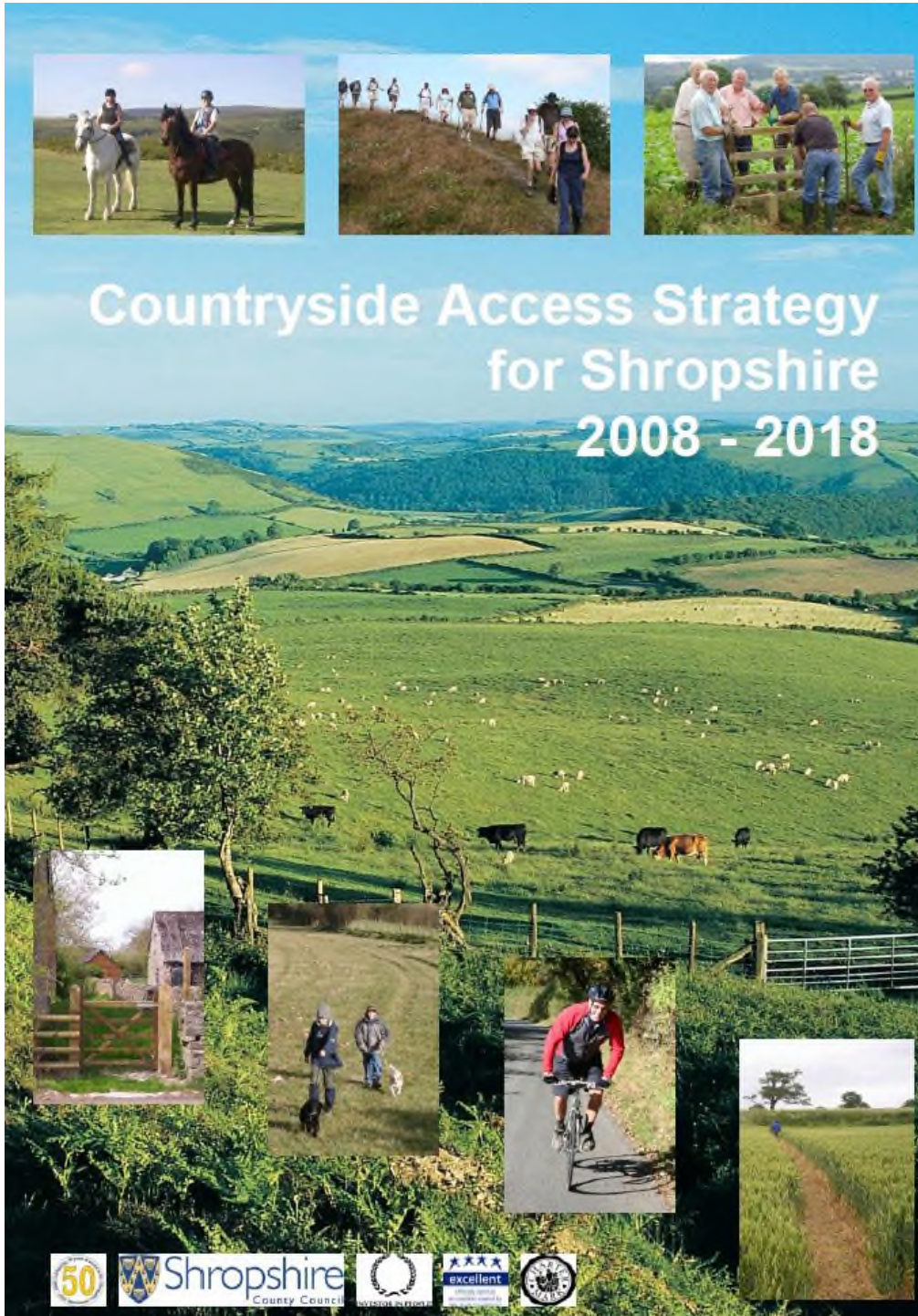


Shropshire Council Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008-2018 5 Year Review 2014



Portfolio Holder Statement – Cllr Steve Charmley

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required all local authorities to prepare and publish a 10 year Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Shropshire undertook the work and published the document called the Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire to cover the period 2008 to 2018.

This document undertakes the required 5 year review. It focus's on each of the themes identified in the Strategy which are:

- **Working with Communities**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Access for Everyone**
- **Making Local Journeys**
- **High Quality Network**

For each themes within the Strategy a list of key actions was identified, these are repeated under each heading. Each area in the report looks at what has been achieved to date, problems encountered and identifies key future actions up to 2018 when a new Strategy will be published.

The period covered by this report has and continues to be extremely challenging for Shropshire Council. It is therefore reassuring that under this pressure so much has been delivered. A modern and fit for purpose access network provides many advantages for local residents and visitors alike. The benefits of exercise in the countryside to people's health is well understood as is the contribution made by walking, riding and cycling to Shropshire's tourism economy.

Resources are limited and developing further new partnerships and finding alternative sources of funding continue to important to the delivery of this strategy. Whilst the future actions contained within this review are required, the challenge will be to prioritise and deliver them.

Cllr Steve Charmley
Portfolio holder
Shropshire Council

Working with Communities

The Strategy stated we would:

- **Provide advice and support at a local level to communities wishing to improve their access to the countryside.**
- **Have a Parish Path Partnership group in every parish in the county.**
- **Keep up to date with local community needs and desires for access improvements and keep Action Plans updated and relevant.**

Outdoor Partnerships provides advice and support at a local level to communities wishing to improve their access to the countryside. This is an on-going area of work. The key mechanism for keeping up to date generally with local community need and demand is through the annual online survey, monitoring of problems reports and listening to our customers represented on the local user forums. The key mechanism for providing advice and support for action is via the work we do with the Shropshire Parish Path Partnerships, but also with our plans for access developments through external funding bids.

The Parish Path Partnerships

The Parish Path Partnerships (P3) approach helps us to support local Parish community volunteer groups to carry out improvements to their local Rights of Way (ROW) network to help meet local access needs and desires. The work varies from simple way marking and minor clearance through to replacing stiles with gates, installing small bridges strimming routes and hedge cutting paths. We also help local P3 groups to produce walking leaflets to help promote walking in and around their community and any other access related events and activities that encourage greater usage of the network. The Partnership scheme began in Shropshire in the early 1990's and has thrived ever since; there are now (2014) over 60 groups carrying out thousands of hours of work each year. Shropshire Council provides small grants, training, advice, equipment, materials and insurance to the volunteers and also works with groups to secure small external funding bids to improve the local access environment. This enables the volunteer groups to set their own local priorities for access improvements and to work as self-sufficiently as possible.



A P3 group in action



P3 group training



Installing a stile



Installing a kissing gate

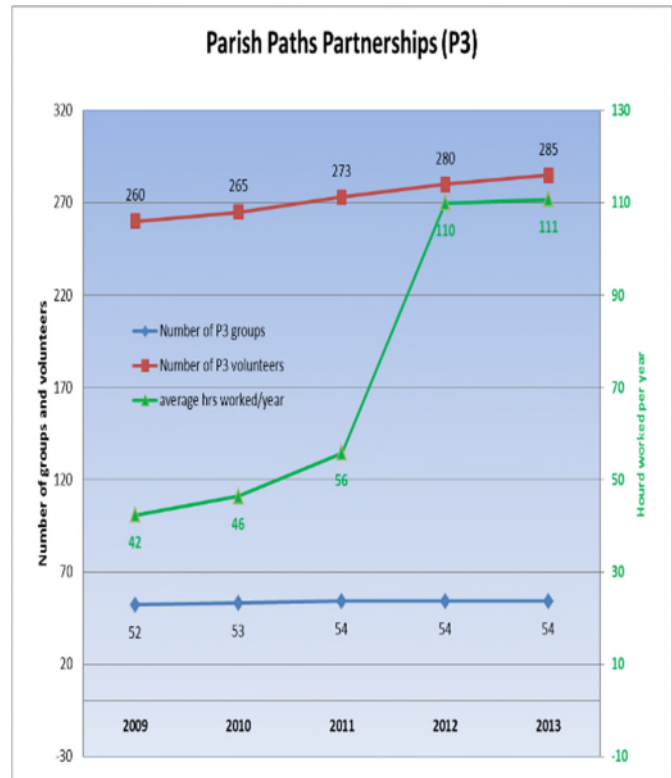
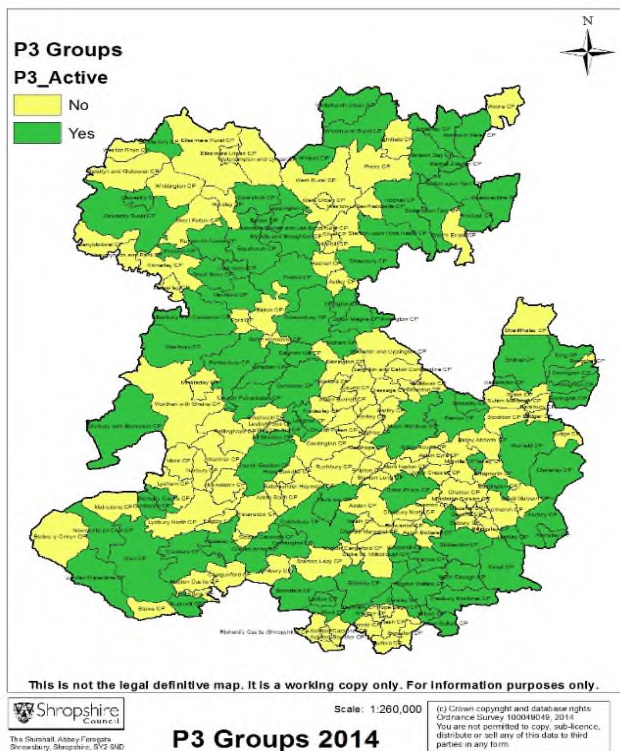


Another kissing gate



A P3 group working jointly with probationers

The support to these groups has changed over the last few years. There was 1 full time officer looking at the whole of Shropshire at the start of the period but now Area Rights of Way Officers each look after the groups in their areas of responsibility alongside other work. The number of P3 groups has remained constant over the period, but some groups now cover larger areas than just one Parish so there is greater coverage in Shropshire. In addition the amount and scope of work the volunteers undertake has increased dramatically with some groups capable of installing all types of gates as well as stiles and fingerposts.



Many P3 groups identified as their local priorities the need for improved circular walks for the use of locals and visitors. The following areas now have improved local circuits from the work of the local Partnership groups:

- Much Wenlock 6 walks
- Pontesbury/Minsterley 6 walks
- Whixall (ongoing) 12 walks
- Hodnet 7 walks
- Whitchurch 10 walks

Additionally the Hodnet P3 group instigated the creation of a permissive path between Hodnet and Marchamley to allow a safe walking route between the villages. This work has been supported through

Sustainable Transport funding which has now ceased. The future challenge will be to continue to support this work through alternative sources of external funding.

Case Study – Stanton upon Hine Heath P3

"Stanton upon Hine Heath P3 Group started about 7 years ago, initially as a one man band (Parish Paths Warden scheme) pulling in other local volunteers as required for particular projects. Currently the P3 Group is fully supported by the local Parish Council and a core group of three volunteers. Generally the Parish paths are in reasonable condition, having had a makeover some 10 years or so ago. However many of the stiles are now getting rather ripe and need replacing, either by new stiles or where the landowner & walking potential permit a galvanised gate.

Over the years we have gradually built up a good working relationship with local landowners. Generally landowners are very helpful although they obviously have limited time & conflicting pressures on them. Some landowners respond very quickly to requests & resolve issues themselves, while with others it may be that permission can be gained for volunteers to go in & carry out work on their land. We always try to resolve issues amicably on a local basis, but know we have the support of the Parish & Unitary Authority should we need it.

