

DRAFT MINUTES – for confirmation at the 2015 AGM
Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Hills Society
2.30 pm Saturday, 22 November 2014
at Leatherhead Institute, 67 High Street, Leatherhead KT22 8AH

1. **Welcome** – The President, Neil Maltby, welcomed members and thanked them for their continuing support. He reminded us about the establishment and the history of the Society which now has successfully been working for six years. He shared with us the most important reasons for having a Surrey Hills Society: a membership society run by members for members, to provide PR for the Surrey Hills, to organise walks, talks and social events, to provide opportunities for volunteers to help look after the Surrey Hills and liaising with other societies with interests or ownership in the Surrey Hills. He thanked the Trustees and Management Committee for their enthusiasm and commitment, particularly the Chairman, Christine Howard, who has received the Point of Light reward from the Prime Minister David Cameron for all her hard work. Thus our Society has gained national recognition.
2. **Apologies for Absence** – Diane Cooper, Simon Whalley, Timothy and Linda Williams, Ian Oxley-Crawford, Sheila Jones, Deborah Mason, Michael More Molyneux, Rob Tong, Tim Harrold (CPRE), Cllr Helyn Clack, Adrian Thompson, James and Nicola Dubois, Henry and Sue Willis, Jill West, Marion Guess, Denis and Sue Holmes, Marion Stocker and Deborah Maltby.
3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 2 November 2013** – The Minutes were agreed by all at the meeting as a true record, signed by the Chairman and filed. No matters arose.
Peter Hattersley proposed and Terry Driscoll seconded and it was approved unanimously.
4. **Chairman's Report** – a copy of the full text of the Chairman's Report is attached.
Surrey Hills Trust – The President explained the role of the Surrey Hills Trust Fund, launched last year, as the fourth leg of the Surrey Hills Family. The Trust is outside the scope of official government influence and works with local communities, landowners and partner organisations to support projects and activities. It's main focus at the moment is to raise money, to create a lasting endowment fund to provide an on-going income for the work on the AONB but also, in the short term, to participate in a project to open view points in the Surrey Hills and install benches to admire those views. He called for possible donors and pointed out that any help would be highly appreciated.
5. **Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014** – Copies of the accounts were available at the meeting and had been published on the website. Jo Tollow (Finance Director) highlighted key information in the Report. There were no questions.
6. **To confirm the appointment of Margaret Brett, a Partner of Bullimores Accountants as the independent financial examiner for 2014/15 and to authorise Trustees to fix remuneration.**
The Chairman expressed thanks and appreciation to Margaret Brett of Bullimores for examining the accounts for the year to March 2014. The meeting unanimously agreed that Margaret Brett should be appointed independent financial examiner for the year to March 2015; she had again waived remuneration.
June Robinson proposed and Ken Bare 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 presented the nominees en bloc; the meeting agreed the appointments nem com.
Ken Bare, Paul Bettinson, Stella Cantor, Sarah Jane Chimvawandira, Alessandra Holly, Christine Howard (Chairman) and Rob Tong will continue as Trustees.
Jo Tollow was standing down and Paul Bettinson is replacing her as Finance Director.

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 a Trustee in the future as we are always looking for new volunteers.

8. **Any other business** – Questions from the Membership:

Jean Pearson asked for a letter of support from the Society for Hope Springs project. The chairman told that it had already been written, following approval at our last Trustee meeting.

Peter Hattersley asked for a summary of the new Management Plan of the Surrey Hills in our next newsletter. Chris Howard replied that the plan can be requested from the Society's office via mail or it can shortly be seen on our website. P. Hattersley also enquired about the possible extension of the boundaries of the Areas of Great National Landscape Value (AGLV). The chairman of the Surrey Hills Board, Cllr David Wright replied that the revision needs to be done quickly and is in the program for the next 18 months.

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. Neil Maltby and Cllr David Wright reassured members about the important role of the Board in Planning. 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.

