

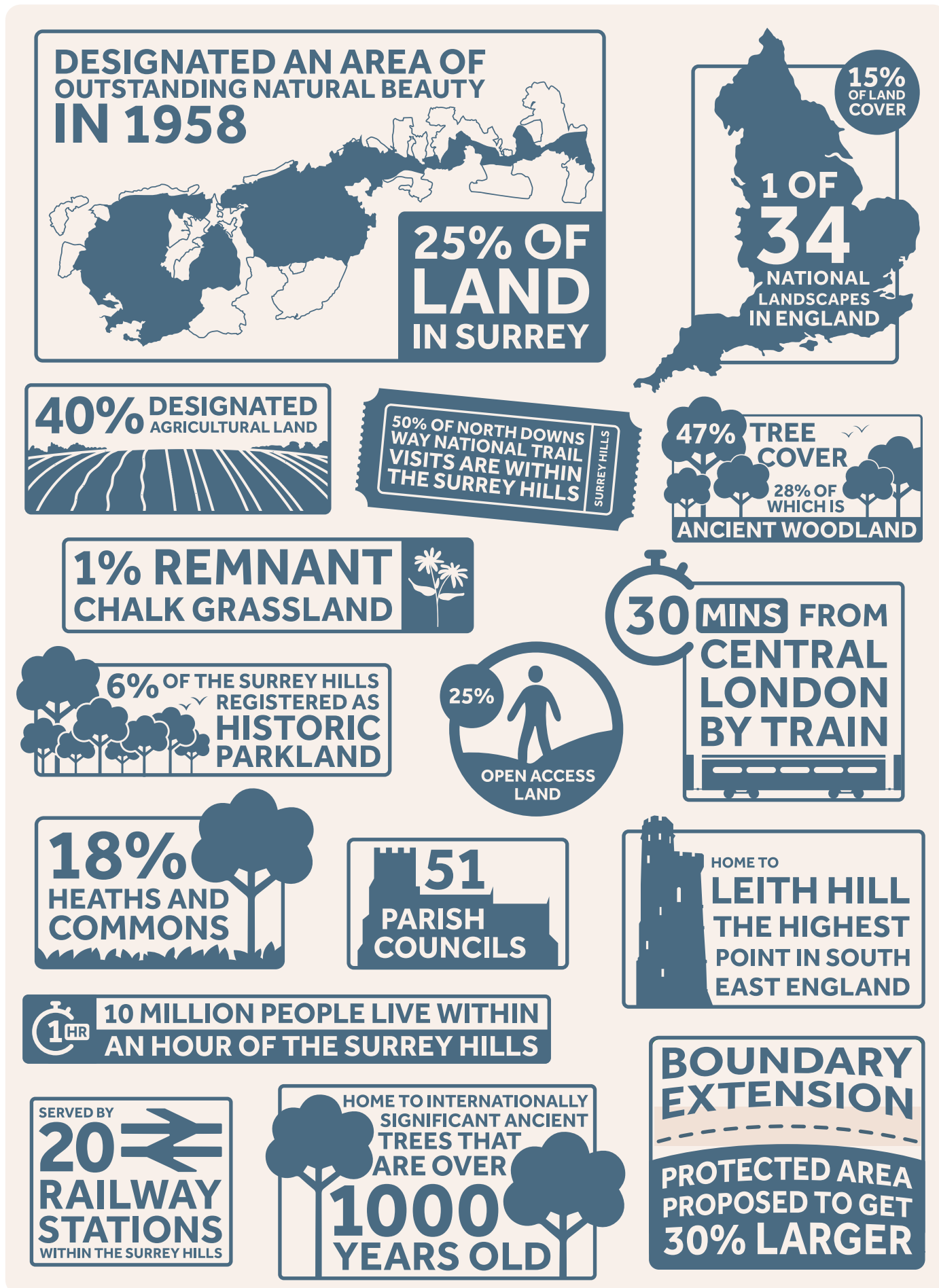


Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025 – 2030)

The 75-Year Vision, Targets and Policy Framework for
a Thriving Place for People and Nature



The Surrey Hills National Landscape



Preface



This is the Executive Summary of the statutory Management Plan for the Surrey Hills National Landscape that was adopted in 2025 by all the local authorities that administer land within the Surrey Hills. The Plan sets out the targets, priorities and policies for the local authorities and other Relevant Authorities to guide their activities and their impact on the Surrey Hills.

At the heart of this Plan is a 75-year vision of the Surrey Hills as a thriving place for people and nature in a changing climate. Thank you to all the people who have contributed to this vision through the surveys and the Postcards from the Future campaign. The special qualities of the landscape that we want to protect and enhance for the next 75 years have been illustrated by Dorking based artist Diana Croft (front cover) and the Surrey Hills Poet in Resident, Rosie May Jones, in her poem which asks the question "Have you ever wondered, about the Year Twenty One Hundred?" (back cover).



Scan the QR code to read the full plan

Structure of the Management Plan

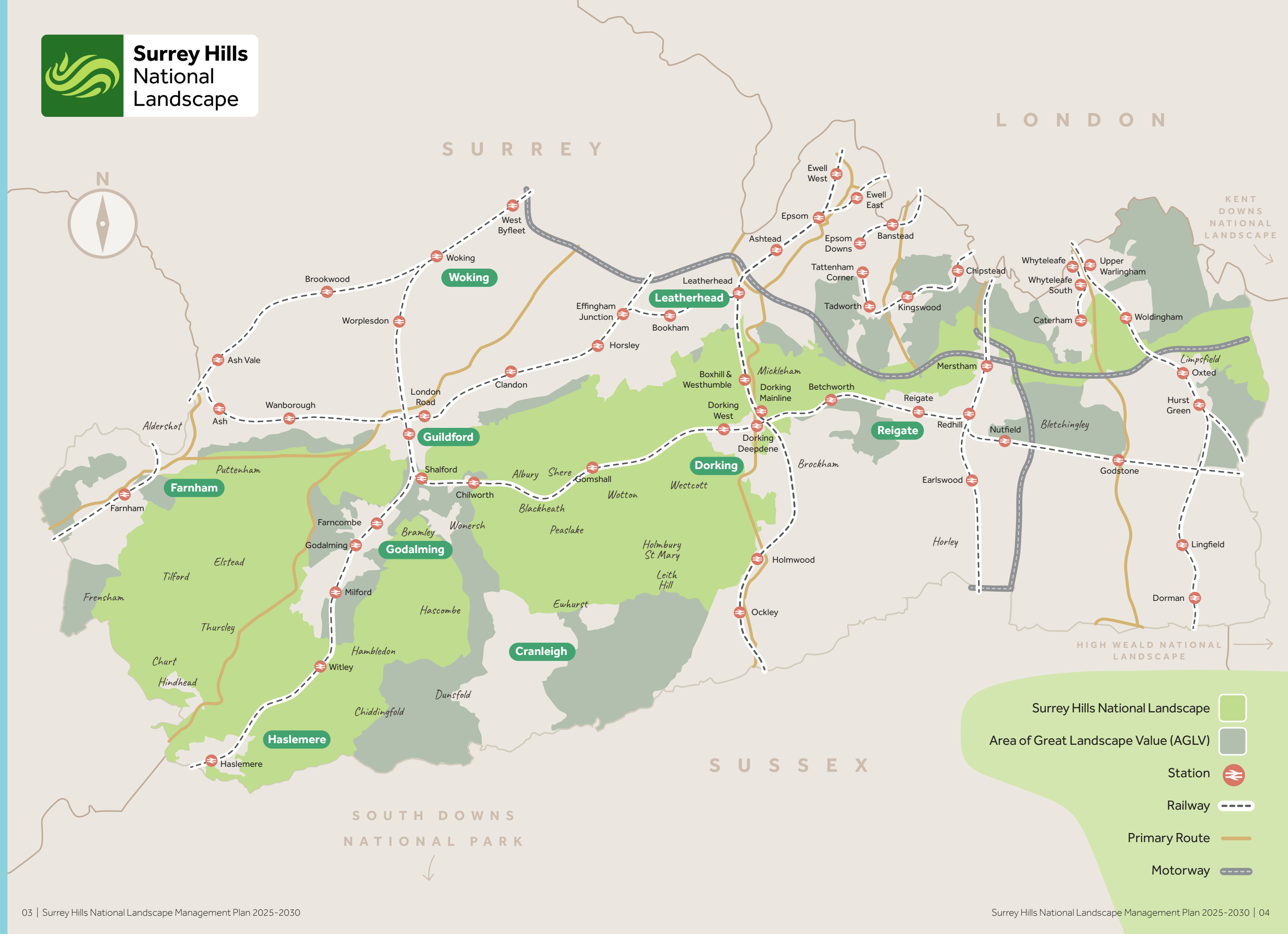
Part 1. Introduction to National Landscapes. This sets the scene regarding the 1949 Act, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation, the status of the Management Plan and the Core Principles at the heart of securing the long-term vision.

