

Minutes 2nd Meeting

Southern Walking Forum

Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms

5 December 2012

Present:

Chris Chillingworth (ChC)	P3 Ludlow
Colin Carson (CC)	HF Holidays & Shrewsbury Hillwalking Club
Dick Ward (DW)	P3 Church Stretton
Don Hale (DH)	Long Mynd Walking
Ian Pearmain (IP)	Walking Co-ordinator, Shropshire Council
John Woolmer (JW)	Walkers are Welcome (Church Stretton)
Keith Pybus (KP)	Shropshire Way Association
Krissi Rochelle (KR)	Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre
Leanne Jones (LJ)	Shropshire Council
Michael Holland (MH)	P3 Ludlow
Pete Atkinson (PA)	Shropshire Council
Phil Sams (PS)	Ludlow 21
Ray Hughes (RH)	Shropshire Council
Rick Summers (RS)	P3 Ludlow & Whitcliffe Common
Stuart Edmunds (SE)	Natural England
Trish Howard (TH)	WfH Church Stretton

Apologies:

Alan Garner	Secret Hills Walking
Graeme Perks	Walkers are Welcome (Ludlow)
Jane Carroll	P3 Bishops Castle
Jim Stabler	Access Development Officer, Shropshire Council
Jodie Griffith	Shropshire Hills AONB
Joy Nisbet	South Shropshire Group of the Ramblers
Julia Walling	Woods for Wellbeing
Mike & Pam Beazley	WfH Ludlow
Peter Carty	National Trust
Peter James	P3 Clun & Ramblers Footpath Secretary
Simon Couter	Natural England
Steven Levers	Clun Walking Group
Sue Jones	Shropshire Area Ramblers

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Everyone introduced themselves.

IP: the numbers attending this meeting and the first meeting in August were similar. Only very few individuals had been to both.

IP had increased the number of invitations: scout & guide contacts, Ludlow NFU and additional walking groups.

CHAIR OF THE FORUM

In the absence of any offers or proposals for a chair of the group, IP has asked KP. There were no objections and KR seconded KP as chair. He has agreed to take on the role for 1 year.

REVIEW OF PROJECTS FROM LAST MEETING MINUTES

Ludlow Shuttle:

New service to start from Ludlow in Spring 2013 for weekends and bank holidays, funded by Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

RH said tenders have now gone out for the running of the service.

PS said the route has now been decided – Ludlow via Clun to Bishops Castle – it won't be going as far as Knighton. It will open up lots of linear walking routes accessible by public transport.

www.travelshropshire.co.uk – up and running.

Walking for Health – remains strong in South Shropshire. Ramblers with Macmillan funding took over support nationally in April 2013.

Walking with Offa – new programme of guided walks in 2013.

Grow with Wyre – good example of a partnership that works well for walking.

Wenlock Walks – leaflets available with set of 5 short (less than 5km) circular walks.

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PROJECTS

This was a chance for members to provide details of projects they are involved with. IP suggested that he would put together an annex to the meeting minutes for logging projects and providing an update on them.

IP

Ludlow Country Walks

MH said that this set of 9 walk leaflets would be published in early 2013. They are all circular walks ranging from 1 mile to 8 miles.

Funding is coming from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

PS was particularly keen to see these when they came out and saw them as a good compliment to the linear walks that will be developed around the Ludlow public transport network.

There was some discussion of the Walkers are Welcome leaflets and other walking leaflets. It is useful to see what else is out there.

Ian reminded the group about www.shropshirewalking.co.uk, which is a good place to look for walks leaflets throughout Shropshire and a good place to make leaflets available.

It is worth noting that the site has become more user friendly, since in the past some people had experienced difficulty in making good use of it.

The value of associating walks with a particular interest was brought up and a number of examples were highlighted:

- RS mentioned the Whitcliffe walks related to geology;
- CC & DH mentioned Long Mynd walks related to geology;

Bishops Castle Railway route

KP mentioned the Bishops Castle Railway route as a prime example of a possible *themed* route. People love walks with a purpose. There are many segments or niches but walking old railways is now a national pastime.

