL Partnership, JAC, Members Advisory Group and Officer's Working Group. Delivery Groups and Partnership Forum are created.	Executive Management Board (EMB) replaces the SHNL Board (JAC), the Members Advisory Group and the Officer's Working Group, with Delivery Groups created to bring in key sector knowledge and experience to support the delivery	<p>Single decision-making body for SHNL, with all members involved in decision-making.</p> <p>Enables better decision-making and scrutiny of decision-making.</p> <p>Reduces complexity, formality and associated bureaucracy and administration.</p>	<p>SHEMB would not be formally included in the LA constitution and may not feel it has as strong a voice as a result.</p> <p>Approval to do this would be needed through SCC Cabinet and would need</p>

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	of the SHNL Management Plan and a Partnership Forum to engage wider stakeholders.	<p>Enables more time to be dedicated Management Plan Delivery.</p> <p>Delivery Groups bring in knowledge and expertise, and challenge public bodies to further the purposes of the National Landscape, resulting in more ambitious and innovative delivery of the Management Plan.</p> <p>Broader Partnership Forum enables wider engagement with the community and encourages a more diverse audience.</p> <p>Retains SCC as Accountable Body.</p>	agreement from other core SHNL Board members.
Option 3- A Joint Committee replaces the JAC.	<p>A formal Joint Committee of the Statutory Authorities would replace the JAC.</p> <p>Could be set up with Delivery Groups and a Partnership Forum.</p>	<p>Single decision-making body for SHNL.</p> <p>Enables better decision-making and scrutiny of decision-making.</p> <p>Reduces complexity and administration.</p> <p>Enables more time to be dedicated Management Plan Delivery.</p> <p>Delivery Groups bring in knowledge and expertise, resulting in more ambitious and innovative delivery of the Management Plan.</p> <p>Broader Partnership Forum enables wider engagement with the community and encourages a more diverse audience.</p> <p>Remains a formal Local Authority Committee.</p> <p>Retains SCC as Accountable Body.</p>	<p>Only Local Authority members have decision-making rights. Other organisations can only be represented as non-voting members.</p> <p>Retains formality and associated bureaucracy.</p>
Option 4- Conservation Board designation.	SHNL would become independent of the Accountable Body and be re-designated as a Conservation Board.	<p>SHNL would have a more independent and authoritative voice.</p> <p>Greater clarity around roles and responsibilities as set out in the legislation.</p>	<p>Likely to require additional funding for back-office services and support. Defra is prepared to consider applications for new Conservation Boards on a case-by-case basis, but it</p>

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		Could set out its own policies and procedures which may be more specialist and simplified compared to a Local Authority.	<p>is not clear whether additional funding could be made available.</p> <p>Membership is dictated and out of SHNL control.</p> <p>Moving away from the Accountable Body could present a significant risk to the delivery of the Management Plan.</p>
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The options are shown in schematics in appendix 5.

4.4.4 OPTIONS ANALYSIS

The governance options described above have been compared against the key criteria for improved governance identified in Section 4.4.2, in the table below.

Challenge	Option 0	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
	As is	As is, plus Delivery Committee	Exec Management Board	Joint Committee	Conservation Board
Better decision-making		+	+++	++	+++
Reduced bureaucracy and complexity	++	+	+++	++	+
Reduced formality	++	++	+++	++	+
Reduced resource requirements	++	++	+++	++	+
Enhanced specialist engagement	++	++	+++	+++	++
Enhanced scrutiny	+	+	++	++	++
Enhanced clarity	++	++	+++	++	++
Enhanced diversity	+	+	++	++	+
Enhanced innovation	++	++	+++	++	+
Enhanced collaboration	++	+	+++	++	++

PREFERRED OPTION

Based on the analysis of the different options for a new governance model, it is felt that Option 2, the introduction of a new Executive Management Board, along with Delivery Groups and a Partnership Forum, presents the best opportunity to address the issues identified in this review in the short term.

The introduction of an Executive Management Board, to replace the Local Authority formal committee, would enable better decision-making and scrutiny of decision-making, whilst reducing complexity, formality and associated bureaucracy and administration. It would mean there would be a single body responsible for decision-making for the SHNL and would also enable a broader membership to be involved, through the establishment of Delivery Groups. It would enable more time to be dedicated to these Delivery Groups, bringing in knowledge and expertise, which should result in more ambitious and innovative delivery of the Management Plan and ensure relevant public bodies were delivering their duty to further the purpose of the National Landscape. A broader Partnership Forum would enable the SHNL to engage more widely with the community and encourage a more diverse audience.

This model aims to focus administration time on delivery of the revised Management Plan and would involve recruiting relevant bodies to the Delivery Groups to help deliver against Defra's three goals:

- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

It is suggested that the Chairs of these Delivery Groups are recruited through an open recruitment process based on role descriptions and sit on the EMB.

Scrutiny and financial oversight will be important. This would ideally be delivered by Defra or Natural England, as the main funder, with annual visits to check progress and financial control.

Alternatively, this could be achieved through:

- In an additional dedicated Sub-group.
- Through the Accountable Body, using existing mechanisms.

A Hosting Agreement between the EMB, SHNL Team and Surrey County Council, agreed by Defra and Natural England, is recommended as part of this approach.

A simplified structure would be easier to understand, with the EMB being more like Boards in other organisations, and all Members would be involved in decisions. The membership proposed would still make sure that the local electorate was represented through Local Authority elected members, and procedures would ensure that decision-making, monitoring, finance and progress were open and transparent.

Forming the EMB would involve disbanding the Surrey Hills NL Board as the formal Joint Advisory Committee, removing it from Surrey County Council's Constitution, and delegated authority on behalf of SCC being passed to the Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, both of whom will have decision-making roles on the SHEMB.

A precedent has been set for this. In March 2024, Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA), requested a change in their governance model and the removal of the of the BCA's Joint Management Committee from Surrey

County Council's Constitution. The reason being that BCA felt that their governance and operational model was no longer fit for purpose and was hindering its financial sustainability. The decision to replace the Joint Management Committee with a Joint Management Board aimed to help ensure that both Surrey and Hampshire County Councils have a more robust, effective and efficient decision-making structure in place for the future. A link to the full report can be found [here](#)

In making this decision, Surrey County Council delegated authority:

- To the Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Head of Legal Services, to agree and enter into the necessary Memorandums of Understanding, Memorandums of Agreement, Agreements and arrangements with partners to deliver the updated governance.
- Subject to the usual limits on officer decision making authority, to the Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to exercise all functions in relation to the management and maintenance of the Basingstoke Canal as an environmental navigational asset and the balancing of the interests of all users of the Basingstoke Canal and the conservation of the natural environment.

The challenge with this model is that the SHNL governance would not be formally included in the Accountable Body constitution and may not feel it has as strong a voice as a result. Making this change would need agreement by all core members.

4.4.5 NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The proposed components of a new governance structure for SHNL are described below.

SURREY HILLS EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

The core decision-making body would be the Surrey Hills Executive Management Board. This replaces the Surrey Hills Board (JAC).

ROLE

The EMB will focus on the stated outcomes in the SHNL Management Plan and facilitate the joint strategic delivery of the Plan, thus furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.

Specifically, it will have oversight of:

- Strategic development of the SHNL Management Plan.
- A SHNL strategy to deliver the Management Plan, with the SHNL Team plan incorporated.
- Operational oversight and control
- Financial management, reporting and decision-making of a devolved budget, with delegation of financial decisions to SHNL Director, to an agreed level.
- Performance management and reporting.
- Contacts and networking.
- Promotion and communication, including consistent use of the brand, in line with the trademark licence agreement.
- Establishing, reviewing, and terminating Delivery Groups.

- Organise seminars, tours and site visits on issues and projects relevant to its work for the Partnership Forum as it considers appropriate.

EMB members will also offer out of meeting support to the SHNL Director and staff, when required.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The core responsibilities of the SHEMA will be to ensure that:

- The National Landscape has the right expertise and sufficient funding to deliver the ambitions of the SHNL Management Plan.
- The Management Plan is delivered innovatively, being creative with core funding, leveraging other sources of income at scale, including through charitable routes.
- Relevant public bodies are delivering their duty to further the purposes of the National Landscape.
- Governance is fully transparent, legitimate and accountable.
- Representatives are selected for their passion, skills, and experience reflective of the SHNL Management Plan outcomes. They should be inspirational leaders in their fields, able to advocate, promote and champion action to deliver ambition.
- Representatives have the authority to use their collective influence to shape the agendas of local, regional, and national organisations to further the purposes of the Protected Landscape, for example advocating for the appropriate targeting of fundamental delivery mechanisms and finding solutions to major issues affecting the character of the National Landscape.
- Representatives strive for improvement, learning from each other and partners, and working with designated landscapes elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe.
- There is a focus on positive, co-operative and outward-looking partnership working, fostering a positive culture to seek all opportunities to collaborate to deliver Management Plan outcomes, including with the Surrey Hills Family, whilst avoiding duplication and mitigating risk in relation to the reputation of the Surrey Hills and Funding Members.
- Governance and activities reflect and account for diversity in their society. Every effort should be made to achieve diversity of social background, gender, age, ethnicity and (dis)ability.

MEMBERSHIP

The Executive Management Board (EMB) should recruit members in line with the Governance Principles above to ensure that it has the capacity and expertise to better deliver the Management Plan, whilst retaining community representation and engagement.

Given the duty on public bodies to further the statutory duties of the National Landscape, funding requirements and the need for public representation, it will be important to retain political membership from the Accountable Body, which is likely to be the most relevant Unitary Council.

An independent Chair of the EMB is recommended, with the Cabinet Member from the Accountable Body taking more of a scrutiny role, as the Vice Chair.

The Chairs of the Delivery Groups should be included on the EMB, to ensure specialist knowledge and collaboration between the groups.

The SH Family should be involved. The Chairs of the different Boards could sit directly on the EMB, as this would help tie their activity back to the broader priorities of the SHNL, and/or they could sit on the Delivery Groups, which will have a tighter agenda, which they may feel is more relevant.

Other members could be included as required. A maximum membership of 12-15 people is suggested.

Suggested membership for the EMB is set out below:

- Independent Chair - The Chair will play an active role in advocating and promoting the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape, in leading the SHEMA, ensuring its accountability.
- Vice Chair – Accountable Body Local Authority Cabinet Member.
- The Surrey Hills National Landscape Director.
- Funding Member- Accountable Authority Director.
- Other key partners
 - Natural England (on behalf of Defra)
 - Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC)
- Chairs of the Delivery Groups
 - Thriving plants and wildlife
 - Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- Chairs of Surrey Hills Family Boards
 - Surrey Hills Enterprises
 - Surrey Hills Arts
 - Surrey Hills Society
 - Surrey Hills Trust Fund (Community Foundation of Surrey)

More details can be found in the proposed constitution in Appendix 6.

MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

It is assumed that Surrey County Council would remain the Accountable Body.

A **Hosting Agreement** is strongly recommended between the SHWMB, SHNL Team and Surrey County Council, agreed by Defra and Natural England. The agreement would clearly set out roles and responsibilities, delegated authority and funding. This is critical given the focus on devolution in Surrey. The Hosting Agreement would make clear the relationship and arrangements for the next five years, aligned with the delivery of the new SHNL Management Plan. SCC is currently negotiating a new Hosting Agreement for Active Surrey, which could form the basis of one with SHNL.

It is expected that the Hosting Agreement would cover:

- Roles and responsibilities, including furthering the statutory duties of the SHNL, as set out in the constitution.
- Delegated authority.
- Funding arrangements, with levels of delegated financial decision-making.
- Back-office services and support.

This could be re-negotiated once a new Unitary Authority takes on the Accountable Body role.

Responsibility for creating and monitoring the Hosting Agreement would sit with Surrey County Council and the SHEMA Secretariate would be Surrey County Council.

SHNL team roles and responsibilities may need to change to retain focus on the key priorities of the new SHNL Management Plan.

The Governance structure should be adaptive, monitored to consider how successful it is being and reviewed every five years, alongside the SHNL Management Plan, to ensure it continues to facilitate the priorities identified.

It is recommended that meetings are held quarterly.

SHEMA meetings should be open to public questions, be recorded and available online.

DELIVERY GROUPS

The constitution includes three Delivery Groups, reflecting the Defra Goals:

- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

The Delivery Groups would encourage sector led advocacy, collaboration and action planning to help achieve relevant SHNL Management Plan priorities, bringing in knowledge and experience of the sector from a range of partners. They would also challenge relevant public bodies to fulfil their duty to furthering the purpose of the National Landscape.

Knowledge should include scientific, experiential, local and traditional, and reflect an understanding of national and regional context, considering historical changes and future projections in social, ecological and climate conditions. It is expected that these would have relevant Chairs from key partner organisations.

They do not necessarily need to be managed by a SHNL Team member, but could be led by Local Authority staff, or partner organisations, providing they have an agreed action plan to deliver. However, if additional administrative support was introduced into the SHNL Team, this would ensure the Delivery Groups were manageable. Regular feedback to the EMB will be essential.

As these Delivery Groups will focus on key priorities and have a tight agenda, it is hoped that partner organisations will be more willing to be involved.

Chairs for these groups should be actively recruited based on role descriptions to ensure expertise, enthusiasm and commitment. It is important that the Chair from each group is invited to sit on EMB to report progress to the EMB on a regular basis.

