

Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Volunteer Development Plan- Draft

March 2015

1.0 Introduction

The Outdoor Partnerships Team was formed following a review of the Outdoor Recreation Service in 2013/14. It is part of Shropshire Council. The aim of the service is to provide a **'Happy, Healthy, Green, more Active Shropshire'**.

The team consists of:

- Rights of Way- maintenance, including Parish Paths Partnerships
- Parks and Countryside- habitat management and maintenance, including Countryside Wardens and Greenspace volunteers
- Rights of Way Mapping and Enforcement
- Development Team- including Walking for Health and the Shropshire Wild Team

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership is also hosted by Shropshire Council through Outdoor Partnerships but operates under its own identity.

In 2014/15 the team has been partially funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and Public Health.

Priorities

The Outdoor Partnership Teams priorities are to;

- Improve people's **health and wellbeing**
- Support **local communities**, the **local environment** and **tourism economy**

Through the management and development of recreational access in Shropshire **via the Public Rights of Way network, Countryside Parks and Sites, green spaces and play areas and Open Access land.**

Volunteers are vital to achieve a 'Happy, Healthy, Green, more Active Shropshire.' Whether leading health walks, contributing to a Parish Path Partnership group, or helping improve our Countryside sites, volunteers are making a real difference to their local environments and people's health by allowing everyone to access paths and quality environments where they live.

This paper analyses the current volunteering offer of the service and makes recommendations for the development of volunteering opportunities, based on consultation with current volunteers and staff involved with volunteer co-ordination. The aim of this plan is to develop a comprehensive approach to outdoor active volunteering recognising that volunteers are vital to achieve a 'Happy, Healthy, Green, more Active Shropshire'.

2.0 Current situation

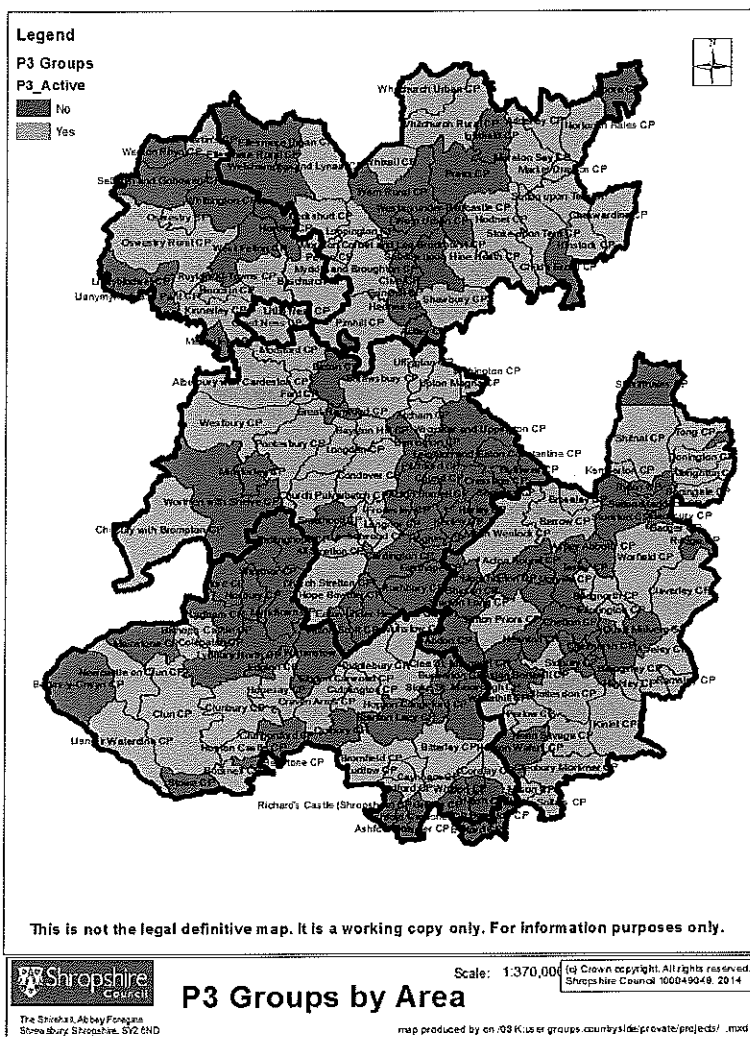
The service currently offers a range of volunteering opportunities:

2.1 Parish Paths Partnerships (P3)

The Parish Paths Partnership initiative was introduced to Shropshire over 20 years ago. The P3 groups and individuals called Parish Paths Wardens work on the maintenance and development of public Rights of Way, usually within a single Parish. P3 groups sign an agreement with Shropshire Council and are provided with equipment, training and insurance, along with a comprehensive manual. Most groups link into their local Parish Councils.

There are now 58 groups (and 29 Parish Paths Wardens) across the county, co-ordinated as part of their role by four full-time Area Officer posts. The distribution of the groups is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1- Map of P3 groups in Shropshire 2014/15



2.2 Countryside Sites, Parks and Greenspace Volunteers

There are a range of active volunteers and 'Friends of' groups associated with the Countryside Sites, Parks and Greenspaces. These have developed organically and the groups vary from formally constituted groups to individuals working on single sites. Table 1 shows the range of groups involving site based volunteers. There are almost 300 volunteers listed as part of these groups, although some work on more than one site.

