



Environment and Transport Select Committee
13th March 2014

Countryside Management Transformation Programme

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services and Budgets/Performance Management/Policy Development and Review

Following the report to the Select Committee on 23rd October 2013, this is an update on the latest position on the Countryside Management Transformation Programme. Significant progress has been made in three key areas: the formation of the collaborative group, the review of the management of the Rural Estate and the review of the Surrey Wildlife Trust Agreement.

Introduction:

1. Appendix 1 sets out the complete picture of where each of the projects within the programme are now. This report will focus on three main areas of work. Establishing a high level collaborative group to deliver key areas of work on the ground, the review of management of the rural estate and a review of the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) Agreement with Surrey County Council (SCC) to ensure it is fit for the future.

Collaboration in Countryside Management

1. The countryside collaboration group has met three times and become a strong grouping with an independent chairman from the business sector along with strong support from a range of organisations. The current membership is included in Appendix 2 along with the report that went to the meeting of 17th February in Appendix 3. The Group will now be known as the Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum (SCREF). The membership includes the Chairman of this Select Committee, along with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport and his Associate for Environmental Services. However care has been taken to ensure it has a dominance of external bodies and is only facilitated by the County Council.
2. At that meeting it was agreed that five working groups would now take the lead in bringing together elements of work on the woodland economy, environmental education, visitor economy, food and drink produced in Surrey and landscape and habitat management.

Review of the Rural Estate

2. Knight Frank have now produced their report on the current management of the Rural Estate, which has informed an internal report on the future management of the rural estate.
3. The internal report to the Strategic Director has now been considered and a decision taken to bring the day to day management of the Smallholdings Estate managed by property services back in house with the potential to access external specialist advice when necessary. The review notes the potential to combine the estate management of the Smallholdings Estate and the property managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust.
4. A decision on the management of the latter will be taken following negotiations with Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Review of the Agreement with Surrey Wildlife Trust to Manage the Countryside Estate.

1. The negotiations with Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) have been delayed awaiting the report on the future management of the Rural Estate and a draft business plan for the Countryside Estate. These have both now been produced and formal negotiations have started.
2. Negotiations will focus on the future management of the built property, governance of the Agreement, monitoring the delivery of the Agreement and the generation of increased income from the Estate to make it self-sustaining.
3. The Negotiating Team is working closely with the Cabinet Member and his Associate and will liaise with this Select Committee's Member Reference Group.

Recommendations:

5. That the Committee
 - a) Notes the progress to date
 - b) Comments on that progress

Next steps:

- Formal negotiations with SWT have commenced and will be reported to this Committee's Member Reference Group including the future agreement in management of the built property.
- Progress of the countryside collaboration group will be reported to the Select Committee

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Sources/background papers:

Countryside Management Task Group Report: Report on Progress, report to ETSC on Friday 19th July 2013

Countryside Management Task Group Report: Report on Progress, report to ETSC on 23rd October 2013

Appendix 1

Countryside Management Transformation Programme February 2014 Update

Project	Progress Last Month	Progress for Next Month	Issues and new/increased risks
1: Revision of the SWT Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower start than anticipated regarding negotiation with SWT due to SWT not wanting to share their business plan with SCC yet • Started engagement with SWT regarding renegotiation of the agreement • Continued to develop options for governance , property, service delivery specification, financial proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop more robust governance; develop property, service delivery specification and financial proposal to discuss with SWT • Negotiate contents of SWT business plan • Progress and complete negotiation with SWT • Negotiate Heads of Terms for the revision of the agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow engagement from SWT means that negotiations did not start as hoped. It is currently unclear how much of an impact on completion date this delay will have. Issues are being addressed but RAG status has changed to amber.
2: Establishment of an Asset Management Plan for SCC' rural estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options and business case for rural property management developed by Property Services. Proposal currently with Julie Fisher and due to go to Tony Samuels for review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree way forward for the future management of the rural estate, based on proposal from Property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay due to surveyors report later than expected and therefore Property report delayed too. The end date of the project is delayed by over 3 months and RAG status is now amber
3: Establishment of the Surrey Nature Partnership (SyNP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further progress since last update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board workshop on establishing purpose, key issues to tackle and issue prioritisation. Develop terms of reference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall progress much slower than anticipated. Project RAG status remains amber.

