

Shropshire Council Countryside Access Team Annual Report 2009-2010

Making a Difference



Shropshire Outdoors Project – Volunteers working alongside our Access Maintenance Team

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Countryside Access Team's 6th Annual report. I hope you will find the report on the Team's work interesting and informative.

This year like others before has been extremely busy and rewarding for the Team and there have been key changes in the service following on from being part of the new Shropshire Council. We now fall under the banner of a new Outdoor Recreation Service. The Outdoor Recreation Service also includes new responsibility for parks and sites and other areas of open space, and play provision. The Countryside Access Team is now also responsible for Walking for Health schemes in the county which is a natural addition to our work with the Parish Paths Partnership.

We have seen yet another leap in the accessibility of the rights of way network in Shropshire as a result of the work of the maintenance team and the Parish Access Project with 85% of the network classed as 'easy to use'. In addition the team is continuing to make access even easier through the provision of gates rather than stiles in co-operation with the landowning community

Other key achievements for this year include finalising year 6 of the Parish Access project - a further 297 km restored for access and successfully bidding for and obtaining an extension to the project for a further 5 years of work.

This is to name just a few of the improvements we have made this year. Please read on to find out more.

We always appreciate feedback on the work of the team. Please contact me with any questions or comments you have on this report. The Team remain totally committed to improving access to the countryside in its broadest sense and we hope you continue to see these improvements whilst you are out and about enjoying Shropshire's countryside.



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2. What our customers say

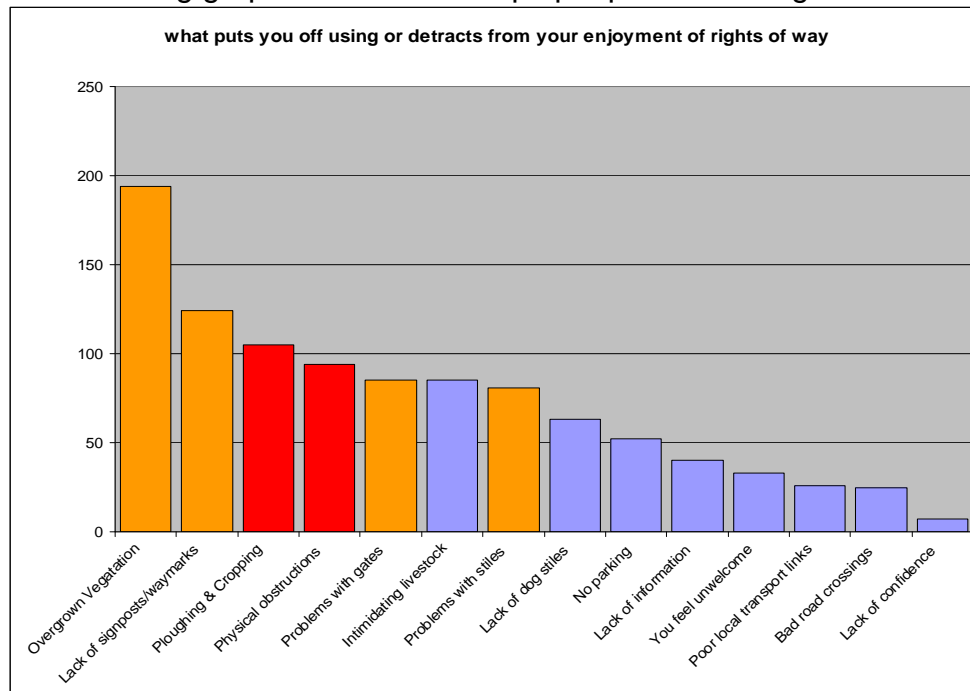
Within the Countryside Access Team we undertake two main forms of performance monitoring. An annual questionnaire is sent out to over 400 users of the outdoors and we monitor our service to people who report problems to us. The results are as follows:

- 54% of people have noticed improvements to ROW in their local area this year
- 57% of people are more satisfied with the condition of ROW than they were 3 years ago
- 65% of people prefer to use circular walks
- 61% of people said that they felt more part of the local community through their use of ROW
- 93% of people said they enjoyed the network and wanted to do more
- 96% of people said they felt better for taking some exercise
- 50% of people were satisfied with the response we gave them
- 67% of people were satisfied with our service to them

People's main reasons for using ROW were as follows:

- 26% to improve health
- 22% for peace and quiet
- 13% to walk the dog
- 10% for a family activity

The following graph shows what stops people from using the network:



3. Improving Access

The Access Maintenance Team has a number of different areas of work.

- Resolution of problem reports from the public and user groups
- Restoration and maintenance of Offa's Dyke National Trail and other long distance and circular promoted routes
- Implementation of an annual programme of capital works (mainly bridges and surfacing)
- Support and development of the Parish Paths Partnership
- Support of the Parish Access Project and other projects
- Involvement in various forums such as the Severn Way Partnership, Byways Liaison Group & Shropshire Volunteer Partnership

2009-2010 could be called the year of the gate. The team have been very successful in negotiating and installing a significant number of gates to replace stiles on the network. Also the team have been able to carry out more jobs that would have been done by contractors in the past. A small investment in training increased the team's skills and we were able to do more surfacing jobs involving diggers and dumpers. The result is a much lower cost job than contractors would have been able to deliver.

Key Achievements of the Team

- 810 individual improvements completed (target of 800). A reduction on last year, but more time consuming and cost effective surfacing works completed
- 167 pedestrian or kissing gates installed, the majority to replace stiles existing on the network
- Capital programme delivered and negotiations for other works continued throughout the year
- Offa's Dyke programme of work delivered alongside delivery of the interpretation plan.
- Open Access land works (plus extra funded works towards the end of the year) delivered by Access Maintenance Team
- Shropshire Way improvement works continued and finalised
- Improvements delivered on the Jack Mytton Way and Walking for Life Routes around Bridgnorth

Resolution of Problem Reports

The table below shows the result of the work of the team over the year in terms of materials installed or delivered to landholders. This is as a result of the 810 individual improvements completed either through issues that have been reported or project work on promoted routes:

Work completed	Totals 09/10	Totals 08-09	Totals 07-08
Stiles installed	98	153	140
Signposts installed	180	261	190
Way mark posts installed	57	69	90
Gates and Kissing gates installed	201	119	136
Gates and Kissing gates repaired	39	10	9
Sleeper Bridges	8	13	18
Kit Bridges Installed	22	16	18
Kit Bridges repaired	6	17	19
Culverts/drainage	2	2	9
Flights of steps	14	9	17
Surface repairs/replace	25	16	19
Clearing – Metres cleared and individual trees removed	24.7 km & 11 trees removed	23.5 km & 13 trees removed	16.5km & 16 trees removed
Motorcycle traps/bollards	0	0	0

This shows that the focus on annual clearance from last year has continued. The figures also demonstrate the success of the team in negotiating gates rather than stiles. The increase in surface repairs demonstrates the jobs that the team has been able to tackle with the new skills of digger and dumper driving. There follows some photos of surfacing works delivered by the team:



Offa's Dyke National Trail

A total of £17,252 was successfully bid for from Natural England. The Maintenance Team delivered £7,252 worth of practical maintenance and improvement works on the trail. This work included an annual vegetation clearance programme, replacement of stiles with gates and some bespoke welcome to Shropshire signage for the border crossings. Also some surface

and revetment works were delivered in Trefonen to improve the route. The following table shows what works were achieved on the trail this year:

Location	Description of work
Trefonen	Revetment and surfacing work
Various locations	Annual clearance of up growth and side growth
Various locations on the border with Wales	Install welcome to Shropshire signs
Bronygarth	Clearance of silt trap
Kerry Ridgeway	Replace 2 stiles with gates
Nanteris Wood	Replace 1 stile with gate
Various Improvements	Repair gate – 6 Replace signpost – 9 New stile – 1 Repair stile – 3 Repair Bridge – 2 Repair steps with stone infill - 3

Examples of some of the work carried out by the team on Offa's Dyke



New Gate to replace stile



one of the new signposts



Welcome sign on a stile



Welcome sign beside trail

The delivery of the interpretation plan represented a large proportion of the grant this year. The project devised 5 new circular walks from the National Trail with the intention of increasing visitor stay times in the county and to further interpret the landscape through which the Dyke runs. These 5 circular routes have a downloadable leaflet and also a Podcast each, which enables people to hear further audio interpretation as they walk along the routes. To further enhance the visitor experience, a downloadable video has been created which offers further interpretation of the Dyke and its history.

