



Surrey Hills
National
Landscape

Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025 – 2030)

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

Minister's Forward

Protected Landscapes are our most iconic and inspiring places. They were created from 1949, with post-war Britain recognising everyone has a right to access the countryside – from Northumberland's dark skies to the South Downs' Seven Sisters. 75 years on, the needs are greater than ever, with nature underpinning our health, economy and climate. That's why this government will empower Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible.

Covering 25% of England, but half of our priority habitats, Protected Landscapes are essential to nature's recovery. This government understands that we will not achieve our Environment Act targets or commitment to protect 30% of nature by 2030 without Protected Landscapes.

Recovering this natural capital is essential to ensure sustainable economic growth. Protected Landscapes are fundamental to strengthening the nation's economic health by looking after the natural resources we depend on. Through nature's recovery, Protected Landscapes protect communities from flooding, fight climate change, enable sustainable food production and create green jobs. They also have a vital role in connecting diverse communities with nature - underpinning the nation's mental and physical health and reducing the strain on our NHS.

This incredible potential is beginning to be set out in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. However, it will only become reality through the work of Protected Landscapes teams in collaboration with local communities, land managers, public bodies and other partners.

Protected Landscape Management Plans provide the focal point for all partners to agree a local ambition and a pathway to deliver it, shaping the future of our most special places, and therefore the country. It is vital that all partners work together to develop and implement Management Plans. To support this collaboration, we have issued guidance on the Protected Landscapes duty which requires relevant authorities to seek to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes.

In recognising their importance to the nation, this government has committed to reinvigorating Protected Landscapes with new legislation, resources and tools. I look forward to developing this with you and other partners because it is only together that we can protect and enhance these remarkable places for generations to come.

Yours sincerely

Mary Creagh CBE MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Nature





Preface

This Plan sets out the targets, priorities and policies for the local authorities and other Relevant Authorities to guide their activities as they impact on the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

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 of 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).

Sections of this Plan

- Part 1. Introduction to National Landscapes. This sets the scene regarding the 1949 Act, the National Landscape designation, the status of the Management Plan and the Core Principles at the heart of securing the long-term vision.
- Part 2. The Surrey Hills National Landscape. This includes the Statement of Significance explaining why the Surrey Hills is designated as a National Landscape, 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 Postcard from the Future engagement process. It includes an appraisal of the past, present and future landscape to set 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 outlines the role of Relevant Authorities on how to seek to further the purpose of the designation, in line with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 duty.
- Part 5. The Delivery Strategy. This includes guidance to 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.

Contents

Minister's Forward.....	2
Preface.....	5
Sections of this Plan	5
Part 1: Introduction to National Landscapes	9
1.1 1949. The National Park and Access to the Countryside Act	10
1.2 2000. Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW Act)	11
1.3 2000. The NATURA Protected Areas Network.....	12
1.4 2018. The Glover Review of Designated Landscapes	12
1.5 2022. The Vision for National Landscapes.....	13
1.6 2023. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act	13
1.7 Core Principles	14
1.8 Management Plan Preparation.....	14
Part 2: The Surrey Hills National Landscape	16
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 An historic environment.....	17
2.3 The Statement of Significance	17
2.4 Pressures and Threats	18
2.5 The Special Qualities of the Surrey Hills.....	19
2.5.1 Hills and views.....	19
2.5.2 Ancient Trees and Woodland.....	19
2.5.3 Heathland.....	20
2.5.4 Commons	21
2.5.5 Chalk downland.....	21
2.5.6 Water: Rivers and Ponds	22
2.5.7 Farmland	22
2.5.8 Boundary features.....	23
2.5.9 Parkland and historic landscape features	23
2.5.10 Routeways: Country Lanes and Rights of Way.....	24
2.5.11 Settlements and the built heritage.....	24
2.5.12 Tranquillity and Darker Skies	25
Part 3: The 75-Year Vision	26

3.1 Our 75-Year Vision	27
3.2 Nature for thriving plants and animals	28
3.2.1 Our Natural Past	28
3.2.2 The Present.....	29
3.2.3 The Future.....	29
3.2.4 A 75-year Mission for thriving plants and animals	31
3.2.5 Strategic Targets for thriving plants and animals.....	31
3.2.6 Long-term Strategic Priorities for thriving plants and animals.....	31
3.3 People and Place for enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement.....	33
3.3.1 The Past	33
3.3.2 The Present.....	34
3.3.3 The Future.....	35
3.3.4 A 75-year Mission for enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement	37
3.3.5 Strategic Targets for enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement	37
3.3.6 Long Term Strategic Priorities for enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement.....	37
3.4 Climate.....	39
3.4.1 The Past	39
3.4.2 The Present.....	40
3.4.3 The Future.....	41
3.4.4 75-year mission for mitigating and adapting to climate change	42
3.4.5 Strategic Targets for mitigating and adapting to climate change	42
3.4.6 Long-term Strategic Priorities for mitigating and adapting to climate change	42
Part 4: The Policy Framework	44
4.1 Arts and Cultural Heritage	45
4.2 Biodiversity and Water Resources.....	46
4.3 Economy, Tourism and Community Development	48
4.4 Farming	49
4.5 Planning	51
4.6 Recreation, Health and Well-being.....	55
4.7 Transport	57

4.8 Woodlands, Hedgerows and Veteran Trees	59
Part 5: The Delivery Strategy	61
5.1 Delivery by Relevant Authorities	62
5.2 Delivery by Wider Society – A Surrey Hills Charter	62
5.3 Delivery by Protected Landscapes Partnerships.....	63
5.4 The National Landscapes Association	64
5.5 The Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board	64
5.6 The Surrey Hills National Landscape Steering Group	64
5.7 Surrey Hills Planning Working Group	65
5.8 The Surrey Hills National Landscape Team.....	65
5.9 The Surrey Hills Brand	65
5.10 The Surrey Hills Business Plan (2025 – 2030).....	66
5.11 Monitoring and Targets	66
5.12 Management Plan Review	67

Part 1: Introduction to National Landscapes

1.1 1949. The National Park 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, now called National Landscapes.

The work leading to the adoption of the 1949 Act laid out the principles on which protected landscapes were founded. Legislators reviewed the different types of provision for National Parks in different countries and made recommendations for everything from nature conservation, the ‘preservation and enhancement of natural beauty’ through to touring, walking and camping opportunities.

Instrumental to this post-war movement, which set out the original vision for our protected landscapes, was Sir Arthur Hobhouse, in his seminal 1947 report¹:

“Certain regions of the English countryside possess a distinctive character whose nature and value depend partly on the physical structure of the country, the rocks of which it is composed and the sculpturing of hill and valley, partly on the local climate, partly on the natural and semi-natural vegetation that may be present, and partly on the crops that are grown and the agricultural regime. All these elements blend into a whole which often possesses both singular beauty and high scientific interest, and the defacement or disappearance of the distinctive characters of such a region involves an irreparable loss which it is hard to overestimate.”

The report went on to discuss the definition and purpose of conservation areas, now National Landscapes:

“There are many areas of fine country and coast in England and Wales which are not included in our selection of National Parks but yet possess outstanding landscape beauty, are often of great scientific interest and, in many cases, include important holiday areas. While in the main they do not call for the degree of positive management required in National Parks, nor for the closer scientific control which may be necessary in National Nature Reserves, their contribution to the wider enjoyment of the countryside is so important that special measures should be taken to preserve their natural beauty and interest. Indeed, we regard our proposals for these areas as an essential corollary to our National Park scheme... We recommend therefore, that the Minister of Town and Country Planning should designate areas of high landscape quality, scientific interest and recreational value as Conservation Areas.”

Since this legislation was introduced, the countryside has seen constant and expansive change: changes in agricultural practices brought about by the post-war agricultural revolution; the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and, most recently, Brexit, as well as wider changes in society, population dynamics, commuting and the continued growth of motor and air travel. This has all had an impact on our protected landscapes, the communities that live and work in them, and for those who visit them. However, the 1949 Act remains vitally important in the way it set out the priorities that we are familiar with today, the post-war principles of town

¹ Hobhouse, Arthur (1947). *Report of the National Parks Committee*

and country planning, and the legislation that created National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is this post-war vision, which has guided our work over the last seventy-five years and will continue to guide our work into the future.

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 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 has 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 should prepare and publish a Management Plan for their National Landscape, which must 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.

Legislation relating to National Landscapes places additional responsibilities on local authorities and the planning system:

- National Landscapes are defined within the EIA Regulations for specific consideration as a “sensitive area”.
- The CRoW Act, Section 85-Duty of Regard, requires all public bodies down to parish council level to consider the nationally protected status given to National Landscapes in any land use related decisions. This includes the determination of planning applications and the formulation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans.
- National Landscape Management Plans have been recognised as a ‘material consideration’ in the planning decision making process.
- Land within National Landscapes is recognised differently under the Town and Country Planning Act as Article 1(5) land (which, for example, restricts certain permitted development rights)

As well as formulating the policy of local authorities in relation to their National Landscapes, the Management Plans are intended to:

- Highlight the special qualities and the enduring significance of the National Landscape and the importance of its landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage, identifying those features which are vulnerable to change
- Present an integrated vision for the future of the National Landscape as a whole, in the light of national, regional and local priorities, regardless of administrative boundaries
- Set out agreed policies which will help secure that vision

- Identify what needs to be done, by whom and when, in order to achieve these objectives
- Stimulate action aimed at helping people to discover, enjoy and understand the local landscape and its natural and cultural features
- Identify actions which will support those economic and social activities which in themselves contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

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.

