

## Southern Walking Forum Minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting

The Greene Room, Wistanstow Village Hall, Craven Arms

**10 am – 2.30 pm Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

**Attendees:** Sue Jones (*Ramblers*), Helen d’Albert (*Shropshire Council*), Clare Fildes (*Shropshire Council*), Keith Pybus (*Shropshire Way Assoc.*), Chris Chillingworth (*Ludlow P3 & WFH*), Val Simpson (*Cleobury Mortimer WAW and CCL tourism*), Joy Howells (*Stiperstones and Corndon Hill County LPS*), Nigel McDonald (*Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership*), Paul Butter (*Shropshire Council*), Gill Mortimer (*South Shropshire Ramblers and WAW*), Peter James (*Walking group and Clun P3*), Mike Beazley (*WFH Ludlow and HF Holidays, and D of E*), Marion Law (*Ramblers area secretary/ Rail Rambles*), Dick Bailey (*WAW Much Wenlock*), Helen Beresford (*Shropshire Council*), Catherine Collier (*Promotions Manager Discovery Centre Craven Arms- Grow Cook Share*).

**Apologies:** Ted Laidlar, Michael Holland, Rick Summers, Kim Skinner, Les Lumsdon, Alison Caffyn, Charles Edwards, Colin Carson, Trish Howard, Merle Lippit, Joy Nisbet, Steve Levers.

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| Welcome and introductions  |  |
| Minutes of last (minuted) meeting – agreed   |  |
| <p><b>Joy Howells- Overview of the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS).</b></p> <p>This LPS is one of over 70 areas across the country funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund because of their distinctive landscape character. It is a 5 year programme, with five members of staff based in Chirbury, and is managed by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership. The team are currently coming to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the scheme.</p> <p>The Scheme is cross border and Joy distributed some copies of the new general leaflet, which includes a map of the area covered.</p> <p>The main LPS outcomes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserving and enhancing special landscape of area</li> <li>• Involving local people,</li> <li>• Improving access to landscape</li> <li>• Improving skills and learning.</li> </ul> <p>The Scheme is delivering 15 projects under four key themes. The most applicable activities for the Walking Forum are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to better link sites, access, and interpretation.</li> <li>• Training to improve access for all.</li> <li>• Support for Bishop’s Castle Walking Festival through the 5 years of</li> </ul> |  |

the scheme, including financial support, promotion and walk leader training The Walking Festival has been extended to 3 weeks this year – from 1<sup>st</sup> May- 25<sup>th</sup> May. There are a number of themed walks within the LPS as part of the festival programme.

- Three promoted routes focused on Local businesses, Heritage and Landscape. Alison Caffyn is leading on this and is looking at the potential to include cycling, riding, and walking.
- Guided walks, for example Dawn Chorus walk.
- Circular walks around Pontesbury and Minsterley; developed with help from Shropshire Council who provided some funding for the leaflets and interpretation panels. These can be found on [www.shropshirewalking.co.uk](http://www.shropshirewalking.co.uk)

For more information about the LPS, please go to:  
<http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/>

K.P. mentioned that there could be potential links between the mines and WW1 and the Battle of Waterloo.  
V.S. mentioned potential links with the Wyre Forest project and distributed leaflets.

#### **Keith Pybus – Overview of Southern Shropshire Walking Forum initiatives and successes**

(Please refer to the sheet K.P. put together in appendix 1, for full details.)

The Southern Shropshire Walking Forum has been running since August 2012. The key objective was to promote walking, shifting from a county-wide forum to three area- based Fora has given a sharper focus and better local decision making.

Keith gave examples of some of the good work achieved by the group since its formation, underlining that the examples given were not the complete list. He highlighted the importance of establishing and nurturing allies to help build the facts, background and stories for the WW1 walks. These walks have fed into the National commemorations.

## Clare Fildes – Shropshire Outdoor Partnership Business Plan

Clare provided an update about the team and funding situation.  
( Please see Clare’s presentation – appendix 2)

Clare explained that the Public Sector funding cuts will impact on what the council can deliver in the future. The aim is for Shropshire Council to commission all services, with only 150 staff employed by the council and all departments are being asked to make significant savings. The Shropshire Outdoor Partnership Team are therefore having to focus activity to statutory delivery, including volunteer development where appropriate, and income generation. The maintenance team are continuing to grow their contracting work, which is bringing in money and enabling Shropshire to retain this team- (nationally there are many areas that have lost their Public ROW maintenance teams). The Parks and Greenspace Team are also looking at income generation and the aim for Severn Valley Country Park is to be cost neutral in the future. It is not known if the Public Health funding will continue- it is committed for the next year but not after that. In terms of the Government Agenda there is good recognition of the physical and mental health benefits of the outdoors and health and activity are high priorities nationally.