One last feature is the installation of a half way post. Shropshire has the half way point for the complete trail and it was felt that those choosing to walk the whole trail should know that they are half way there.

Market Town Access Improvements

The Maintenance Team demonstrated the commitment of Shropshire Council to support our market towns through a series of works to open up and develop the circular walks around Bridgnorth in partnership with the Walking for Life Project. The team delivered many improvements through the replacement of stiles with gates and waymarking to support the newly developed routes around Bridgnorth. It is hoped that these works will help support the walking economy in the town by offering quality promoted routes for visitor and residents alike. The works involved:

Description of work	Number of units
Stiles replaced with gates	35
Stiles replaced	2
Kit bridges installed	2
Gates replaced	2
Signposts installed	10
Waymark posts installed	7
Revetments installed with surfacing	2
Stiles repaired	2
Clearing carried out	545 metres plus 2 trees cleared

This commitment will be continued in the future where other market towns will receive special attention.

Open Access Land Works

A successful bid was made to the Access Management Grant Scheme for a grant totalling £37,594. The resulting works were concentrated on Open Access sites in Colemere, Hope Bowdler, Caer Caradoc (Church Stretton), The Long Mynd and Caer Caradoc (near Bucknell). A summary of the works is shown below:

Location	Description of works
Colemere	Continued development of disabled access to the site through surfacing, extension of a boardwalk and other

	access improvements
Hope Bowdler	Additional permissive access secured to OAL, improved gated access and signage
Caer Caradoc (Church Stretton)	Stone pitching to eroded access route, Improved gated access to OAL over a large area.
The Long Mynd	Installation of a stone bridge to finalise access improvements from last year.
Caer Caradoc (near Bucknell)	Additional permissive access secured to OAL, Improved gated access and signage

Examples of some of the work



New Path at Colemere



Extended Boardwalk at Colemere



Gated access at Hope Bowdler

Other project work on promoted routes

The team have continued their work on other promoted routes throughout the year. The Jack Mytton Way original route has been totally surveyed and re-waymarked and some maintenance works have been completed to ensure that this route remains open and up to a good standard. Also the rolling

programme of maintenance and improvement works on the Severn Way continues. The Severn Way Partnership has also been formed which is collaboration between all the authorities along the route and the Environment Agency who first devised the route. This group will set maintenance standards for the route and look at improving the promotion and interpretation of the route over time. The team also continue to support the development of circular walks to support Parish Path Partnership groups and Walking for Health groups. The photos below show an example of a route required by a walking for health group in Much Wenlock which required our support. The steps were replaced by the Maintenance team with the help of the local Parish Paths Partnership group:



Steps requiring replacement



Steps replaced with the help of local P3 group

Capital Programme of Improvement Works

This programme delivers various bridging and surfacing works that require specialist equipment or contracting. The table below shows where the work was completed and its nature with some photos to illustrate the work.

Location	Works Undertaken
Boat 8 Stanton Long	Surfacing works to repair damage with Crag Volunteers
BW UN7 Coreley	Create a raised path to avoid flooded section of Bridleway and install bridge.
BW 81 Worthen with Shelve	Drainage
BW 13 Coreley	Replace damaged bridge
Non Definitive Ellesmere Rural – Maelor Way	Replace major bridge on promoted route
FP 14 Minsterley	Replace major bridge
Morville FP8	Install major new bridge
BW 25/26 Abdon & Tugford	Reinstate flood damaged surface and ford – Jack Mytton Way
FP7 Abdon & Tugford	Install major new bridge
FP 34 Shrewsbury	Remove trees to protect Severn way path

	and reinstate surface
FP 207 Llanymynech & Pant	Install concrete flight of steps
FP 1 Ruyton XI Towns	Install concrete flight of steps
Non definitive route in Pontesbury	Completion of surfacing to old railway line
Boraston Bridge	Assistance to remove old abutments
FP 50 Alveley	Specialist tree removal
BW 151 Broseley	Stone
BOAT UN3 Moreton Corbett & Lee Brockhurst	Stone
FP 70 Whitchurch Urban	Path resurfacing
FP 11 Albrighton	Path resurfacing
Non definitive route – Sandford Avenue – Church Stretton	Creation of safe path to avoid dangerous road section
FP 14 Oswestry Urban	Surface
FP 84 Clun	Rebuild bridge with existing steel girders
BW 3 Rudge	Surfacing of wet hole in BW
Various locations	Replacement of numerous kit bridges



New Bridge on FP 8 Morville



Raised Path on BW UN& Coreley



New Bridge on the Maelor Way



New Bridge on Minsterley BW 14

4. Parish Access Project

The Parish Access Project was launched in April 2004 with the aim of restoring access in selected parishes across Shropshire. The project employs a full time team who work on surveying individual parish PRoW, negotiating work requirements to be carried out on their behalf with the relevant landowners and then carrying out the ground works either via specialist contractor or directly by team members. Communities are invited to have an input through consultation with the Parish Council and local people are encouraged to join the Parish Paths Partnership to keep up the maintenance after the Project team leaves. Any existing Parish Plan aspirations can usually be accommodated particularly where there is a targeted demand for improved easier access. A further 22 parishes have been the subject of the project this year across North, Central and South Shropshire. A total of 100 parishes have now had comprehensive restoration works carried out with many more having individual routes reopened as outlets from neighbouring targeted parishes.

Years 1 to 6 Key Achievements

Parishes completed to date. (Year six parishes in bold type)			
1	Abdon	51	Leebotwood
2	Acton Burnell	52	Hordley
3	Acton Round	53	Hopton Castle
4	Adderley	54	Leighton & Eaton Constantine
5	Alberbury with Cardeston	55	Llanyblodwel
6	All Stretton	56	Longnor
7	Ashford Bowdler	57	Loppington
8	Ashford Carbonell	58	Ludford
9	Astley Abbots	59	Ludlow
10	Aston Botterell	60	Mainstone
11	Aston Eyre	61	Middleton Scriven
12	Badger	62	Monkhopton
13	Baschurch	63	Moreton Corbet and Lee Brockhurst
14	Beckbury	64	Moreton Say
15	Bedstone	65	Morville
16	Berrington	66	Nash
17	Bettws-y-Crwyn	67	Neen Savage
18	Billingsley	68	Neenton
19	Bitterley	69	Newcastle on Clun
20	Boraston	70	Norton in Hales
21	Bucknell	71	Oswestry Urban
22	Buildwas	72	Pimhill
23	Burwarton	73	Petton
24	Burford	74	Quatt Malvern
25	Caynham	75	Richards Castle
26	Cheswardine	76	Ruckley and Langley
27	Chetton	77	Shawbury

28	Child's Ercall	78	Shipton
29	Clee St Margaret	79	Sidbury
30	Cleobury North	80	Smethcott
31	Clungunford	81	Stanton Lacy
32	Cockshutt	82	Stanton Long
33	Colebatch	83	Stanton upon Hine Heath
34	Coreley	84	Stockton
35	Cound	85	Stoke upon Tern
36	Cressage	86	Stottesdon
37	Deuxhill	87	Stowe
38	Ditton Priors	88	Sutton Maddock
39	Easthope	89	Sutton upon Tern
40	Ellesmere Rural	90	Upton Cressett
41	Ellesmere Urban	91	Welshampton and Lyneal
42	Frodesley	92	Westbury
43	Glazeley	93	Weston Under Redcastle
44	Greete	94	Whitton
45	Heath	95	Whixall
46	Highley	96	Wistanstow
47	Hinstock	97	Wollaston
48	Hodnet	98	Woolstaston
49	Hopton Wafers	99	Wroxeter & Uppington
50	Kemberton	100	Woore

