

**Minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting
of the Surrey Hills Society**

11.00 am Saturday, 21 November 2015
at Parrott Inn, Forest Green, Surrey RH5 5RZ

1. **Welcome** – The President, Neil Maltby, welcomed members and thanked them for their continuing support. He reminded us about the history of the Society which now has successfully been operating for seven years: the first AGM had a small turn out at Warren Farm Barns in Mickleham and now the room at Parrott was full. He admired how much has been achieved in such a short time. SHS is now in strong enough position to be able to support other charities with their projects. SHS has taken over from the AONB Board doing presentation talks about the AONB. He thanked the Vice-Chairman Ken Bare for successfully fulfilling that role. These talks are very well received and procure income for the Society. He also thanked Chris Howard, our Chairman, for working endless hours looking after members and the Society. He very much appreciates all their work and feels honoured to be the President of such an organisation.
2. **Apologies for Absence** – Lord Lieutenant M More-Molyneux, Mr I Oxley-Crawford, Ms S Jones, Mrs D Mason, Mr Thorold-Futers, Mr and Mrs J Boyman, Ms Robinson, Mr B Biddell, Mr and Mrs Barrington, Mr and Mrs G Bulman, Ms P Holt, Mr C Burn, Mrs Sudbury, Mr Bettinson (Finance Director).
57 members present.
3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 22 November 2014** – The Minutes were agreed by all at the meeting as a true record, signed by the Chairman and filed. No matters arose.
Stella Cantor proposed and Ken Bare seconded and it was approved unanimously.
4. **Chairman's Report** – a copy of the full text of the Chairman's Report is attached.
David Wright, Chairman of the AONB Board, explained about the delivery of the Management Plan of the Board. It is part of a bigger Surrey Hills "Family" plan. The "Family" consist of the Board, Surrey Hills Society, Surrey Hills Enterprises and Surrey Hills Trust Fund. The Board manages statutory matters, the Society organises enjoyment and education for the public, Enterprises help local businesses to develop and Trust Fund generates income. These four elements work together for a purpose because government funding has been and will be reduced further in the future. Therefore the "Family" sensibly prepares itself for future. He added that any donation or volunteering would be gratefully received; the Surrey Hills is full of resourceful people and we need to take care of succession.

Chairman welcomed Mayor of Waverley, Mike Band and his wife Val. She also introduced the Director of the SH Board, Rob Fairbanks.

Mike Band told about the sponsored walk Surrey Hills Society had organised to raise money for the Trust Fund last September. SHS is one of his nominated charities during his year as Mayor of Waverley. The walk took place on two different dates over 25 miles along the Greensand Way. He thanked the Society for the organisation of the event and reported over £3000 of donations to the Trust Fund.
5. **Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015** – Copies of the accounts were available at the meeting and had been published on the website. Paul Bettinson (Finance Director) was not able to attend the meeting, so the President summarised the accounts as follows:
 - Membership and gift pack income constant

- New sponsorship from Stan Baring solicitors
- First grant towards a water fountain at Leith Hill celebrating its 250th anniversary
- Accounts in healthy balance with a small surplus for next year

There were no questions.

The Accounts were approved unanimously.

6. To confirm the appointment of Margaret Brett, a Partner of Bullimores Accountants as the independent financial examiner for 2015/16 and to authorise Trustees to fix remuneration.

The President expressed thanks and appreciation to Margaret Brett of Bullimores for examining the accounts for the year to March 2015. The meeting unanimously agreed that Margaret Brett should be appointed independent financial examiner for the year to March 2016; she had again waived remuneration.

Jean Pearson proposed and Mark Turner seconded and it was approved unanimously.

7. To appoint and reappoint Trustees of the Society (there should be no fewer than 5 nor more than 12).

The President proposed the reappointment of the Society Chairman, Chris Howard. This was unanimously agreed.

The President proposed the reappointment of Ken Bare as Vice Chairman. This was approved unanimously.

The President presented the nominees en bloc; the meeting agreed the appointments nem com.

Ken Bare (Vice Chairman), Paul Bettinson, Stella Cantor, Sarah Jane Chimbwandira and Christine Howard (Chairman) will continue as Trustees.

Rob Tong and Alessandra Holly were standing down and were thanked for their efforts.

Tariq Phillips was presented to be appointed as a Trustee. This was agreed.