Part 2. The Surrey Hills National Landscape. This includes the Statement of Significance explaining why the Surrey Hills is designated as a as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the pressures and threats, and the outstanding qualities that need to be conserved and enhanced.

Part 3. The 75-year Vision for the Surrey Hills. This includes the Vision Statement for 2100 for Nature, People and Climate arising out of the Postcards from the Future engagement process. It sets out the Targets and Strategic Priorities which need to be delivered over the next 75 years.

Part 4. The Policy Framework for 2025-2030. This sets out the policy objectives as guidance to Relevant Authorities on how to seek to further the purpose of the designation, in line with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) duty.

Part 5. The Delivery Strategy. This outlines the role of Relevant Authorities, a Surrey Hills Charter for wider society, and the role of the Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board and monitoring of the targets.



Surrey Hills National Landscape

Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV)

Station

Railway

Primary Route

Motorway

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YEAR TWENTY-ONE HUNDRED by Rosie-May Jones 31



Surrey Hills Symposium 2025, exploring how we can shape the future of the Surrey Hills National Landscape as a thriving place for people and nature.

Part 1: Introduction to National Landscapes

Part 1 introduces our National Landscapes (designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and explains how they were established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. It explores their enduring purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, the Glover Review and recent legislation, and their continuing role in shaping the future of our finest landscapes.



Read the full Management Plan on our website for further detail on the legislation and processes to date.

1.1 1949: National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act

In 1949, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act created the legal structure supporting our protected landscapes – National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), now called National Landscapes.

1.2 2000: Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW Act)

National Landscapes are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are conserved and enhanced. The Surrey Hills National Landscape was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958. The primary purpose of the National Landscape designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, as confirmed by Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act).

The Government confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and National Landscapes are equivalent, so the protection given by the land use planning system to natural beauty in both types of area should also be equivalent. The National Landscape designation is also of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Sections 88 and 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) state that each local authority and Conservation Board must prepare and publish a Management Plan for their National Landscape, which should then be reviewed at intervals of no less than five years. Management Plans are adopted by the partner local authorities and the policies contained within these plans carry statutory weight.

1.3 2000: The NATURA Protected Areas Network

The Natura 2000 network is a cornerstone of European biodiversity conservation legislation, comprising Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives.

1.4 2018: The Glover Review of Designated Landscapes

As part of the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018), the government asked Julian Glover to lead an expert panel looking at how these protections could be renewed. The aim of the review was to ask whether the protections for National Parks and AONBs were still fit for purpose.

Glover reviewed the structure of our protected landscapes and put forward 27 Recommendations including reviewing governance structures, strengthening management plans, prioritising nature recovery, renaming AONBs as National Landscapes and expanding their statutory purposes.

In 2024, following Glover's recommendation, England's AONBs were re-named as National Landscapes to better reflect their important role (alongside National Parks) in achieving the nation's strategic goals related to health, wellbeing, sustainable rural tourism, public access, climate change, and nature recovery.

1.5 2022: The Vision for National Landscapes

In 2022, the Government response to Glover set out the following vision for National Parks and National Landscapes:

“ A coherent national network of beautiful, nature-rich spaces that all parts of society can easily access and enjoy. Protected 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. ”

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2022). Landscapes review (National Parks and AONBs): government response



1.6 2023: The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA)

In December 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) imposed a legal duty on Relevant Authorities to actively “seek to further the purpose” of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes. As a result, all public bodies are now required to carefully consider the implications of proposals (including transport and planning) on the National Landscape. The new duty stresses the importance of avoiding harm to the statutory purpose of National Landscapes and requires a proactive approach to explore how best to achieve this purpose, particularly by considering the policy framework which is set out in Part 4 of this Management Plan.

1.7 Core Principles

This Management Plan looks beyond the next five or ten years and sets out a long-term vision for the Surrey Hills as a thriving National Landscape for the next century. It is based on the following principles, which guide the priorities and actions, ensuring a thriving, sustainable future for the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape:

- **Conserve and Enhance:** Go beyond preservation by actively improving the landscape, architecture, and natural beauty or heritage for future generations.
- **Deliver Wider Benefits:** While focusing on nature conservation, contribute to broader goals like health, wellbeing, and social inclusion.
- **Foster Sustainability:** Build a sustainable land management model and rural economy to support local communities.
- **Build Resilience:** Learn from the past to adapt to future challenges with nature-based solutions and new technologies.
- **Think Bigger:** Expand and connect protected nature sites, improve biodiversity, and use land creatively to address issues like flooding.
- **Balance Access and Protection:** Prioritise conservation when conflicts arise between public enjoyment and environmental preservation.



Part 2: Introduction to National Landscapes

The Surrey Hills was one of the first landscapes to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958. Although the Surrey Hills is now one of the most wooded of the UK’s protected landscapes with 47% canopy cover, it is still an intriguingly diverse landscape characterised by hills and valleys, traditional mixed farming, a patchwork of chalk grassland and heathland, sunken lanes, picturesque villages and market towns. It has associations with many of the country’s great artists, writers, musicians and designers. It is often regarded as the first real countryside south of London and is a rural retreat for many thousands of daily commuters.



Read the full plan on our website for further detail on the special qualities of the National Landscape.

2.1 An historic environment

Although geology, soils and climate have created the bones of the landscape, the appearance of the Surrey Hills has been shaped for centuries by the changing patterns of land use and settlement. Over much of the Surrey Hills the historic settlement pattern remains largely intact: small, picturesque villages of Saxon and medieval origin in the valleys; isolated farmsteads on chalk slopes, valley bottoms and in clearings from the woodland; large country houses with extensive parklands; market towns; and remnants of seventeenth and eighteenth-century industry.

2.2 The Statement of Significance

“The Surrey Hills landscape mosaic of farmland, woodland, heaths, downs and commons has inspired some of the country’s greatest artists, writers and architects over the centuries. The National Landscape includes internationally important priority habitats and attracts millions of visitors every year who contribute to the economy of the area. The Hills are protected as part of London’s Metropolitan Green Belt and provide an outstanding natural resource for London and Surrey residents to enjoy outdoor pursuits, taste local food and drink, and to explore market towns and picture-postcard villages.”