Table 1- Countryside Sites, Parks and Greenspace volunteer groups

Site	Location
Abney Avenue Village Park	Albrighton
Birchmeadow Park	Broseley
Ifton Meadows Local Nature Reserve	St Martins
Tollgate Road play area, Ludlow	Ludlow
Arundel Close, Ruyton XI Towns	Ruyton XI Towns
Bridge Inn Field	Ruyton XI Towns
Brown Moss Countryside Heritage Site	Nr Whitchurch
Colemere Countryside Heritage Site	Ellesmere
Corbet Wood Countryside Heritage Site	Grinshill
Hodnet	Hodnet
Merrington Green	Shrewsbury
Nesscliffe / The Cliffe	Nesscliffe
Snailbeach Mine	Snailbeach
Walkmill Meadows	Market Drayton
Whitchurch Waterway Country Park	Whitchurch
Whitchurch Waterway Country Park (Greenfields)	Whitchurch
Wollerton	Wollerton
Bog Mine and visitor centre	Snailbeach
Donington and Albrighton LNR	Albrighton
Lyth Hill Countryside Site	Bayston Hill
Rectory Wood & Field	Church Stretton
Severn Valley Country Park	Alveley
Stanmore Camp	Bridgnorth
Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Area	Llanymynech
Broadlands Way	Oswestry
Bryn y Castell, Gobowen	Gobowen
Eaton Field & Pond	Oswestry
Henley Wood & Meadow	Oswestry
Linear Walk	Oswestry
Llwyn Coppice	Oswestry
Old Mopsis Community Orchard	Morda
Plas Ffynnon Millennium Green	Oswestry
Oswestry Old Racecourse Common	Oswestry
Railway Pond	Oswestry
Shelf Bank	Oswestry

The Mere at Ellesmere	Ellesmere
Trefonen Playing Fields	Trefonen
Wilfred Owen Green	Oswestry

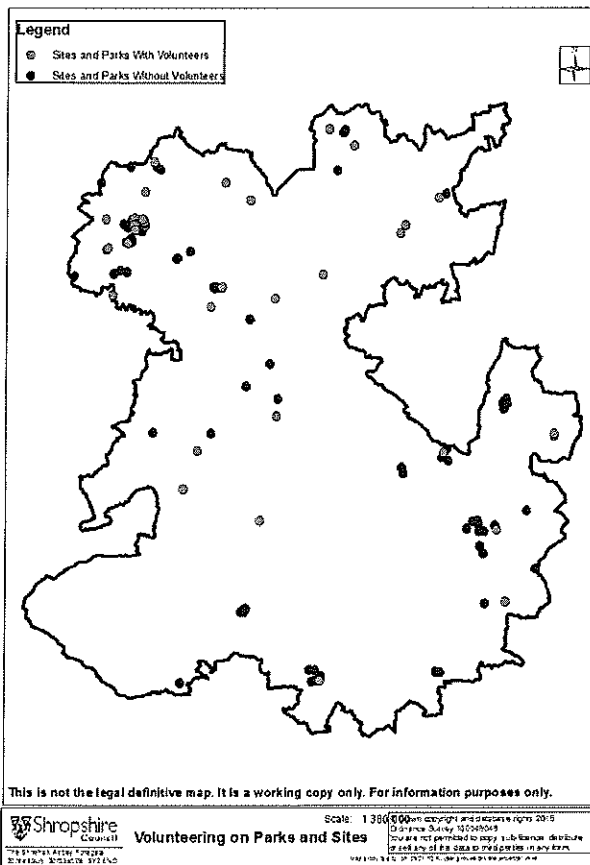


Figure 2- Volunteer Ranger Groups on Parks and Sites

The site based volunteers are either self-governing or coordinated by the four full-time Parks and Greenspaces Officers.

2.3 Walking for Health Walks Leaders

Walking for Health has been actively promoted by Shropshire Council for 6 years. There are currently two full time and one part time Walking Coordinators employed to lead on Walking for Health in the Northern, Central and Southern areas of Shropshire.

There are 49 active groups throughout Shropshire. In total over 550 people are walking with a Walking for Health group every week.

Table 2 shows where the groups are and how many people are involved.