The President, Chairman and members present expressed their appreciation for their contribution to the success of the Society. The Chairman asked members to consider becoming involved in the future as we are always looking for new volunteers.

8. Any other business – Questions from the Membership:

Peter Hattersley asked the Society's view about the planned changes at Newlands Corner? The Chairman replied that Surrey Hills Society had not officially been informed about the introductions of the parking charges although the Chairman had attended an early stage consultation on a range of possible proposals for the area. David Wright replied in behalf of the AONB Board saying that the Surrey County Council is responsible for public access and parking charges. The plans are still at an early stage. Some people are objecting and a lot of discussion is still going on.

He also asked how the "Family" worked together ? Chris Howard replied by saying that each sector had their different public and different roles. SHE talks to businesses and has more paid marketing officers. The Surrey Hills Trust Fund is addressed to philanthropic people willing to give donations which the Fund can focus on different projects within the Surrey Hills.

His third question was about the groups of cyclists on the roads. Chris Howard replied that SHS would share any information coming out about the restricted sizes of the groups etc. The Board has a special group working on the issue.

Richard Jameson urged caution on discussions on housing development on the Green Belt. Some of the opposition was based on inaccuracies and local people should engage in the debate and ensure they were involved in any consultations. Mike Band reminded members that the AONB has the same level of protection as a National Park and the Government has re-affirmed its recognition of the special circumstances in which planning would be allowed. Some allowance could be made to affordable housing for sustainable reasons. Chris Howard highlighted this as the biggest question for the generation. A 1 million housing unit shortfall is predicted by 2030, which creates the pressure on our green space. However, there is going to be a need for open, healthy green spaces for rest and recuperation so protection of the SHAONB is very important.

Peter Bond presented himself as a local sheep farmer. He was concerned that there were not any young farmers coming through to take over our farms. He felt the farmland that makes up the Surrey Hills was being undermined. It is not possible to make living with sheep anymore in the Surrey Hills. Young people can't afford a house. So what is our future going to be like? Chris Howard replied by saying that one of the roles of the SHS is to introduce people to the Surrey Hills and share its history. Much of that history is down to the farmers of Surrey and the SHS tries to highlight their good work and promote their produce. She added also that SHS would be delighted to organise a visit to his farm.

The meeting closed at 12pm.

Surrey Hills Society Chairman's report for AGM - November 2015

Welcome to our 7th AGM and thank you to all of you for coming and for your continued support of this important charity, dedicated to looking after this beautiful iconic landscape known as the Surrey Hills.

Under the guidance of Paul Bettinson, our Finance Director and expert on corporate governance, we have developed this charity from its early beginnings to a more sophisticated management structure, with both a Board of Trustees and a more operational Management team. I am incredibly grateful for his guidance and advice on how to keep our charity legal, accountable and focussed. He has a busy job in the city and I know often has to dash back from London and then drive across Surrey to make a late meeting. But like me, he is passionate about where he lives but whereas I like to walk in the Surrey Hills...he likes to run!

Last year, I told you all about the late nights put in by the Trustees to develop our new Management Plan and that of the wider AONB Management Plan. I am just here going to welcome, Cllr David Wright, Chairman of SHAONB to say a few words about the wider AONB. And I also wanted to welcome the Mayor of Waverley Borough Council and Deputy Chairman of SHAONB, Mike Band and also the Deputy Mayor of Guildford Borough Council, Cllr Gordon Jackson, who is also a strong supporter of the Surrey Hills.

(David Wright on SHAONB Management Plan and wider AONB issues, see Minutes)

Well this year it was the turn of the Management Committee (the guys on the ground that actually do things!). Their task was to take the aspirations of the Business Plan and turn that into a realistic Action Plan, with the real details of who will do what.

From our early beginnings of 12 people sitting round the table at Warren Farm Barns all Trustees and all leading on basics tasks for getting the charity started we now have 7 committees: Events have a team lead by Jeff Holliday of 12, Membership lead by Stella Cantor has 4, Finance led by Paul Bettinson has 6, Shows and Talks led by Ken Bare - 25, PR and Communications led by Diane Cooper - 6, and the latest committee is a separate newsletter committee just dedicated to producing our newsletters led by Anthony Wakefield.

I (and I know all of us here), are incredibly grateful for the time they give, free of charge, philanthropically, to support a landscape that is all dear to our hearts- the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Could we all give them a round of applause?

