

MEETING MINUTES

Eighth Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Hills Society

Saturday, 29 October 2016 at 2.00 pm

Wilfrid Noyce Centre, Crown Court, High Street, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1DY

1. **Welcome** – The President, Neil Maltby, welcomed members to the 8th Annual General Meeting and thanked them for their continuing support. He reminded us about how much has been achieved in such a short time and how high the Society's profile is in the County and in the wider rural community. The Society has obtained a significant Heritage Lottery Fund grant and has worked this year in close partnership with the Surrey Hills (SH) Board, SH Trust Fund, SH Enterprises, SH Arts, The Surrey County Council, The Mayors of Waverley and Guildford B.C. and the Chairman of the Mole Valley D.C. The Society has also been in contact with all the Borough and District Councils that make up the SH AONB, worked with the North Down Way Manager, Surrey Wildlife Trust, numerous other trusts and charities and, of course, all the Town and Parish Councils in the AONB.
The President highlighted that this achievement was made possible by the Chairman, Chris Howard, and the Vice-Chairman, Ken Bare, and all the Committee Members. The Society has also enabled the SH Board to apply for grants and as the grant applicant, the Society has transformed the projects into reality involving manpower which the members provide.
Our President feels that the whole SHAONB "Family" owes the Society a very big thank you, and he feels honoured to the President of such a brilliant Society.
2. **Apologies for Absence** – Sue Boyman, Pamela Holt, Rob Fairbanks, Rob Hewer, Ali Clarke, Graham and Pam Bulman, Gilly Coombes, Diane Cooper, Doug and Frances Sudbury.
42 members present.
3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 21 November 2015** – The Minutes were agreed by all at the meeting as a true record, signed by the Chairman and filed. No matters arose.
Peter Salisbury proposed and Sall Baring seconded and it was approved unanimously.
4. **Chairman's Report** – a copy of the full text of the Chairman's Report is attached.
Chris Howard welcomed Cllr David Hunter, Mayor of Godalming, Cllr Mike Goodman and Cllr David Wright, Chairman of SHAONB Board.
5. **Overview of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan** - David Wright, Chairman of the AONB Board, talked about the role of the AONB Board regarding planning and preservation of the landscape. It has the same responsibilities as a National Park, but has much less funding. The Surrey Hills AONB's geographical shape makes branding and public recognition challenging, hence the need for the Surrey Hills "Family" (Board, Society, Trust Fund and Enterprises) to create for the public an element of contact. These four elements work together for a purpose because government funding has been and will be reduced further in the future. Therefore the "Family" sensibly continues to prepare itself for future.
He insisted on the importance of the Society as the human dimension of the Surrey Hills and a vital element to put the word out. The Heritage Lottery Grant which the Society obtained has helped the Surrey Hills to continue and achieve its goals.
He added that there is always a need for more contributions our members and their effort; any donation or volunteering would be gratefully received.
6. **Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016** – Copies of the accounts were available at the meeting and had been published on the website.

The new Finance Director, Martin Cantor, introduced himself as accountant having worked for a long time with small and medium sized businesses. Charitable accounting, more in details, has been a learning curve and he has been able to rely on Margaret Brett's help from Bullimores. He also has a team of people working behind the scenes and he thanked Terry Driscoll (Treasurer), Stella Cantor (Membership Secretary) and Peter Salisbury (Administrator) for their help. He explained that the Society's accounts show a stable position and the reserves have increased. He explained that the Society remains independent because of its memberships, so there is a need to create new events where people can join and thus generate more income.

Richard Jameson asked about the Society's reserves. Why is there such a big amount as £30,000 in the bank account? The interest rates are low and that money could be invested.

Martin Cantor replied that it is difficult to find anywhere to invest your money to get a decent return at present, but agreed that the funds were not doing anything in the bank.

Chris Howard replied that it is currently under discussion with the Trustees. The surplus has given us options to expand and invest in the charity but there are lots of options and the Trustees need to prioritise the charity's needs.

No other questions arose.

The Accounts were approved unanimously. Anthony Wakefield proposed and David Wright seconded.

7. To confirm the appointment of Margaret Brett, a Partner of Bullimores Accountants as the independent financial examiner for 2016/17 and to authorise Trustees to fix remuneration.

The President expressed thanks and appreciation to Margaret Brett of Bullimores for examining the accounts for the year to March 2016. The meeting unanimously agreed that Margaret Brett should be appointed independent financial examiner for the year to March 2017; she had again waived remuneration.

Mark Turner proposed and Ken Bare seconded and it was approved unanimously.

8. 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 (Vice Chairman), Stella Cantor, Sarah Jane Chimbwandira and Christine Howard (Chairman) and Tariq Phillips will continue as Trustees.

Rob Hewer and Paul Bettinson were standing down.

Martin Cantor was presented to be appointed as a Trustee. This was agreed.

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

9. Any other business – No questions from the Membership

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.

