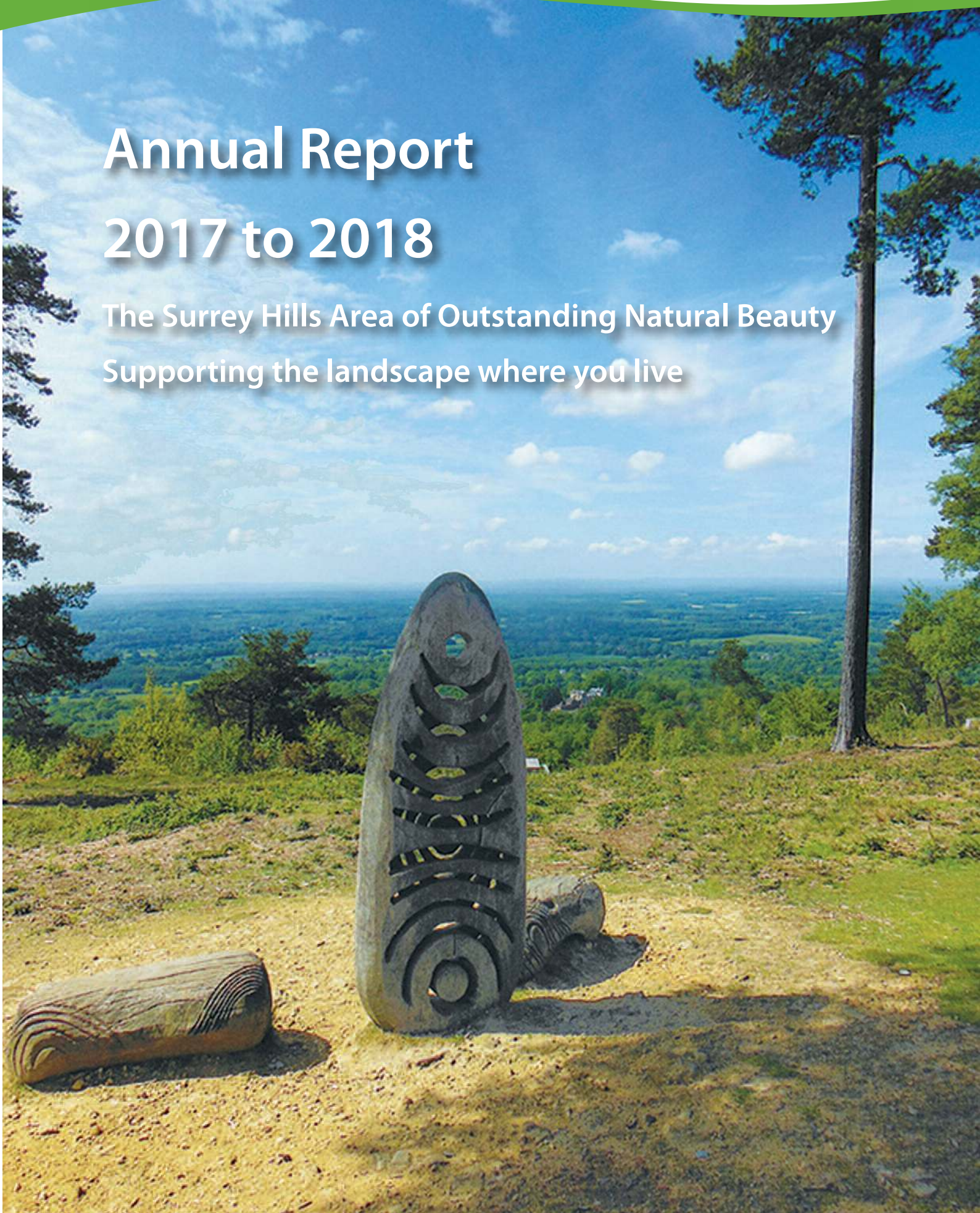


# Annual Report

## 2017 to 2018

The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Supporting the landscape where you live





*SHS members learning about countryside management in Happy Valley, near Coulsdon*



*SHS Volunteers working at Gatton Park, near Reigate*

The Surrey Hills AONB is one of 46 nationally protected landscapes in the UK, having equal landscape status and protection to a National Park.

The Surrey Hills Society is an independent charity promoting the positive enjoyment and care of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for those who live, work in, or visit the area. The Society encourages people to explore and learn about the special qualities and distinctiveness of the area.

At its heart, the Society has a strong membership organisation which provides a vehicle for increasing the knowledge and enjoyment of the area by our members.

The Trustees and Management Team for the Society are all unpaid volunteers. We also have over 70 active volunteers with 22 key volunteers who are active on a monthly or weekly basis. We also have one paid Co-ordinator role of 16 hours per week. Many of our Trustees and Management also have active roles within the charity delivering various aspects of our work.

Due to this high level of volunteering, all the monies received by the Society, whether from internal activities, external grants or donations can (apart from internal running costs) be used to support the outreach and wider goals of the organisation as described in the Charity's Aims.

## What We Offer

**For our members**, we offer a wide-ranging programme of talks, visits and walks. All of these are designed to increase the understanding and awareness of our members and their guests of the special landscape and features which characterise the AONB.

**For the wider public**, we provide information about the AONB through our presence at a large number of shows and events across Surrey.

**For other groups and organisations**, we offer talks about the Surrey Hills using expert volunteer speakers. The income from these talks helps to support the wider work of the Society.

**For the AONB itself**, the Society forms the public face of the AONB, acts on behalf of the AONB Board to promote the area to the public and works with the Board to undertake or support initiatives which help to deliver their Management Plan.

