



Bluebell meadow at Box Hill by Gordon Jackson

Branching Out Building a Strong Future for the Society

The Surrey Hills Society has entered an exciting new chapter. Alongside our much-loved programme of walks, talks and events — delivered with remarkable dedication by our volunteers — we have grown into a key delivery and coordination partner for the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

In recent years, we have helped turn vision into action. **Farm for Health** (derived from our Care Farm pilot project), is our wellbeing initiative based on working farms across the Surrey Hills. It has already supported dozens of people facing mental health challenges, offering practical activity, companionship and renewed confidence. Our **Growing Together** programme, made possible by the generosity of the National Lottery players, has brought the beauty and restorative power of the



Farm for Health Session

landscape to more than 700 people from a wide range of backgrounds. On pages 4 and 5 we expand on the almost 100 events and activities that connect communities with nature and with each other.

Meanwhile, our expanding volunteering and ranger service programme funded by the Surrey Hills National Landscape is supporting conservation and sustainable access, restoring habitats and maintaining vital routes with the energy and commitment of a large and growing team of conservation volunteers. Read more about these exciting developments on Page 7.

These achievements have marked a step-change for the Society. Over the last few years we have appointed our first paid staff and begun a process of careful professional development, ensuring we have the structure, resilience and capability to deliver high-quality projects whilst remaining rooted in our volunteer ethos.

Our volunteers and trustees remain at the heart of everything we do. But if we are to continue growing our impact, we must also secure sustainable funding for the future. That is why we are working in close partnership with the Surrey Hills National Landscape to establish the **Surrey Hills Acorn Fund**. This new Fund, administered by the Society, is designed to generate lasting income for nature, access, skills and wellbeing projects



Branching Out at Frensham Little Pond

across the Surrey Hills, whilst strengthening the Society's capacity to administer and deliver this work effectively.

The Fund is still in its early stages, but it is inspired by the successful model of the South Downs National Park Trust, which raises income through regular donations, legacy gifts, corporate partnerships and grants.

Our ambition is clear: to build multiple new funding streams and work towards a target of £1 million for the Fund within five years. We are immensely grateful for the generous guidance and encouragement of our South Downs colleagues as we nurture this initiative.

Like the acorn itself, this is a seed we are planting for the long term — one that we hope will grow into a strong and enduring source of support for the landscape we cherish. We look forward to sharing further progress with you in the months ahead.

Gordon Jackson and Em Adler

Chairman's Views



Staying on as Chairman

Over recent months I have reflected carefully on my intention, announced in our last issue, to stand down as Chairman in October 2025. At that time we were advertising both for our new CEO and for a volunteer successor as Chair. We were delighted to receive a strong field of applicants for the CEO role — but almost none for the Chairmanship.

As the recruitment process unfolded, it became clear that attempting too much change at once would not be wise. The Society is entering an exciting new phase and it was important that our new CEO, Em Adler, had the opportunity to get her feet firmly under the table and shape the Society's next chapter with stability and confidence.

Em's appointment has been something of a game changer. You can read elsewhere in this newsletter about the energy, ideas and ambition she is bringing to our programmes and partnerships across the Surrey Hills. Encouragingly, her leadership has also allowed me to step back somewhat from the day-to-day operational matters that have occupied much of my time over recent years and regain a little time for other interests.

After discussion with the trustees, I have therefore agreed to continue as Chairman for the time being. It remains a great privilege to serve this remarkable Society and to work alongside such committed trustees, volunteers and staff. I look forward to supporting Em and the Board as we continue to strengthen the Society and ensure that it flourishes as a sustainable, outward-looking and impactful organisation in the years ahead.

Love Nature – Love Your Dog

Whilst the Society is deeply involved in landscape-scale conservation and projects that improve access and wellbeing in nature, it is equally important to reflect on how our own everyday behaviour can affect the countryside we cherish.