Within National Landscapes, Natura 2000 sites enhance conservation by safeguarding critical ecosystems, like heathlands or wetlands, ensuring their natural beauty and biodiversity are preserved. SACs focus on habitats and species, while SPAs protect rare birds, complementing National Landscape objectives to maintain and enhance scenic and ecological value through coordinated management. Designation offers the highest level of protection for nature conservation, and results in specific duties to prevent, or mitigate, the impact of development on protected species and habitats.

1.4 2018. The Glover Review of Designated Landscapes

Seven decades after the visionary report by Sir Arthur Hobhouse, 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. In 2019, the Glover Report concluded that:

Our country is changing fast. It is becoming more diverse. More urban. Much busier. New forms of farming, carbon emissions, the sprawl of housing, new technology and social shifts have changed the relationship between people and the countryside and left nature and our climate in crisis.

The way we protect and improve our landscapes needs to change radically to respond to this. If their natural beauty is to be in a better condition 70 years from today, even better to look at, far more biodiverse, and alive with people from all backgrounds and parts of the country, they cannot carry on as they do now.

We need to reignite the fire and vision which brought this system into being in 1949. We need our finest landscapes to be places of natural beauty which look up and outwards to the nation they serve. In essence, we've asked not 'what do national landscapes need?', but 'what does the nation need from them today?'²

Glover reviewed the structure of our protected landscapes and put forward 27 Recommendations including reviewing governance structures, strengthening management

² Glover, Julian (2019) *Landscapes review: National Parks and AONBs*

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 '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.

The National Landscape Management Plan is the only document with a focus on the whole National Landscape. It is intended to complement other statutory plans which affect the area.

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.'*³**

Each National Landscape has a Management Plan which is a statutory document guiding how the landscape should:

- Conserve and enhance the character and special qualities identified in the plan
- Support the objectives, policies, and principles set out in the plan
- Implement the actions and recommendations detailed within the plan

1.6 2023. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act

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.

The statutory purpose of National Landscapes remains to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape. In addition, several existing nature conservation designations exist, such as Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and Sites of

³ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2022). *Landscapes review (National Parks and AONBs): government response*

Special Scientific Interest, along with the Wealden Heaths National Nature Reserve, which all interact with protected landscape designations to help safeguard and preserve the countryside. This aligns with the government's commitment to protect 30% of the country's land and water for biodiversity by 2030 (the 30 by 30 target), a long-term goal established under the Environment Act 2021.

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.

1.8 Management Plan Preparation

The 75th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 2024 inspired this Management Plan. It offered an opportunity to reflect on how the landscape has been conserved and enhanced over the past seventy-five years and to outline the vision, principles, and priorities for the rest of the 21st Century.

In May 2024, Julian Glover, Chair of the 2019 Designated Landscapes Review, launched the "Postcards from the Future" campaign. This initiative invited the public to describe how they envision the Surrey Hills as a thriving place for both people and nature by the year 2100, in the context of a changing climate. Over two hundred submissions were analysed and processed using AI to help create vision statements and identify the strategic priorities for achieving that vision. These were then further appraised through a public survey in September 2024, which received over a thousand responses. The team reached out to underrepresented voices that were not heard within the survey to explore what they value about the landscape. The vision statements and priorities were explored in a series of workshops with landowners, farmers,

partner organisations, and local authority planning officers. The results of this extensive process have directly informed the contents of this Management Plan.

The Surrey Hills Symposium, entitled Nature Calling, held at Surrey University and attended by 300 people, in November 2024, provided another opportunity to develop the 75-year vision for the Surrey Hills as a thriving place for people and nature. Contributions from speakers, panellists, and guests helped define their respective visions, identify barriers, and suggest priority actions. The performance artist Rosie May recited her poem, 'Year Twenty-One Hundred', based on her reflections on the 'Postcards' campaign.

This Management Plan follows the interim guidance prepared by Natural England and uses the targets and outcome themes developed in Defra guidance. It sets out the priorities and policies through which we will fulfil the statutory duties and guide relevant authorities and decision-makers in fulfilling their duty to "seek to further" the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

The Consultation draft was launched by Professor Richard Murphy, Chair of Surrey Nature Partnership, at the Biodiversity and Planning Conference in Dorking in March 2025. This was an opportunity for individuals and organisations to submit written comments, and an online portal focussed on Part 4 The Policy Framework.

The consultation closed on Friday, 6 June. There were over 40 responses to the consultation draft including extensive written representations from organisations that represented Defra and non-government departments, land owning and land management, conservation and access interests. Parish Councils and community groups also submitted written responses, as well as high numbers of the public that taking part in the Management Plan survey. The public responses covered a wide spectrum of interests and expertise including planning, development, farming, the arts, mountain biking and equestrian matters. The Management Plan was adopted by the local authorities between September and October 2025 and launched at the Surrey Hills Symposium at Surrey University in November 2025.

Part 2: The Surrey Hills National Landscape

2.1 Introduction

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.

The Surrey Hills stretch across the chalk North Downs which run from Farnham in the west, across to Guildford, Dorking, Reigate, and Oxted in the east. They contain a mosaic of woodland, scrub and open downland with combes, spring lines, chalk pits, quarries and striking cliffs. To the south are the Greensand Hills which include Black Down, the Devil's Punch Bowl and Leith Hill, with ancient sunken lanes and geometric fields that have been enclosed from heaths and wooded commons. In between are the valleys of the Wey, Tillingbourne and Mole rivers, and the heaths of Frensham, Thursley and Blackheath. The Low Weald forms the southern fringe of the National Landscape with its extensive woodlands and small irregular fields, hedgerows and wooded shaws.

2.2 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 won from the woodland; large country houses with extensive parklands; market towns; and remnants of seventeenth and eighteenth-century industry.

2.3 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."

2.4 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, leisure patterns and the viability of habitats, 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.



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

These pressures are the result of the many environmental, social and economic forces that are often external to the Surrey Hills National Landscape. Although it is recognised that it will be difficult to address all of these pressures in the Management Plan, a purpose of the Plan is to ensure that the impact of these forces on the Surrey Hills is recognised and that the special and

distinctive landscape features that are the basis of the National Landscape designation are protected and enhanced wherever possible.

2.5 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.

2.5.1 Hills and views

Visitors to the Surrey Hills seek to enjoy the remarkable range of changing scenery and diversity of landscape through the panoramic views obtained from the many vantage points spread throughout the National Landscape. The result is that 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. There are numerous other locations along the North Downs and Greensand Hills which afford a wonderful vista over surrounding countryside. The view from Newlands Corner is possibly one of the best in southern England, overlooking the delightful Tillingbourne Valley and St Martha's Church on its sandy ridge. On a clear day it is claimed that 13 counties can be seen from Leith Hill, which at 290m is the highest point in southeast England.

Prehistoric communities favoured colonising high ground and, by continuous cultivation and grazing, produced expansive tracts of heathland and grassland. Hill forts such as Hascombe, Holmbury and Anstiebury still command wide-ranging views over the Weald, and in the past acted as gateways to trading routes north to the chalk downs and the Thames Valley beyond. For the past 300 years, the Surrey Hills has attracted visitors including numerous well-known writers, poets and artists, inspired by the area's breathtaking beauty.

The quality of views is often diminished by major highway corridors, masts and developments outside the National Landscape. Views are often obstructed by tree growth and forestry plantations, which in many cases have replaced open downland and heathland. There are limited opportunities to enjoy the views from the Greensand ridge and views from the North Downs Way National Trail are often restricted to a few specific locations. Vegetation or other features also restrict potentially good views from many road corridors.

2.5.2 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. Secondary woodland on former farmland and commons preserves archaeological features such as burial mounds, ridge and furrow, and kiln sites that would otherwise be lost under cultivation or management.

Ancient semi-natural woodland has particular significance in terms of historic and nature conservation importance. Yew and box woodlands on the North Downs are of international importance (Special Area for Conservation). There is a variety of woodland within the Surrey Hills, with soil types including clay (with ash, hornbeam and oak); chalk (with ash, beech and yew); and free draining sands (with oak, birch and Scots pine). Together with aspect, drainage and topography, the soils have determined the species composition and evolution of woodlands. Some woods have been managed since medieval times, and many have distinctive boundaries such as earth banks with laid trees.

The problem for many woodlands stems from the lack of management through neglect, fragmentation and commercial pressures. Woodlands are often sold into small leisure plots in which damage to the environmental quality and sustainability of woodlands is caused by pests like deer and squirrels. Coppice currently accounts for 15% of woodland cover, but this valuable wildlife resource is now largely neglected. Re-establishment of coppice management would greatly benefit landscape character, biodiversity and historic interest. Although outlets for local charcoal and hurdles are limited there is growing interest in opportunities to develop wood fuel in the Surrey Hills.

