



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

Responsible Officer Nigel McDonald, Sustainable Tourism Officer
e-mail: nigel.mcdonald@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254744

Summary

This paper sets out the proposed vision, themes and actions for the new Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the draft material provided.

Background

The Partnership held a workshop on the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy at its July meeting. This has been followed by a series of stakeholder meetings, and material from these is being drawn together in the new strategy. This will be submitted in December with our reapplication for the Europarc Federation Sustainable Tourism Charter.

List of Background Papers Paper for 20 th July meeting of the AONB Partnership on Sustainable tourism
Human Rights Act Appraisal The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
Environmental Appraisal The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
Risk Management Appraisal Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices Appendix 1 Draft vision, themes and actions for the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Appendix 1 Draft vision, themes and actions for the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The vision is adapted slightly from that in the previous strategy:

VISION: The Shropshire Hills is a nationally recognised destination for sustainable tourism, valued for its outstanding landscape, its visitor experiences providing enjoyment, health and wellbeing for all, and its positive contribution to livelihoods and communities in Shropshire.

Strategic themes

The following themes have been drawn from consultation with our partners and stakeholders, and from higher level strategic priorities:

- i. **Setting an ambitious sustainable vision for tourism and engaging people with this.**
- ii. **Improving provision of sustainable tourism services which draw on the area's special qualities.**
- iii. **Supporting environmental practices and behaviours by businesses and visitors.**
- iv. **Managing the effects of localised visitor pressure, mitigating impacts and sharing economic benefit by promoting visitor activity across the area.**
- v. **Co-ordinating and adding value to sustainable tourism delivery.**

Actions

The following actions set out the priorities for the next five years under each theme. Note that actions are for a full range of potential partners, not just the National Landscape team. Actions will be prioritised, their delivery partners identified, and costed where appropriate.

Setting an ambitious sustainable vision for tourism and engaging people with this

Through wider activity linked to the National Landscape, seek to protect and restore the Shropshire Hills landscape, prevent inappropriate development, and support nature recovery and regenerative farming and land use.

Keep sustainable tourism prominent within the area's tourism sector and foster a sense of shared environmental responsibility among both businesses and visitors:

- Develop a visible way for businesses to adopt and promote sustainable tourism principles and be recognised for their actions.
- Promote and improve existing channels for people to give back to the area, e.g. through the AONB Trust and its Conservation Fund, and consider future specific appeals.

Maintain partnerships and networks for sustainable tourism – with tourism businesses, with countryside site providers, and with communities.

- Use events and networks to share sustainability ideas and practices.
- Engage the creative sector and outdoor activity providers in sustainable tourism principles and practices.

Improving provision of sustainable tourism services which draw on the area's special qualities

Prioritise and seek a new generation of investment in infrastructure for active travel and recreational walking and cycling (including both capital improvements and ongoing maintenance).

Support the promotion of the area as a destination for walking and cycling, developing routes and promotional activities.

Foster a local food culture and farmers benefiting from tourism, supporting the shift to regenerative farming.

- Support local food suppliers, retailers and hospitality businesses that produce, champion, and supply low carbon, wildlife and soil-friendly, low waste, local foods.
- Support the development and promotion of local food producers, suppliers, networks and products. With Shropshire Good Food Partnership and other partners, promote local food and drink to visitors from local producers, suppliers, retailers, and hospitality businesses.

Be a more inclusive and welcoming destination, reaching new audiences, supported by the National Landscapes rebrand, and improve provision for those with special needs and under-served groups.

Coordinate and maintain high-quality and valuable visitor information and promotion on different opportunities and how to enjoy the Shropshire Hills including inspiring and engaging interpretation.

- Work with businesses, local tourism groups, trusts, charities, community groups, attractions, and visitor information centres to provide content and information about the National Landscape for visitors.
- Promote visitor information services and support visitor facing staff, businesses, and volunteers as ambassadors for the area.
- Produce or support the production of an area map sheet and/or other navigational information for visitors.
- Provide accurate, authoritative, useful, and inspiring information directly to our partners and through the Shropshire Hills National Landscape website, and appropriate social media.
- Develop walking and cycling guides and promotional media to help visitors explore the area on foot and by bicycle.
- Support the production of guides and activities by others that fit these purposes.