The Chairs of the Boards of the SH Family should be included as part of the Delivery Groups to retain focus on communities, the local economy and arts. The Surrey Hills Family should all be working towards delivering the SHNL Management Plan and have action plans to demonstrate how this is going to be delivered and monitored. Involving them on the EMB should help manage potential risks of these organisations not being suitably aligned to Management Plan delivery.

The responsibilities of the Delivery Groups are:

- Bringing together representatives from specialist organisations who have the knowledge, expertise and experience and/ or represent key stakeholders impacted by decisions in that sector. They should have authority for decision-making within their organisation and be able to advocate for the SHNL.
- Coordinating delivery and resources across partner organisations towards the SHNL Management Plan, with an Action Plan that sets out the actions to achieve the relevant priorities in the SHNL Management Plan, with responsibilities, costings, key performance indicators and timescales.
- Identifying gaps and challenges that need to be addressed.
- Ensuring relevant public bodies are delivering on their duty to further the purpose of the National Landscape.
- Adding value to the SHNL, rather than duplicating county-wide groups and organisations. A key knowledgeable member of the Delivery Groups should represent the SHNL on county-wide groups and/ or regional groups as appropriate.
- Reporting on progress towards delivery of the overall business plan.

Task and finish groups could be set up as required to address specific opportunities or challenges.

The current Officer Working Group on Planning could be included if appropriate.

SURREY HILLS PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The role of the Surrey Hills Partnership Forum would be to:

- Encourage wider engagement with a more diverse range of partners and stakeholders.
- Help better understand the contribution of these partners and wider stakeholders to the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.
- Share progress on the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.
- Share good practice in and learning about delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.

The Surrey Hills Partnership Forum would be informal and invitations to events would be to a diverse range of partners and stakeholders who have been involved or would like to be involved in delivering the Management Plan.

Two annual events are suggested

- An annual symposium or seminar, where progress against the SHNL Management Plan could be shared. An annual survey for partners could inform the progress of the delivery of the Management Plan, including performance monitoring, and give stakeholders an opportunity to feed in.
- A summer tour with site visits could showcase work of the SHNL Team and partners. These could be organised and led by the Delivery Groups to reduce the administrative burden.

Broadening the invitation and circulation of these would enable more people to get involved and could encourage a more diverse audience.

Both events should be manageable, so maybe a half day for each, with key projects and initiatives, and highlights from the annual Management Plan progress.

SCRUTINY AND FINANCE

It is essential that the work of the SHNL is open and transparent, and subject to scrutiny in terms of decision-making, financial control and other process and procedures that ensure it meets the requirements of the Accountable Body.

Scrutiny roles and responsibilities need to be defined. This could be achieved by having a Scrutiny and Finance Sub-group that specifically scrutinises the work of the SHEMA and Delivery Groups or through existing Accountable Body structures.

CONSTITUTION

If the proposal outlined in this review is chosen, a draft Constitution for the new Executive Management Board and associated governance structure has been provided for further consideration in Appendix 6.

This does not include a Joint Committee but examples from Joint Committees elsewhere could be used as a basis if needed.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The development of this model would rely on Surrey County Council legal support to ensure it meets any statutory requirements.

The proposal will need to be agreed by Defra and Natural England.

4.5 BUILDING CAPACITY

One of the key challenges for the SHNL Team is having the capacity to manage the Governance structure. To ensure senior staff time, especially the Directors, is not spent on administrative tasks, it is suggested that a new Executive Assistant role is recruited within the SHNL Team to support the day-to-day management of the structure.

Longer-term, given the constraints on public funding, Defra is encouraging National Landscapes to improve their ability to secure additional, external funding. There is an aspiration for the SHNL Team to bid for the National Heritage Lottery Fund Landscapes Connections funding and review their involvement with the SH Trust Fund with the Community Foundation for Surrey. If successful, this would build SHNL capacity, with the aim to secure significant external funding to support the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.

An example of where this has been done effectively in the South Downs National Park through The South Downs Trust Fund. This is an independent charity, which will have secured £2.5-£3m in 2024/25. Conversations are taking place with the South Downs National Park Authority to learn from their experience.

If this was successful, the Chair of the Surrey Hills Foundation/ Trust Fund should be included as a member of the SHEMA.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The survey, structured discussions and desk research resulted in a clear understanding of the challenges and risks facing the Surrey Hills National Landscape and its governance. There's a lot going on and analysis of this and potential solutions for the future have been described in this report.

The governance principles and culture are as important as the model. Given the importance of the Local Authorities in delivering the Management Plan, and the new duty for public bodies to further the purpose of the National Landscape, a more collaborative culture between the SHNL Team, Board and Surrey County Council should be encouraged, which focuses on the positive outcomes that a strong relationship will deliver. The introduction of a Host Agreement with SCC, will help provide this clarity, as well as put the SHNL in a stronger position as devolution progresses.

A decision-making body is required, with clear roles and responsibilities, to avoid potential misunderstandings or disputes that can arise from lack of clarity. A new Surrey Hills Executive Management Board (SHEMB) is proposed to deliver this role.

The SHEMB should have a business plan, which helps focus the work of the SHEMB, Delivery Groups and Team, with regular progress reports, including performance management and finance to enable clear and transparent scrutiny of decision making.

A clear scrutiny role is needed. This could be achieved by having a Scrutiny and Finance Sub-group that specifically scrutinises the work of the SHEMT and Delivery Groups or through existing Accountable Body structures.

The Surrey Hills Family have an important role to play in delivering activity in sectors that are not being prioritised by Defra, and for which there is limited core funding. Their involvement needs to be focused on the delivery of the Management Plan and furthering the duties of SHNL whilst widening diversity and encouraging innovative practices. Involving the Chairs of these bodies on the SHEMB aims to ensure this happens.

Delivery Groups can ensure better collaboration with and between sector experts, helping ensure more ambitious, innovative and joined-up delivery of the SHNL Management Plan. They can also have a clear remit to challenge relevant public bodies to further the purpose of the National Landscape.

A wider Partnership Forum is important and there should be mechanisms to enable the wider community to have an opportunity to be involved, feed into decision-making, share good practice and better promote the SHNL to further the purpose of the National Landscape. An annual survey is proposed.

Governance should be open and transparent, with the constitution, membership and other key documents publicly available.

The proposed governance structure can be thought of in the following way:



View- A **Partnership Forum** engages a diverse range of partners, gathering feedback and good practice to capture a broader view of progress in delivering the Management Plan.



Glue- The **Executive Management Board** facilitates the strategy to deliver the Management Plan, focusing on strategic oversight, financial management, performance reporting, and fostering collaboration.



Do- **Delivery Groups** engage sector experts to advocate for and deliver against Defra's three core outcomes: Thriving plants and wildlife, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

Mechanisms to secure additional, external funding should be encouraged to help address restricted core resources and help fund wider ambitions.

The governance structure should be manageable and proportional to the staff and funding resource being allocated. With such a small team, it makes sense to try and simplify the structure and reduce bureaucracy to help ensure the delivery of the Management Plan remains the key focus. Additional support within the SHNL Team through an Executive Assistant would help ensure that senior staff time is not spent on administrative tasks and help ensure the new governance structure is manageable.

Staff members are involved with a wide range of other boards and community groups, and it is suggested that this is reviewed to prioritise time spent achieving the priorities of the Management Plan. Whilst Delivery Groups should not duplicate work of other bodies, consideration should be given to whether attendance at regular meetings elsewhere is more effective than focusing time on joint agendas in the Delivery Groups.

There is a need to test the legality of this proposal, which has not been possible within this brief. It may be that this approach, without a Joint Committee, does not comply with the legislation, so this proposal is subject to legal advice from Surrey County Council, as the Accountable Body, to ensure it meets regulatory requirements. If a Joint Committee is also required, its purpose would be to prepare the Management Plan and its implementation. It would be worth exploring how often this should meet. Could this meet every five years, just to agree the SHNL Management Plan and implementation to be proposed to the relevant Local Authorities, and evaluate progress, or annually to review progress, as part of the Partnership Forum Symposium or Seminar?

As Defra are reviewing the legislation for National Landscapes and are willing to consider other options, making the governance more flexible to accommodate an Executive Management Board approach should be considered.

The model should be adaptive and reviewed every five years, with the Management Plan.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended approach to ensure more effective governance of the SHNL falls into four categories, which should be considered as a package for governance improvement:

- Governance principles
- Governance model
- Management and support
- Recommendations for the future

6.1. GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

We recommend the adoption of the following Governance principles:

Governance principles

<i>Enthusiastic and committed</i>	Members of National Landscape management bodies are enthusiastic, with a genuine appreciation of natural beauty and their area and be committed to furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.
<i>Management Plan focused</i>	Governance is focused on the stated outcomes in the Management Plan and facilitates the joint strategic delivery of the Plan, thus furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.
<i>Strategic and focused on implementation</i>	National Landscape governance should be manageable and agile, focused on driving the ambitious delivery of Management Plans, and not overly burdened by procedures and processes.
<i>Knowledgeable and experienced</i>	<p>Membership of the governance structure should ensure that the National Landscape has the right expertise to deliver the ambitions of the Management Plan. Representatives are selected for their passion, skills, and experience reflective of the Management Plan outcomes.</p> <p>Knowledge should include scientific, experiential, local and traditional, and reflect an understanding of national and regional context, considering historical changes and future projections in social, ecological and climate conditions.</p>
<i>Accountable and legitimate</i>	The governance is fully transparent, legitimate and accountable.
<i>Forward-facing, positive and co-operative</i>	Partnership working is positive, co-operative and outward-looking, fostering a positive culture to seek all opportunities to collaborate to deliver Management Plan outcomes.
<i>Inclusive and diverse</i>	National Landscapes management bodies reflect and account for diversity in their society – welcoming young voices, people from cities and beyond, bringing

	together stakeholders of all kinds to ensure Boards are well informed about a wide range of interests and specialist expertise. Every effort should be made to achieve diversity of social background, gender, age, ethnicity and (dis)ability.
<i>Innovative and enterprising</i>	Governance structures aim to deliver Plans innovatively, being creative with core funding, leveraging other sources of income at scale, including through charitable routes.
<i>Inspirational and ambitious</i>	Representatives should be inspirational leaders in their fields, able to advocate and champion action to deliver ambition.
<i>Self-critical and adaptive</i>	Representatives strive for improvement, learning from each other and partners and working with designated landscapes elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe.
<i>Influencing the conditions to support delivery</i>	Representatives should have the authority to use their collective influence to shape the agendas of local, regional, and national organisations to further the purposes of the Protected Landscape, for example advocating for the appropriate targeting of fundamental delivery mechanisms.

6.2. GOVERNANCE MODEL

We recommend a revised governance model:

- Partnership Forum and annual survey- engaging with wider stakeholders to report on progress against the SHNL Management Plan, sharing good practice and showcasing successful projects and initiatives. This would involve two meetings annually: a symposium or seminar and site visits.
- Executive Management Board- The core decision-making body would be the Surrey Hills Executive Management Board (SHEMB). This replaces the Surrey Hills Board (JAC), have 12-15 members and meet quarterly. The SHEMB would facilitate the development and delivery of the Management Plan, through business planning, focusing on strategic oversight, financial management, performance reporting, and fostering collaboration among partners.
- Delivery Groups- Three Delivery Groups advocating for and delivering on key sections of the SHNL Management Plan aligned to Defra's Goals, identifying gaps and ensuring public bodies are meeting their duty to further the purpose of the National Landscape. These would meet twice per year, covering the following agendas:
 - Thriving plants and wildlife
 - Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Scrutiny roles and responsibilities need to be defined. This could be achieved by having a Scrutiny and Finance Sub-group that specifically scrutinises the work of the SHERMT and Delivery Groups or through existing Accountable Body structures.

The recommended approach is subject to Surrey County Council obtaining legal advice to ensure it meets statutory requirements.

6.3. MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

It is assumed that Surrey County Council would remain the Accountable Body. A Hosting Agreement should be introduced between the EMB, SHNL Team and Surrey County Council, agreed by Defra and Natural England. This agreement would clearly set out roles and responsibilities, in line with the constitution, would confirm key accountabilities, delegated authority and funding, and be legally binding. This would add clarity and help smooth the transition to Unitary Authorities.

SHNL team roles and responsibilities may need to change to retain focus on the key priorities of the new SHNL Management Plan. Additional support within the SHNL Team through an Executive Assistant would help ensure that senior staff time is not spent on administrative tasks and ensure the new governance structure is manageable.

Due to current resource restrictions, developing the capacity to better secure additional funding is recommended. This should include a review of the SH Trust Fund with the Community Foundation for Surrey and the development of a bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund Landscapes Connections. If successful, this would build SHNL capacity, with the aim to secure significant external funding to support the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.

6.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This proposal offers a short-term solution to the SHNL governance issues identified through this review. However, this review has been completed at a time when there is significant change on the horizon.

It is therefore recommended that governance is further reviewed once the following have been completed:

- The SHNL boundary extension
- Surrey Councils Devolution
- Changes to statutory duties have been agreed and in legislation
- Advice has been issued by Defra on future governance of National Landscapes

Based on the current Conservation Board models, it was not felt that this would be an appropriate model for SHNL but if this model became more flexible, this could be something to consider in the future. If there was an appetite to pursue Conservation Board status, a significant review and business case would need to be undertaken, which would need to go through formal channels for approval by the Secretary of State.



