

Surrey Wildlife Trust

5-YEAR PLAN 2013-2018



A 5-Year Plan FOR SWT

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SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST was formed 52 years ago to care for Surrey's natural landscape and all forms of wildlife, for the benefit of the people of the county. Despite dedicated hard work, great support, and many successes, much remains to be done to secure a healthy natural environment for the future.

The challenges to wildlife remain intimidating: the recent 'State of Nature' Report, compiled by 25 wildlife organisations including The Wildlife Trusts and launched by David Attenborough, indicates that 60% of all species studied have declined in recent decades, with 1 in 10 facing extinction.

This loss of species matters because diversity matters. Without a wide range of species, the balance of nature is impaired, and the natural 'ecosystem services' that we all rely on will not function well.

So what will the next 50 years bring for the county of Surrey?

The good news is that we see a positive future for Surrey where people and wildlife live together in a better balance to the benefit of both. That is the goal of our 50-year Vision, of which this Strategic Plan represents the first 5 years.

We have chosen 50 years for our future Vision because that is a 'generational' time span. Research shows that 50 years is the time it takes to deeply embed the need to care for nature in people's collective mind.

We hope you will find inspiration from our plans and work with us to help us turn the Vision into a reality.



Nigel Davenport
Chief Executive Officer

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Fly Agaric
E. Neep

Surrey's LANDSCAPE HAS:

- 73%** designated as 'greenbelt' land (protected from development).
- 25%** within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 22%** woodland, including more 'ancient woodland' than anywhere else in England.
- 13%** of the UK's remaining lowland heathland, an internationally rare habitat.
- 10%** designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), about 16,700 ha.
- 5%** internationally recognised for outstanding biodiversity.



Heather
A. Lewis



L. Schofield



J. Hawkins



J. Norman

Caring for SURREY'S COUNTRYSIDE

ABOUT THE TRUST

With well over a million people, Surrey is one of the most densely populated counties in the South East, and our proximity to London means this population density is only likely to increase. However, the county is also known for its stunning countryside.

Surrey Wildlife Trust currently manages 82 sites, together covering almost 8,000ha, which is 5% of the land area of the county. We also work with many partners and other landowners to advise on land management for conservation, with particular emphasis on woodland, wetlands, and heathland.

We work with schools, communities and volunteers across Surrey to inform and involve people actively in nature. Over 15,000 children and young people now benefit annually from a wide variety of outdoor learning courses and activities. Each year our enthusiastic volunteers contribute over 10,000 'people days' to our work.

SWT is a key partner in the new Surrey Nature Partnership, and will be a major deliverer of the outcomes required in the England Biodiversity Strategy, Biodiversity 2020. The Trust hosts the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre, holding over 1 million records, supporting a dedicated network of naturalists, and responsible for gathering, managing and disseminating information on habitats and species for the county. We carry out planning reviews, wildlife survey work, and numerous conservation projects for habitats and species.

OUR PURPOSE

The Trust's purpose is embodied in our Memorandum and Articles of Association and can be captured in 3 key themes:

LAND MANAGEMENT: Protection and accessibility of wildlife, its habitats and places of natural beauty.

EDUCATION: Teaching children and adults about nature, biodiversity, wildlife conservation and sustainable development.

SCIENCE: Research and study into natural heritage to promote evidence based activity.

OUR VALUES

- 1 We strive to encourage others to share our belief in the value of nature through proactive example and engaging education.
- 2 We are passionately protecting and restoring wildlife habitats, both in the countryside and urban green spaces.
- 3 We are innovative and creative, caring and enthusiastic, driven to achieve our vision.

Valuing Nature

THE IMPORTANCE OF WILDLIFE

“ There is compelling evidence that England’s collection of wildlife sites are generally too small and too isolated, leading to declines in many of England’s characteristic species. With climate change, the situation is likely to get worse. This is bad news for wildlife but also bad news for us, because the damage to nature also means our natural environment is less able to provide the many services upon which we depend.