There are a lot of issues to resolve in establishing this route from Craven Arms to Bishops Castle, but the proposal has a lot going for it, such as the interesting story of the line, many railway features still present in the landscape and some sections of the route already useable as footpaths. Furthermore, it is ideal for the casual walker – it is fairly level and difficult to get lost.

Walking with Offa

KP said that this had been paid for by the public purse and a number of pubs around the Shropshire Hills area had essentially received some free marketing. There are now plans to expand the model of setting up waymarked Walking with Offa routes with a published leaflet for other pubs, but there would now be a charge.

Bottles of the new beer Up 'n' Down are also now available – this was launched to pubs in October as part of the Walking with Offa promotion by Hobsons with a contribution from every sale going to the Friends of the Shropshire Hills to benefit walking in the area.

Schools

IP: Christina Anderson had contacted him to suggest greater involvement with primary school children with walking, such as running guided local walks once or twice a year. Early exposure to any sport or activity makes later involvement more likely.

IP: there are quite a few different projects and initiatives ongoing. Often it comes down to the interests of particular teachers.

RH has some involvement with schools usually to do with cycling, but has also been involved with *walking buses* and one-off walking events.

IP and RH are looking to work with Ludlow secondary school to develop a Walk4Life circular route of roughly 1 mile from the school. The idea is to involve pupils in waymarking and possibly improving the route, and then to hold a sponsored walking event in May (Walking month) using the route.

IP / RH

Entry Level Map Reading / Navigation

One of the barriers to many adults going for a walk and enjoying the countryside of South Shropshire. Using funding from the Walking for Wellbeing project [managed by Jodie Griffith at the Shropshire Hills AONB], IP is organising some basic courses in map reading and navigation for adults.

IP / DH

To be run by DH during March 2013. DH has good ideas on building confidence in map-

reading. It is anticipated a couple of courses will be run at the National Trust Carding Mill Valley, although it will be run entirely outdoors should weather permit.

To target the *harder-to-reach* who would benefit most from this course, IP will also consider DH running the course at the Rocksprings Community Centre in Ludlow or Craven Arms Community Centre rather than getting them to Carding Mill.

IP

MEMBERS UPDATES

Slow Travel

PS mentioned the Slow Travel movement championed by Les Lumsden and others. Slow travel emphasises public transport to access walks and encourages involvement with local life and the enjoyment of local pubs and cafés.

PS: there will be some trials in 2013 of linear walks using the Ludlow public transport network, and in particular Saturdays on the new Ludlow to Bishops Castle shuttle from spring.

PS

Walkers are Welcome

Ludlow and Clun are looking into becoming Walkers are Welcome towns, joining Bishops Castle, Church Stretton, Cleobury Mortimer in South Shropshire.

National Trust

DH said that the National Trust (NT) produced a lot of good leaflets for the Carding Mill / Long Mynd area, ranging from walks with themes, short / easy walks and of course longer walks up over the Mynd – all available free. They would like to develop more short & easy routes.

The recent change at the NT has been excellent, with really positive efforts getting more people into the area.

KP suggested drafting a letter of congratulations to Peter Carty and the NT recognising their contribution to health and mental development. AGREED

KP

The following was suggested as a topic for discussion: Is Carding Mill Valley too crowded and should people be encouraged to other places, or do we want to keep the concentration there to leave the other places remote and quiet?

This question was not really discussed, but led on to discussion of car parking facilities:-

Car Parking and Public Transport

IP reminded everyone that the South Shropshire Ramblers website had information about car parking. This was the place to look for this information, although a link might be provided from the Shropshire Walking website in the future.

Apparently there is a lack of car parking at the southern end of the Long Mynd at Wern. This is National Trust land and an excellent place to start walking, but nearby residents have opposed a car park being established there. It was agreed this could be something that the National Trust should look at again and it was felt there would probably be various others who would help and support this.

Although it is a commendable ambition to encourage walkers to ditch their cars and find

other ways to go walking, it needs to be accepted that the majority of walkers drive and will continue to do so and they remain the main source of the economic benefits to the Shropshire.

For school / youth groups and others without access to a car (such as Walking for Health groups), minibuses are often used to enable access to the countryside and the great walking of South Shropshire.