2.5.3 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. Extensive areas of heathland occur in southwest Surrey at Thursley, Frensham and Hindhead, and unusually at Headley on acid soil overlying the chalk of the North Downs. Heathland also survives in numerous small pockets, as at the Hurtwood, Leith Hill, Blackheath and Crooksbury. These heathlands represent one of Europe's most important and threatened habitats which is reflected in the designation of Thursley, Frensham and Hankley Commons as part of the Wealden Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and now part of the King's Series of National Nature Reserves.

Heathlands are found on acidic, sandy, well drained, infertile soils, and support special plant communities that can cope with these conditions. *Calluna* (ling) and other heather species form extensive cover with shrubs, grasses and flowering plants. Traditionally grazed, heather once provided fuel and thatching material. Important archaeological features such as burial mounds, enclosures and field systems are often preserved extant on heaths due to the lack of intensive land use in the historic period. The Heathland Countryside Partnership, the National Trust and other public and voluntary bodies are managing heathland areas to maintain their ecological and conservation interest.

The development of bracken, gorse and woodland cover are now major threats to heathland survival. The traditional method of managing heaths through grazing and mechanical clearance is now an expensive undertaking, with little or no commercial return. These problems are compounded by the difficulty in fencing heaths on common land and public resistance to removing trees and scrub. There are also pressures related to recreation, particular the impact of dogs on ground nesting bird populations, fires and encroachment. This is a priority for management.

2.5.4 Commons

Commons are familiar features throughout the Surrey Hills. They include vast open tracts of heathy common at Thursley, Puttenham, Blackheath, and Frensham, and wooded commons at Ranmore, Hurtwood, Ockley and Witley. Traditional village greens have usually evolved from common land. Many commons have a high nature conservation value, particularly heathland and chalk downland, and many are also popular visitor destinations, particularly those with views such as Ranmore.

Commons were probably first identified, bounded and utilised by the Saxons, with most being claimed by manors and parishes, with complex grazing rights in place about 1000 years ago. Most commons evolved from 'rough grazing', and some may have been associated closely with 'Manorial waste', a term originally used to refer to the rights of grazing, cutting firewood, furze and minerals by manorial tenants, rather than a common right of access. Most commons have a complex mix of grasses, herbaceous plants, scrub, heath and woodland, and remaining open areas of common owe their survival to management by grazing and mechanical clearance.

This traditional method of managing commons is now an expensive undertaking and is often compounded by the difficulty in the fencing of common land. Managing visitor pressures also requires significant resources for maintaining car parks and rights of way. Many commons, particularly smaller parcels, are not managed and have been rapidly colonised with trees and scrub, resulting in little conservation or recreation value. Where commons abut settlements, they have been vulnerable to encroachment by land adopted by adjacent householders and problems relating to fly tipping.

2.5.5 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. Downland turf has, for centuries, provided good sheep pasture and supported a thriving wool industry, bringing prosperity to Guildford, Godalming and Farnham. Chalk grassland is an internationally important habitat and is identified as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Only 1% of the Surrey Hills has remnant chalk grassland.

These chalk grassland areas support a diversity of flora and fauna, including orchids, wildflowers, herbs and mosses, together with a myriad of associated insects, particularly butterflies. Unlike the South Downs, the chalk hills of the North Downs did not develop large expanses of chalk downland due to the capping of flints, which historically prevented widespread woodland removal. Often where chalk grassland does survive, so do traces of former prehistoric fields as regular, shallow earth banks, for example, at Box Hill.

The chalky lime and sandstone hills have the same geology as that of the Champagne region in France. Over the past 20 years, the Vineyards of the Surrey Hills group, including Albury Organic Vineyard, Chilworth Manor Vineyard, Denbies Wine Estate, Greyfriars Vineyard and High Clandon now produce outstanding wines from the rolling North Downs. The vineyards represent

the pinnacle of quality in the increasingly successful English wine industry, having won top international and national awards for wine from the Surrey Hills.

Although the National Trust, Surrey Wildlife Trust, the Surrey Countryside Partnerships amongst others, have introduced sheep, goats, cattle and ponies to graze parts of the downs, the general reduction in grazing over the last few decades has resulted in loss of valuable grassland followed by colonisation of scrub and woodland.

2.5.6 Water: 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.

Ponds have featured in the landscape for centuries, often created to satisfy the needs of industry (mill ponds and hammer ponds), agriculture (field ponds), sport (duck decoys), and to act as a focus for communities (village ponds). There are also lots of ponds that can be seen on heathlands and commons derived from small scale quarrying. Larger ponds such as Frensham, Buckland Lakes and Silent Pool are prominent features and visitor attractions.

As with so many historic features, a lack of management can lead to many water features becoming silted up, overgrown, buried and dilapidated. Ponds are now disappearing at an alarming rate. Changes in climate, agriculture and development pressures all have impacts on water quality, flooding, erosion and habitat viability.

Nature based solutions for natural flood management to help slow the flow and reduce flooding, provide opportunities to reintroduce species like the beaver that create wildlife rich habitats. Re-wetting heathland also helps tackle climate change through the sequestration of carbon and reducing risk of wildfires spreading.

2.5.7 Farmland

The Surrey Hills landscape is made up of a patchwork of different character areas, each one distinctive with its own identity and set of features. 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% 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.

Farming maintains some of the finest landscape features including hedgerows, ponds and meadows. There is also a rich heritage associated with farming particularly associated with fields, such as field names. Loss of farmed landscape, where farmers are key 'custodians', leads

rapidly to erosion of local distinctiveness, historic interest, landscape diversity and general visual quality of the countryside.

The mosaic of features associated with the farmed landscape is vulnerable to loss and decline through land-use change, neglect and inappropriate management. Factors contributing to this change include intensification through modern commercial farming and fragmentation, through which land may be speculatively acquired for residential and leisure plots.

Diversification can have both a positive and a negative impact on landscape character. Profitable farming can deliver investment in environmental land management whilst the decline in farming results in issues such as deterioration of woodland, scrubbing up of downland, loss of hedgerows, increased horse grazing and the loss of critical infrastructure including abattoirs which support pasture-fed grazing.

2.5.8 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. Boundary walls can be the defining feature of a place, for example, flint walls in Mickleham. The protection and management of boundary features is key to sustaining the diversity, distinctiveness and health of the Surrey Hills landscape.

Many hedgerows and shaws have evolved as strips from relic ancient woodland and boundaries, often containing a rich mix of plant species. Other hedgerows have been planted, as during parliamentary enclosures. Shaws are primarily associated with the wooded weald and the dip slope of the downs, whilst hedgerows are found throughout the Surrey Hills, forming dominant features in the landscape and creating a variety of field shapes and sizes.

Traditionally hedgerows were trimmed, layered or coppiced regularly, producing a diversity of texture in the landscape. However, with a decline in management due primarily to agricultural changes and increased costs, many hedgerows have been neglected, mismanaged or removed and replaced with fencing, while other hedgerows and trees are over-mature and in decline. Many shaws are neglected and are open to grazing animals, leading to a decline in biodiversity and colonisation by unwanted species. Other boundary features such as walls and fences often suffer from a lack of maintenance or replacement with standard and cheaper materials.

2.5.9 Parkland and historic landscape features

Historic landscape features are found throughout the Surrey Hills and, together with landscaped parks, create distinctive local landscapes. 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. It makes an important contribution to the Surrey Hills' picturesque scenery, historic interest and includes distinctive features such as avenues, roundels and park pale fencing.

Some formal landscapes incorporate former deer parks, as at Gatton Park, whilst other parkland has been created from post-medieval farmland and still exhibits characteristic parkland features, particularly specimen trees including ancient oaks. Some historic parkland like Gatton Park is subject to large scale restoration proposals requiring significant external funding.

The high maintenance costs of parkland and historic landscape features mean that some historic parks, estates and gardens are in decline. Characteristic parkland features within farmland have often been neglected, leading to an erosion of local distinctiveness. Traditional parkland pasture may have been improved or converted to arable.

2.5.10 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. There are broadly three types of lanes, the most common being narrow routes bounded on either side by hedges, shaws or fences, sinuous as they link farm to farm and hamlet to hamlet. Another type, which is confined to the hills, is the hollow way. The relatively soft geology together with the general steepness of slope and the passage of feet combined with natural water erosion of the sands and chalk have produced deep narrow lanes bounded by high banks. The tops of the hollow ways are often enclosed by ancient beech, yew and oak trees. The third type of lane are broad routes, with wide verges the remnants of former commons and greens where roadside 'waste' was once utilised for grazing.

Routeways and their verges can be of considerable biodiversity as well as antiquity value. Frequently associated with country lanes are old signposts, milestones, former drovers' ponds and roadside quarries for stone to repair the track. Ancient pollard trees often mark where parish, manor or ownership boundaries cross. Fields called 'Halfpenny' located by roads or lanes called 'Halfpenny' indicate a former drove way as these were where drovers could obtain pasture for their stock overnight.