Key Achievements in 2009/10

- A further 297km of rights of way restored in year 6 (plus c.110km of outlets to county roads in neighbouring parishes)
- A total of 2,098km delivered through the project in total to date (plus an estimated 750km of outlets)
- 22 parishes have received access improvements this year with the result that 100 parishes have had their networks restored during the project to date.
- Continued improvements in provision of easier access through the replacement of stiles with gates and gaps.
- Consistency of collection and management of data maintained.
- Project has been instrumental in raising the Best Value Performance Indicator which is a measure of the percentage of the network ease of use from 40% (2003/4) to 85% (2009/10)

Improvements delivered in Yr6

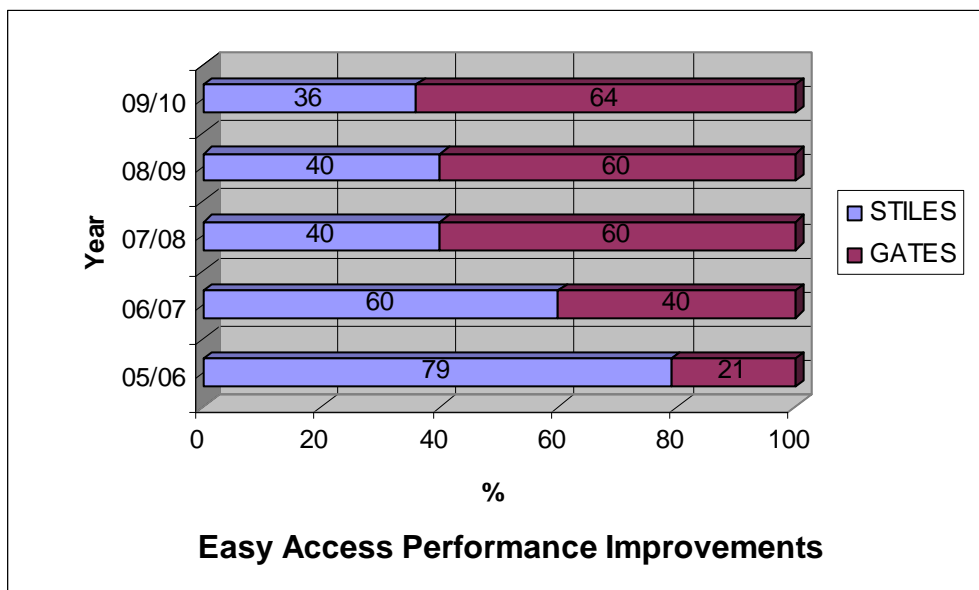
	Total
Fingerposts	240
Stiles	140
Stepboard Kits	117
Field Gate Kits and bridleway gates	40
Extra Gate Posts (for existing gates)	53
Pedestrian Wicket	45

Kissing Gate	164
Gates replacing stiles	131
Obstructions removed	107
Waymark Posts	268
Sleeper Bridges	23
Kit Bridges	10
Cut & Fill Steps	222
Clearing (m)	13554
Surveying inc. outlets (km)	c.407

These figures are for standard items only and do not include less common tasks such as repairs to existing furniture, fencing etc.

Easy Access Developments

The Project has demonstrated a continued commitment to providing easy access options where possible. In numerous instances where stock control is not an issue our surveyors have been able to negotiate gaps where once there were gates or stiles whilst elsewhere we have been reducing the proportion of restrictive barriers we replace. Where stiles exist alongside gates we have continued our policy of only working on the gate, or in some circumstances replacing the stile with a pedestrian gate. Where stiles exist or where there is currently only a fence or hedge we first try to negotiate a less restrictive piece of furniture; a stile is always a last resort. Particularly gratifying is the growing acceptance of this practice amongst the farming community, as indicated by a noticeable increase in the number of telephone requests for individual gates from landowners who are independently seeking to replace stiles on their land. The chart below demonstrates a further increase in the success of this initiative.



Partnerships and Community Involvement

We have maintained our involvement with Parish Councils and Parish Paths Partnership (P3) groups in 2009/10. In numerous instances, we have been able to improve access on paths important to communities identified by local councils and user groups by replacing stiles with gates or removal of furniture to leave a gap. The Parish Access Project continues to be a catalyst for the formation of P3 groups and the establishment of wardens to keep up the maintenance of the work carried out by the project team.

Parish Access Project Phase 2

Following its considerable achievements to date, the project is set to continue for a further five years. Our target is to deliver access improvements in a further thirty-three parishes containing nearly nine hundred kilometres of PRow over those five years. Work undertaken will follow local consultation to reveal the most desirable paths in each parish. We will also seek to create circular routes of varying lengths and enhance those providing strategic access as part of local transport networks. Our target is to open or improve 85% of PRow in each parish, with the result that in excess of 750km of paths will be opened and upgraded.

In addition, the members of the project team are to undertake an ambitious condition survey of Shropshire's entire rights of way network over the next 2 years. This aspect of the project's second phase will help to achieve more efficient and effective asset management and improved outputs for the whole Countryside Access Team in forthcoming years.

5. Parish Paths Partnership (P3)

2009/10 has been a year of further excellent work all over the county by the various P3 groups around the county. The long established groups continue to work towards their local goals whilst further new groups have been established in areas previously worked on by the Parish Access Project and other areas where groups did not exist.

Key achievements of the scheme

- 7 new groups have been formed in Broseley, Myddle, Conover, Westbury, Whitchurch, Coreley and a Shropshire Way group. Also the Shrewsbury and Mid Shropshire group have reformed after the sad loss of their previous coordinator
- 130 volunteers attending the P3 Hog Roast with most attending a training session in practical skills on the day
- More brushcutting training delivered to volunteers
- Around 3,000 hours of volunteer work reported (we know not all of the volunteers hard work is recorded so this is an underestimate)
- 71 stiles replaced with gates in support of our easier access policy
- A series of leaflets designed and in development for 3 different P3 parishes



What the P3 groups have done

Below is a summary of the information we have received so far showing the majority of the practical work completed this year. As always the true number of hours put in by volunteers is vastly underestimated here as so many volunteers do not report all the hard work they do. On top of this practical work we know that at least 13 guided walks have been organised and run by P3 groups and hundreds of hours of surveying and negotiating with landowners has been done. Also a series of walk leaflets have been devised and written by different groups which takes up a huge amount of time (other groups will also be doing this for future projects).

Activity	2009/10	2008/9	2007/08
Stiles replaced	54	73	52
Stiles repaired	115	218	109
Dog latches added to stiles	2	14	30
Signposts (with SC staff)	26	12	30
Waymark posts	60	70	25
Sleeper Bridges	10	5	5
Bridges repaired	5	2	0
Steps in slopes	39	53	29
Gates installed or repaired	87	40	8
General clearance	Too much to count	Too much	Too much
Hours of work reported	2863	1421	1100

This shows how well the P3 volunteers have embraced the least restrictive principle and managed to negotiate many more gates than ever before. Special mention must go to the Pontesbury P3 group who have excelled in this respect. Although difficult to count we are sure that the amount of clearance and brushcutting has increased, especially as we were able to purchase more brushcutters this year. These brushcutters were distributed to groups who have received the training we offer in their safe use.

Parish Paths Warden Scheme

This scheme is designed to support a volunteer or group of volunteers where there are not the numbers or ability to form a P3 group, but an interest in keeping an eye on the local network is shown. The wardens carry out minor works such as waymarking and report issues to the team for resolution.

Whilst developing the 22 wardens already in the scheme, a further 7 wardens were recruited to cover parishes not covered by the P3 scheme. Also one warden successfully recruited others to form a P3 group in Westbury.