7.0 APPENDIX 1- ONLINE SURVEY

Following Julian Glover’s ‘Landscapes Review’ of National Parks and AONBs in 2019 and the subsequent proposal to extend of the Surrey Hills National Landscape boundary, Surrey Hills National Landscape team have commissioned Resources for Change to undertake a review of the constitution of the Surrey Hills Board as the Joint Advisory Committee.

The aims of this work are to:

- Develop options for the Surrey Hills Board constitution
- Propose governance model(s) with clear roles and responsibilities
- Enhance diversity and skills in governance
- Engage those involved in the governance in the process
- Outline next steps

This survey will help inform this process and give useful insights into the overall governance of the Surrey Hills National Landscape. It is designed to be shared with individuals involved with the current governance arrangements.

The objectives of the survey are to:

- Understand what’s working well now and should be retained
- Understand what the challenges are that need to be addressed going forward

Your responses to these questions will be treated in confidence, so please be open and honest as the outcomes of this work will help inform future governance arrangements.

QUESTIONS

1. What group are you a member of?

Drop down box:

- SHNL Partnership
- SHNL Board
- Officers Working Group
- Surrey Hills Arts
- Surrey Hills Enterprises
- Surrey Hills Trust Fund
- Surrey Hills Society
- Other- please add

2. How long have you been involved?

Scale 1- less than 2 years

Scale 2- 2-5 years

Scale 3- 5 years plus

3. What motivates you to be involved with this group?

[Open box]

4. How rewarding and inspiring do you find being part of this group? Do you enjoy it?

Scale 1- no, not at all to 5- yes, absolutely

5. What would help you feel more inspired? [open box]

6. Are the responsibilities for your group clearly defined and documented?

Scale 1- no, not at all to 5- well defined and documented

7. If not, what's missing? [open box]

8. What kind of Surrey Hills National Landscape decisions are members of your group involved in?

Drop down box (tick all that apply):

- Strategic development
- Strategic delivery
- Financial decisions
- Procedural matters and bureaucracy
- Project development and delivery
- Day to day management and delivery
- Other- please specify

9. How effective is your group in making informed and robust decisions?

Scale 1- not effective to 5- extremely effective

10. What works well? What needs to change? [open box]

11. How clear are you on the role your group plays in the development and delivery of the SHNL Management Plan?

Scale 1- not clear to 5- extremely clear

12. What needs to be clearer? [open box]

13. How impactful do you feel you are in delivering outcomes of the SHNL Management Plan?

Scale 1- not effective to 5- extremely effective

14. How could you be more effective? [open box]

15. How aligned are the strategies and policies of partners within your group with the SHNL Management Plan?

Scale 1- not aligned to 5- fully aligned

16. What works well? What could be changed? [open box]

17. How much influence does your group have on SHNL decisions that inform the Management Plan and are important to your group?

Scale 1- non to 5- extremely influential

18. How could your influence be improved? [open box]

19. How accountable and responsible do you feel for decisions made?

Scale 1- not accountable to 5- completely accountable

20. Please expand on your answer [open box]

21. Do the members of the group have the right skills and experience to inform decision making?

Scale 1- no, not at all to 5- yes, absolutely

22. If not, please tell us why and what skills and experience are missing [open box]

23. Do you feel that members of your group have the right training and support?

Yes/ No/ Don't know

24. If no- please specify what training and support, you think would be helpful [open box]

25. How diverse are the members in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and (dis)ability?

Scale 1- not at all to 5- very diverse

26. How can the group become more diverse? [open box]

27. Are there other partners/ groups/ individuals who should be involved?

Yes/ No/ Don't know

28. If yes- please specify who should be involved [open box]

29. Does your group receive information on financial matters? Is it clear and transparent?

No/ yes/ don't know

30. What works well? How could it be improved? [open box]

Surrey Hills National Landscape wider governance

31. How effective is the overall governance of the SHNL?

Scale 1- not effective to 5- extremely effective

32. If you feel that governance is not as effective as it could be, what needs to change and why? For example, what structure would better meet needs? [open box]

33. Are governance structures and processes for Surrey Hills National Landscape decision making clearly defined and documented?

Scale 1- no, not at all to 5- well defined and documented

34. If not, what's missing? [open box]

35. Are the structures and processes for coordination between groups clearly defined and documented?

Scale 1 no, not clearly defined to 5 yes, completely defined

36. How could groups collaborate better? [open box]

37. Do you know what to do if you feel your group/ or you are concerned about another group that is not performing?

Scale 1 no idea to 5 yes, absolutely clear

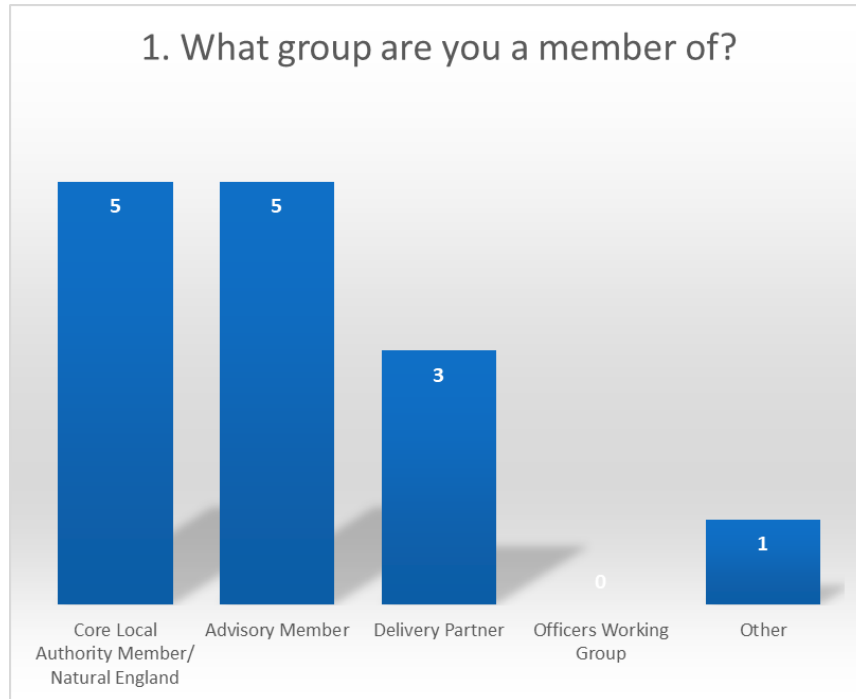
38. If required, what needs to be put in place for this to be clear? [open box]

39. And finally, in your opinion, what would be a good outcome of this governance review? [open box]

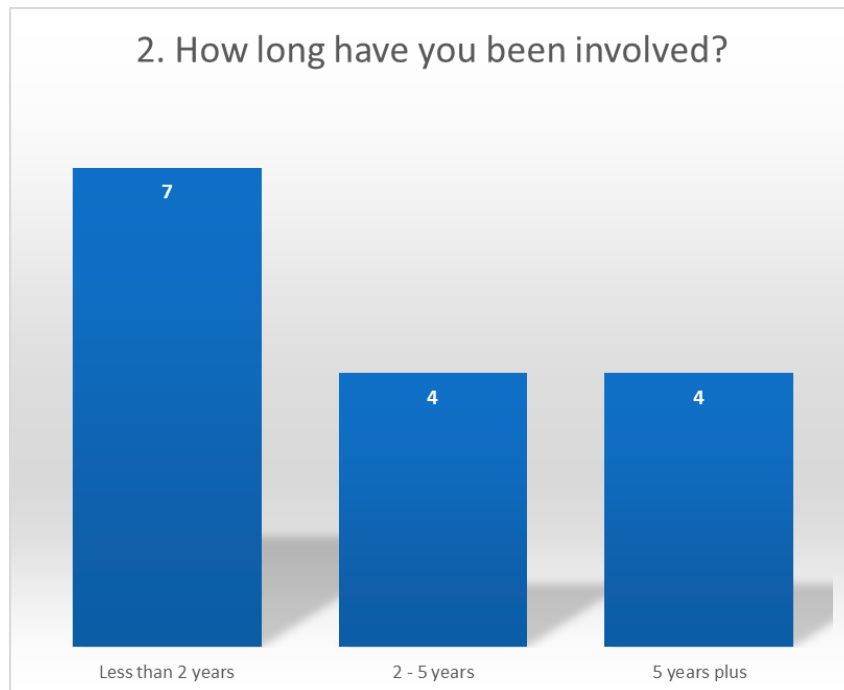
8.0 APPENDIX 2- RESULTS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY FOR THE SHNL BOARD AND OFFICERS WORKING GROUP

8.1 SURVEY ANALYSIS – OUTCOME OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

14 Responses were received

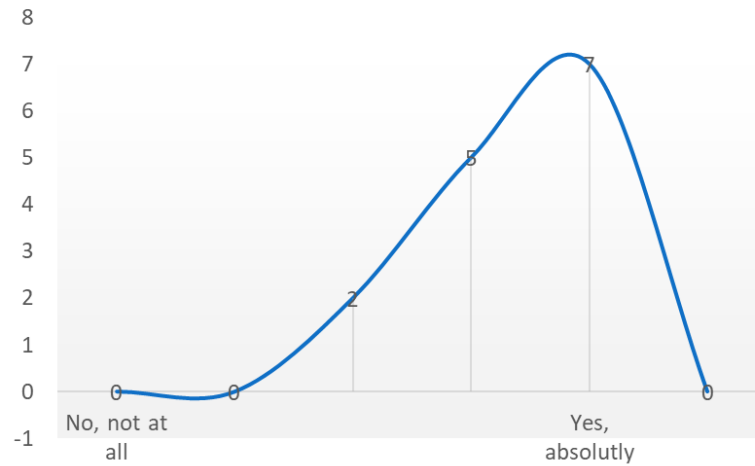


No response from the Officer Working Group



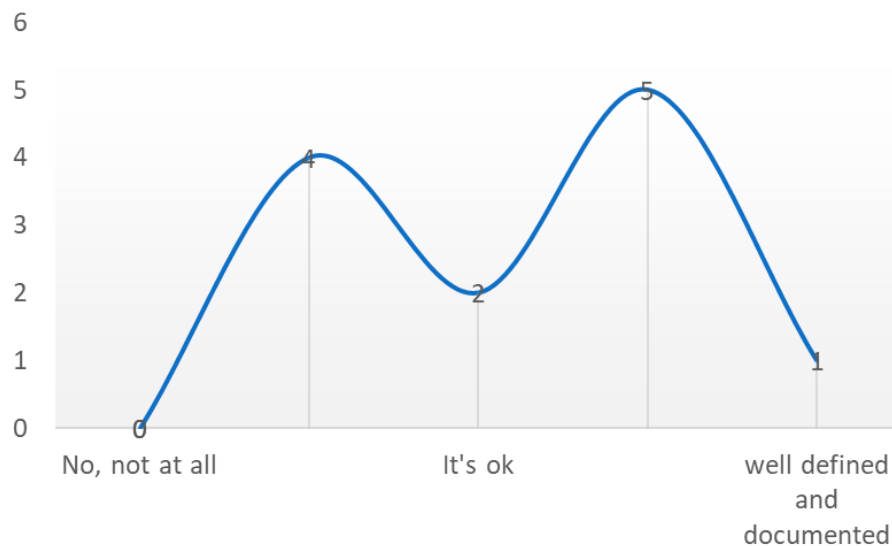
47% have been involved for less than 2 years

4a. How rewarding and inspiring do you find being part of the Board? Do you enjoy it?

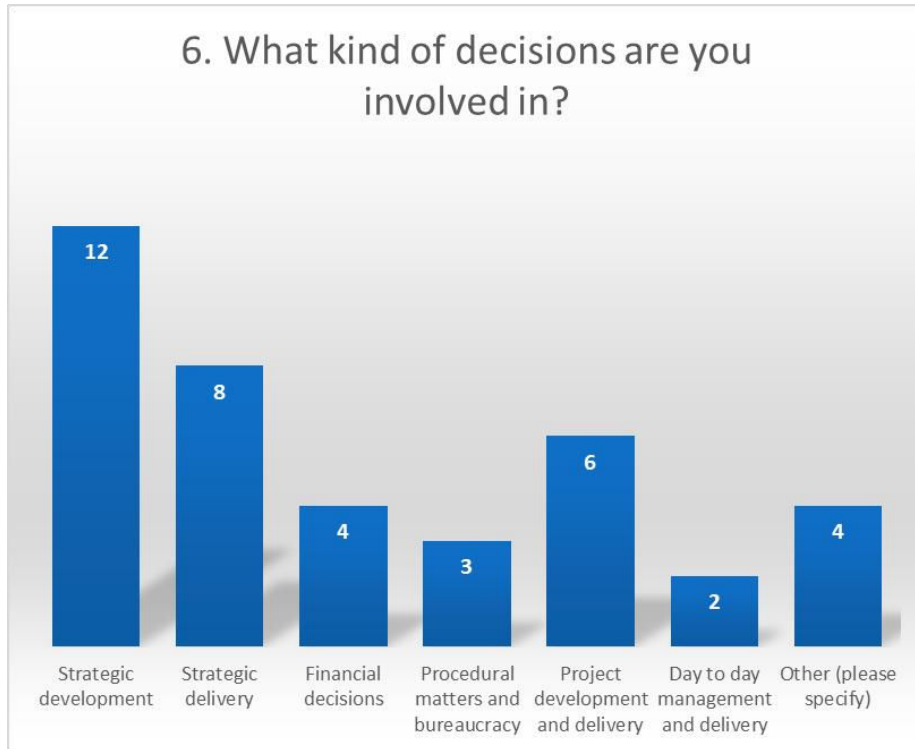


86% or people found being part of the Board rewarding and inspiring

5a. Are the responsibilities for the Board clearly defined and documented?

