Surrey Nature Partnership
Healthy Environment | Healthy People | Healthy Economy

Meeting Minutes - Approved

Surrey Nature Partnership - Board Meeting

Friday 24th April 2026 @10am

Teaching Block Room 23, University of Surrey - Hybrid

Members of the Board

Name	Initial	Role	Organisation	Present
Richard Murphy **(Chair)**	RM	Professor Emeritus	University of Surrey	P
Alastair Roberts	AR	Farm Manager	Knightwood Trust Farms	P
Alistair Hill	AH	Public Health Consultant	Surrey County Council	Online
Carolyn McKenzie	CM	Director of Environment and Planning	Surrey County Council	P
Hugh Broom	HB	Beef Farmer & East Regional Livestock Chair	Dorking NFU	P
Kate Bigwood	KB	Farmer and Osteopath	The Big Wood Estate	P
Mark Lebus	ML	CEO	LC Energy Ltd	Online
Matthew Woodcock	MW	Partnerships & Expertise Manager	Forestry Commission	P
Paul Davy	PD	Catchment Coordinator	Environment Agency	A
Rob Fairbanks	RF	Director	Surrey Hills National Landscape (AONB)	P
Stephen Rudd	SR	Principal Manager, Thames Solent	Natural England	P
Theo Bird	TB	Partnerships Manager	Intelligent Health UK	P
Valentine Seymour	VS	BSc programme director, Director of Employability, Lecturer	University of Surrey	P
Yendle Barwise	YB	Sustainability and Natural Capital Lead	West Horsley Place Trust	P
Zoe Channon	ZC	Director of Nature Solutions and Partnerships	Surrey Wildlife Trust	P
Officers				
Adam Brown	AB	Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy Lead	Surrey County Council	P
Lisa Creaye-Griffin	LCG	Director	Surrey Nature Partnership	P
Mike Waite	MW	Director of Research & Monitoring	Surrey Wildlife Trust	P
Vivienne Greenough	VG	Natural Environment Strategic Lead	Surrey County Council	Mat Leave
Sophie Holt	SH	Administrative Officer, Surrey Nature Partnership		P

P – Present, A – Apologies, N – No Contact

Agenda		Discussion	Actions Owner
1. Welcome and Apologies		Meeting started 10:00 Apologies: Paul Davy (PD) – Catchment Coordinator, Environment Agency Meeting transcribed via Teams. The Chair, Richard Murphy (RM), opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first meeting of the expanded Board. RM thanked members for attending the recent induction training. No fire alarms were expected; emergency and welfare arrangements were briefly outlined.	
2. New Board Member Introduction		Board members and officers introduced themselves, outlining their roles and interests. Emphasis was placed on: • Forestry, farming, public health, renewable energy, higher education, planning and policy, catchment management, biodiversity monitoring, and nature finance. • The breadth of expertise across the expanded Board and the opportunity this presents for cross-sector collaboration.	
3. Previous meeting minutes		**Minutes of the Meeting held 30th January 2026** • The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. **Matters Arising** • No outstanding actions were identified. **Decision: Minutes approved.**	
4. Director update	Lisa Creaye-Griffin – Director	LCG provided an overview of current activity, highlighting: • Increased convening activity across working groups. • Ongoing work to support delivery of the Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). • The Partnership's role in maintaining relationships, coordinating information, and providing a trusted, independent voice for nature. **1. Annual Report** • The report now aligns with the financial year, in line with the Partnership's Terms of Reference. • It demonstrates the breadth of activity undertaken despite limited resources, particularly around convening, engagement, and LNRS development. Board members welcomed the report and commended the volume and quality of work. **Action:** Board members to review the draft Annual Report and submit comments to Sophie Holt by **15th May 2026** **Action:** Finalise and publish the Annual Report by end of May 2026 **2. 2026 Meeting Dates** Results of a Board availability survey were presented. **Agreed dates:** • **Monday 22nd June 2026**, 10:00–12:00 (online) • **Tuesday 13th October 2026**, 10:00–12:00 (In person – University of Surrey) A mix of online and in-person meetings will continue to reduce time/ travel/environmental impact.	**All** **LCG / SH**

