

## Central Shropshire Walking Forum

### Notes of Meeting

2pm, Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015

The Wilfred Owen Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

#### Attendees:

John Newnham (Chair)  
Audrey Menhinick  
Dick Bailey  
Bob Coalbran  
Bill Hodges  
Trevor Allinson  
Clare Fildes  
Mick Dunn  
Helen Beresford  
David Hardwick

#### Apologies:

Susan Daykin

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

John opened the meeting at 2pm

#### 2. Feedback/Action from Previous Meeting

There was no actions from the previous meeting

#### 3. Group Updates

**a. Bob Coalbran (Walk about Wrekin & Wellington Walkers are Welcome)** – The footpath group has been very active, holding 2 sessions a month mainly clearing paths and way marking. The Shropshire Way routes 16 & 17 have been completed and printed.

The Wellington Walking festival will take place between the 14<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Sep 2015. Publicity events have been held in Morrison's etc. and have proved to be very successful. There has also been an interview on Radio Shropshire. <http://www.wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk/Festival.html>

**b. John Newnham (Shrewsbury Ramblers)** – The Shrewsbury Ramblers P3 group has been very active especially maintaining routes included in the "20 Walks in and around Shrewsbury" guide book and on the Severn Way. The guidance notes for Ramblers walk leaders has been updated and issued to walk leaders.

#### **c. David Hardwick (Shropshire Council)**

- Improved 2 circular walks for the Corndon and Stiperstones Landscape Partnership Project. These are a 6.6 mile circular walk starting at Wentnor to Norbury including Linley Beeches and Linley Hill. The other was a 7.5 mile circular walk between Bentlawnt and Stiperstones village including Hope Valley. 11 stiles have been changed for kissing gates, and numerous other stiles, sleeper bridges and way marking improved. Leaflets are to be produced for promoting these routes.
- Volunteer groups have been very active especially Pontesbury, Shrewsbury Ramblers, Bishops Castle P3 groups and Shropshire Wild team.
- Started working on rights of way improvements with new P3 groups at Harley, Uffington and Worthen.

**d. Dick Bailey (Much Wenlock Walking for Health & Walkers are Welcome)** – Walking for Health in much Wenlock continues to be well attended during the summer months. The group is currently getting all walkers to complete the new registration form so details can be updated. They have been liaising with the local GP surgery to become part of the "Sit less, move more" campaign and will act as ambassadors to encourage more people to be more active.

The Walk Leaders carry out regular inspections of the Footpaths around Much Wenlock and pass on the details of any issues to the P3 group.

The Much Wenlock Walking weekend takes place from the 4-7 September. The walking weekend has been sponsored by local traders which helped to pay printing costs etc.

#### **e. Helen Beresford (Outdoor Partnership Development Officer)**

##### 2014/15 Overview

- Volunteer hours have increased from 6393 to 6788 (Moderate 6% increase but an increase nonetheless and we know not all hours are recorded)
- 619 individual furniture improvements on the network comparable to what the maintenance team achieved, many gates to replace stiles for easier access.
- 2563 vegetation clearance hours
- The volunteer work for 2014 was valued at £56,622

##### 2015/16 so far.....

- Volunteer hours – 2570
- 102 individual improvements
- 582 hours of vegetation clearance
- 45 hours of surfacing works
- 283 hours of surveying paths
- 27 guided walks
- 41 fund raising hours
- Total value of P3 volunteering - £15,480

##### Priority areas 2015/16

- Ellesmere
- Wem
- Sellatyn & Gobowen
- Chelmarsh
- Worthen & Shelve
- Rushbury
- Cardington
- Mainstone (BC interested)

Identified as having the most outstanding issues in each of the Officer Areas.

##### New groups establishing

- Worthen & Shelve
- Farlow (footpaths group)
- Culmington
- Trefonen
- Little Ness

We have had interest from Hanwood and Westbury. Uffington are losing their co-ordinator but a replacement has been found already.

##### Long term goal

We aim to have at least 90% of Shropshire covered by the scheme by 2020 (Access strategy).

Geographical area covered by a scheme at present is 66% but this doesn't take into account our roving P3 groups like Pontesbury and Shrewsbury Ramblers who work in many parishes around the County.

#### **4. Walking Coordinator Update**

##### **a. Ploughing and Cropping Interim Summary 26/8/15**

85 letters were sent out in April 2015 to known offenders. This resulted in 5 responses from landowners who assured us they cleared through the crops or there was no crop. No further action was taken on these routes.

80 paths were checked in the period mid-June to end of July. 10 no longer had an arable crop. Of the remaining 70 paths, around 50% of had been cleared. Landowners who had not cleared the path received an additional letter and out of these 75% responded citing crops being harvested as their reason for not reinstating now. Those who have now harvested but clearly did not reinstate the path have received a letter informing them that action will be taken next time if they do not comply.

There is a wide geographical variation e.g. in south Shropshire over 80% of paths were cleared. Whilst in North Shropshire this was considerably less.

#### **b. PROW Guidance Notes**

Shona Butter has produced a set of PROW guidance notes for Farmers and Landowners. The leaflet has been produced to provide an easy guide to some of the common issues and queries relating to Public Rights of Way and the legislation that governs them.