Table 2: Walking for Health Scheme summary

Town	Venue	Frequency	Day of the week	Level
Weekly				
Albrighton	Crown	Weekly	Wednesday	Two/Three
Alveley	Post Office	Weekly	Tuesdays	Two/Three
Baschurch	Admiral Duncan	Weekly	Wednesday	3
Bishop's Castle	Enterprise House	weekly	Monday	One

Bridgnorth	Westgate	Weekly	Mondays	Two
Bridgnorth	Community Hub	Weekly	Friday	One
Broseley	Medical Centre	Weekly	Thursday	One/Two
Chelmarsh	Village Hall	Weekly	Mondays	Two/Three
Church Stretton	Mayfair Centre	weekly	Wednesday	Three
Church Stretton	Mayfair Centre	weekly	Wednesday	One
Church Stretton	Mayfair Centre	weekly	Tuesday	NEXT STEPS
Church Stretton	Mayfair Centre	weekly	Friday	NEXT STEPS
Clun	Maltings Tearoom	weekly	Tuesday	One/Two
Craven Arms	Millmead Housing	weekly	Monday	One/Two
Ditton Priors	Church	Weekly	Thursday	Two
Ditton Priors	Village Hall	Weekly	Thursday	One
Ellesmere	Canal wharf	Weekly	Wednesday	2 and 3, plus 2 hour walk
Hadnall	Village hall	Weekly	Tuesday	1 and 2
Highley	Severn Centre	Weekly	Mondays	Two/Three
Ludlow	Station Drive Surgery	weekly	Monday	One/Two
Market Drayton	Buttercross	Weekly	Friday	2 and 3
Much Wenlock	The Square	Weekly	Mondays	One/Two/Three
Oswestry	Cambrian railway building	Weekly	Tuesday	3
Oswestry	Gatacre sports pavilion	Weekly	Tuesday	2
Oswestry	Gatacre sports pavilion	Weekly	Thursday	1 and 2
Rushbury	Rushbury Village Hall	weekly	Tuesday	Two/Three
Shawbury	Village hall	Weekly	Monday	1 and 2
Shifnal	Village Hall	Weekly	Tuesday	One
Shrewsbury	Abbots Wood Day Centre	weekly	Thursday	one/two
Shrewsbury	The Lantern	Weekly	Wednesday	one/two
Shrewsbury	Marden Medical Practice	Weekly	Wednesday	Two
Shrewsbury	Ladies Walk	Weekly	Thursday	Two/Three
Shrewsbury	Pontesbury	Weekly	Friday	One/Two
Shrewsbury	Various (Evening Walks)	Weekly (during summer)	Tuesday	three
Wem	Edinburgh House	Weekly	Monday	1 and 2
Whitchurch	Civic centre	Weekly	Wednesday	1 and 2
Fortnightly				
Cleobury Mortimer	Sports and Fitness centre	1st/3rd Weds of month	Wednesday	One/ Two and Three
Shrewsbury	Various (Saturday Walks)	2 a month	Saturday	three
Shrewsbury	Claremont Bank	2 a month	Tuesday	one/two
Shrewsbury	Hanwood	2 a month	Wednesday	two/three
Shrewsbury	Haughmond Hill	2 a month	Friday	Three
Shrewsbury	St Nicholas Church	2 a month	Various	Two
Shrewsbury	STFC	2 a month	Mondays	Two
Ludlow	V. Info. Centre	2nd/4th Tues of month	Tuesday	Two/Three

Ashford Carbonell	Village Hall	fortnightly	Thursday	Two
Ludlow	Upper Fee Housing	fortnightly	Wednesday	NEXT STEPS
Monthly				
West Felton	Village Hall	Monthly	Monday	2 and 3
Prees	Sports Pavilion	Monthly	Wednesday	2
Rushbury	Rushbury Village Hall	monthly	Sunday	NEXT STEPS

2.4 Shropshire Wild Teams

A new Development Officer has been recruited recently to work specifically with people with physical and mental health issues. He will be involving around 50 people the next twelve months in countryside volunteering work focused on Shropshire Council sites. There will be opportunities for volunteer team leaders to help with the ongoing viability of the scheme.

2.5 Shropshire Hills Walks Leaders

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team has been working with 5 volunteer walks leaders who led 12 walks in 2014. These volunteers have been offered walks leader and first aid training but they felt they were sufficiently experienced to not need this extra training. 134 people have been on the 9 walks so far.

2.6 Mapping and Enforcement Volunteering

The Mapping & Enforcement Team support both officers and volunteers within the Outdoor Partnership Team by providing specialist advice and guidance on all aspects of Public Rights of Way.

The current enforcement policy recognises the importance of issues reported by volunteers in their areas and this influences the priority of an issue accordingly.

The team has good working relationships with a number of the existing Parish Path Partnership Groups, Ramblers Representatives and individual volunteers. For example:-

- Whitchurch P3
- Cleobury Mortimer P3
- Bucknell P3
- Albrighton P3
- Alberbury & Cardeston P3
- Nescliffe Bridleways P3
- Ruyton XI Towns P3

Volunteers often work with officers to check issues on the ground, report problems, liaise over planning consultations which affect Public Rights of Way and provide valuable knowledge of their areas.

3.0 Consultation

Throughout September and October 2014, five Volunteer Forums were held in Oswestry, Church Stretton, Market Drayton, Shrewsbury and Alveley. The forums were aimed at key volunteers, who

could represent others and present a broader view, staff from the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Team, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team and other partners. 74 people attended the events in total. Attendees were asked to make suggestions to address how the team might:

- Recruit new volunteers?
- Better manage/ co-ordinate volunteers with less staff time?
- Promote volunteering opportunities more effectively?
- Provide more support and training?
- Work better with other outdoor volunteering organisations?
- Ensure better evaluation and recognition?
- Ensure better local prioritisation?