The speed and volume of traffic have a major impact on country lanes, with damage to verges and other features. Engineering measures can be inappropriate within the Surrey Hills National Landscape by introducing additional noise, alien materials and elements such as artificial lighting. Unsympathetic boundary management and 'gardenification' of roadsides can also destroy the character and biodiversity of a country lane, as well as damage any archaeological features that may be present.

2.5.11 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. Many villages are picturesque and many feature 'Surrey Style' architecture inspired by Lutyens and the Arts and Crafts Movement, whose designs sought to reflect local vernacular traditions.

Many villages evolved around village greens creating picturesque scenes and are often designated as Conservation Areas. Old buildings often have significant nature conservation value, for example old agricultural buildings as roosting sites for barn owls and bats.

Settlement pattern in the Surrey Hills is surprisingly varied with some villages still having an isolated remote feel. Woodland cover and topography in the Surrey Hills combine to conceal even expansive development and create a perception of quietness and seclusion. Many villages, such as Hambledon, integrate well into the fabric of the landscape and some larger properties in elevated locations enjoy views without being intrusive.

The standardisation of design of new development has led to a general loss of local distinctiveness. The interface between the built-up areas of towns and villages and the Surrey Hills countryside sometimes presents special problems, especially where land is held for speculative development rather than managed positively to reflect its landscape importance. Problems can also include urban fringe pressures such as vandalism and fly tipping.

2.5.12 Tranquillity and Darker Skies

The Surrey Hills is greatly valued for its scenic beauty and provides wonderful inspiration. It is a resource for historical, cultural, ecological, archaeological and literary interest. The area has influenced some of the country's finest writers, poets, artists and musicians. That inspiration continues today with millions of visitors attracted to its beauty spots and viewpoints to seek recreation and inspiration.

The abundance of natural features, local landmarks, attractive villages and breathtaking views means the Surrey Hills is valued as an area that is pleasant in which to live, work and visit. Many parts of the Surrey Hills still retain a feeling of remoteness, isolation and tranquillity, including dark skies at night.

Being within a densely populated county and region, the peace and tranquillity of the Surrey Hills is constantly being eroded by air traffic and by motor vehicles passing through the area leading to congestion, light and noise pollution and damage to country lanes. 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 three outcomes:

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

3.1 Our 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.

3.2 Nature

3.2.1 Our Natural Past

Prior to the 18th Century, agriculture was the key driver of landscape and nature change within the Surrey Hills. A central aspect of land management for over a thousand years has been livestock grazing on the commons. These commons, typically areas too poor for consistent agricultural production, served as a vital resource for local communities for grazing, firewood and other materials for animal bedding, which played a crucial role in the wider agricultural economy. The Surrey Hills provided a seasonal grazing resource for livestock, which were brought from further afield to feed the growing city of London. Evidence of important transhumance routes and agricultural trade remains in local place names, such as Sheepwalk Lane (East Horsley) and The Woolmead (Farnham).

Furthermore, the agricultural trade, from the Surrey Hills to nearby London, was a key source of employment for rural communities, with many people working in livestock production, milk, and dairy products. Hop growing and barley malting also played a significant role in shaping the agricultural landscape. In the 18th century, the sandy soils in and around Elstead became highly valued for growing carrots, while the tributaries of the rivers Mole and Wey supported a burgeoning watercress industry. In the 17th Century, the Tillingbourne, which flowed off the steep slopes of Leith Hill was one of the most industrial small river valleys in the country producing bank notes, paper, wire and gunpowder from its many mills.

Forestry has also been integral to this landscape. The first book on forestry, *Sylva*, was written by John Evelyn of the Wotton Estate in 1664. At the western edge of the Surrey Hills National Landscape, the Royal Forests of Alice Holt and Woolmer Forest were protected as hunting grounds. They later fell under the administration of the Crown Commissioners for Woods and Forests, who managed them to produce timber for the construction of warships.

As in many areas of the country, post-World War II agricultural industrialisation and the shift from horse-drawn farming to mechanised agriculture brought significant changes to agricultural practices. This shift led to a steady reduction in the agricultural workforce. The consolidation of fields, with the resulting loss of many hedgerows, and the near-total cessation of livestock grazing on commons, caused a significant loss of heathland habitat. As a result, large areas of open heathland have succeeded into scrub, and the lack of active woodland management has led to the development of coppiced woodlands into secondary woodlands. This shades out other species and reduces the vertical structure of woodlands, as well as the proportion of forest edge habitats.

Records show that as many as seventeen species have been lost from Surrey over the past century.⁴ Documentary evidence indicates that a wide variety of characteristic species, such as Black Grouse and Pine Marten, were still present in the area until at least 1900.

⁴ Surrey Wildlife Trust (2023) *The State of Surrey's Nature*

3.2.2 The Present

Much of the remaining agricultural land in the Surrey Hills has suffered significant depletion of its historic wildlife and nature value. In areas managed intensively for farming, the extensive use of nitrogen fertilisers and herbicides has likely degraded the soil and significantly contributed to the loss of hedgerows. However, even in these areas, the fundamental building blocks of habitat and ecology often remain, albeit in a fragmented state. As in most regions, the picture is inconsistent, with some landowners investing considerable efforts into enhancing the wildlife and conservation value of their farms.

The Surrey Hills has expanded its woodland cover over the past century. Much of this woodland is unmanaged with poor species diversity and a lack of vertical structure. This may have contributed to the impacts of tree disease outbreaks, such as ash dieback. In recent decades, efforts have been made to bring more of this habitat into active management. However, the limited market for many forest products and the shortage of a trained workforce present significant challenge.

A reduction in the rural workforce, coupled with the growth in commuting, has also impacted the state of nature in the Surrey Hills. Fewer people are directly connected to farming and nature, and the increasing dominance of roads and transport networks creates significant barriers to wildlife movement across the landscape, resulting in isolated communities which are vulnerable to habitat loss.

Human influence on nature in the Surrey Hills is growing, particularly due to the demand for housing expansion and recreation. While the wider growth in recreational activities is a cause for concern and requires active management, research suggests that disturbance caused by dogs is likely the most significant recreational impact on many priority species in the Surrey Hills.

Parts of the Surrey Hills National Landscape are located within Natura 2000 designated sites, including the Mole Gap Escarpment, the Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons, and Wealden Heath Special Protection Areas. These priority habitats are designated at the European level, and all organisations involved in their management carry significant additional responsibilities to ensure that they are not adversely affected by their actions or nearby development.

Recent studies have also shown that our rivers and watercourses are in a significantly degraded condition. Agriculture remains a major source of diffuse pollution in rural areas, contributing to nutrient overloads, sedimentation, and pesticide contamination in rivers. The primary challenges continue to be water quality, both chemical and biological, as well as connectivity. Obstructions and low flows can severely affect the life cycles of many species within the aquatic food web. There is a clear need to adopt farming methods which reduce run-off, prevent soil erosion, and limit the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

3.2.3 The Future

The importance of agriculture in feeding the nation can conflict with efforts to rewild or take land out of productive farming. However, the growth of more nature-friendly farming methods, including regenerative agriculture, the reduced use of artificial fertilisers and herbicides through technology and precision application, and initiatives to create effective buffer zones and wildlife

habitats on less-intensive areas of farmland, can all significantly balance the impact of farming with nature conservation.

Societal changes, such as increased leisure time and a growing understanding of the importance of access to nature and open-air recreation for health and wellbeing, are likely to continue in the coming decades. This trend is consistent with the history of the Surrey Hills as a place for escape and quiet enjoyment, aligning with the original purposes of the 1949 Act. However, it will require active management, particularly around popular sites, to focus infrastructure for visitors on more robust areas of the Surrey Hills, whilst retaining sensitive areas as "spaces for nature."

Effective woodland management, both in forested areas and in the wider landscape, including hedgerows and standard trees, is likely to become increasingly important in the coming years. This offers significant opportunities to enhance the Surrey Hills for nature. Efforts to establish trees through natural processes, such as managed rewilding, also present opportunities to support nature recovery. Other initiatives, including species reintroductions and changes in watercourse management to help slow the flow, are expected to bring significant benefits to biodiversity and conservation. It is envisaged that humans will continue to play a key role in nature restoration and habitat management through deliberate intervention, rather than relying on entirely natural processes to drive habitat change.

Climate change also poses threats to the future of the Surrey Hills as a place for nature. A warming planet could impact the plant species which thrive in the region, and increased risks, such as the heightened likelihood of heathland and forest fires, may pose a significant threat to the integrity of some sites. These challenges, compounded by site isolation, will require substantial efforts to build a resilient National Landscape and achieve the favourable status of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

3.2.4 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.

3.2.5 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 100km

Protected sites (SSSIs) 75% in Favourable Condition to 95% in 2100. 5-year target 80%

3.2.6 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 regenerative farming, the use of technology and the promotion of organic or low-input 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 to 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 spaces, provide habitats and improve 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.