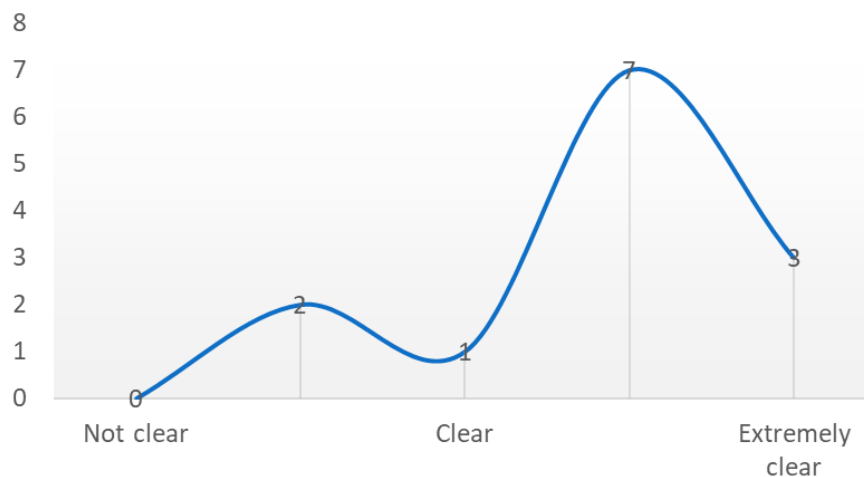


Difference of opinion



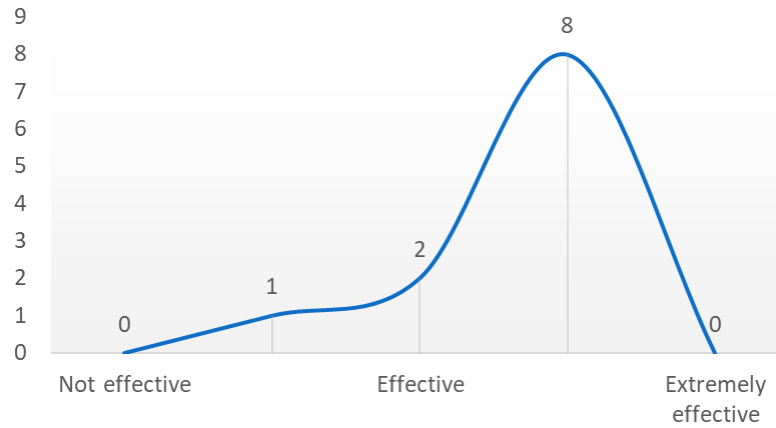
The majority felt that the Board makes strategic development and delivery decisions

7a. How clear are you on the role the Board plays in the development of the new SHNL Management Plan and delivery of the existing one?



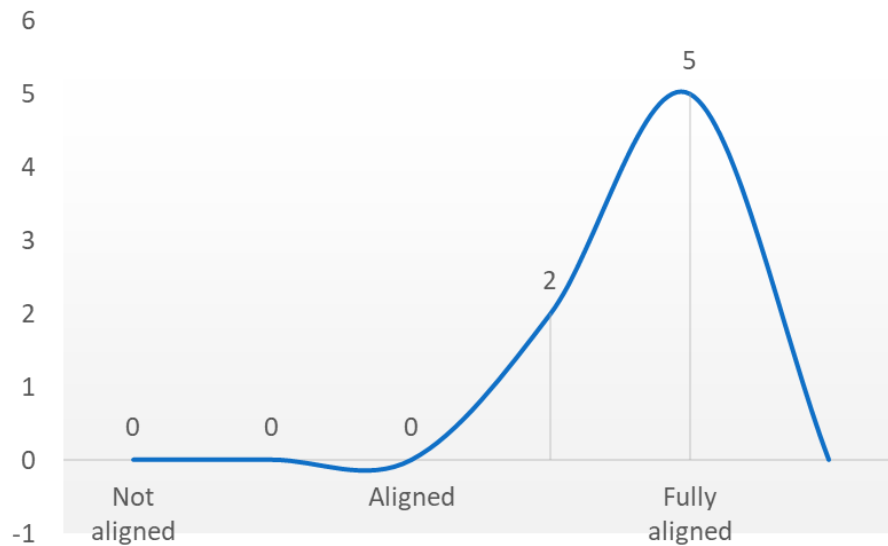
85% are clear of the role of the Board in the development and delivery of the Management Plan

8a. How impactful do you feel the organisation you represent is in delivering the outcomes of the SHNL Management Plan?



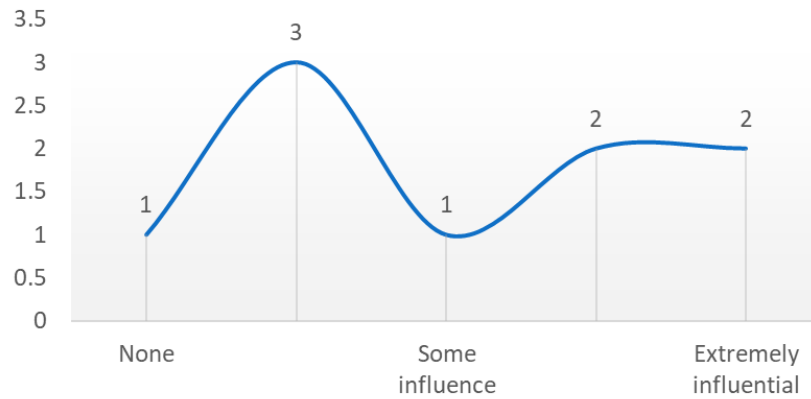
91% felt their organisation is impactful in delivering the outcomes of the Management Plan

9a. How aligned are your organisation's strategies and policies with the SHNL Management Plan?



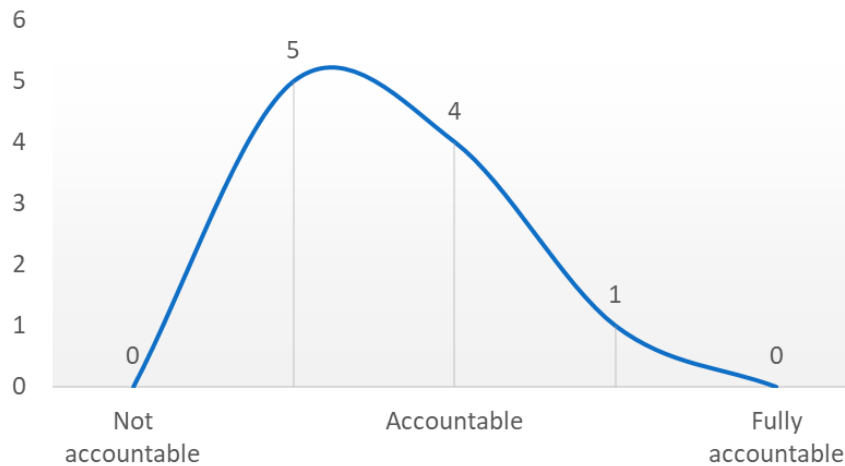
100% felt their organisational strategies and policies were aligned with the SHNL Management Plan

10a. How much influence do you feel your organisation have on SHNL decisions that inform the delivery of the Management Plan and that are important to you?



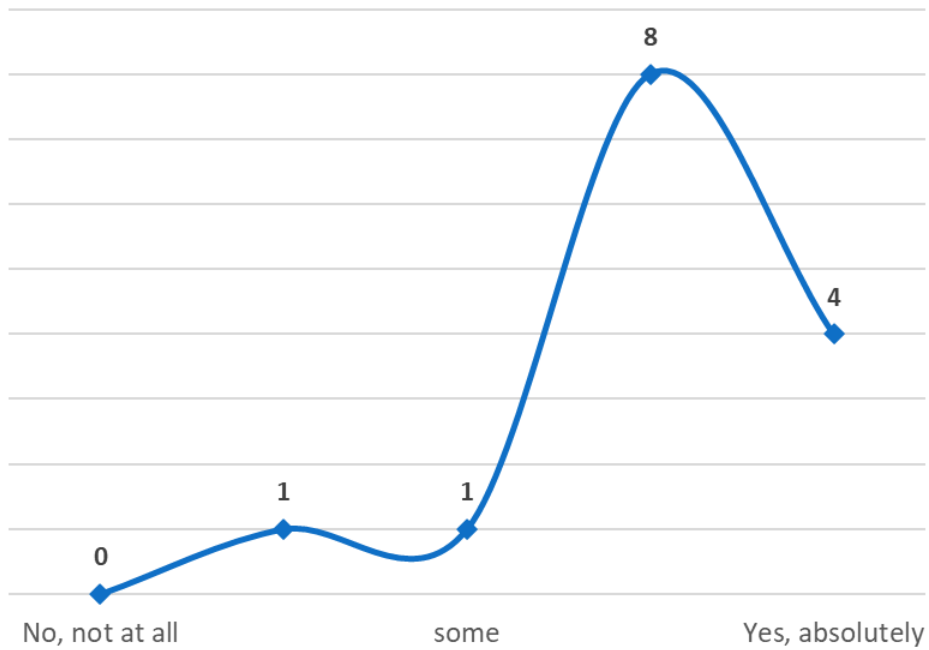
44% felt their organisation has little or no influence on SHNL decisions that inform the Management Plan

11a. How accountable and responsible do you feel for decisions made that progress the delivery of the Management Plan?



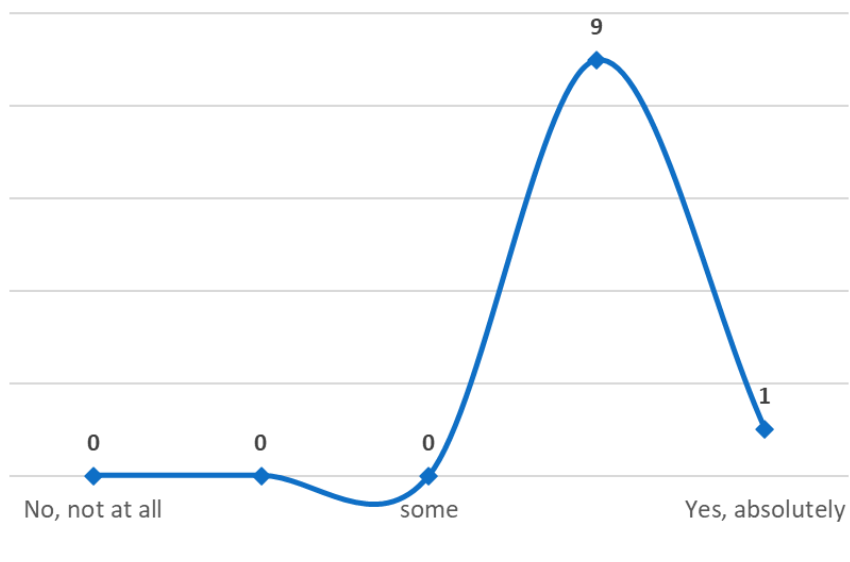
50% did not feel entirely accountable for decisions made that progress the delivery of the management plan

12a - In depth knowledge and understanding of the landscape



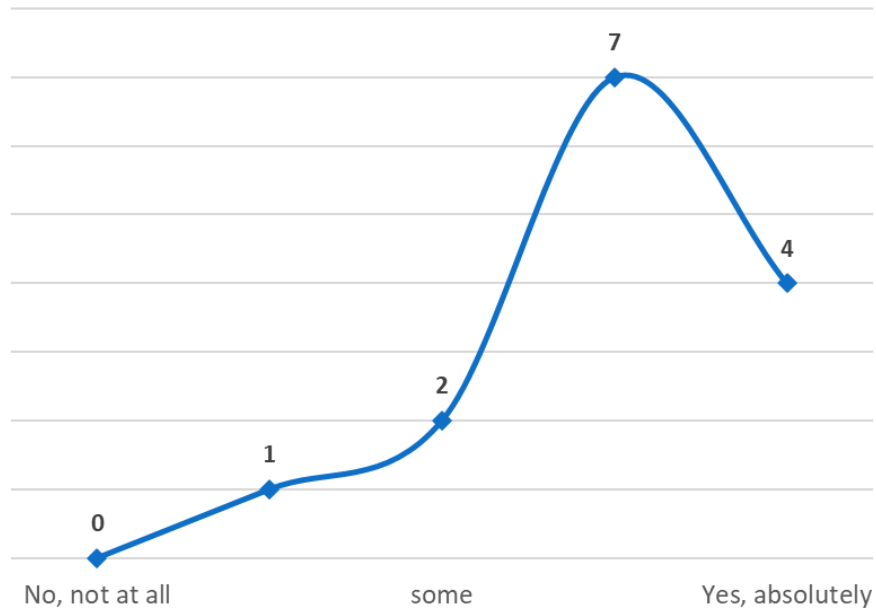
86% felt they have in depth knowledge and understanding