2.3 Pressures and Threats

Many changes have taken place since the Surrey Hills was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958. Although it is still a beautiful and protected area, the threats and pressures on the special character of the Surrey Hills and the vitality of its communities have come in many forms. The Management Plan survey in November 2024, identified the following pressures

- The impact of climate change which is having a major effect on water resources, the viability of habitats and leisure patterns, as well as increasing the risks associated with flooding and wildfires.
- The demand for more houses and general development pressures which have led to high land and property prices, making the Surrey Hills an area where it is difficult to retain key workers and vibrant local communities.
- The general standardisation in the design and use of building materials which has contributed to a gradual loss of local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- The viability of land-based industries, particularly farming and forestry that are undermined by world commodity prices and high land values, leading to fragmentation where the land becomes economically unviable, or vulnerable to neglect or lack of traditional land management.
- The expansion of air travel including at Gatwick, Heathrow and Farnborough Airports with the resultant loss of tranquillity.
- The growth in traffic passing through the area, including the development of motorways and trunk roads such as the M25, M23 and A3 which fragment the landscape.
- The national demand for aggregates, particularly building sand, and waste facilities which have had localised impacts on the Surrey Hills;

energy biodiversity belt
transport visitors
housing landscape
renewable new
change roads
water pollution threat
people green increase
concern farming government
environment wildlife
impact development
countryside use national
land protect needs
pressure building
large local access nature
public rural lack hill
renewables climate years
management solar etc

Figure 1. Word cloud of responses to the question "Over the next 75 years, what do you think are likely to be the biggest threats and pressures to the Surrey Hills National Landscape?" in the winter 2024 survey

2.4 The Special Qualities of the Surrey Hills

This section describes the special qualities of the Surrey Hills National Landscape which this Plan seeks to conserve and enhance.

Hills and views

The Surrey Hills has views which may be considered amongst the best and most diverse in England. The best known include Colley Hill, Box Hill, Albury Downs, Leith Hill and The Devil's Punch Bowl.

Ancient trees and woodland

The Surrey Hills is one of the most wooded National Landscapes, with 47% tree canopy cover, and woodland is perhaps now the defining feature of the Surrey Hills landscape. This woodland is diverse, including shaws, old coppice, wooded ghylls, ancient woodlands, parkland trees, small carrs and conifer plantations.

Heathland

Heathland is a significant component of the Surrey Hills, covering some 18% of the National Landscape as heaths and commons, and these areas support a diverse range of fauna, including spiders, butterflies, moths, dragonflies, wasps and rare species like the smooth snake, sand lizard and Dartford Warbler.

Chalk downland

The species rich semi-natural grasslands of the North Downs are one of Surrey's most valuable habitats. They are a key component in maintaining the diversity of the landscape that characterises the chalk scarp.

Commons

25% of the Surrey Hills is open to public access, and commons are familiar features throughout the landscape.

Water bodies, rivers and ponds

The main watercourses flowing through the Surrey Hills are the meandering Wey with its meadows, pastures and wooded valleys; the Tillingbourne with its rich industrial history including iron, paper, gunpowder and tanning, and which still exhibits remnants of its 30 water powered mills, leats, weirs, sluices and hammer ponds; and the Mole which is often considered to be one of the most celebrated and attractive rivers in the southeast, particularly where it meanders through the Mole Gap to Leatherhead.

Farmland

Farming has played a central role in shaping this landscape, although only 40% of the Surrey Hills is designated as agricultural land under the Agricultural Land Classification Scheme with 41% of that land classed as improved grassland and 9% as arable and horticulture. Traditional mixed farming creates a beautiful and forever changing landscape. The seasonal cycle of ploughing, drilling seeds and harvesting provides a valuable habitat for many species of farmland birds like the lapwing, skylark and barn owl.

Boundary features

Farm boundaries, principally shaws and hedgerows, some of which have considerable antiquity and historical interest, are important features in the Surrey Hills. They provide wildlife corridors and have an enormous influence on the pattern, scale and character of the landscape.

Parkland and historic landscape features

Parkland contributes significantly to the landscape character of the Surrey Hills, as with the Wotton and Albury Estates, and as much as 6% of the National Landscape is registered as parkland. In a landscape that is threatened by pressures of fragmentation, parkland provides a sense of continuity and grand scale.

Routeways: country lanes and rights of way

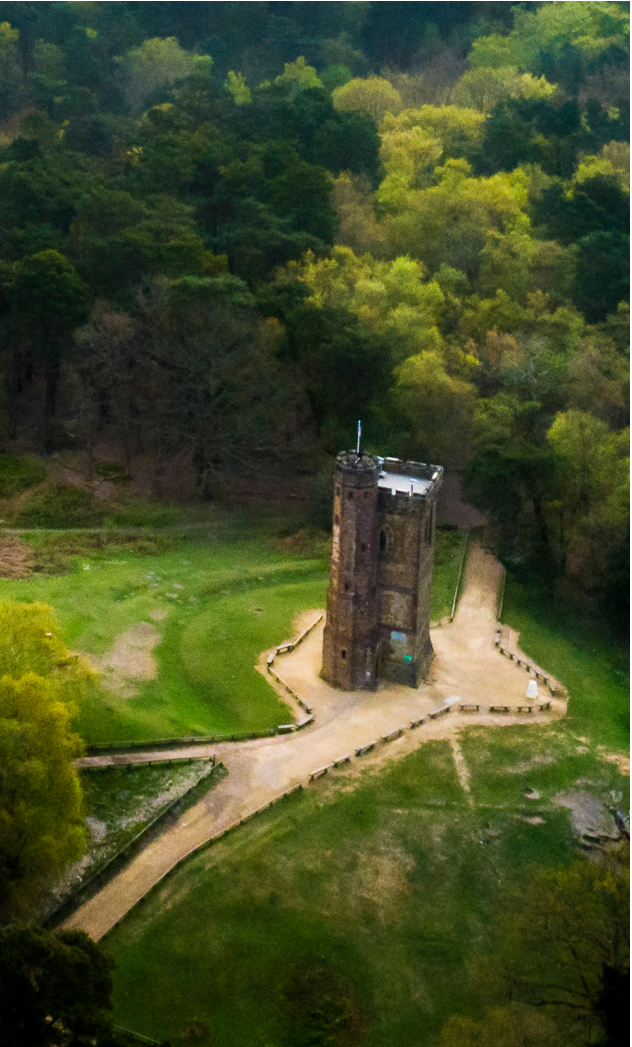
Narrow, winding, sunken country lanes are a characteristic feature of the National Landscape. Many are metalled and carry modern traffic, whilst others survive as bridleways, byways or footpaths, retaining much of the atmosphere of times before the invention of the combustion engine.

Settlements and the built heritage

The Surrey Hills has a rich and diverse built heritage featuring many small farmsteads, pleasant hamlets with village greens and grand houses set in parkland. Local materials like Bargate stone, flint, tile, brick and timber are featured throughout the Surrey Hills, defining the sense of place.

Tranquillity and darker skies

Being within a densely populated county and region, the peace and tranquillity of the Surrey Hills is constantly being eroded. Increased light pollution comes from new development of many kinds and has been exacerbated in recent years by evolving and highly affordable LED lighting technology. Against this backdrop of major economic and social forces, the inspirational qualities of the Surrey Hills landscape are often increasingly difficult to appreciate.



Part 3: The 75-Year Vision

To support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place, the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 established ambitious targets for National Parks and National Landscapes. These targets promote the long-term policies and actions that are most needed to achieve positive changes to achieve 3 outcomes:

Nature

Thriving plants and wildlife

People & Place

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Climate

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

The 75-year Vision

The Surrey Hills is a nature-rich landscape connecting its ancient trees, woodland, heathland and downland, whose beauty is enjoyed and appreciated by all parts of society. As part of a network of internationally protected landscapes, it has a thriving community and economy, delivers natural health and wellbeing, and is resilient to climate change.



Read the full plan on our website for further details.

3.1 Nature

A 75-year Mission for Thriving Plants and Animals

The Surrey Hills National Landscape will see restored and continuous protection of habitats and foster thriving biodiversity. Through rights for nature, regenerative agriculture, proactive conservation, and community-led initiatives, we champion a future where wildlife and people flourish together. We are committed to balancing sustainable development with a deep passion for preserving and enhancing the Surrey Hills for generations to come.