The Outdoor Recreation Service would like to offer another huge thank you to all volunteers who work so hard to improve the Rights of Way in their area.

The P3 Officer also runs the Shropshire Volunteer Partnership which is made up of people who deliver volunteering in the countryside across Shropshire. Current members include BTCV, Natural England, Shropshire Council's (SC) P3 scheme, SC site managers, SC walking bus, SC Shropshire Outdoors Project, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Wildwoods Project. This group share best practice on volunteer management, training and anything else relevant. The Active Volunteering leaflet was re-published and re-launched through this group and through 3 events in November and December 2009.

6. Access Developments and Promotion

Shropshire Outdoors

Shropshire Outdoors promotes inclusive access to the Shropshire countryside and aims to improve the health and wellbeing of sedentary disabled adults. The project targets people with learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities and people experiencing mental ill-health. The project develops a range of “green exercise” activities in the countryside, such as wildlife walks and surveys, hedge laying, greenwood working, coppicing and tree planting.

This year the project has delivered 1388 event hours and has engaged 77 new project beneficiaries in green exercise opportunities. Based on consultations with project beneficiaries, capital work has been undertaken to reduce barriers to access involving, for example, improved path surfacing, signage and site furniture. This year £13,000 of capital funding has been used to improve access to the following countryside sites and has engaged beneficiaries in green exercise and conservation volunteering.

- Walkmill Meadows Local Nature Reserve, Market Drayton
- Rea Brook Valley Local Nature Reserve, Shrewsbury
- Monkmoor Community Woodland, Shrewsbury
- Colemere Country Park, Ellesmere
- Bayston Hill Community Woodland, Shrewsbury

The Project has helped to raise awareness about disability by developing partnerships between countryside and health and social care organisations. In partnership with Disabled Holiday Information, training delivered to countryside staff ensures that they can better understand and meet the needs of project beneficiaries. This year, 55 countryside staff have attended training from the following organisations:

- Shropshire Council
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust
- Natural England
- The Greenwood Trust
- Severn Valley Gorge Countryside Trust

As part of ongoing monitoring, participation in events and activities is recorded and questionnaires and reviews are used to evaluate sessions.

Measuring the mental health benefits of green exercise, 94% of respondents agree that they “feel better” after Shropshire Outdoor activities. 76% agree to physical health benefits and 70% have responded that they would like to get involved with other activities in the community

Walking for Health

In August 2009 two WfH Co-ordinators were appointed, in anticipation of the Walking for Life! project ending in December of the same year. In March 2010 a third Co-ordinator came into post, to take over the North Shropshire and Bridgnorth areas, formally co-ordinated by Active Lifestyles Officers.

Walking for Health (WfH) aims to encourage people who take little or no exercise to make the most of their local green space and join a volunteer-led health walk in their community. In Shropshire, the project's vision is to provide county-wide, accessible WfH walks, that are available to those groups and communities who would benefit most from WfH provision. The table below gives details of Walking for Health provision and throughput of walkers in 2009/2010:

Walk	Throughput* of walkers 2009	Throughput of walkers Jan – March 2010
North Shropshire		
Ellesmere	57	38
Hadnall	45	35
Market Drayton	6	-
Shawbury	54	45
Wem	27	16
Whitchurch	52	42
Oswestry		
Gatacre Avenue	24	19
Lorne Street	23	16
Llanymynech	41	30
Surestart	-	9
Shrewsbury and Atcham		
Stepping out Shrewsbury	34	-
Marden Medical Practice	23	14
Minsterley	16	12
Pontesbury	69	52
Edgefield Green, Bicton Heath	11	-
Ladies-only Walks, Women in Mind gym	-	33
Albert Road Medical Practice	-	12
Radbrook, Lifestyle Fitness gym	-	15
Belvidere Medical Practice	-	8
Bridgnorth		
Albrighton	35	21
Alveley	41	35
Beckbury	8	8
Bridgnorth	32	23
Broseley	74	68
Chelmarsh	19	19
Ditton Priors	16	16
Highley	39	23
Much Wenlock	139	117
Shifnal	4	4
South Shropshire		
Church Stretton	177	128
Rushbury	45	36
TOTAL	1111	894

Shropshire Way North project

Following the success of the upgrade of the Shropshire Way long distance footpath in the Shropshire Hills area a new project has been devised to both extend and upgrade the path in the north of the County. The aim of the Project is to build on the very successful upgrade of the southern section and take the new Shropshire Way to some of the key places in Northern Shropshire. This is subject to funding.

- The Severn flood plains
- Llanymynech with its historical heritage site
- The Oswestry uplands
- The internationally important meres and mosses areas
- Ellesmere
- Brown Moss

The new route will connect some of the most interesting, inspiring and educationally valuable places in the Shropshire history and landscape. Through this project we will enable people to enjoy greater physical and intellectual access to these special places. Through the use of interpretive and educational facilities developed as part of the Shropshire Way project users will be able to gain first hand experience and knowledge of a landscape shaped by man for 11,000 years. The Shropshire Way will also become a medium for exploring and experiencing first hand the Shropshire way of life and “sense of place.”

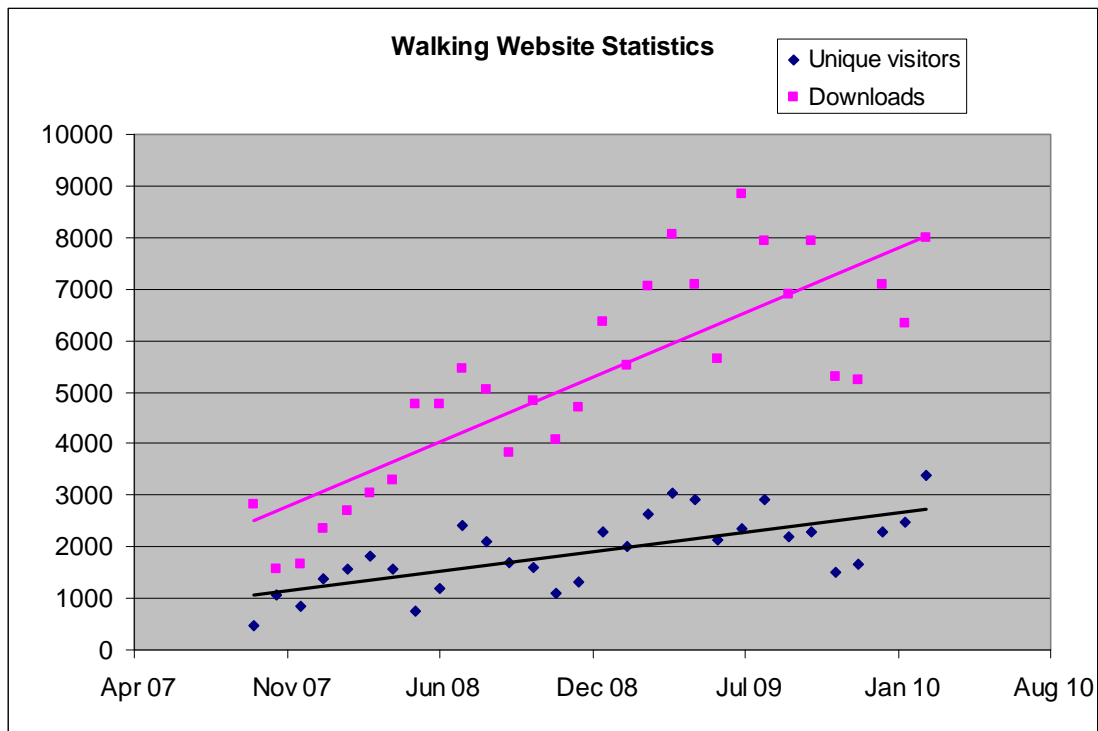
The new routing will also make Shrewsbury, the County Town, a key hub within the walk network.

