

Central Shropshire Walking Forum

Notes of Meeting

2.00pm, Wednesday 20th February 2013

Ludlow Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

Attendees:

Bill Hodges, Shrewsbury Ramblers Association
Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers are Welcome
David Morgan, Longden P3
Geoff Spruson, Marches LDWA & Stiperstones Inn
Hilary Procter, MidShropshire Ramblers P3
Jim Stabler, SC Access Development Officer jim.stabler@shropshire.gov.uk
Lucy Stanley, Support Officer (Notes of meeting) lucy.stanley@shropshire.gov.uk
Mick Dunn, Walking Coordinator mick.dunn@shropshire.gov.uk
Mike Brooks, Shrewsbury U3A
Ped Atkinson, Countryside Recreation Officer ped.atkinson@shropshire.gov.uk
Rob Day, Albrighton WfH
Rob Sharrock, Much Wenlock P3 & Walkers are Welcome
Shona Butter, Mapping & Enforcement Team Leader shona.butter@shropshire.gov.uk
Steve Lowe, Midshropshire Ramblers P3
Tim Parker, Condover/Dorrington P3
Tony Wrighton, Albrighton WfH
Trevor Allison, Shropshire Ramblers

Apologies:

Barbara Martin, Pontesbury WfH
David Hardwick, Countryside Recreation Officer
Les Orrin
Susan Daykin, Marden WfH

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mick asked any new attendees to introduce themselves.

2. Feedback from previous meeting

Longden Walk Maps

Mick Dunn asked David Morgan to email him the written walk instructions.

Action: David Morgan to email walk instruction to mick.dunn@shropshire.gov.uk

Parking

Mick Dunn has started a list of car parks and available parking. He will email this list out for all to add to before the list is passed to Shrewsbury Ramblers to maintain.

Mick asked all to ensure that parking was legal, safe and would not cause any environmental damage.

Action: Mick to email parking list to all

Ploughing and cropping

Mick advised that Shona Butter, Mapping & Enforcement Team Leader, will speak more about this issue at agenda item 5.

Mick asked if anyone wanted to raise any of the issues discussed at the last forum.

Shropshire Walking website

Tim Parker said the Shropshire Walking website needed improvements, particularly with the search facility. Mick Dunn acknowledged there were problems, as the search facility is currently based on the route name, not location. He's working on this. Mick can add walk leaflets to the site if they are sent to him.

Dog fouling

Hilary Proctor raised this issue. Mick advised there was a limited amount we could do as we have no powers of enforcement, and it's an expensive problem to deal with. Mick has displayed posters on one of his walking routes which remained in place for about 2 months, although the problem itself did not improve. Trevor Allison advised that the Council were currently consulting on a single dog control order with the effect of removing dogs from playing fields.

Dog fouling at Haughmond Hill was discussed. Mick advised that a Forestry Commission study showed that removing litter bins and dog bins resulted in less litter on site.

Shona Butter agreed it was a big problem but enforcement was difficult.

Action: Shona to pass on her Environmental Maintenance contact to Mick

3. Group Updates

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

Geoff Sproson, Secretary LDWA: The Marches area has 180 members and organises a programme of challenge (28-100 miles) and social walks (10-14 miles). There are 200 entries for the South Shropshire Circular this weekend. See their website for details: www.marchesgroupldwa.eu Geoff also asked whether there was an active P3 group in Worthen and if a list of P3 groups could be put on the web.

Action: Ped Atkinson to check if there is a Worthen P3 group and discuss with David Hardwick whether the groups can be put on the website

Rob Sharrock, Much Wenlock P3: A small and active group who focus on the central Much Wenlock area. They also carry out monitoring work.

Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers are Welcome (and WfH): Busy with planning walking festival of free morning, afternoon and evening walks to be held first week in July. Also organises regular map and compass reading sessions at the Shortwood Centre, Wellington. Details are on the website: www.wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk Mick advised if anyone else interested in this, he can supply compasses and a presentation. Bob asked for help in distributing his Wrekin postcard walks.

