

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board  
8 March 2019**

**Present:** Councillor Jonathan Glen, Hampshire County Council  
Councillor Mike Goodman, Surrey County Council  
Councillor Edwards Hawkins, Surrey Heath Borough Council  
Councillor David Hilton, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead  
Councillor Barbara Hurst, Rushmoor Borough Council  
Councillor Angus Ross, Wokingham Borough Council  
Councillor Chris Storey, Waverley Borough Council  
Councillor Chris Turrell, Bracknell Forest Borough Council

**In Attendance:** Sarah Bunce, Natural England  
Julie Gil, Bracknell Forest Borough Council  
Michelle Leek, Natural England  
Anna Lucas, Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath SPA Mitigation Project  
Jenny Rickard, Surrey Heath Borough Council  
Debbie Salmon, Rushmoor Borough Council  
Robert Sarfas, Hampshire County Council  
Jennifer Wadham, Hampshire County Council

**Apologies:** Ann Conquest, Natural England  
Councillor Moira Gibson, Surrey Heath Borough Council  
Councillor Richard Billington, Guildford Borough Council  
Councillor John Edwards, Surrey County Council  
Councillor Gail Kingerley, Runnymede Borough Council  
Tina Lamour, RSPB  
Heather Lewis, Surrey Wildlife Trust  
Councillor James Radley, Hart Borough Council  
Andrew Smith, Natural England  
Marc Turner, Natural England

**25 Vote of Thanks**

The Board was informed that Councillor Moira Gibson had decided to step down as Leader of Surrey Heath Council and would not be seeking re-election at the end of her current term of office in May.

A statement was read out to the meeting on Councillor Gibson's behalf in which she thanked Board members, advisory organisations and supporting officers for all they had done to set up the Partnership and deliver the Board's strategic aims and objectives.

The Board moved a vote of thanks to Councillor Gibson expressing their gratitude for the guidance that she had given to the Partnership over the years and in particular during the Committee's early days as it was finding its feet.

**26 Appointment of Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Hawkins be elected chairman.

**COUNCILLOR HAWKINS IN THE CHAIR**

## 27 Minutes of Previous Meeting

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

## 28 Strategic Access Management Monitoring Project Update

The Board received a report providing an update on the work taking place as part of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project. The report summarised the project's activities and achievements since Board's September meeting and included updates on staffing and recruitment, warden activity, SANG visitor surveys, access to SPA land, educational work and monitoring activities.

Key highlights included:

- The new Education and Engagement Officer was now in post and the creation of a new education programme was underway.
- The Ground Nesting Bird Season had started on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019
- 1,107 hours of wardening activity had been completed and 1,942 leaflets and guides had been distributed to visitors.
- Details of the decline in visitor numbers recorded by the 2018 visitor survey would be circulated.
- Development of the Thames Basin Heath Partnership website continued with the inclusion of a comprehensive directory of the SANG sites that could be visited, a Meet the Team section, links to partners' websites and the regular publication of blogs on a variety of subjects including promotion of different sites across the area, habitat management, the flora and fauna that could be found on the heaths and publicising key messages and engagement activities.
- The Greenspace on your Doorstep booklet had been rewritten to provide updated information, better photographs and information about new SANG sites. It was agreed that copies would be circulated to members.
- Following the success of Heath Week in 2018, work was underway to deliver Heath Week 2019 between 28<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2019. The week would include guided walks, arts and crafts, themed activities and historical sessions. Partners had been asked to submit events for inclusion in the programme.
- Bird surveys had found a decrease in the number of Dartford Warblers recorded compared to 2017, from 556 to 266. A decrease that was attributed to the cold weather in March. The migratory nature of Nightjars meant that they were protected from the cold weather and their numbers had remained steady, 351 in 2017 compared to 366 in 2018. Woodlark numbers had fallen from 164 to 112 however, these were the least understood of the three species and the reasons for their fall in numbers was not fully understood. It was agreed that information relating to the proportion of the total UK population for each bird species these figures related to would be circulated.
- It was agreed that future reports would include more detailed survey results and a programme of work for the project team.
- It was agreed that District Authorities would provide updates on the information relating to visitor numbers and observed impacts on wildlife that they held for the SANGS within their remits.
- It was agreed that Hampshire Fire Service would be invited to the Board's next meeting to give a presentation on the advice they gave on fire reduction on the heathlands.

It was noted that whilst the project had initially been set up as a result of EU directives, the regulations had been subsumed into the UK Habitat's Directive and subsequently incorporated into UK law. Consequently SANGS would be unaffected by the outcome of Brexit.

It was reported that the hosting agreement that contracted Natural England to run the SAMM project on behalf of the Partnership would come to an end in 2020. The Partnership considered Natural England's experience to have been pivotal to the success of the SAMM project to date. It was agreed in principle that the hosting agreement with Natural England should be continued for an initial period of 5 years.

It was suggested that this would be an appropriate time to review the contract to ensure that it remained fit for purpose. It was agreed that the legal requirements for renewing the hosting agreement would be clarified and a report reviewing the Hosting Agreement and setting out a way forward would be brought to the Partnership's next meeting so that the matter could be progressed.

The Board noted the update.

## **29 Finance Report**

The Board received a report setting out the current financial position of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access and Monitoring (SAMM) project.

It was noted that £6million from the Endowment Fund had now been invested in line with recommendations from Arlingclose. Projections showed that at the end of the 2018/19 financial year the balance in the Endowment Fund was expected to be £4.578million with a total income for 2018/19 of £3.463million.

It was noted that whilst some partner authorities index linked their SAMM contributions it was not clear if all partner authorities did. It was agreed that the index linking of SAMM contributions would be taken to the Officer group for discussion.

The Board noted the current financial position.

## **30 Investment Strategy Update**

The Board received a report providing an update from the Investment Working Group.

It was noted that £6million had been invested in three funds: CCL Property Fund, Kames Diversified Monthly Income Fund and Schroder Income Maximiser Fund. It was agreed that the Board would be provided with updates on the performance of these investments every six months.

It was agreed that the Working Group would discuss the development of an investment trigger mechanism to ensure that future investments were not unduly delayed.

The Board noted the report.

## **31 Dates of Future Meetings**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Thames Basin Heath Partnership Board would take place on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 10am.

Future meetings of the Board would occur in June and November with additional meetings scheduled as necessary.