- Route upgrade of infrastructure
- The route will be rebranded as already undertaken in the southern half.
- 24 new circular walks will be undertaken to allow a more varied ability of walker to undertake sections of the route. These will be based on centres of population and ideally with public transport access.
- New and innovative themed interpretation will be used.
- Podcasts will be written and available as downloads from the website
- Write a new guidebook that will be available for sale and as a download from the website
- Expand the Shropshire walking website to allow access to route information through a map based interface.
- Link the website to the new “Discover Shropshire” Website
- A promotion campaign will be undertaken to increase awareness and use of the walk.
- A geocaching trail will be established linking existing and new caches along the walk.
- Local volunteer groups will be used for both the base work and ongoing survey and maintenance of the walk.

Activity Websites



The websites have proved popular again with the exception of “Shropshire Active”. Due to the low number of hits this has now been closed. The following are the latest website statistics for the walking site.



There is a project to enhance the website, starting with the walking website to make it a map based search engine. See the section below.

Walking Doctor

£30,000 has been allocated by the RDPE welcome to the Countryside to promote walking in Shropshire over 3 years and improve the way that information is presented to the users. This year Training has been undertaken to Visitor Information staff to ensure they know what Trails (walking/cycling/riding) to be “selling” to what people.

Shropshire Way – Much Wenlock

£30,000 has been allocated to support the Shropshire Way upgrading and creation and improvement of a series of circular walks in the Much Wenlock area ahead of 2012. This will be supplemented by route guides and downloads from the web and hopefully a new disabled access trail.

Shropshire Way – Church Stretton to Shrewsbury

£68,500 funding has been allocated 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 will also be developed and promoted in the Clun and Stapeley/Corndon areas linked to Offa's Dyke.

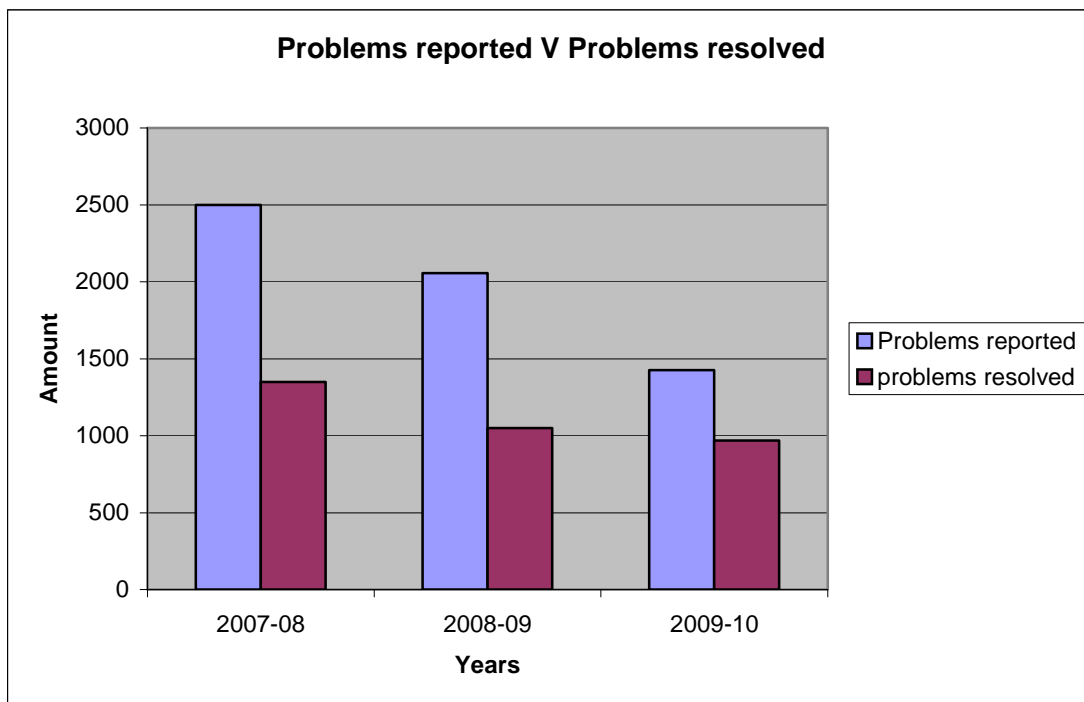
7. Access Enforcement

The Access Enforcement Team has a number of different areas of work.

- The administration and recording of all reported problems.
- Site inspections following reports of problems on the network.
- Liaison and negotiation with land owners and the public.
- The instigation of legal proceedings where necessary.
- The management of temporary and permanent closures of paths where necessary, i.e. on health and safety grounds.
- Liaison with motor sports associations and the granting of permission for legal use of public rights of way by such during rallies etc.
- The team also provides an experienced and professional advisory role to customers on a wide range of issues including access in its widest sense.

The team has this year resolved approx 68% of reported problems. This suggests that the team have resolved significantly more issues year on year. In reality, this is as a result of a reduction of approx 26% in the number of issues reported this year compared to 2008/09, while the amount of issues resolved remains stable at or about 900 –1200 per annum. This indicates that landholders are increasingly aware of their responsibilities in keeping rights of way open by not obstructing the paths, and maintaining the gates and stiles.

Problems reported 2009 to 2010	
Total number of problems reported.	1427
Number of enforcement problems resolved	968



The type of problems reported range from a missing signpost to some major physical obstructions such as domestic and agricultural buildings. Complaints are received about all types of animals, which deter people from using a path, ranging from un-friendly looking sheep to geese and alpacas.

The team has also experienced a continuing change in the attitude of many landowners and farmers, many of whom now readily accept their legal responsibilities in respect of rights of way and the conditions imposed upon them by cross compliance requirements.

Annual Ploughing and Cropping Campaign

Each year the Council receives many complaints about public rights of way being obstructed by a growing crop or illegally ploughed out. This is one of biggest hindrances to public access in Shropshire.

The Enforcement Team, working with volunteers from the Ramblers' Association and other users, target 200 paths, which have been the subject of repeated problems in recent years. Recently opened up parishes are also targeted to ensure the sustainability of the Parish Access Project work.

In the 2009/10 the initial results were encouraging with a 126 (63%) of the paths having no problem report submitted. A further 51 paths had been reinstated by Landholders after being contacted by Officers, and reminded of their legal responsibilities. The remaining paths were harvested before contact with the landholders could be made. It should be noted that for nearly 4 months of the growing season the team was one enforcement officer short, however the officer who left the team wrote letters to the landholders whose paths were selected for checking, to warn them that checks will be made during the Ploughing and Cropping campaign and the actions the Council would take if the paths were not reinstated. This I believe had a beneficial effect on the campaign as a high % of paths were reinstated without further contact. For the 2010/2011 campaign, all landholders whose paths are selected for checking will be written to prior to the growing season warning them paths on their land will be checked whilst at the same time providing guidance notes on their legal responsibilities

It is still worth noting that in general, the number of paths reinstated by many landowners each year without the need of Officers having to contact them is significant higher on recent years.

8. Access Mapping

During 2009-2010 the Access Mapping Team has been successful in achieving the majority of their targets whilst developing access as a whole throughout the County. The year has seen significant procedural changes within the authority relating to Definitive Map procedures. This has resulted in a far greater proportion of decisions being made under delegated powers with only the most contentious being considered at the area planning committee.