Sir John Lawton 2010

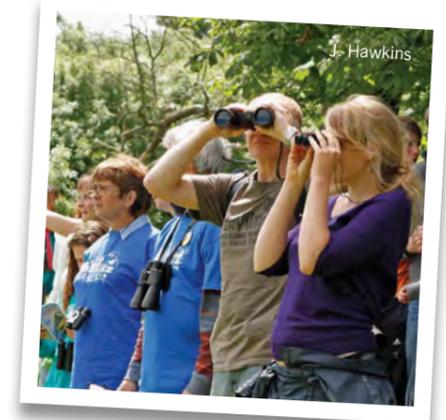


Bumble bee
D. Smith

A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT...

There is increasing recognition that there is overwhelming economic as well as social value delivered by a healthy natural environment – a value which until recently has been largely overlooked.

Our aim is to advance the understanding of the value of nature. We plan to work in partnership to ensure that the true costs – and benefits – of natural services are taken into account, and that as a result, business and economic decisions support a healthy natural environment.



J. Hawkins

THE BENEFITS OF NATURE

A healthy natural environment is vital in providing all of us with our basic needs for existence: food, shelter, clean water and air. Nature also provides for our physical and mental well-being through access to areas for relaxation, culture and sport. Our survival and well-being as individuals, and our function as a society, depend on the continued delivery of these and other natural benefits or ‘Ecosystem Services’.

However, often we do not fully value the services that nature provides. For example, creating a natural floodplain grazing meadow to absorb excess water can conserve wildlife, as well as protecting built-up areas from flooding – often at a lower cost than building hard defences.

Recent work is steadily increasing the recognition that robust economic decisions can only be made if the value of the services provided by nature is taken into account. However, much research remains to be done to continue to build practical metrics and convincing examples.

the value of natural services

In response to this need, one of Surrey Wildlife Trust’s key areas of strategic activity for the next 5 years is to develop and understand more effectively the value of natural services to Surrey and its residents and visitors. This is particularly important because the county’s position as the largest sub-regional economy in the South East is inextricably linked with the benefits provided by a healthy natural environment.

Unfortunately, the health of our natural environment is still under threat. Despite the best efforts of conservation work, the decline of wildlife species and the deterioration of their habitats have continued. Population pressure, management neglect, and atmospheric or waterborne pollution have all played a part.

Future climate change may have the biggest impact of all, and Surrey is already witnessing some resulting natural phenomena. Changes in the timing of seasonal events are worrying. Impacts such as increasingly frequent extreme weather events causing flooding and drought are likely to have further profound and largely negative effects, and some species will inevitably struggle to survive.

Making space for nature

We are fortunate in that, compared with many others, our county remains relatively rich in natural habitats, especially in heathland and woodland, much of which is protected within well-managed sites.

‘Making Space for Nature’, the important DEFRA Report of 2010 led by distinguished Professor Sir John Lawton, highlighted the need to manage and protect these and other high quality sites in the UK, as well as create improved and effective connections to form ecological networks that provide sufficient space and resilience for wildlife to thrive and move.

These networks can be envisaged as inter-relating collections of key habitats together with well-managed local sites acting as ‘stepping stones’ and wildlife corridors. It is the in-built resilience created by ecological networks that will allow Surrey’s natural ecosystem services to remain effective.

Living Landscapes

HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

“ OUR 50-YEAR VISION IS TO DEVELOP ‘LIVING LANDSCAPES’ ACROSS SURREY USING NINE REALISABLE GOALS TO ACHIEVE THE CREATION OF NATURE NETWORKS, AND THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE. WE WILL DO THIS BY PROMOTING THE VALUE OF NATURE TO OUR MEMBERS, PARTNERS AND THE PEOPLE OF SURREY. ”



A 50-YEAR VISION FOR SURREY...

OUR FOCUS IS ON TARGETED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, EXCELLENT MANAGEMENT OF LAND, AND INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT OF PEOPLE.

We will achieve this through our ability to communicate, inspire, excite and enthuse staff, volunteers, partners, supporters, members and the public to believe in and value nature so that together we can truly put Nature first.



A. Holdaway

A REPAIR MANUAL FOR NATURE

The Lawton Report contains clear recommendations which will benefit wildlife and people. They provide a ‘repair manual’ to help re-build nature. Our Strategic Plan addresses these recommendations.