4: Redefinition of SRP and Surrey Rural Strategy	To be defined at later stage		
5: Establishment of a countryside communication plan for Surrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have been identifying key audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will be identifying potential tactics and website and social media tactics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no new risks
6: Leadership of the development of the wood fuel market in Surrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWT Woodland management taking place in Sheepleas woodland and further assessments at other sites Further potential tenant for wood hub identified by Sean Harrison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expression of interest to LEPs for woodland economy activity (by 14th Feb), to be developed in conjunction with Countryside Collaborative Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no new risks
7: Support the establishment of the governance and management plan of the Surrey Hills AONB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysing comments received on Management Plan consultation Governance work on hold until Constitution agreed in April 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised version of the Management Plan to be approved by the AONB Board and then by each partner authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance work will start later than anticipated. This will lead to end of project being delayed.
8: Countryside Access Service Delivery Improvement Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CAMS: SCC Applications Team preparing network/additional server for CAMS system to be loaded onto network. Waiting for supplier to give quotes for additional data migration work Bank staff: Post advertised and short listed. Outstanding work has been reviewed, establishing potential diversions for approximately first half of 2014/15 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CAMS: Programme Board meeting scheduled in Feb to review progress against Project Implementation Plan. (PID). Will need to chase up supplier for data mitigation quotes. Bank Staff: Interviews scheduled for 11/02/15. Appoint successful candidate. Commence employment as soon as possible. Estimate - March. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CAMS: Cost of additional data migration not known at present. Bank staff: None known <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall: Project running slightly behind schedule due to earlier issues regarding CAMS contract approval and bank staff recruitment starting later than planned. However project stays green as savings target does not start until 2014-15.

<p>9: Identification and Establishment of plans for Surrey's Iconic Locations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newlands Corner project brief available and agreed but will now be led by the Surrey Countryside Management Collaboration Group (now known as Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up project team and governance • Develop and agree project plan and roles and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to be on track to have outline project plans produced and project groups identified for each site by Feb 2014 as originally anticipated
<p>10: Countryside Management Partnerships – implementation of business plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff consultation documents drafted. Waiting for HR/Legal advice ▪ Partner meetings held with Elmbridge; LB Croydon; LB Sutton and Tandridge DC ▪ Meetings arranged with all remaining partners ▪ Critical path drafted to close out staff reorganisation and deliver revised governance model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete partner meetings ▪ Launch staff consultation ▪ Formally launch business plan ▪ Convene shadow Officers Steering Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No new risks or issues identified ▪ Project had previously stalled due to dependency with E&I Future. Consultation has now resumed but overall timescales have been slightly pushed back from original plans, hence the amber status.

Appendix 2

Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum Membership

Brief Paragraphs About the Organisations on the Countryside Management Collaboration Group	
Group	Role of the Organisation
Country Land And Business Association (CLA)	<p>The CLA exists specifically to protect and defend the interests of all landowners in England and Wales. Membership of the CLA helps to protect, enhance and develop a member's assets whether they are land, business, property, wealth or a commitment to the countryside.</p> <p>In addition to their wide range of activities the CLA focuses on the following objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defending private property rights in England and Wales and insisting on compensation when private property rights are diminished in any way: The CLA will work to minimise the impact of statutory public access provisions and promote the benefits of an incentive-led voluntary approach whether this is access to coastal areas, rivers or woodland and we will campaign to secure a reform of existing compulsory purchase law and practice to improve the terms that are offered when land is taken for public purposes. • Championing the profitability of rural businesses: CLA emphasises to all levels of Government that the basic building block of the rural economy must be profitable farming and forestry and other rural businesses. Many strands of our work have this aim in mind. For example, we seek to maintain the size of the CAP budget, to reduce red tape and to reform the planning and tax regimes so as to stimulate rural economic development. • Promoting the role of land owners and managers in delivering landscape, biodiversity and mitigating climate change: We will build on our success to date in making the case that only farmers and land managers can provide food while at the same time delivering a healthy and natural environment.
Forestry Commission	<p>England is the Government's NDPB (non departmental public body) tasked with protecting, improving and expanding England's woodlands.</p> <p>We:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage the public forest estate (of which there is around 1,523ha in Surrey); - Administer the Government's regulations and grants for other woods - a further 40,000ha in Surrey; - Work with a range of partners and offer professional advice to help landowners achieve their aspirations from their own woods while managing them sustainably to continue to deliver the wider range of benefits they provide for society, the environment and the economy. <p>Surrey is England's most wooded county with almost 25%</p>