The Surrey Hills National Landscape has recently launched the **Love Nature, Love Your Dog** campaign, reminding us that responsible dog ownership is essential if wildlife, farming and recreation are to thrive



Sheep at Albury Vineyard. Photo: Rob Fairbanks

side by side. Even the most well-behaved dog, when off lead, can disturb ground-nesting birds, causing adults to flee their nests and leaving eggs or chicks exposed to predators.

There is also a serious livestock health issue that many people are unaware of. Cattle can abort calves if infected with *Neospora Caninum*, a parasite that can be spread through dog faeces. What may seem a small oversight can therefore have significant economic and animal welfare consequences for farmers.

You may also have noticed sheep now grazing between the vines at Denbies and Albury vineyards — an innovative stewardship approach supported through the **Farming in Protected Landscapes** grant programme. Grazing improves soil health and biodiversity while reducing the need for mechanical mowing, but it also reinforces a simple message: dogs must be kept under close control around livestock.

Loving nature sometimes means small acts of restraint. By keeping dogs on leads where required, clearing up diligently and respecting local signage, we can all play our part in protecting the landscapes and wildlife that make the Surrey Hills so special.

Gordon Jackson

Introducing Em Adler

Our First CEO takes the Society's Helm



The Surrey Hills Society has recently appointed its first ever Chief Executive Officer. Em Adler joins the Society at an exciting time as we continue to expand our work beyond our long-established programme of inspiring walks, talks and activities for members. Alongside these popular events, the Society is increasingly delivering practical projects that restore nature, improve countryside access and support community wellbeing and skills across the Surrey Hills.

"I'm delighted to have been chosen as the first CEO of the Surrey Hills Society. We have a brilliant team of staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to make the Surrey Hills a better place to live in, visit and enjoy.

The Society has a proud heritage of protecting this precious landscape and ensuring that as many people as possible can experience and be inspired by the Surrey Hills. From leading wonderful walks across the

countryside to restoring footpaths, planting hedgerows and trees, and delivering projects that help people connect with nature and improve their wellbeing, the Society already makes a remarkable contribution. I'm excited to build on these strong foundations and help the charity reach even more people in the years ahead."

Em joins the Society after eight years at Wildlife and Countryside Link, England's largest environmental coalition. During that time she led work across communications, campaigning, research and organisational operations.

Through this role she worked closely with many leading national charities, including the National Trust, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts and The Rivers Trust, as well as specialist organisations such as CHEM Trust and the Soil Association. Her work helped secure stronger environmental laws and policies that benefit nature, people and climate.

The trustees and staff warmly welcome Em to the Society and look forward to the energy, experience and leadership she brings as the charity enters this exciting new phase of development.

The Lovelace Bridges of East Horsley

When William King, 1st Lord Lovelace, had a number of bridges built on the hillsides above East Horsley in the 1860s, he almost certainly wasn't expecting them to be regarded as a local curiosity 160 years later. According to a 1984 booklet published by Horsley Countryside Preservation Society (HCPS), a total of 24 bridges were built by the Earl with 15 recorded on the local hillside. These 15, together with approach causeways, spanned the gaps where tracks crossed existing bridleways. Lord Lovelace was an enthusiastic forester and the primary use of these bridges was to facilitate the transport of timber on horse-drawn carts on his estate.

The Surrey Hills Society has had a long association with these "Lovelace Bridges". The Society was only established in 2008 but one of our 2009 walks was to visit the area. By that time, many of the bridges had fallen into disrepair (or worse) and in 2003 a partnership project between the Forestry Commission and HCPS had been established to restore or conserve what remained.



BBC Secret Surrey Recording 2026 (Raven Arch)

As this latest project was reaching completion, a decision was made by HCPS that it could no longer function and should be wound up. As part of the discussions about what to do with the assets and projects with which they were involved, the Society was approached to see if they would be prepared to take on responsibility for the trails – with a suitable amount of HCPS funds being transferred to make this possible. That has now come to fruition so the Society involvement with the "Lovelace Bridges Trails" is ensured for years to come.

