



Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Service

Annual Report 2016/17



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1.0 Summary

The report gives an overview of the work of the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships team in 2016/17 and demonstrates how it is meeting the Corporate Plan priorities for Shropshire Council. It discusses the achievements and issues encountered and includes evaluation of activity where possible. It is not designed to be completely comprehensive but to illustrate the quality and breadth of the activity being delivered.

This report will be used to provide feedback to Councillors, other Council staff, funders and other stakeholders on the activity of the Outdoor Partnerships Team in 2016/17.

1.1 Achievements 2016/17

Key facts and figures

- ✓ Income generation of £398,665, an increase of 24% on 2015/16
- ✓ An estimated 952,000 people visited the Parks, Sites and Greenspaces, a 21% increase on the previous year
- ✓ 1,291 children on school visits (43% increase on previous year)
- ✓ External funding continues to be secured for parks and sites projects despite heavy workloads
- ✓ Severn Valley Country Park Visitor Centre upgrade
- ✓ New office at The Mere- Community room to hire
- ✓ Over 1,500 improvements to RoW, Parks and Sites
- ✓ 170 stiles replaced by gates to make access to the countryside easier for those with limited mobility (10% increase, despite securing more external contracts)
- ✓ Shropshire Way Main Route development
- ✓ External funding of £343,300 secured for special projects
- ✓ 21 improvements to the Definitive Map
- ✓ Responded to 455 planning applications
- ✓ Responded to 4602 Public Rights of Way Searches
- ✓ Successful ploughing and cropping campaign
- ✓ 1,177 volunteers, mostly 55+ years old, supplying almost £310,000 worth of volunteer support, which is equivalent to 10 full time staff
- ✓ There are 73 Parish Paths Partnership groups across the county now, five new ones started in 2016/17
- ✓ Parish Paths Partnerships groups dedicated over 10,000 volunteer hours
- ✓ Healthy Outdoors for Schools- successful pilot with two schools
- ✓ Walking for Health walks are now more independent and mean we can use one less member of staff to co-ordinate them
- ✓ Over 1,800 people take part in Walking for Health, 30% joined this year and numbers are still growing
- ✓ 46 Wild Team volunteers have been involved this year
- ✓ 103,000 users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website, 76% of whom were under 45
- ✓ 2,960 likes on Facebook and 2,258 Followers on Twitter
- ✓ New Shropshire's Great Outdoors membership scheme launched Dec 2016, 43 members joined Q4

- ✓ LEADER- Southern Shropshire Local Action Group is the best performing in the West Midlands
- ✓ £307,000 of grant has been allocated.
- ✓ 13.8 new jobs have been created.
- ✓ 11 projects have been approved and the Grant Funding Agreements signed.

1.2 Issues 2016/17

The following issues were raised by users:

- Better promotion of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website and the work of the Service is needed
- Concerns over impact of housing and other developments
- Concerns about lack of funding and reliance on volunteers
- More investment is needed in off-road cycling and horse riding routes
- Some people are not keen to see car parking charges on sites

The following issues need to be addressed to further develop the work of the Service:

- Simple Terms and Conditions are required for small contracting works with external parties
- A Working Capital account is needed into which any income that is earned beyond the annual targets could be stored between years.
- Better promotion of the Service through development and delivery of communication plans.
- Increased staff capacity is needed to fully address the on-going needs of the Service.

1.3 Future development 2017/18

The priorities for 2017/18 are:

- Publishing a new Five Year Strategy for Outdoor Partnerships
- Publishing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-28, including a review of off-road cycling in Shropshire
- Creation of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board to replace the Local Access Forum
- Development of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Foundation- a charitable 'arm' so that we can encourage charitable donations, sponsorship and legacies
- Development of a new wood fuel business- using timber extracted from the sites
- An extension to the Visitor Centre at SVCP to enable more events, education visits and space for the café
- Options analysis of Swan Hill Depot at Ellesmere for business use
- Initial discussions about a new flagship Country Park for Shrewsbury as part of planning for new housing, transport and economic growth development
- Successful delivery of Southern Shropshire LEADER Programme
- Developing a new approach to volunteer co-ordination across the county to better fulfil the aims of Public Health

2.0 Strategic Priorities

A Five Year strategy for Outdoor Partnerships is being developed around the following outcomes and priorities, which all contribute to the Corporate Plan priorities.

Our Vision

Inspiring action in Shropshire's Great Outdoors.

In five years time, the quality and promotion of the recreational access, Country Parks and Heritage Sites will be inspiring people to be more involved, get more active and enjoy and celebrate our wonderful habitats and heritage. Communities will be happier and healthier as a result. Businesses will benefit from this increased activity and more visitors enjoying the outdoors. Biodiversity and climate change mitigation benefits will be maximised.

In a time of reducing Government support, this will be achieved partly through increasing income and securing more external funding.

Core Principles

- The provision of high quality ecosystems, cultural heritage, assets and outdoor infrastructure underpins the community need for outdoor recreation
- The involvement of local people in the provision of service will increase physical and mental wellbeing and community resilience
- Provision of high quality outdoor recreation assets will give many businesses the products on which to build the local economy
- Joint working with relevant partners is the best way to deliver a range of outdoor recreation provision across the county
- Well managed ecosystems benefit wildlife, the environment and help mitigate climate change
- There is a legal requirement to manage land, along with the statutory duties regarding Rights of Way
- Our natural and cultural heritage should be protected for future generations

2.1 Healthy People

Outcome: Shropshire residents are physically and mentally active through access to, and participation in, a broad range of outdoor recreational activities and active volunteering

Priorities:

1. *Older people are supported to be more physically active through participation with Walking for Health*
2. *Local people are actively involved with Parish Paths Partnership and Volunteer Rangers groups across the county*
3. *People with mental and physical health issues are supported through the Shropshire Wild Teams*
4. *Residents benefit from access to countryside events and guided walks*
5. *Young people are more active outdoors*

6. *Access to ROW and open spaces helps supports physical and mental well being*
7. *People benefit from social interaction, skills and learning, resulting in less social isolation and increased confidence.*

Public Health allocated the Outdoor Partnership's Service £200,000 funding in 2016/17 to develop active volunteering and improve outdoor recreation provision.

Through this funding, volunteering, route and site improvements and Walking for Health participation is increasing, especially in the over 65s and research shows that the work is:

- Increasing physical activity, including for those who were previously 'inactive'
- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Providing facilities that encourage everyone to be more active more often
- Promoting opportunities to easily get more active



The funding enables the Service to better deliver against Public Health England's Everybody Active Every Day and the Public Health Framework Indicators and Adult Social Care outcomes and a report explaining more about Outdoor Partnerships contribution to these is available on request. All of this means that the Outdoor Partnerships Service is helping people to remain independent longer, reducing reliance on Adult Social Care provision.

A full report for Public Health on the health benefits of the work is available.

2.2 Resilient Communities

Outcome: Local partnership approaches enable communities to identify and act upon their priorities for the local economy, healthy residents and a high quality outdoor environment and biodiversity

Priorities:

1. *Local people lead and co-ordinate Walking for Health schemes across the county*
2. *Shropshire Wild Teams are self-supported by local people*
3. *Volunteer Rangers are involved in making decisions about their local parks and greenspaces and work to make things happen*
4. *Local communities play an increasing role in the management of their local routes and open spaces*
5. *Parish Paths Partnership groups set their own priorities for local routes and improve and maintain them*
6. *Decision making on the Southern Shropshire LEADER Programme is carried out through the Local Action Group*

7. *Recreational users have an increased understanding of how to act responsibly in the natural environment*
8. *User Forums advise Outdoor Partnerships on local and county priorities*
9. *Sites with natural and cultural heritage designations are managed to ensure they are in favourable condition*

Shropshire has one of the largest Rights of Way (RoW) networks in the country: The 5,600 km would reach across the Atlantic to New York. It is an invaluable resource for local communities and enables people to access the fantastic scenery throughout the county. Through the Parish Paths Partnership groups and the Walking Forums, local people can decide on the priority routes for their parish and wider area and work towards making improvements themselves. More than half the county now has a P3 group and these volunteers taking on much of the management of the RoW in their area is one of the reasons that the BVPI for the ease of use of RoW is still as high as 70%.

Volunteers also make a major contribution to the management and development of the Country Parks and Countryside Heritage Sites, again helping maintain the local facilities for future generations and help with events and activities of local benefit.

2.3 Prosperous Economy

Outcome: Economic growth is supported by developing the outdoor economy through working with businesses to access Shropshire's rich and varied natural environment and heritage

Priorities:

1. *Country Parks and Heritage Sites are developed to bring in more income and to be utilised by outdoor activity businesses for economic benefit, whilst respecting the natural and cultural heritage*
2. *The Southern Shropshire LEADER programme facilitates the provision of 73 new jobs and the Local Action Group are actively involved in the development of new rural development priorities.*
3. *Rights of Way are accessible and well maintained and utilised by active outdoor businesses*
4. *External funding is successfully invested to improve the offer for outdoor tourism and support related businesses*
5. *People and businesses are supported to maximise local economic benefit from Shropshire's Great Outdoors*
6. *Shropshire is valued and recognised as high quality countryside and a walking friendly destination*
7. *Visitors use of the high quality Council owned parks and green spaces enhances the local economy and helps businesses thrive*
8. *New opportunities to grow the Outdoor Economy are pursued*

The £2.2m Southern Shropshire LEADER Programme was launched in January 2016. The programme funds organisations, mostly businesses, to develop the local economy in ways that help sustain the high quality environment.

Outdoor Partnerships launched the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website at Easter 2016. This is an invaluable resource for local people, visitors and businesses to help encourage recreational use of

the countryside and derive economic benefit in the process. A new business scheme is being developed as part of the new Shropshire's Great Outdoors membership scheme.

The Rights of Way network and the high quality natural and cultural heritage of our Country Parks and Heritage Sites form part of the essential infrastructure for visitors and encourage many to choose Shropshire for their holiday. These assets underpin the local area, especially in rural parts of the county.

2.4 Operation of the Council

Outcome: Outdoor recreational assets are safe and well maintained to meet the statutory obligations of the Council now and in the future, drawing in external funding to help address current financial restrictions

Priorities:

1. ROW are accessible, safe and well maintained
2. The Definitive Map is kept up to date
3. Parks and Countryside Heritage Sites are safe and well maintained
4. Effective planning for the sustainable recreational use and management of natural resources is embedded in our work
5. External funding and income will be maximised to help deliver and develop the service

The budgets and staff resource are less than half what they were in 2013/14 and Council financial support is continuing to fall. This has had a dramatic impact on the capacity of the team to fulfil their statutory duty and to involve local people and co-ordinate volunteers. There was considerable concern voiced in the Annual User survey about the on-going cuts to funding for Outdoor Partnerships, for example:

"The work of Shropshire's Outdoor Partnerships is hugely important to the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of the community. I truly hope that sufficient funding is available to continue its work."