	<p>woodland cover where trees and woods play a huge part in the character of local landscapes which are so highly valued by both residents and visitors. However, over the last century the culture of woodland management has deteriorated and many of our treasured woods are not actively managed resulting in their increasing vulnerability to pests, diseases, storms and climate change, reducing ecological diversity and reduced value to the local economy. However, the ever growing appreciation of the value of our trees and woods offers an opportunity to work together to restore Surrey's woodland culture and deliver a huge range of benefits for local people.</p>
National Farmers Union	<p>The NFU has 55,000 members representing more than 70% of full time farmers. Our role is to champion farming in England and Wales, to provide professional representation on behalf of our farmer and grower members, and to provide professional services to our members. The NFU's local representatives in Surrey are Anthony Posnett based at Milford, and Helen Kirby and Charlotte Williams based at Oxted. The NFU's County Adviser for Surrey is Sandra Nichols who is based at the regional office in Petersfield, Hampshire, where she is supported by a regional environment and land use adviser, communications adviser and support staff.</p>
National Trust, Surrey Hills	<p>The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty is a charitable organisation dedicated to the conservation of this country's heritage. Central to the organisation is the ownership of countryside to which there is open access. Our role is to facilitate enjoyment of the countryside by provision of appropriate infrastructure (such as car parks, signage, interpretation) and to conserve wildlife and habitats through agreed management techniques particularly as much of our land is SSSI or SAC/SPA. We employ a ranger service over our estates to ensure suitable professional countryside management. Currently the National Trust (NT) is running a programme called Getting Outside and Closer to Nature, encouraging more outdoors activities over NT land and this gives rise to support for all forms of active outdoor activity, adventure, discovery and learning. Our priority habitats in the Surrey Hills are chalk grassland, lowland heath and deciduous woodland.</p>
Surrey Countryside Access Forum	<p>The Surrey Countryside Access Forum was established by Surrey County Council under section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act). The function of the Forum is to advise the County Council and other relevant bodies on the improvement of public access to land, including rights of way, in Surrey for the purposes of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. All bodies specified by or under section 94, including local authorities, have a statutory duty to have regard to the advice of the Forum. Although the Forum is administered by Surrey County Council it is in all other respects entirely independent.</p>

<p>Surrey Community Action</p>	<p>Surrey Community Action acts as the Rural Community Council (RCC) for Surrey. We are a member of the Rural Community Action Network across England and we work with our partners over the borders in Hampshire and Sussex as well as others, to provide comprehensive links across geographical areas and between grass roots activity and national advocacy. We aim to support community-led action and strong local governance in rural communities, increase the long-term sustainability of rural community life and to influence policies and services, particularly to achieve equity for rural communities. We achieve this by practical support to the Surrey Rural Partnership and our direct action across the towns and villages of Surrey. Amongst other things, we provide community buildings advice and support services and grant schemes; voluntary car and good neighbour schemes; and we work to support the creation of affordable rural housing. We also campaign on rural issues locally, regionally and nationally, and we engage closely with Local Enterprise Partnerships to represent the rural voice.</p>
<p>Surrey County Council Countryside Service</p>	<p>Surrey County Council Countryside Service spends £2.6 million managing the 3400 kilometres of public rights of way, Basingstoke Canal and the County Council’s Countryside Estate. Some of this role is statutory, with the rest discretionary; all of the work is to provide access for recreation, and protection and enhancement of the biodiversity and landscape for the people of Surrey. The County Council also acts as the accountable body for a number of partnerships including the Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey LEADER Programme, and the Downlands, Heathland and Lower Mole Countryside Management Partnerships. A key priority for the future is to generate an income from the Countryside Service to help maintain and enhance the service.</p>
<p>Surrey Hills AONB Family</p>	<p>Surrey Hills ‘Family’</p> <p>Background</p> <p>The Surrey Hills, one of the first landscapes to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958, stretches across a quarter of the county, including the chalk slopes of the North Downs from Farnham to Oxted and extends south to the Greensand Hills which rise in Haslemere. The Surrey Hills Board is responsible for overseeing the governance of the AONB with the ultimate aim of enhancing the beauty of the Surrey Hills as a wonderful place to live, work and visit.</p> <p>The organisations working together to achieve AONB objectives are known as ‘the AONB Family’ and consist of:</p> <p>Surrey Hills Board – established as a local authority Joint Committee with Core Members and Delivery Partners representing local authorities, Natural England and other</p>

