

DRAFT MINUTES – for confirmation at the 2019 AGM
Tenth Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Hills Society
Saturday, 13 October 2018 at 2.15 pm
Dorking United Reformed Church, 53 West Street, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1BS

1. **Welcome** – The President, Neil Maltby, welcomed members to the 10th Annual General Meeting and thanked them for their continuing support.
2. **Apologies for Absence** – Mr and Mrs Paull, Susie Turner, Sue Boyman, June Robinson, Mr and Mrs Brodie, Mr and Mrs Pulman, Charlotte Choi, Mrs Maltby, Mun-Ling Logue, Stephanie Fudge, David Montgomery, Mr and Mrs Turner

43 members present

3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 28 October 2017**
Sall Baring proposed and Peter Salisbury seconded and the Minutes were approved unanimously.
No matters arising.
4. **Chairman's Report** – a copy of the full text of the Chairman's Report is attached.
5. **Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018** – Copies of the accounts were available at the meeting and had been published on the website.
The Finance Director, Martin Cantor summarised the year as a solid year, very similar to the previous year. Talks in addition to our Events create an increasing regular income to the charity. There are restricted funds from Heritage Lottery Fund grant for Changing Landscape book. Anniversary expenses have been covered by sponsors. Residual costs for website and credit card payments done via our website.
The Society has moved to Sage, full account system and to Stripe, credit card system for online payments.
Overall Surrey Hills Society is in robust financial health.

Question about why there is a consultancy fee? Martin Cantor explained that one person is remunerated on a consultancy basis to ensure the smooth every day running of the charity.

Question on GiftAid income, why it doesn't appear? Martin Cantor explained that by the time the online registration was completed, it was past the end of March deadline.

No other questions arose.

The Accounts were approved unanimously. James Dubois proposed and Peter Hattersley seconded.

6. **To confirm the appointment of the independent financial examiner for 2017/18** - The President expressed thanks and appreciation to David Montgomery of Kingston Smith, our new financial examiner, for examining the accounts on pro bono basis for the year to March 2018.
The new examiner was approved unanimously. Anthony Wakefield proposed and Marion Salisbury seconded.
7. **To set the annual membership subscription for 2017/18** – The Chairman proposed that the membership fee remained unchanged for the coming year, which was agreed unanimously.
8. **To appoint and reappoint Trustees of the Society.** Profiles were available on the website.

- a) To note the resignation of Chris Howard as Trustee and Chairman and Ken Bare as Trustee and Vice Chairman and to thank them for their contribution as they have come to the end of their 9 year term.

Neil Maltby thanked them both for their hard work and commitment for our relatively small charity. Chris and Ken have worked endless hours and taken the charity to a whole new level. Gordon Jackson presented a gift from the Trustees.

- b) To confirm the reappointment of Stella Cantor for three years. This was agreed unanimously.
- c) To confirm the appointment of Gordon Jackson as a new Trustee, having joined on 20 March 2018 as a co-opted member. This was agreed unanimously.
- d) To note the appointment of the new Chairman, Gordon Jackson by the Trustees. This was agreed unanimously.

9. **Any other business**

Everyone was invited to our next event called 'Change of Chairs' at Leatherhead Institute on 9th November to thank Chris Howard and Ken Bare for their work and welcome our new Chairman Gordon Jackson and hear about his plans for the Society's future.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm.

Surrey Hills Society Chairman's report for AGM – October 2018

Welcome. I can't believe it is now our 10th AGM! I know we are reviewing the year 2017-18 today but I must take this opportunity to say well done to everyone who got involved in supporting the 60th anniversary of the Surrey Hills AONB. We have had an amazing.....exhausting year but I am very proud of what we have all been able to deliver to make this a very special 60th anniversary year for the AONB and for our own 10th birthday.

I am very grateful to Peter Salisbury, Ken Bare, Jeff Holliday and Marika Elzinga for organising this year's AGM with me. Most importantly I need to thank Martin Cantor for preparing our accounts and managing our finances. Martin has also done a huge amount of work moving our accounts onto Sage accountancy package, which is making it easier to produce our end of year accounts. A huge thank you also to David Montgomery of Kingston Smith LLP, who have kindly come on board to be our new auditors.