Clare is focusing on developing externally funded projects over the next few months.

What does this mean for the Forum? ... It means that there needs to be careful thought about future priorities and realism about what the Outdoor Partnerships Team can realistically achieve.

M.B. mentioned the consultation about Shropshire Council Budget proposals is on the Council website- if people wish to comment.

G.M. asked does the council recognise the importance of public ROW and the economic importance for the county. P.B. felt that the answer was no. Nigel McDonald pointed out there was an very interesting survey that was carried out by Natural England which looked at the economic benefits of the outdoors:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/378737/mene-report-june-aug-2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378737/mene-report-june-aug-2014.pdf)

Current activities:

- Volunteer development – new branding is being created which will hopefully give people a more ‘family feel’ regarding volunteering, and Clare is looking into external funding to support this.
- The Shropshire walking and riding websites are being replaced by a new website, which will include volunteer pages, walking, cycling and horse riding. It will be set up independently and have better search mechanisms and a better map based way of finding sites and routes.

Clare will send out a pro forma to help people as a starting point for writing up a case study and Hd’A will circulate to the group.

Clare Fildes highlighted the need for feedback regarding walks and footpaths and asked for case studies to show this. So she asked if anyone has nice examples to show how improvements to ROW and Countryside spaces etc. have helped their local community or local economy to please send these in to her as these will really help to show the importance and value of this work.

K.P offered to talk to the Holiday Property Bond to gain some feedback regarding guided walks and the economic benefits etc. He also mentioned that the walks he has done to the various County Homes recently and has got/ can get information that can be used to help with this, such as feedback from the property owners about the positive benefits of these recent guided walks.

P.J. – Peter mentioned the Walking in Shropshire, December 2005 : A Niche Market Report Prepared by Shropshire Tourism Research Unit, which had some useful figures on economic benefit. (appendix 3)

K.P. asked if there was a date for submissions / contributions for case studies? Anytime, although the sooner the better.

K.P. to liaise with the Solihull Path Finders- K.P. has been working with this group to help them with their plans to do a series of sections of the Shropshire way long distance footpath. The group wants to celebrate on the completion of this and this would make a good case study as has helped boost local economy e.g. hotel meal and accommodation.

K.P also highlighted case studies could be done around the media stories, e.g. the recent ones of broadcasts on Radio Shropshire, with Julia Bradbury, Countryfile.

Helen d'A mentioned that we have had two recent broadcasts on Radio Shropshire, both of have had positive results- for walkers and interest in volunteering walk leading opportunities.

C.F. said just need a few lines and a quote and figures and anecdotes and maybe a few photos would be ideal.

Other potential examples given by members of the Forum for case studies were: Spring Gathering WAW, Walking Festivals (is there some national data that would help to support this? does B.C. walking festival have a satisfaction survey?). Case studies are also a good way of recognising the value and acknowledging the work done by Volunteers.

C.F. fed back that Mark Blount is looking at getting some new People Counters- and will be testing these soon. They are based on taking a film of people's feet and can tell if it is a dog, child, adult or cat for example! And also defines how many there are going in each direction. These are going to be used in parks and other sites.

V.S. mentioned about 'Forest Pig' a Shropshire business (Wyre Forest) which was recently featured on Countryfile.

Val Simpson – **Walkers are Welcome** (WaW)

Val chairs the Shropshire Hills WaW group. This started with five WaW towns and now have a group of eight (with two other towns in Shropshire also WaW- this makes a total of ten WaW towns in the county).

Val explained they meet as a group of WAW towns to share and learn about each other and encourage promotion. They move the meetings round the county with different WaW locations hosting. At the last meeting they met at the pub to network, enjoyed a town walk and then got down to business with the formal part of the meeting and wrote a serious critique for national WaW. Val highlighted the national standards that WaW towns have to adhere to satisfy the WaW national criteria. One of the criteria that the WaW have to achieve is to maintain footpaths. Val underlined that the WaW are doing some fantastic work locally and are using volunteer resources to achieve this. Val pointed out that at today's Forum meeting there were in fact three WaW rep's present.

Val reported the Spring Gathering in Cleobury was a very successful cross border event. Many WaW towns run walking festivals or walk events. Promotional postcards are coming out at the end of January publicising the walking festivals across the Shropshire hills. Val showed the group a copy. Ironbridge has its own small advertising postcard which has just come out. Each local WaW are having a 1,000 to distribute.

WaW were asked to produce a banner – a little square to make up a quilt, showing the range of WaW towns and this was exhibited at Chepstow WaW national conference. Following the national conference- our WaW group was asked 'As you are so effective, why not put in a bid for the National Conference?' Val explained the difficulties with this is that the WAW group have no venue of a suitable size within a WAW town and do not have the resources to host it currently, or the capacity to organise this with solely the WaW members. The option of Ludlow Racecourse as a possible venue if this to be considered was raised. C.F. mentioned to the group that this could possibly be picked up as part of the Irresistible Offa project in the new programme. It could be a lovely way of promising value of walking to local businesses.