*Recently we have benefitted from the practical efforts of a Shropshire based charity "**Landau**" that works mostly with unemployed young people, and aims to provide people with learning disabilities or long-term health issues, the long-term unemployed and young people, with the skills and support they need to find sustainable employment. Small teams of their volunteers have worked hard under the guidance of one or more members of the P3 group. Work has been carried out on many of the local footpaths, including the Shropshire Way, replacing stiles, installing new gates, clearing vegetation, waymarking, etc. At the same time the young people have learnt new skills & gained valuable work experience to help them in their future careers. As the weather improves this spring we hope to be doing more valuable work with Landau volunteers.*

Throughout the whole process the Shropshire Council Rights of Way team have been extremely supportive, supplying advice, training, information, materials and tools. Their service is invaluable & we would really struggle to maintain the network without them. Many of the young unemployed people who have helped us have also really benefitted when members of the rights of way team have worked alongside them on site, providing training & acting as excellent role models. It is only a shame that there have been so many personnel changes over the years.

Caring for our rights of way often involves hard work & a great deal of time, but we do have a lot of fun doing it & we know that it is appreciated locally by the many kind comments received from residents & walkers. "

Chas Warren Stanton upon Hine Heath P3 Group Nov 2014

In addition the Outdoor Partnerships Team, with support from Public health, has refocused its work towards supporting growth of 'active' volunteering opportunities. Key to this is additional support to growing the number of Parish Path Partnerships, with the aim of having at least 90% of Shropshire covered by the scheme by 2020. The Partnerships in Shropshire represent an approach to outdoor active volunteering that recognises that volunteers are vital to achieve a 'Happy, Healthy, Green, more Active Shropshire.' Whether leading health walks, contributing to a Parish Path Partnership group, or improving our Countryside sites, volunteers make a real difference to their local environments and people's health by allowing everyone to access paths and quality environments where they live.

Interest groups

Outdoor Partnerships also supports the various communities of interest in Shropshire that are enjoying the great Shropshire outdoors. They are:

- The Local Access Forum (LAF), a statutory body under the 2000 CROW act. The function of the Local Access Forum is to provide advice to Shropshire Council as local authority and to Natural England on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation, in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests.
- Shropshire Riding & Carriage Driving Group– looks after all riding matters
- Byways group
- Cycling Forum
- Regional Walking Forums

These groups of representatives freely volunteer and give their time to their areas of interest.

Future Priorities 2014-2018 - Working with Communities

We will:

Continue to listen to our customers through:

- Annual online surveys
- User forums
- Problem reports

.....and be flexible in terms of responding to customer needs

Work to establish local ROW priorities and ensure that these priorities are reflected in any direct delivery at a local level as well as ensuring that we work in partnership to make things happen at a local level – this may be through externally funded project or other place based initiatives.

Maintain support to existing Parish Path Partnership groups and Parish Paths Wardens and support new local groups to develop where there are gaps. We will work towards a longer term vision to have countywide geographical coverage for the partnerships.

Support Parish Path Partnership groups alongside Town and Parish Councils to set their own local priorities for ROW improvements and developments as well supporting an area wide approach to active volunteering partnership's – linking people and groups together.

Provide more training to extend the range of activity volunteers can undertake.

Work to link to existing volunteer groups to other active volunteering groups locally and encourage sharing of resources, training and best practice.

Health and Wellbeing

The Strategy stated we would:

- **Improve promotion of the benefits that access to the countryside brings to both mental and physical health.**

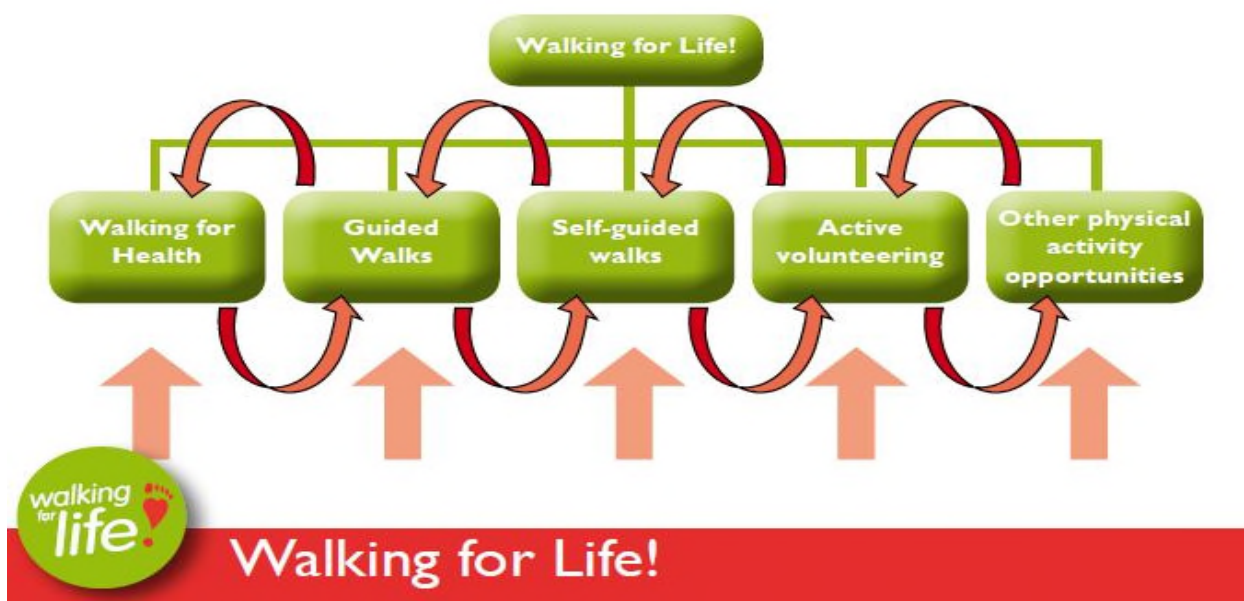
- Provide more outdoor recreation activities through work with Energize STW, Shropshire PCT and other leisure providers.
- Increase the number of Walking for Health schemes and ensure that the groups are sustainable.
- Provide accessible, high-quality walking and cycling routes close to where people live and other appropriate locations.
- Promote and encourage people to increase their physical activity levels through progression into other activities.
- Increase the number of people undertaking 'active' volunteering in the County through Parish Paths Partnership schemes.

Our work in this area has focussed on and continues to be concentrated on the following:

- Parish Path Partnerships
- The Walking for LIFE Model of progression
- Walking for Health
- Increased opportunities for Active volunteering

Walking for LIFE!

We use the Walking for Life approach which was extant for part of the review period. This methodology sets the scene for the future focus on Walking for Health, Shropshire Outdoors and Active Volunteering.

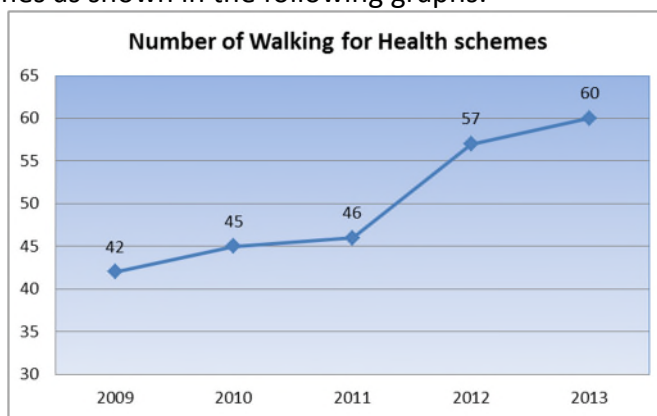


The model is based on providing a series of progression activities, ranging from Walking for Health, through guided walks, to self-guided walks and into active volunteering opportunities. It recognises that people's needs change over time as either they become more active or maybe need to gear down their activity with older age.

Walking For Health

In England, half of all adults are not active enough to benefit their health. This means that they are at risk of developing serious illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. We support the Walking for Health schemes, helping people across the county lead a more active lifestyle, improving the mental and physical well-being of thousands of people. We have three Walking coordinators who support the Walking for Health (WfH) schemes throughout the County. These continue to be very successful and have attracted

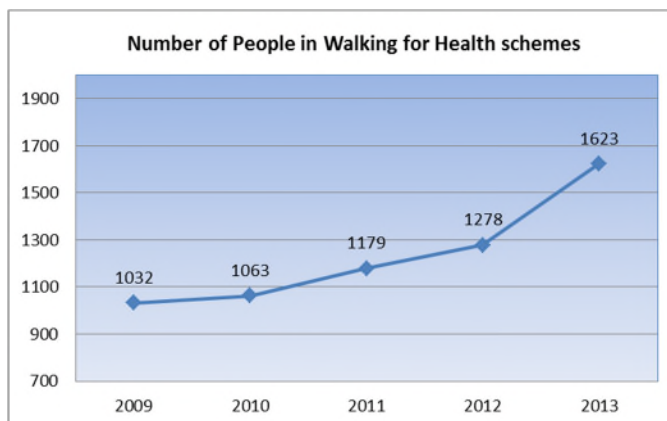
Public Health funding to ensure they continue. The uptake has increased as have the number of walk leader volunteers and schemes as shown in the following graphs:



The number of Walking for Health schemes across Shropshire has grown from 42 to 60



The number of walk leader volunteer hours has grown from 6155 annually to 10562



The number of people walking has grown from 1032 to now 1623 annually

Walking for Health Schemes across Shropshire are now based in the following areas:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Shrewsbury | Wem | Clun |
| Much Wenlock | Oswestry | Church Stretton |
| Chelmarsh | Hadnall | Ashford Carbonell |
| Highley | Ellesmere | West Felton |
| Bridgnorth | Whitchurch | Prees |
| Alveley | Baschurch | Rushbury |
| Shifnal | Market Drayton | Shawbury |