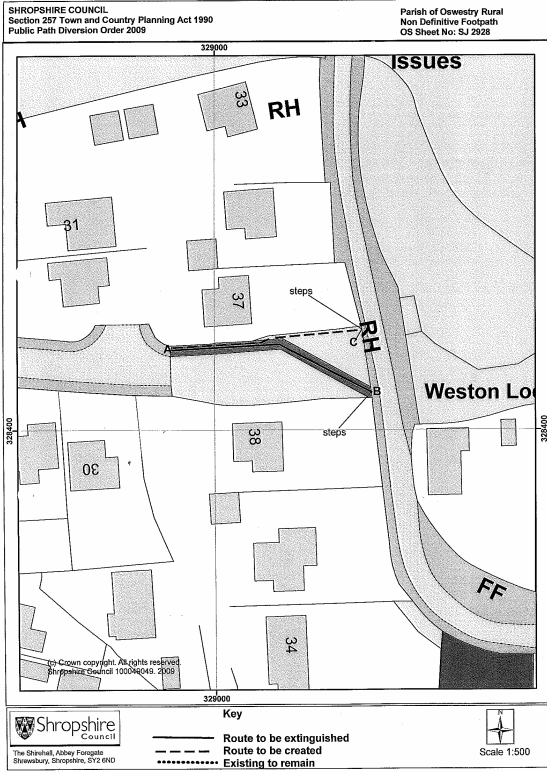
A new prioritisation system for of Definitive Map work has been established which considers applications in relation to whether the parish has been reviewed in the past and considers key local demands identified within Shropshire's Countryside Access Strategy. A proactive review programme will concentrate on North Shropshire with parish clusters being investigated from west to east.

Legal orders have been published for **89** issues. These orders ensure that the Definitive Map and Statement are kept up to date. Benchmarking with a range of other authorities in 2010 revealed that Shropshire Council continues to outperform other authorities in terms of Definitive Map outputs with resources broadly in line with other authorities.

Checking the digital version of the Definitive Map continues with **205** parishes having been checked. Plans to consolidate the map and republish it at a larger scale have been slightly delayed and it is now hoped that final consolidation can take place by March 2011.

Town & Country Planning Act: Rights of Way and Development

Since becoming a Unitary Authority planning functions are now coordinated centrally. There are provisions under the Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA) for amendments to be made to rights of way in order to allow development to take place. Whilst the old District Councils had this duty they were used only sporadically and often affected rights of way were not identified until after development was complete. The result is a legacy of hundreds of building obstructions affecting the network. The Countryside Access Team recognised the opportunity afforded by unitary status, not only to take on the responsibility to process orders under the TCPA but also to forge better working relationships with planners through training and networking. A part time officer now deals with rights of way and development and in a short space of time the benefits of a proactive approach have been clear with developers of all scales considering the implications of rights of way at an early stage and through early consultation avoiding delays in building and where possible seeking to improve the access opportunities through planning gain. Although it is still yet to be fully developed the new approach to ROW and development is providing clear benefits to developers and users as well as providing a new revenue opportunity for the Team.



TCPA Diversion in Morda

One of the first issues dealt with by the new TCPA officer concerned a non definitive footpath in Morda. The route had been laid out for use by the public but was not on the Definitive Map and had never been adopted. Previously it would have been very likely to be overlooked during the planning process and would probably have been subject to a Wildlife & Countryside Act application once blocked by building works; blighting the property after construction. Through an Order made under TCPA the route was diverted and made definitive improving its legal protection with no loss of amenity and giving the developer peace of mind.

Highways Act 1980

Public Path Orders to divert or extinguish routes

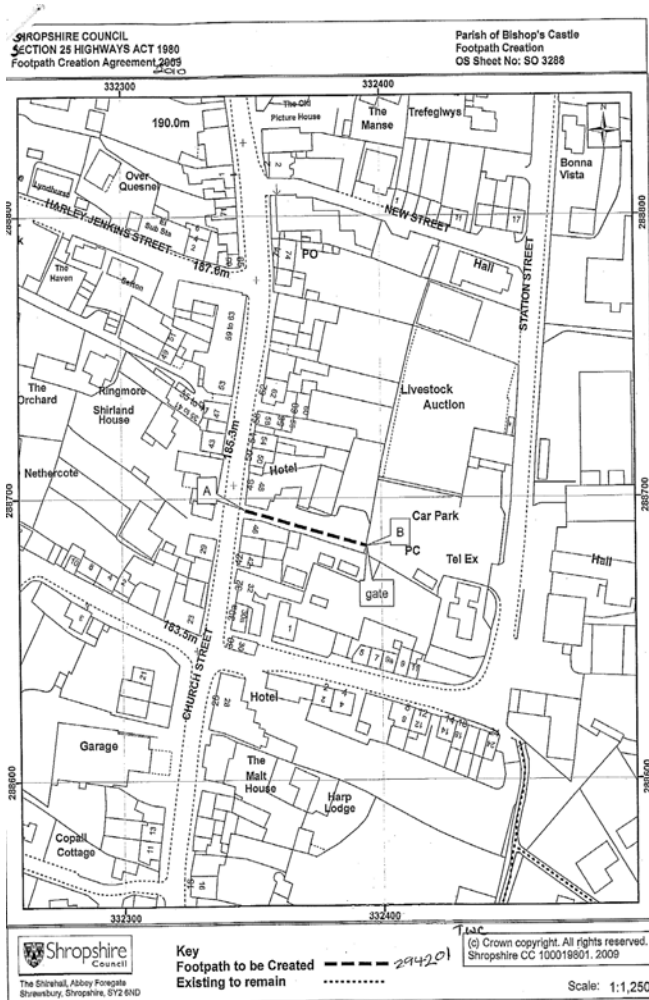
During 2009-2010, **40** applications were either published and/or confirmed totalling **44** individual route changes. The table attached at the end of the annual report lists all the legal orders published.

Creation Agreements

Definitive Footpaths have been created by agreement with the landowner in Bishop's Castle (Livestock market) and Shrewsbury (Sundorne) and a bridleway has been created in Oswestry Rural (Treflach).

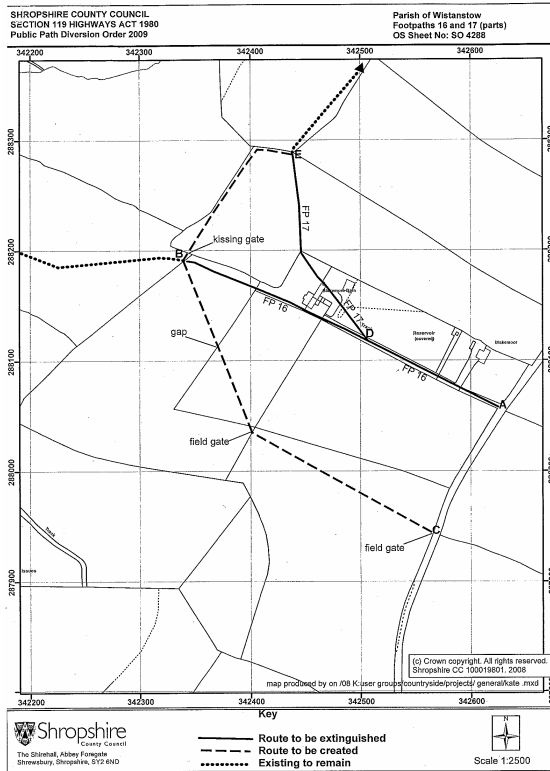
Permissive Agreements

Permissive Footpaths have been created under formal agreement in Clee Hill village and on Hope Bowdler Hill Open Access land, and a Permissive Bridleway in Clun as part of the Blue Remembered Hills route.



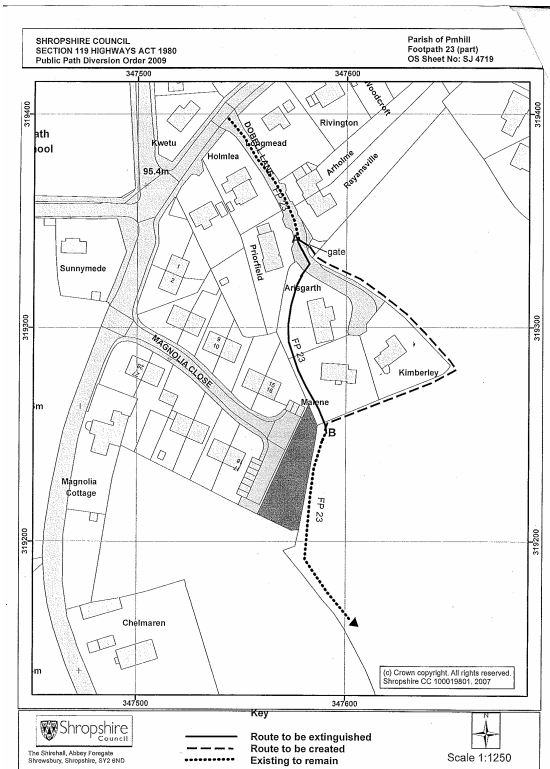
Creation Agreement in Bishops Castle

Originally the subject of an application under the Wildlife & Countryside Act made by Bishops Castle Town Council this important link from the livestock market and car park to the centre of the town was eventually added to the definitive map by agreement with the owners; Punch Taverns. Resolution by agreement avoided the need for expensive and adversarial investigations and hearings. Officers from the Countryside Access Team carried out negotiations and drew up legal agreements whilst the Town Council agreed to meet the donor's legal costs and the route was successfully added to the Definitive Map in January.