12b - Relevant, specialist experience in a relevant subject



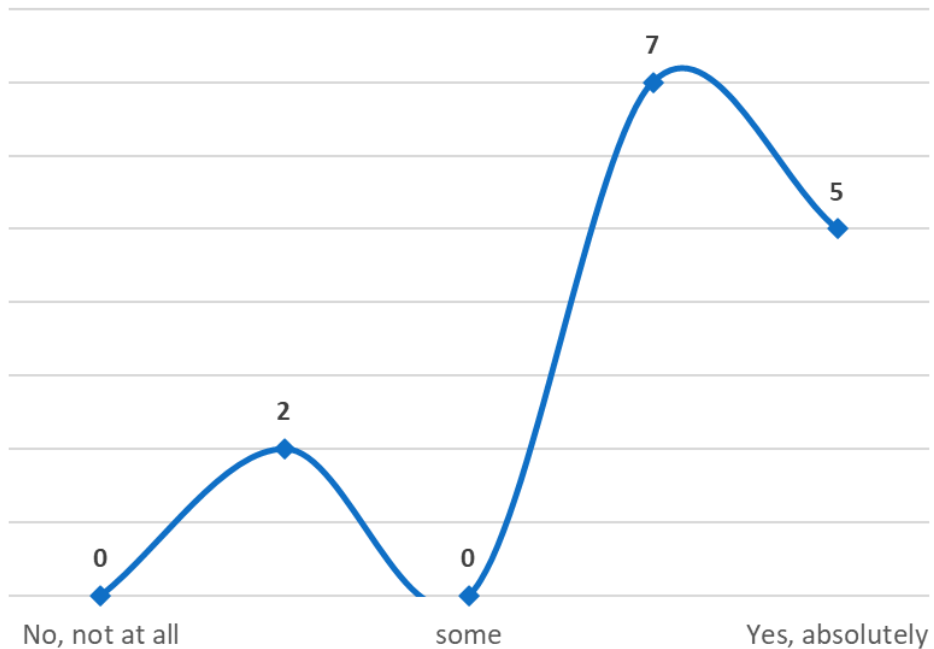
100% felt they had relevant, specialist experience

12c - Ability to advocate for and engage people in the SHNL

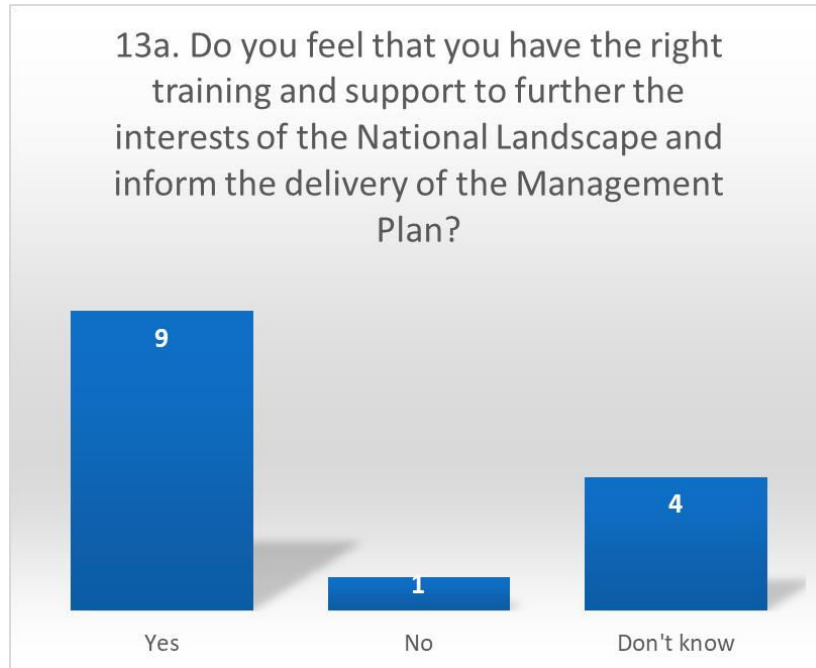


93% felt they were able to advocate for and engage people in the SHNL

12d - Understanding of community needs and aspirations related to SHNL

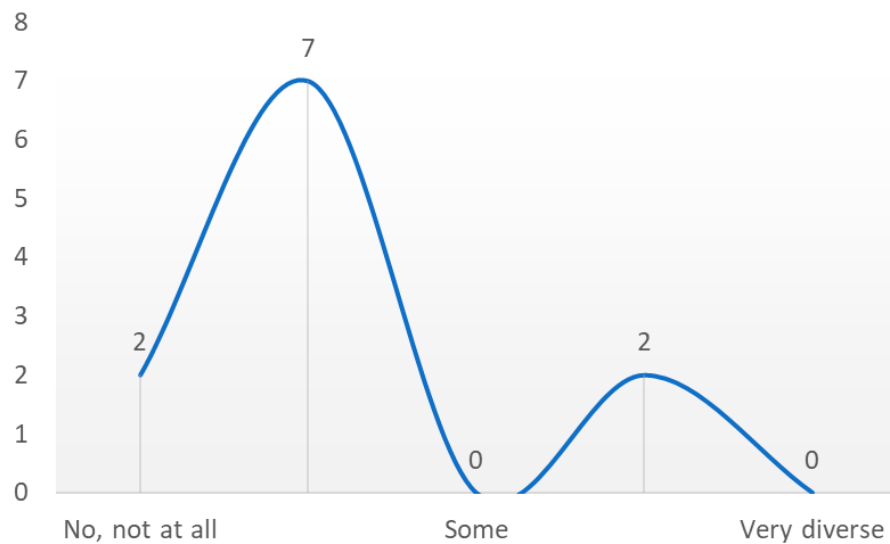


86% felt they understood community needs and aspirations

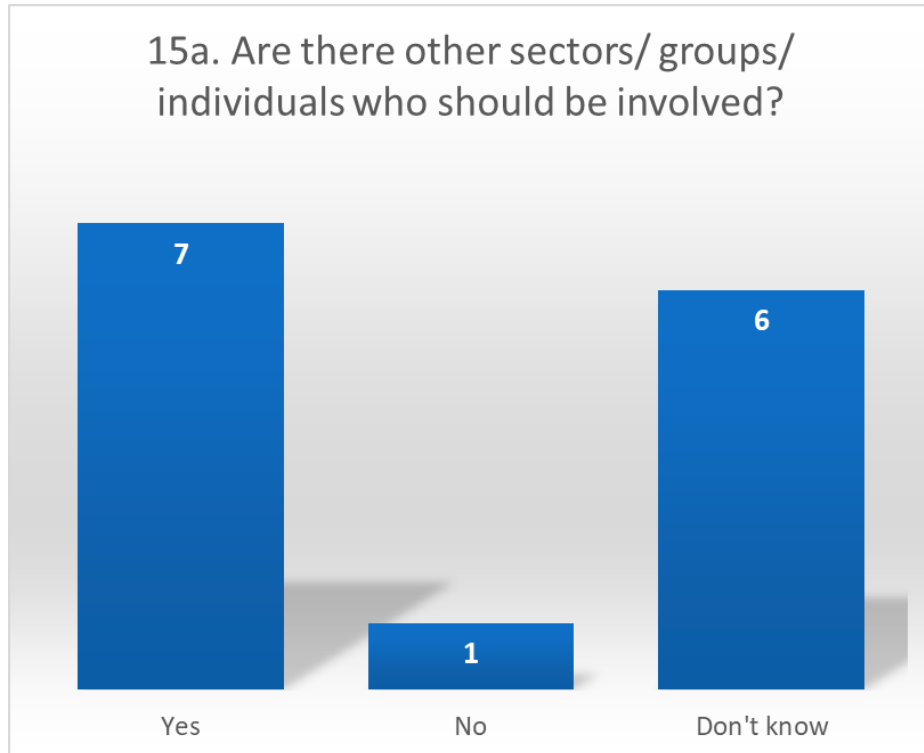


64% felt they had the right support and training

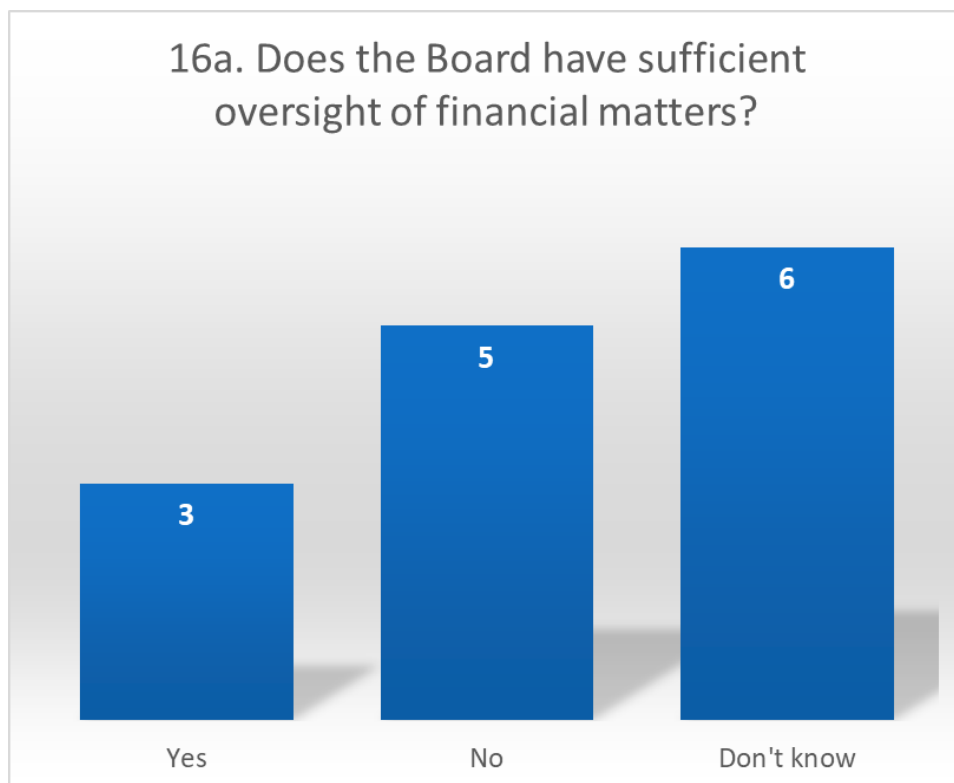
14a How diverse do you feel the Board is in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and (dis)ability?



82% felt that the Board was not diverse

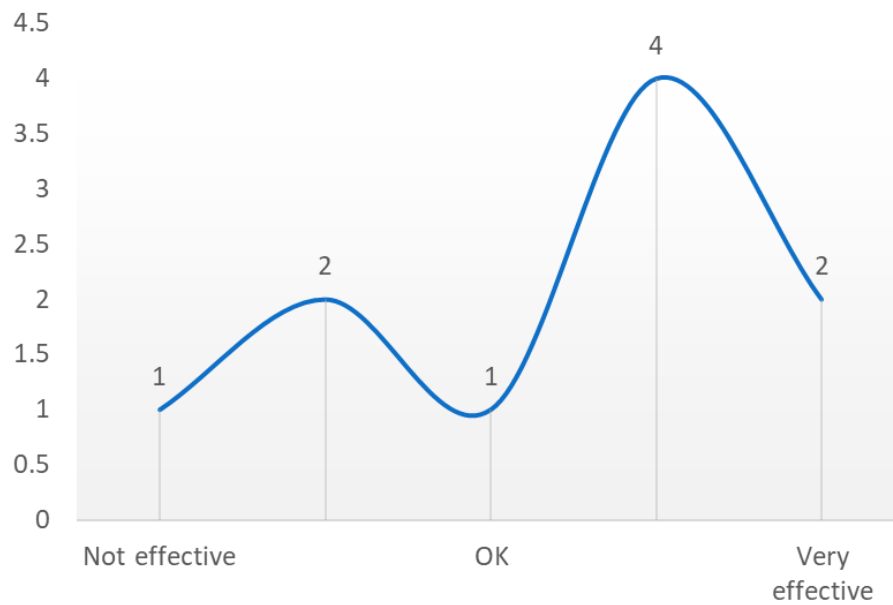


50% thought there were others who should be involved, 43% do not know



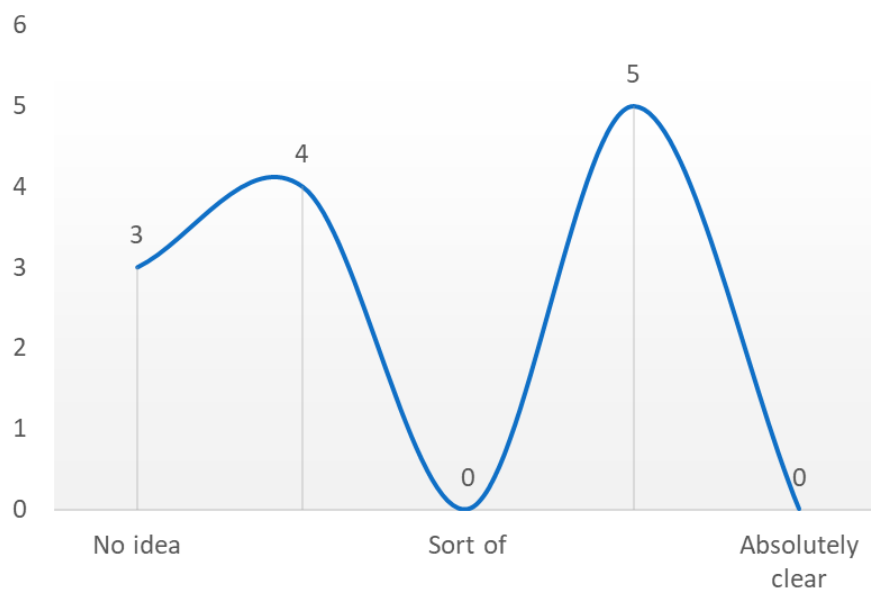
43% do not know if the Board has sufficient insight into financial matters

17a. How effective is coordination within the SHNL Family?