Supporting environmental practices and behaviours by businesses and visitors

Set a high aspiration on net zero compatible travel behaviour – including transport habits and choices to reduce travel and lower car use, and through use of public transport and active means of travel.

- Champion visits to and within the area by public transport, where possible providing specific services and activities that facilitate and promote this.

- Develop a closer relationship with service providers to promote leisure trips, and activities where public transport can be a means of accessing our landscape.
- Design service specific itineraries and products to promote visiting and exploring on foot and by bike.
- Continue to manage and provide the Long Mynd and Stiperstones Shuttle Bus.
- Support the work of others in this area and share good practice.

Use the qualities of the area and its culture to associate the Shropshire Hills as somewhere to have a sustainable holiday/visit – e.g. a change of pace, physically active, healthy and low car miles with a locally distinctive, authentic experience.

- Through information and experiences, seek ways for visits to the Shropshire Hills to help people become more sustainable and shift behaviours more generally.
- Improve opportunities for people to develop their emotional connection to nature through nature-focused activity.
- Use dark skies as a powerful nature experience and a motivator for improved sustainability on lighting.

Promote greener tourism business practice, including net zero and other environmental issues.

- Work with local tourism organisations to recognise, support, and promote best practice in businesses that reduces their impact on the environment and climate, and supports nature recovery.
- Help to ensure environmental advice (such as through Climate Action Partnerships) is reaching businesses.

Managing the effects of localised visitor pressure, mitigating impacts and sharing economic benefit by promoting visitor activity across the area.

Support countryside site providers to manage pressurised sites through on the ground repairs, information and changing patterns of use and behaviour.

De-emphasise key honeypots through promotion and signposting to alternative locations.

- In agreement with landowners and management bodies, work to actively promote alternative locations.
- Maintain web and print media designed to help visitors navigate, find, and be inspired by our iconic landscape in ways that safeguard its future. Annually producing a visitor map to help them explore the area.
- Highlight places of interest away from the best-known places, providing or promoting visitor information on how to get to them, what to expect, their qualities, facilities, and accessibility.

Spread visits across the area, through the day and through the seasons, reducing pressure on honeypot sites at key times of the year.

- Emphasise the promotion of less known locations and less visited places, celebrating the diversity of the landscape and its characterful historic market towns.

- Work with partners to coordinate and promote environmentally positive tourism activities and messages through printed media, media campaigns, websites, and social media.
- Actively promote visitor experiences that take place at off-peak times and during less busy periods.

Support and promote year-round events and activities. To encourage seasonal visits and spend we will support and promote activities and events, led by the community, partner organisations, volunteer groups and attractions that celebrate the landscape, heritage, and culture of the area. Working with partners:

- Support the development and promotion of year-round events and activities through print, digital and social media.

Co-ordinating and adding value to sustainable tourism delivery

Work in partnership at a county and local level, recognition and involvement. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape covers a quarter of Shropshire and significantly contributes to the county's offer and economic prosperity. We will:

- Work at a strategic level, as a Destination Organisation, contributing to the work of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership.
- Support the delivery of the County Destination Management Plan.
- Support and inform key strategic partners such as Visit Shropshire, Visit Telford, Visit Shropshire Hills and Destination Ludlow Partnership.
- Work at a community level to provide advice, support, and guidance, to groups, organisations, and businesses.

Integrate promotion with county level activity with the Shropshire Hills as part of Shropshire's visitor offer, and tourism structures.

Boost capacity for action by connecting sustainable tourism work to wider initiatives e.g. the National Landscape Partnership and Management Plan, the new Engagement Ranger post, plus partner activity on nature recovery, climate change work, farming transition, etc.

Establish a programme to monitor some key tourism metrics on which data are available and which are relevant to the strategy's objectives.

Make use of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism by learning from other areas, sharing what we do well, and being a visible sustainable tourism champion.