

Central Shropshire Walking Forum

Notes of Meeting

2.00pm, Wednesday 3rd October 2012

Wilfred Owen Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

Attendees:

Barbara Martin, Pontesbury WfH
David Hardwick, Shropshire Council Countryside Recreation Officer
David Morgan, Longden P3
Dick Bailey, Much Wenlock WfH and Walkers are Welcome
Gerry Lawson, Ramblers Association
Hilary Procter, MidShropshire Ramblers P3
Jim Stabler, Shropshire Council Access Development Officer
Lucy Stanley, Shropshire Council Support Officer (Notes on meeting)
Mick Dunn, Shropshire Council Walking Coordinator
Mike Brooks, Shrewsbury U3A
Susan Daykin, Marden WfH

Apologies:

Bill Hodges, Shrewsbury Rablers
Jan Bailey, Shawbury P3 (to attend N Shropshire Forum)
Margaret & Tony Cook, Shawbury WfH (to attend N Shropshire Forum)
Mike Richardson, Condover P3
Russell & Valerie Colard, Condover P3
Sylvia Greenfield, Condover P3

1. Welcome & Introductions

Hilary Procter (MidShropshire Ramblers P3) and David Hardwick (Countryside Recreation Officer) were asked to introduce themselves. David explained his role included coordinating P3 volunteers.

2. Feedback from previous meeting

a. Problem reporting/P3 Groups:

Mick explained the problem reporting process. All issues should be reported either via Customer Services (0345 678 9000), by completing the web report form, or by emailing outdoor.recreation@shropshire.gov.uk Lucy Stanley will then log the issues and pass them to the relevant officer to progress. The question of whether P3 volunteers can directly contact landowners was asked. David Hardwick will look at how this can happen and whether any letter templates can be set up.

b. Shropshire Walking website

Mick Dunn acknowledged there were problems with the site, in particular that you are not able to search by postcode or grid reference. Mick has done work to remove dead links and he has a meeting planned with Shropshire Tourism to discuss further improvements such as the addition of further hotspots on the map. Jim Stabler advised that the long term aim is to move to an interactive map. In the short

term, Mick would like to list all walking related events and improve local walks information on Facebook. Mick is devising a simple downloadable A4 template containing a walk map and instructions.

c. Waymarking/post painting

This was suggested at the last Forum to improve visibility. The maintenance team has agreed with this in principle at certain locations. Mick said he would like well-marked promoted routes in all villages with a leaflet containing a map, walk instructions and link to Travel Shropshire website. Mick advised that he is working on promoting six routes in Shrewsbury using QR codes and a photo trail. Mick asked all to let him know of any suitable walks (written description and photos would be helpful. Mick will show these leaflets at the next meeting.

Action: All to send Mick Dunn local walks information

d. Dog walkers/dog fouling

Mick has made enquiries about this issue but there is no easy answer. Signs will be displayed at Battlefield and Old Canal sites. The issue needs enforcement in rural areas but we have no powers to do this. More information on signs and leaflets is required. A suggestion was made to contact vets to display/distribute information.

e. Parking/Transport

Mick advised all to have a look at the Travel Shropshire website and to link walks to it. Tourism Shropshire website lists pay & display car parks, but SC can't promote non Council car parks/verges/laybys (can only link to them). Informal parking is listed on the Ramblers website for South Shropshire. Mick will approach them to see if they will collate a list for the central area.

Action: Mick asked all to speak to their parish councils and feed back to him

3. Group Updates

Attendees were asked to give a brief update on current work.

Dick Bailey, Much Wenlock WfH & Walkers are Welcome: W4H walks regularly have a good turnout. Walkers are Welcome walking weekend in early September also very successful.

Susan Daykin, Marden Medical Practice: Walks start from the practice and routes are usually decided on the day. The one doctor's referral unfortunately no longer attends.

Barbara Martin, Pontesbury WfH: Typically 25-30 walk attendees with various lengths of walk, some with P3 helpers. Alternative walks run every week.

David Morgan, Longden P3: Group carry out ongoing maintenance and have recently opened up an impassable path. They have no walking maps but can provide written walk descriptions.

Action: Mick to contact David to follow up.

Mike Brooks, Shrewsbury U3A: 2-10mile walks for U3A members with 150 regularly walking once per fortnight. Mr Brooks agreed that a list of village halls and P3 contacts would be useful.

