

Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board Acting as the Local Access Forum for Shropshire

Constitution

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board acts as the Local Access Forum for Shropshire but broadens the role of this to cover a wider remit in response to current priorities in Shropshire.

The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 were published by the Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and came into force on the 19 March 2007. Local Access Forums are required (by section 94 of the CROW Act) to "have regard" to this Guidance when carrying out their functions. The constitution for the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board will incorporate these regulations as part of this constitution.

Title

1. The Forum shall be known as the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board (the Board).

Geographical Coverage

2. The area covered by the Board is the administrative county of Shropshire, although links will be made across administrative boundaries where this is felt to be advantageous.

Role and Responsibility

3. The primary purpose of the Board is to provide advice to the following bodies:
 - the appointing local authority being Shropshire Council
 - Parish and Town Councils
 - Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership
 - the Secretary of State
 - Natural England
 - Forestry Commission
 - Historic England
 - Sport England

Although these are the statutory bodies, the Board will also consider giving advice to other individuals or organisations if it was thought to be beneficial.

4. The Board will give advice to these bodies on:

- how to improve public access in Shropshire (whether on foot, horse, cycle, canoe, mechanically propelled vehicle or any lawful means) for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.
- public access in Shropshire for any other lawful purpose which includes ‘functional’ access to services and amenities (whether on foot, horse, cycle, canoe or by any means other than mechanically propelled vehicle).

The Board will also give advice on:

- Development and promotion of the Outdoor Economy in Shropshire
- Promotion of the great outdoors for health and wellbeing
- The importance of access to and within outdoor greenspace for community wellbeing and biodiversity
- The natural capital of the Rights of Way network and publically accessible greenspace

The advice from the Board will be independent, constructive, relative, inclusive, incisive and informed. The advice will take account of a broad range of balanced local interests and take account of social, economic and environmental concerns.

The Board will work to:-

- Adopt a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of access, outdoor economy, health and wellbeing and natural capital which reflects local circumstances and the needs of all sections of society.
- Operate within the requirements of the law and locally-set conditions of appointment.
- Provide advice on issues of principle and good practice which is consistent with national guidance.

In carrying out these functions the Board will have regard to:

- The needs of integrated land management, and of environmental, social, economic and educational interests
- The desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area, including flora, fauna and geological and physiological features
- Guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- Proper liaison with neighbouring authorities

5. As Board members are volunteers and give their expertise and experience freely it is recognised that there is a limit to the amount of time members can dedicate to the work of the Board. The Board will prioritise their time by identifying issues which are of special interest or relevance to the area in relation to access and outdoor recreation, which can then be actioned by specific action groups who are focused on these specific activities. These will include:-

- Development of recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people
- Development of a more financially viable model for management of outdoor space and improvements to the Rights of Way network
- Increasing awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation for health, the local economy and the environment
- Influencing and advising other departments, organisations and local and national policy
- Community engagement and volunteering
- Strategic improvements to the rights of way network
- Implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside

Membership of the Board

6. The role of Board members is to attend Board meetings and to contribute constructively to the role of the Board by:
 - Sharing (and developing) experience, knowledge and skills and the views of any organisation/ network they represent
 - Valuing the contribution of other members, respecting minority views, engaging in constructive debate and seeking consensus where possible
 - Adopting an inclusive approach, which reflects local circumstances and the needs of all sections of society
 - Engaging with the people that they represent (and others) to explain and promote the work of the Board, changing the operation of that organisation or network where appropriate to reflect the advice given
7. The membership will consist of no more than 22 members including:-
 - A Chair and Vice-Chair
 - A maximum of 2 elected Councillors (or a maximum of 3 if there are 17 or more other members)
8. Board members will represent:
 - Users of local rights of way or open access land (e.g. walkers, horse riders, cyclists, carriage drivers and motorised users)
 - Owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way subsist
 - Any other interests relevant to the area which could include; nature or land conservation, heritage, health and well-being, tourism and active recreation, local community or minority interests

Preference will be given to those people who represent organisations or networks that have a wide range of experience and knowledge on a cross section of local interests. Membership

of the Board will be balanced to avoid dominance by a single interest group or coalition of like interests.

