



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

BY POST AND EMAIL

22nd October 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

We, the undersigned, are writing today to urge you to approve and expedite the long-awaited boundary review of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The Surrey Hills were designated as an AONB in 1958, but the boundary drawn at the time was incredibly tight, hard to manage, and difficult to understand, leaving many beautiful and ecologically sensitive areas excluded and potentially vulnerable to inappropriate development.

After many years of discussion with the Surrey Hills AONB Board, Natural England finally agreed in 2014 to conduct a boundary review and made assurances that it would be started as soon as their review of the Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB had been completed. This has now been completed, but Natural England is still yet to confirm a starting date for the Surrey Hills review.

So far, large areas around the boundary of the Surrey Hills AONB have been protected as 'Areas of Great Landscape Value' (AGLV), a local designation which has given a helpful 'buffer zone' around the AONB. We are concerned, however, that if Natural England reneges on its promise to conduct a boundary review, it will leave these AGLVs very exposed to looser planning regulations. In our view, the AGLVs contain landscapes just as valuable as those covered by the AONB designation and, as such, deserve to be afforded the same protections. If they were ever to be built upon, whether for agricultural intensification or for housing, it would change the character of the area forever.

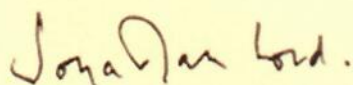
Moreover, the boundary review has the support of all six local councils. Local residents and communities have been pinning their hopes on it for some years and there will be great

disappointment if the review does not get underway soon. As you may imagine, the Surrey Hills AONB Board is also very keen for the review to start straight away and has kindly offered to work closely with Natural England on a streamlined review, using its local knowledge and contacts.

In order to safeguard this precious landscape for future generations we believe it is important to conduct, as a matter of some urgency, the boundary review to which Natural England has committed itself.

We urge you to set this important review in progress at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Lord
Member of Parliament for Woking

Co-signatories:

Claire Coutinho MP, Member of Parliament for East Surrey

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Member of Parliament for South West Surrey

Angela Richardson MP, Member of Parliament for Guildford

Sir Paul Beresford MP, Member of Parliament for Mole Valley

Crispin Blunt MP, Member of Parliament for Reigate