

Shropshire Local Access Forum	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u>
24 January 2011	<b>16</b>	<b>D</b>
10.00 a.m.		

## **Update on Shropshire Way and other matters**

### **1. Oswestry Ring**

Peter Dunhill started work on the 8<sup>th</sup> November and has already walked and surveyed the main “ring” with local ramblers and British Waterways. The furniture has been ordered and after final agreement on the route work will commence on the installation works.

The circular walks have not yet been decided but the plan is to create an “inner ring” of walks in addition to the outer loop. Spokes will radiate out from the town centre, crossing the inner ring and then joining with the outer loop. This doubled ring will allow for great flexibility in the walks available. The plan is to integrate these new routes with the existing walking for health walks providing a seamless catalogue of walks of varying difficulty. This will form the main walking offer in the “Active Oswestry” plan.

### **2. ECOMINDS**

Shropshire MIND have won a bid for monies to allow some of their service users to help with the Shropshire Way in the north of the County. They will undertake surveys, research and help write a guide book. They intend to carry out the work in partnership with us.

### **3. Much Wenlock**

Work has started on the upgrade of furniture in and around Much Wenlock. A problem has arisen with some of the permissive sections of the circular walks which will necessitate some route changes, this will be finalised at the next steering committee meeting in Feb.

The route for the main Shropshire Way from Wilderhope to Ironbridge has been agreed but the use of the railway tunnel is subject to an internal inspection and cannot yet be finalised. As an interim measure steps will be installed from the end of the railway down to the road.

The Shropshire Way sections will have guidebook pages written and a small guidebook produced for the circular walks. The website will be upgraded accordingly.

#### **4. Ramblers' Contributions**

The Ramblers are to be thanked for their excellent volunteer contribution in helping with the route surveys and the funds that they have provided to the projects:

- £ 500 from Ramblers Headquarters and
- £ 250 from the Oswestry branch

#### **5. Walking with Offa routes**

Funding has been made available through a Natural Assets project to:

- Upgrade the section of existing Shropshire Way from Thresholds to Lyth Hill.
- Establish a new loop route from the Stiperstones along the ridge and down to Snailbeach. It will then continue on via Pontesbury hill and join up with the existing Shropshire Way at Lyth hill.
- Provide a "Harvey Map" of the already upgraded Shropshire Hills sections of the Shropshire Way.

The routes have been surveyed and the furniture orders placed, work will start on the upgrades as soon as a contractor is chosen. New guidebook pages, in the existing Shropshire Hills sections format, will be written and the routes placed on the website.

#### **6. Extra LEADER bid for Shropshire Way North**

A bid has been written and accepted by the Northern Marches LEADER programme to upgrade the planned Shropshire way routes from Ellesmere to Whitchurch and from Whitchurch down to Hodnet (the edge of the LEADER area). It will also upgrade sections of the linking route from Shrewsbury to Llanymynech. The funds requested will pay for the upgrading work, guidebook printing, website development and a part time project officer. This will join the Oswestry Loop into the main Shropshire Way network. Final confirmation of funding is awaited.

#### **7. Walking for Wellbeing Update**

A new project has been started by the Shropshire Hill AONB. It is called "Walking for wellbeing" and is designed to improve the health, wellbeing and sustainability of local communities in the Shropshire Hills. The project will focus on Cleobury Mortimer, Bishop's Castle and Church Stretton, building on the success of Walking for Health and Walkers Are Welcome initiatives, increasing the number of people walking and improving the sense of place for walkers in the Shropshire Hills. The project will deliver a range of activities, agreed by each town, designed to promote walking in the Shropshire Hills and bringing together walking for locals and visitors. Delivery will be in conjunction with the Natural Assets "Walking with Offa" project.

The project will employ a Graduate Trainee for 2.5 days per week to deliver these activities. The Project Officer will work with the Walking With Offa

Steering Group to deliver the project locally, and with the Offa's Country Sustainable Tourism Partnership to deliver the LEADER Cooperation project.