Case Study

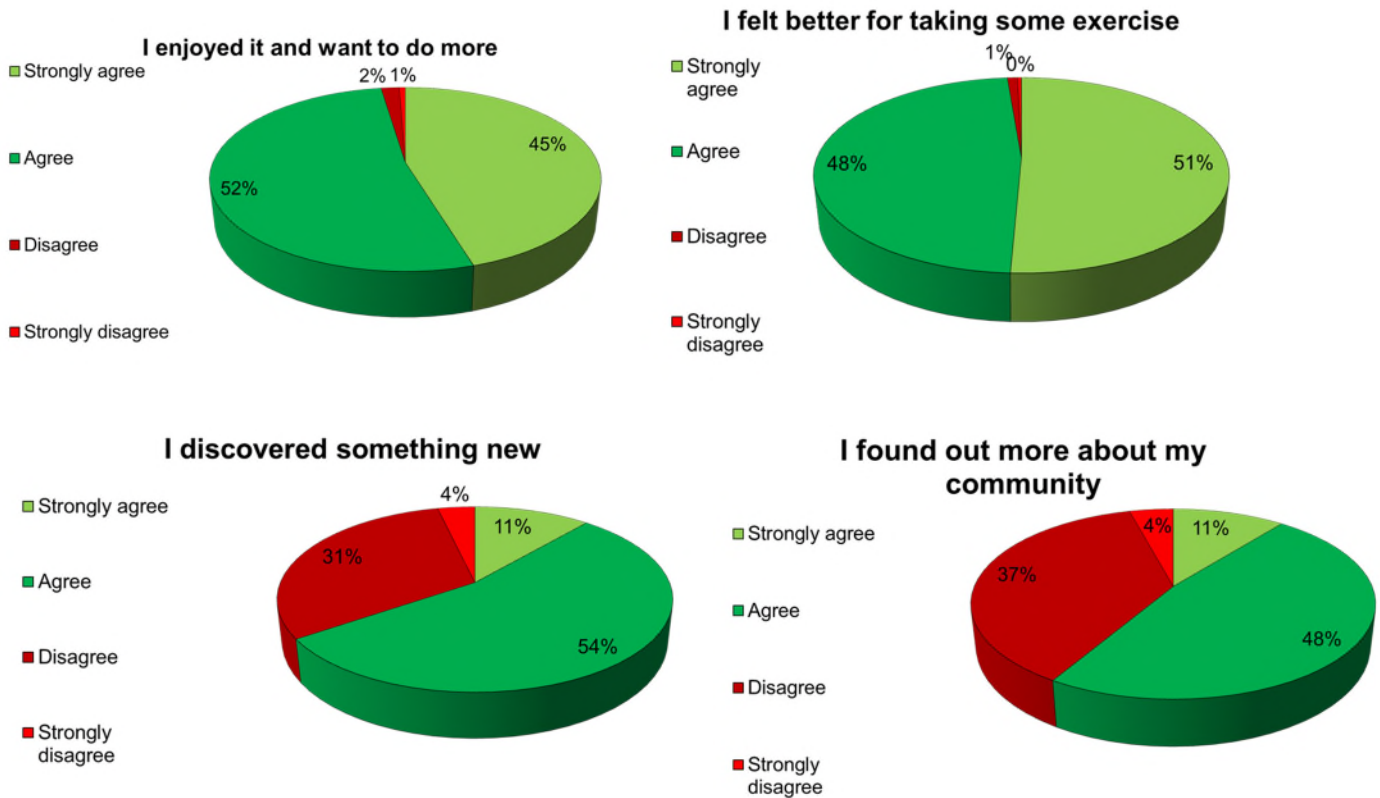
Oswestry Walking for Health

There are just over 20 people who make up the Oswestry walking for health group. It meets at the Gatacre Avenue sports pavilion on a Thursday morning, and successfully meets most of the needs of the diverse people who attend. About half the group comprises of people who come from a local day centre with their carers. This group of people have learning disabilities and it has been encouraging to see their progress. When 'Ronald' first came he refused to walk on grass as he had only ever walked on paved paths before. With encouragement and gradual introduction, he now strides quite happily over grass at the park and on footpaths. 'Simon' would pick out a member of the group and shout and swear at them in quite an intimidating manner. He now never displays this behaviour although he still mutters under his breath when he feels some walkers are talking too much instead of walking. 'Kevin' would walk along and not communicate with anyone for the entire walk, complaining of a stomach or back ache so he often had to end the walk prematurely. He now walks quite happily and will answer questions and join in the general conversation. 'Jack' requires one to one attention from a carer as his autism is so severe. He likes to stay at the back of the group but obviously enjoys watching leaves fall and looks out for buses and cats. These are just some examples of the obvious benefits that have been seen and can be measured as a result of walking in a supportive group.

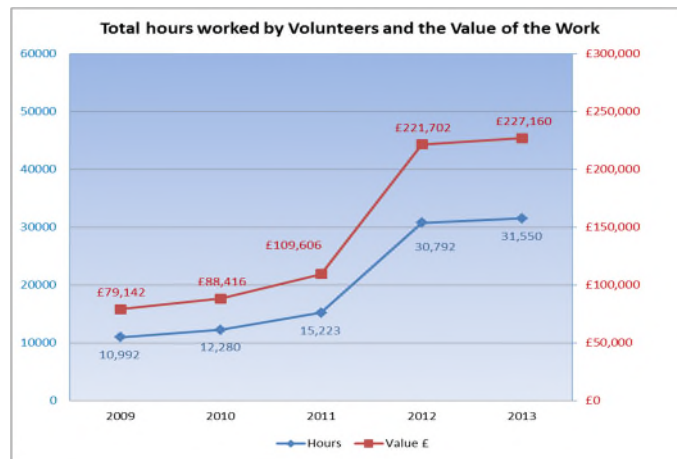
The other half of the group come from the town and include 'Miriam', a 96 years young lady who has always enjoyed walking but now relies on others for support to both get her to and from the walk. She enjoys walking with the group but says she gets most enjoyment from the social aspect afterwards when having a cup of tea where she enjoys listening to everyone chatting. 'Luke' is in his mid-seventies and has diabetes which has stabilised since he started walking. This is alongside diet control, but he feels walking has helped his condition. 'Daniel' has not lived in Oswestry long but says he has enjoyed walking as a way of getting to know the area, as you go places you would not notice when driving. His blood pressure has gone down too. 'Alice' has lived in Oswestry a long time and knows her way around, but finds walking helps her back by 'loosening it up'. This group walk an hour a week through the town via parks, paths and pavements, but all say they feel better for coming along.....

Other Active Volunteering opportunities

Quality Green space plays a vital role in the health of the population. Functional ecosystems, green infrastructure and accessible local green spaces can have wide-ranging benefits for health and wellbeing. Well managed green spaces, countryside sites, footpath networks, parks provide communities with opportunities for active recreation, and offer an escape from stress and strain of modern living compounded by the built environment. Volunteering to improve green space and ensure access is important as it is generated directly from needs identified within the community and is created by local communities for local communities. It empowers people to take more control of their environment and provides opportunities for be active in their community. Our key effort in the health and wellbeing agenda is getting more people from all walks of life into the countryside undertaking active work in the fresh air, whether this be on the ROW network or on our Countryside sites or Greenspaces. To do this, with support from Public Health, we have refocused the team to provide increased support towards volunteering. The amount of active volunteering has increased dramatically and is of double benefit; the active work benefits the volunteer and the work benefits the wider population of users. We measure the success of our work by asking the volunteers and ROW users to tell us what they feel they have gained from working on and using the ROW network.



The following graph shows the extent that volunteering has grown from 2009 to present day.



Future Priorities 2014-2018 – Health and Well Being

To inform our future direction with regard to supporting active volunteering we have held a series of Volunteer Forums across the county in the autumn of 2014. The Forums provided an opportunity get together a representative group of volunteers, business representatives and officers in each of the key market towns to consult on the development of volunteering across the Outdoor Partnership team.

Attendees were asked to consider how we might recruit new volunteers, better manage/ co-ordinate volunteers with less staff time, promote volunteering opportunities more effectively, and provide more support and training. In addition we asked how we could work better with other outdoor volunteering organisations and ensure better evaluation and recognition for our volunteers.

The results have enabled us to draw up a **Volunteer Development Plan** with the following Vision:

'In five years' time there will be a well-developed and widely understood volunteer effort across the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships service; making a sustained and significant difference to the development and maintenance of Shropshire's Rights of Way, Countryside Sites, Parks and Greenspaces. Volunteering outdoors will be recognised as a healthy occupation that can make a real difference to mental and physical wellbeing of individuals. The volunteering groups will be inclusive, with health and countryside professionals working more closely together for the wellbeing of those most in need. Young people have more opportunities to get involved in volunteering that is designed for them.'

We will focus activity around the following objectives that also support the Countryside Access Strategy as follows:

1. Increase the number of volunteers involved in existing groups and increase the number of new volunteer groups – Parish Path Partnerships, Walking for Health, Shropshire Outdoors and from our Countryside Sites and Greenspaces
2. Promote volunteer opportunities better and more effectively, in partnership with other organisations
3. Increase self-supervised volunteer activity, with the suitable paperwork, training and equipment
4. Develop a number of 'A Teams' of volunteers who can be called on to tackle more complex jobs
5. Increase business involvement through corporate volunteering
6. Create volunteering opportunities around non-physical work such as website or event management
7. Increase the number of young people involved in Outdoor Partnerships volunteering

We are aiming to have:

- 90% of all Parishes with an active P3 group
- 90% of key sites and Greenspaces actively managed by volunteers, including those with physical and mental health issues
- Further growth of walking for health walks where there are gaps
- All groups able to work independently, with guidance from SOP staff
- 3 'A teams' active across the county
- 3 Young Ranger programmes across the county
- A pilot approach with three businesses using countryside sites for corporate volunteering
- 6 volunteers helping in admin, web based or event organisation roles across the county
- 6 x Walks Leaders, focused on key sites leading walks

Access for Everyone

The Strategy stated we would:

- **Ensure the mechanisms to improve access to the countryside are maintained and improved applying the 'least restrictive' principle.**
- **Talk with hard-to-reach groups to understand their barriers to access and find out what would encourage them to access the Shropshire countryside more.**
- **Work to ensure that the opportunities to access the Shropshire countryside are available for everyone.**
- **Improve policy development to embed the overall aim within the work of the Countryside Service and ensure improvements are long-term.**
- **Incorporate the information from hard-to-reach groups regarding improved access within the Action Plans and secure additional resources to implement.**
- **Understand the needs and interest of people with learning difficulties, mental health problems and sensory impairment and make it easier for them to participate in countryside activities.**
- **Ensure that recommendations within the Action Plan are implemented and plans and policies are kept under review.**

Least Restrictive Principle

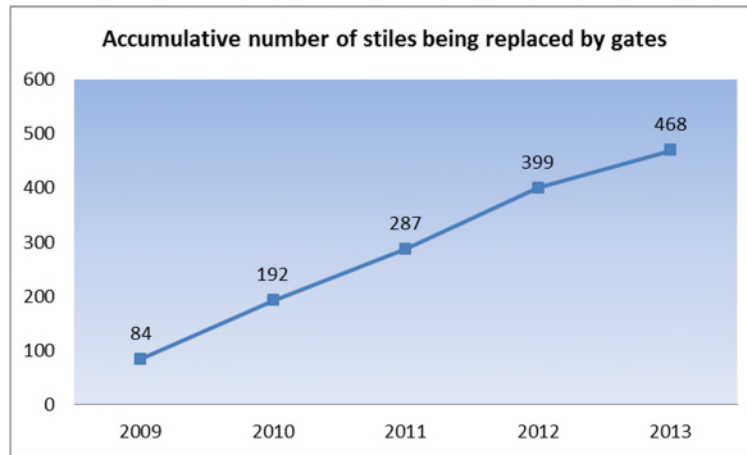
A key way to ensure that there were incremental improvements to Rights of Way over time, and ensuring that they were accessible wherever possible to those with mobility problems was the development of the 'Least Restrictive Principle'. The 'Least Restrictive Principle' as a Shropshire Council policy requires that any new structures placed on rights of way are the least restrictive option possible. Stiles present an unacceptable barrier to many potential users of public paths and modern pedestrian gates should not pose any stock proofing difficulties.

Shropshire Council requires any new barriers to be gates rather than stiles and we will encourage the replacement of existing stiles with gates. However many farmers did not like the normal metal kissing gates saying they were not stock proof. To counter this we designed and had produced a new higher kissing gate which has proved more acceptable to farmers.

Over the period our work in this area has increased and we have replaced 468 stiles with gates with support from the landowners that make the network more accessible.



New high metal stock proof kissing gate



The Shropshire Outdoors Project.

The primary way that we have engaged and supported hard to reach groups in accessing the Shropshire countryside is through the Shropshire Outdoors Project. Commencing in December 2007 the Shropshire Outdoors Project was developed by Shropshire Council, Shropshire PCT and Shropshire Wildlife Trust to improve health and wellbeing and to address health inequalities experienced by disabled people. The project has targeted sedentary people (such as people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health problems) and increased physical activity levels by providing ‘green exercise’ opportunities. Participating organisations included:

Mental health – Mind, Community Mental Health Teams

Adults with Learning Disability – Mencap, Shropshire Council ALD services

Physical Disability – Shropshire Enablement Team, Headway

Countryside – Shropshire Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, National Trust, Severn Trent

Community – Craven Arms Volunteer for the Environment (C.A.V.E), Friends of Ifton Meadows

The project allocated funds to improve access to eight countryside sites, Brown Moss, Onny Meadows, Poles Coppice, Walkmill Meadows at Market Drayton, Reabrook Valley in Shrewsbury, Ifton Meadows at St Martins, Llynclys Common and Monkmoor Community Woodland.