This article could have been a description of the various bridges and the state that they are in. However, when HCPS was wound up, East and West Horsley Parish Councils took the major step of creating the Horsley Heritage Group. In October 2025, they published an excellent item on their website (www.horsleyheritage.info) under the Local History heading. This is well worth reading if you wish to know more about the bridges and see photographs of them.

By coincidence, BBC Radio Surrey – who run a podcast series entitled Secret Surrey – have just recorded an item about the Lovelace Bridges. You may also wish to listen to that interview featuring the co-chairman of Horsley Heritage. The podcast will appear on the Secret Surrey part of the BBC Radio Surrey website in the near future.

Ken Bare



Stoney Dene restored



Lovelace Bridges Visit 2009 (Stoney Dene)

At the time of this 2009 visit, work on Stoney Dene bridge was almost complete. Unfortunately, the lead of the project (Des Hollier, Chairman of HCPS) had died suddenly. Des had been the key person in undertaking the flint and lime-mortar work so that activity had come to a halt.

The Society retained its contacts with the project and, in 2011, Chris Howard, Ken Bare and Peter Hattersley represented the Society when the Guildford Mayor attended an official opening of the bridge. Around this time, a waymarked trail and map was created and the "Lovelace Bridges Trail" came into being.



The Society Walk October 2015 (Dorking Arch)

By the time of the next Society visit, in 2015, the "Lovelace Bridges Trail" was a recognised and well-used route taking in almost everything which remained.

Over time, the combined effects of regular use, forestry operations and — sadly — vandalism and theft took their toll on the route and its information boards. In the early 2020s, a new project was established by HCPS to renovate the trails, add new way-markers and do a relaunch as two separate routes of differing lengths.

Celebrating our *Growing Together Project*

The Growing Together project was developed by the Surrey Hills Society in response to the UK Government's 2019 Landscapes Review, which highlighted unequal access to the countryside as a major national challenge. Thanks to a grant of £144,000 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, the Society delivered *Growing Together: Inclusion and Conservation in the Surrey Hills* between June 2024 and December 2025. The project has now been successfully completed and a full evaluation report can be seen on our website.

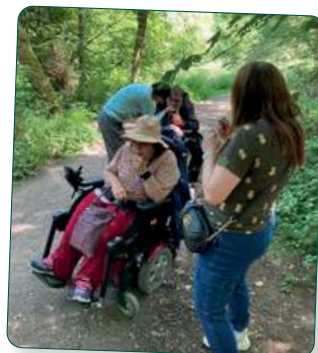
The programme was built around four strands: **Create the Landscape**, offering arts and heritage workshops such as willow weaving and apple pressing; **Explore the Landscape**, developing confidence through guided nature sessions including bird and fungi identification; **Volunteer to Career**, providing practical conservation skills through tree planting, hedge laying and woodland coppicing; and **NatureWorks**, a youth-focused programme blending gardening, wildlife conservation and wellbeing.

1. Create the Landscape



Traditional arts and crafts provided welcoming entry points into nature. Willow weaving, apple pressing and storytelling workshops encouraged creativity while building confidence and wellbeing. Participants connected with heritage skills rooted in the Surrey Hills landscape.

2. Explore the Landscape



Guided walks, bird and fungi identification, forest bathing and outdoor discovery sessions helped people experience the Surrey Hills in new ways. Many developed the confidence to travel independently and feel that the countryside is truly "for them".

3. Volunteer to Career



Practical conservation opportunities enabled participants to plant trees, lay hedges and coppice woodland. These hands-on experiences developed environmental skills and, for some, opened pathways towards volunteering and green careers.

4. NatureWorks (Youth Programme)



Youth-focussed sessions blended gardening, wildlife conservation and wellbeing activities. Young people — including those with additional needs — built resilience, confidence and a lasting connection to nature.