We will continue the recent advances in improving the condition of key wildlife sites, particularly our Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Beyond these are a large number of surviving patches of valuable wildlife habitat, for example Local Wildlife Sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Importance). We will take steps to upscale the positive management of these sites and ensure effective links to local planning systems to ensure their long term protection.

Some of these will be sites managed by the Trust itself, many others are privately and publicly owned, so we cannot hope to achieve these changes by ourselves. However – working with partners – we can develop a plan that will see Surrey’s key sites become more resilient by forming part of a cohesive ecological network of connected sites.

THE NEED FOR NETWORKS

There have already been notable successes: many valuable nature reserves have been identified, protected and well managed for conservation and enjoyment, and these continue to provide secure havens for wildlife. For many species, having long been lost from everywhere else, such reserves remain their only home. But increasingly we realise that protecting just key sites is not enough: their isolation means wildlife populations are fragmented, making them more vulnerable.

The solution lies in restoring the ability for species to migrate and adapt. Of course we cannot recreate the vast swathes of natural habitat of 100 years ago across Surrey, and this is not our goal. But we can focus on creating wildlife corridors and ecological networks.

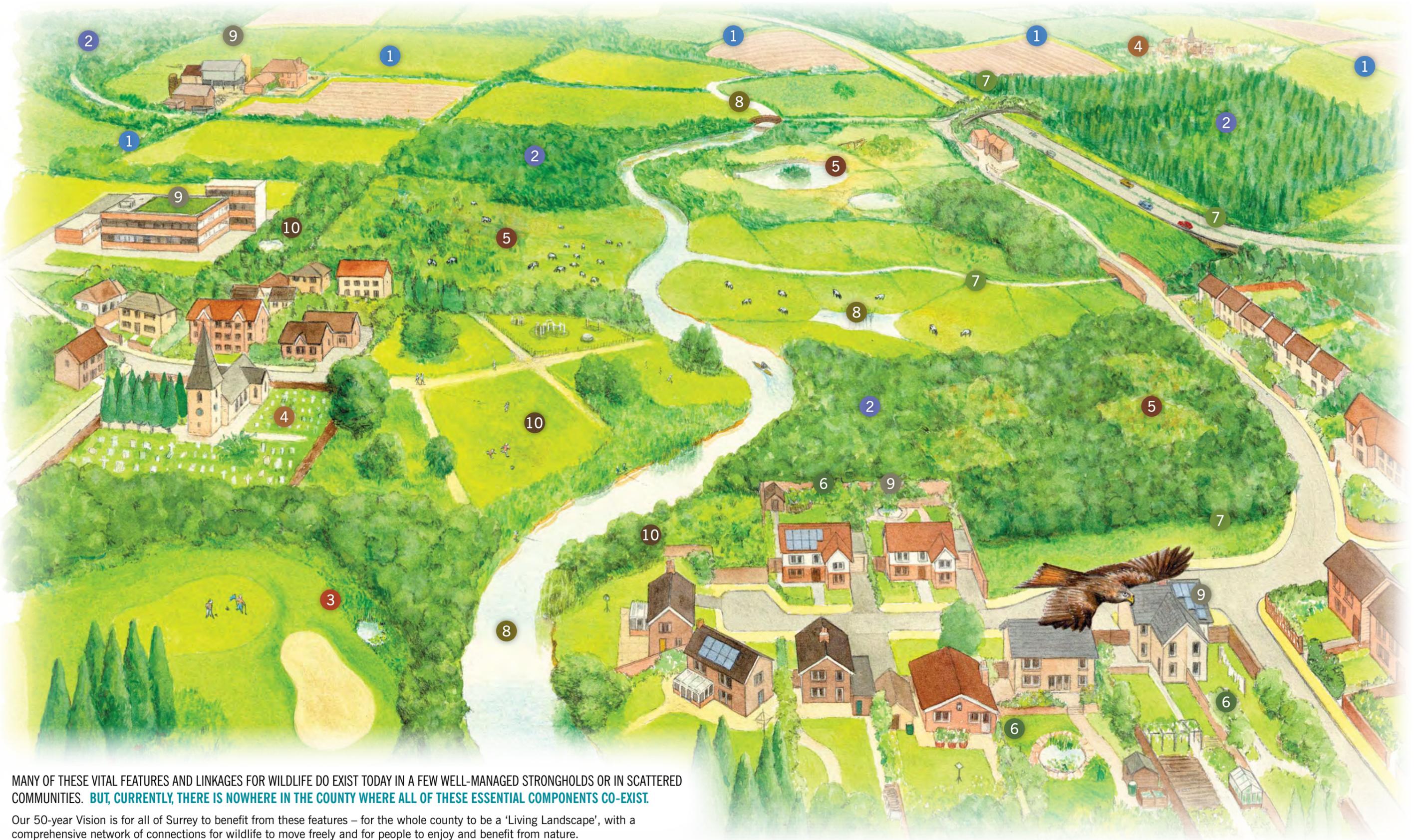
The proper planning of wildlife networks will include identifying and mapping existing sites, prioritising habitat restoration programmes and creating ecological linkages.