The project also worked alongside 14 health and social care organisations and has involved 153 project users in 170 green exercise sessions, such as practical conservation, access maintenance work and guided walks. Some of the case studies produced by this project are attached at Annexe D.

The Project helped to raise awareness about disability by facilitating lasting partnerships between countryside and health and social care organisations. Training delivered to countryside staff ensured that they could better understand and meet the needs of project beneficiaries. “Working with Vulnerable Adults” and “Understanding Barriers to the Countryside” were training courses delivered by project beneficiaries and by partners, Shropshire Council and Disabled Holiday Information.

The following photographs show some of the work carried out during a project by service users with learning difficulties.



Shropshire Outdoors Project – Volunteers working alongside our Access Maintenance Team

Whilst the project ceased in 2011 it is currently being re-started in 2014 with support from Public Health and this will be our key mechanism for ensuring that we support vulnerable people to get more active by volunteering on our sites and enjoying County walks.

Easy Access guide

One point noted in the Annual survey was the requirement for more wheelchair friendly easy access routes.



The Outdoor Recreation countryside sites and other potential sites were surveyed by experts from the Disabled Holidays Charity and routes chosen. In total 12 walks were chosen, the paths upgraded and the guide launched in 2010. Since then 4 more all ability trails have been created as follows:

Colemere – working with the Lyneal trust, a charity that provides holiday accommodation for wheelchair users and hires out specially modified canal narrow boats. A 2.4 km all-ability trail was established around Colemere and the car park upgraded with disabled parking spaces.

Whixall canal side –working with Natural England, The Meres and Mosses Project, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Lyneal trust, a new car park was created and 1 km of towpath upgraded to allow wheelchair, pushchair and people with mobility problems to access the Moss for the first time. At the end of the upgraded section of towpath Natural England created a boardwalk into the Moss and erected interpretation boards that tell the story of the Moss and its natural history. Additionally a new mooring was created to allow the Lyneal Trust and other narrow boats to stop and learn about the Moss.



Car park before work started



Completed car park



New towpath and jetty



Towpath before work



The boardwalk

Bettisfield – working with Natural England a 2.3 km easy access track was created around Bettisfield Moss with a new viewing platform and interpretation.

Much Wenlock wheelchair friendly trail 800 metres of track along the old railway line with access ramps and linkage between 2 main road footpaths.

Family Friendly walks

Another point noted within the Strategy was that more walks aimed at families were needed and we needed to ensure more young people were engaged with the countryside. This has led to a series of 12 walks being created based around our Countryside sites and the guide book published in 2010 aimed at young families. They proved so popular that a reprint was needed in 2013.

walking for life **Walk yourself fitter!**

Whatever your age or fitness, it's never too late to exercise

- Everyone can benefit from doing more

Try to fit in 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity 5 times a week

- Moderate intensity activity makes you breath a little faster, have a slightly faster heartbeat and feel warmer

Go at your own pace

- If you feel dizziness or pain whilst walking, slow down or stop completely and rest. If the problem continues, consult your doctor before walking again.

Doing a little regular exercise is better than doing none

- Small changes make a big difference – the most important thing is to start

Keep active to feel fitter and more healthy

To find out more about walking in Shropshire go to www.shropshirewalking.co.uk

No kangaroos were harmed in the production of these walks

Discover Shropshire **FAMILY FRIENDLY WALKS** short walks for all the family

Future Priorities 2014-2018 – Access for Everyone

Providing inclusive opportunities for everyone to access the countryside is an ongoing requirement. We will continue to:

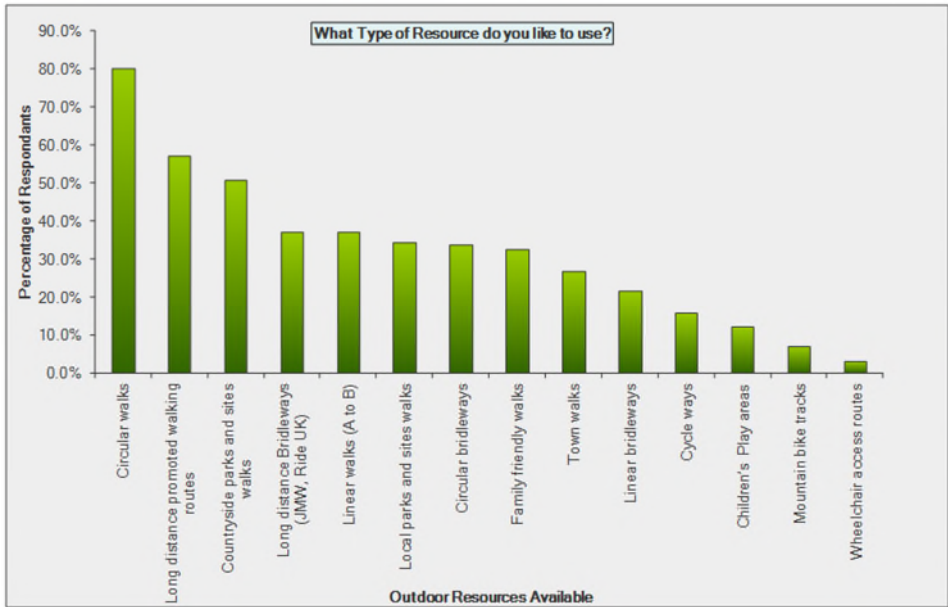
- Engage with hard-to-reach groups to understand their barriers to access
- Understand the needs and interest of people with learning difficulties, mental health problems and sensory impairment and make it easier for them to participate in countryside activities.
- Reintroduce the 'Shropshire Outdoors' approach to encourage such groups to engage more in the Shropshire countryside specifically by continuing to support this approach to active volunteering
- Work to ensure that the Shropshire countryside is more accessible for everyone implementing the 'least restrictive' principle on the ground - replacing stiles with gates where ever we can.
- Continue to promote easier access and provide wherever opportunities present themselves
- Work towards providing a range of volunteering opportunities for young people – Youth Rangers.

Making Local Journeys

The Strategy stated we would:

- **Work to integrate the implementation of the Countryside Access Strategy and Local Transport Plan**
- **Take forward significant improvements to local walking cycling networks that encourage people to walk and cycle for local journeys.**
- **Improve provision, marketing and promotion of the rights of way network in urban areas and the associated health benefits of this physical activity.**

The annual online survey’s carried out by Outdoor Partnerships (see a copy of the survey results for 2014 attached at Annexe B), show that shorter circular walks were routes most used and that there was demand for more. This demand is for everyday walking circuits from urban centres out into the surrounding countryside but also for routes that people would travel to or would use if visiting Shropshire.



Circular walks

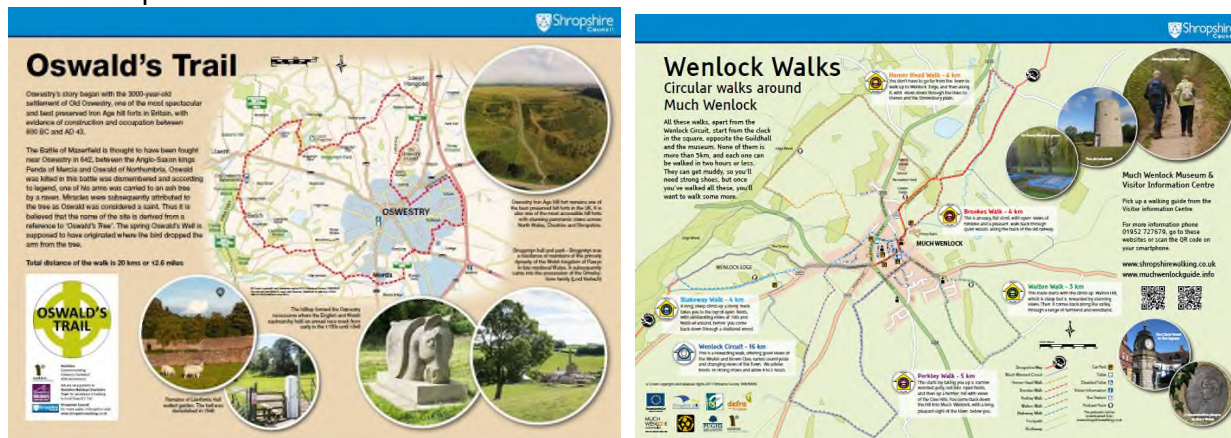
In response to this Outdoor Partnerships have worked with local communities to produce over the period many circular walks from the Market Towns and larger villages into the surrounding countryside. The following areas indicate where this work has been undertaken to upgrade routes and produce associated downloadable leaflets.

- Much Wenlock 6 walks
- Oswestry 17 walks
- Whitchurch 10 walks
- Craven Arms 5 walks
- Shrewsbury 4 walks
- Cleobury Mortimer 22 walks
- Ditton Priors 9 walks
- Ludlow 7 walks
- Ellesmere 4 walks
- Hodnet 7 walks

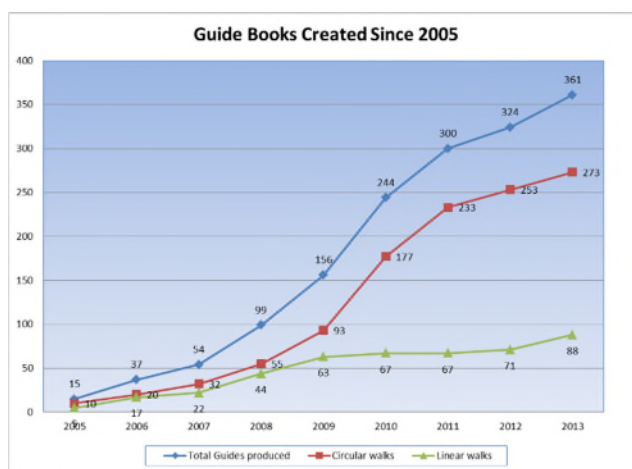
Additionally Town Map boards showing the walks that have been created have been placed in:

- Much Wenlock
- Oswestry
- Cleobury Mortimer
- Minsterley
- Pontesbury
- Whitchurch

Two examples of which are:



In total 273 circular walks have been produced with guide books over the period. This is in contrast to smaller number 88 linear guides produced in the same period. A full list of all guides produced is attached at Annex C.



Future Priorities 2014-2018 – Making Local Journeys

Over the next few years there is demand to extend the current approach to cover all the Market Towns and larger villages in Shropshire.

- We will work Parish and Town Councils to promote walking as a way of getting around local areas.
- We will continue to seek out external funding to support such initiatives.
- We will incorporate the walking and cycling active travel content of the Travel Shropshire website on to the new Shropshire Outdoors website.