9. The Board will maintain a reasonable balance between the representative groups.
10. Members of the Board will be appointed by Shropshire Council according to the selection criteria which assess whether candidates have the authority to represent organisations or networks and have sufficient relative experience to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution.
11. Before appointment members will be asked to confirm:
 - Their ability to represent the categories mentioned above, their position within any organisations/ networks they are representing and the willingness of those organisations/ networks to contribute and respond to advice from the Board
 - Their support of the positive purpose of the Board
 - Commitment to working within the constitution and to achieving the aims of the Board through constructive working with other members
 - That they are able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings, progress the outcomes of the Board meetings, attend training and to network with a wide range of interests outside meetings
12. Membership of the Board will be for a term of up to 2 years save that:
 - a) At the end of the relevant period any member can be re-appointed
 - b) Any member who does not attend for a period of 1 year without permission may be removed from the Board by the appointing authority
 - c) The Chair in consultation with the Vice-Chair shall be able to recommend to the appointing authority to suspend any Member who is judged to have brought the Board into disrepute.
 - d) De-selection of any member so suspended shall only be exercised following a full vote at the next meeting.
 - e) Should a member of the Board subsequently become a member of a local authority they must inform the Secretary and will be required to step down if the quota of 2 elected councillors' has been filled.
13. The Board shall elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from within their membership who should be nominated and seconded.
 - a) If there is more than one nomination the election will take place by way of a secret ballot
 - b) Members present at the meeting will have one vote each and the candidate receiving the most votes will be appointed
 - c) The Chair and Vice-Chair will be drawn from different representative groups
 - d) The term of office for Chair and Vice-Chair should not be for more than two years subject to an annual re-appointment

- e) Members of the appointing authorities should not put themselves forward for either Chair or Vice-Chair
14. Meetings should consist of a quorum of eight Board members including at least one member from each of the representative groups. The Chair may suspend any meeting should this quorum not be reached.
15. In the event that neither the Chair nor Vice-Chair is available for a meeting then a Chair should be elected from the assembled members for that meeting only.
16. Each Member of the Board will have one vote on any issues requiring a decision, which will be by a show of hands. The Chair is to have the casting vote should the need arise.
17. Members are required to disclose any personal interest they may have in a matter to be discussed by the Board. Members with a personal interest should not necessarily be excluded from discussion or voting because such members may have a useful contribution to make to the Board's deliberations as long as the nature of the interest is made known to the Board, and recorded as such in the minutes. It will be for the Chair to decide, after consultation with members, if that personal interest is prejudicial to the Board's deliberations on that matter.

Action Groups

18. The Board may appoint members to action groups to delivery activity prioritised by the Board. These may be practical actions or to consider any issue within the Board remit. The groups shall:
- Be made up of individuals relevant to the delivery of that activity, with help from the appointing authority where appropriate and preferably a member of the Board to feedback to the Board as delivery progresses.
 - Make recommendations to the Board on specific issues.

Administration

19. Secretariat support will be provided by an officer of the appointing authority.
20. Meetings will be held at least twice a year and more frequently where necessary.
21. Meeting agendas will be agreed between the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Secretary following consultation with relevant officers where necessary.
22. Shropshire Councils normal procedure for advertising meetings will be adopted.
23. Agendas, papers and minutes of the meetings will be available to the public.
24. The Chair may invite observers to the meeting when appropriate.

25. Observers will be able to contribute to the proceedings at the discretion of the Chair.

26. Participation of the public:

- Meetings to be fully open to the public
- Prior notice should be given by members of the public who wish to ask a question, make a statement, or present a petition in line with the Councils public question time procedure
- Public questions will be taken at the relevant point on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair

27. The appointing authority will have the right to review the chairing and membership of the Board on an annual basis if necessary.

28. The Board shall prepare an annual report on the discharge of its functions.

29. The annual report will be published by the Board's appointing authority.

30. These rules can be amended by the Board should the need arise subject to the agreement of the appointing authority.