

Surrey Hills Management Plan draft consultation Response from Surrey Nature Partnership

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Postcards from the Future campaign and Shaping the Future survey in 2024. We received over 200 postcards and 1,000 survey results!

By using these submissions and working with experts in the field, we have now drafted our Surrey Hills Management Plan 2025 - 2030. This Management Plan looks beyond the next five or ten years and sets out a long-term vision for the Surrey Hills as a thriving National Landscape for the next century.

We are now asking for your feedback on this current draft.

Our Management Plan has been divided into 5 Parts. You can download each Part from our website below. [Or visit the website here.](#)

This consultation closes on Friday 6 June.

Please send this document to info@surreyhills.org

1. Your name

Lisa Creaye-Griffin

2. Are you responding as an individual, group or organisation?

I am responding as the Director of Surrey Nature Partnership.

Surrey Nature Partnership (SyNP) was established in 2012 as one of over 40 county nature partnerships. Our vision is to see a healthy natural environment supporting economic and social benefits throughout.

Our role is as an advocate for nature recovery and the understanding of nature throughout the county. Our work includes promoting greenspace and the need for nature connectivity for wildlife and the health and wellbeing of people. This includes running the Biodiversity Working Group, Surrey Local Sites Partnership and the Surrey Parks and Countryside Forum and running the annual Biodiversity and Planning Conference in Surrey.

Part 1. The Introduction to National Landscapes

This sets the scene regarding the 1949 Act, the National Landscape designation, the status of the Management Plan and the Core Principles at the heart of securing the long-term vision.

Do you have any comments to share on Part 1. The Introduction to National Landscapes?

- I think the duty on responsible authorities under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 needs to be emphasised more. This should then have a greater influence on design guides and planning, throughout the Surrey Hills.

3. Part 2. The Surrey Hills National Landscape.

This includes the Statement of Significance as to why the Surrey Hills is designated as a National Landscape, the pressures and threats, and the outstanding qualities that need to be conserved and enhanced.

Do you have any comments to share on Part 2. The Surrey Hills National Landscape?

- Generally, we agree with the points made about why the area was designated and the pressures and threats.
- As referenced in this section, roads and railways have dissected the Surrey Hills and the landscape needs to be managed to soften their appearance and reduce pollution as much as possible. The tree canopy is important in helping to reduce the impact of roads and railways on the landscape. Location of trees and hedges is therefore important in future development.

4. Part 3. The 75-year Vision

This includes the vision statement for 2100 for Nature, People and Climate arising out of the Postcard from the Future engagement process. It includes an appraisal of the past, present and future to set out the Targets for each theme and the proposed Strategic Priorities that need to be delivered over the next 75 years.

Do you have any comments to share on Part 3. The 75-year Vision?

- We agree with the three broad statements in the vision.
- The reference to the postcards on page 2 section 1.6 was repeated from page 14 of part 1, I don't think the repetition was needed although reference to the posts cards and Julian Glover is relevant, this could be done by referring to the earlier reference.
- It's hard to argue with any of the core principles outlined. We need to think bigger and ensure that sites of nature conservation importance and all green sites are joined up. People also need access to sites near to their homes to avoid excessive travelling to open spaces. Travelling for recreation can't be stopped but providing better sites close to homes will reduce the need to travel so much and level up access to green space for health and wellbeing.

- Good to see reference to the Sandford principle as nature can't always move to another spot if it is isolated and we need to protect and conserve our best sites.
- The Nature Recovery Strategy for the Surrey Hills, sets out a series of species that are relatively easy to spot and forms the indicator species for the habitats in the Surrey Hills, it would be useful to see more promotion of this more generally once the County LNRS has been completed, this will allow us to explain to the public how they fit together.
- Building resilience is vital for all aspects of nature, however water management is one of the most important areas to address. It is scarce for parts of the year in Surrey and can be too abundant at other times. We also need to ensure all development is designed to cope with water abundance and scarcity, providing long term storage and slowing the flow of flood water. Better attention to natural ways of cleaning water will also help to reduce costs and benefit nature. Water management in its widest sense is now one of the most important aspects of land management in Surrey.
- The use of Nature based Solutions will help to build the importance of nature in solving problems and build understanding of how important it is to us.
- As the plan says the main issue with woodland in the Surrey Hills and wider Surrey, is the lack of management in places. A focused campaign with the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust and other relevant partners which really pushes the need to manage woodland to get the best out of it and to manage squirrels and deer would help considerably.
- The targets look possible, and they are sensible, they will need to be cross referenced with those of other organisations to ensure they stay realistic.