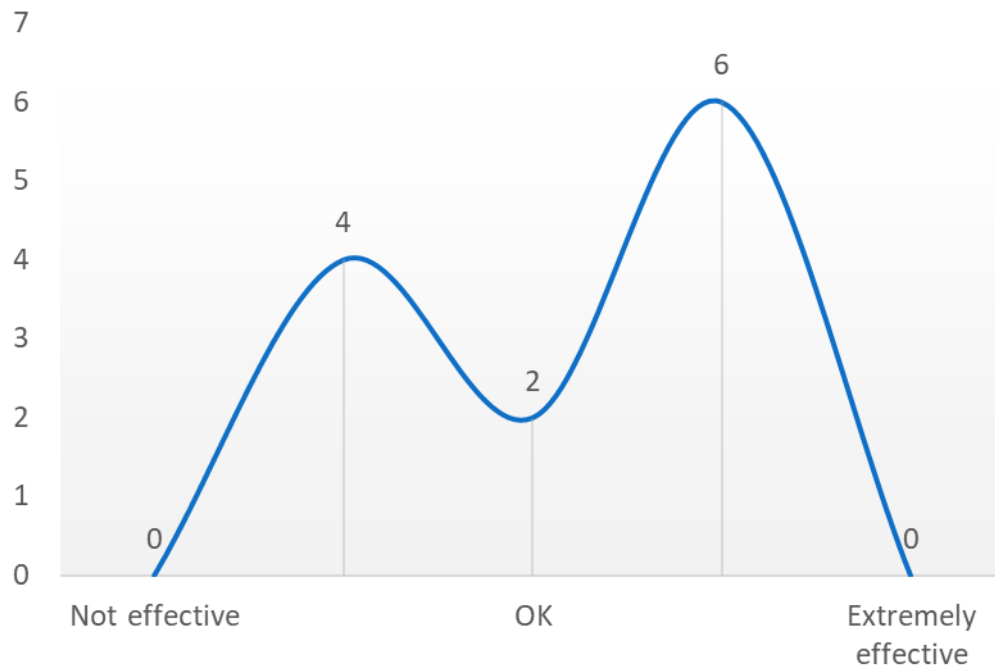
60% felt coordination with the SHNL family was effective

18a. Do you know what to do if you feel the Board is not performing?



58% had little or no idea what to do if they feel the Board is not performing

19a. How effective is the overall governance of the SHNL?



Difference of opinion

8.2 SURVEY ANALYSIS- OUTCOME OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA

WHAT'S WORKING WELL CURRENTLY?

NB. Comments below are not verbatim, to avoid identity of respondents being revealed

- Feels very coordinated with wide variety of members and partners who attend the Board meetings.
- SH Family comes together well through the Board and outcomes are achieved.
- Good partnership relationships.
- Board engages with all communities and there is a strong atmosphere of inclusivity.
- The SHNL does an enormous amount with a small staff.
- Regular Chairs meeting of the SH Family although no formal influence on delivery.
- Enthusiasm for Surrey Hills and its natural beauty.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - SOME RESPONDENTS ARE NOT CLEAR ON:

- Executive authority and decision-making
- Role of Board, SHNL Family, Defra, and host Local Authority
- Board's role in financial matters
- Role of Board within Management Plan development and delivery
- Board not making decisions or decisions not being enacted

- Not sure that the Partnership is effective enough in providing governance
- Need greater transparency around SHNL delivery decisions and a more robust mechanism for concerns to be discussed
- Concern about whether the Board was able to speak out about what it is prepared to fight for e.g., planning, government policies on farming

CONSTITUTION

- Constitution is out of date, does not reflect new policies and guidance and is not a user friendly or intuitive document. Role of the delivery partners has expanded since the constitution was last reviewed.
- Board does not adhere to all the structures and processes within the constitution
- Scrutiny function is ill defined

RELATIONSHIP WITH HOST LOCAL AUTHORITY – SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL (SCC)

- Perception that SCC has too much influence and control on work and budgets.
- Transactions take too long
- Greater alignment needed in decision making between SHNL and Planning Authorities
- Lack of independence

SHNL FAMILY

- Better delegation of Management Plan actions, and greater scrutiny and accountability by all members of the SHNL family
- Need to draw a clear line between the functions of Surrey Hills Enterprises and Surrey Hills Arts to the overall purpose of the National Landscape
- Surrey Hills Society is not set up for project management. Need new fundraising model similar to the South Downs National Park.

OTHER

- Ensure core members are fully briefed (especially after local elections) so that they can champion National Landscape and help deliver the management plan
- Need to better understand compliance with government requirements
- Wider national government recognition of importance of the rural economy
- Not enough communication about delivery of Management Plan outcomes
- Landowners feel they have little influence
- Lack of involvement in the day-to-day work on the ground
- More collaboration needed
- Need to balance planning decisions with improving sustainability of communities and local businesses
- Insufficient time to get fully involved

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

BOARD STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES

- Smaller, more engaged Executive group, focused on strategic thinking and decision-making

- Role of SCC diminished, more autonomy to SHNL Team, whilst retaining collaboration
- Improved Chair and Board selection process and incentivisation
- Written procedure for raising concerns and reviewing Board performance, with measures
- Advisory Board Member document
- SHNL team to report to the Board

LEARNING AND SUPPORT

- Induction/ training programme for Board members on the role of the SHNL and Board
- Learn more about our partnerships and their working lives
- Tour of Surrey Hills to learn more about the make-up of its landscape

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- Encourage partnership from wider range of interested parties including youth ambassadors and minority groups
- Creation of defined roles on the Board e.g., nature, climate, and place to encourage more diverse membership
- Closer working with community groups (not just rural), businesses, tourism providers, minority groups

COMMUNICATIONS

- More regular updates on difference the SHNL is making to biodiversity
- More regular updates outside Board meetings against targets set in the Management Plan
- Advertise the Management Plan through the SCC Communications Department.
- More and better communication between officers and Councillors about the Management Plan

OTHER

- Ensure Natural England Area Team are involved in the Management Plan
- Greater emphasis on special characteristics, successes, and achievements, aligned to vision and ambitions
- More support for farmers and landowners
- More focus on benefits of SHNL to rural economy

IF THERE IS ONE THING THAT YOU THINK WOULD IMPROVE GOVERNANCE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

- A clear organisational and partnership structure which shows all the partners, who is involved, who is responsible for decision making etc.
- A strong vision, clear objectives and Key Performance Indicators that are reported back at Board meetings in terms of delivery and performance. Some elements of scrutiny on decision making as well.
- The creation of a clear, accountable, and representative executive group/body, that has the authority to make decisions and commission work, informed by the Board/JAC, with sufficient resources to make a difference and deliver not just the Management Plan, but the strategies and plans of each of the SHNL 'family' groups.

- Small diverse Board with clear roles. Board is reflective of the needs, communities and those who visit the National Landscape.
- Full independence and a structure based on community governance.
- Less involvement of host Local Authority.
- Having more teeth.
- A guideline booklet.
- Provision of more information to Board members and beefing up the role of the Partnership.
- Revisit the priorities of why we all want the Surrey Hills National Landscape to be preserved.

8.3 SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY

NB- This was a small sample and just reflects the views of the SHNL Board.

Below is a summary of the results:

- Board members generally felt being involved in the Board was rewarding and inspiring, they are well aligned to the Management Plan outcomes, have the right knowledge and experience, and were able to advocate for and engage people in the SHNL.
- Most felt they were clear on the role the Board plays in the Management Plan and that their organisation was helping deliver it, although this was not consistent, and some members felt this was not clear. This may be because half of the respondents had been Board members for less than 2 years.
- Most felt that coordination with the SHNL Family was good, and they had sufficient training and support.
- However, there is a lack of clarity in Board, Local Authority, SHNL Family, Defra and Local Authorities roles and responsibilities, especially around decision making and finance.
- There seems to be a clear ask for an Executive group or smaller Board, with delegated decision-making powers. Board roles were suggested.
- It's suggested that this should be part of a clearly defined structure, with a strong vision, clear objectives and KPIs that are reported back at Board meetings, with more scrutiny and associated procedures. The constitution needs updating.
- There are concerns about lack of diversity.
- There are many good ideas that could be developed by the Board in the future, including better communication and induction processes.

9.0 APPENDIX 3- IUCN GREEN LIST CRITERIA FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

1.1 GUARANTEE LEGITIMACY AND VOICE: There are clearly defined, legitimate, equitable, and functional governance arrangements, in which the interests of civil society, rights-holders and stakeholders, are fairly represented and addressed, including those relating to the establishment or designation of the site.

- The site's governance structure is clearly defined and documented and in accordance with relevant national or regional government, jurisdiction or recognised authority specifications
- The site's local governance structures and mechanisms provide civil society, stakeholders and rights-holders with appropriate opportunities to participate in management planning, processes and actions
- The site's local governance structures and mechanisms recognise the legitimate rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities
- Rights-holders and stakeholders are effectively involved in decision-making and the adaptive management of the site.
- Governance arrangements help advance gender equity in relation to management of the site.
- The defined governance structures and mechanisms are accepted by major constituents (civil society, rights-holders and stakeholders) reflecting the governance category of the site

1.2 ACHIEVE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Governance arrangements and decision-making processes are transparent and appropriately communicated, and responsibilities for implementation are clear, including a readily accessible process to identify, hear and resolve complaints, disputes, or grievances.

- The governance structures and key documents on management are readily accessible to civil society in an easily understandable format. Key documents include the site's management plan or equivalent, relevant subsidiary plans and other key direction documents
- Where a formal decision-making body exists, the current membership of the body is publicly available and procedures for establishment and membership of the body are publicly accessible, or where there is no decision-making body appointed, the names and contact details of formal decision-makers such as a Minister or Agency Director are publicly accessible
- The outcomes of discussions by decision-making bodies or decision-makers in relation to issues raised by civil society, rights-holders and stakeholders are publicly available
- A readily accessible process to identify, hear and resolve complaints, disputes or grievances related to the governance or management of the site is in place

1.3 ENABLE GOVERNANCE VITALITY AND CAPACITY TO RESPOND ADAPTIVELY: Planning and management draws on the best available knowledge of the social and ecological context of the site, using an adaptive management framework that anticipates, learns from and responds to change in its decision making.

- Procedures are in place to ensure that results from monitoring, evaluation and consultation are used to inform management and planning processes including the establishment of goals and objective
- Planning and decision-making recognise relevant conditions, issues and goals at national and regional scales that impact the protected area
- Planning and management processes draw on multiple knowledge sources (scientific, experiential, local and traditional knowledge)
- The site has, where relevant, considered historical changes and future projections in social, ecological and climate conditions

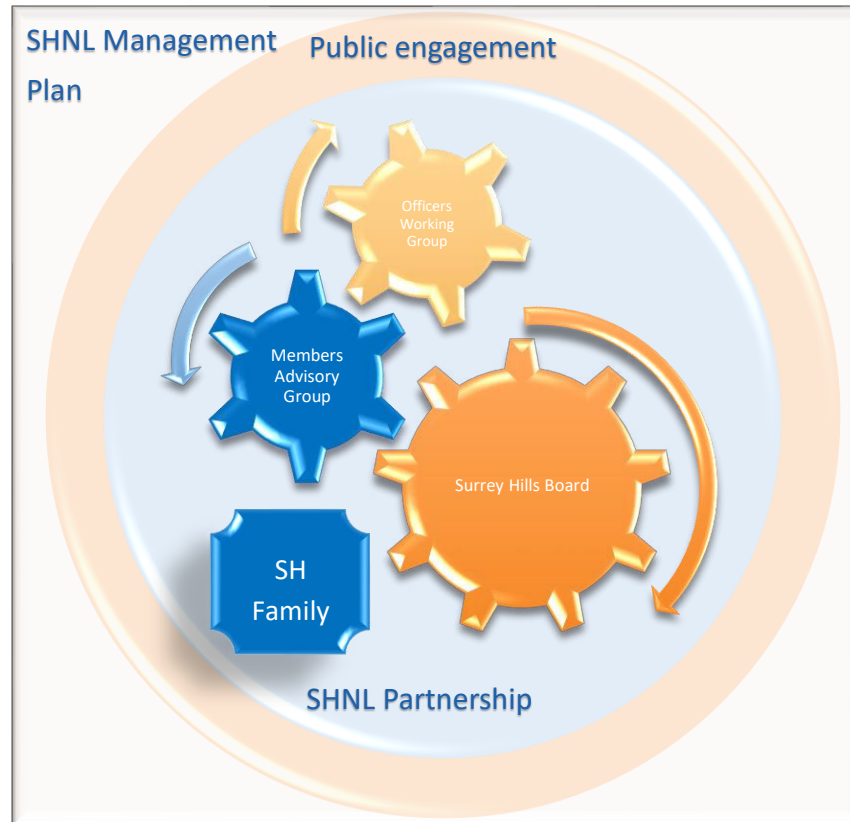
10.0 APPENDIX 4- DRAFT PRINCIPLES FOR THE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF MANAGEMENT PLANS, NATURAL ENGLAND

The following list is a set of key principles by which Protected Landscapes partnerships, committees and joint committees can most effectively deliver the Protected Landscapes Management Plans.

