

**NOTE OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ELLESMERE AREA
LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2012 AT THE BOAT
HOUSE, ELLESMERE**

7.00 p.m. – 9.20 p.m.

Responsible Officer: Michelle Evans

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Present:

Members of the Committee:

Steve Davenport	Shropshire Council
Ann Hartley	Shropshire Council
Alan Clarke	Ellesmere Town Council
John Dickin	Cockshutt-cum-Petton Parish Council
Kay Egerton	Ellesmere Rural Parish Council
Chris Symes	Welshampton and Lyneal Parish Council

Councillor Mike Owen, Portfolio Holder for Business Support, Tourism and Culture was also in attendance.

Officers:

Julie Ruler	Community Action Officer, Shropshire Council
Michelle Evans	Committee Officer, Shropshire Council
Alison Patrick	Tourism Officer, Shropshire Council
Sarah Lalieu	British Waterways
Karen Rolfe	Conservation Officer, Shropshire Council
PC Turner	West Mercia Police Authority

There were approximately 50 members of the public in attendance

ACTION

1. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief explanation on the purpose of the Local Joint Committees. He went on to explain the format of the meeting and key items on the agenda. Members of the Committee then introduced themselves.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 An apology for absence was received from Mr Brian Williams (Shropshire Council).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 No declarations of interest were received.

It was agreed to take agenda item 6 next.

4. PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT)

4.1 PC Turner updated the Committee in relation to the Laser Speed Gun which had been used a total of 25 times since the previous meeting. He reported that 40 drivers had received verbal warnings and that hotspot areas were being targeted.

4.2 PC Turner updated the meeting in relation to the speed limit through Criftins and reported that a traffic order was awaited. Councillor Egerton clarified that due to an administrative error the 30mph speed limit through Criftins was not enforceable. This was in the process of being corrected and would be re-advertised.

5. NOTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 **RESOLVED:** That the note of the meeting held on 10 November 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. TOURISM

6.1 Councillor Mike Owen, the Portfolio Holder for Business Support, Tourism and Culture addressed the meeting. He explained that Enterprise and Growth was one of Shropshire Council's top three priorities and the visitor economy was one of the identified growth sectors so there were a lot of opportunities. The annual visitor expenditure across Shropshire was £561 million, of which £115 million was spent in the northern area supporting 2,855 jobs. Research commissioned by the Local Enterprise Partnership would update these figures in order to give a clearer picture of the value of tourism in Shropshire today.

6.1.1 Councillor Owen reported that new consumer research was currently being undertaken which, it was hoped, would tell the Council more about how visitors perceive Shropshire and how to attract more visitors to spend their time and money in Shropshire. Shropshire Council were working with Destination Development Partnerships across the county to bring together the private and public sector, tourism groups and businesses to give a more localised approach to destination management.

6.1.2 Councillor Owen informed the meeting that Shropshire Council had recently convened a working group of Councillors from the northern area of Shropshire (which included Councillor Hartley) to work with the Destination Partnership for North Shropshire and Oswestry, on a new tourism strategy and action plan for the area with an emphasis on collaborative working. The need to work more closely with Town and Parish Councils that wished to develop and progress tourism projects in their areas had been highlighted.

6.1.3 Councillor Owen explained that the learning gained from other areas could also be applied to North Shropshire which, although less well known at the moment, had huge potential. It was a destination that provided visitors with what they were looking for.

ACTION

- 6.1.4 In conclusion, Councillor Owen stated that the offer needed to be developed more and Shropshire Council had an ongoing commitment to double the footfall into the town centre by 2015, which may seem ambitious but was felt to be achievable.
- 6.2 Alison Patrick, Tourism Officer for Shropshire Council gave a presentation (copy of slides attached to the signed Notes) about the tourism opportunities in Ellesmere and the Shropshire context.
- 6.2.1 Ms Patrick drew attention to the main themes for Northern Shropshire which had been agreed at a stakeholder workshop in May last year and which remained at the heart of strategic development. These themes included Canals, Landscapes and Heritage. Ellesmere was therefore in a really good position but needed to develop its offer.
- 6.2.2 Ms Patrick then referred to the research undertaken by Arkenford Leisure who were specialists in tourism and leisure research for the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. A sample of 1500 visitors and non visitors had been questioned to find out their thoughts about the area and how more visitors might be attracted to Shropshire.
- 6.2.3 84% of respondents would consider Shropshire for a holiday or day trip, however only 16% felt Shropshire was their kind of place. Although Shropshire did well compared to others Ms Patrick would like this figure to be closer to the Cotswolds eg 36% felt that the Cotswolds was their kind of place.
- 6.2.4 Turning to local verses non-local awareness (local meaning 90 minute drive time – likely to be day visitors), there was not much difference in consideration and appeal of Shropshire when comparing the local and non-local findings (80% [would consider] and 20% [my kind of place] compared to 85% and 15%). 41% of local respondents had never visited Shropshire before which again was very similar to the non-local findings (46%). So there was a lot of potential for attracting more day visitors from closer to home eg West Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool.
- 6.2.5 The research highlighted that Shropshire was predominantly seen as a short break destination which the Council had worked hard to promote over the years because staying visitors spend more. However, Shropshire may be missing out on easier to get day visitors which were also important for the local economy eg attractions, cafes, shops etc.
- 6.2.6 As was expected, Shropshire was seen as a destination for adult couples and small groups which highlighted a clear need for family attractions and family orientated businesses to consider and address the offer for families with children. Shropshire was however seen as an all-year-round destination (although more people said they would visit Shropshire during off peak times as opposed to peak times).