The results of these meetings are available by contacting Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships.

At an Away Day for the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Team in November 2014 the staff were asked to consider the top priorities for action against the following three objectives:

- Increase the number of volunteers involved in existing groups
- Increase the number of new volunteer groups, especially Parish Paths Partnerships and on our sites
- Increase self-supervised volunteer activity, with the suitable paperwork, training and equipment

The results of these discussions are also available.

A summary of all these consultations and other discussions is shown below.

3.1 Promotion:

- Word of mouth is the best advertising and better ways are needed to help volunteers already involved to spread the word.
- Better promotion and promotional materials are needed, with staff and volunteers attending local groups and events to promote opportunities. More promotion on site also recommended. Must be eye catching.
- Easier to find and more comprehensive online information needed about volunteering opportunities and how to get involved. Work with other organisations to have complete offer.
- Make sure staff are up to date with opportunities across their area.
- It was felt that branding should be less corporate and not directly promoting Shropshire Council. This would make it more appealing to the general public. Consider promotional clothing, including high visibility (although opinion was split on this).
- Comprehensive database of volunteers needed for easier communication and directory of other groups.
- Stress the benefits of volunteering- including social interaction, feeling of satisfaction and health benefits.
- Use local media e.g. parish newsletters, press releases in Shropshire Star etc.

- Work more closely with other organisations that promote volunteering e.g. The Qube, Rural Community Council, Wildlife Trust, National Trust.
- Employ a graduate placement or Intern specifically on promotion.

3.2 Processes:

- One team contact needed per area. Build relationships.
- Volunteer groups need to be able to work more unsupervised in the future.
- A more complete volunteer pack, with outline roles and job specifications would help clarify opportunities, details on insurance, example risk assessments, points of contact. Clarity needed on volunteer co-ordinator role.
- Development of one or more 'A Teams' of volunteers with specific skills who are willing to travel further around the county and come together to tackle more complex jobs. Pool of tools and equipment to help with this.
- Database/ blog to help people share skills.
- Joint training and skills sharing with other organisations.
- Better feedback on reported faults and RoW complaints needed.
- Members only on line blog or similar to encourage sharing of ideas and expertise. Could also hold relevant files. Regular e-newsletter aimed at existing volunteers. Consider local networks.
- Transport of equipment onto site can be an issue.
- Volunteer expenses should be reimbursed.

3.3 Target audience:

- More young people- colleges, Duke of Edinburgh Award participants, schools.
- People involved in other local groups e.g. WI, Young Farmers Clubs, History groups.
- Target people who are about to retire.
- Unemployed and people with mental and physical health issues that want to get into employment.
- Businesses to take advantage of corporate volunteering.
- Cup of tea and a flapjack!

3.4 Evaluation and recognition:

- Annual event needs to continue.
- Volunteer of the year award or similar.
- Better training and the potential to gain qualifications.
- Press releases and other promotion locally about what has been achieved.
- Publishing results of surveys etc.
- Event evaluation recorded and publicised.
- More visits from senior managers to see work being done on the ground and gather feedback.

3.5 Training:

- Programme of standard training needed- First Aid, brushcutter, hedge cutter etc.

- More advanced training made available e.g. hedge laying, stone walling, coppicing, species identification and surveying techniques.
- Website development and blogging etc.
- Needs better, more joined up promotion.
- Work with other organisations to maximise opportunities.
- Training could be with in-house staff, not necessarily with paid trainers.
- Accreditation to be made available, although it may scare some people off.
- Make sure there is also a social element to the training.
- Study trips to learn from work elsewhere.

3.6 Other volunteering opportunities

The most popular opportunities for volunteering in other things were websites and promotion and corporate volunteering.

4.0 Volunteer Development Plan 2014-2018

The results from the consultation and other discussions have been considered and the following plan for the future is proposed.

4.1 Vision

In five years' time there will be a well-developed and widely promoted volunteer effort across the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships service; helping to look after, and improve access to and management of Shropshire's countryside and green spaces

Volunteering outdoors is recognised as a healthy occupation that can make a real difference to mental and physical wellbeing of individuals. The volunteering groups are inclusive, with health and countryside professionals working closely together for the wellbeing of those most in need and that young people have more opportunities to get involved in volunteering that is designed for them.