"I think the Outdoor Dept do a very good job considering the horrendous cuts to their budget. If they were to sort out all of the problems of blocked paths etc. the County Council would need to make a considerable increase in investment in Rights of Way. Surely people of Shropshire deserve this."

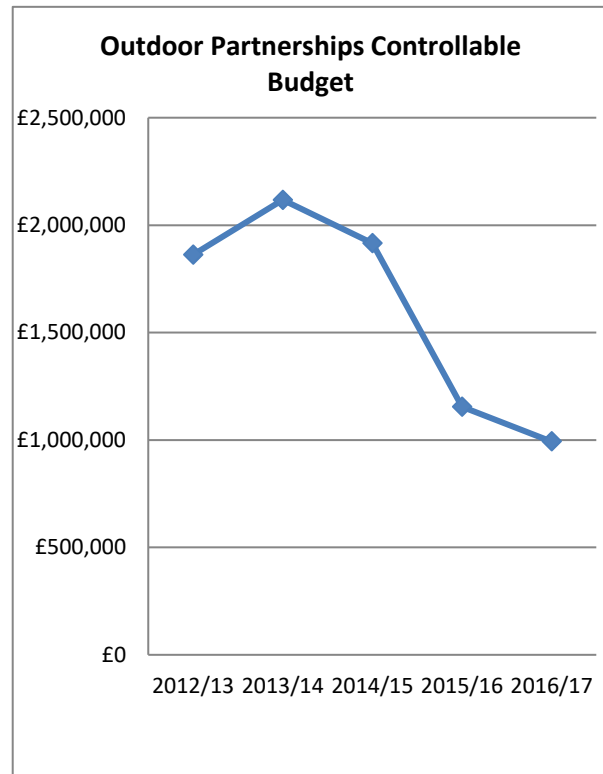
"Thank you for everything you do, and the improvements you continue to make, despite funding cuts. Don't know how you do it, but glad you are able to!"

3.0 Budget

The total budget for 2016/17 was £1,507,000. This includes around £600k non controllable costs such as depreciation, IT services and payroll, leaving a controllable budget of around £1m. The controllable budget has dropped by more than 50% since 2013/14 as shown in the graph. This reflects a similar drop in staff numbers of more than 50% in the same period.

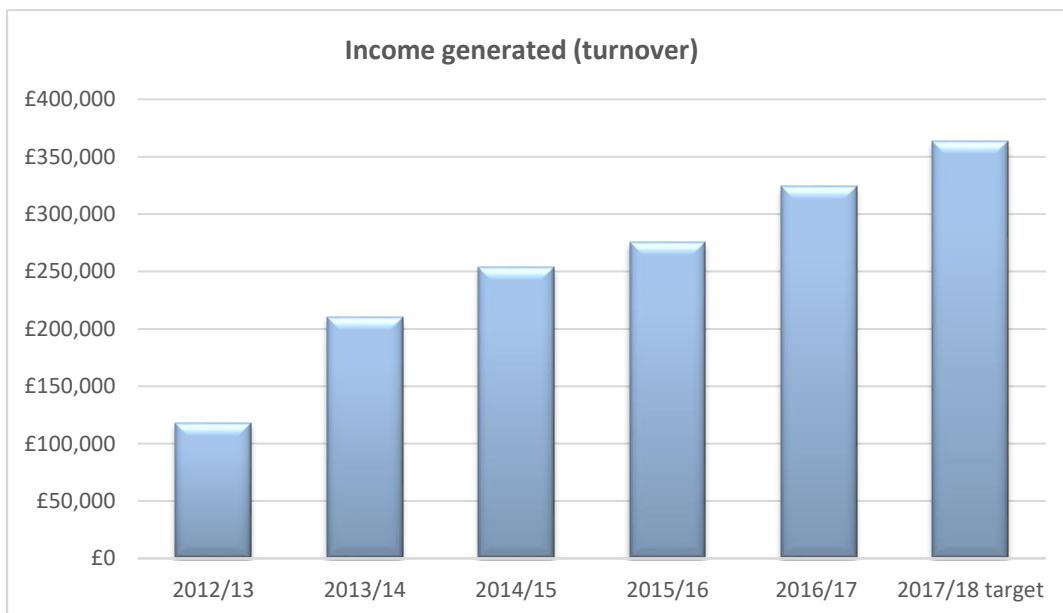
The funds are split between the teams as follows:

- Rights of Way £640,000
- Mapping and Enforcement- £104,000
- Parks & Sites - £640,000
- Health - £123,000 (Public Health funding)
- Management & Admin - £50,000
- LEADER- 73,000 (RDPE funding)



Income generation

Income has been generated by a number of commercial activities over the past few years and is growing year on year as expected. This graph does not include funding from Public Health or Highways. All of the teams within Outdoor Partnerships are contributing to this.



4.0 Activity in 2016/17

This section gives more detail about the activity, achievements and feedback from our customers in 2016/17.

4.1 Improving accessibility and the local environment

Work by the Countryside Maintenance, Parks and Greenspaces and Mapping and Enforcement teams make a significant difference to improving accessibility and the local environment.

4.1.1 Country Parks , Countryside Heritage Sites, Urban Greenspaces and Play Areas

At the beginning of 2016/17 the Council set out its financial strategy, indicating service cuts to discretionary services such as parks & green spaces. With the need to look at income generation, the Parks and Greenspace Team undertook a review of its service delivery, the solutions and actions being set out within a new Shropshire's Great Outdoors Enterprise Plan in July 2016. The Key actions being:

- The management of 97 urban greenspaces to be transferred to the Highways Street Scene Teams from 1st July 2016, who already maintain amenity greenspaces and highway verges through the Highway contract with Ringway.
- The Play and Maintenance Officers also to be transferred to Highways Street Scene Teams from 1st July 2016.
- Parks and Greenspace Team was renamed The Country Parks & Heritage Sites Team, which would continue to manage sites that require specialist management of specific natural and cultural heritage features e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Schedule Ancient Monuments, which are used by more than the local community and are important for the visitor economy.

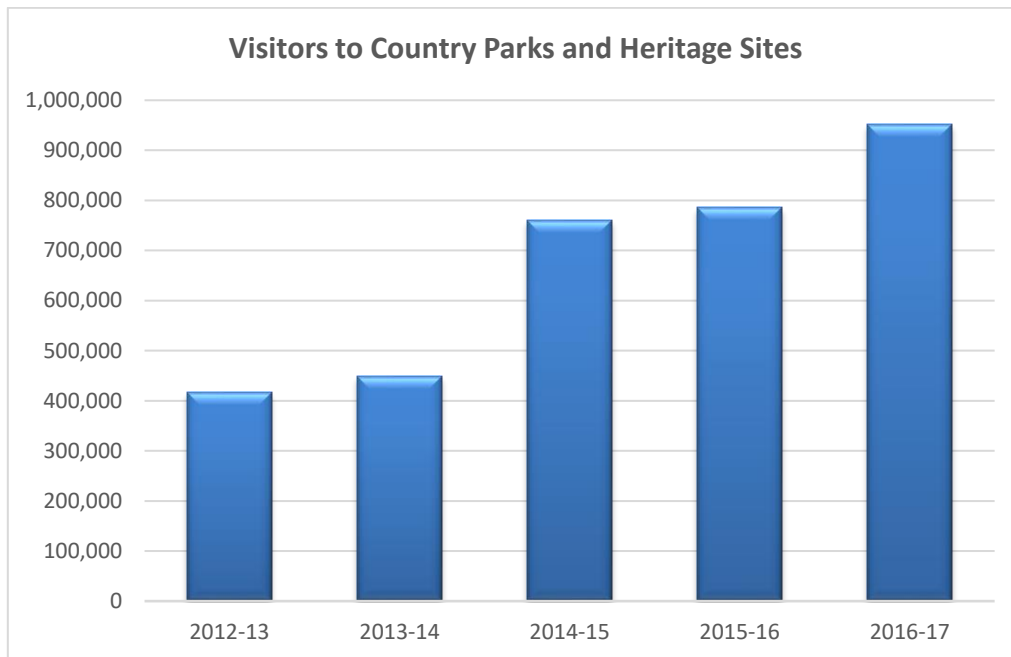
Throughout the year the Team has been working to deliver the actions within the Enterprise Plan as well as continuing to ensure that all the sites are checked on a regular basis to safeguard users and to increase visitor enjoyment. Whilst fulfilling this obligation we undertake the following:

- Oversee site repairs and maintenance
- Work with local communities and support volunteering activities
- Apply for external grants to deliver projects
- Develop and implement site management plans
- Deliver wildlife habitat and access improvements
- Deliver events and educational activities

Key achievements

- 12 project providing £234,633 of external grant income
- 900 children on school visits
- Over 350,000 visitors at 2 country parks and over 550,000 visits across other heritage sites

- 15,293 hours of volunteer time, equating to £118,520
- 293 site improvement tasks undertaken
- Upgrade and improve the SVCP Café within the Visitor Centre and install an environmentally sustainable sewage system
- Move into the new offices at the Wardens Bungalow at the Mere



Customer feedback

“Through the Shropshire County Council website, I was put in touch with Shaun Burkey in response to my enquiry regarding the possibility of installing a memorial bench on Brown Moss.

He could not have done any more to help me. From suggesting possible sites on a map, along with photographs of these positions, he has arranged the whole operation, along with help from his colleague Mike Simms. He has kept me informed throughout, and today sent photos to show the bench in its beautiful spot. I really am so very impressed by the effort Shaun made to make sure everything went smoothly.

Brown Moss was loved by my parents throughout their lives, and I cannot think of a better memorial than this. Hopefully it will be enjoyed and appreciated by many other locals too.”

Resident

“Just to say thank you to you and your smashing team for a great Trail Race yesterday. The course was lovely and all the Marshalls were great, very encouraging!!! I thought the event was well organised and I will definitely be back.”

Participant in the Severn Valley Trail Run

“We visited the Severn Valley countryside centre, today for the very first time. What an absolute gem of a place, we will definitely visit again.