3.3 People and Place

3.3.1 The Past

Since time immemorial, the social and economic value of the Surrey Hills for its communities has been deeply intertwined not only with its natural beauty, but also with its built heritage. Many historic landmarks remain today, from the remnants of the 13th-century Cistercian abbey near Farnham to the enduring traces of the region's wartime strategic significance. Victorian forts, World War II encampments, and, for those who know where to look, Cold War bunkers are scattered throughout the area. The landscape bears the scars of past quarrying, gunpowder mills, and other industries, offering a glimpse into the region's industrial history. Meanwhile, the extensive woodlands, downlands and heathlands reflect the agricultural and forestry heritage which supported markets in nearby London.

Up until the mid-20th century, however, the daily life of the Surrey Hills remained predominantly rural, centred around village life. Outside a few small towns, the area's character was shaped by agricultural and woodland production, with a calendar driven by seasonal cycles of harvesting and livestock management. The region also maintained large tracts of common land, a defining feature of its rural landscape.

In recent decades, the Surrey Hills has experienced a significant expansion of woodland cover. Historical photographs show that many of the region's commons were once far less wooded, with these changes most probably linked to the decline of commons practices after the war and the associated reductions in grazing and coppicing. This shift has led to profound changes in the landscape over the past century.

For hundreds of years, the Surrey Hills has also been a popular destination for recreation, particularly for the residents of nearby London. As early as the 1630's, John Evelyn wrote of Box Hill as a place where visitors from the surrounding urbanised areas resorted "during the heart of a summer to walk, collation and divert themselves" to Box Hill to soak in the peace of the "natural alleys and shady recesses among the box trees".⁵

By the turn of the 20th century, Box Hill had become one of the most famous hills in the world. As one contemporary observer noted:

*"...it has all the advantages. It is within easy reach of London for school treats, excursions, choir outings, weekends, and all other journeys in the open air; it has a railway station at its foot, several inns, a tea garden at the top, and a hundred bank holidays have left it unspoiled."*⁶

The early 20th century saw a growing national movement advocating for public access to open country. The need for statutory protection of such landscapes became widely accepted. Voluntary organisations like the Open Spaces Society and the Council for the Protection of Rural England played a key role in advancing the cause, while social movements, including the Cyclists' Touring Club, Youth Hostels, and Ramblers' Associations, highlighted the public's desire to

⁵ Evelyn, John (1677-1706) *The Diary of John Evelyn*

⁶ John Betjeman (1952) *First and Last Loves*

escape from the industrial cities to the countryside. Special 'ramblers' trains' were introduced to carry visitors to the Surrey Hills. During this period, the arts also played a significant role, with arts retreats and other excursions attracting visitors before the war. Visionary politicians, such as James Chuter-Ede, also shaped public support for conservation. Several subscription schemes helped raise funds to purchase land around Box Hill for public benefit.

In this context, the Surrey Hills was well known for its estates and country houses. In common with much of the country, many of these estates were broken up in the early 20th century due to the need to pay death duties and financial losses during the 1930's stock market crashes. However, a number of important properties and their surrounding parklands were preserved through the National Trust, though many of these properties have become disconnected from the agricultural estates which once supported them.

As in the past, the visitor economy continues to make a vital contribution to the economic well-being of the Surrey Hills, benefiting both its rural industries and the towns and villages within it. This economic impact spans a wide range of businesses from exclusive hotels and golf clubs to shops selling outdoor clothing and accessories, and from pubs to bakeries catering to mountain bikers. For both visitors and residents, access to the countryside remains important for the health and well-being benefits of experiencing the countryside.

A major draw for many visitors is the North Downs Way National Trail, which opened in 1978, although it has its origins in the ancient Pilgrims Way, believed to date back to the Stone Age. This trail follows the historic ridgeline from east to west. More recently, the Greensand Way has been added as a popular route, and for cyclists, King Alfred's Way, which links the Surrey Hills with Winchester, Avebury and Stonehenge.

3.3.2 The Present

The long history of common land within the Surrey Hills provides a significant resource for outdoor access. There are extensive areas of open-access land and a vast network of public footpaths for walkers. However, access for other user groups remains patchy, with a fragmented bridleway network and inconsistent rights of access for equestrians, cyclists, and other users. Additionally, many routes remain inaccessible to those with disabilities. While outdoor pursuits are an option for many, some demographics are still under-represented in our countryside. The current social and economic lack of diversity of visitors remains a concern.

Research commissioned by Natural England in 2023 indicated that more than half of visits to the protected heathlands in the western part of the National Landscape are for dog walking. This underscores the need for active management of recreational access to mitigate potential negative impacts, particularly on endangered ground-nesting bird species. Similar concerns are raised by farmers, with recent increases in incidents of livestock worrying and growing concerns over the spread of parasitic worms from dog faeces. It is also important to note that most visits to the countryside, by residents and visitors, continue to be facilitated by car journeys. This increase in motor traffic is widely seen as a key threat to the rural tranquillity and enjoyment of the Surrey Hills.

In addition to these threats, key challenges remain regarding inappropriate development that threatens to damage the rural character of the protected landscape. Housing demand poses a

significant threat to both the rural character and public enjoyment of the countryside. The shortage of affordable housing has had a marked impact on the composition of rural communities, with fewer young people and families able to afford to live in villages. This has led to the erosion of village life and the closure of local facilities. Simultaneously, changes in working patterns, including the growth of remote working (facilitated by high-speed internet) may further alter living and commuting patterns.

Concerns have also grown over the increasing industrialisation of the countryside through various development proposals, ranging from oil exploration to solar energy installations and biofuel manufacturing facilities. Some fear that recent government policies on farming could lead to the break-up of traditional farm enterprises, making them more vulnerable to sale and development. Furthermore, the conversion of farm buildings for other purposes is contributing to the urbanisation and industrialisation of existing rural sites. On a more positive note, many of the region's most important historic buildings and estates have been preserved under the National Trust's conservatorship.

All these issues highlight the ongoing importance of the land-use planning processes to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of this special area.

3.3.3 The Future

*"The high aesthetic and architectural standards demanded in National Parks may not be attainable throughout the length and breadth of all the Conservation Areas; but planning powers under the new Bill should be strictly and wisely applied to the preservation of the landscape, to the mitigation of existing disfigurement and to the protection of all features of natural or scientific interest."*⁷

The original vision of the Hobhouse Report, with its emphasis on preserving both the character and aesthetic qualities of protected landscapes as integral to their natural beauty, will likely continue to face pressure from urban development in the coming decades.

Current projections indicate a continuing increase in population and ongoing demand for housing in southeast England, underscoring the need for robust protections to remain in place. The recent legal duty requiring public authorities to not only consider but actively further the purpose of the National Landscape is a welcome development. This is an opportunity to establish clear policies and guidance on how these public bodies should interpret and implement this strengthened responsibility.

Planning policies and decisions must ensure that development is appropriate for its location, considering the potential effects, including cumulative impacts on the special features and rural character of the National Landscape. Activities occurring outside the boundaries of the National Landscape can still significantly affect people's experiences and enjoyment of the area. This includes the impact of transport networks, road, rail, and air, and their effects, particularly in terms of noise and light pollution. Effective mitigation strategies and robust policies must be in place to manage the potential negative impacts of regional development. Moving forward, ways

⁷ Hobhouse, Arthur (1947). *Report of the National Parks Committee*

need to be explored to offset the effects of external development by funding improvements in nature conservation and sustainable visitor management within the protected landscape.

The Surrey Hills' role as a place of enjoyment and responsible recreation, for both local communities and those seeking respite from the city, should be recognised and safeguarded. Access to, and enjoyment of, the countryside for health and wellbeing has never been more important, as evidenced by the recent pandemic, and the need for all members of society to have the opportunity to access nature.

When the National Parks Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1949, it was described as:

*"...a people's charter for the open air, for the hikers and the ramblers, for everyone who loves to get out into the open air and enjoy the countryside. Without it, they are fettered, deprived of their powers of access and facilities needed to make holidays enjoyable. With it, the countryside is theirs to preserve, to cherish, to enjoy and to make their own."*⁸

Over the next seventy-five years, the aim is to strive to continue fulfilling this vision and expand the provision of responsible access for all members of the community, including those currently excluded due to disability, or social and economic barriers.

⁸ (1949) National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act

3.3.4 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 for 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.

3.3.5 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 no barriers from 8 miles to 75 miles in 2100. Five-year target 20 miles.

3.3.6 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 attracts visitors through investment in infrastructure and public transport services, which reduce 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 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 the rural character of the area, 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.

3.4 Climate

3.4.1 The Past

The landscape of the Surrey Hills has been shaped not only by geological processes over millions of years but also by a complex interplay of climatic factors. The area's diverse ecosystems, including heathlands, woodlands, and downlands, have been profoundly influenced by shifts in climate, both natural and anthropogenic. These changes have also left their mark on the cultural history of the region, from the cultivation of Roman vineyards to the rise of hop farming. The climate history of the Surrey Hills is not just a story of natural forces but also one of human adaptation and ingenuity in response to the environment.

As the last Ice Age ended around 12,000 years ago, a warmer, more temperate climate marked the beginning of the Holocene epoch, which continues to the present day. The warmer temperatures allowed forests to spread across much of southern Britain, including the Surrey Hills. This period of post-glacial afforestation saw the establishment of dense woodlands dominated by oak, elm and birch.