High Quality Network

The Strategy stated we would:

- **Provide a high quality access network that supports a thriving sustainable tourism economy**
- **Ensure that promoted walking, cycling and horse riding routes supported by the Council are maintained to the highest standard and that good interpretation is embedded in route promotion.**
- **Implement a higher standard of maintenance on well used and promoted walking, cycling and horse riding routes of significant importance for tourism.**
- **Ensure that access promotion to visitors is compatible with environmental considerations, (wildlife, heritage and sustainable transport), and promote understanding of these aspects to visitors and providers.**
- **Encourage local businesses to relate their services to promoted routes, to maximise economic benefit and improve facilities for visitors.**
- **Improve the recognition of Shropshire as a destination for walking, cycling, horse riding and sustainable tourism.**
- **Provide an increased number of promoted walking, cycling and riding routes.**
- **Provide a co-ordinated approach to access promotion that is of a high standard.**
- **Develop support for walking festivals and guided walks programme**

These actions support the Walking Tourism economy. It has long since been acknowledged that Shropshire's walking offer not only contributes to the health and well-being of County residents, but is also a critical component of the leisure and tourism product. Whilst recognising its importance, however, the economic value that walking brings to the Shropshire economy has never been quantified. The last Shropshire visitor survey (2007) reported that 12% of visitors had come to the County specifically to walk. This was the joint third most popular reason for visiting (with shopping) behind general sightseeing and visiting an attraction. 12% of both overnights and day trippers said that the primary reason for being in Shropshire was to walk. A third of all visitors said that they had gone/would go for a walk at some point during their trip – this suggests while walking might not be their primary motivation for visiting Shropshire, a fifth of those prompted to visit Shropshire for other reasons do on a walk at some point.

Estimating the value of walking to the visitor economy based on the proportion of visitors for whom walking is the primary activity (from the Shropshire Visitor Survey), their levels of expenditure (also from the Visitor Survey) and the overall volume of tourism (from the Economic Impact Assessment for Shropshire, 2011) gives a value of £64.9 million. This equates with 13% of the overall tourism market.

Volume and Value of Walking Tourism (where walking is the primary reason for visit)

	Overnight Visitor	Day Visitor	Total
Estimated Number of Visits	149,760	1,243,200	1,392,960
Estimated Value of Visits	£31.6 million	£33.3 million	£64.9 million
Estimated Value per Visit	£210.98	£26.8	£46.59
Estimated Direct FTE Jobs	-	-	1,014
Estimated Actual Jobs	-	-	1,451
Estimated Direct, Indirect and Induced FTE Jobs	-	-	1,425

Source: *Economic Impact of Tourism, 2011/Shropshire Visitor Survey, 2007*

Using the same employee GVA proxy as for tourism generally, this would suggest that walking tourism contributes £42.7 million to Shropshire GVA, which is the equivalent of 1% of the total (13% of tourism

GVA). However this does not include the value the Shropshire walking product generates through visitors for whom walking is a secondary activity. There will be an associated value, since a lack of walking product could deter potential visitors who want to spend part of their holiday walking. Similarly, an attractive walking product can encourage visitors to stay in a destination for longer and to spend more.

Our main emphasis over the last 5 years has been creating high quality access allowing more people of differing abilities to get into the countryside. The surveys carried out before the Strategy was written identified the need for more shorter circular routes, better signposting/waymarking, better guide books and more information. This has been the focus of work mainly as part of project work such as the Shropshire Way many old fingerposts have been replaced with new bespoke ones. 689 fingerpost and 239 waymarking posts have been installed during the period.

Improvements to ROW - state of the Network

A one off survey of the ROW network was undertaken as part of the Parish Action Project with 44% of the network surveyed before funding ceased in 2012. 5% is now surveyed annually as part of the ease of use indicator programme. The results of the surveys are held on the CAMS management system and BVPI database for action as priority and funding allows.

In 2007/8 at the time of Publication of the Countryside Access Strategy the BVPI score for accessibility of the rights of way network had risen to 78.7% (from a low of 36%). This was improvement was largely as a result of the capital funded Parish Access Project (PAP) which invested over £1.6m over a 6 ½ year period to 2011 when funding ceased. At the end of the PAP project this figure reached a height of 85%. The impact of reduced maintenance staff and budgets has been seen quickly on the accessibility of the network with the latest figure being 65.6%.

Signage has been greatly improved as part of project work and much bespoke signage has been created and used. This ensures that the user know what trail to follow and also promotes the route.

The Team have also invented a new form of bespoke waymarker with a clear circular window in the middle. A stick on insert can be applied behind the window showing the promoted route being waymarked. This has reduced the incidence of multiple waymarkers having to be used.



This means that the inner walk logo is always in the correct position no matter which way the directional arrow is pointing. This form of waymarker is now widely used throughout the country by other outdoor recreation organisations.

Surfacing

When funding has allowed, often as part of projects with external funding, over 90 surface improvements have been undertaken and many kilometres of ROW drained and surfaced. The following are some examples.

The bridleway running through Happy Valley near Pontesbury was identified as a key route for local circular walks by the community and a key link for local horse riders and cyclists. Some funding was secured through the Market Towns Initiative which enabled the service in partnership with the local Parish

Paths Partnership group (P3) to improve the surface and widen a difficult section of the bridleway. The partners worked together with assistance from one of the landowners to widen and surface over 600 metres of the bridleway including some drainage. Two bridges were replaced and another one was renovated. Other access improvements were carried out on adjoining paths by the P3 group to complete the opening of a set of circular routes around Pontesbury and Minsterley:



Happy Valley before work

The bridleway after surfacing

Some short sections of surfacing, such as the following examples, are not long but improve greatly the quality of life for the local people who use urban routes to get to work or the shops. This example from Cleobury Mortimer, was community led and P3 group implemented.



Access Infrastructure

The following table show the numbers and types of access infrastructure that have been installed since 2009. The peaks in the number of individual improvements seen in 2009 and 2010 are a result of the PAP Project that was still active at this time. A focus on annual vegetation cutting can be seen thereafter where the remaining team have continued to carry out other works, but increased the length of route cleared through an annual vegetation programme. This is a direct consequence of lessons we learnt from the consultation for the Countryside Access Strategy which identified this as a major detractor from enjoyment of the rights of way network.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Wicket gates installed	190	215	134	135	85
Wicket gates repaired	21	9	14	9	5
Stiles installed	98	147	81	103	73
Field gates installed	34	40	35	24	33
Field gates repaired	26	26	24	23	30
signposts	180	142	116	128	123
Waymarker posts	57	56	51	42	33
Sleeper bridge	8	14	20	16	11
Kit bridges installed	22	19	13	10	13
Kit bridges repaired	6	22	15	19	12
Culverts/drainage	2	4	12	1	5
Flights of steps	14	15	16	16	4
Surface repairs	25	16	13	16	20
Clearance metres	24700	22,885	28,500	27,560	30,333
Trees removed	11	28	8	32	84
Horse stiles	0	2	0	0	1
Gates replacing stiles	84	108	95	112	69

In addition to the regular maintenance of the network, the service received a capital grant of £200,000 pa (removed in 2011) to repair and maintain larger structures and surfaces. Below are some examples of these issues.

Two bridges installed by contractors under the capital programme



Before and after photo of the Papermill Bridge in Cleobury Mortimer – damage due to flooding!



Working with Probation Trust

A new innovation during the period is in the use of probationers to undertake ground works. Outdoor Partnerships Service and Probation Service joined forces to work together on improving Shropshire's Outdoor Recreation assets for local communities via Community Payback.

The project started during early summer 2013 and will run for two years initially. The partnership enables Community Payback offenders to work on the rights of way network and countryside sites to improve these spaces for local communities and also to gain skills in such work.

To date over 7667 hours of work have been completed including litter picking, strimming, path improvements and even painting some changing rooms at Birchmeadow Sports Field. All works are overseen by supervisors from the Probation Trust and the quality of this work has been very good and has already made a big difference.

New ROW

New ROW have been created at:

Montford Bridge where working in partnership with The Highways Agency and Preston Montford Field Studies Centre a 1.7 km bridleway was created. This allowed existing bridleways to be linked and a safe crossing of the busy A5 to be created. This was undertaken as part of the Paths For Communities fund run by Natural England.

The Rea Valley where 4 kms of footpath were dedicated by Shropshire Council to ensure the well-used, but not definitive paths could not be lost due to development.

Definitive Map

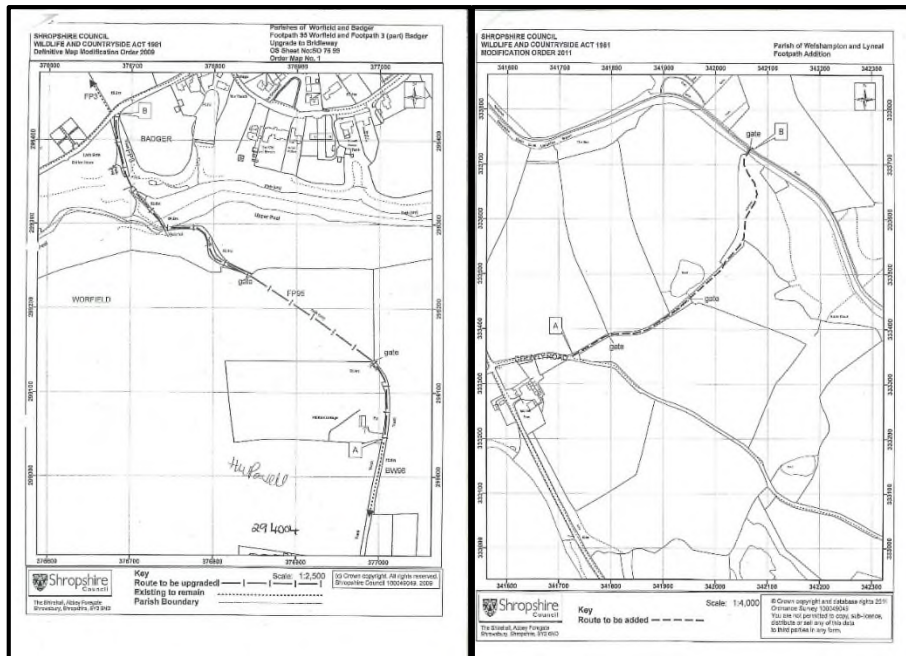
During this period amendments have been made to the Definitive Map to ensure that it is kept up to date and records routes correctly and protects them for future generations. This has included preferential Orders under the Highways Act and Town & Country Planning Act – These are usually in the interest of the landowners and often move routes out of gardens or from cross field to field edge or undertaken as part of the planning process when Public Rights of Way are affected.

Public Path Orders confirmed April 2008 –April 2014	Diversions	Extinguishments/Stopping Up
2008-2009	10	3
2009-2010	18	2
2010-2011	13	2
2011-2012	19	3
2012-2013	23	2
2013-2014	14	2
TOTAL	97	14

Evidential Orders under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 – These are based on evidence and often involve upgrading's, downgrading's, line amendments and deletions.

Evidential orders - number of confirmed issues April 2008 April 2014

	Deletions	Line Amendments	Upgrade/Downgrade
2008-2009	0	8	2
2009-2010	1	3	0
2010-2011	0	2	0
2011-2012	4	3	1
2012-2013	1	1	0
2013-2014	3	3	0
TOTAL	10	20	3



Examples of evidential orders

This also allows routes to be added to the Map. The following lengths of ROWs have been created over the period either based on evidence or by agreement with the affected landowners.