4.2 Objectives

The following objectives have been recognised as priorities for the future:

1. Increase the number of volunteers involved in existing groups
2. Increase the number of new volunteer groups, especially Parish Paths Partnerships and on our sites
3. Promote volunteer opportunities better and more effectively, in partnership with other organisations where appropriate
4. Increase self-supervised volunteer activity, with the suitable paperwork, training and equipment
5. Develop a number of 'A Teams' of volunteers who can be called on to tackle more complex jobs
6. Increase business involvement through corporate volunteering
7. Create volunteering opportunities around non-physical work such as website or event management
8. Increase the number of young people involved in Outdoor Partnerships volunteering

4.3 Targets

By 2020;

- 70% of all Parishes will have an active P3 group
- 70% of key sites and greenspaces will have active volunteers supporting and delivering site management plans , including those with physical and mental health issues
- All groups will be able to work independently, with guidance from Shropshire's Outdoor Partnership staff
- 20% increase in the number of walkers involved with a Walking for Health Scheme or similar
- 50 new walks leaders trained
- 3 'A teams' will be active across the county
- 3 Young Ranger programmes will exist across the county
- A pilot approach with three businesses using countryside sites for corporate volunteering will have been tested
- 6 volunteers will be helping in the administration of a web based volunteer forum and event organisation roles across the county
- 6 Walks Leaders, focused on key sites

4.4 Action Plan

It is clear from the consultation that there is no such thing as a standard volunteer! The offer for volunteers therefore needs to be flexible and able to be tailored to individual's requirements and to the volunteer tasks.

The action plan has been split into two phases to make it more manageable.

4.41 First Phase Development

The strategy is to start with some general activity and a few pilot approaches in different parts of the county. This will enable staff to test different processes and get feedback from volunteers on how well they are working. Evaluation of these pilots will be important to decide how we proceed in the future. The aspiration for completion of the first phase is end June 2015.

a. General actions

To enable this to happen there are some general actions that need to take place. These are:

- Sorting out volunteer policies, training manuals, example risk assessments, volunteer roles and agreements. Confirmation of insurance cover will be part of this. This will build on the current P3 handbook and agreements.
- New branding for each of the groups:
 - Parish Paths Partnerships
 - Shropshire Volunteer Rangers
 - Shropshire Wild Teams
 - Shropshire Walks Leaders

- Youth Rangers

Walking for Health has national branding and this will continue to be used.

- Ensuring there is enough equipment for the groups.
- Creating a new general volunteering leaflet for the service and display equipment. This will set out clearly the opportunities available across the service.
- Development of the bi-annual volunteer newsletter
- Development and dissemination of case studies, illustrating good practice and sharing ideas
- Working with organisations such as the Rural Community Council, the Qube, the Ramblers, U3A, MacMillan, National Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust to help promote these opportunities.
- A new Shropshire's Great Outdoors website will be developed incorporating the information held on the Shropshire Walking and Riding websites with the cycling and walking information on the Travel Shropshire website. A member's only section may be created, where volunteers can exchange ideas and experience and all the relevant documents can be stored. An events calendar will also be made available.
- A database of all volunteers is being created and will make communication with the volunteers more effective.
- Annual volunteer event and recruitment day.

These actions will be led by the Development Team Leader in consultation with other members of the team.

b. New project development

Natural Happiness Initiative

Whilst the service has been able to employ two new Development Officers, through allocation of funding from Public Health, to help with the recruitment and management of volunteers, the current set up does not adequately address the needs of volunteer development for Parks and Greenspaces. There is an aspiration for a new project specifically to target areas of Shropshire that suffer most from health inequality and encourage physical activity through active volunteering on their local greenspaces. This project would also focus on the development of volunteering for young people through Youth Rangers groups.

Clare Fildes will lead on the development of a new partnership project to address this.

- Discussions with Parks and Greenspace Officers and volunteers to understand key site heritage requirements and how they can be better supported by volunteers
- Joined up development of project with key partners, such as Public Health, Leisure Services, voluntary organisations, relevant Town Councils and other providers of publically owned green space
- Discussion with funders to ensure the most appropriate funding is identified
- Project ideas worked up in collaboration with Officers and volunteers, complementing work of the Development Officers
- Project application to be submitted

Irresistible Offa

A new business plan has been written to develop Phase II of the Walking with Offa project. This applies to the west of the county and will involve developing the visitor economy based on the high quality natural and cultural heritage assets, in co-operation with other organisations and businesses along the Welsh-English border. One of the key themes for Phase II is volunteer recruitment and development. This will most likely include:

- Support for Rights of Way volunteer maintenance groups
- Community 'adopt a path' schemes
- Offa's Dyke Path National Trail volunteers
- Equipment
- Support for healthy walking

Actions

- Clare Fildes is leading on this and is a member of the Walking with Offa Steering Group, Nigel McDonald is representing the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
- Discussions are occurring with a range of interested parties, especially in north eastern Shropshire. These will continue to ensure the project is addressing local needs
- Setting up a regional focus group for the northern part of the border to, amongst other things, help focus on the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site and maximising opportunities with surrounding areas
- Submission of funding bids in 2015. Funding currently being considered includes LEADER, other EARDF funding, Intereg and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Severn Valley Country Park

A new project to revamp the Severn Valley Country Park is being developed. This will probably include:

- Development as a walking and family cycling hub for the area
- New promoted routes showcasing local heritage and connecting to other interesting sites
- New signage and interpretation
- Improvements to the kitchen and potentially, an extension to the building to house a new classroom

A Stage 1 bid to HLF's Parks for People will be made in September 2015 following more consultation with partner's organisations, users of the park and volunteers.