The main objectives are:

- To ensure a more integrated approach to the delivery of walking activities for local people and visitors across the Shropshire Hills
- To share good practice and networking between market towns and surrounding areas
- To reduce the carbon footprint of events and activities
- To increase the demand for local products

Activities are likely to fall into the following categories:

- Marketing of walking opportunities and associated events
- Improved choice of and access to walks
- Business engagement and opportunities
- Walks leader training
- Networking between walking groups within and across market towns
- Experimentation with new themes, routes, activities
- Increase in organised walking activity
- Transport for walking groups

## **8. Wenlock Quarry Update**

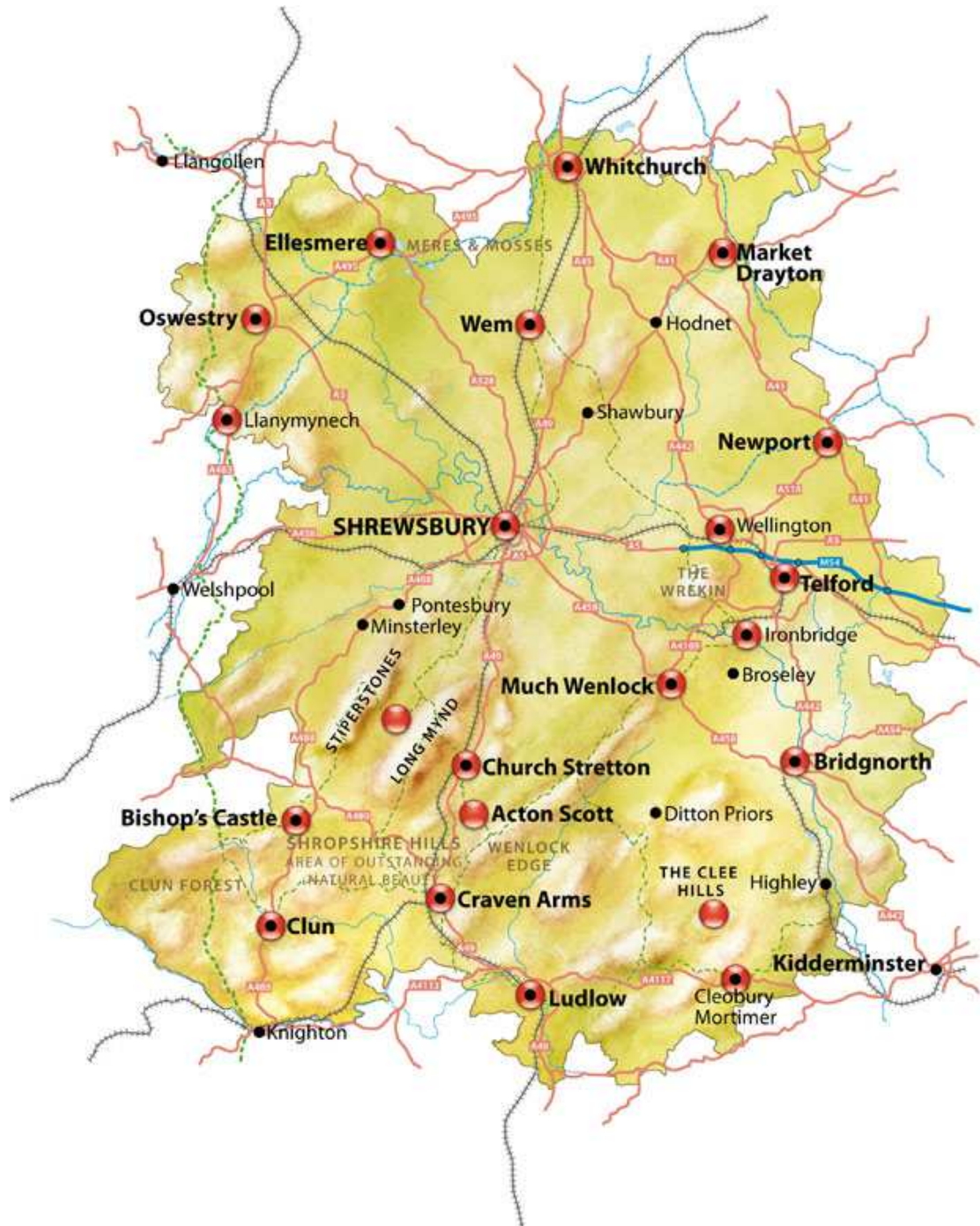
Plans are still ongoing for the National Trust to acquire the Lea Quarries at Much Wenlock and develop the site for visitors and local residents. It is planned to have walks through the quarry interpreted to show the flora, fauna, history and geology of the site.