The meeting closed with thanks to the Leatherhead Institute and June Robinson for hosting the meeting. The Chairman highlighted the participation of our Society at a special presentation of Surrey at Westminster to the MPs, including the Prime Minister.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.

Afterwards members enjoyed a cream tea and Ken Bare provided some entertainment with a quiz identifying "Places and activities in the Surrey Hills".



Surrey Hills Society Chairman's report for AGM - November 2014.

Welcome to our 6th AGM and thank you to all of you for coming and for your continued support of this important charity. Last year I stood before you and we celebrated the fact that we were one of the charities to survive the deepest recession since the 1930s. Today I stand before you to report that the last year has been incredibly challenging, and required a great deal of hard work from my dedicated Trustees and Management Team.

Under the guidance of Paul Bettinson, our 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 both legal, accountable and focussed.

In 2014, we have done a lot of questioning and challenging starting with an Away Day in January. Our first business plan to get us through the early years was completed and we needed to review where we had got to and where we want to aspire to get to in the future. This has meant an incredible amount of late night meetings from my Trustees, after they had already done a full day's work in their day jobs. I (and we), I know, 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.

I am also, incredibly grateful to our operational Management Team. They are the nicest team of people I have ever worked with and no matter what challenge is thrown at them, they manage to sort it out among themselves and deliver what is required.

One of the pleasures of 2014 was welcoming our new sponsor on board. Sall Baring of Barings Solicitors in Godalming has been the most amazing sponsor we have ever had, because, not only does her and her husband's law firm sponsor our newsletter, but she also has rolled up her sleeves and actually does something!!!- including the amazing afternoon tea we will enjoy later. But what I like most about Sall is she is just great fun to have around, makes me laugh and I just love her enthusiasm for the Surrey Hills. The other big highlight for me this year was meeting Marika Elzinga. Marika 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. Wanting to get involved in her new county, Marika came across the Surrey Hills Society and joined our Communications Team as a volunteer. Her new found enthusiasm for the Surrey Hills was incredibly infectious and she was great fun to work with. Then in April, when we announced, following the retirement of June Robinson, our Administrator, that, having re-structured the role, we were advertising for a new co-ordinator for the Surrey Hills Society, she applied for the post and against strong competition won over the interview panel to become our second paid officer for the Society. Marika, I am so delighted to be working with you. You are already making a huge difference and we are all enjoying working with you.

Which takes me to my next theme about working with us.....

I need more volunteers to grow the Society! It can be as little or as much as you want to do. I need someone (or two or three) who have tow bars. We just need people who are prepared on one or two days a year to get up early and drive our trailer to somewhere in Surrey to promote our lovely Surrey Hills. Or, if you like talking to people, then perhaps you would consider volunteering for our show team and joining us at one or two of our amazing country shows.

I am also looking for someone prepared to be involved on a more regular basis on our Management Committee managing any funding projects that we may be lucky to secure in the future. Rob Fairbanks, who is here today, is the Director from the Surrey Hills Board, the statutory body charged with managing the Surrey Hills. He has been incredibly supportive of our growing charity and is keen to see us playing a more significant role in the projects in the Surrey Hills. We have played a very supportive role in the development of the Deepdene, Hope Springs Eternal project and the Tillingbourne Valley HLF funding bid which we, although we failed to achieve the major funding pot, are going back with a smaller more focussed project that we hope might be more successful. Again, I would just like to give my thanks to Rob Fairbanks, one of the most hard-working officers I have ever met who has a real passion for the Surrey Hills and has managed to attract a loyal following of supporters, including me!

Our Events team, has continued to flourish. We now have more events than ever, and if you have a great idea for an event, do talk to me about it. You don't have to be on the Committee to run an event. It is at this point I need to thank our long serving Chairman of Events Committee, Graham Butler. Graham was a founder member of the SHAONB. He is a senior member of the Rambler's Association and his knowledge of the Surrey Hills Rights of Way is truly amazing. I am incredibly grateful for the huge contribution Graham has made to the beginnings of this important charitable trust. Now, Graham's efforts as a former Trustee of the Society have already been recognised but I just wanted to thank him again for all his efforts and note that, having moved away from the county, he is standing down as Chairman of the Events Committee.