WHAT IS A LIVING LANDSCAPE?

A Living Landscape is a place where people and wildlife live comfortably alongside each other. A place where wildlife is not confined to a few beautiful but isolated nature reserves, but is able to move around amongst us. It is a place where nature thrives, and we live better because of nature.

We will develop – with partners and through a series of steps – a long-term programme which will produce a true ‘Living Landscape’ across our county. In this landscape, Surrey’s key wildlife sites will be cared for, conserved, and enjoyed, but will be much more resilient by forming part of a mosaic of interconnected sites. These interconnected sites will form a functioning ecological network, where wildlife can move and thrive.

“ ON THE FOLLOWING 2 PAGES WE HAVE ILLUSTRATED JUST HOW WONDERFUL SURREY WILL BE WHEN THIS VISION IS ACHIEVED AND SPECIES ARE ABLE TO MOVE THROUGH A WILDLIFE-RICH COUNTRYSIDE. FOLLOWING THAT ARE 6 PAGES SUMMARISING OUR 9 STRATEGIC GOALS. ”



MANY OF THESE VITAL FEATURES AND LINKAGES FOR WILDLIFE DO EXIST TODAY IN A FEW WELL-MANAGED STRONGHOLDS OR IN SCATTERED COMMUNITIES. **BUT, CURRENTLY, THERE IS NOWHERE IN THE COUNTY WHERE ALL OF THESE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS CO-EXIST.**

Our 50-year Vision is for all of Surrey to benefit from these features – for the whole county to be a ‘Living Landscape’, with a comprehensive network of connections for wildlife to move freely and for people to enjoy and benefit from nature.

- 1** PERMEABLE FARMLAND

- traditionally managed hedgerows, ditches and field margins, riverbank buffer-strips, new field ponds and linking shelter-belts: all re-connecting the landscape and allowing wildlife to move.
- 2** MANAGED NATIVE WOODLANDS

- reinstated coppice management cycles, driven by a local and sustainably-paced demand for wood fuel and hardwood timber products.
- 3** GOLF COURSE NATURE RESERVES

- roughs and fairways managed to support wildlife, new features such as tree-lines and wetland hazards, self-sufficient irrigation and declining use of damaging fertilisers and pesticides.
- 4** CHURCHYARD WILDLIFE

- ancient relict pastures mown so as to sustain wildflowers, havens for rare mosses and lichens on headstones, belfry bat roosts: a place where nature can also rest in peace.
- 5** NATURE RESERVES

- exemplars of balanced and well-informed wildlife management, extended widely through advice and negotiation with adjacent landholders, such as farmers, timber-growers and departing aggregates companies.
- 6** WILDLIFE GARDENING

- imagine every Surrey gardener helping the wildlife on their patch! Wildflower lawns, bird feeders, nest-boxes, composting and vegetable growing transforming Surrey’s 12% of back-garden land.
- 7** TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AS WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

- road verges, green bridges, rail-sides and canals, managed as natural highways letting wildlife migrate throughout the landscape.
- 8** RIVER CORRIDORS

- restored to function more naturally within their floodplain, with enhanced water quality, water meadows, reinstated meanders and ox-bows, plus the removal of migratory barriers.
- 9** WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- with green roofs and walls, on-site surface drainage schemes and grey water recycling, as well as bespoke wildlife habitat enhancements for nesting birds and roosting bats.
- 10** COMMUNITY GREENSPACES & SCHOOL GROUNDS

- with playing field margins and habitat corners supporting more tree-cover, strips of long grass and meadows, wildlife ponds and outdoor nature study areas.