The climate of the Surrey Hills continued to warm through the early Holocene, though with periodic fluctuations. By the 1st century AD, Roman settlers had established vineyards, where the combination of well-drained, south-facing slopes and a relatively warm climate provided an ideal environment for grapevines. Though the decline of Roman Britain in the 5th century led to the abandonment of many vineyards, the tradition of winemaking in the region would later be revived, and it is likely that viticulture flourished again between the 9th and 13th centuries, when Europe is widely accepted to have experienced a climatic phase known as the Medieval Warm Period (MWP), characterised by higher than average temperatures. This period of warmth had significant impacts on agriculture and land use in the Surrey Hills, facilitating the expansion of arable farming and the clearance of more woodland for crops and grazing. The region, with its fertile soils and mild climate, was particularly suited for the cultivation of grains such as wheat and barley.

After the MWP, the climate began to cool. This cooler period, from roughly the 14th to the 19th century, had profound effects on the climate of the Surrey Hills. Winters became colder, with more frequent snowfall and harsher frosts, while summers were cooler and wetter. These climatic shifts had a marked impact on agriculture in the region, reducing the growing season and making farming more difficult. A notable change in this period being the expansion of heathlands, coinciding with changes in agricultural practices, with farming becoming more prominent. The introduction of grazing sheep and cattle on the heathland areas was particularly common in areas like the Surrey Hills where the underlying chalk and sandy soils supported their development. Heathland ecosystems, with their distinctive flora such as heather, gorse, and broom, became a defining feature of the region's landscape.

As the climate began to warm again in the 19th century, new agricultural practices emerged in the Surrey Hills, influenced both by local conditions and broader economic trends. One of the most significant developments during this period was the rise of hop cultivation in the region. The cultivation of hops, essential for brewing beer, became a major industry in the Surrey Hills,

particularly in areas like Godalming, Farnham, and Guildford. These regions, with their chalky soils and mild climate, were ideal for hop growing, and by the 18th century, hops were a key agricultural product in the area.

The cultivation of hops in the Surrey Hills was part of a broader agricultural revolution that occurred across Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries. This period saw the adoption of new farming techniques and crop rotations, which allowed for increased productivity and more diverse agriculture. The rise of hop farming in Surrey, along with the growth of other industries like wool production, helped fuel local economies and contributed to the region's cultural landscape.

The climate history of the Surrey Hills is a story of adaptability and transformation, shaped by both natural forces and human ingenuity. From the post-glacial forests and Roman vineyards to the spread of heathlands during the Little Ice Age and the rise of hop farming, the region's landscape has been continually influenced by changes in climate.

3.4.2 The Present

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen significant changes in the climate of the Surrey Hills, as global warming has led to rising temperatures and altered weather patterns. All of the UK's ten warmest years on record have occurred since 2002. Heatwaves, like that of summer 2018, are now 30 times more likely to happen due to climate change. Summers have become hotter and drier, while winters are generally milder and wetter. These changes have had both positive and negative effects on the region's ecosystems and agricultural practices.

In particular, the warming climate has helped to revitalise the wine industry in the region. As temperatures have increased, conditions for grape growing have improved, and vineyards have once again been established in parts of the Surrey Hills. The resurgence of viticulture in the region, particularly with the production of sparkling wines, is a testament to how changing climate conditions can enable the re-emergence of practices that once thrived in Roman times. However, climate change is having a significant impact on nature conservation efforts in the Surrey Hills. The increasingly unpredictable weather patterns associated with climate change, such as heavy rainfall and prolonged droughts, present severe challenges for agriculture and conservation in the region. Delicate ecosystems within this region are facing increasing stress, threatening biodiversity and complicating conservation work.

Heathlands, which are highly sensitive to both over (and under) grazing and changes in climate, are at risk from increased fire risk, the spread of invasive species, and from habitat degradation, while the spread of new crops and changes in farming techniques continues to reshape the rural landscape. One of the most prominent effects is the shifting of species' habitats. Many plant and animal species in the Surrey Hills are adapted to specific climate conditions, and as temperatures increase, some species may struggle to survive in their traditional habitats. Warmer winters and hotter summers can also alter the timing of seasonal events such as flowering, breeding, and migration. For instance, migratory birds may arrive earlier or later than usual, disrupting their relationships with local food sources and potentially leading to mismatches in ecosystems.

In addition, changing weather patterns, including more frequent droughts and extreme rainfall, can damage vital habitats. Waterlogged soils and eroded riverbanks threaten aquatic species

and plant life, while longer dry spells may lead to the decline of woodland and heathland habitats that are home to rare species like the heath fritillary butterfly or the rare woodlark. Furthermore, the spread of invasive species, which are better suited to warmer conditions, poses a growing threat. Non-native plants and animals may outcompete native species for resources, further destabilising ecosystems and reducing biodiversity.

To mitigate these challenges, conservation efforts in the Surrey Hills must focus on reducing net carbon emissions and creating resilient landscapes, which are more able cope with, and adapt to, the expected climate changes over coming years. This includes restoring habitats, promoting species migration corridors, and improving land management practices to better cope with the changing climate. However, as global warming continues, more adaptive and long-term strategies will be necessary to protect this unique and cherished landscape. There is a tension over the nature and extent of renewable energy infrastructure and what is appropriate in Protected Landscapes

3.4.3 The Future

The Surrey Hills faces considerable challenges as it adapts to the realities of climate change. Yet, the resilience and richness of its ecosystems continue to offer hope for the future. As the region strives to preserve its unique cultural and natural heritage, understanding its climate history is crucial for ensuring that it remains a thriving part of the English countryside for generations to come.

Warmer, drier weather is likely to pose significant risks to the remaining areas of heathland. With the increased risk of fire, combined with existing fragmentation, there is a real danger of local extinction caused by fire, as there may be no nearby habitat for species to recolonise. Additional risks to heathland include increased storm intensity, which could lead to the loss of soil from nutrient-poor, thinly soiled sites. Similarly, chalk grassland is vulnerable to fragmentation and potential loss. Expected increases in storm intensity and extreme weather events also pose threats of catastrophic flooding, impacting both wildlife and communities, both within the National Landscape and downstream.

It is imperative that, over the coming years, decisive steps are taken to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the Protected Landscape to prevent the further fragmentation and loss of our sensitive habitats.

Projects to reduce fuel loads on heathland sites, such as tree removal, mechanical mowing, or controlled burning, may become increasingly important to preserve the long-term integrity of these habitats. The expected increase in storm intensity is also likely to exacerbate flooding risks. However, efforts to slow the flow of water into and through watercourses, particularly through sustainable drainage, the expansion of wetlands, and semi-natural flow interventions, including the use of trees and the damming of streams, can help to mitigate and prevent downstream flooding.

Similarly, to sustain livestock farming in a warmer climate, agroforestry can provide significant benefits for animal welfare, such as using trees for shade, along with carbon fixation and biodiversity benefits.

3.4.4 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.

3.4.5 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

3.4.6 Strategic Priorities

Land management and farming

- **Soil health** – promoting conservation tilling and planting cover crops to improve soil health and structure, 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 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 eg on existing farm buildings 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 impact 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 working 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

4.1 Arts and Cultural Heritage

The Surrey Hills has provided inspiration to many of the country's great artists, writers, designers and architects, particularly during and since Victorian times.

The consultation on the Management Plan highlighted a general sense that the historic and cultural heritage of the Surrey Hills is greatly under-appreciated, particularly the artistic associations and industrial heritage. There is a lack of awareness of how the landscape has evolved and the inspiration that it has provided. There has also been a general loss of local distinctiveness and traditional rural character through the decline in traditional land management practices and the standardisation of design and materials.

The Management Plan seeks to ensure that the historic features and the rich cultural and artistic heritage that define the special sense of place are recorded, protected, managed and celebrated by present and future generations. The Delivery Strategy identifies the need for partnership working, including Surrey Hills Arts engaging and inspiring new audiences and creating new work which enhances the sense of place and encourages a personal connection to the landscape. The National Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Connections programme is a major opportunity to build capacity in the National Landscape to collaborate with local history societies, the Surrey Hills Society and the Surrey Archaeological Society in understanding, conserving and celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the Surrey Hills.

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

The Surrey Hills is an area rich and diverse in wildlife due to its varied geology, landform and traditional land management. It contains internationally important sites for nature conservation ranging from the extensive lowland heaths on the Greensand to the chalk grassland and yew and box woodlands on the North Downs. The Surrey Hills landscape also contains an important matrix of smaller features like hedgerows, shelterbelts, woodland coppice and ponds.

The Management Plan survey highlighted the need for robust policies and regulation to protect designated sites of nature conservation. However, there were comments that more should be done beyond designated sites, including opportunities to adapt to climate change and to link habitats. The fragmentation and general decline in traditional land management practices have led to a tremendous pressure on maintaining the rich biodiversity of the Surrey Hills.