	<p>interested parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Policy and Strategy lead (Management Plan) • Public sector lead and partnership working <p>Surrey Hills Trust Fund – newly established as a specific Fund administered by the Community Foundation for Surrey on behalf of the AONB and all those interested in the protection and enhancement of the Surrey Hills. Its key aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing long term legacy • Directing resources to Surrey Hills • Project promotion, events, PR, website, social media <p>Surrey Hills Enterprises CIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation and income generation through direct events and business member recruitment (c 50 business represented) • Trading and marketing local products, services and events (Regional/National Wood Fuels Conference; leading regional Wood Fair & Interreg-funded international wood promotion project + local food & drink promotions) • Surrey Hills Brand development • Website, business networking events and social media • Delivery of management plan objectives through projects <p>Surrey Hills Society – established as a charity with over 1000 individual members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of the Surrey Hills and other organisations • Getting the public involved through walks, talks, events etc • Providing a public facing newsletter, website, trailer, social media etc • Promoting projects in the Surrey Hills and encouraging volunteering
<p>Surrey Nature Partnership</p>	<p>Our vision is to ensure fully informed and educated decisions are made throughout Surrey and its surroundings; to see a healthy natural environment, continuing to contribute to and consciously linked with economic and social benefits.</p> <p>Surrey Nature Partnership is one of 48 Local Nature Partnerships mandated by Government in 2012 to provide a strategic, co-ordinating role for all those with an interest in the natural environment in Surrey.</p> <p>The Board comprises representatives of interests including, health, business, education and developers as well as nature conservation. The shadow Board has now met and will continue to develop the vision and practical ways of demonstrating it.</p>

<p>Surrey Rural Partnership</p>	<p>Established in 2007 to provide a Surrey forum to promote Surrey’s rural interests across the economy, the countryside and within communities. The membership includes public sector and private sector organisations which provide rural services and/or represent the interests of particular sectors of rural Surrey.</p> <p>The main aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide a focal point and leadership for rural matters through an active forum of organisations that represent Surrey’s diverse rural interests</i> • <i>To champion Surrey’s rural interests by influencing and monitoring strategies and programmes which impact upon rural Surrey</i> • <i>To attract inward investment from regional and national programmes to strengthen Surrey’s rural communities, economy and countryside.</i> <p>Since 2007, SRP has secured funding to strengthen the county’s rural economy and rural communities which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrey Hills LEADER Programme = supported 101 projects with £1.6m grant funding which attracted investment in excess of £5.6m into rural Surrey. Includes 6 new businesses start ups, 65 new jobs and 246 jobs supported. A bid for the new Programme is currently being worked up. • Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP) , attracted £211,810 distributed to 29 projects. • Surrey Rural Towns Programme £390,550 which £722,800 worth of investment to 6 rural towns in Surrey (Cranleigh, Leatherhead, Dorking, Caterham, Haslemere and Godalming <p>SRP Members were involved in producing the Surrey Rural Strategy 2010-2015 and also published the Surrey Farm Study 3 in 2009.</p> <p>SRP currently organises an annual Autumn Meeting with keynote speakers and an opportunity for group discussion on topics which are considered of pertinent interest.</p> <p>SRP has a Strategic Advisory Group which meets on a regular basis made up of individuals representing some of the membership. :</p> <p>Priorities for the future include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bid for the next LEADER application Farm Study 4 to update the baseline data Working with the LEPs to ensure a share of the rural funding comes to Surrey
<p>Surrey Wildlife Trust</p>	<p>Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) is a registered charity and the largest of the 47 trusts in the UK that make up the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, the national body. The Trust’s three key objectives are: Land and habitat management for people and wildlife, outdoor education and environmental</p>