What we achieved

Over the eighteen month period that the project ran we delivered 93 events with 756 participations. Over 1,000 trees were planted, 235 metres of hedge laid and 340 sqm of woodland coppiced.

A key objective was to ensure the Surrey Hills National Landscape became more inclusive and accessible, improving wellbeing, developing new skills and delivering tangible environmental benefits. We had three amazing partners: Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum, Surrey Choices and The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People.

University of Surrey analysis showed 92% felt happier and 85% gained conservation skills — clear evidence that **Growing Together** has helped make the Surrey Hills a place for everyone. A younger cohort with long-term physical or mental health conditions showed particularly positive results. In addition, improvements to site accessibility have already been made, in consultation with our partners, with more in the pipeline.

For further updates look out for the Surrey Hills National Landscapes series of podcasts.

We would like to thank the National Lottery Players for making this project possible.

Susie Turner

Rob Fairbanks, director of Surrey Hills National Landscape, summarises the project's success: *"The positive impact **Growing Together** has had, not just on making under-represented groups realise the Surrey Hills is a place for them, but also on delivering real tangible benefits for nature, cannot be underestimated."*



Planning Notes

An update from the Surrey Hills National Landscape Planning Adviser



Happy Valley nr Coulsdon – part of the possible extension

Boundary Extension Update

Natural England is currently analysing responses to the final public consultation on its proposals to extend the Surrey Hills National Landscape, which closed shortly before Christmas. Subject to Natural England Board approval, the proposals are expected to be submitted to the Secretary of State around June, at which point a formal Boundary Variation Order will be sought.

If confirmed, the designation would increase the size of the Surrey Hills National Landscape by approximately 30 per cent. The timetable for determination by the Secretary of State remains uncertain, but this represents a significant and welcome step forward in strengthening protection for our nationally important landscape.

Haslemere Appeal Decision

In contrast, a recent appeal decision has allowed 111 dwellings within the Surrey Hills National Landscape on the southern edge of Haslemere off Midhurst Road. This follows a complex planning history. An earlier

Inspector had dismissed the appeal, citing harm to the National Landscape. The developer successfully challenged that decision in the High Court on a technical point, leading to a second inquiry.

The second Inspector attached limited weight to the earlier decision and reached a different conclusion on the planning balance. Legal advice to Waverley Borough Council indicated that there was insufficient prospect of success to justify a further High Court challenge.

The Chair of the SHNL Board has written to the Chief Planning Inspector expressing concern about the implications of the conflicting decisions for confidence in the planning and appeal system. A response is awaited. The Society will continue to advocate for clarity, consistency and robust protection of the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

Clive Smith



Scotland Park site off Midhurst Road
Adam Architects

The New Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan

The newly adopted *Surrey Hills National Landscape Management Plan (2025–2030)* provides an ambitious and long-term framework for protecting and enhancing the landscape we all cherish. With a 75-year vision at its heart, the Plan sets out how nature, climate resilience, sustainable farming and community wellbeing must work together to secure a thriving future for the Surrey Hills.

For the Surrey Hills Society, the Plan strongly affirms the direction the Society has been taking in recent years. Its emphasis on nature recovery, habitat connectivity and environmental resilience directly supports our **Surrey Hills National Landscape Ranger Service** programme. The focus on sustainable land management and supporting farmers aligns closely with initiatives such as **Farm for Health**, recognising that working landscapes can deliver both food and wellbeing.