I would especially like to thank the National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust 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 from NT for their support and collaborative working with us. Together we make the Surrey Hills stronger.

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

In 2014 we also said we would be launching a new 20s-40s group for the SHS. Well actually, it started as an 18-30s group, but that was before I discovered that 18 year olds don't talk to 21 year olds, or before I knew that 9.30am is way too early to start a walk or that many of these young people have two jobs and are not available on Saturdays. I also thought that they all responded to Facebook. Well yes, they do respond to Facebook but that doesn't actually mean they will turn up! We have discovered that personal, face to face organic growth is the best way to grow our young membership. I am incredibly grateful to Pete Lambert, the lead on the 20s-40s group. He is young, enthusiastic and loves the Surrey Hills. Thank you for all you do for the Surrey Hills and I wish all the best for the group in 2015.

We also set up a working group to explore the potential of more family orientated events. I am incredibly grateful to Peter Arnold and Jo Tollow for taking the lead on this project – as well as Aly Holly from the NT for her assistance. Our first event was a visit to Bocketts Farm at Easter time and we had a fantastic time, saw twin lambs being born, decorated Easter eggs and had special tractor rides and petting sessions with the animals. However, we also discovered that the National Trust and SWT do a lot of really excellent family events and as the SHS never wants to compete with other organisations working in the Surrey Hills, we have agreed to do a lot more signposting of NT and SWT events, as well as doing a couple of events ourselves, like the Bocketts Farm event and the family Christmas decoration making which we are holding on 13th December.

I am extremely grateful to my Finance Committee, who as you can see from their CVs on the website, have impressive commercial experience to guide us safely through our development and keep us legal, corporate and focused on creating an effective charity that supports and promotes the Surrey Hills AONB and potentially in the future, a major funder of the AONB unit as a whole.

I would also like to thank the membership team, under the leadership of Stella Cantor. They all meet every Wednesday at Stella's house and without this group supporting our membership we would cease to function, so thank you for all you do. I would especially like to thank Lucy Whitrow, who has had to stand down at the moment due to health reasons. She is sadly missed and her efforts have been very much appreciated. By the way, if you are free on a Wednesday, Stella Cantor, our membership secretary, would like to talk to you.

I must also thank Jeff Holliday, who is always assisting me in the background at every event or meeting. As an example, today he is at the back quietly assisting with the preparation of your afternoon tea.

Last year, I told you about the development of the Surrey Hills Enterprises and our objective to commercialise the Surrey Hills brand. Well, after many meetings with Surrey County Council, we can now announce the successful launch of the Surrey Hills brand. The SHE have run an incredibly successful, now National Wood Fuel Conference in October at Denbies, to a sell out audience. The SHS also provided a significant proportion of the volunteer force for the Surrey Hills Wood Fair held in the first weekend in October. This is a wonderful manifestation of what makes the Surrey Hills special. It is an amazing country event which is fantastic for children and actually everyone to get down and get grubby in the woods.

We are incredibly lucky to have Ken Bare who has agreed to be both a Trustee of SHS and the new SHEnterprise, "not for profit" social enterprise company. He was the lead project manager on the Surrey Hills Wood Fair and can I just say it is the most enjoyable and authentic country fair I have ever been to. Thank you Ken for all you do for the Surrey Hills. He is one of the lynch pins of our organisations.

Ken is also the lead on our shows team and one of his stalwart volunteers is Peter Hattersley. He is a founder member who has donated hours and hours of his time to the Society. I decided it was time we recognised some of the efforts of our volunteers outside of the official positions and I wanted to personally thank Peter Hattersley for all his support over the years. He has been a major fund raiser for the Society and a regular at all our

shows and events. I would also like to thank Jean, his wife for her help as well. I just wish I could clone them both!