Public Path Diversion in Wistanstow

Issues with footpaths 16 & 17 were highlighted as part of the Parish Access Project. At the time the owners and residents of Blakemoor Barns expressed an interest in diverting the route out of their garden. The alternative route, confirmed in April 2009, takes both paths away from the property, avoids several obstructions and has established gated access where previously there were predominantly stiles.



Public Path Diversion in Pimhill

Made in the interests of the landowners the order moves this right of way from two domestic gardens and redirected it around the field edge. The amendment has created a preferable line for users of the path as well as the owners of the properties; the order was made in September 2009 and confirmed in April of this year.

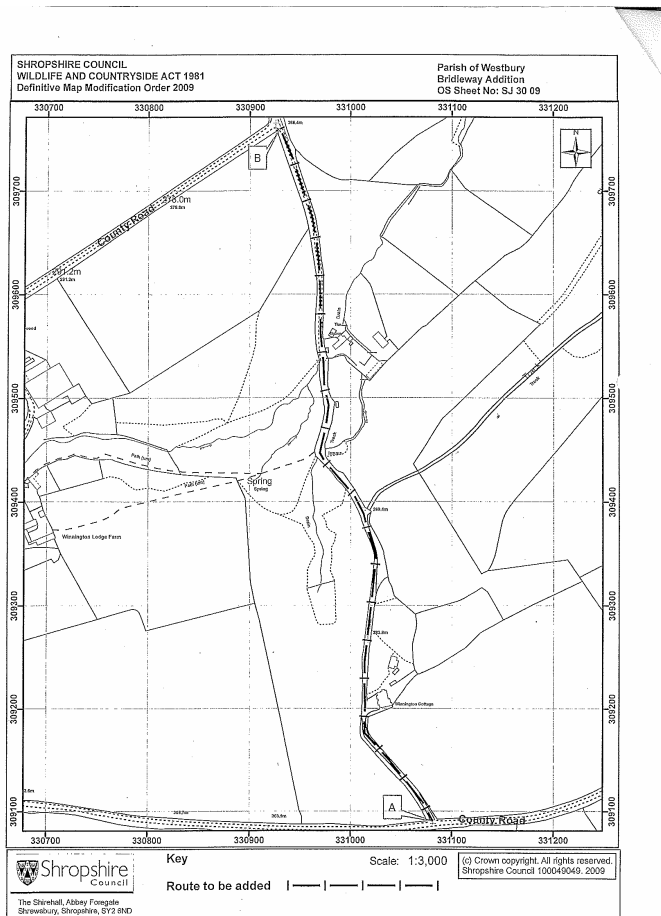
Modification orders to alter the map - Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

Under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Highway Authority has a duty to keep the Definitive Map and statement under continuous review. Changes that can be made are additions, upgrades, downgrades, deletions and line amendments.

During 2009-10, **14** modification orders were either published and/or confirmed/determined totalling **39** single issues.

- Seven of these modification orders were initiated through the submission of a formal application.
- Three were considered under the general review procedures
- The remaining orders were published as a result of the Parish Access Project or issues relating to correcting the Definitive Map.

The confirmed orders have the effect of adding to the Definitive Map 1 Restricted Byway, 2 Bridleways, 22 Footpaths, and amending 2 definitive routes onto a new line and deleting 2 public footpaths. (See table attached at Appendix B)



Bridleway Addition in Westbury

A claim was prompted when the route was blocked by an adjoining landowner. The claim was supported by significant historical and user evidence. Whilst objections were received these were withdrawn following negotiation and the Order was confirmed without the need for a Public Inquiry

9. Countryside Access Team Plan priorities for 2010-2011

The following table gives an indication of the Countryside Access team priorities for 2010-2011 contained within the annual team plan.

Key areas of work	Key actions
Maintaining the Rights of Way Network	800 improvements resolved implementing the least restrictive principle.
	Programme of works to implement improvements in Oswestry and Whitchurch
	Proactive annual vegetation maintenance programme to agreed priorities.
	Implement Parish Access Project - 3 parishes or 85 km completed.
	Implement 100% Condition Survey – Year 1
	Implement a programme of Capital improvements to the network – 10 schemes
	Maintain improvements to the Offa's Dyke National Trail and the Jack Mytton Way – Ride UK circuits and Offa's Dyke circular walks
	Finalise improvements to the Severn Way in Shrewsbury and to Atcham
	Provide disabled access provision at Much Wenlock
	Implement improvements to Open Access Land at Stanmore
Enforcement on the network	Successfully deal with 500 reported enforcement issues
	Support the Parish Access Project through enforcement action
	Support the Much Wenlock area ahead of 2012 in improving access
	Instigate new ploughing and cropping campaign - 200 incidences of crop obstructions – 50 volunteers supported
Definitive Map	Provide consolidated Definitive Map at 1:10,000 scale
	Complete outstanding work for Shrewsbury and Oswestry Urban and initiate review in the north of the county –Parish cluster 1
	Investigate 12 Formal Applications and determine 7 objected orders
	Investigate 20 review issues arising from the PAP Project
	30 Public Path Order applications dealt with
	14 TCPA Public Path Order applications dealt with

Community support	Support 55 existing active P3 Groups
	A further 5 new P3 groups developed
	2 P3 Groups linked into local schools
	Continue to manage, support and develop the Shropshire Active Volunteering Partnership
	Support 27 existing Parish Wardens and support 10 new wardens
	Attend 12 Parish Council meetings to raise awareness of access
	Support the Local Access Forum
Promotion	Develop the Outdoor Recreation web information
	Continue to support and develop the 'Activity websites and Discover Shropshire portal
	Launch the new Easier Access Guide and Offas Dyke circular walks
Access Development and projects	Develop a pilot project based on Oswestry for Open Space strategy/Green Infrastructure planning
	Develop 'Paths to Play Project linking play areas to ROW network
	Develop the Walking Doctor project – implement training to VIC's
	Develop an action plan with all partners to manage points of access pressure Stiperstones and Corndon areas
	Work with Natural England on Higher Level Stewardship Access scheme targeting to help overcome access gaps where needed
	Work with Transport Planning team to develop linkages into the LTP for Rights of Way road safety improvements based on promoted and popular routes and those routes within 2km of urban fringe and to target improvements where significant road barriers exist.
	Develop access development project plans for Shrewsbury, Severn Way and Jack Mytton way
	Develop funding bids the Shropshire Way Project in the north of Shropshire and Oswestry area
	Implement the Shropshire Way project in Much Wenlock – upgrade to route infrastructure, improved guide book information and broader promotion ahead of 2012
	Contribute to the Offa's Dyke Country Project and develop bids to help implement the Offa's Dyke Interpretation Strategy
	Continue to develop the UCR survey and implement access improvements to agreed routes
	Identify new sites for Open Access Land

	designation
Physical Activity	Manage the outputs of the Shropshire Outdoors Project and work towards project sustainability.
	Increase physical activity by supporting Walking for Health schemes in Shrewsbury, Oswestry Bridgnorth and North Shropshire areas
	Carry out a 'Total Place' review of walking opportunity – Oswestry pilot
	Work with Leisure services and the PCT to in the development of a PCT Active4Health physical activity referral scheme
Performance	Initiate a 100% condition survey over a 5 year period which contributes to performance - 85% by March 2010
	Implement annual local communities' stakeholder survey