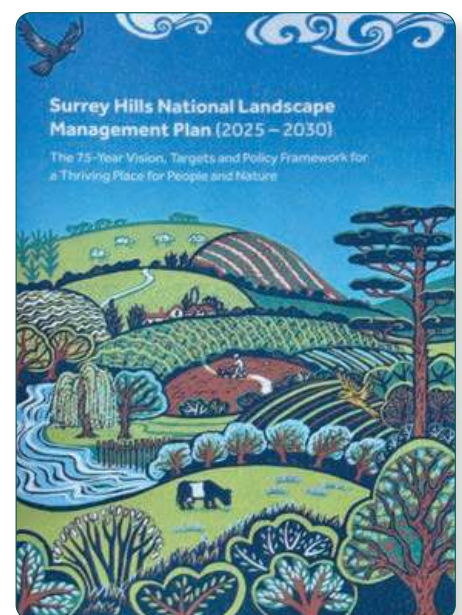
Importantly, the Plan highlights the essential

role of communities and volunteers in delivering meaningful change. This echoes the success of **Growing Together**, which has demonstrated how connecting people with nature strengthens both individual wellbeing and community cohesion. The Management Plan reinforces the principle that access to high-quality natural environments is not a luxury, but a public good.

The Plan also carries statutory weight, guiding planning authorities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape. At a time of increasing development pressure, this provides vital protection for the distinctive character of the Surrey Hills.

As delivery partners to the National Landscape, we look forward to playing our part in turning this vision into action – ensuring that the next chapter for the Surrey Hills is one of resilience, inclusion and long-term stewardship.

Gordon Jackson



Artwork by Diana Croft

Walking Surrey's National Trail more popular than ever!



Outside Winchester Cathedral after walking St Swithun's Way

We are fortunate in Surrey to have 53 miles of National Trail crossing the county along the North Downs Way. From there, walkers can continue for a further 33 miles to Winchester – or begin at the Cathedral and follow the path through Hampshire, Surrey and Kent to Canterbury. Beyond that lie Folkestone or Dover, and onward connections to the great European pilgrimage routes.

Pilgrimage is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors, not just nationally but internationally. Long-distance trails run across Europe, including the Camino de Santiago, the Via Francigena to Rome and others stretching all the way to Jerusalem.

The North Downs Way from Farnham to Canterbury runs right across the Surrey Hills and forms our local link to this wider European network. Several churches along the way – such as St John the Baptist at Puttenham and St Katherine at Merstham – recognise and celebrate this historic connection.

Some may ask why Farnham marks the start. In truth, an even earlier point could be Winchester, as the St Swithun's Way runs from there to Farnham, and Winchester itself has long been regarded as a destination for pilgrims.

This wider vision has now been recognised, and there are plans to link St Swithun's Way formally with the North Downs Way as part of the National Trail. In support of this initiative, proposals are being developed – and funding sought – to establish St Andrew's Church in the centre of Farnham as a pilgrimage hub. A National Lottery Heritage Fund bid has been submitted, including provision for a staffed visitor centre within St Andrew's. Farnham Town Council and the Surrey Hills Society have lent their support, and the outcome is expected soon.

Happy walking.

North Downs Way Ambassadors – Chris Howard & Ken Bare



St Katherine's Church Merstham seen from the NDW

Surrey Hills National Landscape Ranger Service Growing in Strength and Impact

The Surrey Hills Ranger Service continues to go from strength to strength, playing a vital year-round role in conserving, enhancing and improving access across the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

Volunteer-driven at its heart, the service now works with several hundred conservation volunteers, alongside corporate groups and community partners. Ranger-led activities include hedge planting, scrub clearance, habitat management, wildlife surveys and essential footpath maintenance.



Dead Hedging at Wotton Estate

Recent projects have delivered impressive outputs, including more than 1,500 metres of hedge planting and extensive habitat improvements. In fact, 11,000 hedge plants put into the ground by the Ranger Service would create a hedge equivalent to 5.5 times the height of the Shard – a powerful illustration of the scale of practical conservation being delivered on the ground.

Funding from the Surrey Hills National Landscape during 2025/26 has enabled major progress against key nature restoration metrics. It has also secured a dedicated ranger van and expanded our tool capacity.