We came to see the Flying Scotsman. Can we say that the facilities are brilliant, parking, the cafe, food and the staff, toilets, and the mini bus service that you put on today for the trains. The guys who ran the bus are fabulous, they even waited for us with the last bus because we wanted to see the Tornado pass at 4.10pm and wouldn't get back to the bus until 4.25pm due to a gentleman who couldn't walk very fast due to lung disease.

Top marks for customer service. Well done!!”

Visitor to Severn Valley Country Park

4.1.2 Rights of Way improvements

The Countryside Maintenance Team delivers improvements to the rights of way network through a number of different areas of work:

- Resolution of problem reports from the public, Parish Councils and Councillors
- Support and development of the Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme
- Restoration and maintenance of Offa's Dyke National Trail and other promoted routes such as the Shropshire Way and Jack Mytton Way
- Implementation of new project work such as the development of new promoted routes
- Implementation of works that arise from legal changes to the map where routes are diverted or added to the definitive map.

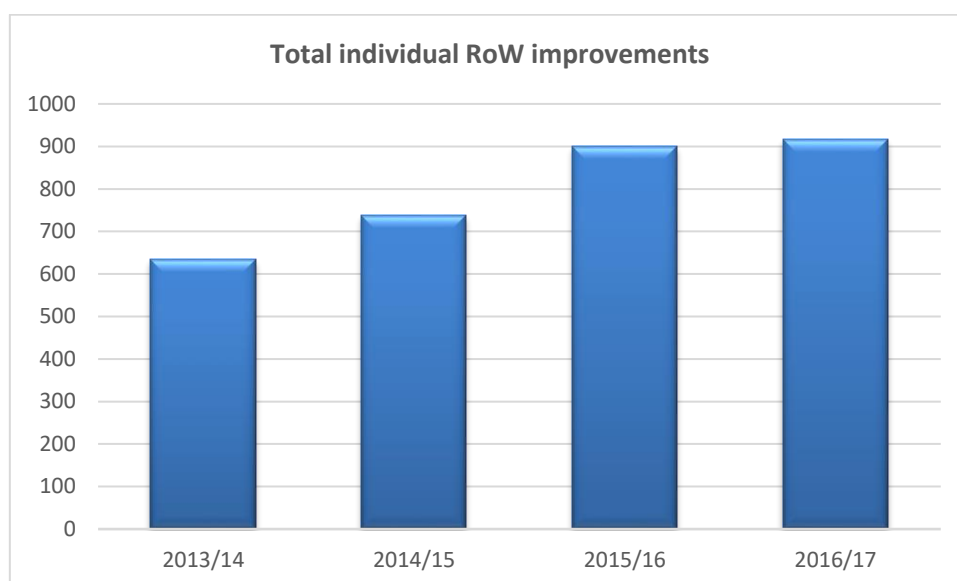


Key achievements

- 916 individual improvements made on the network (target 800)
- 170 gates replacing stiles to improve accessibility (target 150). These were spread around the county more this year, with more done as training for P3 groups, so they can continue the good work elsewhere.
- Existing P3 groups supported and new groups formed (please see active volunteering section of this report)
- Offa's Dyke programme delivered and funded up to 75% by Natural England
- Further development of the commercial output for the team's skills, over and above the network management task. New staff have been appointed and the team have built a

strong customer base for future work. Income targets were met alongside continuing growth in Rights of Way work output.

- A new working relationship with Shrewsbury School was developed, leading to an ongoing week of community work every year with the students (see case study in appendix 2).



Appendix 1 shows what type of work was delivered through the 916 individual improvements and shows a comparison on recent years output.

The progress in replacing stiles with gates has grown with a further 170 stiles replaced with gates (10% up). This demonstrates the team’s commitment to negotiating the replacement of stiles with gates to improve the accessibility of the network. On top of this a further 25 gates were installed independently by Parish Path Partnership groups to replace stiles.

The team managed to sustain last year’s increased amount of path clearing delivered this year. Overgrowth remains a key obstacle to users according to the user survey results, so this will have to be maintained and increased year on year.

A case study about the work carried out with students from Shrewsbury School is shown in Appendix 2.

Customer feedback

“Just a short note to thank you for the great job that you and your excellent team of volunteers did on Wednesday - we’re sure the results will be appreciated by all who pass this way for many years to come!”

A resident of South Shropshire

“I have just become the owner of some land on Wenlock Edge and I contacted the Rights of Way Officer to clarify the rights of way and to attend to the access. The experience has been very prompt and very good.”

A Landowner from Much Wenlock

“The lads have done an excellent job on the Bridleway, I'd forgotten how wide it is in places. Thank you very much for getting it sorted and please pass on my thanks to the lads that did the work.”

A resident of South Shropshire.

“Thank you very much for arranging for the replacement of the footbridge west of Knowbury. The provision of kissing gates in place of the old stile is also a big improvement. I'm very grateful for your prompt response which enabled the work to be done in time for the Magnalonga which took place yesterday. The event went well, and was enjoyed by about 600 people. It was reassuring to know that at least one of the potential hazards had been removed. The work will also benefit others that use the route.”

Organiser of a walking event in South Shropshire

“Just a further note to thank you and your Team for carrying out the works to the above footpath. A number of Councillors and parishioners have contacted me to let me know how delighted they were with the works and reiterated what a difference it will make.”

Woore Parish Clerk

4.1.3 Mapping and Enforcement of Rights of Way

The Mapping and Enforcement Team are responsible for ensuring that the Definitive Map is kept up to date and the protection and enforcement of the Public Rights of Way network. This covers a number of different areas of work:

- Processing, investigating and making recommendations on all applications to alter the map and public Rights of Way.
- Legal orders to amend the Definitive Map (both evidential and preferential).
- Maintaining statutory registers.
- Responding to Planning application consultations and land charge searches.
- Responding to problem reports and legal notices.
- Site inspections and negotiations with landowners.
- Enforcement action.
- Motor Rally permissions.
- Traffic Regulation orders.
- General Enquiries and supply of information.
- Temporary Closures.

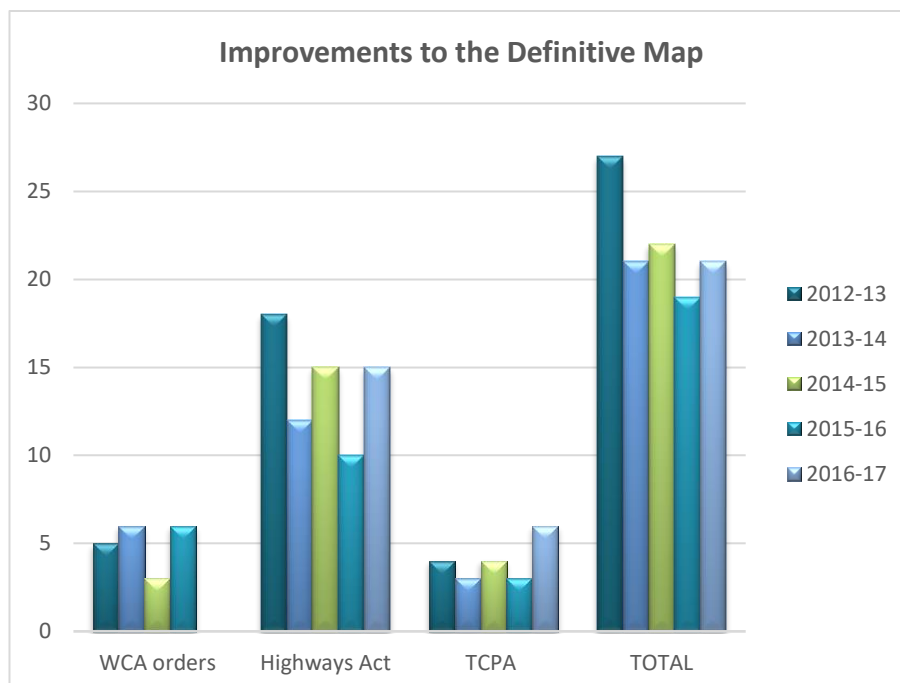
The team consists of five Officers, three who undertake all mapping and enforcement works within their allocated areas and a support officer who publishes legal orders, undertakes many of the tasks detailed above and provides direct support the team. Since November 2016 a Land Charges and Planning Support Officer has joined the team to respond to Land Charge Searches and Planning Applications since Public Rights Of Way queries became part of the standard searches in June 2016.

Key Achievements

- Public Path Orders (Preferential Orders)
 - Six diversion orders were made under the Highways Act 1980 and six orders were confirmed.
 - Two Extinguishment orders were made and three were confirmed.
 - One Creation Order was made and confirmed under the Highways Act 1980.
 - Seven orders were made and five Orders were confirmed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where routes were affected by development.
 - One bridleway and one footpath were dedicated by landowners.
- Three Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) (Evidential Orders) were made and/or confirmed.
- Fifteen ROW Temporary Closure Orders and extensions (to allow works to be carried out usually on Health and Safety Grounds) were undertaken raising £15,500.
- 40 Rights of Way Searches were carried out bringing in an income of over £2,300

Eight Highways Statements/Declarations (To protect landowners against claims for Rights of Way based on user evidence) were made to deposit with the Council a Landowner Statement or renew a Landowner Declaration bringing in income of £2,800.

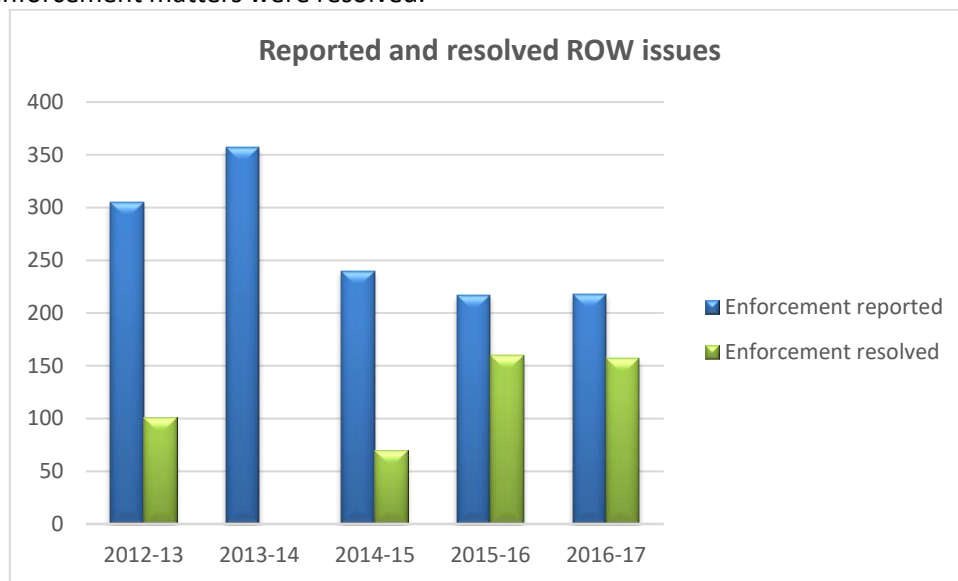
These applications protect landowners from future claims for additional public rights of way over their land based on user evidence. Current regulations allow the Council to charge for such applications.