Written from a synthesis of responses to the "Postcards from the future" campaign in 2024.



Strategic Targets

Wildlife Rich Habitats

(deciduous woodland, heathland and chalk downland)

14,560 ha to 20,000 in 2100.
5-year Plan target of additional 1,000 ha



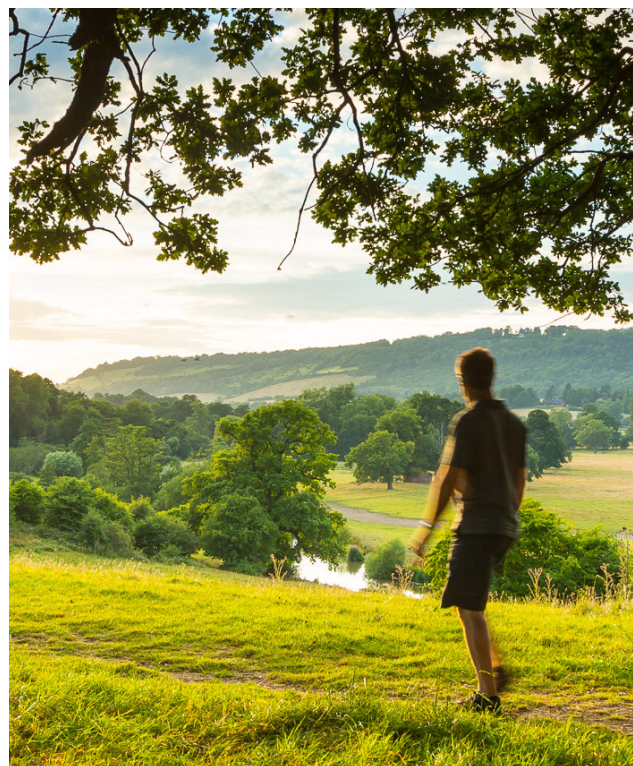
Hedgerows

6,900 km to 10,000 km in 2100.
5-year Plan target of 100 km



Protected sites (SSSIs)

75% in Favourable Condition to 95% in 2100. 5-year target 80%



Strategic Priorities

Land Based Priorities:

- **Woodland restoration** - Planting native trees and shrubs to restore forests and woodlands, which can enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, and sequester carbon.
- **Wetland restoration** - Restoring and creating wetlands to provide habitats for wildlife, improve water quality, and act as natural flood defences.
- **Ancient trees and woodlands** - Ensuring the conservation of ancient woodlands and veteran trees, which are vital for biodiversity and have historical significance.
- **Heathlands and chalk grasslands** - Maintaining and managing heath and grassland areas, which are unique ecosystems, home to rare species.

Farming Priorities:

- **Nature friendly farming** - Encouraging farmers to adopt agroecological practices to enhance soil health, reduce chemical use and promote biodiversity.
- **Hedgerow planting and maintenance** - Planting and maintaining hedgerows to provide wildlife corridors and habitats for birds, insects, and small mammals.
- **Soil conservation** - Improvements to soil structure, alterations in crop choice and rotation and increased use of cover crops to reduce soil erosion.
- **Precision farming** - Adopting farming methods which reduce excess fertiliser use, including the use of technology, and the promotion of organic or low-input regenerative farming methods which minimise chemical inputs.

Water Based Priorities:

- **Restoring and protecting riparian buffer zones** - Enhancing the vegetation along riverbanks with native species, along with fencing off riparian zones to prevent livestock access and creating buffers that intercept pollutants.

- **Restoring or creating wetlands** - Re-wetting drained land, reconnecting rivers to their floodplains, or creating new wetlands strategically placed to capture run-off from agricultural fields.
- **Natural Flood Management** - Restoring ponds, creating scrapes, woodland planting and the creation of leaky dams which reduce the velocity and flow of water in minor watercourses.
- **Community-Led River Management Initiatives** - Engaging land managers and the wider community in the stewardship of rivers through education, stakeholder programmes, and local conservation projects.

Communities, Urban Green Spaces and Connectivity Priorities:

- **Green Infrastructure** - Developing green roofs, walls, tree-planting and parkland within urban and urban fringe areas to increase green space, providing habitats and improving residents' quality of life.
- **Wildlife Corridors** - Creating and maintaining wildlife corridors to connect fragmented habitats, allowing endangered species to migrate and thrive.
- **Volunteer programmes** - Organising practical programmes for habitat restoration projects, tree planting, and conservation efforts to involve the community in nature restoration.
- **Public and educational campaigns** - Running educational campaigns and workshops to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity and nature conservation, encouraging sustainable practices among residents.



3.2 People and Place

A 75-year Mission for enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement

A commitment to conserving and enhancing natural beauty, serving as a place of calm for people's wellbeing whilst protecting areas for wildlife. Ensuring that nature thrives alongside people, striving to make the area more accessible and welcoming, supported by improved active and sustainable travel networks. Providing greater access to environmental education and opportunities for everyone to care and be inspired by the landscape heritage supported by skills development, training, the rural economy, heritage services and the arts.

Written from a synthesis of responses to the "Postcards from the Future" campaign in 2024.

Strategic Targets

National Heritage at Risk
features from 8 to 2 in 2100.
Five-year target from 8 to 4



Easier Access Trails, rest stops, interpretation and without barriers
from 8 miles to 75 miles in 2100. Five-year target 20 miles.



Strategic Priorities

Improving public access & engagement with nature

- **Green infrastructure** - improvements to public rights of way and connecting with commons and open spaces, seeking to improve disabled access, and other proposals which result in benefits to protected species or habitats.
- **Gateway locations** - improvements to facilities which attract visitors through investment in infrastructure and public transport services, reducing pressure on more sensitive locations. Such Gateway locations require appropriate level of visitor services and facilities including, where appropriate, parking spaces, picnic areas, play areas and toilets. The larger Gateway sites include Hindhead Commons, Frensham, Farnham Heath and Tilford Rural Life Living Museum, Newlands Corner, Polesden Lacey, Box Hill, and Reigate Hill.
- **North Downs Way National Trail & Promoted Routes** - integrate and enhance existing promoted routes to include surfacing and

furniture improvements which better facilitate disabled access or improve safety and visitor experience.

- **Active Travel Routes** - routes which connect local communities, link communities to the countryside, or facilitate safe walking, cycling or equestrian exploration of the National Landscape.
- **Inspiring Views, interpretation and public understanding** - the creation or improvement of facilities which enhance public enjoyment of the nature, heritage and cultural appreciation of the National Landscape through viewpoints, interpretation and artworks which enhance the environment.

Supporting thriving rural communities

- **Local Business Support** - encouraging the growth of local businesses and entrepreneurship through grants, training, and infrastructure support.
- **Agriculture and Agri-business** - promoting sustainable farming practices and value-added agricultural products to enhance profitability and sustainability.
- **Tourism and Recreation** - developing sustainable eco-tourism and responsible recreational opportunities which capitalise on the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Healthcare Services** - ensuring that residents have access to health care services and maximise the benefits of the natural environment through forest bathing and other nature-based health connections.
- **Educational Opportunities** - providing access to quality education through well-funded schools, vocational training, and adult education programmes to support communities and land-based businesses that help to steward the National Landscape.
- **Transportation networks** - developing and maintaining reliable road, public transport, and non-motorised transport infrastructure to connect residents to services and opportunities, including car-share and rural bus services.

- **Digital Connectivity** - supporting high-speed internet access for education, business and social connectivity, whilst mitigating potential impacts on landscape.
- **Community Programmes** - supporting social, cultural, and recreational programmes that strengthen community bonds and enhance residents' quality of life.
- **Volunteerism and Civic Participation** - encouraging volunteerism and active participation in local governance and decision-making processes to ensure that community needs and voices are heard.