Eastern Oswestry Greenspace

A bid to HLF Our Heritage fund will be made to improve the management and understanding of the heritage within Shropshire Council owned sites in Eastern Oswestry. The details of this still need developing in consultation with local people and volunteers.

c. New Parish Paths Partnership groups

Helen Beresford is leading on the development of new P3 groups. The initial focus will be on:

- Ellesmere (Urban and Rural) and Welshampton- working with Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) staff and the local Community Enablement Officer. The LPS is delivering a Down to Earth community project in Welshampton, which will enable us to trial a number of funded taster days as a new approach to identifying potential volunteers
- Worthen and Shelve- working with Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme staff
- Chelmarsh
- Alveley (linked to development of SVCP as a walking hub)
- Kinnerley
- Rushbury
- Uffington
- Sellatyn & Gobowen
- Llanfairwaterdine
- Mainstone
- Clee St Margaret
- 6 new Parish Paths Wardens – possibly based in the following areas where P3 needs more support
- Wem Rural
- Wistanstow
- Cardington

The process will be as follows:

- Presentation to SALC re opportunities for new P3 groups
- Development Officer supporting Area Officers – groundwork days as part of training sessions or support for new/establishing P3 groups where there are capacity issues
- Identify recent community demand-led works in the Parish and/or instigate new works to stimulate interest in local ROW
- Approach the Parish Council and local member to ensure they are on board with the proposal
- Talk to other community groups in the area, in partnership with other organisations
- Arrange a no-obligation taster day that is widely promoted using existing volunteers, other Council staff, partners, local media and local notice boards. Ideally, the taster day would be associated with a specific project that local people care about.
- Gauge level of interest and hopefully start a new group from there.
- Support new group set up and local priorities for ROW usage and access developments - The expectation at this stage should be that the group will become self-supported and that one or more Coordinators are identified.
- After period of time Development Officer to handover group to Area Officer
- Signpost volunteers to other opportunities where appropriate, for example sites or Walking for Health.

d. Existing P3 groups

The expectation across P3 groups is that all groups should be self-supervised. Those that aren't need to be identified and worked with to encourage them to become self-supervised. The team will continue to support local P3 in ground works and will occasionally where needed work alongside them, or arrange for direct links to Probation led ground works.

The process for this will need to be flexible as groups will vary but could be:

- Have a clear Volunteer Coordinator role description and agreement in place.
- Identify the key individuals who would be willing to become Coordinators.
- Arrange work placements, for those who are willing, with the RoW maintenance team.
- Arrange any training requirements, including leadership training.
- Promote to P3 groups opportunity for support for works via Probation project

We need to encourage all P3 groups to identify their key local routes and add this to the Councils database and GIS system so that local access priorities can be supported by the rest of the team in relation to potential enforcement actions or complaints prioritisation.

We need to capture all local P3 groups aspirations for developing their local network offer. This will involve support to groups either individually or as larger project groups to access external funding. Helen will help develop projects and external funding bids.

e. Self-supervised Volunteer Ranger groups

The management of sites tends to be more complex than P3 activity, requiring knowledge of habitat management and the impact of the weather and seasons. There are also many different types of groups managed in different ways, from independent, constituted groups to key individuals.

The key requirements for these groups appear to be:

- Management plans, provided by the Parks and Greenspace Officers to indicate annually what work volunteers can be encouraged to undertake.
- Volunteer Pack- similar to the P3 one but tailored to be relevant to sites. Confirmation of insurance.
- Training- work with a regular contractor who will act as an on the job trainer for key volunteers willing to take a lead in these groups. Identify and arrange other key training requirements.

With the exception of the first activity which is needed for all sites, the suggestion is for each Parks and Greenspace Officer to identify one group to work with to trial this approach, whilst a new project is being developed.

- Corbet Wood
- Stanmore Country Park
- Eastern Owesry Volunteer group

f. Recruitment of new volunteers to existing groups

A targeted approach to new volunteer recruitment will be taken based on the pilots described above. The Parks and Greenspace Officers and the Area Officers will be supported to advertise for new volunteers.

Priorities will be on:

- Eardington Nature Reserve
- Corbet Wood
- Whitchurch Waterway Country Park
- Walkmill Meadows, Market Drayton
- Brown Moss
- Colemere
- Nesscliffe
- Snailbeach

g. Youth Rangers

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team are leading on the development of the first Youth Rangers schemes in the Shropshire Hills, primarily through the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Team developing the first schemes in the south west of the county.

Cath Landles is working with Richard Morley from the South Shropshire Youth Forum on a bid for the Young Roots Heritage Lottery Fund for a Clee Hill scheme. If successful, this will involve 15 young people from the Clee Hill area and will commence Spring 2015. They have been invited to submit a full application following a successful Expression of Interest.

The other priority area in the Shropshire Hills is Church Stretton and the development of a Youth Rangers scheme here will be the next priority.

Jon Bielstein is developing ideas for the Stiperstones and Corndon area, liaising with Cath and Richard. The development of Youth Rangers here will begin in 2015.