- Responded to 346 Planning Applications that directly affect or has a Public Right of Way running within close proximity and 109 applications affecting Public Open Space provision. These are

dealt with via the Councils Planning Portal. Where routes are directly affected this can often result in an application to divert the route under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or the Highways Act 1980. (See above).

- Since June 2016 the Public Rights of Way question has become part of the standard Land Charges Search. Since July 2016 **4602** searches have been responded to by the Mapping and Enforcement Team.
- A total of **1083** general enquiries were logged during the year. These include letters, emails to the generic e-mail address, from the Councils website and from the Customer Call Centre. This does not include phone calls or e-mails direct to individual officers. The majority of the enquiries logged are matters which are dealt with by the Mapping and Enforcement Team.
- **944** complaints/ issues were reported and logged on the System used by the team to manage the Public Rights of Way network.
- **76%** of the issues reported related to problems which were allocated to the Rights Of Way Team who undertake practical works on the network. The remaining **24%** of issues reported relate to matters requiring enforcement so were allocated to the Mapping and Enforcement Team.
- **157** enforcement matters were resolved.



More detail on each of these achievements can be found in appendix 3.

Customer Feedback

'Dear Lucy

Many thanks to all involved in getting the stile near Mainstone sorted in time for our walk. The evidence is in the photo. I was especially pleased to see a little bridge and handrail over the ditch. We had a wonderful day.'

'I just wanted to say a big thank you to everyone who made last night's meeting possible! I'd especially like to thank Lucy, Shona, Jean and Emily for giving up their free time to come and inform, educate and answer endless questions! Lucy please do pass on our sincere gratitude to your colleagues. It was so good to have you all there and to know we are working in partnership with the experts.'

4.2 Southern Shropshire LEADER Programme

The LEADER approach is a rural development method used for delivering the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). It is based on local knowledge to promote an integrated bottom up, community led grant scheme, funded by the EU and Defra. This £138m scheme is part of the RDPE programme to help grow the rural economy that also includes the Countryside Productivity scheme and RDPE Growth Programme.



Shropshire Council, as the Accountable Body for the LEADER Programme, delegates the strategic direction and the decision making elements of the programme to the Southern Shropshire Local Action Group (LAG).



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas

The Southern Shropshire LEADER LAG secured £2.032 million of European funding through the LEADER Programme (2015-2020). The money was secured on the strength of the LEADER Local Development Strategy, this strategy seeks to implement the six national LEADER priorities:

- Increasing farm productivity in ways which enhance natural capital;
- Developing sustainable micro and small enterprises and farm diversification;
- Building rural tourism making the most of Shropshire's assets;
- Improving rural services to support business growth and development;
- Enhancing the natural, cultural and heritage attractions of the area;
- Increasing woodland and forest productivity in ways which enhance natural capital.

Key achievements

- The Southern Shropshire LAG has received 67 Outline Applications (OA). 42 of these OAs have been invited to the Full Application stage. The remaining 25 include 20 that have been rejected and 5 where the OA has been withdrawn.
- £307,000 of grant has been allocated.
- 13.8 new jobs have been created.
- 11 projects have been approved and the Grant Funding Agreements signed.
- £78,000 of project expenditure has been claimed.
- 3 Applicant training sessions have been completed. The training is provided to assist the applicants in completing the full application process.
- An annual Delivery Plan was submitted in April 2017 to DEFRA and the RPA for approval, this sets out the activity of the programme for the next financial year.
- Two Rural Payment Agency Audits have been carried with no issues found.

- The Southern Shropshire LEADER Programme Manager continues to represent the West Midlands on the national LEADER Exchange Group.
- A LEADER Support Officer was recruited and commenced employment in September 2016.

The priorities for the new financial year, 2017 – 2018, are to continue to develop projects that can demonstrate a benefit to the local rural economy and a connection to the landscape, which should contribute to the creation of jobs or the development of businesses in the Southern Shropshire LEADER rural area.

The impact of Brexit will shorten the programme length, the programme was due to finish in December 2020. This date has been brought forward to March 2020.

More information about LEADER can be found on the Shropshire Council website:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-recreation/southern-shropshire-leader-programme>

Feedback

The Chair of the Southern Shropshire Local Action Group, Councillor Tim Barker, said:

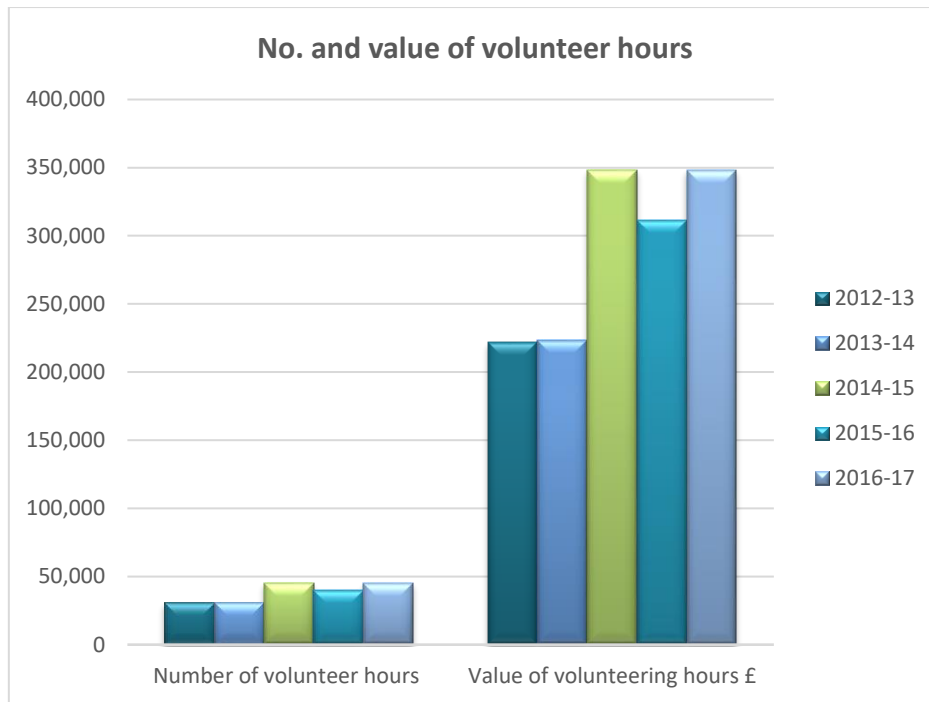
“We are absolutely delighted to have secured funding for rural businesses operating throughout southern Shropshire and are confident that it will contribute towards a stronger and more sustainable rural economy. This programme is specifically targeted at smaller businesses and I would encourage anyone who might want to apply to either contact us or have a look at the Southern Shropshire LEADER programme website”.

4.3 Active Volunteering

The Outdoor Partnership team relies on a range of dedicated residents from across the county to help deliver the Service. Without these fantastic volunteers the level of Service delivery would be significantly lower. In return, the team provide training, co-ordination and support but increasingly these groups are working independently, setting their own priorities locally, with minimum input from the team.

By volunteering to do physical tasks in the outdoors and to lead walking groups the volunteers are also helping themselves and others keep more physically active, more often and the volunteering programmes are therefore contributing to the Public Health ‘Everybody Active Every Day’ agenda and helping improve health and wellbeing locally.

The number of volunteer hours and the value of that time as grown from 2013-14. Volunteers are contributing the time of 21 full time members of staff.



The team would like to note their heartfelt thanks to everyone who volunteers with us.

4.3.1 Walking for Health

Walking for Health has been actively promoted by Shropshire Council for 13 years. Mick Dunn left us at the end of 2016 and the scheme is so successfully delivered by the volunteer walk leaders that we feel it can now be managed by the other two Walking Coordinators. The schemes have been split into north and south. Funding for these posts in 2016/17 was from the Public Health Dept. Funding has been committed by the Public Health Dept. to ensure this service continues in 2017/18 but the future of the work after this point is uncertain.



Key achievements

- 56 active groups throughout Shropshire (7 new groups in 2016/17)
- 1,818 participants, with around 700 walking weekly (a 5% increase on the previous year)
- 338 active volunteer walk leaders
- 63 new walks leaders trained
- 30% of participants joined this year, which is higher than the national average