Action: Bob to email jim.stabler@shropshire.gov.uk an electronic version to add to website

Mike Brooks, Shrewsbury U3A: Walking is the most popular activity with over 100 people taking part.

Tim Parker, Condoover & Dorrington P3: Tim asked for advice on the re-occurring problems of ploughing and electric fencing. They will soon be printing leaflets of 12-13 walks. Tim offered to write walks for other areas.

Tony Wrighton, Albrighton P3 & WfH: Problem with crops and ploughing so sent letter to landowners which resulted in 3 positive responses. Now is the right time of year to tackle! 6 walks and maps which have sold over 12000 copies.

Action: Mick to produce a pdf of these walk leaflets

Rob Day, Albrighton WfH: 2 walks on a Wednesday for different abilities finishing at the community centre. The group has around 30 regular walkers.

Bill Hodges, Shrewsbury Ramblers Association: Regular walks on a Tuesday, Thursday, and weekends, some of which include routes from the '20 walks around Shrewsbury' book. The book is to be reprinted as it's selling well.

Steve Lowe & Hilary Proctor, MidShropshire Ramblers P3: A group of 14 (including 4 women) covering a number of parishes in the central area (and helping out elsewhere). Hilary was keen to say that there is lots of work available for women. They have emailed David Hardwick pictures of the group.

David Morgan, Longden P3: The wet weather has stopped work for the last few months. A recent issue has been a landowner removing dog gates the group put in, as well as pasture land being ploughed and paths not reinstated. Shona Butter clarified that we can't insist on dog gates, we can only negotiate. This is the same for replacing stiles with any other types of furniture, such as kissing gates.

4. Outdoor Recreation Updates

Jim Stabler gave an update on the following:

a. Feedback from the Local Access Forum: A key issue was that of properties encroaching on to grass verges (which are part of the highway). A second issue was that the LAF wanted to be more involved in particular planning applications. Jim Stabler is obtaining clarification from Natural England on the LAFs statutory responsibilities.

Hilary Proctor asked where to find the LAF minutes. Jim advised these were included in the link to the agenda.

b. Paths for Communities: Natural England is providing money to upgrade or dedicate public paths but the application process is proving problematic. Jim Stabler is putting in bids for projects in 3 areas – Oswestry loop, Colemere & Brownmoss, and an extension to the Jack Mytton Way.

c. Shropshire Way: Peter Dunhill has finished work in north Shropshire and is now volunteering with Whitchurch Walkers. The route has been upgraded in the south and north and Jim is now planning a project to improve the Shropshire Way in the Shrewsbury area which will also include historic sites, such as the Flax Mill. In the future he hopes to work in north east Shropshire.

Action: Bob Coalbran and Jim Stabler to discuss signing the Shropshire Way in the Wellington area.

David Morgan asked about the Minsterley to Pontesbury old railway line. Jim said Rea Valley Environmental Network (ReaVEN) was putting in a PFC bid and Shropshire Council would be happy to dedicate the route on its land. Jim will give an update at the next forum.

5. Rights of Way discussion

a. Ploughing and cropping: A major problem which will be tackled this year by a letter drop in May targeting repeat offenders. The Ramblers have agreed to inspect routes and Shona asked whether any other groups would be prepared to inspect. Shona advised she would be happy for voluntary groups to send letters but please liaise with her first. Tim Parker said his parish council sends letters and also a thank you when the farmer complies. This has been very effective.

b. Maintenance & Enforcement: Shona Butter clarified the legal situation:

i) Ploughing/cropping: A landowner has 14 days to reinstate a route. See Public Guidance Note 5 (follow the 'Publications' link from www.shropshire.gov.uk/countryside.nsf to access the PGNs)

ii) Electric fencing: An obstruction of the highway enforceable by us.

iii) Adjacent hedge encroachment: Landowner responsible for cutting back any adjacent vegetation (we maintain the surface)

iv) Shropshire Council has a policy of not spraying public paths (there is no legislation preventing landowners spraying public paths)

v) Bulls: See PGN 1, paragraph 16.