We have continued to develop our partnership with Surrey Life magazine. Ken Bare for the second year running has been asked to judge the Surrey life Food and Drink Awards which champions local food producers and pubs, cafes and restaurants that support local producers.

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 will see the continuing emergence of local protest groups like the Guildford Greenbelt Guardians who will challenge the traditional political parties at the elections in May.

I received many emails and letters of concern about this issue. I am incredibly grateful to our Planning Consultant 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. I was also extremely grateful to him and to Rob Fairbanks, Tim Harrold from CPRE and Cllr Mike Band, the Deputy Leader of Waverley BC, who agreed to be guest speakers at a planning evening we held back in March, attended by many of our Parish Councils and interested members - one of which is now the Leader of the Greenbelt Guardians Group in Guildford.

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. Please continue to write to your MPs with your thoughts on this issue.

Another issue that has filled my inbox this year is cycling in the Surrey Hills. This is not just a Surrey Hills issue, it is not even just a Surrey issue or even a National issue....it is a world-wide phenomenon. However, due to the Olympics and also our proximity to London, cycling in the Surrey Hills has become a real point of conflict. It was discussed and agreed only this week at the Surrey Hills Annual Partnership Meeting that we would look at a working party for on-road cycling too. To follow the valuable work that has been done with the mountain bikers.

However, what I have been telling people is that they need to write to their MPs about this issue because at the moment it is not seen as a priority and yet I believe we will only be able to ultimately solve this issue by legislation.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I announce the standing down of our Finance Director, Jo Tollow. I know for a fact, that we would not be where we are today without the valuable guidance and sheer hard work that Jo has given the Society. She has been a key driver in the development of a lot of the behind the scenes processes that keep our organisation functioning. She was the lead volunteer on the project to access funding for the gift pack project - now fully operational and you can buy your gift pack from Ken before you leave!...A great Xmas gift! She has also kept a "steady ship" with our finances and worked tirelessly.

I am pleased to say she has agreed not to leave us all together and will stay on as a member. I know she has said she is looking forward to enjoying all the events without any responsibility.

Jo has also laid down real challenges to the Society, like flexing our muscles and being 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 £1000 to donate the Leith Hill Appeal for the water through and landscaping project, which will celebrate its 250th birthday next year.

I am incredibly grateful to Diane Cooper and her two sons who courageously rode for us in the Ride London event in the summer. Thank you to all of you who sponsored these guys

and a special thank you to the long distance ramblers who donated £250.00 to the cause via the cycle race sponsorship.

On another positive note, I would like to ask our President, Neil Maltby, to update you about another new member to our SHAONB family, the newly formed Surrey Hills Trust. We held the official launch in May.

Neil Maltby: [The aim of the Surrey Hills Landscape Fund is to conserve and enhance the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its local communities by supporting the work of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Surrey Hills Board develops and promotes the AONB Management Plan and works with local communities, landowners and partner organizations for the benefit of residents, workers and visitors to the Surrey Hills. The Funds generated each year will be used to support projects, programs and activities identified in the Management Plan and will work closely with Surrey Hills Society and Surrey Hills Enterprises to support each other's work. The Trust was launched in May, with support from Surrey Hills Society members and we have currently raised £13,000 towards the project. We are very grateful for the support of the Community Foundation for Surrey, our partner organization that is supporting us with this project].

One of my duties today is to present to you the Trustees Report and Financial Statement for the period of 1st April 2013 to 31 March 2014. 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 Leatherhead Institute who are kindly hosting us today and especially to June Robinson who is still such a supportive member of our Society.

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 2015.

I have one final challenge for you all in 2015. The Trustees have set some very tough membership targets for 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?

Chris Howard, Chairman of the Surrey Hills Society, 22nd November 2014.