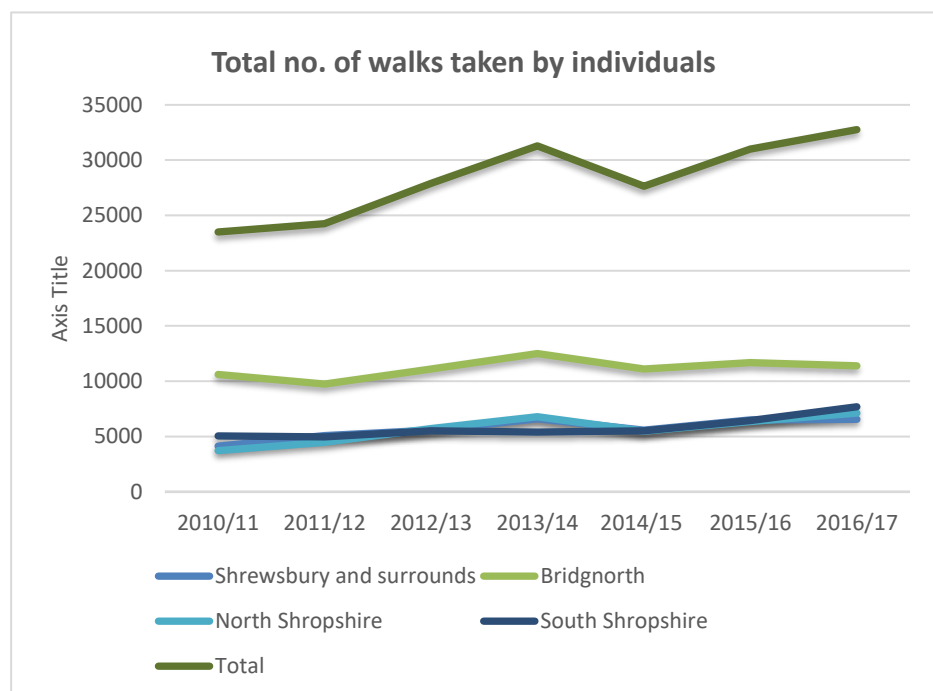
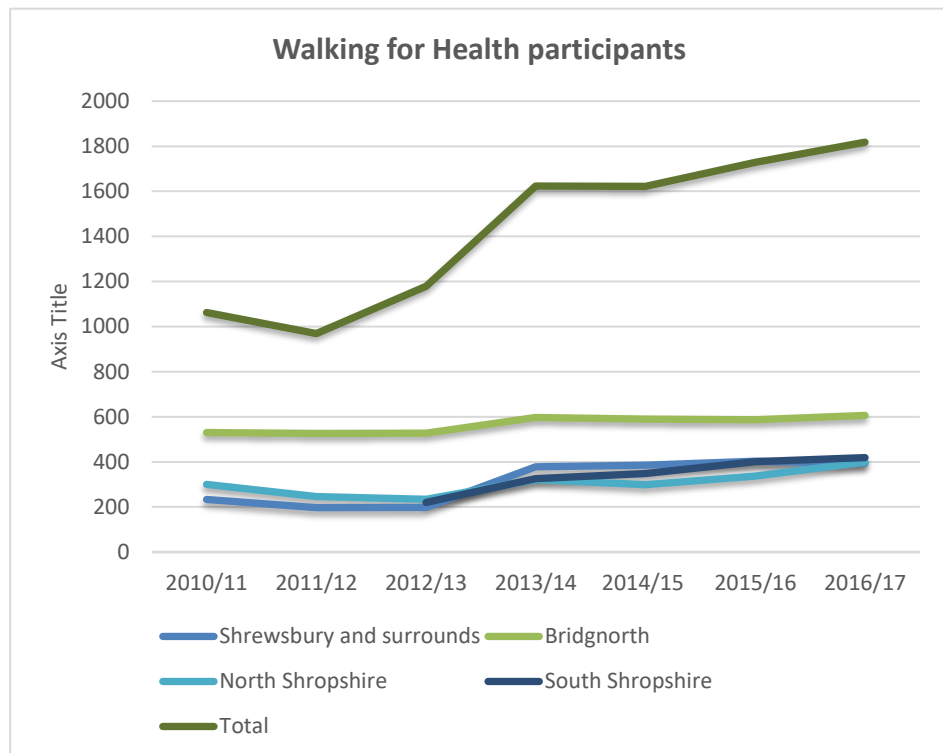


Participants were most likely to be over 55 (86%) and female (58%). Only 5% were referred by a GP or health professional, so most walk of their own accord.

A summary of the Walking for Health groups across the county is shown in appendix 4.

The number of walks taken by individual has steadily increased year on year, with almost 40% more walks taken since 2010/11.

Ongoing support from the Co-ordinators remains important, especially for the development of Level 1 and 2 walks, promotion of existing groups and creation of new groups.



Customer feedback

“The Walking For Health Group in Oswestry are a great benefit to the service users who attend Avalon Day Opportunities. The service Users are encouraged to take part in a healthy activity whilst being part of the group and local community. The staff and the other members of the walk have been

extremely supportive to our group. The Service Users look forward to this every week! Many thanks for all your hard work and long may it continue."

Avalon Day Care

"I am particularly grateful for your help at our Diabetes Awareness Programmes. We hold these around the county and I recognise that I have asked you to lead a 20 – 30 minute walk from various challenging starting points, and with a wide range of abilities! I realise that this causes you significant extra work in scoping out an appropriate route and doing the full risk assessment, for a large diverse group. The participants seem to have enjoyed the walks and it shows them that there really are no barriers to being more active – which is especially important with Diabetes."

Wise and Well Team

4.3.2 Shropshire Wild Teams

Shropshire Wild Teams provide volunteering opportunities in countryside management and other outdoor activities for people who most need support. The project especially caters for people with physical disabilities and mental health issues including those receiving support from health or care services. The Wild Teams are co-ordinated by a full-time officer.

The teams travel around Shropshire's amazing landscapes taking on projects such as:

- Ground clearance
- Habitat management
- Footpath maintenance
- Hedge laying
- Gate installation
- Wildlife survey work



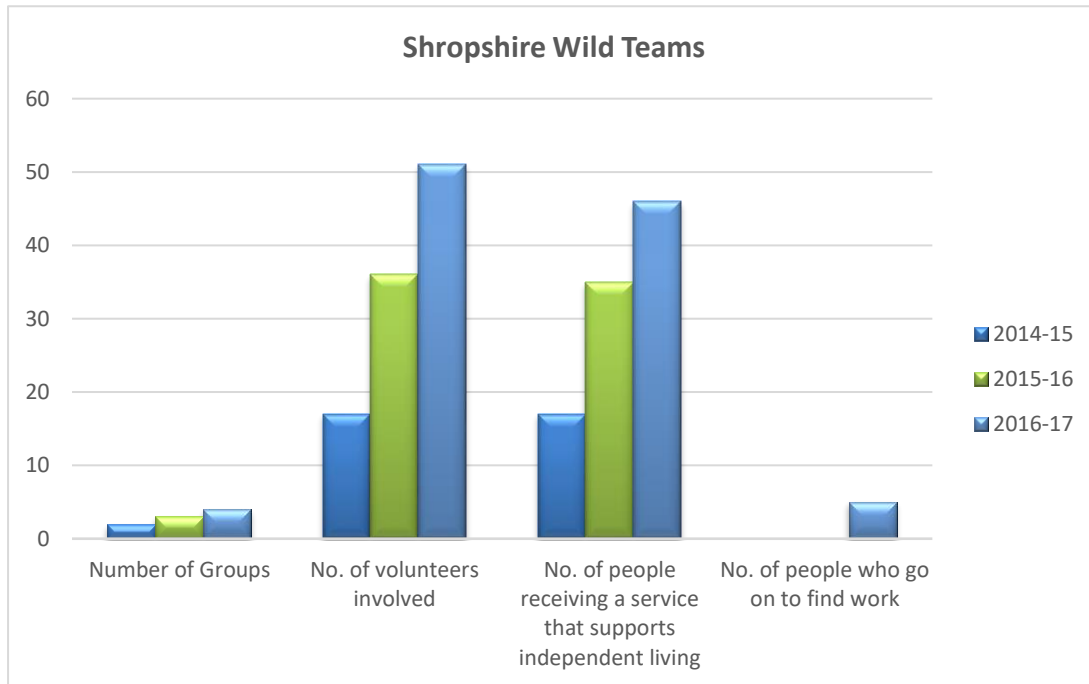
Volunteers can also take part in other activities such as walking, basic map reading, natural navigation and bushcraft, including foraging and tracking skills (and any other preferences voiced within each team).

The Project Officer supports team members to develop their skills and introduces them to the network of outdoor professionals, as well as familiarising them to new landscapes and environments. As individual and group confidence builds the Project Officer will support the group to become self-sustaining, and then take a step back from direct on the ground support while the team continues to run as the local Shropshire Wild Team for their area.

Key Achievements

- Volunteer numbers have grown to 51 over the past 12 months.
- Four teams currently running, based around Craven Arms, Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Bridgnorth.

- 5 people have gone on to find work.
- 3,217 volunteer hours have been committed through the work of the Wild Teams. This is up 35% in the past 12 months.



The nature of the project and the personal issues the volunteers are experiencing means the Wild Teams are resource intensive and numbers are necessarily small but the benefits can be fantastic, including:

- Increased personal and social confidence
- Overcoming depression, anxiety and agoraphobia
- Reduction in self harm incidents
- Skills development

Customer feedback

"I am proud to be part of the Bridgnorth Zombie Army. I have made a lot of friends in the group and it is helping me make friends and socialise a lot more than I am used to. It's a positive for me mentally and physically. It make a change to make friends instead of enemies. I look forward to Thursdays because I am doing something positive with my life and I really enjoy the work. I have seen a lot of the Shropshire Wilderness. I have made a lot of friends."

Wild Team Volunteer

"As a support worker within a CMHT I regularly support service users to attend. I have seen many good outcomes of increased confidence, sense of pride through achievement, and increase in self-

worth. This has led to several attendees being able to be discharged from CMHT support due to the benefits attending has brought.

One attendee in our group was able to secure paid employment as a direct result of attending. The Wild Team is a great resource that mental health services can benefit from. "

CHMT Support Worker

4.3.3 Volunteer Rangers

Shropshire Council owns and manages some of the most iconic heritage sites in Shropshire, from The Mere at Ellesmere and Severn Valley Country Park, to heritage sites such as Llanymynech Limeworks and Snailbeach Mine.