Strategic Goals

FORWARD THINKING



Ecological study
J. Hawkins

Theme 1

SCIENCE

1 LIVING LANDSCAPES

Through the implementation of our 5-year Living Landscapes Strategy we will continue to 'Conserve, Create, Connect and Celebrate' the natural environment of Surrey as outlined in our 2011 Living Landscapes Policy Statement.

We will refine the existing Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs), including urban BOAs and river catchments, in order to plan cohesive ecological networks and prioritise our Living Landscape activities. We will use these networks to influence landowners, local authorities and other key partners to achieve co-ordinated landscape scale management.

We will articulate the importance and value of the services provided to Surrey by a healthy natural environment – Nature's Services – and promote understanding of the natural environment as an essential asset supporting both the economy and our health and well-being.

2 RESEARCH

Through the implementation of our 5-year Research Strategy we will take a practical evidence-based approach to underpin all our decision making. We will proactively instigate research projects that help us to develop the implementation of our landscape scale approach, e.g. by developing a suite of indicators for monitoring Living Landscapes projects.

As part of the delivery of our charitable objective to study our natural heritage, we will strengthen our relationships with academic partners.

We will promote the use of the land we manage as an outdoor laboratory for the further advancement of science. We will continue to communicate the results of the research we undertake to our stakeholders to promote the importance of research-based decision making.

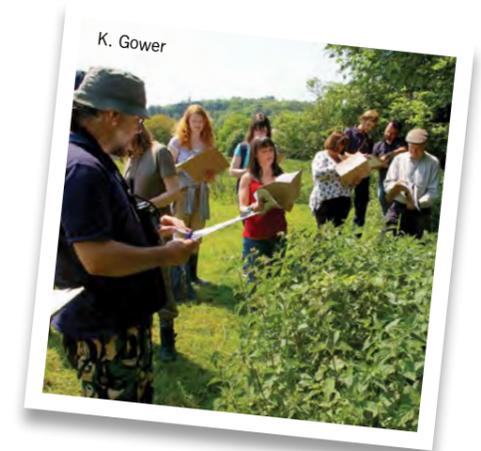
3 SURREY NATURE PARTNERSHIP

Surrey has a rich heritage of wildlife, valued by both residents and visitors. It is a popular place to live and work, and is an economic powerhouse that supports the national economy.

Inevitably, there will be some tension between maintaining a growing economy while also ensuring Surrey's vital ecosystem services (Nature's Services) can thrive. This is where the Surrey Nature Partnership (SyNP) can play a crucial role. SyNP will help make more informed decisions about the natural environment by bringing together expertise and senior figures to ensure that decisions protect and enhance the natural environment.

SWT is a lead partner, with Surrey County Council, in developing the SyNP and we will continue to support and guide the development of the Partnership over the next 5 years.

“ BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS (BOAs) ARE LARGE TRACTS WHERE CONSERVATION ACTION IS LIKELY TO DELIVER THE GREATEST BENEFIT. WE WILL REFINE THE EXISTING BOAs, TO IDENTIFY KEY SITES, MAP ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS AND PLAN THE WILDLIFE NETWORK. ”



K. Gower

Theme 2

LAND

1 EXEMPLARY LAND MANAGEMENT

Our goal is to deliver exemplary management of all land managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust, and also to promote best practice management of land for wildlife and people across the county.

Surrey is the most wooded county in England, so implementing a Sustainable Woodland Management Policy is a priority. Conservation grazing is another important management technique, which the Trust started in 2007 with three animals. We now have a herd of over 300, and aim to make the project fully self-sustaining by 2017.

The level of public funding and external grants available to manage the land is increasingly under threat, so the Trust is working to implement a business model which maximises income from our managed landholdings, using methods that do not compromise our conservation aims.