Whilst primarily written to assist farmers and landowners, the guide should be beneficial to everyone who enjoys getting out in the countryside. The leaflet has been endorsed by the Country Land and Business Association and will hopefully be endorsed by the NFU once a few points have been clarified. There are still more in depth guidance notes on the council website which can be found at

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-recreation/countryside-access-and-public-rights-of-way/countryside-access-and-public-rights-of-way-guidance-notes/>

#### **c. Shropshire Way**

A meeting was held in July to discuss a single, promoted, long distance Shropshire Way route. In attendance were, John Newnham, Audrey Menhinick, Deb Hughes and Mick Dunn. It is hoped to devote a page on the new website to promote this route. Further discussion is required to finalise the details of the route, way marking etc.

### **5. Shropshire Outdoor Partnership Updates – Clare gave the following updates:**

#### **a. LEADER Funding**

New programme due to start early 2016 for southern Shropshire (south of M54 due west).

Total funding= 2,540,000 Euros (approx. £2,032,000) from 2016-2020

Priorities:

- Helping businesses thrive in southern Shropshire
- Exploring opportunities for growth and addressing market failure
- Building the resilience of local communities
- Nurturing southern Shropshire's local distinctiveness

Business grants 40% intervention, community infrastructure and heritage development will be higher.

Local Action Group being formed to oversee delivery of the programme and to make funding decisions.

#### **b. Web Site Update**

New website is now live, although not yet finished. The site covers:

- Walking, cycling, horse riding and other outdoor activities
- Parks and countryside heritage sites
- Play areas

Parks and sites information being uploaded within next week, followed by Outdoor Experiences. Longer term aspiration is to include other publically owned sites; Forestry Commission, Natural England, National Trust and Wildlife Trust. The new website can be found at

[www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk](http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk) attendees are encouraged to have a look at the website and pass any comments to Clare.

#### **c. Project Development**

##### **SVCP project**

Currently working on Accessing Nature bid to SITA to be submitted end September. Focus on developing the centre at a hub for outdoor activities that get you closer to nature- improvements to walking, cycling and riding routes, Nordic walking equipment, wildlife interpretation, cameras and screens for watching wildlife, replacement of pond dipping platform and habitat management.

A much larger project to make the SVCP the gateway to the Severn Valley is being developed that will be submitted to HLF under the Parks for People fund in February. This will include improvement to the centre, possible new classroom/ meeting room, interpretation plan and marketing. It will look to place the SVCP at the centre of the wider visitor offer for the Severn Valley from Ironbridge to Bewdley.

### Irresistible Offa

Looking at an Inttereg bid for the development of sustainable tourism and community involvement in outdoor activities, especially walking and cycling.

Shropshire Wild Teams

Submitted and Expression of Interest to work on a consortium bid for ERDF/ Big Lottery funding to continue Wild Teams until 2020.

### d. Southern And Northern Walking Forums

Clare gave a brief overview of the outcomes of the Southern & Northern Walking forums Workshops.

### 6. The Big Path Watch

John reported that due to problems with the App the Big Path watch had not been as successful as originally hoped. Johns advised the forum that the data can still be used but it is better to use the Web Version rather than the smart phone App. You can register and access the web version here

[www.ramblers.org.uk/bigpathwatch](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/bigpathwatch) John and Trevor are confident that the 200 grid squares allocated in Shropshire will be completed.

### 7. Walking Forum Workshop

Clare gave a quick presentation to set the scene for the workshop (presentation attached).

The Walking Forum members were asked to consider future priorities that could be delivered to benefit the Central Shropshire area by discussing these in two groups and then swapping to see what the other group had written and adding any more they felt were relevant. They then each prioritised the top three by allocating sticky dots. The results, including the number of dots for each one are listed below. Where appropriate, priorities have been grouped together.

Priorities for future delivery by the Walking Forum

Priority	Priority
Lost Ways project- support volunteers to research archives/ maps. Deadline 2026	8
Upgrading/ revamping Severn Way	7
Increase volunteering	5
Ploughing and cropping	3
Shropshire Way as a main circular route around the county	2
P3 roving groups/ overlapping boundaries in remote areas or where there isn't a P3 group	1
Promotion of routes from cafes and pubs	1
Parking in honeypot areas	1
Replacing stiles for gates	1
Targeted approach in neglected areas e.g. Long Mountain, Westbury, Worthen and Shelve	1
Opening up more Walking for Health routes	
Historic routes e.g. Roman roads	
Better links with public transport and promoted routes	
Encouraging village halls to allow parking in the day	
Paperwork provided for accurate recording of volunteer hours- group and individual	
Restoring routes where busy roads e.g. A5 make crossing difficult	

Next steps

Delivery of the top priorities needs to be considered at the next meeting. These appear to be:

- Lost Ways project development- suggest a smaller group is put together to lead on this
- Upgrading the Severn Way- Hopefully Jim Stabler will get involved with this, with some help from Forum members

- Increase volunteering- we can discuss how to do this at the next meeting

**8. AOB**

- a. Trevor informed the Forum that St Winifred's walk (Pilgrimage from Shrewsbury abbey to Holywell) will take place in June 2016
- b. Bob informed the forum that the National Walkers are welcome AGM will be taking place in Whitchurch on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November 14:00 – 16:00**

**Oswestry Room**

**Shirehall**

**Shrewsbury**

**SY26ND**