		Action: Circulate calendar invitations **3. LNRS Proposition** Members were updated on the proposition submitted to Surrey County Council for enhanced Partnership involvement in LNRS delivery. • The proposal has been submitted and initial discussions are expected. • Board members emphasised the importance of the Partnership's convening role in nature recovery delivery. **4. Surrey Local Sites Partnership (SLSP) – Planning Update** An update was given on the SLSP and SNCI (Sites of Nature Conservation Importance) process: • SNCIs are non-statutory and gain protection primarily through local plan policies. • Increased pressure has been observed from parties seeking SNCI designation to block development, which is not the purpose of the process. • Work is underway to clarify public-facing guidance and website wording. • A review of district and borough local plan policies is being undertaken to identify inconsistencies in policy wording. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - will eventually be a big benefit for these types of planning considerations. • Surrey Important Grasslands Inventory (SIGI) feeds into the SNCI process. **Action: Develop clear, consistent guidance on the website and standard wording on SNCI designation and planning status.** **Public Summary/~~Confidential~~**	**SH** **LCG / SH & SBIC**
5. Biodiversity Working Group	Mike Waite	**Updates included:** • Next meeting scheduled for 13 May 2026 (venue: Runnymede Borough Council). • To include: Development of a new workstream on research access and specimen collection permissions, including a proposed "collector pass". SyNP could consider being the issuing body. • Presentation at next meeting will be by Sarah Birch from SCC Climate Change Adaptation • An extraordinary meeting planned to explore the concept of an "ecological sweet spot" (Date proposed 29th June 2026) • Annual field day planned for 2nd July 2026, likely at Bansted Commons/Downlands Partnership. **Public Summary/~~Confidential~~**	
6. Catchment Management Partnerships	Zoe Channon	**Updates included:** • Anticipated increase in core funding (from £15k to c.£30k per catchment). • Additional support from Thames Water. • Environment Agency review of Water Framework Directive Programme of Measures. • Water Resources South East (WRSE) focuses on water resources while Water Resources East focuses on the whole system. Trying to get WRSE to focus on the whole system now to get better outcomes. • Emerging innovation, including:	

		○ "Insure for Nature" insurance model where profits are redirected to nature recovery including River Catchments. (Note: Invite to present to Board – ZC/SH). Going through Statutory Bodies currently. ○ PhD research with the University of Surrey on water body detection using machine learning. • Link to Bigwood Estate Event on 20th May organised by Surrey Wildlife Trust • Discussion on citizen science, agricultural runoff monitoring, and septic tank impacts. Need for more training in use of kits and co-ordination of data once collected. • Funding support offers for Agricultural Water Testing, EA have increased the number of inspectors to help improve the testing and quality of water. • Newt Conservation also have their own water data (KB) • New GIS Layer for Overland flows (MWo) Georgie Terry, used to work for Natural England is now with the Environment Agency (EA) and could be a good link for us. • Water Rangers are well organised. Recognises however increased data collection requires increased data management. • Increase on data on water and a need to bring it together strategically. The new Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) will do this. Needs to be aware of all the information available CK is leading this work in Surrey. All spatial strategies have to take account of the LNRS and the guidance in place. **Action: MWo to make introduction with Georgie Terry to ZC** **Action: KB to introduce Citizen Science Groups to CM** **Action: Pick up conversation and plan for increased Agricultural Water Testing Kits** **Action: Add a dedicated agenda item at a future Board meeting on citizen science water quality monitoring and data coordination.** **Action: Include agenda item for next meeting to update on Farmer progress.** **Action: Ensure that CM and SDA team are aware of data sets on water.** **Public Summary/~~Confidential~~**	**ZC/KB** **MWo** **KB** **ZC/HB/RF** **SH / ZC** **SH** **ZC**
7. Surrey Nature Recovery Update	Adam Brown	**Updates included:** • The Surrey LNRS has been formally published. • LNRS now carries material weight in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), with a 15% uplift for aligned projects. • All spatial strategies (including Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), minerals and waste, and neighbourhood plans) must now demonstrate alignment with LNRS. • Workstreams are focusing on: ○ Convening the Nature Partnership ○ Embedding LNRS into planning ○ Mapping and supporting strategic recovery projects ○ Monitoring and reporting delivery	

		• Recruitment has gone well for SCC Nature Recovery Officer, however other organisations are finding it hard to recruit the right level of skilled workers into the roles. Skills shortages across the conservation and land management sector. • Is there a way of introducing good but unsuccessful applicants to other similar roles that need filling in other organisations – better sharing of roles could mean that applicants could be redirected. • Possible Role for SyNP to share Nature Jobs in Surrey e.g. Monthly Bulletin. • Rebuilding Nature – CM on the steering group. Classifying Nature as infrastructure. Set up by National Highways and Kent Wildlife Trust. Using Grey Belt Sites to scale up nature – creating a Strategic Nature Network. • Strategic Projects – Working on Gap Analysis. Looking at Coppicing Opportunities in Surrey and Mobile Hedge laying Group. • BNG Pipeline is missing from the registers – difficult to see what's coming up. SyNP could be a good place to support local landowners that need support. **Action: ZC to request SJC feed into the board.** **Action: Share LNRS launch event details (2nd June 2026, Denbies) with Board and partners.** **Link to Register:** https://surreysnaturerecoverylaunch.eventbrite.co.uk **Public Summary/~~Confidential~~**	**ZC** **AB / SH**
8. AOB		Key points raised included: **ML** – Importance of clear articulation of the Nature Partnership's role. • Suggestion to develop and circulate an acronyms and terminology list. **AH** - Alignment opportunities with new Health and Wellbeing Strategy updates: The refreshed Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy was published in March. This flags the importance of "wider determinants of health" (such as the environment and access to green and blue space) for our health and wellbeing. It also updates the Key Neighbourhoods in Surrey where it is recommended that place based interventions to reduce health inequalities should be targeted. **MWo** - A recent Legal & General investment at Pudding Wood (over 100 hectares, north of Gatwick), previously managed as intensively farmed pasture, is now undergoing significant woodland creation and habitat enhancement. ○ Surrey Wildlife Trust is supporting ongoing land management. ○ The project was highlighted as a potential exemplar for large-scale institutional investment in nature recovery. ○ It was noted that land use change of this scale can have implications for tenant farmers. • Recent national policy statements on deer and grey squirrel management were highlighted as relevant to woodland creation.	