Hedgerows are important for linking those woodland areas for wildlife, where possible they should be preferred over fences.

All your targets require partners to be able to achieve them, so the focus must be on partnership working across the public and private sector.

Heathland and Chalk grassland are both very important in Surrey and across the south-east but are not classed as priority habitat, we need to work together to ensure they are accepted as priority habitats. Fortunately, many of them are already nationally and internationally designated but some areas are not and run the risk of being destroyed. Again, the need to work on connecting any isolated pieces of habitat is important.

Wetland restoration and creating wetlands

Water based priorities

We agree with these and wonder how involved the SHNL is in the Catchment Management Partnerships, the two main ones in the county would be good places to align your vision and targets with.

In Safeguarding water courses, it is important to raise the profile of chalk streams which are a rare habitat that also provides water for the public via aquifers. However, they are being threatened by a lack of consideration for them when development is planned and built. For Example, many in the Bookham area are winterbournes, where local knowledge is important. Ignoring them has led to a need to retro fit solutions to protect buildings and maintain the water quality.

The connectivity of urban greenspaces is key to getting people out and about and interacting with nature on their doorstep, so we will continue to stress this throughout our response.

Community Engagement/Volunteer Programmes and Educational campaigns are areas where the vision will need to align with other partners to ensure a co-ordinated way forward.

There are many volunteer groups across Surrey and different organisations managing them. Collaboration across these groups can help to pass on skills and ensure the continuity of them in the future.

Arts and Heritage-the arts projects have been successful in bringing the art and culture of the area to a new audience and should be developed further.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation This is an area that can be developed with key partners and is now part of the business plans of virtually all companies/organisations and landowners. This gives us all an opportunity for new and innovative funding sources plus a way to get new partners and links by showing how they can help conserve and enhance the Surrey Hills and achieve their climate plan.

Part 4. The Policy Framework for 2025 – 2030.

This sets out the policy objectives that will guide Responsible Bodies on their statutory duty, under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, to further the purpose of the designation.

The Policy Framework includes:

- Arts and Cultural Heritage
- Biodiversity and Water Resources
- Economy, Tourism and Community Development
- Farming
- Planning
- Recreation, Health and Wellbeing
- Transport
- Woodlands, Hedgerows and Veteran Trees

Please share any comments you have on the Policy Framework below. You do not need to respond to every policy area.

Biodiversity and water resources

The key areas for us are nature recovery and connectivity and raising awareness of the importance of nature to all of us. Closely linked to the latter is ensuring everyone has a better understanding of land management, from why woodland and trees need to be managed for their health and the general biodiversity of the woods and forests, to the management of heathland and grassland to promote a unique biodiversity.

I would therefore put ‘helping to raise awareness of the importance of nature’ in this policy aim, to emphasise the need to encourage a wider understanding of land management and biodiversity. It is mentioned in B3 but should be included up front. The link between people understanding the management of land and habitats and their support for what is being done is key to ensuring we get the connectivity we want from gardens, private estates and farms to public open space across the National Landscape and out into the rest of Surrey.

Economy Tourism and Community Development

Hopefully without stating the obvious the health of nature and people is linked inextricably to the success of many of the management plan’s policies and targets. Nature needs to be healthy and connected across the county to provide attractive areas for tourists, allow people to get direct access to nature near their homes for health and wellbeing, and provide a landscape and locations for businesses and homes.

Farming

The role of SHNL is very important in advising landowners and currently providing grants through FiPL. This role should be enhanced where possible, with the help of partners such as the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and National Farmers Union (NFU), National Trust (NT), Forestry Commission (FC) and Woodland Trust (WT) to develop a coherent advice service for farmers, foresters and landowners.