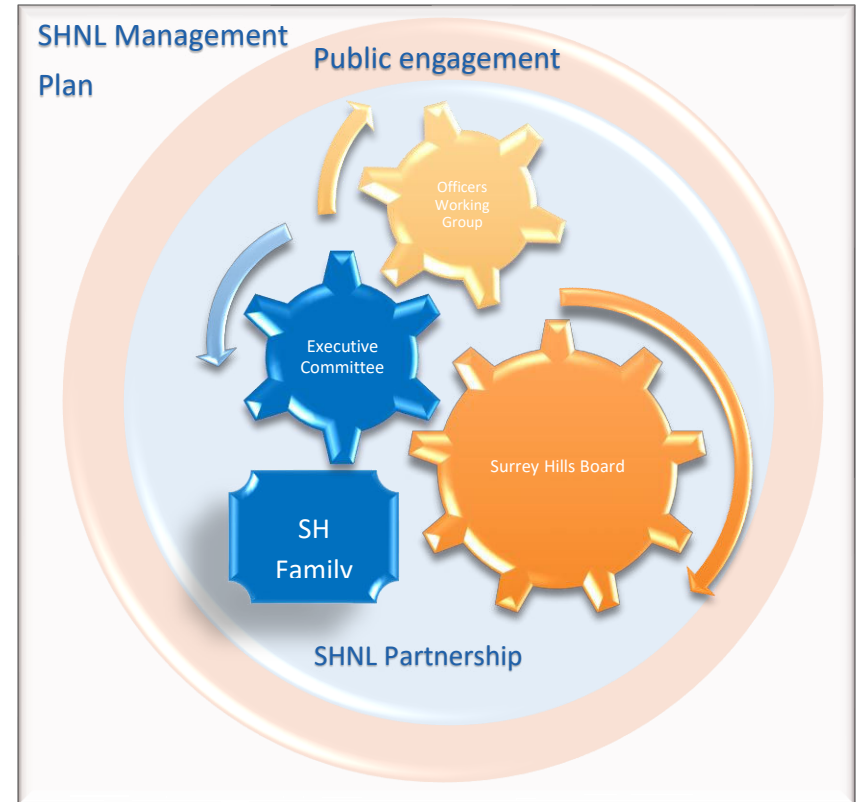
- **Management Plan focused-** Delivery is focused on the stated outcomes in the Management Plan and all processes, procedures and activity facilitate the joint delivery of the Plan.
- **Accountability-** Partnerships, committees and boards are fully transparent and accountable with wide communication.
- **Forward-facing, positive and co-operative-** Partnership working is positive, co-operative and outward-looking, seeking all opportunities to collaborate together to deliver Plan outcomes.
- **Inclusive and diverse-** Protected Landscapes management bodies reflect and account for diversity in our society – welcoming young voices, people from cities and beyond, bringing together stakeholders of all kinds to ensure Boards are well informed about a wide range of interests and specialist expertise. Every effort should be made to achieve diversity of social background, gender, age, ethnicity and (dis)ability.
- **Strategic and focused on implementation-** Protected Landscapes should be agile, focused on driving the ambitious delivery of Management Plans, and not overly burdened by procedures and processes.
- **Innovative and enterprising-** Protected Landscapes deliver Plans innovatively, being creative with core funding, leveraging other sources of income at scale, including through charitable routes.
- **Inspirational and ambitious-** Protected Landscape representatives should be inspirational leaders in their fields, able to advocate and champion action to deliver ambition.
- **Self-critical and adaptive-** Protected Landscapes strive for improvement, learning from each other and partners and working with designated landscapes elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe.
- **Knowledgeable and experienced-** Professional staff and have the right expertise to deliver the ambitions established in the Plan. Partnership, committee and board representatives are selected for their passion, skills, and experience reflective of Management Plan outcomes.
- **Structured to deliver-** All forums, from board level to working groups are structured in such a way as to enable a strong focus on delivering the outcomes of the Management Plan.
- **Influencing the conditions to support delivery-** Protected Landscape representatives to use their collective influence to shape the agendas of local, regional, and national organisations to optimise delivery, for example advocating for the appropriate targeting of fundamental delivery mechanisms.

11.0 APPENDIX 5- SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF GOVERNANCE OPTIONS.

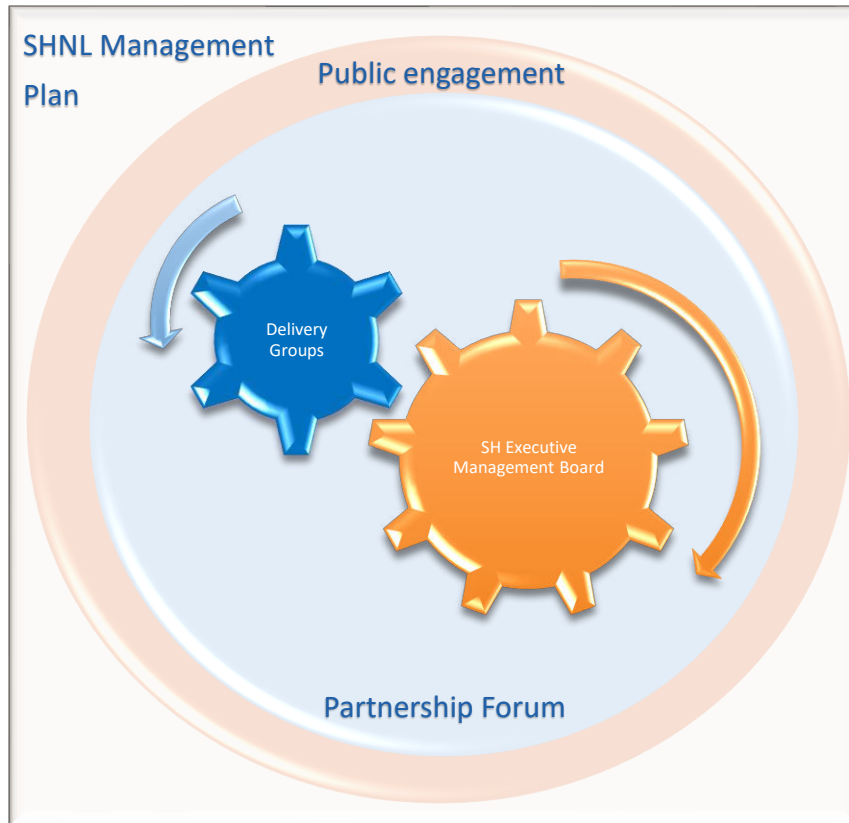
Option 0- Current Structure



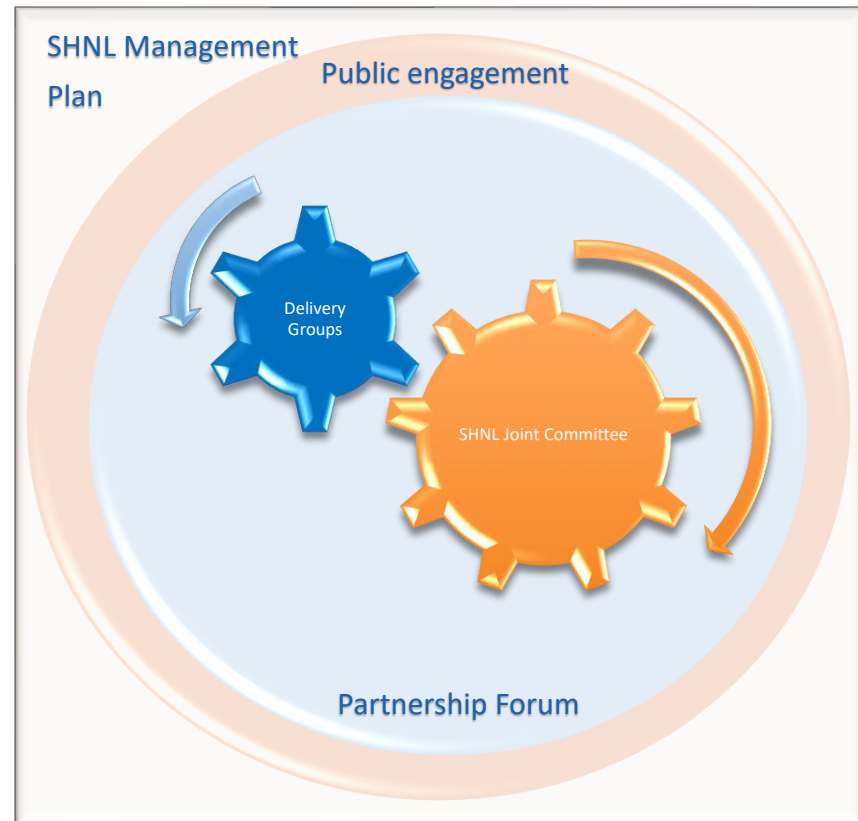
Option 1- Current Structure with Executive Committee replacing Members Advisory Group



Option 2- Executive Management Board, Delivery Groups and Partnership Forum



Governance Model Option 3- Joint Committee, Delivery Groups and Partnership Forum



Option4- Surrey Hills NL Conservation Board



12.0 APPENDIX 6- PROPOSED CONSTITUTION FOR SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE- A DESIGNATED AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document (“the Constitution”) is to set out the roles and responsibilities of the new Surrey Hills National Landscape Executive Management Board (“The Surrey Hills Executive Management Board (SHEMB”) for the Surrey Hills National Landscape (SHNL).

The SHEMB has been established following the removal of the SHNL’s Joint Advisory Committee from the Accountable Body, Surrey County Council’s constitution on the XXX. In making this decision, Surrey County Council has delegated authority, subject to the limits on officer decision making, to the Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, both of whom will have decision making roles on the SHEMB.

This draft consultation is for advisory purposes only and legal advice will need to be sought by Surrey County Council, as the Accountable Body to ensure it fully meets regulatory requirements and is agreed by Defra and Natural England.

2.0 THE SURREY HILLS EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD CONSTITUTION

2.1 NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

The formal designation for a National Landscape is ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ (AONB), which were originally designated under legislation in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949 but now sit within the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act).

The Statutory duty of a National Landscape is to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Natural beauty is the sum of its ‘sense of place.’ It includes geology, climate, landform, and species which together give rise to the industry, heritage, culture, and language of a place.

Section 84 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 sets out the powers of Local Authorities responsible for National Landscapes.

(4)A local planning authority whose area consists of or includes the whole or any part of a National Landscape has power, subject to subsections (5) and (6), to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape or so much of it as is included in their area.

Section 85 of the CROW Act (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) requires ‘relevant authorities’, in exercising or performing any function that affect AONBs

in England, to ‘seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’.

Defra’s mission for National Landscapes is:

‘A coherent national network of beautiful, nature-rich spaces that all parts of society can easily access and enjoy. National Landscapes will support thriving local communities and economies, improve our public health and wellbeing, drive forward nature recovery, and build our resilience to climate change.’

Every National Landscape must have a statutory Management Plan, which is reviewed every five years.

2.1.1 PURPOSE OF THE SURREY HILLS EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

The purpose of the Surrey Hills Executive Management Board (SHEMB) will be to oversee the preparation of the SHNL Management Plan for adoption by the Funding Members (described below) and focus on the stated outcomes in the SHNL Management Plan to facilitate the joint strategic delivery of the Plan on their behalf, developing practical measures to:

- Further the statutory duties to protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- Promote the unique identity of the National Landscape recognising and respecting the individual landscape character and habitats of local areas in the implementation of planning and management policies.
- Encourage, where appropriate, quiet enjoyment of the National Landscape.
- Ensure that development is soundly based on principles of sustainability and is appropriate to the character of the National Landscape.

2.1.2 ROLE

The SHEMB is a decision- making body, which will decide how the SHNL Management Plan is delivered.

Specifically, it will have oversight of:

- Strategic development of the SHNL Management Plan.
- A SHNL strategy, delivering the Management Plan, with the SHNL Team plan incorporated.
- Operational and financial oversight and control
- Financial management, reporting and decision-making of a devolved budget, with delegation of financial decisions to SHNL Director, to an agreed level.
- Performance management and reporting.
- Contacts and networking.
- Promotion and communication, including consistent use of the brand, in line with the trademark licence agreement.
- Establishing, reviewing, and terminating Delivery Groups.

- Organise seminars, tours and site visits on issues and projects relevant to its work for the Partnership Forum as it considers appropriate.

SHEMB members will also offer out of meeting support to the SHNL Director and staff, when required.