Place Protection

- **Farmland** - safeguarding agricultural land that enhances rural character of the area and its appearance through the seasons and its productivity for nature and food outputs.
- **Protected sites** - resisting inappropriate development, particularly in locations close to, or which risk having an adverse impact on, protected sites.
- **Farm buildings** - controlling the replacement of agricultural buildings, and their conversion into non farming uses whilst supporting the need for farm businesses to be viable through diversification schemes.
- **Affordable housing** - Favouring development of small-scale, affordable housing projects that can be restricted, in perpetuity, to those associated with the locality and in need of affordable housing.
- **Darker Skies** - reducing and controlling the effects of light pollution particularly on the remoter parts of the National Landscape for better ecology, climate, health and cultural outcomes.
- **Water bodies, rivers and streams** - reducing pollution through careful controls of development and drainage management systems that prevent direct discharge into watercourses.

3.3 Climate

75-year mission for Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

Creating a healthier landscape with a resurgence in biodiversity, as habitats adapt to a changing climate. Where reintroduced species work alongside people as environmental engineers, as well as the removal of invasive species, and the mitigation of species disease. By working together and involving the community, we strive to make a significant impact, reducing carbon emissions and planting trees to better connect woodlands, ensuring vibrant and resilient ecosystems.

Written from a synthesis of responses to the "Postcards from the Future" campaign in 2024.



Strategic Targets

Trees Outside Woodland



(under 0.5 ha, agroforestry, hedgerows and tree belts)

from 2,665 ha to 4,200 ha (6.5% of land cover to 10%) in 2100. Five-year target of 2,665 to 2,800 ha

Net Zero by 2050



(national target)

-0.5 by 2075, -1.0 by 2100

Strategic Priorities

Land management and farming

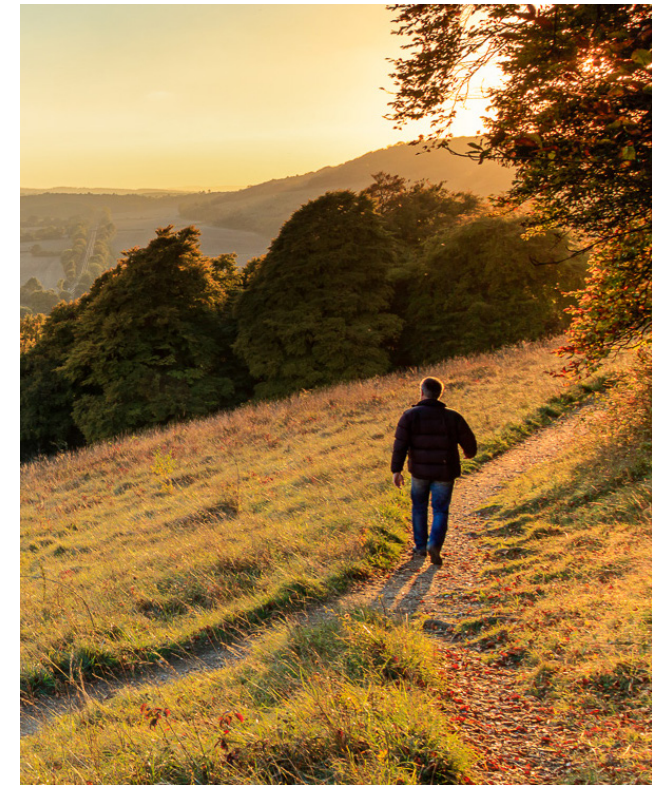
- **Soil health** - promoting conservation tilling and planting cover crops to improve soil health, reducing erosion, and capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- **Optimising fertilisers** - utilising organic fertilisers like compost and manure to improve soil health and reduce reliance on synthetic fertilisers. Using technology to apply fertilisers more efficiently, reducing the amount needed and minimising nitrous oxide emissions.
- **Methane Reduction** - implementing strategies to reduce methane emissions from livestock.
- **Grazing management** - adopting rotational grazing, mob grazing, and other sustainable grazing practices to enhance soil carbon storage and reduce methane emissions.
- **Agroforestry** - integrating trees and shrubs, including hedgerows, into agricultural landscapes to capture and store carbon while providing additional benefits such as shade and wind protection.
- **Solar and Wind Power** - small-scale installations of solar panels and wind turbines on farms (without loss of agricultural land) to generate renewable energy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Biofuel production** - promoting wood fuel and using anaerobic digesters to convert agricultural waste into biogas for heating, electricity, or as a vehicle fuel, thereby reducing methane emissions from decomposing organic matter.

Reducing transport emissions

- **Electric and hybrid vehicles** - encouraging the use of electric cars, trucks, and buses through incentives and the development of charging infrastructure.
- **Public Transport infrastructure** - expanding bus and rail services to improve and widen rural public transport options, reducing dependence on private vehicles.
- **Active Travel** - developing safe and accessible

active travel infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling, including bike sharing and the development of multi-user greenways and quiet lanes which prioritise low carbon user access.

- **Smart Transport Solutions** - using telematics to optimise routes for deliveries and personal travel to improve road safety and reduce fuel consumption.



Sustainable communities and the circular economy

- **Local Production and Consumption** - encouraging local production and distribution, to reduce the need for long-distance transport of goods.
- **Remote Work and Services** - promoting remote work and the provision of local services to minimise commuting.
- **Environmental Sustainability and Conservation** - implementing sustainable practices to manage and protect local natural resources, including water, soil, and wildlife.
- **Renewable Energy** - promoting the use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and bioenergy to reduce environmental impact and provide local energy solutions.

Part 4: The Policy Framework

The purpose of this Policy Framework is to describe what actions need to be taken over the Management Plan period (2025 – 2030) conserving and enhancing the special qualities (Part 2) and to progress the long-term 75-year Vision, targets and priorities for nature, heritage, engagement and climate (Part 3).

The aims and policy sections will help relevant authorities demonstrate how they are meeting their legal requirement to seek to further the purpose of the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.



Read the full plan on our website for further detail on the justification for each policy heading.

4.1 Arts and Cultural Heritage

Policy Aim: The artistic and cultural heritage that defines the distinctive sense of place within the Surrey Hills is recorded, protected, managed and celebrated.

AC1: An historic perspective of how the Surrey Hills landscape has evolved will be promoted, including its traditions, industries, buildings and settlement patterns.

AC2: Heritage assets, including historic buildings, archaeological sites and historic parks and gardens, will be conserved, managed and recorded.

AC3: Development proposals will have due regard to the locally distinctive character of rural settlements and the setting of historic buildings.

AC4: The rich artistic and craft traditions of the Surrey Hills will be promoted and celebrated.

AC5: New artistic interpretations of the landscape and its heritage will be commissioned with the involvement of local communities to inspire and engage new audiences and to leave a legacy that enhances the Surrey Hills.

AC6: Opportunities will be sought to better research, catalogue and understand the cultural, historic and landscape heritage of the Surrey Hills to ensure an accurate and up to date knowledge base is available to support management and enhancement projects.



4.2 Biodiversity and Water Resources

Policy aim: We will enhance the biodiversity of the Surrey Hills by creating and restoring wildlife rich habitats, trees outside woodlands, hedgerows, and ensure more protected sites are in favourable condition. This aim also supports the delivery of biodiversity net gain and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

B1: Designated sites (SSSIs, SPAs & SACs) within and connecting to the National Landscape will be conserved, enhanced and managed to ensure that all such sites are brought into or are maintained in 'favourable' condition.

B2: The importance of designated sites and the need for their protection and management will be promoted to the public through information and awareness campaigns.