We manage substantial landholdings for key partners, including Surrey County Council, Mole Valley District Council, and the Ministry of Defence. Naturally, we are focused on delivering a high standard of service to these partnership agreements.

2 INFLUENCE LAND USE

We want to build on our experience and expertise by encouraging other land owners to manage land for nature conservation through the creation of wildlife networks and a living landscape.

To do this we need to improve our own profile as exemplary land managers by explaining significant land management achievements, e.g. where we have achieved targets for improved condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), or where we have worked successfully with partners to improve connectivity between sites.

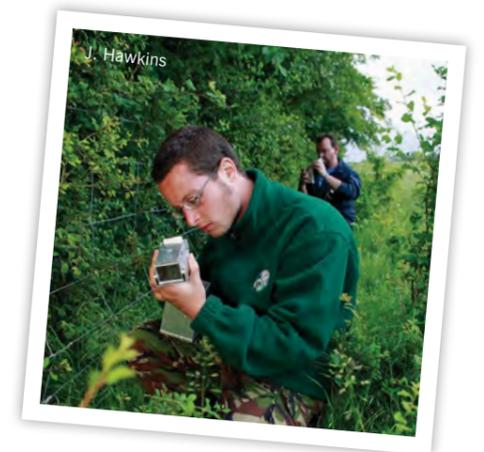
Our target in the next 5 years is to select two key BOAs within Surrey and work with other landowners to achieve improvements in managing land for conservation and connectivity. We will also aim to encourage Local Authorities to adopt conservation policies and recognise the importance of connectivity and BOAs within their 'core strategies'.

3 PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT

Attracting visitors to SWT sites and enthusing them about the natural world is a vital part of our work. We aim to deliver an outstanding visitor experience and one that leaves a positive impression of the Surrey countryside, SWT and our partners.

We plan to progressively improve the facilities that are used to educate and engage visitors at key sites. Elsewhere our Rangers and People & Wildlife Officers will work to encourage communities to become more actively involved in their local sites and greenspaces to develop a greater appreciation of nature and an enhanced understanding of land management.

“ WE PROTECT AND RESTORE WILDLIFE HABITATS TO DEMONSTRATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND THE VALUE OF WELL MANAGED SITES. WE WILL DEVELOP OUR INFLUENCE ON LAND USE BY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO MANAGE AND CONNECT KEY SITES. ”



Belted Galloway
J. Adler



Theme 3

PEOPLE

1 CENTRES BASED EDUCATION

Wildlife Education is one of SWT's key objectives, and our Education Centres are key to our success in reaching 15,000 children and young people a year through our Outdoor Learning programmes.

Our goal is to significantly extend our reach across Surrey in the next five years. We are well underway with plans to rebuild the classrooms at our flagship Education Centre Nower Wood, and are actively seeking to develop a new Outdoor Learning facility in West Surrey.

The Nower Wood New Build project is both costly and complex, but will deliver significant benefits: improved efficiency, environmentally friendly facilities, an extra classroom and a longer teaching season. We have already raised almost a third of the £450,000 needed, through the generosity of our members, major gifts and grants. During the build we will provide temporary accommodation for staff, volunteers and schools, and carry out mitigation work to secure the range of protected species.

2 OUTDOOR LEARNING

SWT is already a leading provider of Outdoor Learning and Forest Schools. Our goal is to cement and develop this success. We aim to promote the spread of Outdoor Learning by building a wider understanding of how vital it is for our children to spend time outdoors and interact with nature.

Forest Schools is an inspirational process that offers children and young people regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning in a woodland environment. We aim to become the premier provider of Forest Schools and Outdoor Learning in Surrey, by extending our scope and raising the standard of our current provision.

Success will be measured by the number of additional children engaged, and a steadily growing percentage of schools across Surrey whose children benefit from Outdoor Learning.

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Five years ago, SWT embarked on the ambitious £750,000 Surrey Greenspace Project, with funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Councils of Woking, Guildford, and Reigate & Banstead. The Trust now employs a team of eight People & Wildlife staff and has successfully run over 1700 events and engaged an estimated 25,000 members of the public over the first 4½ years of the project.