2.1.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

The core responsibilities of the SHEMB will be to ensure that:

- The National Landscape has the right expertise and sufficient funding to deliver the ambitions of the SHNL Management Plan.
- The Management Plan is delivered innovatively, being creative with core funding, leveraging other sources of income at scale, including through charitable routes.
- Relevant public bodies are delivering their duty to further the purposes of the National Landscape.
- Governance is fully transparent, legitimate and accountable.
- Representatives are selected for their passion, skills, and experience reflective of the SHNL Management Plan outcomes. They should be inspirational leaders in their fields, able to advocate, promote and champion action to deliver ambition.
- Representatives have the authority to use their collective influence to shape the agendas of local, regional, and national organisations to further the purposes of the Protected Landscape, for example advocating for the appropriate targeting of fundamental delivery mechanisms and finding solutions to major issues affecting the character of the National Landscape.
- Representatives strive for improvement, learning from each other and partners and working with designated landscapes elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Europe.
- There is a focus on positive, co-operative and outward-looking partnership working, fostering a positive culture to seek all opportunities to collaborate to deliver Management Plan outcomes, including with the Surrey Hills Family, whilst avoiding duplication and mitigating risk in relation to the reputation of the Surrey Hills and Funding Members.
- Governance and activities reflect and account for diversity in their society. Every effort should be made to achieve diversity of social background, gender, age, ethnicity and (dis)ability.

Each Local Authority has delegated to the Surrey Hills National Landscapes Team, the statutory duty to prepare and keep under review the National Landscape Management Plan.

The SHEMB will be guided by national policies set out for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as National Landscapes, primarily by Natural England on behalf of Defra.

2.1.4 MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

In meeting its purpose to oversee the preparation, adoption and implementation of the Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan, membership of the Executive Management Board will include:

- Independent Chair - The Chair will play an active role in advocating and promoting the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape, in leading the SHEMB, ensuring its accountability.
- Vice Chair – Accountable Body Local Authority Cabinet Member.
- The Surrey Hills National Landscape Director.
- Funding Members- Accountable Authority Director.

Other Local Authority representatives, as required.

- Other key partners
 - Natural England (on behalf of Defra)
 - Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC)
- Chairs of the Delivery Groups
 - Thriving plants and wildlife
 - Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- Chairs of Surrey Hills Family Boards
 - Surrey Hills Enterprises
 - Surrey Hills Arts
 - Surrey Hills Society
 - Surrey Hills Trust Fund (Community Foundation of Surrey)

MEMBER PROTOCOL

The Members will be entitled to nominate one representative each to the SHEMB.

For the SHEMB to operate effectively and with maximum influence it is essential that appropriate representatives are appointed. For Local Authorities this is usually expected to be an elected member. For other organisations the nominated member should have appropriate authority to represent the views of that organisation.

Each member organisation of the SHEMB, will be expected to be enthusiastic, with a genuine appreciation of natural beauty and their area, and be committed to furthering the purposes of the National Landscape and to achieving the national and local objectives for the Surrey Hills in accord with the Management Plan. In doing so they will act primarily independently in the interests of the National Landscape, whilst giving just regard to the interests of their sponsoring organisation.

Each representative is expected to be properly briefed and to have the necessary authority to contribute to effective decision-making on relevant matters.

Funding Members will decide on the period of office of their representative(s) on the SHEMB and shall so notify the secretariat.

Non-Funding Members will be appointed for a period of office of five years, to coincide with management planning.

All the Members will be expected to appoint a deputy member or to proxy an officer to attend meetings of the SHEMA or participate in associated activities. Representatives of Local Authorities may be accompanied by an officer of that Local Authority who will attend meetings in a non-voting capacity unless proxied by a member. Exceptionally more than one officer from an individual authority may attend.

Appropriate officers of the non-funding Members may also attend meetings of the SHEMA in a non-voting capacity to offer professional advice.

All the Members will endeavour to ensure their organisation is represented at all meetings of the SHEMA.

The SHEMA may review its membership as and when it considers necessary.

With the agreement of the SHEMA, members may take on specific roles. These roles include representing the SHEMA at a national and regional level and championing specific National Landscape projects at a local level.

In the event of neither the Chair nor the Vice Chair being present at a meeting of the SHEMA, a representative of one of the Funding Members present shall be elected to chair the meeting.

It is recommended that the SHEMA members follow the [Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies](#) published by the Cabinet Office.

The 'Surrey Hills Family' are independent organisations, established by the Surrey Hills National Landscape to help deliver the SHNL Management Plan. They are:

- Surrey Hills Enterprises
- Surrey Hills Society
- Surrey Hills Arts
- Surrey Hills Trust Fund

The SHEMA will establish and scrutinise the work of the Delivery Groups and via these groups, coordinate the work of the 'Surrey Hills Family' all of whom will be represented on the SHEMA and the Delivery Groups as they use the Surrey Hills trademark. Active coordination will ensure the delivery plans, policies and programmes of the SH Family align with those in the National Landscape Management Plan.

2.1.5 MANAGEMENT

The secretariat for the Executive Management Board will be provided by Surrey County Council.

2.1.6 MEETINGS

The Board will normally meet quarterly or at the request of the Chair and / or National Landscape Director.

The SHEMB meetings should be open to public questions, be recorded and available on the SHNL website.

2.1.7 DELIVERY GROUPS

Delivery groups encourage sector led collaboration, advocacy and action planning with partners to help achieve relevant SHNL Management Plan priorities, bringing in knowledge and experience of the sector from a range of partners. Knowledge should include scientific, experiential, local and traditional, and reflect an understanding of national and regional context, considering historical changes and future projections in social, ecological and climate conditions.

Delivery Groups are:

- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the Delivery Groups are:

- Bringing together representatives from relevant bodies and specialist organisations who have the knowledge, expertise and experience and/ or represent key stakeholders impacted by decisions in that sector. They should have authority for decision-making and to enable scrutiny of activities.
- Act as an advocate for the National Landscape, championing the statutory purpose and Management Plan ambitions.
- Coordinating delivery and resources across partner organisations towards the SHNL Management Plan, with an Action Plan that sets out the actions to achieve the relevant priorities in the SHNL Management Plan, with responsibilities, costings, key performance indicators and timescales.
- Identifying gaps and challenges that need to be addressed.
- Challenge relevant public bodies to deliver their duty to further the purpose of the National Landscape.
- Adding value to the SHNL, rather than duplicating county-wide groups and organisations. A key knowledgeable member of the Delivery Groups should represent the SHNL on county-wide groups and/ or regional groups as appropriate.
- Reporting on progress towards delivery of relevant priorities in the Management Plan.

Members of the sub-groups should have authority for decision-making within their respective organisations.

The Chairs of the Boards of the SH Family should be included as part of the Delivery Groups, with their agreement, to retain focus on communities, the local economy and arts. The Surrey Hills Family should all be working towards delivering the SHNL Management Plan and have action plans to demonstrate how this is going to be delivered and monitored.

It is important that the Chair from each Delivery Group, is included as a member of the SHEMB.

These would have relevant Chairs from key partner organisations, who would sit on the SHEMA to report progress to the SHEMA on a regular basis.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE DELIVERY GROUPS

Sector specialists, recruited to Chair the Delivery Groups, will report to the Executive Management Board and will be responsible for reporting progress on the delivery of Action Plans, which form part of the overarching National Landscape Management Plan.

Chairs for these groups will be actively recruited based on role descriptions to ensure expertise, enthusiasm and commitment.

The Delivery Groups will involve representatives from the Surrey Hills Family and additional Members who are able to offer a diverse range of experience and specialisms.

Task and Finish groups can be set up as required to address specific opportunities and challenges identified.

MANAGEMENT

Delivery Groups do not necessarily need to be managed by a SHNL Team member, but could be led by Local Authority staff, or partner organisations, providing they have an agreed action plan to deliver. Regular feedback to the EMT will be essential.

Where the SHNL Team is acting as the secretariat, sufficient administrative support should be available to ensure this isn't a distraction for senior staff.

MEETINGS

The Delivery Groups will meet twice per year.

The Secretariate for the Delivery Groups will be the National Landscape Team.

2.1.8 SURREY HILLS PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The role of the Surrey Hills Partnership Forum is to:

- Encourage wider engagement with a more diverse range of partners and stakeholders.
- Help better understand the contribution of these partners and wider stakeholders to the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.
- Share progress on the delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.
- Share good practice in and learning about delivery of the SHNL Management Plan.

The Surrey Hills Partnership Forum is informal and invitations to events are to a diverse range of partners and stakeholders who have been involved or would like to be involved in delivering the Management Plan.

Two annual events will be organised:

- An annual symposium or seminar, where progress against the SHNL Management Plan could be shared. An annual survey for partners could inform the progress of the delivery of the Management Plan, including performance monitoring, and give stakeholders an opportunity to feed in.
- A summer tour with site visits could showcase work of the SHNL Team and partners. These are organised and led by the Delivery Groups.

2.1.9 PATRONS AND AMBASSADORS

Distinguished local people with an interest in the Surrey Hills may be invited to be patrons of the Surrey Hills National Landscape, to lend their names and support to high profile campaigns, including fund raising campaigns.

2.1.10 SCRUTINY AND FINANCE

Defra, or Natural England, as their representative will fulfil the scrutiny role, as part of the Hosting Agreement with Surrey County Council. This will involve an annual visit to the National Landscape to assess impact and scrutinise financial controls and to ensure knowledge sharing, best practice and more collaborative work between National Parks and National Landscapes.

2.1.11 THE SURREY HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM

The SH Executive Management Board will recommend and approve the appointment of the Surrey Hills Director subject to funding availability. The Chair and a representative of Natural England will be members of the appointment panel. The Board may also recommend the appointment of other members of the Surrey Hills National Landscape Team as part of a planned programme of work and to undertake specific functions determined by the SHEMB. The SHEMB should ensure the current National Landscapes Management Plan, defines the duties and tasks of the Surrey Hills Director and any associated staff.

The Surrey Hills Director and any associated staff will be employed by Surrey County Council. As the Accountable Body, Surrey County Council will be responsible for employment, pensions, financial control, banking services, audit, recruitment, payroll, insurance, legal services, IT provision, estates management, and health and safety. In all other regards, the Director and staff will be directed in their duties by the Executive Management Board decisions.

When necessary, in the interests of expediency, the Surrey Hills Director may act on behalf of the SHEMB, after seeking prior approval of the Chair and Vice-Chair, provided such action is consistent with this Constitution and is reported to the next meeting of the Executive Management Board.

The Surrey Hills National Landscape Team will prepare the Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan for adoption by the SHEMB and Funding Members and will lead

implementation on their behalf of the Surrey Hills National Landscape Team Plan as part of the overall Business Plan to achieve the SHNL Management Plan priorities.

2.1.12 FINANCE

The funding requirement of the SHEMA will form part of a five-year rolling Business Plan that will align with the Management Plan. The plan will be reviewed and submitted for approval to the Board on an annual basis.

The contributions to 'core' costs will be made primarily by the local authority Members. Other organisations may be willing from time to time to provide funding or assistance in kind.

The account of the Executive Management Board will be administered by Surrey County Council and will be operated under the County Council's financial regulations.

A budget will be prepared each year by the Surrey Hills Director and presented to the Executive Management Board for approval in the context of the 5-year National Landscapes Management Plan.

The budget will make sufficient provision to cover:

- staffing costs of the Surrey Hills Director and any other staff employed (such costs to include salaries, travel and subsistence, training, redundancy and recruitment).
- office accommodation and associated expenses.
- costs associated with publicising and promoting the work of the Board.
- the costs of any other projects and activities to be undertaken during the year for which the Executive Management Board's approval has been given.

Financial contributions to the Executive Management Board's budget will be agreed at the AGM.

Any surplus remaining in the Board's account at the end of a financial year shall be carried forward into the next financial year.

The Surrey Hills Director shall, within the budget limits agreed in advance and in accordance with the County Council's financial regulations or any conditions imposed by grant-giving bodies, be authorised to approve expenditure within the Executive Management Board's Constitution and to apply for grants, sponsorship, lottery funding or any other source of income. Continuing efforts will be made by all Members of the Board to identify and secure funding from a wide range of sources.

The Surrey Hills Director will prepare an annual statement of accounts for the previous financial year for the Board's approval. The Surrey Hills Director will also be responsible for providing financial information in response to any reasonable request from any of the Funding Members making a financial contribution.

In order to secure continuity and stability to the arrangements based on Defra continuing to contribute up to 75% towards the core staff unit costs and Local Authority Core Members contributing a minimum of 25% and will commit them to support over a five-year period based on the following formulae:

Defra	75%
Local Authorities	25%

2.1.13 HOSTING AGREEMENT

A Hosting Agreement has been agreed between the SHEMB, SHNL Team and Surrey County Council, agreed by Defra and Natural England. The Hosting Agreement makes clear the relationship and arrangements for the five years period of the SHNL Management Plan.

The Hosting Agreement covers:

- Roles and responsibilities, including furthering the statutory duties of the SHNL, as set out in this constitution.
- Delegated authority.
- Funding arrangements, with levels of delegated financial decision-making.
- Back-office services and support.
- Secretariate responsibilities.

Responsibility for creating and monitoring the Hosting Agreement sits with Surrey County Council.

2.1.14 REVIEW

The funding arrangements will be reviewed annually and the constitution for the Surrey Hills Executive Management Board will be reviewed at least every five years at the time the Management Plan is reviewed and adopted.