(Ask Anthony to come to the front) Now, I thought I had a reputation for sitting on a lot of committees but I think I have just been "out committed" by this man! He is extremely well known in the Dorking area. He is a member of Rotary, and very active in Dorking's twinning with Güglingen (Germany) and Gouvieux (France).

It is with much pleasure that I also introduce Anthony Wakefield as our new Sponsor. Anthony Wakefield and Company Limited specialises in the arrangement of Antique and Fine Art Insurance for Dealers, Auctioneers, Corporate Collectors and Private Clients. His company also offers policies to Commercial and Retail concerns, and for Household and other Personal Insurance requirements.

Anthony is an expert in historic buildings and fine art and has in fact acted as insurance broker for our charity, right from the start. I am really enjoying his articles in the newsletter about insurance issue. For example, I had no idea that a very pretty plant often found in gardens, called Knot weed, could potentially make your house uninsurable! See our last newsletter for details. Anthony is a local in the Surrey Hills and is just brimming with ideas on how we can promote and protect our beautiful countryside....as well as enjoy it! He has some ideas for some fun events in 2016...so watch this space!

What I am also delighted about is the fact that Sall Baring from Barings Solicitors, our previous sponsor, is now a really active volunteer in our Society and sits on our events committee and our PR committee.

Finally, I need to mention a few other special people. The first is Peter Salisbury, face behind info@surreyhillssociety.org. You probably know him as the chap that most often greets you at events and ticks off your name. Peter spends hours and hours every week corresponding with members of the Management Committee and SHS members and members of the public. Thank you Peter for the incredible and often thankless task you do!

The second is Ken Bare who is incredibly hard working in so many aspects of the Society and also Stella Cantor, our Membership Secretary who works quietly behind the scenes each week to manage the huge task of managing our members' renewals.

Finally, I need to thank our paid member of staff, Marika Elzinga. Marika, you may remember, joined us last year as our Co-ordinator. A new role created to "herd" all us volunteers and keep us focussed! You may remember she is Finnish, but married into a French wine family and after working in the family vineyard in France, moved to Surrey where her husband became the winemaker for Denbies in Dorking. Those of you who attended our Surrey Hills wine event last week will also realise she is a knowledgeable wine expert as well.

A very heartfelt thank you for putting up with me! Marika is always positive, and always charming, even when I have not responded to her every increasingly urgent emails! It is an extremely difficult job to manage a large group of volunteers but Marika has done it with ease. Thank you for being the anchor for this ever growing organisation.

Last year I asked for more volunteers to expand this Society and you have responded accordingly and I am pleased to say we have more volunteers than ever before working for us in many different ways. Thank you to all of you for your support. Whether it is just to snatch some time from your busy schedules to attend an event or because you have put your hand up and agreed to run an event for us, or become a volunteer on a committee. We are only as strong as the sum of our parts.

Last year, I also asked for someone to get involved in applying for grant funding for the AONB. This year I am pleased to announce that the SHAONB managed to secure £93,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This has been a real team effort, working with all the parishes along the Tillingbourne Valley, community groups like Chilworth Together and charitable Trusts like Shere Museum. Surrey Hills Society has led on the recruitment and employment of the consultant, Dr Anne Sassin, who is leading on the project to capture and promote the amazing story of the fascinating history of the Tillingbourne Valley. If you would like to know more there is a meeting on Monday night at Shalford Village Hall at 7.30pm to explain the project. Several of our members have volunteered for this project but they are still looking for more.

Two of the largest landholders in the county are the National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust. Once again I would like to thank them for their support and you will also notice in 2015 much more collaboration on events, joint events and promotion of the good work both these organisations do in the Surrey Hills. I would also personally like to thank Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira from SWT and Aly Holly NT for their support and collaborative working with us. Together we make the Surrey Hills stronger.

Sadly for us, Aly Holly is standing down as a Trustee, but for the most delightful of reasons. Aly is expecting her first child in January and we wish her well on her new role as “mum”. Aly is not able to be with us today but we had a Trustee meeting on Wednesday night where we thanked her for her time with us.

We have one other Trustee standing down at this AGM, Rob Tong. Rob has given us invaluable advice as a website designer, but also as a keen photographer and resident of the Surrey Hills. Again, juggling a young family has forced him to take the decision to stand down as a Trustee but like all our former Trustees he promises to remain an active member of the Society.