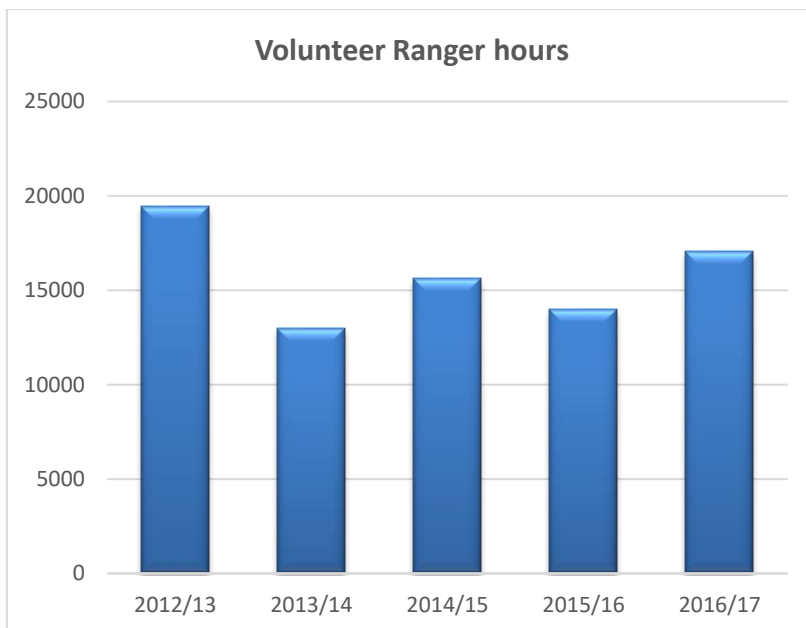
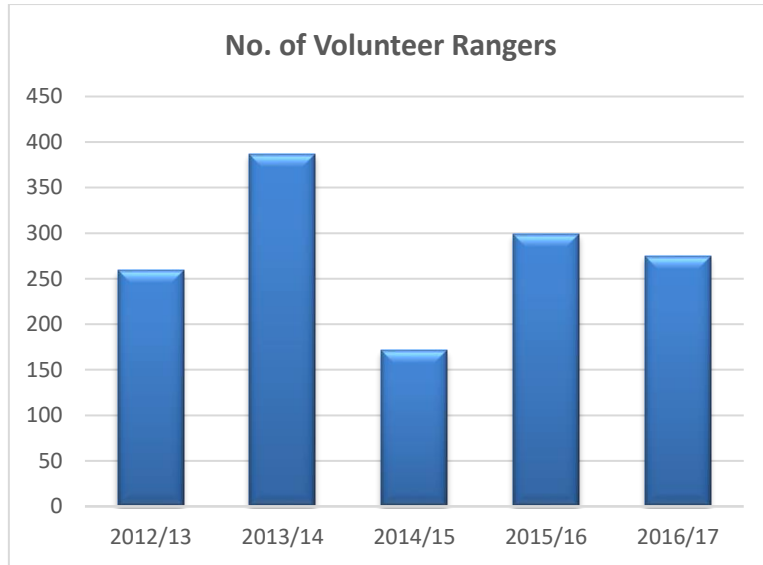
Support for volunteering has varied across the county depending on staff capacity. At Severn Valley Country Park, where there has been more sustained officer support, a committed volunteer team meet weekly and are integral to the successful management of the site. There are now 23 regular volunteers, making this the largest Outdoor Partnerships volunteer group across the county. In the north of the county, staff time has been diluted across a high number of urban greenspaces. These were allocated to the Environmental Maintenance department in 2016/17, with a view to them being offered to Town and Parish Councils. This should improve the capacity for volunteer support on the Country Park and Heritage Sites in 2017/18.

Further staff capacity has been secured through an apprentice at Severn Valley Country Park and a student placement is due to start in September 2017 at The Mere.

Key Achievements

- There are 260 volunteers helping manage the sites. Numbers have reduced from last year following the handover of the urban greenspaces and associated volunteers.
- 151 of these are volunteering in the south of the county and the groups in the south are going from strength to strength.
- 15,989 hours of volunteer time was committed, equivalent to 8 full-time members of staff. Almost 12,000 hours were in the south of the county. This is a remarkable achievement given the capacity issues of the team.

A full report of volunteering in the south of the county is shown in appendix 5.



Customer feedback

“What a great event! Woke up this morning to open the curtains to the sight of snow fall but on route to the event the sun popped out and stayed with us most of the day. Thanks Linda and Syd for organising the event and to James the ranger for sorting out a worthwhile activity for us all to enjoy. I think!”

Corporate volunteer

“Quick meet up with James the Ranger to talk through the mornings activities. Then it was backs to the spades and the barrows to clear that path. A brilliant turnout and what an achievement a long section of path now cleared and set fair for wheelchair users and wobbly walkers. We even managed to have a litter pick for those who wanted a less boisterous activity and we collected 5 bags of rubbish.”

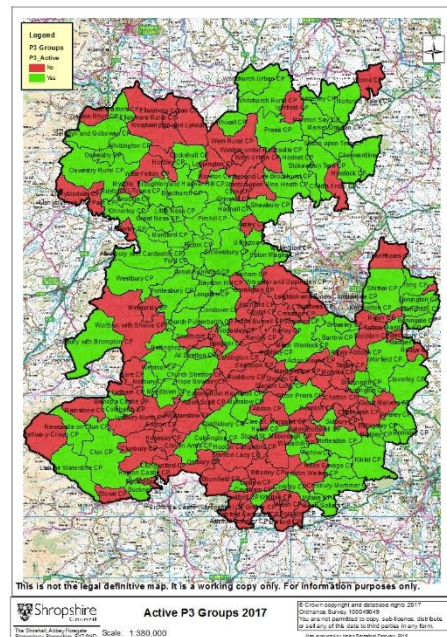
Volunteer

4.3.4 Parish Paths Partnerships

The Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme has been running for over 20 years in Shropshire. The scheme encourages local groups of volunteers to help manage and maintain their local network of Rights of Way network through a variety of activities. The Outdoor Partnerships Team supports this through the supply of tools, training, materials, expert advice and small grants.

The benefits if this are numerous, including:

- Assistance in maintaining a huge network of paths that otherwise would fall into disrepair
- Local prioritisation for maintenance
- Benefits to participants in physical and mental health
- Economic benefit through an improved tourism resource locally and information for visitors
- Increased opportunities for others to enjoy the network locally, with the health benefits that arise from this
- Ability to draw in funding that otherwise would not be available to Shropshire Council



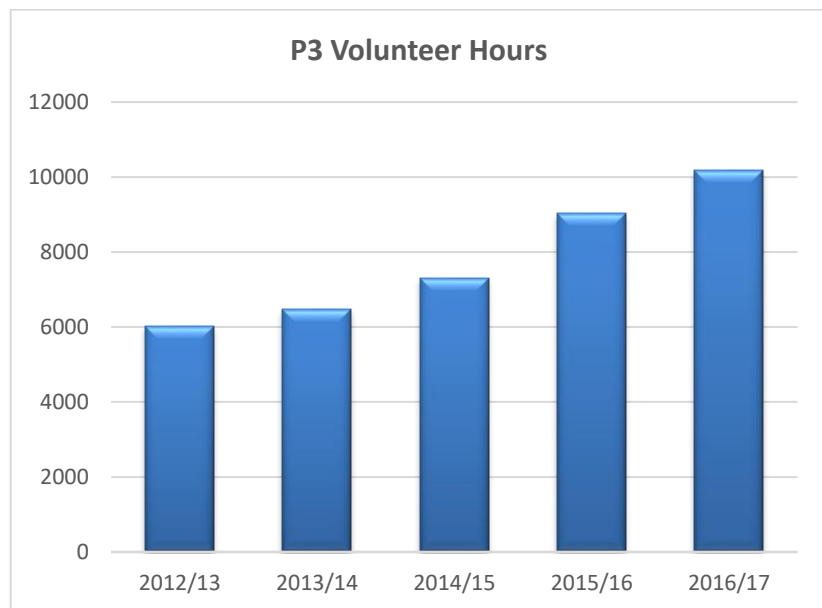
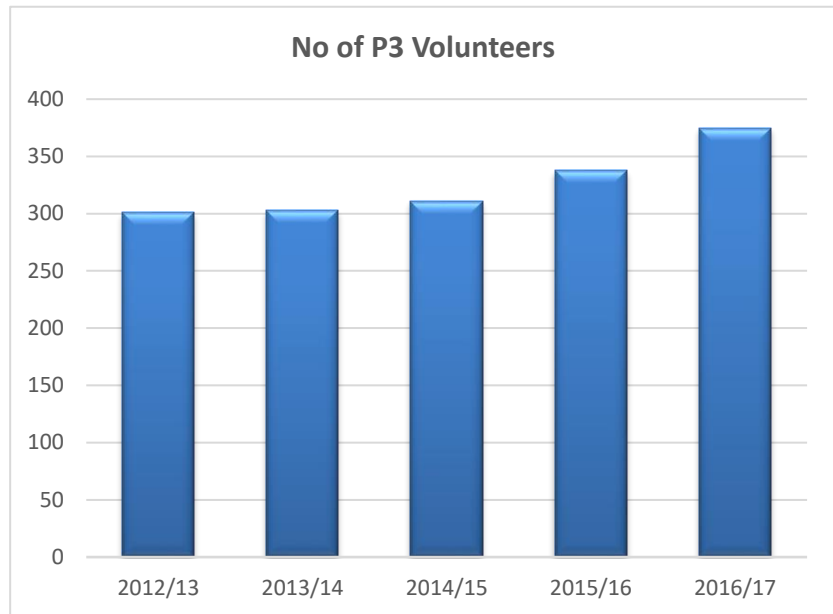
P3 support is a shared role between the Parish Paths Partnership Officer and the Area Rights of Way Officer. The success of this scheme shows how helpful it is to have a full time dedicated member of staff.

Some case studies illustrating the work of the Parish Paths Partnership groups are shown in appendix 6.

Key Achievements

- The number of volunteers involved with Parish Paths Partnership groups has grown to 375 in 2016/17.

- Group numbers have increased to 71 active groups from 55 at the end of 2012/13. This is despite losing some previously active groups, which is inevitable as people move away or become unable to tackle the more physical tasks.
- Recorded hours of activity have increased from 8,320 to over 10,000, this is an increase of 16% compared to last year's figures and it is worth noting that not all volunteer's hours are reported back to us.



Customer Feedback

"I attended, for the first time, the Parish Paths Partnership AGM at Nesscliffe Village hall near the end of last year. It was a wonderful and well organised day. The Shropshire Council Officers were brilliant and enthusiastic. It was an inspiring event. Thank you!"

Comment from the User Survey

“In the last two years our P3 group has grown from three to thirteen keen volunteers. This has come about through encouraging local walkers to help out when they can, whilst others have noticed the improvements and been motivated to join the group. Much of our work is focused on the Shropshire Way and the Walkers are Welcome leaflets around Bishops Castle. We now have four volunteers trained to use the brushcutter and we have all learnt new skills and become fitter in our outdoor gym.



We have put in sets of steps, repaired and replaced stiles, installed a number of kissing gates and cut back an overgrown hedgerow along a section of the Shropshire Way on the edge of town. Thanks to Helen and David from SCC Outdoor Partnership for providing vehicular access across farmland and the skills training.”

Bishop’s Castle P3 volunteer

“Last Friday, I was passing the gate we installed (my wife wanted to see what the latest madness was that I had been up to). We were looking at the gate and there was an elderly gentleman in the field, walking with the aid of a stick. He had a big smile on his face and asked if we knew who had put the gate in. I explained that we had and about the P3 groups. He said that we had made his day as it was 15 years since he had been able to get into that field which was just a few minutes walk from his house. He asked that thanks to be passed to all concerned and encouraged us to keep up our marvellous work.”

Comment to an Oswestry Volunteer

4.3.5 Community Payback Scheme

Outdoor Partnerships has spent the past three years working closely with Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company. They have contributed 7,295 hours to parks, sites and Rights of Way management, equivalent to £56,536 of labour.