	<p>research. The Trust has an annual turnover of just under £5 million, employs over 120 people and through long term contracts (mainly with MoD and SCC) manages nearly 5% of the land area of Surrey – 8,276 Ha. The Charity has nearly 31,000 members (around 3% of the county's population) and is supported by over 1,000 regular volunteers who provide nearly 10,500 man days of voluntary work a year - 40 FTE. The Trust also sees some 15,000 children annually through its Environmental Education Centres and schools and community outreach programmes.</p> <p>Despite its population density The Trust's vision is to create a 'living landscape' in Surrey with more interconnected reserves and 'green corridors' which provide sustainable habitats for wildlife. The Trust aims to demonstrate exemplary land management and work in partnership with many other environmental charities and bodies including all Surrey Local Authorities. The Trust also provides a number of related services e.g. to collect evidence and monitor species diversity, to influence local and regional decision making and to promote environmental educational services.</p>
<p>VisitSurrey</p>	<p>Visit Surrey Community Interest Company (CIC) is the official Destination Marketing/ Management Organisation (DMO) for Surrey. It is our aim to promote Surrey as a great visitor destination, highlighting and broadening the profile of Surrey to England and wider, showcasing the wonderful, attractions, events, restaurants and accommodation providers across Surrey.</p> <p>The visitor economy in Surrey is worth approximately £2bn annually, supporting around 33,000 jobs across the county. Surrey is a hidden gem in the south-east, with 4 nationally important racecourses, important attractions such as Painshill, Brooklands Museum, RHS Wisley and Watts Gallery, wonderful accommodation such as the Radisson in Guildford and Pennyhill Park in Bagshott and a range of outdoor pursuits in the superb Surrey Countryside, ranging from walking to the paintballing and mountain biking.</p> <p>Visitors to Surrey are a mix of local residents and incoming visitors from around Britain and across the world, however local people from the majority of visitors, in particular for day trip visits. Surrey has a vibrant day trip economy, but also sees many visitors for both business trips and weekend leisure breaks. Our aim is to focus on these sectors and entice potential visitors from within Surrey to stay local and also to entice visitors from both south London and those passing through to go to London to visit Surrey.</p> <p>The website, www.visitsurrey.com is the main focus for the CIC and our main tool for communicating to visitors. We average 60,000 unique visitors to the site each month rising to over 80,000 unique visitors per month in the summer. We work with partners within Surrey such as The University of Surrey, Guildford Tourist Information Centre and the Local Authorities and outside Surrey, Visit England and Visit Britain. To maximise what can be achieved we focus on our</p>

	<p>website, social media, attendance at shows, and partnership working. We currently work with the Surrey Hills AONB, the Surrey Hills Society and Surrey Hills Enterprises as well as the SCC Countryside team, and we are keen to develop all these relationships to reduce overlap of work and confusion to visitors.</p>
<p>Woodland Trust</p>	<p>Established in 1972 the Woodland Trust (the Trust, WT) is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. We own and manage 1,276 sites that cover over 23,580 hectares, all open to the public free of charge. Woods owned by the Trust are independently certified under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as being sustainably managed, and several have won Forestry Commission Awards for the highest standards in woodland management. In Surrey the Trust Estate is approximately 290ha (including sites leased to Third Parties) of which 114ha is SSSI and 82ha Ancient Semi Natural Woodland.</p> <p>Our vision: We want to see a country rich in native woods and trees enjoyed and valued by everyone. Supported by a steadily increasing membership, currently over 200,000, our mission is to realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create woodland, championing the need for a doubling of the UK's native woodland • Protect woodland, fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland. There should be no loss of ancient woodland for any reason • Restore woodland, ensuring the restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes <p>The WT's Council, made up of 11 Trustees, provides strategic direction for the organisation. Six departments support a Chief Executive: Woodland Operations, Public Affairs, Fundraising, Marketing and Communications, Corporate Services and Organisation Development. The WT employs 325 staff throughout the UK with 40% of staff working from home offices and the remainder based in offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In the South East we have a Woodland Operations Team of 6, plus a number of staff covering areas such as policy, fundraising, woodland creation and restoration.</p> <p>UK wide the Woodland Trust spends: On the core estate we have direct spend of £4.7M in 2012, £1.1M has been spent on woodland creation, £1.2M on biodiversity projects and some £2.4M on public access and engagement. This includes £400K on PAW's restoration projects and £500K on people engagement projects. £2.7M of forestry and agricultural grants and timber income was generated directly from the estate in 2012 covering some 55% of its direct costs. The estate features directly in public appeals and campaigns. It acts as a point of inspiration and</p>