A development plan has been drafted and will be available for consultation in March 2011.

The owners, Bardon Aggregates, have asked the National Trust for more money for the site, as they have been told it could be developed as a holiday village. A request for outline planning permission will be put in front of Shropshire Council by Bardon. The outcome of this request will dictate the price being asked for the site and any further project work.

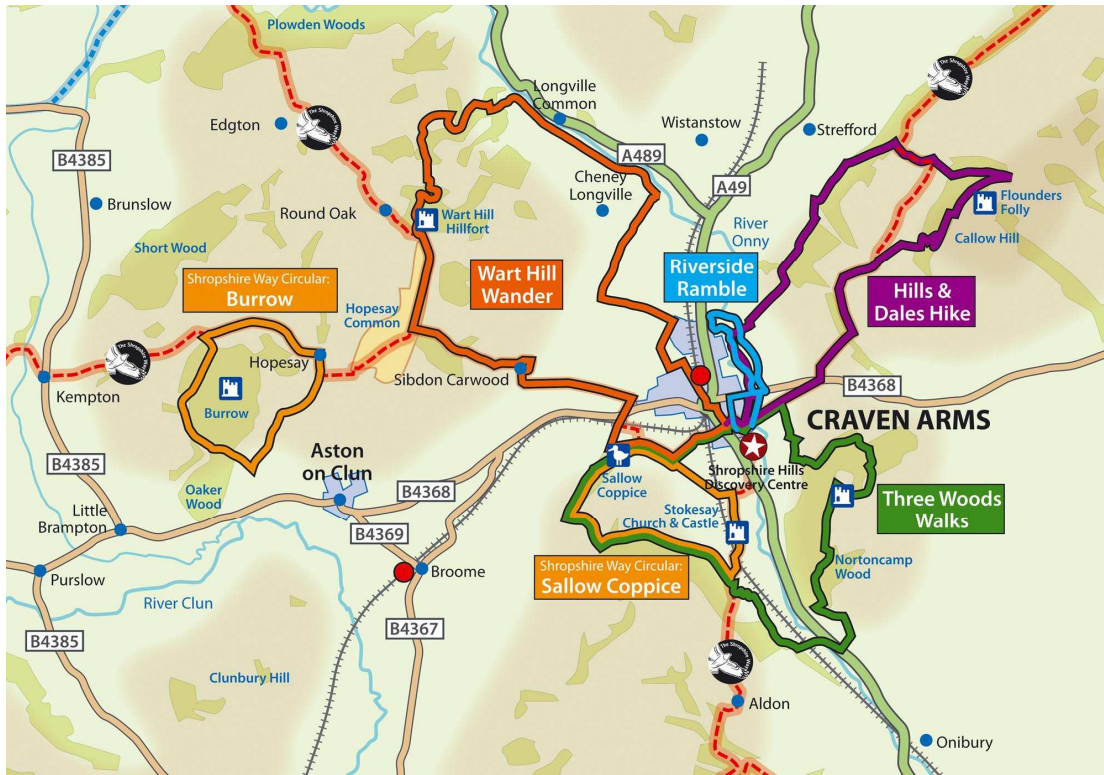
## 9. Website Developments Update

The walking website [www.shropshirewalking.co.uk](http://www.shropshirewalking.co.uk) is in the process of being upgraded to be map based rather than a search engine based. This means that visitors now are presented with a map on the home page



By clicking on any of the red dots the walks in the area are listed. A similar map page has been constructed for the easy access walks and one for the Countryside Sites is under construction at the moment.

Eventually there will be another layer of mapping under the top home page map of the county that will show the walks in each local area as below. Again by clicking on a walk you will be able to see and then download the pdf for the guide.



Other “hot spots” can be added to these intermediate maps to take visitors to other websites.

This will bring the main website in line with that already found in the Shropshire Way section. It should also be noted that as part of the work ongoing on the Shropshire Way in the north of the County a Shropshire Way North section will also be added to the website.