		• Tree removal and habitat change were recognised as potentially highly emotive, reinforcing the importance of early public engagement and clear communication. • Under-utilised urban land associated with the Royal Marsden Hospital (Sutton) was identified as having potential for nature-based health and wellbeing interventions and possible future collaboration with the health sector. **MWa** – M25 J10 restoration Project nearing completion. • The Junction 10 heathland restoration project generated less public opposition than anticipated. Improved communication and public understanding were cited as key factors. Highlighted as a positive example of infrastructure-led habitat restoration. **KB** – Nature and Wellbeing project in Horley Area – with NHS. Early stage of project. Potential Vegetable Growing project. **CM** - It was confirmed that the LNRS and LNRS team are ringfenced and protected from impacts arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). • Devolution will require the development of a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for Surrey. • Surrey County Council will shortly be bringing forward work on the Minerals and Waste Plan. • There is a strong intention to build on previous successes where former minerals and waste sites have been restored, regenerated, and brought back into use for environmental and nature outcomes. • The Surrey Nature Partnership will be closely involved in SDS development. • There is a clear ambition to ensure nature is recognised as essential infrastructure within the SDS. • The Board will be engaged as this work progresses. **SR** - Natural England is aligning with new strategy, delivering nature recovery through Local Delivery Teams, working closely with partners at a place-based and landscape scale e.g. Super National Nature Reserve (Super NNR) • Emphasis was placed on collaborative delivery with local stakeholders, aligning national policy objectives with local priorities and partnerships. • The importance of integrating nature recovery into existing place-based frameworks was reinforced. **RF** - Practical, visible outcomes (e.g. reinstated viewpoints) help the public understand why management is necessary. • Cited experience that simple infrastructure, such as placing a bench at a restored viewpoint, can materially shift public perception and support for habitat management. • Referenced restoration experience at Junction 10, where anticipated public concern around vegetation clearance was less pronounced than expected, attributed to better communication and understanding of outcomes. • Public attitudes towards habitat restoration have matured, particularly where projects are clearly linked to landscape quality and biodiversity gain. • Funding discussions with the National Lottery, which identified priority investment themes relevant to Surrey Hills, including:	

		○ Ancient and veteran trees ○ Trees outside woodlands (e.g. hedgerows, farmland trees) ○ Scrub management and targeted tree removal to restore priority open habitats ○ Skills, training, and engagement to support long-term landscape management • Noted that effective landscape management requires both tree planting and selective tree removal, reinforcing the principle of "right tree in the right place". • Highlighted the importance of treescapes rather than just woodlands, including connectivity across farmed landscapes. ○ Importance of using seeds of a local provenance, where possible to help develop resilience, landscape character, and long-term ecological suitability ○ Develop a better understanding of woodland creation and management in the local community and visitors. **YB** - Emerging habitat bank (primarily grassland, with Plantlife acting as Responsible Body), Pre-Application for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (based on Woodland Management Plan), and woodland creation planning (with Forestry Commission support) work ongoing at West Horsley Place Trust. ZC – SWT are an external auditor for Habitat Banks (via Plantlife). **AR** – Request for visualization of What organizations and funding are available to support nature recovery. • **VS** - Availability of University of Surrey students for placements and research. • **SH** -York University have created: **A toolkit for the use of mapping tools to consider opportunities for health and nature recovery. - York Research Database** **Action: RJM to introduce MWo to Royal Marsden Contact.** **Action: SyNP To follow up on what visualisation of Funding flow looks like** **Action: Create and circulate an acronyms and terminology list for Board members** **Action: Arrange introduction regarding hospital land enhancement opportunities.** **Public Summary/~~Confidential~~**	**RJM** **SH/LCG** **SH** **AH**
		Meeting closed at 11:50	
Date and Time of Next Meeting		**Monday 22nd June 2026**, 10:00–12:00 (online)	