APPENDIX A
Highways Act 1980
Orders Published/Confirmed April 2009 – March 2010

No	Title of Order	Date Order Published	Order Opposed	Date Confirmed	No of Issues
1	FP 7 (pt) Billingsley Diversion (PAP issue)	03.04.09		08.05.09	1
2	FP 16 & FP 17 (pts) Wistanstow Diversion	09.01.09		24.04.09	1
3	FP 5 (pt) Moreton Say Diversion (PAP issue)	16.10.08		18.06.09	1
4	FP 5 (pt) Stanton Lacy Diversion (PAP issue)	01.05.09		09.10.09	1
5	FP 16(pt) Acton Round Diversion (PAP issue)	28.08.09			1
6	FP37/FP33 (pts) Kinlet/Neen Savage Diversion (Enforcement issue)	15.01.10			1
7	BW 30 (pt) Bettws-y-Crwyn Diversion	17.10.08		24.07.09	1
8	BW 31 (pt) Bettys-y-Crwyn Diversion	17.10.08		24.07.09	1
9	FP 9(pt) Monkhopton Diversion (PAP issue)	06.06.08	Objection received – order determined by Written Representation	08.05.09	1
10	FP 44(pt) Shrewsbury Diversion	15.05.08		17.07.09	1
11	FP 62Y Worthen with Shelve Diversion	18.12.08		22.05.09	1
12	BWUN1/BW35 (pts) Clunbury/Clungunford Diversion (PAP issue)	07.11.08		09.10.09	2
13	FP 29 Neen Savage Diversion (Enforcement issue)	15.01.10			1
14	BW 33/33A Worfield Extinguishment	05.06.07	Objections received – determined by Hearing	12.06.09	1

15	FP 9, FP20/22Y & FP 20 Neen Savage & Hopton Wafers Extinguishment and Diversion	27.03.09		17.07.09	2
16	FP 12Y Wheathill Diversion (Enforcement issue)	19.02.10			1
17	FP 7(pt) Burford Diversion (PAP issue)	13.11.09		26.02.10	1
18	FP 28A (pt) Diversion	13.02.09		03.04.09	1
19	FP 25 (pt) Diversion (PAP issue)	16.01.09		26.06.09	1
20	FP 6 (pt) Morville Diversion (PAP issue)	21.08.09		23.10.09	1
21	FP 49/18 (pt) Hopton Wafers/Coreley Diversion (Open Access Land issue)	27.03.09		15.05.09	1
22	FP 28/28Y/26 Neen Savage Extinguishment and Diversion (PAP issue)	16.01.09		24.04.09	2
23	FP 13/FP14 Ruyton-XI-Towns Diversion and BW Creation (Review issue)	07.05.09		27.08.09	2
24	FP 18 (pt) Hinstock Diversion (PAP issue)	03.09.09		26.11.09	1
25	FP 4 Westbury/Alberbury with Cardeston Diversion (PAP issue)	05.11.09			1
26	FP 61 (pt) Neen Savage Diversion (PAP issue)	26.06.09		23.10.09	1
27	FP23A/FP24A (pts) Chelmarsh Diversion (Enforcement issue)	21.09.09		12.02.10	1
28	FP 13 (pt) Stanton Long Diversion (PAP issue)	28.08.09			1
29	FP 23 (pt) Pimhill Diversion (PAP issue)	17.09.09		29.10.09	1

30	FP 22 (pt) Hinstock Diversion (PAP issue)	24.09.09		26.11.09	1
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31	BW 30 (pt) Hinstock Diversion (PAP issue)	24.09.09		26.11.09	1
32	FP 6 (pt) Stottesdon Diversion (PAP issue)	Republished 26.03.10			1
33	FP 1(pt) Frodesley Diversion	Made by SABC		26.11.09	1
34	FP 45 (pt) Condover Diversion (Maintenance issue)	11.03.10			1
35	FP2/FP3 Kemberton Diversion (PAP issue)	05.03.10			1
36	FP 1/FP UN5 & FP8 (pts) Meverley Diversion	05.02.10			1
37	FP 13 (pt) Weston Rhyn Diversion (Review issue)	10.12.09		22.01.10	1
38	FP 46 (pt) Bitterley Diversion (PAP issue)	04.12.09		29.01.10	1
39	FP 17B Caynham Diversion	04.11.09		29.01.10	1
40	FP 16 (pt) Hopton Wafers Diversion (PAP issue)	04.11.09		29.01.10	1
TOTAL ISSUES 44					

Orders forwarded to Planning Inspectorate 2009-2010

1. FP 9 Monkhopton Diversion – Inspector confirmed order by Written Representations procedure

Public Inquiries/Hearings held 2009-2010

1. BW 33/33A Worfield Extinguishment – Hearing held on 21 April 2009. Inspector decided to confirm the order as made.

APPENDIX B

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Modification Orders Published/Confirmed April 2009 – March 2010

No	Title of Order	Date Approved by ROW Committee	Date Order Published	Order Opposed	Date of Final Confirmation	No of Issues
1	FP Addition Llanymynech & Pant (Formal Application)	12.06.07	25.09.08	Objections received. Order determined by way of Hearing	03.12.09	1
2	FP 7 Abdon Line Amendment (PAP issue)	Delegated Authority	06.02.09	Objection received	29.05.09	1
3	BW Addition Westbury (Formal Application)	23.09.08	21.05.09	Objections received and withdrawn	05.11.09	1
4	FP 102A Cardington Line Amendment (Formal Application)	23.09.08	22.05.09	Objection received		1
5	Melverley Review 2004	Delegated Authority	18.11.04	Objections received, Hearing held May '08	15.05.09	3
6	Shrewsbury Review 2009		27.08.09	Objections to Order Maps 11 & 15	Part confirmed 04.03.10	16
7	FP Addition Culmington (Formal Application)	28.07.09		Objections received		1
8	FP 95/FP3 upgrade to BW & BW addition Worfield/Badger (Formal Application)	24.03.09	02.10.09	Objections received		2
9	FP additions Claverley (Formal Application)	15.01.08	02.10.09	Objections received		2
10	FP 13Y (Pt) Oswestry Rural Line Amendment (Line issue)	Delegated Authority	09.10.09		19.11.09	1
11	Colebatch Review Orders	19.09.84	31.10.86	Objection received and withdrawn	17.12.09	2
12	FP 13 Ashford Bowdler Line Amendment	Delegated Authority	12.02.10			1

	(PAP issue)					
13	BW 4/FP7 Frodesley (Formal Application)	15.01.08	25.02.10	Objections received		5
14	Broseley Review (The Jitties)	Delegated Authority	23.03.06	Objections received to Order Maps 1 & 11 – determined by written representation	12.03.10	2
TOTAL NO OF ISSUES						39

Orders forwarded to Planning Inspectorate 2009-2010

1. Broseley Review Modification Order 2006 – Order Maps 1, 1/13 and 10
2. Barrow Review Modification 2006 – Order Maps 2, 7, 12 and 13
3. Shrewsbury (Shuts and Passages) Modification Order 2008 – Order Map 19 (St Mary's Court)

Public Inquiries/Hearings held and determination of orders by Written Representation 2009-2010

1. FP Addition, Llanymynech and Pant Modification Order 2008
Hearing on 13th October 2009. Inspector confirmed order as made
2. Broseley ('The Jitties') Modification Order 2006 – Order Maps 1 and 11
Inspector confirmed both issues by Written Representation procedure
3. Weston Rhyn Review Modification Order 2006 – Public Inquiry on 25th
25/26th November 2009 and 25th January 2010 – Order Maps 5, 6 & 7
Inspector advertised modifications to order