Ludlow WaW launch. V.S. reported that Ludlow WaW had approached their launch by inviting all the businesses that might benefit from WaW to attend. 50 + businesses attended and there was lots of discussion and networking as a result.

P.J. asked to what extent the WaW group meetings links had been extended to Clun WaW, and V.S. reported that Clun had been invited.

M.L. voiced that WaW is very appealing to a lot of people and other walk initiatives. She pointed out the absolute necessity by the Council of keeping footpaths open. She explained that all Ramblers are encouraged near to the elections to contact all the Council leaders to remind them of the importance

C.F / H.d'A

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| <p>of keeping F.P's open.</p> <p>C.Ch. commented he has emailed some comments to Hd'A (Helen to circulate these and those from other members unable to attend the meeting) relating to Charles Edwards comments which were circulated prior to the meeting as Charles unable to attend today. Chris explained that he and Michael replaced discs on Ludlow – Clee hill section. Members mentioned that there are still some old ones on there and there is no route in Ludlow itself.</p> <p>P.J. mentioned that he originally waymarked the whole of the Shropshire way where there were no waymarks. Route was recreated with Jim Stabler further to this.</p> <p>WaW accreditation – part of this is to show evidence that footpaths are being maintained.</p> <p>N.McD. Shropshire way – there are still publications out there with the old route on and there is a long time lag between OS updating and ROW definitive map computer version etc.</p> <p>K.P. asked can we have a definite date / time when the OS updated? It was mentioned by a member of the group that anyone/ members of the public can inform OS.</p> <p>Clare Fildes is putting together an updated WaW leaflet for Shropshire</p> |  |
| <p><b>Peter James: Cresswell House Clun Plaque</b></p> <p>P.J. raised the issue of getting a Blue Plaque attached to Cresswell House in Clun to commemorate its connections with Old Bill, Captain Bruce Bainsfather (the WW1 artist) and the progress made with this. K.P. spoke with the owner of the property who was very enthusiastic, but preferred the application to come from an outsider. K.P. reported Mark to Watby to apply. It is a grade 2 listed property, which may have implications for the process.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Helen d'Albert: Distribution and promotion of walking leaflets</b></p> <p>Helen briefly outlined the reasons for raising this and that there was not going to be the time available to discuss this important topic in the detail it requires. Therefore Helen suggested that members email Helen with ideas of how to distribute printed leaflets and we put it on the agenda for the next meeting.</p> <p>The issue was briefly discussed:<br/> Hd'A explained that we have just undertaken a stocktake of all the walking leaflets we have in stock at Shirehall and are now looking at how to best distribute these around the county.<br/> K.P. suggested that it would be good to have leaflets available to distribute to his walkers on the guided walks. M.L. explained that the issue was raised initially as a result of concerns raised by Cheryl Johnson from the Ramblers that V.I.C's were often not up to date with programmes, and the need to therefore work out how we distribute leaflets. Hd'A understood that sometimes there are not programmes such as rail rambles available simply</p>  |  |

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| <p>because they have been used up already and not had any more to replace them.</p> <p>Mention made about the cuts in V.I.C's.</p> <p>All encouraged to (as some have done today) bring any leaflets to distribute at the Forum meetings. Copies of WW1 walks left on table at the meeting along with WFH and other leaflets from Members for all to take as wished and distribute accordingly.</p> <p>K.P. mentioned the idea of potentially pooling resources and producing a collaborative walk information poster?</p> |  |
| <p>AOB – Date of next meeting to be confirmed – but agreed a meeting required soon to follow up on the work carried out in the afternoon workshops and the results and action needed further to this. Helen to circulate meeting date in due course- anticipated being in February.</p>  |  |

The afternoon session 12.30- 2.30pm focused on a Review of the Forums progress to date, and its future priorities.

| <b>Time</b> | <b>Agenda item</b>   |
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| 12.30       | Welcome- Keith   |
|             | Presentation- Clare  |
| 1.00        | Workshops  |
| 1.30        | Change groups  |
| 1.40        | Change groups  |
| 1.50        | Allocate priorities  |
| 2.00        | <p>Agreement of priorities. Discussion about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How Forum can help deliver priorities</li> <li>• Forum membership</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul> |
| 2.30        | Finish   |

Please note due to time constraints there was not time to allocate and discuss delivery of the priorities. The top 3 priorities that the group aim to focus on were established by the group during the afternoon workshop. Details of these have been typed up by C.F. and are to be circulated with the minutes of this meeting (appendix 4).

The discussions about delivery of these priorities will be on the agenda at the next meeting which will be organised for next month- details to follow in due course.