

**Name** Access recommendations for the Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership  
c/o Natural England office, Rigmoroak, Pennerley, Minsterley, Shrewsbury, SY5 0NE.

**Contact** Helen Fairweather 01743 792928

**Job** To analyse the potential for improved access offered by the LPS area, assessing key routes and producing a series of costed recommendations based on the findings.

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## 1.0 Project Summary

Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country is a beautiful upland area of shared landscape character that crosses the Welsh English border between the Shropshire Hills and Montgomeryshire (see appendix 1 for a map of the proposed area).

Less than a hundred years ago it was a thriving industrial area, at different times containing one of the largest lead mines in Western Europe and the largest barytes mine in England. There would have been many more people living and working here and life would have been hard. The mining reflects the underlying geology, with two rock types separated by the Pontesford- Linley fault, lead ore to the west and barytes and copper to the east. There is also important prehistoric and medieval history, with hillforts, stone circles and medieval hunting forests.

Livestock farming is still important but whilst the modernisation of farming has had an impact here, the area still contains a mosaic of high quality habitats that are a haven for Biodiversity Action Plan species such as curlew, snipe, lesser horseshoe bat, dormice and spreading bellflower. Some of these sites are publicly owned but the majority are in the hands of private landowners. There is a rich cultural heritage of myths and legends and the stunning scenery inspired authors such as Mary Webb and Malcolm Saville.

Today, the area is sparsely populated, with pockets of deprivation amongst otherwise wealthy communities. Most working people are self-employed and many have a number of trades. Wages are below national averages and there are few large employers. As in many rural areas, young people are moving out and older people moving in, with around a fifth of residents being over 65.

The Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme seeks to ensure the precious cultural and natural heritage is appreciated and enjoyed for generations to come. Hedgerows, drovers' routes, stone banks and walls will be repaired. The mosaic of habitat will be conserved and enhanced, with a softening of the boundaries between heath and farmland.

Mining relics and other cultural heritage sites will be repaired and access and interpretation for all abilities and ages improved. People will investigate their local heritage and talk to older members of the community about their experiences. New opportunities for training and work in heritage skills will be developed.

As well as helping conserve and enhance the landscape, the scheme will bring people together; better understanding the heritage and their part in it. They will begin to appreciate how others see the landscape and promote the services it provides.

This will be achieved by a dedicated team of specialists working with local people to thoroughly understand the heritage of the area, conducting the 'Down to Earth' approach to consulting communities and one to one contact with private owners and landowners.

As part of the development phase of the scheme a number of contracts are being let for specialist input into assessing natural and cultural heritage assets, identifying access and interpretation opportunities and collating archives for the area. This brief is to employ a consultant to make an assessment of access opportunities to help focus the delivery of access outputs in the delivery phase of the scheme.

## 2.0 Objective

To analyse the potential for improved access offered by the LPS area, assessing key routes and producing a series of costed recommendations based on the findings. This work must also inform and integrate with work to identify priorities for increased interpretation to the area for all ages and abilities. This will involve liaising with the consultants working on interpretation assessments to inform a clear, justified plan for spending around £300,000 over five years on access and interpretation improvements. Recommendations for sites or routes may also come from the consultants working on cultural and natural heritage contracts.

## 3.0 Target Audience

Access should be targeted at all groupings represented in the area and surrounding communities, especially those less engaged at present, for instance young families and young adults. It will include:

- People living and working in the area
- People living and working in nearby communities
- Existing users of the area e.g. walkers, riders and cyclists
- Those under-represented as audiences of the area's heritage, e.g. young adults

Consideration should also be given to those with reduced motility e.g. older people and those using mobility scooters.

There is a target of 2,000 more walkers, riders and cyclists using the routes or people taking part in interpretative events over the five years of the delivery stage of the LP Scheme.

## 4.0 Consultant role

A consultant will be recruited to:

- Confirm the range of access opportunities available, in context with the aims of the LP Scheme, based on the ideas below (see 5.0 Scope).
- Carry out in principle negotiations with landowners and any close residents to confirm which options are likely to be achievable
- Identify preferable start and finish points based on existing car parking, public transport, business opportunities and facilities
- Identify any barriers or issues, including ROW anomalies, that will hinder or prevent the development of these routes
- Identify any need for diversions, including away from farmyards, to make the routes easier and safer to navigate
- Circulate recommendations of routes to the Access and Interpretation Special Advisory Group for the LP Scheme and make a presentation to the Steering Group.
- Agree priorities

*The Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme is managed by a Partnership of professional and community representatives from Shropshire and Powys, who are listed at [www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk](http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk). The lead organisation for the Scheme is the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, hosted by Shropshire Council.*



Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme  
Brief for Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country - Access

- Develop costings for the proposed routes, including both the cost of implementation and consideration of long term maintenance costs.
- Write a report with recommendations, action plan and budgets which can be included in the Local Conservation Action Plan and Stage 2 submission for the LP Scheme

The consultant will work in close communication with the ROW departments from Shropshire Council and Powys County Council at all times. Key contacts will be Calum Carr, Powys County Council and Jim Stabler, Shropshire Council.