B3: Important habitats, such as chalk grassland and heathland, will be managed and promoted in ways that conserve and enhance their nature conservation and cultural value.

B4: Opportunities will be taken to restore, extend and link habitats for nature recovery through the creation of new habitats and corridors to establish a multi-functional landscape which helps to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

B5: The enhancement of biodiversity will be maximised through the targeting of advice and grants for nature friendly farming which support the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

B6: Opportunities to deliver biodiversity net gain and off-setting in the National Landscape to meet planning conditions or legal agreements will be promoted, when appropriate.

B7: Water Catchment Management Plans and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will conserve and enhance the ecological value of river corridors, wetland habitats and water quality to protect biodiversity and enhance the environmental and landscape quality of the Surrey Hills.

4.3 Economy, Tourism and Community Development

Policy aim: The Surrey Hills is an attractive place to live, work and invest, where local businesses contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty

E1: The Surrey Hills as a National Landscape will be managed as a destination for sustainable tourism and responsible recreation.

E2: Initiatives that promote and market Surrey Hills products and services and that support a thriving rural economy and communities and contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area, will generally be supported.

E3: The provision and retention of affordable social housing for local people and key workers will be supported, in line with Policy P7.

E4: Initiatives that result in affordable and reliable community transport and infrastructure for recreation, employment and access to local services will be supported.

E5: Opportunities to develop land management and conservation skills through vocational training, volunteer work and paid employment will be identified and actively promoted.

E6: Greater awareness of the Surrey Hills National Landscape will be supported to foster a pride of place that encourages community members and visitors to take action to protect, enhance and enjoy its landscape.

4.4 Farming

Policy aim: Farming plays a positive role in maintaining the outstanding and diverse character of the protected landscape, contributes to nature recovery goals, and plays a part in reducing the risk of, and mitigating the effects of, climate change

F1: Farming as a viable and sustainable enterprise, within and around the National Landscape, will be supported through the development of initiatives consistent with good management of land, where this makes a positive contribution to increasing

biodiversity and conserves or enhances landscape character.

F2: Advice and financial assistance through the environmental land management schemes will be provided to encourage land management practices which conserve and enhance the landscape and contribute to addressing the dual challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

F3: Farm diversification schemes will be supported where they help to maintain and enhance the special landscape character of the Surrey Hills, have a demonstrable, positive amenity impact, lead to an increase in biodiversity and contribute to the vitality of the Surrey Hills.

F4: Major development leading to a loss of farmland will normally be resisted unless an overriding public interest can be demonstrated.

F5: A wider public understanding and awareness of farming practices will be promoted where this encourages and supports the creation and maintenance of the outstanding landscape character and a naturally richer Surrey Hills.

4.5 Planning

Policy Aim: Development conserves and enhances local character and the environmental quality of this nationally important protected landscape and its setting.

P1. In balancing relevant planning considerations associated with determining development proposals, great weight will be attached to any adverse impact upon the amenity, landscape beauty and rich and diverse ecology of the National Landscape. All proposals should seek to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

P2. Development must respect the special landscape character and nature of the locality, particularly where development may be unduly prominent or conspicuous on views, whether during the day or at night, and/or where it would be likely to have an adverse effect on relative tranquillity. The nature and intensity of the proposed use, including the likely need for external lighting, together with the colour of external building materials must harmonise with its related landscape to avoid

new development appearing incongruous in its landscape setting. Applications for a change of use of rural buildings will be required to demonstrate how the design respects the original rural functional character of the building.

P3. Development proposals will be required to respect local distinctiveness and be complementary in form, setting and scale with their surroundings and should take any opportunities to enhance their setting. The design of suitable residential or commercial conversions of rural buildings should respect the original rural functional character of the building.

P4. Applications must be supported with additional reasoning and justification which demonstrates that development will conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, without relying upon existing trees and woodlands for screening purposes. Development that would fail to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, in line with national policy and the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, will be resisted, even when well screened.

P5. Farm diversification proposals will be supported where they would enable the long-term continuation of a farm holding and bring benefits to the social and economic well-being of the local community. Any harm caused by the development must be demonstrated to be outweighed by the benefits and be adequately mitigated.

P6. The residential or commercial conversion of redundant rural buildings of substantial construction should conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and may be acceptable provided the use and level of activity associated with that use would not harm the protected landscape when compared to its original use. The proposals should demonstrate there will be no need to replace any buildings to be converted in order to manage related land.

P7. Any development proposals to redevelop or convert farm buildings or provide for equestrian use, that would result in farm fragmentation or other loss of the associated farmed landscape will need to demonstrate, with supporting evidence, that the farm remains viable and that the new use would contribute to the local rural economy. Further, in determining applications, the cumulative impact

on the countryside of a proliferation of buildings to support very small holdings will also be considered.

P8. Small scale rural exception schemes for affordable housing to be legally maintained in perpetuity will be supported provided their harm to the landscape can be satisfactorily mitigated.

P9. All development proposals within the National Landscape and its setting will need to demonstrate how light pollution, which could adversely affect the darkness of skies, wildlife and habitats of the National Landscape will be avoided. This includes the appropriate design of external lighting and measures to minimise light spill. Use of, and reference to, the guidance note published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals on the Reduction of Obtrusive Light can and should be utilised to guide and support schemes.

P10. Renewable energy projects will be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated they would not harm the natural beauty of the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

P11. Development proposals outside the boundary of the Surrey Hills National Landscape must not cause harm to the setting of the National Landscape in terms of public views to or from it or generate harmful additional traffic flows along country lanes within the National Landscape.



4.6 Recreation, Health and Wellbeing

Policy aim: The Surrey Hills will be promoted and cherished as a National Landscape which provides opportunities for all members of society, including those currently excluded through physical, social or economic barriers, to fully enjoy the natural environment to benefit their health and wellbeing

R1: Activities which enhance people's health, enjoyment and understanding of the Surrey Hills will be encouraged, whilst conserving or enhancing landscape character and biodiversity.

R2: The Surrey Hills will be promoted through a range of campaigns to encourage a diversity of visitors to have the opportunity to enjoy the National Landscape.

R3: Significant viewpoints and vistas across the National Landscape will be identified, conserved and enhanced with easier access, to inspire and engage new audiences to appreciate and enjoy the Surrey Hills.

R4: The design and development of new visitor facilities, and the maintenance of existing facilities, will have regard to the needs of people of all abilities and social backgrounds to access and enjoy the Surrey Hills landscape.

R5: Recreational activities in the Surrey Hills will be managed to minimise potential conflict with sensitive habitats whilst contributing to people's enjoyment of the area and supporting the rural economy.

R6: The impact of dogs will be managed through sensitive signage and practical land management measures to reduce the impact on farming and sensitive habitats, particularly for ground nesting birds.

R7: Measures which seek to improve and maintain green infrastructure or reduce visitor impact on local communities and protected ecosystems will be supported through improvements to rights of way networks, surfacing, signage and fencing.

R8: Activities that prescribe the benefits of nature for treating mental and physical health will generally be promoted and encouraged within the Surrey Hills as a place for nature.

4.7 Transport

Policy aim: Transport proposals do no harm to the rural character and tranquillity of the protected landscape, and provide a range of safe and sustainable, low carbon travel alternatives.

T1: Measures that increase opportunities to access and enjoy the Surrey Hills by public transport, walking and cycling will be supported, in accordance with the Sandford principle.

T2: The impact of development proposals on the surrounding Surrey Hills road network, including any highway mitigation measures, will be given great weight when assessing the acceptability of the development.

T3: Design and enhancement of the rural road network will be expected to conserve and enhance the National Landscape through a variety of techniques, including the use of speed limits and traffic regulation orders, to improve connectivity and safety for vulnerable road users, and to influence the behaviour of road users in a manner which protects public safety and enhances enjoyment of the special features of the protected landscape.