Action: David Hardwick to send P3 contacts to Mike Brooks

Hilary Procter, MidShropshire Ramblers P3: An active group covering five parishes undertaking works such as vegetation clearance. Their details are advertised on two parish council websites in the hope of attracting more volunteers.

Mick Dunn mentioned that at the last Forum meeting there was a discussion about a 'flying P3' group to travel to other areas as required. All agreed that better liaison between P3 groups was required.

Gerry Lawson, Ramblers Association: The RA has published 20 new walks of up to 6 miles. Walks are located within 10 miles of Shrewsbury.

David Hardwick, Shropshire Council: David explained that he works with P3 groups as well as site volunteers and that there are opportunities for P3 volunteers to help with site access clearance. There was a discussion about templates for P3 quarterly reports outlining what work has been done. It was explained that these are really important in capturing volunteer hours and performance monitoring. Jim Stabler explained that volunteers may be asked to do more surveying and record path usage.

Action: Mick and Jim to discuss setting up a simple template form to record this

4. Outdoor Recreation Updates

Jim Stabler gave an update on current/future projects

a. Paths for Communities: A Natural England fund to create new public paths, in particular the creation of an easy access route on the old railway line in Much Wenlock.

Rae Valley Environmental Network (ReaVEN): A project with the aim of dedicating the Pontesbury-Minsterley old railway line as a public path. Jim Stabler confirmed that Shropshire Council will be dedicating its land as public bridleway.

b. Sustainable Transport Fund: Used to upgrade the riverside footpath from Sydney Avenue to Telford Way. Also used for a permissive path created between Hodnet and Marchamley.

c. Other projects: Shropshire Way in the North project finishes in December. Jim is currently writing an HLF bid for the central area incorporating Shrewsbury's heritage and smart phone technology.

d. Visit by Director of Public Health, Professor Rod Thomson: A very successful visit to Pontesbury and Professor Thomson very supportive of WfH and countryside access. Jim is hoping to arrange a visit to Much Wenlock.

5. Key issues/Working Groups

a. Dogs: Target problem areas with signs, letter/poster to vets/parish magazines. Mick asked all to speak to own parish councils and vets. Jim suggested establishing a working group to follow up on this.

b. Parking/Transport: As earlier discussed, Mick to approach John Newnham of the Ramblers about setting up a parking database for the central area.

Action: Mick Dunn asked all to let him know of any local parking provision

c. Field edge paths/Ploughing & cropping: Issue raised by Gerry Lawson on behalf of John Newnham. Mick explained this is an enforcement issue and he will discuss it with Rights of Way colleagues.

d. Events/Festivals: Mick would like to set up a diary on the Shropshire Walking website for next year. Mick asked everyone to let him know the details of any walking events so that he can promote.

e. Shropshire Walking Group Inventory: Mick asked all to send him walking group contact details so that he can list on the Shropshire Walking website.

f. Walking Forum membership: Mick confirmed he has approached Shropshire Tourism and Young Ramblers but had not received a response. Other suggested groups were the LDWA (Gerry Lawson to provide contact). Other suggestions for occasional attendance were Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and Telford Ramblers. There was a discussion about the location of the Forum meeting. All agreed to meet in Shrewsbury with one meeting per year elsewhere to include a walk.

g. Circulation of Information: Jim Stabler explained that a 'Yammer' network had been set up for the Southern region and he would report back to the Forum at the next meeting on how well this worked. Mick advised all that Facebook was working really well as a promotional tool and he reminded all to let him know any event details and feedback/photos so he can promote.

6. Potential Projects

Jim asked for any ideas for potential projects. David Morgan expressed an interest in establishing a permissive path between villages (See 4.b). Jim Stabler confirmed that Natural England will give capital grants to landowners for permissive access so this is a real possibility for a project.

7. Feedback from LAF

Jim Stabler advised that Walking Forum discussions are fed up to the Local Access Forum and that the LAF minutes are available from the Shropshire Council website. Key points from the last meeting are that Natural England no longer wants to manage the National Trails and have recently consulted on future options (Offa's Dyke in Shropshire). Also Natural England is granting open access on all National Nature Reserves (NNRs) with higher rights where possible (Whixall Moss and Stiperstones in Shropshire).

8. AOB

No other business was raised.

9. Date of next meeting

A provisional date of Wednesday 23rd January 2013 was set. Mick Dunn will check room availability and email all Forum members to confirm date of next meeting.