## Our Members

We have around 450 memberships of which a large percentage are family memberships of two or more people. In addition to this we have an affiliate network of related organisations including most of the Parish Councils across the AONB, National Trust, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Long Distance Walkers' Association, Dorking and District Preservation Society, Friends of Boxhill Association, GASP Motor Project and The Gatton Trust, as examples.

## Volunteering - April 2017 to March 2018

During 2017 to 2018 there were more than 70 active volunteers supporting our Society in various ways

- 7,728 volunteer hours were achieved, equivalent to nearly 4 full-time staff
- Over 40 events held, 14 talks given and 8 shows attended
- We raised £25,820 of income this year through running a series of educational events and talks, as well as donations by individuals and businesses and from membership

Our volunteers do a wide range of tasks including practical volunteering, newsletter compilation and packing, supervising events, sitting on committees as well as external promotion of the Society.

## Events - April 2017 to March 2018

There were more than 40 different events in this time period including:

- Free monthly walks each first Sunday of the month organised by different SHS members/volunteers
- Joining up with other related organisations/charities and running events jointly with them, such as walking festivals and conservation volunteer tasks
- Our annual Chairman's and President's Days
- Visits to historic properties/Surrey Hills villages of interest/gardens of note not normally open to the public
- Educational events such as learning to map read/Christmas wreath making/tree identification events

We very much value the contributions, however small or large, made by our volunteers and to mark this, a 'Thank you to the volunteers' picnic was held for the first time in August 2017.



*Volunteers manning our stand at Surrey Hills Challenge at Denbies September 2017*



*SHS Members fund raising for Surrey Hills Trust Fund in Surrey Hills Challenge event at Denbies*

## Other Initiatives and Projects

Other initiatives we have been involved with from 2017 to 2018 include:

### The Tales of the Tillingbourne HLF project

This project was led by the Surrey Hills Board but most of the volunteers came from the Society. The Project Leader, Dr Anne Sassin was commissioned by the Society and we assisted her with many aspects of delivery. 7 new walks were mapped out and put into leaflet form by a team of volunteers. There is now a permanent exhibition at Shere Museum and a website [www.tillingbournetales.co.uk](http://www.tillingbournetales.co.uk) providing much information.

We are grateful for sponsorship from Fidelity International.



*Members of the Tales of the Tillingbourne project team with one of the puppets at launch event in Shere*



*Launching the Tales of the Tillingbourne walks with Great Western Rail.*

## **Gatton Park – 300th Anniversary**

Gatton Trust bid for an HLF grant to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Capability Brown's birth. The Society led an awareness day and promoted the project ahead of the grant being received and then raised £1,000 to help with match funding for the project. Society members ran a volunteer day and donated £350 for new tools for Gatton volunteers, during 2017 to 2018.

## **Supporting Surrey Hills Arts – Inspiring views and soundscape**

The Society supports the work of Ali Clarke, the Surrey Hills Arts Officer in her projects across the Surrey Hills. We promote her activities in our newsletters and have been the lead charity in some of her grant applications. We have also created several events to highlight this work and promoted it on social media.

## **Patchworking Garden**

The Society ran an event to promote this interesting new project in Dorking. One of our members who attended our event now volunteers on a regular basis for them. We have also raised a small amount of funds to donate to their charity.

## **GASP Motor Project**

This may appear a strange coupling for the Surrey Hills, but it is an excellent project that has been developed in the old SITA sandpit/refuse centre in Albury, at the base of Newlands Corner. Again, the networking value of the Society was demonstrated when, after our visit to GASP, one of our members donated a significant sum towards their project which teaches teenagers basic motor engineering skills.



*SHS Members at Patchworking Garden Project*

## Marketing and Communications

- Good working relationship with local publications such as Surrey Life, Vantage Point and Surrey Downs magazine
- Monthly countryside column in Surrey Life, including information on our free guided walk a month in advance so that we can encourage more people to come along and get to know us
- Compilation of our newsletter 3 times a year as well as its distribution to Surrey's library network
- Vantage Point occasionally publish editorials on our behalf

All of this exposure in local publications is free of charge to the Society and very much valued by us as widespread publicity.

## Shows and Talks

From April 2017 to end March 2018 we gave 14 talks. 3 of these were free for various reasons and the other 11 gave rise to an income of £600 (plus in some cases additional Gift Aid).

The Society also attends various public events across the whole county – not necessarily all within the AONB – with its trailer or gazebo. Volunteers man it and give up their time to engage with members of the public (and hopefully gain new members).

We did less external shows than in previous years during this period, but they included many of the key locations across the county:

- Surrey County Show
- Cranleigh Fete
- Gatton Country Fair
- Heritage Open day in Guildford
- Surrey Hills Challenge at Denbies
- Rustic Sunday at Tilford Rural Life Centre
- West Horsley Fete at West Horsley Place
- Our Tales of the Tillingbourne Valley at Wotton



*One of our wintry guided walks*



*SHS volunteers leading on Guildford Walkfest Walk on Ranmore Common*



## 2018 Anniversary Year

2018 is an auspicious year for the AONB as well as the Society; the former celebrates 60 years since its legal designation and the Society has been in existence for 10 years.

Much has been going on during this period to highlight the importance of the Surrey Hills as a living landscape and to look at how the designation has worked to conserve it.

To coincide with the actual 60 years anniversary of the AONB on 8 May 1958, the Society researched and produced a 60 page book, 'Our Changing Landscape' looking at how the designation has protected the Surrey Hills during that period of time. We successfully gained HLF funding to cover the cost of researching, paying to publish archive photos and printing 4,000 copies of the book. Many volunteer hours were spent during the months of 2017 and early part of 2018 on producing this very well-received book.