Planning

This is one of the main areas where we all need support from the planning depts across the County. The adoption of 20% Biodiversity Net gain has been a small win in a few authorities so far but it is essential that we see this across all of them. Working together to achieve this is essential. Having a Green Infrastructure strategy that looks at the links to settlements and within settlements is important to ensuring this is taken into account in the assessment of every planning application.

The link to the LNRS is also important as a considerable amount of work has gone into it and Government are not showing signs of supporting nature as much as we had hoped.

We totally agree that design is important and should include nature friendly elements such as swift bricks, nest boxes, permeable surfaces for drainage and permeable boundaries where practicable to allow wildlife to travel through. This must apply to new build and conversions.

P6 there is a need to work with farmers and their organisations to assess the likely changes to farming and consider in advance the sort of development/changes that could occur and how they could be mitigated in the landscape. This would need some forward planning but could help with negotiations on future changes.

The impact of traffic from developments in and outside the area will need to be considered as early as possible. The Surrey Hills, like the rest of Surrey is crossed by many roads including major roads and the impact of traffic already causes air, soil, water, sound and light pollution in places and certainly can destroy the character of an area.

Recreation Health and Wellbeing

This is an area that the Surrey Nature Partnership are keen on seeing promoted in relation to nature and greenspace. We support all your policies and encourage you to work with us and other partners to develop campaigns and promote them.

We particularly support R6 and the impact of dogs on farming, nature, and would add 'other people'. It has been shown that some people are deterred from going to some recreational sites because of the number of dogs.

At R7 we would add a bit on the interaction between walkers and cyclists, we need to ensure that both are aware that others use the routes and to behave appropriately. Shared routes are likely to become more common in the drive to get people out and about using green forms of travel.

Transport

Agree with all the policies but would add a need to ensure that all new roads and road improvements account for the impact of vehicles as polluters on the land around them.

Also agree that signage should be used to promote the character and sense of place, information that people have arrived at or are driving through somewhere that is beautiful and different.

Woodland

We agree with all the policies in this section and are happy to support them wherever possible. Particularly on raising the awareness of the public and seeking ways to make woodlands generate an income for their products and for activities in the woods.

As a very wooded county with a concentration of trees in the Surrey Hills, management is a key need and must be interpreted to the public, so they become used to seeing trees being

felled, coppiced, pollarded and understand why it is necessary. It is too common in Surrey for tree cutting to be associated with development and to cause considerable public discontent and suspicion. Any chance to have open days/events where tree management is demonstrated is important. The spread of disease and pests and how they come into the country and move around the country is also something that needs to be explained.

Part 5. The Delivery Strategy

This includes guidance to Responsible Bodies, a Surrey Hills Charter for wider society, and the role of the Surrey Hills Board, Strategy Groups, Partnership, the Brand Strategy and the monitoring of the targets.

Do you have any comments to share on Part 5. The Delivery Strategy?

I would reiterate the need to make the public more aware of duty under s245 of the **Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LUR Act 2023)** so they can hold Responsible bodies to account.

The Surrey Hills Charter covers a good range of actions and needs to be made widely available with an invitation to get involved or sign up to it. As stated, the success of the plan depends on the buy-in of wider society. They can action things on the ground and put pressure on Responsible bodies to carry out their duty.

The brand values are another area that need so be publicised more to build greater awareness.

5. Are there any organisations you think should be part of a new Surrey Hills Partnership that will be responsible for delivering the Management Plan?

It is unclear who the advocates are for nature, people and place and climate, I can guess but it would be useful to know which organisations are involved already. Is it one organisation that represents each of these areas?

I agree with the concept of using the sector advocates to lead task groups, we would be happy to get involved in these where relevant.

Final comments This is a good coverage of all the areas that make up the Surrey Hills and will help it to achieve the Vision, you will have considerable support for it but it will need a lot of partners to ensure it happens and very likely to lobby Government to get the right legislation in place. We would be happy to help lobbying where we can and in promoting the plan.

March – June 2025

Finally, the next draft when ready, needs to be proofread to remove extra words and to ensure it is UK English spelling, it currently has several American spellings of words in it.