T4: Transport infrastructure and associated landscaping, including verge management, will seek to respect and enhance the local landscape quality, character and biodiversity, and improve safety for vulnerable road users.

T5: Decisions on major transport infrastructure should attach great weight to the importance of National Landscape designation and ensure that any adverse impacts should be mitigated and compensated, to minimise net impact on the protected landscape.

T6: Roads and verges will be enhanced and protected from damage caused by excessive vehicle use and uncontrolled parking, with opportunities sought for verges to be maintained as wildlife corridors.

T7: Highway and transport signage should promote the character and sense of place of the Surrey Hills National Landscape, enhancing its special qualities.

4.8 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Veteran Trees

Policy aim: Woodlands, hedgerows and veteran trees are sustainably managed and linked together to conserve and enhance the landscape, ecological, archaeological and recreational value of the wider Surrey Hills landscape

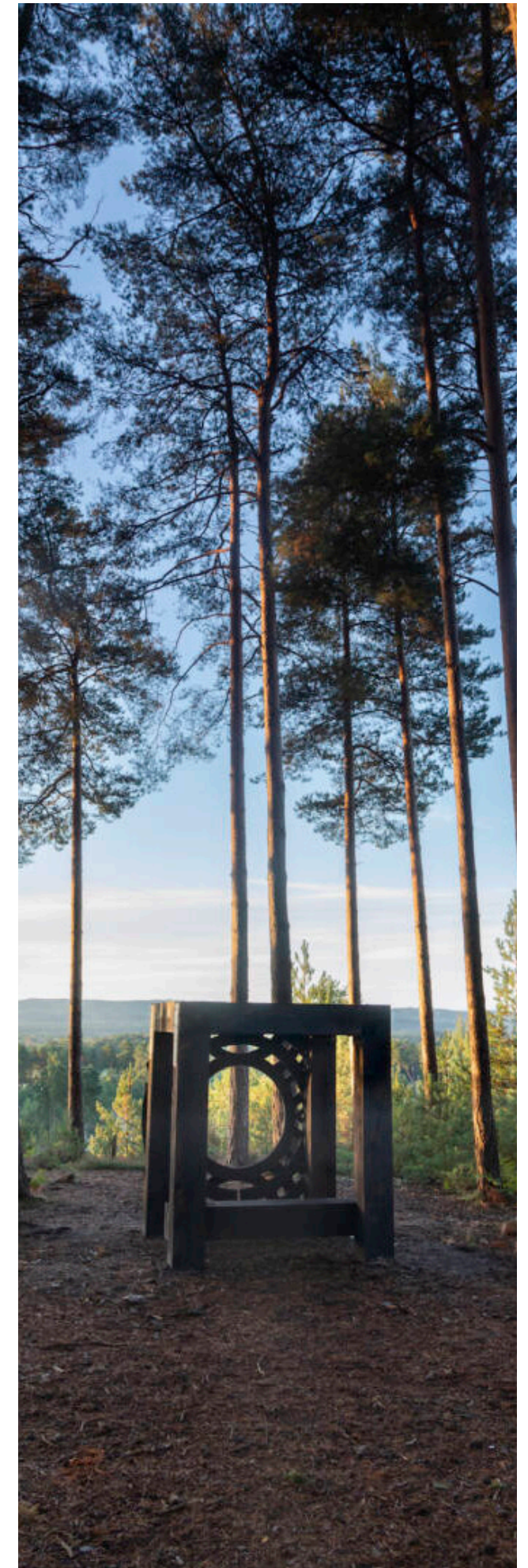
W1: Woodland owners and managers will be supported to manage all woodlands, hedgerows and veteran trees that contribute to the landscape character, biodiversity, natural flood management and cultural heritage of the Surrey Hills.

W2: Markets and infrastructure to support forestry and woodland management will be identified, promoted and supported.

W3: The wider importance of trees and woodlands and the need for their management, including disease and pest control, will be promoted through the provision of advice, information on grant schemes and public awareness campaigns.

W4: The benefits of woodland scrub and removing inappropriate trees and secondary woodland, particularly for the restoration of heathland and chalk grassland, will be promoted to improve biodiversity and enable the reinstatement of views.

W5: Opportunities will be taken to extend and link woodland and hedgerow habitats, including agroforestry, for landscape connectivity, mitigating and adapting to climate change and to restore nature.



Part 5: The Delivery Strategy

It is intended that the policies set out in Part 4 of the Management Plan will be embraced and acted upon by all those organisations that have a role to play in the management of the Surrey Hills landscape and the wellbeing of its local communities. This includes landowners, voluntary organisations, interest groups, local authorities, parish councils, statutory agencies, regional bodies and Government departments.

The following pages constitute formal guidance to the Responsible Bodies on how they should seek to deliver their duty to conserve and enhance the Surrey Hills. The governance of the Surrey Hills National Landscape is outlined in its role of convening, enabling and supporting the delivery of the Management Plan.



Read the full plan on our website for further detail on the delivery strategy, including the governance structure.

5.1 Delivery by Relevant Authorities

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 places a duty on relevant authorities to seek to further the purpose of the designation when carrying out their functions which affect land in Protected Landscapes in England. This is a statutory duty, not discretionary, meaning that all relevant authorities must comply.

Relevant authorities include all government departments, public bodies and statutory undertakers such as water and electricity companies. In the context of planning, the duty requires a proactive approach and should be read alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which stresses that “great weight” should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of National Landscapes. Importantly, natural beauty is not limited to visual aesthetics, it encompasses landform, geology, flora and fauna, and the rich history of human settlement. The relevant authorities include:

- Local Planning Authorities
- The Planning Inspectorate
- The Secretary of State
- Parish Councils preparing Neighbourhood Plans

Guidance issued by Defra identifies that the duty is an active, rather than passive duty, which means that they should:

- Take appropriate, reasonable, and proportionate steps to explore all measures which further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes
- Seek to avoid harm to the natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics of Protected Landscapes outlined in Part 2 of this Plan, as far as is reasonably practical.

5.2 Delivery by Protected Landscapes Partnerships

The Surrey Hills National Landscape is part of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is a category 5 landscape as an internationally important place for nature,

culture and heritage. In England, Defra supports the Protected Landscapes Partnership as a collaboration between organisations that work to protect and enhance the country’s landscapes. The Partnership was established in response to the 2019 Landscapes Review. It is sponsored by Defra and includes the National Landscapes Association, National Parks England, National Trails UK, and Natural England. Its goals are:

- Nature recovery: working together to restore nature and biodiversity
- Improved public access: making landscapes more accessible to the public
- Support local leadership: help local partnerships work together on national issues.

5.3 The National Landscapes Association

The National Landscapes Association is a registered charity that supports the mission to conserve and enhance natural beauty in National Landscapes and other protected areas. Its aim is to support and develop a network of ambitious National Landscape teams and partnerships to have a strong collective voice and a positive impact on the places for which they care for on behalf of the nation. The National Association led on the re-branding of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) as National Landscapes’. In doing so it has registered the respective Landscapes logos as Trademarks under a family identity of National Landscapes. The Surrey Hills logo is used as part of building a brand and sense of place. This is a function of the Surrey Hills Steering Group, working collaboratively to build the brand and to diversify the resource base, including access to skills, funding and volunteering, with the following Surrey Hills organisations:

5.4 The Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board

Surrey Hills Partnership Board is a Joint Advisory Committee which enables a wide range of partners to contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan and its Task Groups. The Partnership agrees

the policies and the governance arrangements for the Surrey Hills National Landscape. It has an annual Forum which manages progress against the Management Plan and an annual summer Tour which showcases the work of the National Landscape Team and partners. These arrangements provide an opportunity to share progress and good practice.