Surrey Hills Society Chairman's report for AGM – October 2016

Welcome to our 8th AGM. I am very grateful to the Mayor of Godalming for agreeing to attend. I am especially delighted to welcome Cllr Mike Goodman, Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Planning, and Cllr David Wright, Chairman of the SHAONB statutory Board. And finally welcome to all our wonderfully supportive members here today. Without you, none of the fantastic work that we in the Surrey Hills Society do, could happen. Thank you for your continued support of this important charity, dedicated to looking after this beautiful iconic landscape known as the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

You may remember that last year our Finance Director went missing in action on the AGM day. He had recently been appointed a Vice President of his organisation in the City and he emailed me at 1am in the morning giving me briefing notes for the AGM and saying he had to go to work! Sadly, the new job meant that Paul had to step down from his role with us. We are all extremely grateful for the work he has done for us, particularly his work on Governance of the Society, which will pay dividends for many years to come.

I am incredibly grateful to Martin Cantor for agreeing to take over as Finance Director this year and it has been an absolute pleasure to work with him. He is extremely experienced and has a realistic and practical approach to everything, including slimming down the number of meetings we have each year, which is music to the ears of my long suffering husband, Jeff Holliday!

Last year I also talked about the development of the new AONB Management and Action Plans and how important these documents are for all of us to work under, to deliver the various objectives contained within them. Last year we had spent long hours in meetings and pouring over paperwork and agreeing plans, whereas this year has been all about delivery. I will leave Cllr David Wright to tell you about the wider plans in a moment. I will focus on what the Society, the charitable (volunteer) arm of the AONB, has been up to.

At the last AGM, I asked all my Management Committee to stand up to identify themselves to you. They are all still with me and we are all still friends but wow, what a time we have been having and I think we have only been able to achieve what we have this year because we have now all worked together for such a long time, we all know each other's skills and talents, we trust each other, and we are all passionate about the Surrey Hills. Can I give them all my sincere thanks for all their hard work this year and a "thank you" for supporting me through our toughest year to date....more on why later.....

Can I also thank our key sponsor, Anthony Wakefield from Anthony Wakefield & Co, specialising in the arrangement of Antique and Fine Art Insurance for Dealers, Auctioneers, Corporate Collectors and Private clients. His company also offers policies to Commercial and Retail concerns, and for Household and other Personal Insurance requirements – indeed, he acts as broker for our Society's insurance. He not only sponsors our newsletter, but is also an active member of our Society, chairs our Newsletter Committee and also organised a fascinating visit to Pixham Patchworking Garden and Lady Wedgwood's delightful home in Dorking this year. Thank you Anthony so much for your invaluable work for the Society!

I am also delighted that Sall Baring from Barings Solicitors, our previous sponsor, is still an active volunteer in our Society and sits on our Events and PR committees and has been responsible for organising this event today. Big thank you to Sall!

Finally, I need to thank our paid member of staff, Marika Elzinga. She joined us two years ago as our Co-ordinator. A new role created to "herd" all us volunteers and keep us focussed! You may remember she 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. He also has his own company, Litmus Wines and is the wine maker for Albury Vineyard as well. Marika will be running a very special Surrey wine tasting event in the Guildhall in Guildford on 26th January 2017, so do book early if you would like to join us for this special evening with the Mayor of Guildford. Marika, thank you for your patience with all of us....it is a bit like herding cats but somehow Marika manages to stay calm and continue to smile through it all.

Because this year we have been out there delivering so much, I am pleased to say I have even more volunteers to thank. I would particularly like to thank the volunteers who stepped in to deliver the Tales and Trails of the Tillingbourne project. Two really key people on this project were Steve Peacock and Pete Lambert who were involved in the development of the walks leaflets. Steve has also been leading on the development of a new map for the area. I also need to thank Ken Bare and Jeff Holliday for their involvement in Steering group meetings, making puppet boxes to managing car parking at the various events. I also must thank my daughter, Jessica, who became the costume maker for the puppet characters that were created and her boyfriend Ben Carter who also did everything from sewing on buttons to oral histories, to car parking duties as well. I also need to thank Dr Anne Sassin, whom we took on as our Project Manager. This has been a great partnership project with the Surrey Hills Board, Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council, who manage the Gunpowder Mills at Chilworth. The project also included support from all the Parish Councils along the Tillingbourne Valley, the National Trust who manage the mill at Shalford, Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud Youth Theatre, Chilworth Together and Shere Museum to name but a few of the groups involved. I hope you have been tracking the project via our newsletters or through coming to some of our events....and there will be more....

Apart from Paul Bettinson, mentioned earlier, I have one other Trustee standing down this year. It has been a pleasure to have Rob Hewer, one of the National Trust Rangers, serve with us this year. You may have seen the article about him and the NT volunteers at Landbarn Farm in our recent newsletter.

Last year I mentioned the launch of the new 20s-30s walking group that meets on the first Sunday of the month at 11am somewhere in the Surrey Hills. Well, it is still going...it is growing....and we had so many of our members asking if they could come, so we have now widened the event to fit, fast older walkers as well. They are short 1 ½ to 2 hour walks as a rule and usually involve a pub at the end.