	engagement with high donors, corporates and legators, and communities. We also seek grant from other funders such as HLF, Landfill Trusts and smaller Charitable Trusts.
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Appendix 3

Paper Taken to the Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Group on 17th February 2014 and agreed by the members.

Surrey Countryside Management Collaboration Group

ACTION PLAN – DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

This document has been drafted following individual consultation with as many as possible of those attending the initial meetings. It is intended as a draft to stimulate discussion and creative thought and it will need to evolve as more information becomes available.

‘The Flip-side of Austerity is Creativity’

In the current financial climate all organisations are facing continually diminishing public resources but we all value the countryside of Surrey, for its wildlife, landscape, economic value and its contribution to our quality of life, health and wellbeing. Because the world has changed and, along with the cut-backs, leadership at national and local level has also diminished, we have to find new ways of providing that leadership. We believe that by working together we can develop new, more creative solutions that will impact positively on the countryside and rural economy of Surrey. We cannot expect the County Council to drive this (though we are assured of their support). We must take the initiative ourselves if we are to ensure that our unique natural heritage has a future and, in so doing, we will also be providing a national exemplar for this new approach. This forms the basis of our Mission which will need to be developed into a clear statement – preferably at the first meeting.

You were invited to join this group as representatives of organisations and networks with an interest in countryside management and the future of Surrey with a view to developing a shared vision and identifying opportunities to collaborate. Our Ambition is not to form another layer of bureaucracy but to form a true partnership which will unite us in working actively to meet the challenges we are facing. This requires a paradigm shift in thinking. Those who share this ambition will need to commit time and resources to achieving the objectives outlined in our Mission. If however we are going to save on costs overall we will have to accept that shared responsibilities require shared knowledge as well as resources.

Group Title

We feel the previous working title fails to give enough emphasis to the economic imperatives or the importance of the proposed tasks. We therefore propose a new name for the Group along the lines of:

‘The Surrey Countryside & Rural Enterprise Forum’

This title contains the four key words that search engines would look for – though ‘Enterprise’ could be changed to ‘Economy’ or ‘Business’ with a subtle change of emphasis if such descriptors were preferred. ‘Forum’ is used to try and avoid too structured a set-up. The range of interests may well change as overall project priorities materialise and some organisations may be more or less active accordingly. Specific expertise and advice sources may also be invited to join for single meetings or short-term input.

Group Structure & Programme

At the last meeting it was thought that 2 meetings per year of the main Forum would be appropriate. We suggest that in addition there should be an ‘Away-day’ designed

to encourage creative thinking and reporting on individual and group initiatives. Further it was felt by several that the Forum should establish an Annual Countryside Conference (perhaps linking in existing gatherings too). This should also link Surrey with London so as to capture the interest of the commuter and visitor metropolitan population as well as local interests including Councillors, rural businesses, educationalists, health & well-being, etc. The Forum will have the role of advising the County Council and will have direct access to the Select Committee and the Cabinet Member with Countryside responsibility so as to ensure they are conversant with the issues and actions being addressed by the Forum and to make specific recommendations for consideration by SCC.

In establishing its priorities the Forum will need to clarify some concepts:

- What do we mean by 'countryside'?
- Can we agree a definition for 'rural enterprise'?
- What are the brands we need to promote? How do we define them and how are these currently perceived by stakeholders?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- How do we make sure we can all work together without 'territorial' issues and minimise duplication?
- Do we need to produce a diagrammatic 'road map' of who does what in our field? This could help to define areas of common interest so as to identify potential joint project themes.
- Any other core issues?