There is often little public awareness and understanding of the need for appropriate management, particularly grazing, and there is a general lack of resources to coordinate and implement positive management regimes. Wetland habitats are important to the overall ecology of the Surrey Hills and the Rivers Wey and Mole, and their tributaries are significant landscape features. Catchment Partnerships for both river catchments have been working towards meeting Water Framework Directive targets. The Partnerships are an important platform that bring together various agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to the management of wetland features.

The development of sensitive flood alleviation measures and the implementation of natural flood management schemes like will be supported and impacts monitored. Additional impetus has been given through efforts directed at reversing the loss of biodiversity nationally as a result of changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 170[d]) which includes the principle that 'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures'. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan led to the introduction of a mandatory requirement to deliver biodiversity net gain through the land use planning system.

It is in this context that the Management Plan policies seek to enhance the biodiversity of the area through sustaining the management and extension of the designated sites and important features in the wider Surrey Hills landscape. This involves promoting landowner awareness and generating resources for practical land management through new environmental land management schemes and biodiversity off-setting opportunities in the Surrey Hills. There is also the need to ensure collaboration between landowners and land managers, and partner organisations through the Surrey Nature Partnership and farmers working collaboratively on a landscape scale in clusters. The local planning authorities will need to ensure that they secure biodiversity improvements when determining planning applications, including within the Surrey Hills.

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

As a National Landscape, the Surrey Hills is a major economic asset to the county and the region. The quality of the landscape contributes to the economic success of the southeast as a place to live, work and invest.

Being a generally prosperous and attractive area means high land and property values often undermine the viability of rural businesses such as farming and village shops by making staff recruitment difficult, yet these businesses help maintain the landscape and keep communities thriving. This relative prosperity creates major issues relating to affordable housing and means that local people who do not have access to everyday facilities, jobs or a car can be excluded from participating fully in community life.

The Management Plan seeks to ensure that the protection and enhancement of the environmental quality of the National Landscape leads to the Surrey Hills being an attractive place to live, invest in and visit for all members of the community. Particular regard needs to be given to promoting those sustainable forms of social and economic development, such as low impact tourism, affordable housing and the development of local food initiatives, which can themselves contribute to conserving the environment by generating income for land management and a reduction in the need to travel.

The work of Surrey Hills Enterprises in helping to build the Surrey Hills brand, seeking collaboration in raising environmental standards and marketing high quality local products, services and events will be supported in line with the brand values set out in the Part 5 Delivery Strategy.

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

The beauty of the Surrey Hills is largely the result of the way the land has been shaped and maintained by farmers, landowners and estate managers over the centuries. This has created a beautiful landscape composed of a mosaic of small to large fields enclosed by hedgerows, shaws and copses and farm buildings. Many of these demonstrate building traditions dating back to medieval times and are constructed of local materials. Having a viable and diverse farming economy reduces the pressure to fragment the landscape, which then becomes more vulnerable to development and inappropriate management.

The high land and labour prices, together with the reduction in agricultural incomes, create a massive pressure to give up farming, to intensify production or to diversify into activities that may not necessarily protect and enhance the special character of the area. The Surrey Farm Study 2023⁹ highlighted the pressures that farming is under in Surrey, but there are new opportunities to diversify, for example into viticulture, which could have a major impact on the landscape and the rural economy, along with new ways to enhance biodiversity. Farming can play a crucial role in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change and reversing the loss of biodiversity. There is a particular concern with the loss of farmland to provide for the keeping of horses as this can degrade the landscape and take land out of production.

With the Government's commitment to new environmental land management schemes, the Management Plan seeks to ensure that farming remains a viable enterprise in the Surrey Hills and continues to play a positive role in maintaining its outstanding landscape. This means raising awareness of the important role that farmers play, supporting them as custodians of the landscape, ensuring the survival of critical infrastructure such as abattoirs, and exploiting commercial opportunities to capitalise on the millions of people who cherish the Surrey Hills as a place to live, work and visit.

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.

⁹ Rural Policy Group, *The Sustainable Food Report* (2023)

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

The primary purpose of the National Landscape designation is to conserve and enhance the natural and scenic beauty of the landscape. A fundamental role of the local planning authorities is to ensure that the very features that make the Surrey Hills special and worthy of its National Landscape designation are protected. This is achieved by strict development plan policies and through the vigilant exercise of development management powers. This Plan seeks to ensure that both are applied in a consistent manner across the National Landscape.

London and the South East's economic success, combined with the attractive environment of the Surrey Hills, creates substantial demand for development that is constrained by environmental designation. These pressures are expected to increase and justify especially stringent controls of development in the circumstances of this National Landscape. The prospect of an increase in housing in London and other nearby settlements and including more small dwellings in apartments, it becomes ever more essential for the health and well-being of future populations to have access to outstanding countryside. In that way, new housing development needs to be complemented by greater protection of nearby valued landscapes, such as the Surrey Hills.

The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has placed a new active duty on planning authorities and other relevant authorities "to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty" of the National Landscape. The duty is placed upon the planning authorities, not on applicants, even though the latter may wish to assist planning authorities to demonstrate that the Councils have sought to further the purpose of the National Landscape designation. This Management Plan is aimed at assisting Surrey Hills constituent planning authorities to meet the requirements of the Act. In seeking to identify sufficient land in development plans to meet Councils' future housing requirements, any proposed housing land allocations impacting upon the National Landscape should be avoided, if possible, or only allocated in exceptional circumstances in line with the requirements of national policy.

The Courts have held that, in line with NPPF policy, the "tilted balance" in favour of allowing sustainable development does not apply in National Landscapes if the development would fail to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. The cumulative effects of many, often small, developments over decades and centuries would reduce the landscape and scenic beauty of the Surrey Hills and spoil it for future generations. These and other pressures and threats are considered to justify the policies in this Plan for strict controls of development in this most sensitive of landscapes.

Development proposals should take into account any Landscape Character Assessments for the locality and the Surrey Hills publication "Building in Design". The increasing impact of replacement buildings in parts of the Surrey Hills is an issue. Special care needs to be taken over their siting, volume and design to ensure that their impact on the landscape does not become progressively greater over the years. Similarly, the conversion of farm buildings and other rural buildings, particularly more modern portal framed buildings, to other uses can often individually and collectively spoil the landscape. Some such buildings are unattractive, sometimes in a dilapidated state, but previously met functional agricultural needs. Their retention through conversion can detract from the landscape and no longer be justified for land management purposes. Such proposals should be resisted. Their existence should not be perpetuated

through their conversion to other uses. The conversion of older brick and tiled roof farm buildings, or redevelopment proposals, should demonstrate there would be no need for replacement buildings for the maintenance of the associated landscape. Similarly, the substantial works to convert stables, usually of temporary timber construction, to other uses, and the change in character will be resisted.

Small scale, rural exception schemes for affordable housing, in accordance with local plan policies in or adjacent to a settlement and, where shown to be needed in a parish and/or neighbouring parishes, will be supported. Assurances will be needed, preferably through a social housing landlord and, if necessary, through a legal agreement, that the occupancy of the homes would, if possible, be restricted in perpetuity to those locally associated with the locality and in need of affordable housing. Some market housing argued to make the affordable housing viable must be justified.

To mitigate the visual impact of a development, effective landscaping and tree screening of native species can assist in justifying a proposal. Where appropriate a condition should be applied to the permission to provide for the long-term retention of the tree screening. However, with the Surrey Hills being the most wooded of the nationally protected landscapes in the country, substantial existing or proposed tree screening is not considered to be a justification for a proposed development. If accepted, and with the demand for development being so great in the well wooded Surrey Hills National Landscape, it would be capable of being repeated too often, which would undermine the value of its nationally important landscape designation.

Farmland in the Surrey Hills has diminished, often going to equestrian uses, yet it is important to conserve landscape character. The loss, even where not involving the best agricultural land, would undermine the changing appearance and mosaic of fields through the seasons. Further, the nation's food production and associated security would be reduced. Consequently, development resulting in the loss of agricultural land will need to be of overriding public benefit. This Management Plan exists to support farming.

Minerals can only be worked where they are found and there are nationally important mineral resources within the Surrey Hills National Landscape including soft sand and silica sand. Waste management development within the Surrey Hills is generally limited in scale, intrinsically connected to the rural economy and working countryside and serving to manage waste arising from local communities and/or agricultural and forestry uses. Accordingly, proposals for minerals and waste management development within the Surrey Hills will have regard to the existing and emerging Minerals and Waste Development Framework, including development plan policies that seek to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape.

Darker skies give the Surrey Hills a sense of remoteness and peacefulness. They need to be protected for the benefit of all and future generations for our health, well-being, enjoyment and to increase our understanding and sense of place in the universe. Light pollution also detrimentally affects a wide range of nocturnal species. It comes as additional stress to habitat loss for already declining populations of many species across the Surrey Hills. Light emanating from buildings can intrude into views of an otherwise dark landscape. Consequently, large areas of glazing and roof lights should be avoided. Where that is unavoidable, automatic blinds or shutters should be incorporated to operate in times of darkness and poor light. Any necessary external lighting will normally be resisted but, where special circumstances exist, it should be

designed to minimise light pollution. Floodlighting in the Surrey Hills, including from moveable floodlights for sports fields, can be particularly damaging to the night skies. The Surrey Hills National Landscape is within Zone E1 in the darkness scale. Consequently, a planning condition could be applied to a permission to require the E1 standard.

