



Shropshire Hills Discovery  
Centre Advisory Board

9 July 2009

2.00pm

Item / Paper

**4**

Public

## NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2009

10:00 am – 11.15am

**Responsible Officer** Tim Ward

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### PRESENT:

#### Members

South Shropshire District Council	Mr N Stephens
Craven Arms Town Council	Miss J Hoskins
South Shropshire Tourism Association	Mr L Chapman
Craven Arms Community Centre/ Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	Mr D Gibbon
Secret Hills Network	Mr C L Bodenham

#### Officers

Shropshire County Council	Ms Z Griffin (Centre Manager - Secret Hills)
	Mr N Willcox (Head of Countryside & Heritage)
	Mr T Ward (Committee Officer)

The Chair welcomed those present and informed them that there would be a couple of extra items that would be taken after item 5

### Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P Corston (SCC), Cllr Mrs B Craig (SCC), Cllr Mrs A Hartley (SCC), Tim King (Tourism Officer SSSC) and Lezley Picton

### Note of Previous Meeting

2. The note of the meeting held on 5 November 2008, as circulated, was confirmed as a correct record.

The Chair asked whether any more had been done regarding the concerns raised regarding staff safety. The Centre Manager informed him that no further work had been done but that in general the problems experienced had lessened over the past twelve months

### **Performance and Developments at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the Period April 2008 to January 2009**

3. A report outlining performance and developments at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the period April 2008 to January 2009 had been circulated. The Centre Manager also distributed a table showing performance for the period April 2008 to January 2009

The Centre Manager informed members that the building work at the Community Centre (CAAC) was almost complete and that they were having an open day on March 5<sup>th</sup>. She went on to say that the Centre was continuing to work with CAAC on plans for the forthcoming year which included: -

- The extension of the youth workers scheme
- Working with the newly formed Community Interest Company on the Gleanings community art project
- Work on the pilot Grow, Cook, Eat project part of which make use of the meeting room and community garden at the Discovery Centre and in the new teaching kitchen at the Community Centre. It was hoped that the pilot would provide evidence for a funding application for a much larger scheme

The Centre Manager informed the meeting that use of the library continued to grow, with overall book loans increasing by 35% and audio visual loans up by 84%. Mr Gibbon asked for more break down of the figures and the Centre Manager agreed to send this to all members. The Centre Manager reminded members that the library supported 4 local reading groups and that details of the Craven Arms Group was being included in the local marketing material in an effort to encourage more people to join the group. She added that the Reception class at Stokesay Primary School had been visiting the library on a weekly basis and work was ongoing to encourage other year groups at the school and also other schools to attend.

The Centre Manager informed members that visitor numbers had remain fairly constant in spite of the deteriorating economic climate but that the recession had affected the amount spent in the café and the shop which was down 10% and 15% respectively. Mr Stevens commented that he had received comments that the cafe had not been the same since the refurbishment of the centre. The Centre Manager commented that the Catering Manager had been on sick leave following an operation which may have had some effect on the café. Discussion followed regarding the remit of the café. The Chair commented that the main aim of the café had always been to use locally source products and to promote healthy eating. Mr Gibbon commented that if this was so was there a case for getting rid of the coke fridge? Mr Willcox commented that there was a firm in Shropshire that supply ethically stocked vending machines. The Centre Manager pointed out that to replace the coke fridge would cost £3,500 - £4,000 and that it also contained a range of locally produced fruit juices and other drinks. Mr Willcox suggested that the catering manager at Theatre Severn could get together with the centre's catering manager to discuss best practise.

The Centre Manager informed members that the Customer Service Point had been open on Wednesdays & Thursdays since the end of March offering information on a range of services. She went on to say that as part of the move to the Unitary

Authority the staffing of the point was to be reviewed and may well be extended. The Centre Manager then outlined the other services that were based at the Centre.

The Centre Manager informed Members that the monthly "Dads and Kids" forest school sessions had been taking place but that the Meadow Fun Sessions were not being run at the moment due to the loss of the volunteer that ran them but that it was hoped to reintroduce them after the February half term working in conjunction with the Family Centre. She added that the Forest School site was also being used by a number of schools for self led sessions. She added that the volunteer work parties were continuing and had been enhanced by some joint working with the Shropshire Outdoors project on the installation of wheelchair accessible kissing gates into the main meadow which would enable to use of the main meadow for grazing. Mr Gibbon acknowledged the work of CAVE in Craven Arms and it was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to Merinda Essex.

The Centre Manager informed the meeting that following a successful funding application work would shortly be carried out on improving the paths in the community garden. She added that a new steering group had been set which was a positive step in the Garden becoming self sustaining. Mr Willcox asked whether there was any progress with proposals for a youth shelter within the gardens. The Centre Manager replied that the main priority was the paths. Several members expressed concerns regarding inappropriate use of the proposed shelter. Mr Gibbon commented that there was need for an all weather path around the whole of the meadows to improve access for all people. Mr Willcox agreed to take this matter to the County access team and to investigate further sources of funding. Miss Hoskins asked whether any progress had been made with the smell of sewerage in the Community Garden and meadow. The Centre Manager commented that she had received no further complaints regarding this matter but that further monitoring would be carried out.

The Centre Manager updated members on the marketing and promotion work that had been carried out and on promotional work that was planned for the next few months. She also took members through the list of events and activities that had been held in 2008 and those which were planned for 2009. Members congratulated her on the full programme that was planned.

The Chair thanked the Centre Manager for her report and congratulated her and her staff for all that they had achieved.

### **Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre Network**

4. The Chair informed members that that the Network had met in November and there had been a good discussion on joint working. Discussion had also taken place regarding the proposed events at the centre and other activities.

### **Craven Arms Learning Centre Development Project**

5. This item had been covered in the Centre Managers report

## Date of Next Meeting

6. It was agreed that the dates of the next meeting would be:-

Thursday 9 July 2009  
Thursday 3 November 2009  
Thursday 4 February 2010

All meetings at 10.00am

## Other Items

7. a. The Chair informed members that this would be the last meeting of the Board that Neil Willcox would attend as his job in the new authority was changing. He thanked him for all the work he had done for the Centre. Mr Willcox thanked members for their kind words and went on to say that his job in the new authority would be as Head of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation and that the Centre would come under the remit of Lezley Picton the Head of Arts and Heritage.
- b. The Chair commented that Stewart Minton Beddoes had resigned as the AONB Partnership's representative on the Board and asked that a letter of thanks be sent to him for his contribution to the work of the board.
- c. Mr Gibbon raised the possibility of creating better signage between the Community Centre and the Discovery Centre. Discussion followed regarding proposals for improvements at the Playing fields and the problems with dog fouling.
- d. The Chair asked members whether they felt there was need for the election of a vice-chairman for the board. Mr Willcox commented that with the demise of the District Council there was need to look at the constitution and terms of reference for the Board and this could be covered in this. The Chair also questioned the need for three meetings per year. Members agreed that there should be three meetings held.
- e. Mr Stephens commented that the Map board in the entrance to the Meadows was very shabby. The Centre Manager informed him that there were plans in hand to replace it.

CHAIR.....

DATE .....