Actions

Cath and Rich to submit a full application form to Young Roots for Clee Hill following consultation with young people in the area.

Jon to develop action plan for Youth Rangers in the Stiperstones and Corndon area in 2015.

Development team to include (wherever relevant) development of Youth Rangers on other external funding bids.

h. Walking for Health

Shropshire is currently split into three areas covered by the three Walking Coordinators. These areas need reviewing as part of this development process to make sure that each of the Coordinators has a similar number of groups and walkers. There is also a more creative approach to new groups needed that targets other demographic groups. For example, 1 in 10 children starting school in the UK are now considered obese and family walking or school groups could well be an effective new target group.

The key issue with Walking for Health is identifying the walks leaders. The process and training is all in place once these have been identified.

Following new criteria from Walking for Health nationally, local criteria for 'Next Step' walks has been agreed and shared with the groups. This means some existing two hour walks can continue to be included alongside the Walking for Health promotion.

The priorities for new groups are:

- Ruyton IX Towns- Liz Evans
- Craven Arms- Helen d'Albert
- Bayston Hill- Mick Dunn
- Erdington- Mick Dunn
- Shrewsbury- Mick Dunn

Further development of existing groups and those that are struggling for leaders will also be targeted:

- Clun and Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton Grade 1 and Ludlow TIC- Helen d'Albert
- Ellesmere and Welshampton- in conjunction with other volunteer recruitment. Taster sessions will be carried out using different approaches, for example a Sunday Stoll after church or a lantern walk, working with the school and encouraging families. If walks leaders can be identified through these activities, new groups that come under the Walking for Health umbrella but not overtly branded Walking for Health could be initiated.
- Wem, Market Drayton, Oswestry - Liz Evans. Working in collaboration with the new Big Local project and targeting existing groups such as Gobowen Old Friends, Weston Rhyn Good Companions and the community meals service at Selattyn and Gobowen.

Action

- Accreditation of existing Walking for Health schemes.
- Structured, county wide promotional campaign to encourage more walkers and walks leaders on existing schemes, using more innovative techniques such as taster sessions/ attending events.
- Targeted approach to developing new groups, with extensive advertising and promotion through other local groups/ societies.
- Establish contact with all community care coordinators within GP surgeries, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy contacts
- Compile list of local useful contacts for promotion of walks
- Listing on 'Do It' website through the Rural Community Council/ The Qube

- Continue to provide walks leader training, support and advice
- Management of webpages, social media and database

i. Walking for Life self-guided walks

A series of short walks, suitable for Walking for Health participants, were developed some years ago through the Walking for Life project. These are still available but have not been updated and checked recently and some may be out of date or poorly waymarked. Maintaining these to encourage participants to walk between Walking for Health led walks is a priority.

Creation of possible new routes include;

- Albrighton
- Alveley
- Shifnal
- Broseley
- Bishops Castle
- Church Stretton
- Craven Arms

Actions:

- Check existing routes. Identify those that are no longer relevant i.e. are from medical centres or residential homes that no longer exist.
- Survey and arrange infrastructure and way marking improvements as necessary.
- Identify some new walks where there is a local need. Existing Walking for Life walks are only from the main towns.

j. Shropshire Wild Teams

Simon Brown has been recently recruited to lead on the development of volunteering on sites, targeting those people with specific mental and physical health issues. Simon will be working closely with other Shropshire's Outdoor Partnership team members to develop the groups. A new vehicle, with hygiene and toilet provision for the teams has been ordered and will enable work to be done on a variety of sites once it arrives. It is envisaged this will be by May 2015. Before then work will be limited to those sites with toilets and kitchen facilities only, as a standard minibus will only be available.

The current plan is:

- Completion of paperwork and agreements
- Evaluation plan in place
- Steering group developed
- Equipment purchased

- New branding in place
- Identify three initial groups, targeted first at Shrewsbury and Ludlow. The groups will have two introductory sessions before commencing volunteering tasks.
- Provide training for volunteers and for professionals- countryside management skills for volunteers and health professionals and better understanding of working with people with mental and physical health issues for countryside professionals.

The targets to end June 2015 are:

- Engage 32 target participants in countryside management volunteering activities
- Introduce target participants to 9 new skills/ knowledge
- 6-8 environmental professionals supported in working with target groups
- 4-5 service providers supported to engage with environmental projects independently

A key focus is ensuring these groups can continue without dedicated staff support following a six month programme. This expectation will be set from the start with participants, support workers and countryside staff. The aspiration is for the support staff to be able to continue organising the work, whilst the countryside staff become more able to include people with mental and physical health problems into their existing volunteering groups.

The progress of this work will be evaluated with help from the Public Health team and recognised evaluation tools.

k. Walkers Are Welcome

The following towns now have Walkers Are Welcome status in Shropshire:

- Ludlow
- Clun
- Bishop's Castle
- Cleobury Mortimer
- Church Stretton
- Much Wenlock
- Wellington
- Oswestry
- Whitchurch
- Ironbridge

A previous Shropshire Hills Walkers Are Welcome brochure also included Knighton.