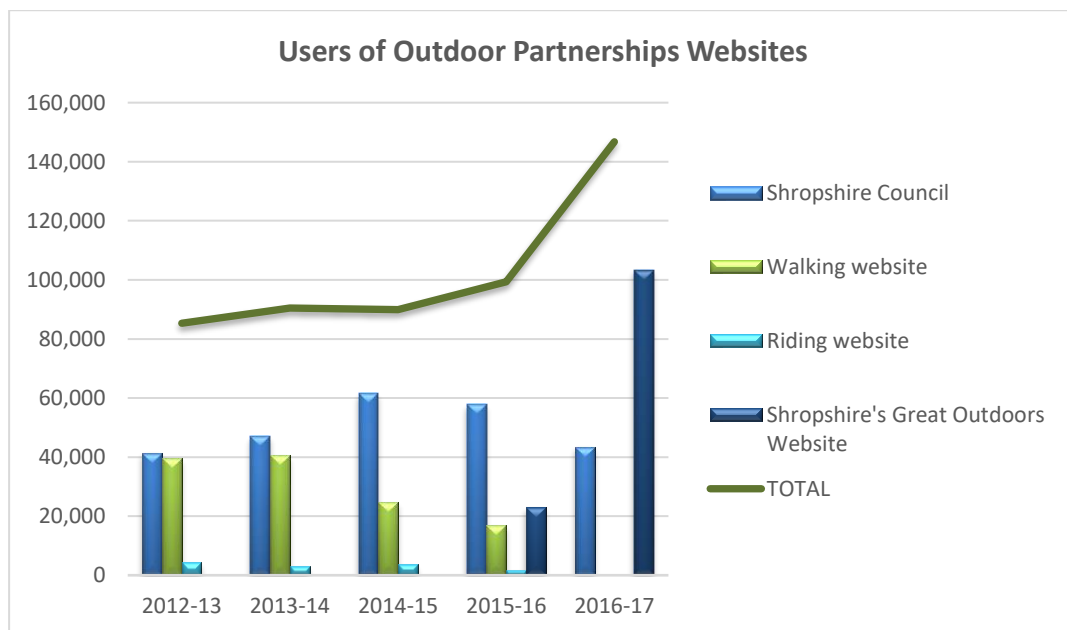
A pilot scheme was introduced in 2016 to introduce the John Muir Award to participants. In total 23 people took part in the award to a varying degree, completing a total of 65 days. However only 11 participants achieved the required number of days to gain an award. The majority of participants entered into the spirit of the scheme but due to a variety of factors could not commit to enough sessions.



4.4 Promotion

4.4.1 Shropshire's Great Outdoors website

The new 'Shropshire's Great Outdoors' website was officially launched at Easter 2016. Since then we have seen over 100,000 users, which far exceeds the number of people using our website previously and we have had some excellent feedback. 76% of people using it are under 45 years old which is very different from the xx% over 55s that reply to the User Survey or volunteer with us. We need to make sure that marketing is targeted at the younger age groups as well as the people we commonly work with.



This means that many more people are finding walking, cycling and riding routes and being made aware of the volunteering and other opportunities across the county.

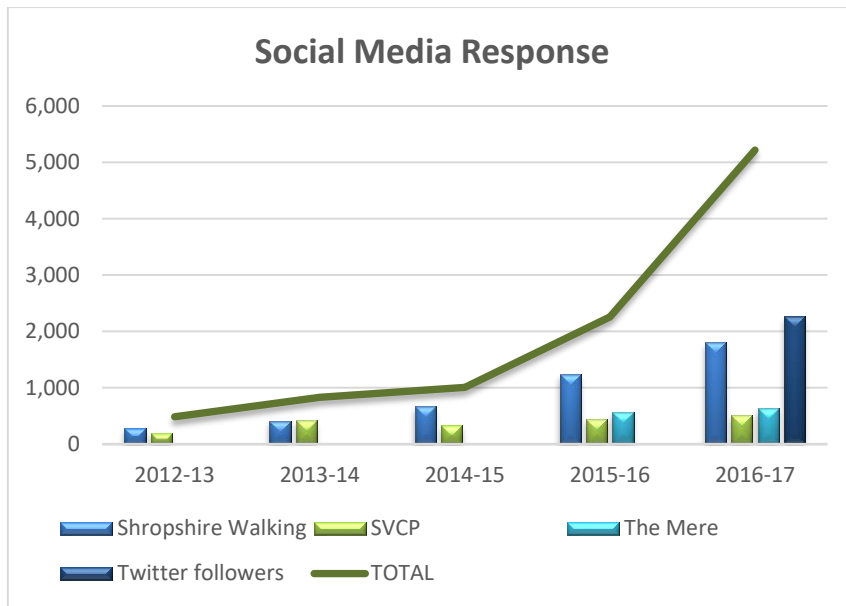
Customer Feedback

"Having lived near Bridgnorth for a number of years I have always enjoyed the Shropshire countryside and local walks. Imagine my pleasure on recently finding your website Shropshire's Great Outdoors. Having now tried some of the walks my congratulations to whoever has pulled together this little treasure trove of information. I know we are often free in our criticism of SCC but this website is, in my opinion, excellent. The level of information, ability to drill down by different criteria, and its understated health message are just right."

Resident

4.4.2 Social Media

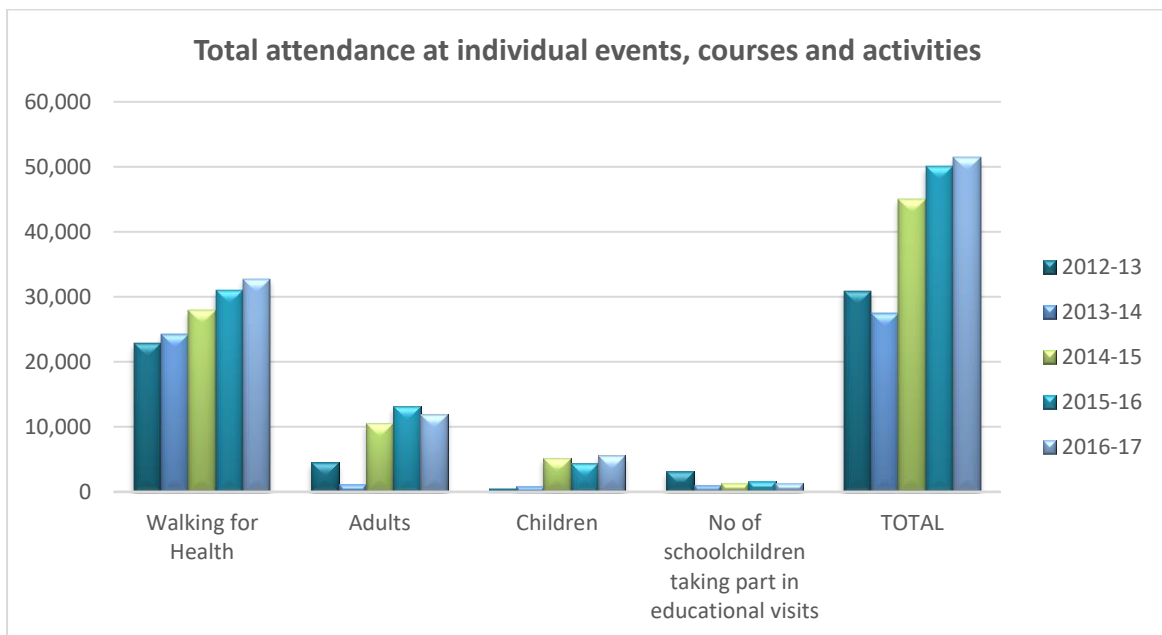
Social media continues to become more and more popular, reflected by the growth in people 'liking' our Facebook pages and following us on Twitter.



The volunteer groups are increasingly creating their own Facebook accounts for their groups as well.

4.4.4 Events, courses and other activities

Interest and participation in events and activities is growing. Whether these are the number of walkers on Walking for Health walks, or the number of adults and children attending the guided walks, events and activities on our Country Parks.



4.4.5 Other promotion

There were press releases, Radio Shropshire interviews and articles in local Parish newsletters promoting the work of Outdoor Partnerships and the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website.

4.5 Projects

There were a number of projects completed in 2015/16, which, including LEADER, totalled £281,140. Other projects are listed below.

<i>Project</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Value</i>
<i>Offa's Dyke Programme 2015/16 - 75% funded by NE via Powys CC</i>	Offa's Dyke Path National Trail management	£14,900
<i>World War 1 walks</i>	Continuation of the development of themed walks commemorating World War 1 in Shropshire, with five guided walks and two more self-guided walks leaflets.	£20
<i>Stanmore Hidden History</i>	Tesco Bags of Help external funding at Stanmore CP	£8,000
<i>The Lost Garden Terraces of Castlefields</i>	Renovating the garden terraces in Ellesmere. Tesco Bags of Help funding	£12,000
<i>Colemere Meres & Mosses</i>	Access improvements. Meres and Mosses LPS funding	£2,100
<i>Walks leader training</i>	Interpretation and group management skills for walks leaders. Funded through the Meres and Mosses LPS	£3,000
<i>Rights of Way training</i>	Training for volunteers on legal aspects of Rights of Way as well as Brush Cutting and practical tasks. Funded through the Meres and Mosses LPS	£2,466

4.6 Consultation and survey results

The results of two national surveys and our local Annual User Survey are summarized below.

4.6.1 Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey Trend Analysis

601 people responded to the Annual Survey in 2016/17. They were mostly over 55, white British and lived in Shropshire. Slightly more men than women replied. The survey was filled out by people from more user groups this year, with fewer users of Countryside Sites and many more mountain bikers, cyclists and horse riders. 10% were 4x4 or drivers or trail bikers. This is reflected in over 40% of respondents being members of a horse riding or cycling group and 8% belonging to a 4x4 or trail riding group. 67% of those filling out the survey last year volunteered with us, compared to only 30% this year. This will have had an impact on the results when compared with previous years.

Only 18% of respondents were under 45, compared with 76% of users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website, most of whom are using it to find walking routes, so the survey results are unlikely to represent the opinion of the majority of the 103,000 users of the site.

