



Committee and Date Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 7 February 2012
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Item 3

AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

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Summary

This paper provides members with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and offer comments.

KEY AREAS OF PROGRESS IN 2011-12 TO DATE (April 2011 - present)

Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote wellbeing, enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.
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- Good progress with allocation of **LEADER** grants, project monitoring and claims (see attached paper 4).
- £19,538 allocated in **Sustainable Development Fund** grants to 10 projects for 2011-12.
- **Farming Project**- Clare Davies has been employed as the new Farming Officer and joined in Jan. Four farmer meetings booked already. Computer workshops successful in the Clun area. Three more planned for Cleobury Mortimer, one specifically for local YFCs. Stapeley Commoners Association being formed with the aim of entering into a HLS agreement. Three community events were completed in 2011, with another four booked for 2012. Five new schools being targeted. Children's book about farming in the Shropshire Hills being created. To date the community aspects of the project have involved 398 children and 153 adults.
- Advisory visits and Management Plans completed for **Woodlands Project** (ongoing). The Heartwoods SITA funded woodlands project is under way, with the Project Officer working 2 days/ week on Shropshire Hills sites, based from our office.
- SITA funded **River Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project** under way (3 years). Practical work under way on Upper and Lower Clun. Additional funding from Natural England for catchment related work. Date booked for a new Clun Catchment Partnership.
- **Shuttles** service agreed for 2012. Stiperstones and Long Mynd Shuttles continue as last year and there will be a new Wenlock Wanderer service from Church Stretton to Much Wenlock via Acton Scott. Running from 7th April to 30th September on weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays.

- **Discover Local Trade Fair** being held on 23rd February at the Discovery Centre. Consultation with businesses planned to discuss activity beyond March 2013. Nine consumer and 12 business events delivered. Discover Local main three day event at Acton Scott Historic Working Farm August Bank Holiday 2012. Events in 2011 involved 796 people and 187 businesses.
- Two new volunteers are helping sign up renewals with **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme** members, with renewals completed since December. 2012 directory being designed.
- **Walking with Offa** activity has been completed. 12 waymarked pub walks (with four podcasts and apps on www.viewranger.com), 4 Days Out a walking booklet and mugs for sale, posters, beer mats, window stickers and leaflets to help promote the scheme. For details see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/things-to-do/walking/>. Midlands Today filming on 27th January. 2011 guided walks involved 119 people. 31 businesses attended Sense of Place training and 27 places were taken on three days of walks leader training.
- **Walking with Offa cross-border LEADER co-operation project** – Lucinda Williams from Adventa in Monmouthshire is managing this project. A communications and monitoring and evaluation contracts have been let. Brief for transport study is being developed. Good practice seminar is being held in the Shropshire Hills on 8th March.
- **Walking for Wellbeing** – Activity and infrastructure being delivered for Shropshire Hills Walkers Are Welcome groups. New programme of guided walks organised. Walking celebration planned with Walking for Health groups for end April. Car free walks leaflets being designed.
- **Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme** Joy Howells and Helen Fairweather have been employed as Landscape Partnership Coordinators as a job share. They are based at Rigmooak, Stiperstones NNR. In the process of bringing together the Landscape Partnership Board, Steering Group and Special Advisory Groups and collating information already gathered.
- **Promotion activity.** New Walking with Offa page on www.shropshirewalking.co.uk. New walking page on AONB website. 25 press releases and 1 E-bulletin issued. Improved output on social media. Annual Review for 2010-11 published. Joint Shropshire Hills 2012 Events programme and visitor guide in design.
- **Advice and support** to a wide range of activities and projects led by others.

Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.

- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** formally approved. Close involvement with Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Development Partnership and input to development of Marketing Strategy by Shropshire Tourism. Application for the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas submitted.
- Input to local authority and other **steering groups** (Biodiversity Partnership, Local Access Forum, Destination Development Partnership, and others).
- Input to selected **planning** applications.

Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.

- **Clee Hill Partnership** third meeting held.

- Progress with **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** constitution.
- New **funding Memorandum of Agreement** between Defra and local authorities signed.
- Input to **West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum** and **National Association for AONBs**, including Conference, AGM, training seminars and regional Chairs meeting.
- A review is under way of potential **structures** for the AONB Partnership as an alternative to hosting by Shropshire Council.

Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above).

- Support and advice for a wide range of **community projects**.
- **Talks** to Parish Councils and other interest groups.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** currently has 101 members (with many renewals pending), generating £2,239 of income for SDF this Financial Year. Two Friends social events to Monastery on Stiperstones. Six Parish & Town Councils have now joined Friends.
- 30 AONB-led **events**, attended by a total of over 500 people. Support to at least 10 events led by others.

List of Background Papers

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan.

The full 2011-12 Team work programme can be made available to members on request.

A summary is available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/SHAONB-Team-Plan-Overview-2011-12.pdf>

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None