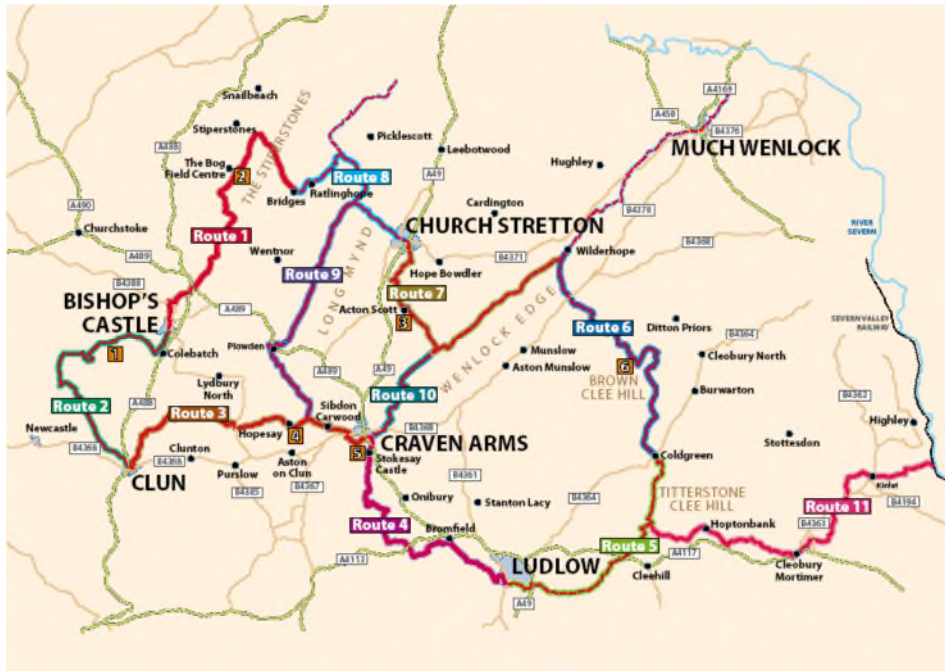
YEAR	LENGTH OF Footpath	LENGTH OF Bridleway	LENGTH OF Restricted Byway	BY ORDER OR AGREEMENT
2009	5770	1514	248	
2010	1433	330	0	
2011	7088	5325	1720	
2012	2397	818		
2013	800	1590		
2014 to date	193	1689		Creation Only
TOTAL	17681	11266	1968	

General advice has been provided throughout this period to the public, landowners and both internal and external partners. Other work has included responding to planning applications, formal searches, temporary closures and formal enforcement of the network to ensure that it is protected and open and available for all to use.

New Promoted Routes

Shropshire Way Long Distance Footpath

Phase 1 the Shropshire Hills - Using HLF and LEADER funding of £170,000 the Shropshire Way has been extended in the Shropshire Hills area and also around Oswestry with link routes also being created through the Meres and Mosses area to Whitchurch. In the south the project concentrated not only on re-branding and upgrading the existing path but ensuring it was made available to a much wider ability of users. The project not only upgraded and improved the footpath and furniture but added new sections to make shorter day walks more easy. Additionally six new circular walks were added as well as 10 “car free” walks that utilised public transport. A new guide book was written that has inserts for each section of the walk, the circular walks, transport and accommodation. The existing Shropshire walking website was extended and made map based rather than search based. This allowed more extensive and detailed information to be made available to users. The information included map and guide book downloads and links to other websites at key points of interest. 27 waypoint/ track downloads were added and podcasts were added.



The new Shropshire Way routing

Case study

Benefits to local businesses

Coats Farm is located just off the Shropshire Way route under Wenlock Edge. Before the upgrade of the Shropshire Way along Wenlock Edge the path was very overgrown with many broken stiles and difficult to follow. The upgrade and improvements have cleared the line of the path, provided gates wherever possible, signposting and downloadable guides and maps. This gave easy access to users. Two guide book sections are relevant to the campsite and the walks are included on the Shropshire Way Website

'Our farm and campsite is situated south west of Wilderhope Manor Youth Hostel, bordered by part of the Shropshire Way that was improved a few years ago. The upgraded path has enabled people to walk and cycle easily along the southward route, and as a direct result we now have groups of walkers, Duke of Edinburgh students, horse riders and cyclists staying on our campsite from April to October. Before the path was improved we had less than half the numbers of visitors for just the few main holiday weeks of the year. In short, our campsite has greatly benefited from the improved pathway, and further improvements to the central and northern parts of the Shropshire Way can only be good for businesses along its route.'

Middle Woodbatch Farm was already on the Shropshire Way route but it was thought a circular farm walk from it would be beneficial both to walkers on the Shropshire Way, local walkers and people staying at the farm. The project devised a short circular walk starting from the farm. The aim was to produce a walk which showed the various seasonal aspects and work of a mixed farm in the south Shropshire Hills. The walk was waymarked, all stiles replaced with kissing gates and a stream bridged. This gave easy access to walkers. A guide book section was written, see below, and the walk included on the Shropshire Way Website. A "hotspot" was included on the website map that linked to the farm's own website. The Austin family business now has a high grade product that they can sell to their customers. The Austins were interviewed in April 2010 and stated:

'they had noticed a definite increase in their B&B and campsite businesses and now had to pass customers on to other campsites on a regular basis. The circular walk has proved extremely popular with campers who use it to see the seasonal working on the farm. Spring during the lambing season is extremely popular with some campers even coming back to help on the farm.'

Foxholes Campsite was already on the Shropshire Way route but it was thought that upgrading the path section from the campsite to Bishop's Castle would be beneficial to both campers and local residents. All the old and difficult to use stiles were replaced with kissing gates and steps were built on steep sections. This gave easy access to walkers. A guide book section was written and the walk included on the Shropshire Way Website. A "hotspot" was included on the website map that linked to the campsite's own website. The easy access link has proved extremely successful for both walkers on the Shropshire Way, local residents and users of the campsite. They now have a safe easy route into town that is not on a dangerous road. Mr and Mrs Jones estimate that well over a thousand people have used the link in the past year. Business has been good in the last year at the campsite with a marked increase in business and a large increase in the number of people who have found the site via the Shropshire Way Website. Some increase in business has been in the form of referrals from Middle Woodbatch Farm campsite who have also noticed an increase in business.

There have been no adverse comments made to the campsite owners only positive ones such as:

'Absolutely brilliant new walk.'

'I really appreciated the new gates, now I can walk down to town without using the road.'

'I now use it every day.'

'Thanks so much for this, when there is a festival in town you can see the crowds streaming down the hill on the Shropshire Way'

Phase 2 Much Wenlock - £30,000 of LEADER funding allowed the Shropshire Way to be upgraded and the creation and improvement of a series of circular walks in the Much Wenlock area ahead of 2012. Much Wenlock was the place that inspired the Olympic Games and this was used to celebrate the Olympics being held in Great Britain. This will be supplemented by route guides and downloads from the web and a new disabled access trail.

Phase 3 Church Stretton to Shrewsbury - £68,500 HLF and LEADER funding was used to improve access as part of the Offa's Country project. The project will allow for the upgrade of the Shropshire Way from Church Stretton to Shrewsbury and also develop a new loop taking in the Snailbeach and Pontesbury areas. New circular walks were developed and promoted in the Clun and Stapeley/Corndon areas linked to Offa's Dyke.

Phase 4 Oswestry loop and link routes - £79,000, part funded by LEADER was used to extend and upgrade the Shropshire Way in a ring around Oswestry and link it to Shrewsbury along the river Severn. A further £89,000 part funded by LEADER was used to link the Oswestry ring to the rest of the Shropshire Way by creating new section along the River Severn to Shrewsbury and through the Meres and Mosses to Whitchurch. This work was undertaken in partnership with the Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme and Natural England at Fenn's and Whixall National Nature Reserve. A new Guidebook was printed and the walking website further upgraded.

The new network now looks as follows:



It should be noted that routes 16, 17, 18 and the Shrewsbury Area still need to be upgraded.

The Shropshire Way now links with:

- Offa's Dyke National Trail
- The Sandstone Trail
- The Mortimer Forest Trail
- The Severn Way

A series of 4 walks were created around Cleobury Mortimer's Golf club which are heavily used by local residents and Visitors alike.

The Jack Mytton Way Long Distance Bridleway

The route was established originally in 1992, and covered a distance of 75 miles (127 km) starting at Ray's Farm, Billingsley travelling through Highley, Much Wenlock, Church Stretton and Clun to ending at Llanfair Waterdine on the Welsh border. The southern loop providing a further 25 miles (40km) was developed in 2003 which leaves Rays Farm and passes through the villages of Stottesdon, Cleeton St Mary, Clee St. Margaret then crosses the Corve Dale to rejoin the Jack Mytton Way at Rushbury. This enables people to experience some of the more secret treasures of the South Shropshire landscape. The route was extensively upgraded and a new guidebook written in 2009.

Enjoy 100 miles of Shropshire's countryside

Jack Mytton Way

Your comments are welcome
The Jack Mytton Way is maintained and promoted by Shropshire County Council. Please provide us with feedback by completing the enclosed evaluation form or by contacting us at the address below.

Further Information
This guide is one of the routes that Shropshire County Council promote for horse riding and cycling. There is also a series of 10 circular rides off the Jack Mytton off the Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge area. These outlinking routes varying between 5 and 20 miles, give you the chance to spend a few hours or days making up the country.
We also produce an information leaflet called Guide for horse riders and cyclists on brideways and byways in Shropshire.
For further information on all these routes or to obtain a downloaded version of these guides please visit www.shropshire.gov.uk

Shropshire County Council
Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
Tel: 01884 618 000
www.shropshire.gov.uk

British Horse Society
www.bhs.org.uk

Off's Dyke Association
www.offdyke.com

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk

The Countryside Agency
www.countryside.gov.uk

Shropshire Tourism
Local Visitor Information Centres on route
Cawbury Martlets, Much Wenlock, Church Stretton, Clun
www.shropshiretourism.co.uk
(accommodation information available)
Visitor Information Centres
Shropshire 01746 712227
Church Stretton 01694 721123
Ludlow 01584 872052
Much Wenlock 01952 727679
Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre 01588 678000

Shropshire
The Countryside Agency

Shropshire's long distance bridleway

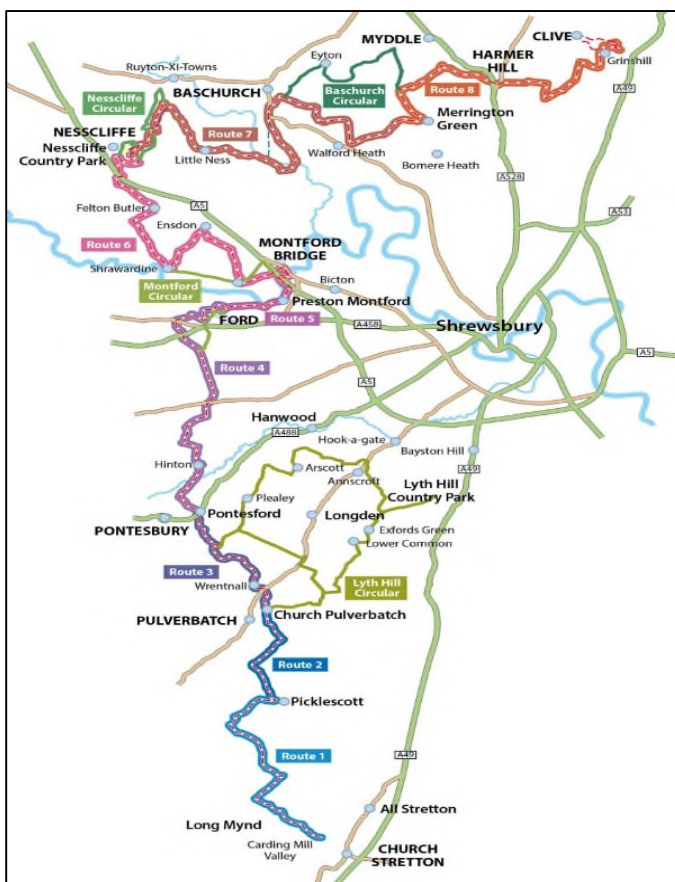
Shropshire

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This publication has been made possible by the publication grant received from the Home Office. If you have any comments regarding this publication please contact Shropshire County Council. Further along vegetation or lower side on 20% recycled, 100% chlorine free paper.