The Surrey Hills National Landscape Steering Group, Planning Officers Working Group and Team report into the Partnership Board. More information on these groups can be found within the full Plan.

5.5 The Surrey Hills Brand and Organisations

As part of the National Landscapes family branding, the Surrey Hills National Landscape has an emblem that has been protected for the purpose of enhancing the identity of the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape.

The Surrey Hills Family are all licenced to use the Surrey Hills trademark consistent with the aim of:

“A thriving place for people and nature”

The Brand Values are:

- Share pure joy
- Nurture connection and community
- Safeguard and celebrate our natural world

These brand values will be reflected throughout all Surrey Hills activities to build understanding and to protect its reputation. The Surrey Hills brand will be used consistently by the Surrey Hills family of organisations:

- **Surrey Hills Enterprises:** a Community Interest Company that is building the Surrey Hills brand by growing the rural economy to support the work of enhancing the Surrey Hills, its landscape and local communities. It organises events and offers membership to commercial and charity partners by sub-licensing the Trademark as an environmental accreditation to qualifying businesses to become ambassadors for the Surrey Hills.
- **Surrey Hills Society:** A charity which is a

membership organisation established to recruit and inform individuals with an interest in the Surrey Hills by running a range of walks, talks and projects which enhance the public's understanding and enjoyment of the Surrey Hills.

- **Project Acorn:** A dedicated fund which is held by the Society, attracting investment to implement projects that deliver the aims of the Management Plan.
- **Surrey Hills Arts:** A Partnership Board hosted by Surrey County Council. It brings together universities, arts, and heritage organisations to inspire and engage new audiences through a programme of arts events, installations and experiences to connect people to the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape.



5.6 The Surrey Hills Business Plan (2025 – 2030)

The Surrey Hills National Landscape Team will prepare a 5-year business plan that sets out the key goals and priorities for the Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board. It will reflect the Strategic Priorities identified in Part 3 of the Plan and drive the work programme for the Surrey Hills Team and the Partnership's Working Groups. Given the current constraints on public funding, Defra is encouraging National Landscapes to improve their ability to secure additional, external funding. The Surrey Hills Team will work with partners to bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscapes Connections programme and review the Surrey Hills Trust Fund with the Community Foundation for Surrey. If successful, this would build the organisational capacity, with the aim to secure significant external funding to support the delivery of the Management Plan in the longer term.

The Surrey Hills National Landscape Team will support activity that delivers the Management Plan's Outcomes and Targets:

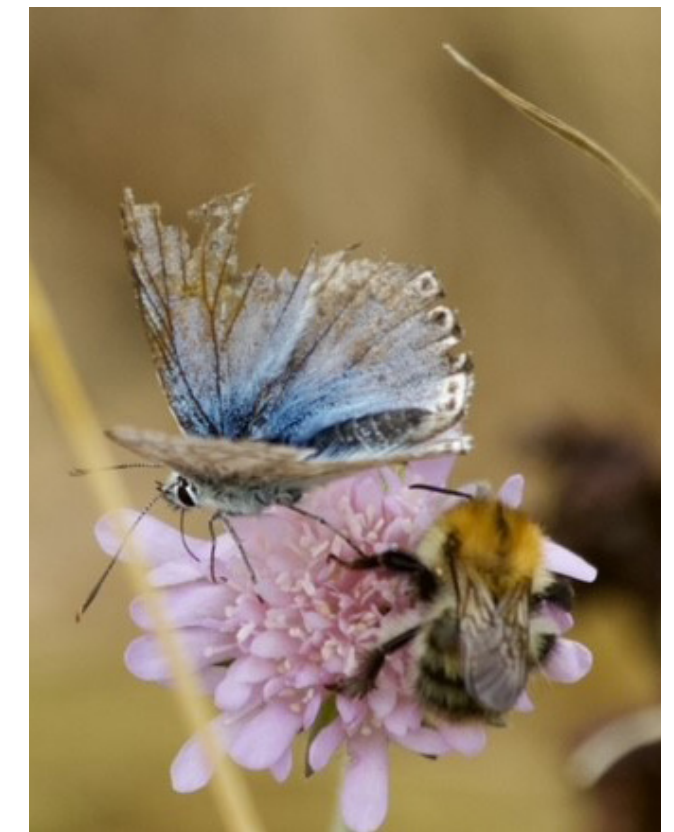
- **Nature** - thriving plants and wildlife
- **People and Place** - enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- **Climate** - mitigating and adapting to climate change

This will be accomplished through facilitating sector led collaboration to help achieve relevant Management Plan priorities, bringing in knowledge and experience of the sector from a range of partners in Task Groups. The groups will challenge Relevant Authorities to fulfil their duty to further the purpose of the National Landscape, and report on progress towards delivery of the overall business plan.

5.7 Monitoring and Targets

The Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board will take the lead in monitoring the implementation of the Management Plan. This will be achieved by establishing a monitoring mechanism for partners to report on the extent to which the Management Plan targets have been met.

These targets are based on the Defra Protected Landscapes Outcome Framework derived from the Environmental Improvement Plan. They are based on an analysis of the environmental potential of the Surrey Hills to deliver them in alignment with the Special Qualities, Vision and Strategic Priorities set out in this Plan. Fixed point survey points will be identified at various locations that span the Surrey Hills. These will monitor the landscape changes over the 75-year period and changes in the landscape will be formally reviewed every 5 years as part of the Management Plan review.



5.8 Management Plan Review

The Management Plan will be kept under review by the Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership. The Climate Change Action Plan, to be published by 2028, will lead the review of the Plan in challenging the integrity of the vision and targets. In the meantime, Local Government Reorganisation and the proposed 30% extension of the Surrey Hills designated National Landscape will mean that the Management Plan and the governance and funding arrangements for the Surrey Hills National Landscape will need to be reviewed within the next 5 years.



Have you ever wondered About the year twenty one hundred?

Are you filled with hopes or with fears
For what the world will be in seventy-five years?
Do you think about what will be gained or what might be lost,
Of our hills and hedges, fields and forests,
Chalk streams and rivers, woodlands and downs,
To the urban sprawl of cities and towns?
Do you think our children's children will look back and say
Thank you for the choices we are making today?
Thank you for declaring Nature has Rights,
Thank you for not giving up the fight,
Despite housing pressures and sewage in our rivers,
Over consumption and carbon emissions,
Thank you for holding to your convictions,
In that terrible time of mass extinctions,
Thank you to the people of the twenty first century,
Who fought to reestablish natural biodiversity,
Who stopped the clock on wildlife slipping away,
Turning their thoughts and actions towards better days.

Can you see them silently flying in hydrogen automobiles?
Across wildflower meadows and grassy green fields,
Pointing out the beavers building their dams,
As they glide alongside eagles' grand wingspans,
Our natural capital splendid and abundant,
Kaleidoscopes of butterflies swarming triumphant
Along green corridors from the centre of London Town
Stretching across Surrey Hills all the way to the South Downs,
With protection for wildlife and our public rights of way,
And lost species reintroduced through technology and DNA,
High capacity solar power and ocean-salt derived batteries,
Charging community conservation and restoration strategies,
For bees and box trees, newts and bats,
Woodlands and wetlands, and otters on riverbanks,
The creation and recovery of protected habitats,
For quiet contemplation and beauty preservation
With an eco-infrastructure to welcome all the population,
Nurturing a national vision of long term management,
With the understanding that soil, seed and water are sacrosanct,
With countryside stewardship and regenerative agriculture,
Cultivating a comprehensive appreciation for nature
In twenty one hundred, what a time to be alive
Where all species are treasured and given space to thrive

TWENTY-ONE HUNDRED

A poem by Rosie May Jones, written from the *Postcards from the Future* campaign 2024
Artwork by Diana Croft