In fact, this year we got even more involved in walking in the Surrey Hills, as we became a leading organisation within the Guildford WalkFest. Last year, Graham Butler led one walk around Shere for us. The Society led 4 walks and gained some good profile on the website and with the local press. It also got us several new members. In May 2017, we have now been asked to help support the Farnham WalkFest. North Downs Way Manager Peter Morris and I will be leading a North Downs Way walk from Farnham to Guildford. Do join us!

Some of you hardy walkers, joined Ken Bare, Neil Maltby, Pete Lambert, Steve Peacock and I on the Mayor of Guildford's North Downs Way Sponsored walk. We are incredibly grateful to Cllr Gordon Jackson, Mayor of Guildford, for choosing the Surrey Hills Trust Fund as one of his charities. We had a fabulous day out on what must have been one of the last glorious days of the summer. The Surrey Hills was at its best and I am pleased to say that event raised well over £1000 for the Trust Fund.

This leads me nicely on to the other reason why we have been so busy this last year....

Two years ago, our President, Neil Maltby laid down a challenge to the Surrey Hills family to raise significant funds to create an endowment, which will produce an on-going income for the AONB. This is especially important in the light of the on-going cuts in government spending. Many of you will be aware of the fantastic work that is done by the Community Foundation for Surrey. They are experts in the management of trust funds but also in managing the grant funding application schemes and monitoring the delivery of the projects. They agreed to work with us to set up and support a Surrey Hills Trust Fund.

Last year the Mayor of Waverley made the Surrey Hills Trust Fund one of his chosen charities, this year the Mayor of Guildford and the Chairman of Mole Valley District Council have adopted the Surrey Hills as their chosen charities and we will continue to support their fund raising activities through until next May. Having organised a sponsored walk through Waverley on the Greensand Way in September 2015, we have now organised a sponsored walk on the NDW through Guildford borough this October and we joined several Mayors to support the Surrey Hills Challenge on 25th September.

Earlier in the year, we were delighted to hear we were to benefit from the profits of a very special celebration event at Great Tangle Manor, possibly the oldest dwelling still in residential use and celebrating its 1000th birthday with a pageant. This event raised £6000 for the Trust Fund and we are incredibly grateful to Mr and Mrs Powell-Evans for their support. It also gained us several new members.

We have also been raising funds at our President's Day event which featured the Tales of the Tillingbourne, where Ken Bare organised a raffle which managed to raise £410.00.

We have also been busy raising funds for the Gatton Park HLF project and Stella Cantor presented them with a cheque for £1000 to go towards landscaping work. We hope to be able to do a volunteering day at Gatton over the winter to continue our support for this great project re-establishing the grounds of one of landscape designer, Capability Brown's most expensive projects.

Several of us have also been involved in a new project called the Surrey Hills Arts project. This was made possible by a donation from the Mittal Foundation and involved the creation of several arts installations/benches along the Greensand Way, as well as opening up lost viewpoints along this path. I am delighted that our Co-ordinator, Marika, has volunteered to join this project for the coming year.

I would now like to take you pictorially through a few of the other highlights of 2016.

I am incredibly grateful to the Planning Consultant, Clive Smith, at the SHAONB unit who has continued to monitor and comment on the many planning applications that come across his desk each year. He has a regular column in our newsletter to keep you abreast of what is happening on the planning front. The main concern this year has been the development of each of the boroughs Local Plans and the enormous pressure to build houses in the greenbelt. Clive and Rob Fairbanks, the AONB Director, 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. We continue to support them in their work.

On the membership front, our Society has not grown significantly from last year, so this is an area we really want to focus on for the coming year. We are however, limited by the number of key volunteers available to manage the organisation. We have put on more events than ever before but we are very aware that some of our popular events get booked up very quickly and some members are disappointed. If you feel you would like to get involved in the Events Committee please do talk to Jeff Holliday. It may be you want to do just one event a year, so it is not a huge burden.

We are also looking for a new show co-ordinator to take the trailer or gazebo to the various shows and events that happen throughout the summer. Ken Bare has been doing this job for 5 years and I think needs a break. I am incredibly grateful to him for the hours and hours of work he has given to the Society over that time. He will continue as Vice Chairman this year and is still in charge of the Talks programme.

Later in this agenda, we will be presenting the Trustees Report and Financial Statement for the period of 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. I would like to thank Margaret Brett from Bullimore's of Dorking for her 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. Also, a special thank you to our President, Neil Maltby for his continued support for the 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 2017.

As always 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 member to join the Society this year. That would double our numbers. Can I ask for your help please? Christmas is coming and our gift packs would make an unusual and yearlong gift for that "hard to buy for" relative or friend. Also, what about a fleece or t-shirt or perhaps a badge? Do see Jeff Holliday for these.

Chris Howard, Chairman of the Surrey Hills Society, 29th October 2016.