A further 10 circular rides were added to it called "Ride UK" routes

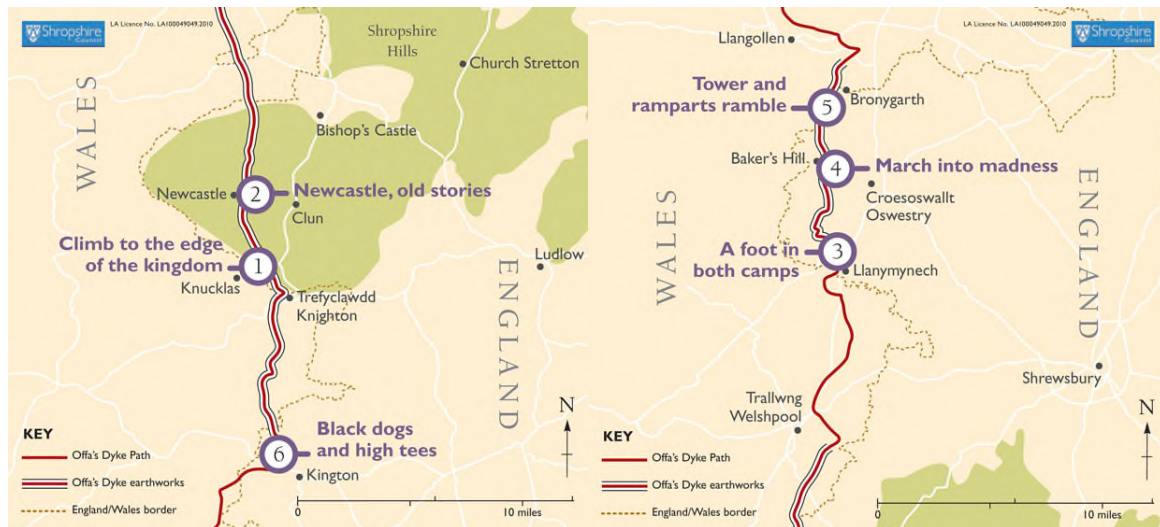
The Humphrey Kynaston Way

The Humphrey Kynaston Way is a new linear route, 51 miles long and providing a long distance horse riding route from south to north Shropshire linking and extending the Jack Mytton Way. Before the project, riders at Preston Montford had to negotiate stiles, a steep incline and then cross the busy A5 a major trunk road bisecting Shropshire. We have created a new section of Bridleway enabling a wider section of users access to the whole bridleway network and providing a safe way to cross the busy A5 trunk road by using the Highways Agency underpass. The Natural England grant of £18,000 was used to improve surfaces, bridleway gates, benches, signage and promotion. Additionally 4 circular rides off the main route were created.



The Offa's Dyke National Trail

The Offa's Dyke National Trail in Shropshire is maintained by the Outdoor Partnerships Team using grant funding from Natural England of about £10,000 per year. In 2010 as part of the Offa's Country Project 6 new circular walks were created from the main trail.



Walking with Offa

Walking with Offa was a major cross border LEADER and HLF funded project that looked at the interpretation of the corridor along Offa's Dyke. As part of this project 18 "walking with Offa" circular routes were upgraded and guides produced for each. The routes all started at a rural public house. Also 6 linear walks that used the public transport system were devised.

- Offa Hoppa 1 - Walton to Kington
- Offa Hoppa 2 - Titley to Kington
- Offa Hoppa 3 - Presteigne to Kington
- Offa Hoppa 4 - Norton to Knighton
- Offa Hoppa 5 - Knucklas to Knighton
- Offa Hoppa 6 - Five Turnings to Knighton

1 WALTON TO KINGTON

A moderate 5.5 mile linear walk with one hard climb to Hergest Ridge, steeped in legend and with great views. Allow 3 hours.

Food, drink and accommodation

The Crown Inn at Walton
Opening times: Open from late afternoon weekdays and from 12noon Saturday and Sunday. Closed Wednesdays.

The Harp Inn at Old Radnor
An historic pub which prides itself in offering locally sourced and freshly cooked food as well as real ales and other beverages.
Opening times: Tuesdays-Fridays from 6pm and at weekends from 12-3pm and 6pm onwards. Closed Mondays.
Tel: 01544 350655

In Kington there are hotels, cafes and pubs in this 'Walkers are Welcome' town. See www.kingtontourist.info for more details

Getting there
Catch the 461/462 bus from Hereford, Kington or Llandrindod Wells. Buses leave Kington (Mill Street Car Park) for Llandrindod Wells at 1010, 1110, 1210, 1310, 1410, 1610, 1710, 1810 hours (and from Hereford Railway Station 1 hours 10 mins earlier). Buses leave Llandrindod Wells (Railway Station forecourt) at 0900, 1107, 1207, 1307, 1407. These services operate on Mondays to Saturdays. No Sunday service. Ask the driver for The Crown at Walton.

The Walk - start at The Crown, Crossroads, Walton.

- From the entrance to The Crown turn right to walk on the lane up to Old Radnor. Look for a green track to the left of the war memorial up to Old Radnor Church and the Harp Inn. There's also a great viewpoint across the Radnor valley to the hills of Radnor Forest.
- Go right to pass by the church to a junction. Turn left and follow this to the end of the village. Look for a path leading off left, by a signpost (pointing to

WALTON TO KINGTON 1

the right, confusingly) and opposite a stile. The path climbs to a wood and heads slightly right below a summit. Keep ahead through gorse and bracken and then the path veers slightly left to descend slowly to run behind cottages to a lane. The views down the Back Brook valley are superb. Go right on the lane and follow this to Burlingjobb, turning left at the first junction, keeping ahead at the second and turning right over the stone bridge at the third. The road leads to the B4594 which you cross into Hanter Lane.

- Immediately cross a stile on the right into a field. Turn left and walk ahead to go over a stile and footbridge. Head slightly left across the next field to cross a stile beneath hawthorn bushes and then head slightly left again and keep close to the hedge on your left to exit at the end of the field by way of a gate with a house to your left.

Oswald's Trail.

Oswald's Trail is a new 21km walking route around Oswestry using existing footpaths which have been improved and in some cases opened up after years of being unusable. Starting at the bus station the route goes along the east side of the town and then heads out into open countryside, taking in Llanforda, the Old Racecourse, Brogyntyn Park, and Oswestry Old Hill fort. The route encompasses many of the sites of interests around Oswestry and links in with the recently opened Oswestry Loop of the Shropshire Way, the Offa's Dyke path and the Wat's Dyke path. The project cost £7,000 was funded by the Oswestry Group of the Ramblers from profits from its two published books of local walks, a grant from Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust and a small grant from Shropshire Council. Shropshire Council project managed the improvement work to the route.



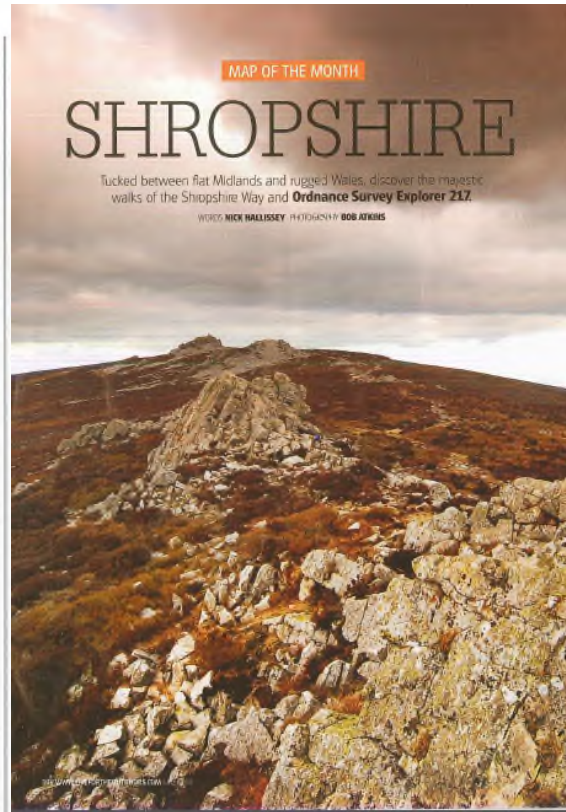
WW1 walks

WW1 walks funds have been allocated as part of the HLF WW1 project for Shropshire to commemorate the Great War. It is planned to hold 4 guided walks every year to celebrate some aspect of how the home front was affected by events that happened 100 years ago. The first 4 walks that looked at 1914 have now been held, led by local experts and historians and the leaflets placed with local visitor information centres. At the end of the 5 years these will build into a pack with all 20 walks included.



Promotion

Promotion has improved dramatically in the first 5 years of the Strategy with Shropshire no longer known as Britain’s best kept secret due active lobbying of the walking magazines and National Press. This has led to numerous articles of the beauty of the landscape and its exceptional walking offer. There have also been 2 Countryfile programmes that featured Shropshire and 2 TV news features. Examples of some of the articles are attached at Annexe F.



Website: www.shropshirewalking.co.uk

The website has been extensively upgraded over the last 5 years and has moved from a textual search based system to a map based search with separate pages for each of the major types of walks. It now includes links to all the Countryside Sites, news and details of walking events and festivals.

Click on a red button on the map below for walks in that area.



- Home
- Latest News
- The Shropshire Way
- Offas Dyke National Trail
- Walkers are Welcome
- Walking With Offa
- Easy Access Routes
- Walking for Health
- World War 1 Walks
- Permissive Walks
- Countryside Sites
- Events & Walking Festivals
- Podcasts
- Tourism Information Links
- Useful Information
- Shropshire Hills Shuttle Bus
- Contact Us
- QUICK ROUTE SEARCH**

The Shropshire Way has a separate page



By clicking on any of the linear or circular route numbers you are taken to a further page where you are able to look at and download the guidebook, detailed 1:25,000 maps and any MP3 podcasts.

The website has now reached its capacity and funding needs to be found to convert it to a more modern web engine and make it fully map based and interactive. The riding website which was developed at the same time as the walking website requires a similar upgrade and it is recommended that these websites need to be more fully integrated.

The number of downloads of the 453 online leaflets has amounted to over 250,000. The 41 podcasts that have been developed, as part of projects, to tell the story in local peoples words have been downloaded 4370 times. We have measured unique visitors to the websites since their inception and during the period this has risen from a total of 18,000 per year to over 90,000 per year.



Walkers are Welcome UK Network

Walkers are Welcome UK Network is a nationwide initiative launched in 2007 to encourage towns and villages to be 'welcoming to walkers'. The network has expanded rapidly and there are now over 100 locations across the UK that have joined this innovative community-led scheme to benefit from Walkers are Welcome accreditation. Its aims are to encourage and support towns and villages to:

- be attractive destinations for walkers with top quality information on local walks
- offer local people and visitors excellent walking opportunities within their areas
- ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are maintained, improved and well signposted
- contribute to local tourism plans and regeneration strategies
- promote the health benefits of walking and increase participation
- encourage the use of public transport

Shropshire now has 9 Walkers are Welcome accredited market towns

- Oswestry
- Bishop's Castle
- Church Stretton
- Cleobury Mortimer
- Much Wenlock
- Wellington
- Whitchurch
- Clun
- Ludlow

Additionally there are walking festivals held annually at 7 locations

Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival
Whitchurch Walking Festival
Wellington Walking Festival
Church Stretton Walking Festival
Bishops Castle Walking Festival
Much Wenlock Walking Weekend
Oswestry Walking Festival

Future Priorities 2014-2018 – A High Quality Network

Next steps

To continue with this partnership approach for the remaining areas of Shropshire will require projects to be developed incrementally over time. The focus at this stage needs to be within and around Shrewsbury, as the Shropshire Way crosses our county town and links with the sections upgraded in the south and north of the county. We need to vastly improve the walking offer in this area for local residents and visitors alike.