Action

- A new booklet covering all Walkers Are Welcome towns in Shropshire will be completed by end March 2015.
- Have local discussions with interested parties in Shrewsbury, Ellesmere and Bridgnorth to see if there is interest in becoming new Walkers are Welcome towns.

i. Mapping and Enforcement Volunteers

The Mapping and Enforcement Team would like to expand on the existing partnership approach by increasing the number of volunteers who are able to check issues on the ground and report back to the team. This is invaluable for effective monitoring and issue resolution. This will be encouraged by working with established P3 groups, ensuring they have sufficient training and understanding.

4.42 Second Phase development

The second phase of this plan will pick up a number of objectives, once the activity described above has been completed. These include;

- Develop a number of 'A Teams' of volunteers who can be called on to tackle more complex jobs
- Increase business involvement through corporate volunteering
- Create volunteering opportunities around non-physical work such as website or event management

The timescale for this is August 2015- end Dec 2016.

a. 'A Teams'

Volunteers were generally enthusiastic about the development of 'A Teams' that can be called upon to work on larger or more complex projects.

b. Business volunteering

There are some interesting possibilities for approaching businesses about working more closely with the Outdoor Partnerships Team. Following on from work conducted by the National Association of AONBs, a process has been defined for approaching businesses. There are now two active environmental business networks in Shropshire: the Meres and Mosses Business Environmental Network (BEN) and The Business Environmental Support Scheme for Telford (BESST).

Pugh's Funeral Directors has sponsored the development of the Shropshire Way previously and they should be approached again, along with other selected businesses to consider sponsorship opportunities.

Actions:

- Presentation for businesses about the health benefits of physical activity for staff
- Develop toolkit to help businesses develop a healthy working policy and/or action plan
- Develop opportunities for business sponsorship e.g. Pugh's Funeral Directors
- Test process defined by AONB Partnership on several target businesses next to key parks and sites and discuss mutual benefits of getting more involved

c. New volunteering opportunities

There was some enthusiasm for opportunities to be offered around:

- Web site and social media updates
- Event organisation
- Administration

These could be made available through existing groups or within the office. These opportunities will be considered at a later date once the other activity has been finalised.

Action:

- Arrange a meeting with volunteers already involved with social media and those who have an interest in becoming more involved, to consider the best way to use social media to communicate with the public and between volunteers.

d. River Severn project

There is an aspiration amongst several sectors to develop activity around the River Severn for economic benefit. This would include the improvement of the Severn Way long distance path and the development of volunteering around the Severn Way. Clare Fildes has met with Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shrewsbury and Shropshire Waterways and Leisure group and Bridgnorth Area Tourism Action Group to discuss possibilities.

Actions

- Shropshire Wildlife Trust are working on an application to HLF to fund ecosystem services. The aspiration is to match this with an application to the EU structural funds for the delivery of economic benefit, which would include improvements to the Severn Way, especially around the market towns and Shrewsbury, and more engagement with volunteers and businesses. A bid will be submitted to HLF by End June 2015

e. Walking Forums

A review of the current Walking Forums is needed to ensure these are working as effectively as possible. It is hoped that forums would act as a focus for joint working across the Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships service, bringing together bodies interested in walking in the great outdoors; access, green spaces, health and wellbeing, tourism and the wider countryside offer.

There is an aspiration for the groups to demonstrate:

- More effective joint working across the service and with partner organisations
- Help share learning, training, skills, promotion and activities, so making better use of increasingly scarce resources
- Enable more effective local decision making and project development

One suggestion is to make groups more locally based and the following areas are suggested:

- Shrewsbury and surrounds- Nesscliffe, Hadnall, Uffington, Dorrington (links with proposed River Severn project)
- The Shropshire Hills- to include Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Bishop's Castle, Pontesbury, Minsterley, Much Wenlock, Cleobury Mortimer (links with Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country LPS, Powys, Mortimer Country).
- Severn Valley- Bridgnorth, Shifnal, Alverley, Highley (links with proposed River Severn project, Ironbridge, Bewdley and Kidderminster)
- Northern Shropshire and Borderlands - Llanymynech, Knockin. St Martins, Gobowin, Whittington, Ellesmere, (links with Irresistible Offa development, Wrexham, Denbighshire and the WHS at Llangollen, Powys, Cheshire and Meres and Mosses LPS), Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Tetchill, Hodnet (links with Staffordshire and Meres and Mosses LPS)

More consultation is needed before any changes are made.

These groups could feed into the Local Access Forum, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Destination Development Partnerships. Sharing between the groups would happen at the northern and southern staff meetings.

5.0 Other comments

This Volunteer Action Plan will form part of the delivery of the Shropshire Countryside Access Strategy. It is a working plan and will be expected to change as ideas develop. A partnership approach will be adopted, working with other organisations and networks that work with volunteers and looking for opportunities to pool resources where possible. Feedback from volunteers will inform the on-going delivery of this plan.

Evaluation and monitoring will be integrated into delivery. Current performance indicators will be used as a baseline against which to measure progress.