Where possible, routes and sites should adhere to the following principles:

- Allow the interpretation of key natural and cultural heritage themes and consider how integrated access and interpretation can best 'tell the story of the landscape' in an interesting and innovative way
- Minimise impact on any designated sites such as SSSIs and SAMs
- Be of maximum benefit to walkers, cyclists or horse riders in terms of facilities, historic interest and scenery whilst being least disruptive to landowners and other local people in terms of increased nuisance and traffic; minimising the impact of increased car use on minor roads
- Offer maximum economic benefit to hospitality and tourism businesses and use existing facilities and services such as car parking, toilets and public transport
- Use existing ROW and avoid permissive paths and routes where there are anomalies
- Complement and avoid duplicating existing access in the area
- Be accessible to as many people as possible, including those with poor mobility

## 5.0 Scope:

Suggestions for improved access from the Access and Interpretation Special Advisory Group so far include:

- Improved cross border links. There are three suggested cross border routes that may need improvement;
  - Stapeley to Corndon
  - More Works site and Bagbury
  - Heath Mynd and Hyssington
- A potential leisure route between Pontesbury and Minsterley along the disused railway line
- A new waymarked, cross border circular route that includes Stiperstones, Stapeley, Corndon and Roundton and offers maximum economic opportunities to local tourism and hospitality businesses
- Improvements to the road and car park at Stapeley Common and Roundton NNR
- Development of an easy access route- suggestions include Nipstone Rock or Stapeley Common

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- Creation of new pub walks- especially in Churchstoke and Chirbury, complementing existing Walking with Offa, Minsterley and Pontesbury Market Towns developments, Stiperstones Inn and The Bridges walks
- Links to Promoted routes such as :
  - The Shropshire Way
  - Ride UK routes

There may of course be other opportunities for improved access. Some may well be brought to light through the other contracts that have been let, whilst others will become evident as the consultant conducts research for this brief. The approach to fulfilling this brief should therefore be flexible and regular discussions with Helen Fairweather will be needed.

The contract will include all preparation time, research, consultation with partner organisations and residents, travel and report writing.

### **6.0 Monitoring and evaluation:**

The results of the report will be assessed by the Landscape Partnership Steering Group, with advice from the Access and Interpretation SAG and the Shropshire and Powys Local Access Forums.

### **7.0 Complementary activity**

This research will complement other reports in interpretation, natural and cultural heritage and digitisation of archives to help inform the Landscape Conservation Action Plan for the area and presenting the findings at a joint workshop will need to be included in the bid. The consultant will need to liaise closely with the interpretation consultant.

Shropshire and Powys Access Plans should be taken into account when delivering this contract, along with the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan.

### **8.0 Skills Required**

The consultant is required to have a proven track record in assessment and development of access routes, including strategic and practical delivery, and should have the following generic skills to deliver the work:

- Sound organisational skills
- Good reporting and communication skills

It is expected that there will be a close working relationship with the Landscape Partnership Scheme Access and Interpretation Specialist Advisory Group from appointment to completion and the chosen consultant should maintain regular dialogue during the commission. The Access and Interpretation Specialist Advisory Group, along with the Shropshire and Powys Local Access Forums, will be a source of advice and will help contribute to the assessment of current provision with information from both sides of the border.

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## 9.0 Funding

This work is funded through a Landscape Partnership fund, with the main contributor being the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The budget for this work is around £8,000. Payment will be made 50% on appointment and 50% on completion of the research, report and recommendations.

The budget for the five year delivery of the LP Scheme to deliver access and interpretation together is around £300,000.

## 10.0 Terms and conditions

Shropshire Council will be the commissioning agent for the work. The consultant will be appointed on a fixed price basis and will need to comply with the Shropshire Council Terms and Conditions. The consultant is requested to provide a breakdown of their fee proposal, including their daily rate.

## 11.0 Timetable

Activity	Deadline
Brief issued	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2012
Deadline for submission of tenders	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
Appointment of consultant	20 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
Inception meeting	tbc
Draft plan agreed with Access and Interpretation Specialist Advisory Group	17 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
Presentation of findings to Access and Interpretation Specialist Advisory Group	Wk ending 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2012 tbc
Report submitted	Wk ending 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2012
Presentation of recommendations to Steering Group	Wk ending 28 <sup>th</sup> September 2012

## 12.0 Selection of consultants

In scrutinising consultant proposals the Steering Group will be looking in particular for:

- A sound appreciation of the brief, the rationale underlying it and the means of achieving it

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Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme  
Brief for Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country - Access

- A comprehensive and realistic approach to delivering the brief, including timescales and content
- Interpretation experience, including practical implementation
- Daily rate
- No. of days preparation, delivery and report writing
- Value for money

Price will be a material factor, but the ability of the consultants to meet the brief and demonstrate value for money will be fundamental. The Steering Group reserves the right to reject the proposal if they are not satisfied with the content.