Our goal is to further broaden the number of people who engage in outdoor activities. By holding accessible and exciting events across a wider range of communities, we can help more people to benefit from engagement with nature and develop an interest in wildlife. We are already in touch with most of Surrey's Local Councils, and we will be approaching the rest as part of our 5-Year Plan.

“ WE WILL FURTHER EXTEND OUR INSPIRATIONAL WILDLIFE EDUCATION AND ENGAGING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES TO EDUCATE AND INFLUENCE THE PUBLIC, IN PARTICULAR TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO REALISE THE VALUE OF THE NATURAL WORLD. ”



Getting muddy
J. Norman

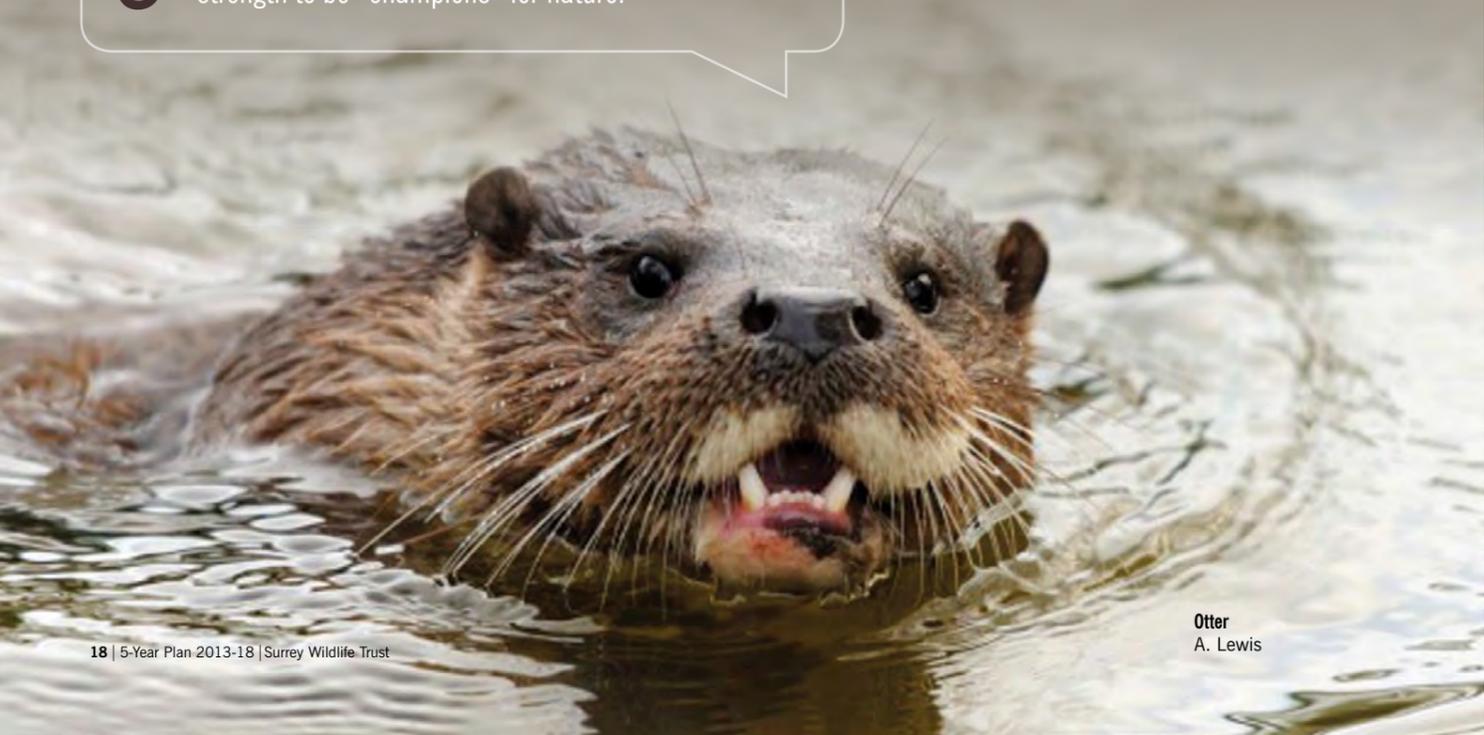
A. Clarke

Looking Ahead

REALISING OUR VISION

IN 5 YEARS TIME WE WILL HAVE IN PLACE:

- 1 A robust Living Landscapes strategy, underpinned by sound scientific research, with clear and specific goals designed to create cohesive ecological networks;
- 2 A number of key landscape-scale projects in progress, with initial key goals achieved and successes recorded;
- 3 Exemplary land management examples which showcase our Vision and highlight how much can be achieved, especially on heathland, woodland and wetlands;
- 4 Many more children and adults across Surrey who are involved with and value nature through our inspirational education and community engagements;
- 5 Key partners who value the economic benefits of the environment and partners who have the corporate strength to be “champions” for nature.



Otter
A. Lewis

HOW WE DELIVER ADDED VALUE...

IT IS REALISTIC TO ASK HOW A LOCAL COUNTY CHARITY SUCH AS SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST CAN HOPE TO ACHIEVE A RESULT ON SUCH A COMMANDING SCALE.

Naturally we cannot expect to achieve this magnificent outcome by ourselves. The answer lies in the ability of the Trust to inspire and harness the combined efforts of partners, communities, schools, local authorities and individuals across the whole of Surrey.

There are 3 key areas where the Trust delivers significant added value. These will be crucial to the overall success of our Strategic Plan:

1 PARTNERSHIP

We can only achieve our goals if we work in partnership with others. Our Vision is simply not achievable without widespread public support and collaboration. Local authorities, communities, statutory agencies, farmers, landowners, voluntary agencies and businesses will all need to play a role. SWT is well placed to provide leadership and supportive influence across these sectors.

Areas of focus include working with local authorities to agree a more joined-up approach to planning for nature, as well as encouraging greener design in our towns and cities. SWT already plays a key role in many partnership initiatives, playing a leading role in the Surrey Nature Partnership, the Wey Valley Partnership and the SWT Grazing Project.

Our work over the next 5 years will continue to nurture and develop existing and new partnerships, to work with people who share our values and who want to make a positive difference to the natural landscape of Surrey.

2 VOLUNTEERING

SWT's work is impossible without our dedicated, passionate and capable volunteers. We recognise their value and strive to ensure they operate within a culture which is friendly, inclusive, respectful and safe. We aim for volunteers to feel a unity with staff, understand the workings and structure of the Trust, and feel they can voice opinions and concerns freely.

Within our Strategic Plan we aim to:

- improve communications by introducing a quarterly e-newsletter to update volunteers on activities within the Trust;
- develop and broaden opportunities for volunteering across all areas of SWT;
- connect communities to countryside sites to facilitate greater volunteer participation and interest in site management;
- develop our volunteer training programmes, adding accreditation and certification for Volunteers e.g. Trainee Rangers.

3 MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Each £ that the Trust spends on staff and projects leverages significant additional value. The result is a beneficial impact of each pound multiplied many times over.

FOR EXAMPLE:

£40,000 a year spent on our Environmental Groups project =

- 16** events with...
- 430** attendees;
- 234** children engaged;
- 16** practical tasks;
- 8** wildlife training courses delivered;
- 116** individuals trained;
- 13** talks given to...
- 457** people;
- 6** sites surveyed;
- 3** newsletters a year to...
- 150** environmental groups;
- 38** groups helped with advice and practical guidance;
- 3** new churchyard groups visited, leading to...
- 2** new wildflower meadows;
- 3** community orchards and...
- 5** more wildflower meadows;
- 1,000** trees planted;
- 15** partner organisations worked with to control invasive species on...
- 13** sites with over...
- 100** volunteers.

“ SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST WAS FORMED 52 YEARS AGO TO CARE FOR SURREY’S NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND ALL FORMS OF WILDLIFE. DESPITE DEDICATED HARD WORK AND MANY SUCCESSES, MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE TO SECURE A HEALTHY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE FUTURE. SWT’S 5-YEAR PLAN WILL DRIVE POSITIVE ACTION TO DELIVER A TRUE LIVING LANDSCAPE ACROSS SURREY. ”



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Cover images: E. Neep