Without the support of these important local businesses our charity, like many others, could not exist. I am also incredibly grateful to Anthony Wakefield, who not only is our major sponsor - sponsoring our newsletter, but also Chairs our Newsletter Committee and is an active member. Thank you Anthony for all your support.

And finally a huge thank you to all our wonderfully supportive members here today. Without you, none of the fantastic work that we in the Surrey Hills 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. We now have a dedicated band of volunteers who have found where their strengths and energies can be targeted within the organisation. Like any business, the first few years are critical and many organisations never manage to bear the growing pains of the organisation becoming a much larger beast. Due to the team work and flexibility of our volunteers we have been able to do that.

When we set out 10 years ago to create this charity, we only vaguely knew where it would lead us. We knew that some other AONBs have charities supporting their work; we knew we needed funds to be able to deliver projects within the AONB, and we knew that the government would struggle to fund AONBs and National Parks in the future due to financial pressures.

It is also rewarding to see that every person in that photo [see board] is still with us today.....not many companies can say that! I have also made some incredible friends from my time with the Surrey Hills Society and I know many of you have too. I even know of two members, who are now a couple, who met through the Surrey Hills Society!

How interesting that next month the Surrey Hills AONB family is hosting a symposium with the University of Surrey, looking at whether the Surrey Hills should be a National Park? This is part of the debate being created by the government's announcement of a new 25 year environment plan. Part of that process is a review of National Parks and AONBs headed up by Julian Glover, which we are currently involved with. It was originally down to visionaries on the Board like Michael Sydney and Neil Maltby, our first Chairman that the Surrey Hills has the strong identity it has today, partly due to its strong supporting charity. This year we have been also working with Kent Downs AONB and one of their officers said to me: "I wish we had a Society like yours to support us".

It is also rewarding to know that the charity is now able to be a facilitator of many of projects happening within the AONB. Even more exciting is in 2017 we were awarded our first HLF project led by us....in the form of our anniversary book led by Ken Bare. We have also worked with the Surrey Hills Arts Officer, Ali Clarke to provide match funding for her Surrey Unearthed Project and provided some direct funding raised by us, you...our members.

Some people say to me: "Oh you are just a bunch of people having a good time in the Surrey Hills!"...and yes that is true.....but why can't you have fun while raising funds for something you feel passionate about? Our events do generate surpluses that go to fund our website and other costs associated with running a charity but they are also used to tell the story of the Surrey Hills to a wider audience. The pictures and knowledge learned putting these events together go to form parts of our talks programme, our Comms Team use the information and photos to create articles for magazines and newspapers.

Can I also just thank Surrey Life magazine for their support and for making the 2018 calendar's theme the Surrey Hills.

Last year I mentioned we were in the middle of developing our new three year business plan. I am delighted to say this has now been finalised and signed off by the Trustees. It is not a radical departure from our previous Business Plan, but I think we can say we are gaining in confidence in our ability to deliver more.

Today we have published our first annual report. We felt it fitting for our 10th anniversary that we captured officially some of the good work done by the charity. I hope you enjoy reading it and promoting our charity to others. I need you all to be good ambassadors for us.

This will of course be with a new Chairman at the helm. I am incredibly grateful to Gordon and Sue Jackson for wanting to become more involved in the charity. I am even more grateful to Gordon for agreeing to take over as Chairman. I cannot think of a safer pair of hands to hand the last ten years of my life over to. Thank you so much to both of you and I look forward to supporting you going forward, as you have supported me, since joining the Board.

As I mentioned last year, it is laid down in our Constitution that Trustees can only serve for 9 years in total and it is right that there is continued "new blood" arriving on the Board to give new perspectives and vigour to our organisation. Therefore, it is with great sadness that Ken Bare and I are standing down this year.

However, we have both been asked not to go too far away. Ken will continue to do his Talks program and I will still be involved in delivering the Events program.

Ken, you have been an amazing Vice Chairman. I think we have done a great doubled act. You have strengths that I do not possess, and vice versa. You have worked incredibly hard and I do not think we would be where we are today without your dedication to the charity. Can I just say a huge thank you from me and on behalf of the whole Society.