As the key aim of the Forum is to deliver work objectives, not just discussing theoretical concepts, the main workload is probably best delivered through work groups focussed on specific subjects. Such groups would need to be flexible, built round particular interests and skill-sets and maintain open channels to other groups so as to avoid any tendency to work in silos. Ideas for these submitted include:

- Visitor Economy – including Greenspace & Countryside Access? This group could be based on the existing work of Visit Surrey and incorporate the Explore Surrey programme linked to the extensive work being carried out by many organisations across the spectrum of rural interests.
- Woodland Group – encompassing promotion of ecologically sound Management, Awareness development and all aspects of the Woodland Economy
- Food & Drink Sector – producers and outlets
- Education – all ages + health & well-being
- Landscape & Habitat Management – including the Iconic Heathlands
- Communications Group – to establish a programme of awareness-building, brand development, lobbying and promoting national leadership. Surrey has a sophisticated and sales-resistant population which needs clear and compelling messages.

Note: These proposed groups will need to be confirmed and prioritised by the Forum and each will need to have defined objectives. Where a specific project requires input from more than one skill-set the groups will need to coalesce round that project to achieve effective progress. Alternative scenarios (such as where there is a common thread to all or part of the work across the groups) may need to be considered but it is probably better to keep the initial structure simple and let natural evolution point the way forward.

Each group will choose its own facilitator to coordinate the group and each facilitator would be part of an Executive Group if this was felt desirable.

In addition there is a need to co-ordinate and provide advice on the content and structure of bids for funding from the work groups to the LEPs and other sources. The Surrey Nature Partnership could develop this role working closely with existing expertise within the members (eg Forestry Commission & the SCC European Grants Officer). SNP would also be responsible for maintaining a strategic overview of who is developing what and feeding this to the Executive Committee which it could co-ordinate and chair.

Invitations to the CEOs of the 2 Surrey LEPs to meet with the Forum or the Executive Group might be considered as an early priority.

Our Vision

Following on from the early meetings of the Group and the subsequent discussions with most of the interested parties, we are developing a vision for the Surrey Countryside and Rural Economy building on what had been developed from the Task Group Review (though not constrained by this). The vision will evolve but currently includes:

- Conserving and enhancing the Countryside of Surrey - stewardship
- Greater collaborative working and communication with other organisations to maximise the impact of our limited resources and improve lobbying effectiveness.
- Surrey Nature Partnership becoming a key partner for the Environment in Surrey feeding into the LEPs and other key networks – helping all (but especially business) to understand the language of ‘nature’ and its economic and social impact.
- A better awareness and understanding of what Countryside Management is all about among visitors and residents.
- A combined understanding of the Environmental Education resource across the county; identifying strengths and weaknesses and seizing opportunities to build on the foundations established in recent years.
- A strong brand or suite of brands for Surrey, to promote to visitors – and residents. A clear and joined-up approach to marketing across all the organisations (and even within some organisations).
- A better network of visitor facilities at iconic sites across the county, e.g. Ockham and Wisley, Newlands Corner, Chobham Common, Leith Hill but also focussing on better interpretation of all habitat types to build understanding of value in historical, current and future contexts.
- Increased use of renewable energy in all suitable buildings (focusing on woodfuel as a key local resource) to increase the economic viability of woodland management across the county and support the supply chain with sites for wood fuel production (“hubs”)
- A Green Infrastructure strategy to link existing green space, and identify potential green space, to ensure that development doesn’t have a negative impact on the overall environment of the county and providing residents with easy access to green space and linking walking and cycling routes.

What Surrey County Council is Offering

The County Council is directly concerned with countryside management and access, including managing the Public Rights of Way Network. This includes 50 staff on full and part-time contracts delivering the service.

Areas of SCC activity relevant to the collaborative process and to which they have a strong commitment:

- An overview of Projects, collating what is going on across the County
- Communications and liaison with the public working through its existing structures
- Seeking collective funding opportunities & supporting bids
- Strategy setting with members of the Group
- Bringing key people, especially decision-makers, together
- Information sharing
- Possible financial support in cash or kind