Shona advised that the PGNs are currently being updated but any legal information they contain should be up to date. Please ask her if you want clarification on any legal situation.

c. Route priorities: Shona explained that all problems were prioritised based on the nature of the issue, who is reporting the problem and what category of route the issue occurs on (determined by the level of use). If any issues occur on paths which will be used for organised walks/events, please give us as much notice as possible and we will try to resolve. Trevor Allison suggested it would be useful to include a timeframe in any feedback.

How to report problems: You can telephone Customer Services on 0345 678 9000, email us at outdoor.recreation@shropshire.gov.uk or submit an online form by following the 'Outdoor Recreation Feedback' link from our web pages at www.shropshire.gov.uk/countryside.nsf Please include your contact details and as much information as possible about what the problem is and where it occurs. It would be helpful if you could quote the path reference number.

How to find the path reference: You can view public rights of way online via the Council website (www.shropshire.gov.uk). If you scroll down to the bottom of this page, you can click on a button labelled 'Maps'. This will open a new window. In the bottom left corner if you click 'Map layers' you can put a tick in the box to display rights of way. You can then search the map by entering a street or postcode. You are able to navigate around the map by holding down the left mouse button and dragging the map, and you can also zoom in and out. If you click on the line of a public right of way, a box will open which displays further information about the route including its individual route code reference and status.

6. Get Walking Week 4th – 11th May 2013

This is a short walks festival arranged by the Ramblers Association with an online walks diary. Mick intends to register his WfH walks.

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/getwalkingweekhealthwalks>

The 'Britain on Foot' website goes live at the end of February, with the intention of bringing together various national walking campaigns. <http://britainonfoot.co.uk/>

7. Shropshire Walking Groups/Festivals/Events

Mick has entered those he is aware of on the Shropshire Walking website. If anyone would like their event promoted on the Shropshire Walking Facebook site, please email Mick the details and a link to the relevant website.

8. Networking/Social Networking/Newsletter

a. Facebook: This is a good promotion tool but does require maintenance. The Walking in Shropshire Facebook site lists events, walking groups and other links. Mick is happy to include information for groups if you send him the details.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Walking-in-Shropshire-Website/354059134660132>

b. Twitter: Mick thinks it's difficult to use but is useful for sending out an instant message.

Shropshire Walking@OutdoorShrops

c. Shropshire Walking Newsletter: Mick intends to send out twice per year with the first in late April. The idea is to promote walking, festivals, events, etc. Hilary Proctor expressed concern that this was a duplication of information and it was important to identify who the target audience was.

9. Goals for 2013

Mick asked the forum what projects they would like to focus on.

Jim Stabler is currently working on a Walking Pilgrim project based on the Pilgrimage route between Shrewsbury Abbey and Holywell.

Tony Wrighton put forward the issue of clearing cropped paths as a goal for 2013.

Geoff Sproson asked whether we can provide support for the production of leaflets. Mick advised he does have a leaflet template. All agreed that there should be some focus on making promoted/leafleted walks easily walkable.

Tim Parker asked about the availability of furniture. Ped Atkinson confirmed there were no problems with providing this.

Jim Stabler suggested groups may like to put forward suggestions for raising the priority of certain local routes in their areas, such as routes to schools.

10. AOB

Trevor Allison advised that there was a new Shuttle bus for the Shropshire Hills this year.

Rob Sharrock asked whether legal order notices could be more widely advertised. Action: Mick Dunn to ask Shona Butter whether they can be displayed on the website

Bill Hodges asked all to provide evidence of use of Earl's Hill, Pontesbury, in support of a formal application to record the route. If you have any relevant evidence, please send it to Lucy.McFarlane@shropshire.gov.uk

Jim Stabler asked all to reserve the 28th July in their diaries as International Bog Day. There is a programme of walks in the Whixall area.

11. Date of next meeting

A provisional date of Wednesday 22nd May 2013 was set. Mick Dunn will check room availability and email all forum members to confirm details of next meeting.