### 13.0 Submission of proposal

The proposal should be sent by email to Helen Fairweather, Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme, by 12 noon on 18th July 2012. The proposal should not exceed 20 pages of A4 (including background information).

The success of the proposal will be notified by email or phone on or before 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012. At this stage the date of the inception meeting will be confirmed.

### 14.0 Further Information

Should any further background information be required please feel free to contact Helen Fairweather either via email: [helen.fairweather@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.fairweather@shropshire.gov.uk) or by telephoning 01743 792928

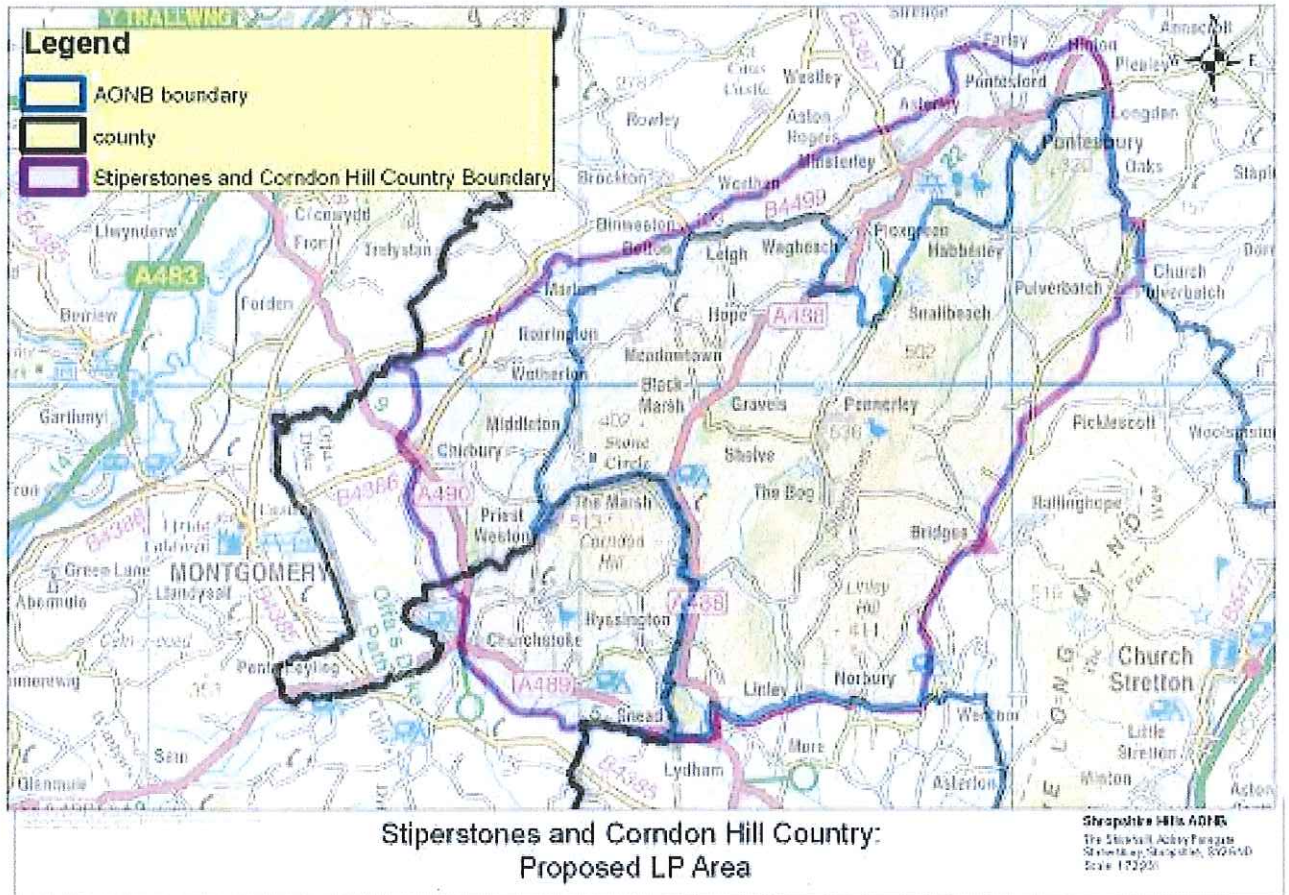
Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme, Rigmoroak, Pennerley, Minsterley, Shropshire SY5 0NE

Go to [www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk](http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk) for more details.

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Appendix 1- Landscape Partnership Scheme Area



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