Ultimately this work would also be focussed around Market Drayton in the north and the east of Shropshire - Bridgnorth and Shifnal and we will take advantage of any opportunities that present themselves to complete this work by capitalising on any existing or new projects that may be developed by our partners to bring additionally to their projects as we have done so previously.

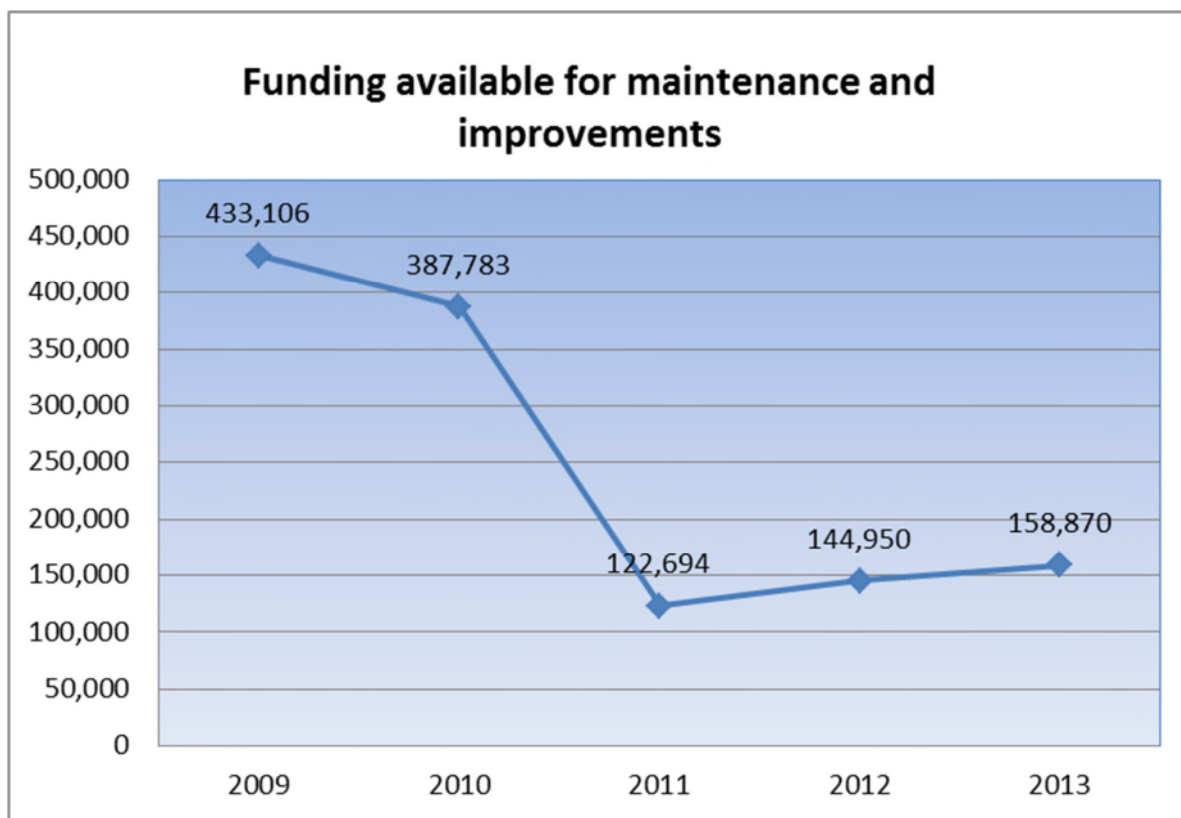
The next phase of the project will be to secure external funding for:

- Upgrading the Shropshire Way in the Shrewsbury and surrounding area and create a number of shorter circular walks, town heritage trails.
- Provide updated guides, web information and digital apps to allow more people to link to the wonderful heritage that this area has to offer with walks on the ground.
- Side by side this work with the local community to secure “walkers are welcome” status for the town.
- More support for local volunteer groups such as the Parish Paths Partnerships to minimise costs to the Council and maximise work on the ground.
- Finalise work on the Shropshire Way links to Shrewsbury and Market Drayton
- Work to improve the Severn Way and develop local circuits

Problems Encountered

Core funding and manpower reductions

There have been reductions in the core revenue and capital funding available to carry out work on the ground on Rights of way over the period.



FUNDING AVAILABLE	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Revenue	40,700	20,000	40,000	144,950	158,870
Capital bridges & surfaces	162,675	247,925	32,380	0	0
PAP	229,731	119,858	50,314	0	0
	433,106	387,783	122,694	144,950	158,870

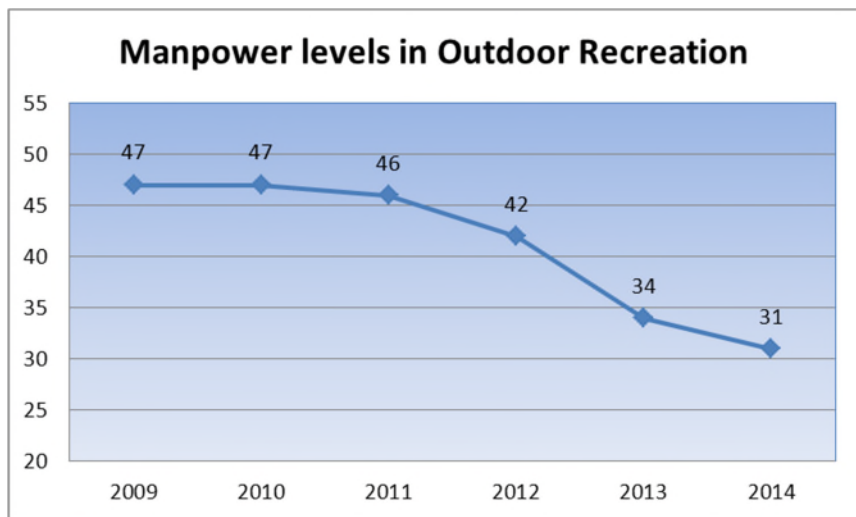
Most significant being the withdrawal of capital funding support for major bridge or surfacing works. As a response to this, and the need to make further savings the Service restructured during 2001/12. This enabled the revenue maintenance budget to be increased to support some of the more capital type project work. Clearly this is a key factor in the drop in accessibility on the network.

This has meant that much of the upgrading of ROWs has had to be undertaken as part of externally funded projects. The funds available from Projects, which has reduced of the last 5 years, will further lessen as the required match funding becomes impossible to get.

The service has a Business Plan in place to significantly increase income to off-set maintenance budget reductions.

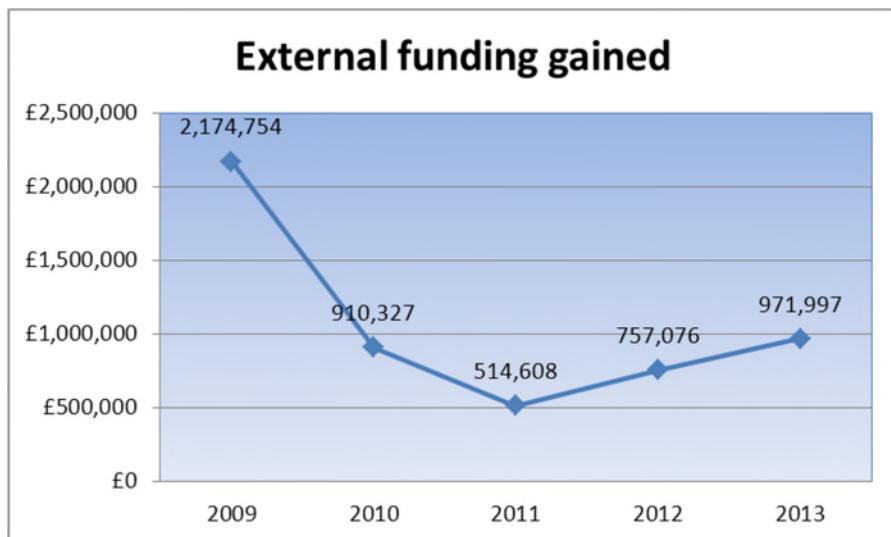
Manpower reduction

Another consequence of the cuts in Council spending is the reduction in the revenue budget available for manpower, this has resulted in reviews of staffing and the manpower available has dropped from 47 to 31 during the period.



External funding

Key to providing implementation of the Access Strategy is securing external funding.



The levels of match funding required by Heritage and LEADER funding streams has increased to 50% in most cases.

Future Priorities Summary– 2014 - 2018

Future Priorities 2014-2018 - Working with Communities

We will:

Continue to listen to our customers through:

- Annual online surveys
- User forums
- Problem reports

.....and be flexible in terms of responding to customer needs

Work to establish local ROW priorities and ensure that these priorities are reflected in any direct delivery at a local level as well as ensuring that we work in partnership to make things happen at a local level – this may be through externally funded project or other place based initiatives.

Maintain support to existing Parish Path Partnership groups and Parish Paths Wardens and support new local groups to develop where there are gaps. We will work towards a longer term vision to have countywide geographical coverage for the partnerships.

Support Parish Path Partnership groups alongside Town and Parish Councils to set their own local priorities for ROW improvements and developments as well supporting an area wide approach to active volunteering partnership's – linking people and groups together.

Provide more training to extend the range of activity volunteers can undertake.

Work to link to existing volunteer groups to other active volunteering groups locally and encourage sharing of resources, training and best practice.

Future Priorities 2014-2018 – Health and Well Being

We will:

Increase the number of volunteers involved in existing groups and increase the number of new volunteer groups – Parish Path Partnerships, Walking for Health, Shropshire Outdoors and from our Countryside Sites and Greenspaces

Promote volunteer opportunities better and more effectively, in partnership with other organisations

Increase self-supervised volunteer activity, with the suitable paperwork, training and equipment

Develop a number of 'A Teams' of volunteers who can be called on to tackle more complex jobs

Increase business involvement through corporate volunteering

Create volunteering opportunities around non-physical work such as website or event management

Increase the number of young people involved in Outdoor Partnerships volunteering

Future Priorities 2014-2018 – Access for Everyone

Providing inclusive opportunities for everyone to access the countryside is an ongoing requirement.

We will continue to:

Engage with hard-to-reach groups to understand their barriers to access

Understand the needs and interest of people with learning difficulties, mental health problems and sensory impairment and make it easier for them to participate in countryside activities.

Reintroduce the 'Shropshire Outdoors' approach to encourage such groups to engage more in the Shropshire countryside specifically by continuing to support this approach to active volunteering

Work to ensure that the Shropshire countryside is more accessible for everyone implementing the 'least restrictive' principle on the ground - replacing stiles with gates where ever we can.

Continue to promote easier access and provide wherever opportunities present themselves

Work towards providing a range of volunteering opportunities for young people – Youth Rangers.

Future Priorities 2014-2018 – Making Local Journeys

We will:

Work Parish and Town Councils to promote walking as a way of getting around local areas.

Continue to seek out external funding to support such initiatives.

Incorporate the walking and cycling active travel content of the Travel Shropshire website on to the new Shropshire Outdoors website.

Future Priorities 2014-2018 – A High Quality Network

We will: work to secure external funding to:

Upgrade the Shropshire Way in the Shrewsbury and surrounding area and create a number of shorter circular walks, town heritage trails.

Provide updated guides, web information and digital apps to allow more people to link to the wonderful heritage that this area has to offer with walks on the ground.

Work with the local community to secure "walkers are welcome" status for the town.

Provide more support for local volunteer groups such as the Parish Paths Partnerships to minimise costs to the Council and maximise work on the ground.

Finalise work on the Shropshire Way links to Shrewsbury and Market Drayton

Work to improve the Severn Way and develop local circuits