It is important that public transport and car-free walks are promoted. IP recalled that his funding comes from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. It is logical that he be seen to encourage people out of their cars, whether local people walking for work / shopping or visitors using public transport to access walks.

RH mentioned that there will be a car sharing website in the near future – see www.travelshropshire.co.uk/drive/car-sharing.aspx for more details.

HF Holidays

CC said that HF Holidays took over the Long Mynd Hotel on 1st February 2012 on a 5 –year-lease, with an option to buy.

HF Holidays provide a programme of local guided walks for walkers coming on holiday to the hotel. Other walkers and walking groups are still welcome to use the Long Mynd Hotel. Alan Garner (Secret Hills Walking) still has groups that he leads staying at the hotel. HF Holidays is holding its AGM in Shrewsbury in 2013.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

JW said that a Vision Statement needed to be *visionary* and suggested that the one proposed meant very little and was too long-winded.

He suggested that something like “Make the Shropshire Hills the walking centre for the West Midlands” would be more appropriate. There was some discussion of this, including the concern that this didn’t highlight the importance of the RoW (Rights of Way) network to the residents of South Shropshire and their health. Furthermore, this might make the marketing of the Shropshire Hills the focus of the forum, but this is an important function of the Shropshire Hills AONB and there is no point duplicating effort.

JW said that the walking market is incredibly fragmented. It was good to see quite a few different organisation represented at the Forum. There was general agreement that more co-ordination is required. This forum was a start to finding out what else was going on and in ensuring the previous rigid compartmentalisation became a thing of the past.

AOB

Newsletter

Jim Stabler, Access Development Officer, had been building a mailing list of West Midlands walking clubs, societies and groups for some years. KP felt that a newsletter could be the most cost-effective way of reaching walks organisers.

Compiling the newsletter may be beyond the current capacity of council departments.

This could also be useful beyond walking groups to encourage local people to enjoy the countryside, its heritage and walking in it.

Visitor Information Centres (VIC) are not seen as pro-active in promoting walking (eg not replenishing leaflets when they run out) or in possessing personal experience and interest.

A newsletter could go some way to equipping VIC staff better to advise visitors and

residents.

Leisure Centres should also be engaged more.

ACTION ITEM KP offered to put together a first newsletter, so please send him any relevant snippets. Looking ahead some months, he further suggested a theme of *Autumn Colour Walks*.

All / KP

Footpath Addition Clun local enquiry 15th May 2013

KP: in the absence of the Clun members, sketched the background going back several years. He felt the historic case was good. In his capacity as Arvon trustee [owners of The Hurst whose lands accounted for a major section of the path] he had tried to keep Arvon positive and to recognise their debt to the public purse. Local Ramblers had even considered the path might be called the John Osborne Way [the playwright had lived at The Hurst until 1994].

KP sought the approval of the committee in writing to Arvon. It might be an initial example of the Forum flexing its muscles. Approved. ChC pointed out that such a letter would probably have little impact on the decision which would be made entirely on historic precedent, but that there was no harm in doing it anyway.

KP

Public Rights of Way – Policy Updating

Shona Butter (Access Mapping and Enforcement Team Leader, Outdoor Recreation, Shropshire Council) is looking at existing policies relating to how the Public Rights of Way network is managed. This includes how issues like ploughing & cropping or obstructions are dealt with, and how enforcement and maintenance work is prioritised for the network – something discussed at the last Forum meeting.

ACTION ITEM forum members and others to review their areas and identify:

- Routes considered priorities, eg regularly used routes that provide key links to schools or local amenities and any others the community feel should be a priority.
- Main issues / problems relating to the Rights of Way network.

Any other comments would be gratefully received.

It would be very helpful if you could provide *Route Code* when referring to a particular route – these can be found using the mapping on the Council's website - <http://shropshire.gov.uk/maps/default.htm>. If you switch on the Rights of Way map layer, then point and click on the route on the map you should get a box coming up with the *Route Code*. [Note: this feature does not work in Google Chrome, but should work in Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox]

Please email Shona Butter early February with responses to this request:

shona.butter@shropshire.gov.uk

All

Date of Next Meeting

10am – 12noon, Friday 22nd March 2013

Craven Arms Community Centre