Three-year funding from the Surrey Hills National Landscape from April 2026 provides welcome certainty, allowing us to plan

Kate and Sam with our new Society van



more ambitiously and strategically. Our services remain in high demand, with new partnerships emerging to support access and conservation priorities across the area.

At the core of this success is our permanent ranger team, Sam Jones and Kate Bannister, whose leadership, expertise and energy ensure that volunteers are supported, partnerships are strengthened and real impact is delivered across the Surrey Hills.

The Ranger Service is increasingly central to landscape-scale delivery. There are so many opportunities for volunteers and we do hope you will sign up to be included in our regular volunteer newsletters by going to the volunteer section of the Society's website.

Gordon Jackson



Protecting the Dormouse

Spring 2026 Events Programme

Below is a brief list of planned events we are running. There is much more detail on our website and a link to a booking form which needs to be filled in whether an event is free or has a cost.

Our free walk every first Sunday of the month still needs to be booked.

| DATE | EVENT DETAIL |
|-------------------------|--|
| Sun 12 April (am) | Free Sunday Walk – Limpsfield Common A sociable guided walk across Limpsfield Common and surrounding countryside exploring heathland, woodland and village paths. |
| Thurs 16 April (am) | Chilworth Gunpowder Mills Visit (with optional lunch) Guided tour of the historic Chilworth Gunpowder Mills ruins followed by optional lunch at The Percy Arms |
| Sat 25 April (am) | Bluebell & Woodland Photography Walk – Chantry Woods Guided walk with photography tips from Bookham Camera Club, ending with views across the Surrey Hills. Ideal for beginners to intermediate users with smartphones or more advanced cameras. |
| Tues 28 April (all day) | Exclusive Private Visit – Royal Holloway, Egham A rare private visit to Royal Holloway's spectacular Victorian campus and its remarkable Gertrude Jekyll garden, believed to be the most complete surviving example of her work with flowing "colour drifts." Includes a guided tour, lunch, and a special talk on the famous Picture Gallery. |
| Sat 2 May (all day) | Visit Three Churches in Albury with Tea and Cakes A guided visit to three of Surrey's historic parish churches with the Surrey Churches Preservation Trust with tea and cake along the way. |
| Sat 3 May (am) | Free Sunday Walk – Explore The Mole Valley Cut A guided walk exploring Fetcham Downs and Norbury Park |
| Thurs 14 May (am) | Basingstoke Canal Boat Trip and Cream Tea Boat trip on the historic Basingstoke Canal aboard the Canal Centre's 12-seater boat <i>Rosebud</i> with opportunities to enjoy the canal environment and towpath, followed by cream tea. |
| Fri 22 May (am/pm) | Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Tour Guided visit to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst exploring the traditions and history of this prestigious training college. |
| Wed 3 June (all day) | Coverwood Farm & Lakes – President's Day Visit to the beautiful Coverwood estate in the Surrey Hills including its lakes and surrounding countryside. Meet the farmer, Tim Metson and enjoy a lunch with farm produce and a tour around the gardens and lakes. |
| Sun 7 June (am) | Free Sunday Walk – Explore the River Wey Guided walk exploring the River Wey near Ripley |
| Wed 17 June (am) | The Manor House Garden, Upton Grey Return visit to the renowned Gertrude Jekyll garden at the Manor House, Upton Grey. |
| Fri 26 June (am/pm) | Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Tour (Third Visit) Additional visit following earlier tours in February and May due to strong demand. |
| Sun 5 July (am) | Free Sunday Walk – Explore Thursley National Nature Reserve Walk across the famous boardwalk exploring Thursley's rare heathland habitat. |
| Thurs 9 July (am/pm) | Wine tasting and lunch at Albury Vineyard Meet the Vineyard manger and enjoy a wine tasting with cheese and charcuterie followed by optional walk through the vineyard and their wildlife walk. |

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION visit our website **OR EMAIL:** info@surreyhillssociety.org
OR PHONE: 07530 949302 and leave a message



www.surreyhillssociety.org

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