In 2014 we launched a new 20s-30s group for the SHS and we got involved in the world of Facebook and Twitter. Well....I am yet to be convinced by it all.....we can get 30 people saying they will attend and then only 10 turn up. However, during this year I have met some amazing young people, some of which are the sons and daughters of our members and some of which, like me, were born in other countries but are fascinated and love the Surrey Hills.

However, during 2015 I had the pleasure of meeting Katarina and Tariq Philips. Tariq is the MD of a firm of solicitors in Woking and (I think we have a theme going here....) I am delighted to say Katarina is expecting their first child in 2016. However, Katarina is a marketing expert and is full of ideas on how we can improve our activity in social media and has agreed to join our PR Committee.

Meanwhile, you will see from your AGM papers that Tariq has agreed to become a Trustee of our charity. Again, his enthusiasm and expertise will be greatly appreciated.

I would now like to take you pictorially through a few highlights of 2015.

Last year, I told you about the development of the commercial arm of the Surrey Hills - Surrey Hills Enterprises. Many of you attend the Surrey Hills Wood Fair in Bramley in October and some of you have attended the Food Fuel conference run by them – also in October.

Last year at our AGM we highlighted the concerning development pressures on the AONB. Waverley Borough Council had had their new Local Plan refused by the Government Inspectors; Guildford has had all sorts of fun and games with their new Local Plan, which has been currently withdrawn, with the departure of the Head of Planning and a Chief Executive, and Leader of the Council and the Lead member for Planning. Mole Valley is also wrestling with its housing numbers and the 2015 elections saw the continuing emergence of local protest groups like the Guildford Greenbelt Guardians who are to challenge the traditional political parties.

I received many emails and letters of concern about this issue. I am incredibly grateful to our Planning Consultant, Clive Smith, at the SHAONB unit who has continued to assist us with planning issues. He has a regular column in our newsletter to keep you abreast of what is happening on the planning front.

CPRE have done a wonderful job of highlighting the issues around building in the AONB and Clive and Rob, although they do it quietly in the background, are talking to planning officers and politicians and have an enormous influence over the protection of our AONB.

You may remember Jo Tollow, our previous Finance Director, laid down a real challenge to the Society, to be more proactive on the fundraising and giving to support the Surrey Hills. We have taken up that challenge and I am pleased to report that we were able to raise over a £1000 to donate the Leith Hill Appeal for the water trough and landscaping project, which celebrated its 250th birthday this year. We have also done several events to highlight the project and created a double page spread for Surrey Life Magazine, for which the National Trust were delighted.

This year we are championing another amazing anniversary in the Surrey Hills. It is the 300th anniversary of Capability Brown, the landscape architect, whose work has been preserved at Gatton Park, near Reigate. The Gatton Park Trust is developing a HLF project to improve and reinstate the original Capability Brown gardens and we will endeavour to support them in this ambition. Thank you to everyone who has supported our fundraising so far.

One of my duties today is to present to you the Trustees Report and Financial Statement for the period 1st April 2014 to 31 March 2015. I would like to thank Margaret Brett from Bullimores of Dorking for their continued support, acting as our external examiner. I would also like to thank the National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust for their support including the use of their buildings for meetings and also to all the parish councils whose support is much appreciated.

Thank you also to the Parrott Inn who are kindly hosting us today. They are a real champion of the Surrey Hills. Not only do they run the pub but they run a farm that produces so much of the produce and also run the most amazing deli shop that you must visit after lunch.

There is not enough time here today to thank everyone I should for all the amazing things they do for this wonderful charity, but thank you to all of you. I love working with you, I love meeting all our lovely members and I look forward to working with you and enjoying the Surrey Hills with you again in 2016.

I have one final challenge for you all in 2016.... (and I did ask this of you last year too?) the Trustees have set some very tough membership targets in our new business plan. And I am going to need all your help to achieve them. I would like to ask you all to be ambassadors for the Surrey Hills Society and try and get at least one new friend or family to join us this year. That would double our numbers. Can I ask for your help please? Christmas is coming and our gift packs would make an unusual and yearlong gift for that "hard to buy for" relative or friend.

Finally, last year I informed you of the launch of Surrey Hills Enterprises, a new commercially focussed arm of the Surrey Hills "Family". I would like to welcome here today Tim Metson, who some of you will have met at our very enjoyable farm visit in August. Tim is a Director of SHE and is going to tell you about his new project to promote the Surrey Hills.

Chris Howard, Chairman Surrey Hills Society, 21st November 2015.