Key messages from the User Survey:

- The Service is appreciated and people are aware of how important the provision is for health and wellbeing

- Better promotion of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website and the work of the Service is needed
- Concerns over impact of housing and other developments
- Concerns about lack of funding and reliance on volunteers
- More investment is needed in off-road cycling and horse riding routes
- Some people are not keen to see car parking charges on sites
- There is demand for 4x4 and motor bike trail riding routes

Results:

- Walking is still the main activity (77%)
- Most people are enjoying the outdoors to improve their health and experience nature
- Overgrown vegetation and physical obstructions are the most common issues experienced
- Circular walk and Country Parks and Sites are most commonly used
- Respondents were most likely to use the provision 1-3 times per week, for 2 hours or more with family and friends
- 70% were involved with an outdoor activity or volunteer group. They joined a group to make friends, learn new activities and get more active
- The most popular improvements sought were:
 - Better signage
 - More circular walks- although this was down on previous years
 - More walks with gates instead of stiles
 - More online guides and interpretation
 - More cycle tracks
- Respondents are most likely to get information from:
 - Shropshire's Great Outdoors website and other local websites (51%)
 - Printed leaflets and guidebooks (40%)
 - Organised groups (38%)
 - Local Newspapers (29%)
 - Social media (26%)
- 99% of respondents think that getting into the great outdoors has a positive or very positive impact on their quality of life
- 62 people were interested to know more about the work we do or to volunteer with us

Trends

When these results are compared, where possible, with results from previous years the following trends can be seen:

- Physical obstructions were much more of an issue
- There were fewer users of promoted walks routes and more users of bridleways, with people more likely to be out for 2 hours or more
- There was a lower satisfaction level with Rights of Way than previous years, with only 31% seeing improvements in the past 12 months
- Whilst 54% were satisfied with parks and sites, only 22% had seen improvements in the past 12 months
- Fewer people were using printed leaflets and guide books (40% compared to 59% last year)
- 70% of people did not want to volunteer

There were many comments, with a good number thanking the team for all their hard work. The primary concern was cuts to funding and the ability for these services to be maintained in the current financial climate.

Quotes from the User Survey that sum up the key messages:

- I think Shropshire are far ahead of other areas in the UK, the website is probably the best I've seen in the UK
- The work of SOP is hugely important to the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of the community. I truly hope that sufficient funding is available to continue its work.
- I think the Outdoor Dept do a very good job considering the horrendous cuts to their budget. If they were to sort out all of the problems of blocked paths etc. the County Council would need to make a considerable increase in investment in Rights of way. Surely people of Shropshire deserve this.
- Excellent organisation. As a walking for health leader I am impressed by the help, support and continuing good work of the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships.
- Footpaths are not always well kept and housing developments often encroach onto them, disturb the footpath and make it uneven or make them very enclosed
- It would be great if there were more extensive routes for off road cycling. Currently a lot of the bridleway network leads to nowhere which means many routes require large portions of on road riding. Secondly there are many bridleways that aren't being kept accessible as gates are being locked or paths are left unattended.
- Responsible 4x4 drivers are usually forgotten in these plans.
- The walks in Shropshire are definitely an asset to the area.
- Thank you for everything you do, and the improvements you continue to make, despite funding cuts. Don't know how you do it, but glad you are able to!

62 people asked to be kept informed about the work of the service and volunteering.

4.6.2 National Highway and Transport Network (NHT) Benchmarking Survey

The NHT run an annual, postal Public Satisfaction survey that compares results between participating authorities across the country. It covers all Highway and Transport Services including Rights of Way.

2016 Results

928 people responded across Shropshire. The results show that the Service is at or just below average and the trend is downwards, as shown below:

	Your Score	Average	Variance	Ranking	Trend
03. Walking and Cycling BI					
WCBI 18-Bridleways for horse riding and/or cycling	59	60	-1	22	-2
WCBI 19-Signposting of Rights of Way	58	59	-1	21	-1
WCBI 20-Condition of Rights of Way	53	56	-3	26	-3
WCBI 21-Ease of use by those with disabilities	41	44	-3	25	-2
WCBI 22-Information about Rights of Way routes	48	48	0	15	-1
WCBI 23-Overgrown footpaths and Bridleways	41	42	0	16	-4

Learning

- Public satisfaction in the quality of Rights of Way in Shropshire is starting to fall behind and are in danger of deteriorating. This corresponds with last year's BVPI survey of the quality of our Rights of Way and reflects the halving of funding in the past three years.
- Overgrown footpaths and bridleways are a growing problem

4.6.3 Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)

MENE is a national survey conducted by Natural England that ask people about their visits to and experiences in the natural environment. The last complete year results are from 2014-15. The results and how they compare with those in Shropshire are shown below:

Question	National	Shropshire	Difference
Visited weekly in the last 12 months	59%	60%	1%
Visited at least once in the last 7 days	44%	54%	10%
Estimated visits weekly	3.12 billion people	273,240 people	
Used paths, cycleways, bridleways	15%	33%	18%
Park in a town or city	26%	21%	-5%
Woodland/ forests	13%	25%	12%
Walking with dog	48%	57%	9%
Walking without dog	28%	26%	-2%
Playing with children	10%	5%	-5%
Horse-riding	1%	0%	-1%
Off-road cycling	1%	1%	0%
Eating and drinking	9%	5%	-4%
Enjoyed it	97%	95%	-2%
Appreciated surroundings	84%	92%	8%
Felt refreshed/ revitalised	87%	95%	8%
Felt calm/ relaxed	87%	87%	0%
Felt close to nature	76%	63%	-13%
Learned about the natural world	31%	31%	0%

Learning

- The natural environment is important and visited by a lots of people on a regular basis. We estimate there were almost 1 million visits to Shropshire Council managed Country Parks and Heritage Sites in 2016/17.
- Almost everyone enjoys being in the outdoors and feel refreshed and calmer as a result
- People in Shropshire are much more likely to use rights of way and woodlands to access the outdoors than the rest of the country
- Walking is the most popular activity and many people have a dog with them
- Those visiting the natural environment in Shropshire are less likely to have children with them than the national average or to spend on eating and drinking

4.7 Partnership Working

We work in partnerships with a number of voluntary, public and private organisations as well as individuals.

The user forums give regular opportunities for officers, Councillors and Service Users to get together and discuss national policy, countywide strategies and activities and share local priorities on Rights of Way and the use and enjoyment of open space. There is an Advisory Group to advise on the delivery of The Mere Charitable Trust. Other partnerships are formed to deliver specific initiatives.

4.7.1 Local Access Forum

Local Access Forums (LAF) are statutory advisory bodies set up under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Their role is to advise decision makers about improving public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel. They can set their own local priorities and are consulted on key documents affecting access.

When making decisions LAF's should consider:-

- Land use
- Conservation of flora and fauna
- Geological and physical features
- Local priorities

The Local Access Forum is to become the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board in 2017/18. This will wider the remit of the group and aim to influence health, economic and environmental strategies of other organisations.

4.7.2 Walking Forums

There are three regional Walking Forums:

- Shropshire Hills
- Northern Shropshire
- Central Shropshire

Another forum needs setting up in the Severn Valley area.

All three Walking Forums were reviewed in 2015/16 and have agreed action plans. Activities towards these actions are reported at each meeting.

4.7.3 LEADER Local Action Group

The Southern Shropshire Local Action Group (LAG) is made up of members who represent the geographical LEADER area and the six national LEADER priorities. More information about the Local Action Group can be found here:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-recreation/southern-shropshire-leader-programme/southern-shropshire-leader-local-development-strategy/>

4.7.4 The Mere Advisory Group

The Mere Advisory Group helps advise the delivery of activity for The Mere Charitable Trust, a charity that was set up to administer the Council managed land around The Mere at Ellesmere. Membership of the Advisory Group include Shropshire Council, Ellesmere Town Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and other key stakeholders.

4.7.5 Other Partnership Working

The teams are involved with a wide range of partner organisations and networks including:

- The Outdoor Partnerships Manager is a member of the Local Nature Partnership, Chairs the Meres and Mosses LPS Steering Group, is a Board member of the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country LPS, was on the national LEADER Co-operation Advisory Group, attended meetings of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS, Irresistible Offa Steering Group and met with a range of partner organisations.
- The Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader Chairs the West Midland Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), which brings together RoW professionals from across the region and feeds into national debate.
- The teams liaise with colleagues from neighbouring authorities to resolve cross-border RoW issues.
- The Country Parks and Sites Manager is a member of the West Midlands Parks Forum and Benchmarking Group.
- The LEADER Manager represents the West Midland Local Action Groups on the national LEADER Exchange Group.

5.0 Priorities for 2017/18

The Countryside Access Strategy (2008-2018) will be reviewed this year, a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan being published in 2018. Alongside this a new five year strategy for the Outdoor Partnerships Service will be published to clarify the direction of the Service going forward.

A Service Plan with specific actions has been agreed for 2017/18, which is summarised below, under the Corporate Plan priorities.

5.1 Healthy People

Public Health funding has been secured for 2017/18 and means we can continue delivering Walking for Health, Shropshire Wild Teams and the other active volunteering initiatives. More emphasis will be put on increasing the number of people volunteering on parks and sites, and a new FTE post will be recruited early this year.

Policies such as the replacement of stiles with gates will continue where possible, as will the promotion of easy access and all ability trails through the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website.

Off-road cycling provision will also be considered through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan review.

5.2 Resilient Communities

Local partnership approaches continue to be the focus to enable communities to identify and act upon their priorities for a high quality outdoor environment and biodiversity. This is done through the active volunteering groups, especially Parish Paths Partnerships and Volunteer Rangers, working with Town and Parish Councils.

The Outdoor Partnerships team help communities retain and improve local Rights of Way, parks and sites.

5.3 Prosperous Economy

The Outdoor Partnerships provision helps develop the local economy through the development and promotion of high quality promoted routes, parks and sites. We will continue to build the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Business Network and encourage more businesses to get involved in new projects, such as the development of access to and along the River Severn.

The Southern Shropshire LEADER programme will continue, with the aim of providing 73 jobs in total by Dec 2020.

5.4 Operation of the Council

Income generation will continue to be a key activity of the Service, with a target of £400,000 in 2017/18. In addition to existing activity, the following is planned:

- A new wood fuel business
- Development of a charitable foundation
- An extension to the Visitor Centre at Severn Valley Country Park
- Options analysis for Swan Hill Depot at Ellesmere
- Consultation on introducing car parking charges on key sites
- Opportunities for business advertising on Shropshire's Great Outdoors website

As mentioned above, the Local Access Forum will be replaced by the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board, helping further raise the profile of access and outdoor recreation to the health, economic and environmental agendas.

6.0 Further Information

For further information please contact Clare Fildes, Outdoor Partnerships Enterprise Manager

Clare.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk

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