

First Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Hills Society held on Saturday 13 June 2009 at Warren Farm Barns, Headley Lane, Mickleham, Dorking RH5 6DJ

MINUTES

The Chairman, Neil Maltby, opened the meeting and welcomed approximately 50 members to the first AGM of the Society. He thanked the National Trust for hosting the meeting, explaining that Warren Farm Barns provided accommodation for the Trust, the Surrey Hills AONB Board and the Society. Neil introduced Richard Pitts, Membership Secretary and minute taker, and his two fellow existing Trustees, Terry Edwards and Rose Younger.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from 34 members. A further two were mentioned at the meeting.

2. Chairman's Report

The Chairman gave a short overview of the work of the Society in the past year and its plans for the future. The annual report, including reports from the Chairs of the various sub-committees, was circulated at the meeting. Neil said that founding the Society had been both exciting and demanding and he paid tribute to all the help provided by the Surrey Hills AONB Board and its chairman, Cllr Michael Sydney. He also thanked members of the Management Committee and others who had given their time for the Society. The Society's finances were healthy and the Society was now aiming to appoint a part-time paid administrator.

Neil mentioned some of the Society's past and future events and the projects that it would like to take forward. These included: arrangements and resources to attend a number of shows through the year; production of slides for presentations; a country fair this autumn; a calendar for 2011; mountain bike trails; Parish audio guides; advice on managing small woodlands; and a North Downs trail.

The Society had recently had to consider its approach to planning applications. It was not presently resourced to properly research planning applications, although this may change in the future. However, it had been agreed that the Society should make sure that Members were aware of the main planning applications of relevance, how to express their views and what other bodies had taken a view. The Society would also liaise closely with the recently appointed planning adviser to the Surrey Hills AONB Board. Another challenging area was off-road vehicular access in the Surrey Hills (eg four-wheel drive vehicles, scrambler and trail bikes) where the Surrey Hills AONB Board was taking a lead.

In conclusion, Neil felt that the Society had got off to a fantastic start. It needed to continue to grow its membership, maintain good communications, improve its website and strengthen its administrative arrangements.

3. Report of the Trustees and Unaudited Financial Statements for the Period 4 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

The Report of the Trustees and the Unaudited Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2009 had been circulated in advance and posted on the Society's website. However, some members had been unable to access this material from the email that they had been sent. The Chairman apologised for these difficulties and further copies were circulated at the meeting.

Terry Edwards presented the Report, which had been prepared by his firm of chartered accountants, Bullimores. Terry said that during the year the Society had become a company limited by guarantee and attained charitable status. More recently the Society had registered with HM Revenue & Customs to enable it to claim tax back on Gift Aid donations. There were no questions about the Report and Financial Statements. Adoption of these was proposed by Brian Reader, seconded by Peter Hattersley and agreed.

4. Confirmation of the Appointment of the Independent Examiner for 2008/9

Terry said that the independent examiner for 2008/9 had been Margaret Brett, a fellow partner at Bullimores, who in his view had done a very thorough job. Confirmation of Margaret Brett as Independent Examiner for 2008/9 was proposed by Jean Pearson, seconded by Gail Sperrin and agreed.

5. Appointment of Auditors/External Scrutineers for 2009/10 and Authorisation of Trustees to Fix Their Remuneration

The appointment of Margaret Brett as auditor and / or external scrutineer for 2009/10 and authorisation for the Trustees to fix her remuneration was proposed by Andy Tanner, seconded by Nigel Davenport and agreed.

6. Appointment of Trustees

The Chairman referred to the list of eight proposed trustees and associated short CVs that were circulated at the meeting. He said that every one of these individuals had done a huge amount for the Society over the last year. The appointment of all eight trustees was proposed by Brian Reader, seconded by Tony Pearson and agreed.

7. Any Other Business

Several members suggested schools as possible venues for a country fair in the autumn. The Chairman said that if anyone had suggestions for the venue they should contact the Society. It was suggested that the Surrey Photographic Association should be included in plans for a competition to choose the illustrations for a 2011 Surrey Hills calendar. The Chairman thanked members for attending the AGM. After the formal business there was a talk by Rob Fairbanks, AONB Director and Society member, about the Surrey Hills AONB Board. This was followed by a buffet lunch and a walk to Headley Heath and back, arranged by the National Trust (with thanks to Wardens Mark Dawson and Sue Harris).

Surrey Hills Society
June 2009