Now, last year you may remember some of you challenged us on our financial position because you quite rightly pointed out that we were sitting on a healthy reserve. I did tell you though that we have plans for this money and also as the organisation became bigger you needed bigger reserves to protect yourself against unforeseen emergency costs. Our Trustee Board took up your challenge, in fact I told you last year that we already had ambitious plans for the money.

Websites are expensive and we have continued to have costs associated with it. I am also incredibly grateful to Stella Cantor, with assistance from Martin, her thorough treatment of GDPR this year, which has challenged many organisations – especially small charities.

We have also been more ambitious in funding projects, including the Gatton Trust with their Capability Brown anniversary project, Surrey Unearthed arts project, and investment in our own anniversary celebrations.

However, we have also been incredibly successful in attracting corporate sponsorship for our activities. For example, we are incredibly grateful to Playle and Partners who sponsored our Loseley Park celebration and Kier, the Surrey CC highways contractor who agreed to sponsor the Speakers House event. Ken Bare also managed to get HLF funding for our anniversary book. Therefore, while we have been incredibly successful in attracting funding and delivering great projects, it still means some of you may consider we have not reduced our reserves as much as you would have liked.

One of the things that Gordon is currently working on is a paper to clarify the working relationship between the Surrey Hills Society and the Surrey Hills Trust Fund so we can confidently work with the Trust on specific projects while remaining open and accountable to all, including other potential partners like Surrey Wildlife Trust, the National Trust or some of the other landowners across the Surrey Hills. Actually developing good projects is the thing proving hardest to do. Gaining volunteers to support the projects, getting the planning permissions and making sure the money is spent appropriately is actually the easy part.

Although 2017-18 was a quieter planning year for the 60th anniversary celebrations this summer, we continued to expand our programme of events and our walks programme. We continue to support the various walking festivals across the AONB, and the Heritage Open Day weekend programme in September. I am incredibly grateful to the growing walk leaders group who develop and run the free monthly walks program. This is a great way to engage new members and telling the story of the Surrey Hills to a wider audience. I would especially like to thank Pete Lambert, Diane Cooper and Steve Peacock who have developed and lead many of the walks. I am also incredibly grateful to my husband, Jeff Holliday who often acts as driver and back on these walks. Thank you Jeff.

Also incredibly grateful to the support of Charlotte and Kai Choi. Kai for musical support at Speakers House and Charlotte for her amazing hare.

On the membership front, our Society numbers remain stable. 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, the Chairman of Events or Marika Elzinga, the Society Coordinator about joining us. It may be you

want to do just one event a year, so it is not a huge burden if everyone shares the load by just doing one event each.

We are also looking for someone to take control of co-ordinating our summer shows program. We have bought a new, much lighter gazebo, so even Peter Salisbury and I can put it up easily. These days are fun (when the weather is good) and you get to meet an amazing variety of people from our area, learn more about our wonderful food and drink offer and activities taking place in the Surrey Hills. We also need more volunteers, so if you fancy even doing just one show tell Marika today and she can add you to our list.

There is not enough time here today to thank everyone I should for all the amazing things they do for this wonderful charity, and for all your support and friendship you have given me over these last 10 years. I have loved every minute of it. I am now going to enjoy supporting Gordon to take the charity onward and upward.

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 Peter Salisbury at our stand later. We are about to do an order for new shirts and fleeces, so get your order in now for Christmas. Also, we now have in addition my new walking book of short walks in Surrey. All the proceeds, after costs, from this book go to the charity, as did my fee for writing the book.

I need to say one last huge thank you to my husband Jeff Holliday. I could not have done these last 10 years without his constant support and assistance. As many of you know, he is always there in the background, busy setting up, making teas, putting out chairs, setting up at shows and the list goes on. He is also Chairman of our Events committee and so attends many of our evening committee meetings. Thank you Jeff. You have been amazing.

Thank you again to all of you for all your support during my time as Chairman. Good luck to Gordon as you take up the reins as Chairman. I hope to see many of you on one of our events over the winter and all the best for 2019.

Chris Howard, Chairman Surrey Hills Society, 13th October 2018