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 an 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 Well-being

Some of the most familiar beauty spots in England are found within the Surrey Hills, including Box Hill, Leith Hill and the Devil's Punch Bowl. With the North Downs Way National Trail and the extensive rights of way, open commons, sunken lanes, easier access trails, picnic sites, attractive market towns and villages, it has been a favourite playground for local people and visitors keen to enjoy the fresh air and outstanding scenery.

Whilst it is difficult to monitor the number and profile of visitors to the Surrey Hills, there is little doubt that the area receives millions of visitors every year. To maximise the contribution visitors can make to the wider Surrey economy, whilst limiting the impact they have on existing infrastructure, investment is needed. Roads, local services, viewpoint conditions and capacity, bridleways and footpaths are just a few elements where the most pressure is felt, and where focused investment is most needed, ensuring the balance between visitor experience, quality of life for residents and the environment.

The Management Plan seeks to recognise that the Surrey Hills, as a nationally important landscape, is managed so that local people and visitors can enjoy the area in a way that has minimal impact on its beauty and benefits the lives of its residents. There is the opportunity for Surrey Hills Enterprises and tourism partnerships, such as Visit Surrey and the North Downs National Trail, to ensure that the spending power of visitors contributes significantly to the local economy. This includes promoting local food, and ensuring that visitor facilities also enhance local people's enjoyment and understanding of the Surrey Hills National Landscape

With the increase in dog ownership, particularly since the Covid pandemic, the Surrey Hills has seen an increase in the number of people visiting the countryside, benefitting their mental and physical health and well-being. This has created pressures, particularly disturbance to ground nesting birds and the increase of Neospora (a parasite which affects livestock) and dog attacks, which need to be managed through coordinated communications and interventions like dead-hedging and fencing, as appropriate.

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 well-being

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 which 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

The impact of traffic on the Surrey Hills is perhaps greater than on any other National Landscape or National Park. This is largely due to its proximity to London and other urban areas, resulting in high volumes of traffic passing through the area.

The consultation on the Management Plan highlighted the blight caused by major transport infrastructure such as the M25 and M23, whilst highlighting that the Surrey Hills has become a key destination for cycling. The increasing volume of traffic leads to a loss of tranquillity, increased air pollution and damage to features such as verges, and the introduction of highway engineering solutions that can detract from the rural character of the area. The relatively high level of car ownership in Surrey contrasts with a relative lack of convenient public and community transport.

The Management Plan aims to raise awareness of the impact that traffic has on the Surrey Hills and to promote measures that reinforce the rural character of the area through sensitive design and maintenance. Working with local communities in the National Landscape, the highway authority has implemented schemes to declutter transport infrastructure, assisted by a more flexible approach to the provision of highway signage.

There is also a need to provide safe and convenient non-motorised access by working with rail and bus operators and through initiatives to promote walking, cycling and horse riding for people who live in, work in or visit the Surrey Hills. Transport routes can also act as important green corridors, linking habitats and promoting biodiversity through sensitive verge management.

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

The Surrey Hills is one of the most wooded of all the National Parks and National Landscapes in the country with approximately 47% canopy cover. Its character varies from the patchwork of irregular woods, old coppice and shaws of the wooded Weald, and the conifer plantations of large estates on the Greensand Hills, to the ancient yew and box woodlands on the North Downs.

The 1947 woodland census suggests that the Surrey Hills landscape has changed from a predominantly open landscape with coppiced woodland to a landscape with largely unmanaged, secondary woodlands extending onto former commons, heathland and downland. The major threats to the woodland habitats in the 21st century arise from their fragmentation and loss, lack of management and inappropriate planting of non-native species. Small woodland ownership has increased within the Surrey Hills, but many owners are unaware of what management should be undertaken.

Although the Management Plan engagement process has demonstrated the great value that people attach to woodlands, the consequences of fragmentation and neglect include the loss of biodiversity and a perception that woodland is of little use and therefore little value. In addition, the uncontrolled expansion of woodland and scrub can be at the expense of other more important semi-natural habitats, particularly heathland and chalk downland. Woodlands are also prone to disease and can suffer significant damage from mammals such as deer and grey squirrels if not controlled. Climate change is already having a major impact on the Surrey Hills landscape where trees under stress, for example from prolonged droughts, are more susceptible to pests and diseases.

Hedgerows and veteran trees are an important landscape feature and important wildlife corridors linking woodland habitats. They are also important elements of the historic landscape, which need to be appropriately managed to maintain their diversity and health. With climate change predicting wetter winters and drier, hotter summers, more robust hedgerows with trees and agroforestry will provide an important role in providing shelter for livestock and crops.

The Management Plan policies seek to raise awareness and understanding amongst the public and small woodland owners of the value of woodlands and the need for management. There need to be financial incentives to cover the cost of management through well-resourced and targeted grant schemes. New markets for woodland products need to be developed, such as opportunities to work with local sawmills on added value products for craft related uses, highway signs and fencing. There is a particular opportunity in the Surrey Hills area to develop wood fuel projects and build on the success of the annual Surrey Hills Enterprise's Wood Fair.

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

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 Wider Society – A Surrey Hills Charter

The long-term vision for the Surrey Hills National Landscape as a thriving place for people and nature, will only be achieved if all community groups, residents, visitors and businesses help to take care of this nationally important landscape. The following principles and actions will be encouraged through campaigns and programmes

Love Local

Money invested in products and services that help support this management plan, is money invested in conserving the National Landscape and its rural economy. Buying products and services from farmers and woodland managers who actively manage their land to benefit the environment.

Take pride in the Surrey Hills National Landscape

Promote its special features and places to family, friends and visitors. Getting people to enjoy the Surrey Hills, will mean they care for it and will want to protect it.

Respect other users

Follow the Countryside Code. Through responsible behaviour we can all use and enjoy the countryside without damaging the enjoyment or livelihoods of others.

Love Dogs, Love Nature

Dog walking is a popular activity throughout the Surrey Hills. By following the Surrey Dog Code, you can help reduce the impact on wildlife, particularly ground nesting birds, as well as on livestock.

Reduce, reuse and recycle, and dispose of all litter responsibly

Litter spoils enjoyment of the countryside and can cause fatal harm to wildlife

Slow down for people, horses and wildlife

Speeding vehicles are dangerous to other road users and wildlife, and ancient routeways and their rare plants are damaged by inconsiderate driving and parking.

Help prevent the spread of invasive and harmful plant and animal species

Introduced plant, animal and fish species spread rapidly in the Surrey Hills countryside, competing with our native wildlife and leading to its loss.

Use less water

Demands for water lead to high levels of water extraction, damaging the wildlife of the National Landscape's streams, rivers and wet grasslands.

Avoid using the car where possible and consider using renewable energy in your home

Emissions from fossil fuels contribute to climate change and lead to degradation of valuable habitats

Have a say.

Your views can influence care of the area. Use consultation processes operating at parish, district, county and National Landscape level.

Get involved – support local conservation organisations

With financial and practical support, local conservation organisations can take action to care for the area such as monitoring threatened wildlife, undertaking practical conservation tasks, and lobbying government.

5.3 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 special 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.

5.4 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 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:

5.5 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.

5.6 The Surrey Hills National Landscape Steering Group

The Steering Group focuses on the outcomes and strategy in the Management Plan and facilitates the joint delivery of the Plan, thus furthering the purposes of the National Landscape.

The Steering Group has oversight of:

- Strategic development of the Management Plan, including establishing and reviewing the membership of the Partnership and Task Groups.
- A Business Plan, delivering relevant parts of the Management Plan and setting the priorities for the Surrey Hills National Landscape Team.
- Financial management, reporting and decision-making for a devolved budget, with delegation of financial decisions to the Surrey Hills Director, based on the host authority's Standing Orders.
- Promotion and communication, including consistent use of the Surrey Hills brand, in line with the trademark licence agreement.

5.7 Surrey Hills Planning Working Group

The Surrey Hills Planning Working Group comprises officers of the local authorities and the Defra Relevant Authorities that provide the Surrey Hills National Landscape Board with professional advice in relation to its terms of reference, work and activities. The Chair is a senior officer of the National Landscape Team host authority.

5.8 The Surrey Hills National Landscape Team

The work of the Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board is achieved through the Surrey Hills National Landscape Team, taking forward a range of initiatives to promote the special character of the Surrey Hills, establish partnerships, secure funding, ensure implementation and monitor effectiveness. As a nationally designated landscape, the core costs are funded by central government through Defra with a contribution from the respective local authorities, which reflects their statutory responsibilities towards preparing and keeping under review the National Landscape Management Plan.

5.9 The Surrey Hills Brand

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 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 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 to the Surrey Hills as a National Landscape.

5.10 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.

5.11 Monitoring and Targets

The Surrey Hills National Landscape Partnership Board will take the lead in monitoring the implementation of the 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 Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (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.

5.12 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