ACTION

- 6.2.7 The research showed that Shropshire was seen predominantly as a countryside destination although towns were also important for attracting visitors, they were not currently the 'drivers'. Visiting local towns and villages, countryside, scenic areas and landscapes were the most appealing activity whilst on holiday, although more gentle activities were enjoyed by a wider range of people eg river walks, forest trails and gentle strolls. Developments in Shropshire to create and promote short walking routes appear to be supported by this research.
- 6.2.8 Turning to food and drink, opportunities to taste and buy local produce appeal to more and more people so Shropshire has a real opportunity to promote local produce, farmers markets and farm shops.
- 6.2.9 History and heritage was of interest to a large proportion of consumers across all age groups and types of people, although industrial heritage was slightly less appealing and so required careful presentation and the use of different words to describe it.
- 6.2.10 92% of respondents used internet searches to gather information before their trip whilst leaflets from tourist information centres and hotels were the most used source of information gathered during their trip. It was therefore important for businesses to ensure they were on a number of websites which needed to be increasingly mobile friendly.
- 6.2.11 In response to a query, Ms Patrick explained that it was an aspiration to double the footfall into Ellesmere within three years and ways to do this would be worked out as the new tourism strategy was put together. Ms Patrick felt that developing the accommodation offer may be key to this.
- 6.3 Relighting the Forge Project
- Sarah Lalieu from British Waterways gave an overview of the Relighting the Forge Project at Ellesmere Boatyard (copy of slides attached to the signed Notes). Ms Lalieu reported that British Waterways were to become a charitable trust in order to raise funds for the upkeep of the canal network, to include Ellesmere Boatyard.
- 6.3.1 She informed the meeting that the project was focused on the restoration of the blacksmith forge at Ellesmere Canal Yard with the objective of bringing it back into use. The forge was of national significance being almost 200 years old, a grade 2 listed building and the workplace of Thomas Telford.
- 6.3.2 The forge and other buildings had however fallen into disrepair but British Waterways, Shropshire Council and Ellesmere Town Council were committed to seeing the forge and the whole set of buildings returned to their former glory and used as a community asset.

- 6.3.3 The restoration project would cost in the region of £70k and contributions had been gratefully received from the Ellesmere Area Local Joint Committee, British Waterways and Rural Challenge. When completed, the forge would once again be an active part of the economic and heritage success of Ellesmere.
- 6.3.4 It was hoped that the venture would attract a large number and wide range of visitors to the canal side location and it was envisaged that the forge works would spring board project partners to progress the full restoration of the whole site including at least 11 craft related units which would ensure the sustainable use of the whole yard and would attract more visitors. The increased visitor numbers to the site would also support the economic resilience of Ellesmere and the surrounding area.
- 6.3.5 Ms Lalieu informed the meeting of progress to date and reported that it was hoped to complete the project in the summer. A number of opportunities and events were planned for volunteers including a 'spring clean' and 'heritage recording day' when it was hoped to undertake a detailed inventory.
- 6.3.6 In response to a query requesting more information about volunteering opportunities, Ms Lalieu explained that one event had already been held when names and contact details had been gathered. These volunteers would be invited to get involved in the clean up and inventory. There would however be other opportunities for volunteers to get involved.
- 6.3.7 In response to a query in relation to car parking, Ms Lalieu explained that British Waterways also owned the field next to the yard and this would be included in the project. It was also hoped to include the bridge in the project which would improve access to the towpath.
- 6.4 Ellesmere Heritage Interpretation Trail Project
- Karen Rolfe, Conservation Officer gave an update on the Ellesmere Heritage Interpretation Trail Project. The project involved the installation of two flat toposcope tables at two key locations, one to the front, north corner of The Boat House and the other on the piazza at the wharf head, east of the Tesco store in the vicinity of the crane structure.
- 6.4.1 These toposcope tables would illustrate a basic 3D layout of Ellesmere and relate to the position of a further five heritage interpretive markers to be placed at five locations on a circular route. The design of the markers joined elements of the town's industrial past relating to the canal, agriculture and nature.
- 6.4.2 Ms Rolfe informed the meeting that the objective of the project was to provide interactive activity points in the form of these markers and toposcopes along a trail that would lead visitors to areas of special significance around the town.

ACTION

6.4.3 Each marker had a different leaf motif upon which would have a scene relative to its location etched on it and which could be used for brass rubbing. Audio recordings relevant to the location had been completed and would be accessible at each marker through a special mobile telephone number. Trail guides would be prepared describing the trail and there would be links to the Council's website where additional information on the locations would be available.

6.4.4 Ms Rolfe had been working with the Town Council and other interested groups with an aim to completing the project this year. The toposcopes had been completed and finalisation of the images to be sketched onto the marker's leaves was awaited. Planning Permission had been approved in 2009 but this had lapsed and would shortly be resubmitted once the Town Council had agreed to slightly altered locations for a couple of the markers. Text for the wheel of the markers and the toposcopes also needed to be finalised. Ms Rolfe stated that the biggest challenge had been creating the images to be sketched onto the markers.

6.4.5 In response to a query about the altered locations for the markers, Ms Rolfe explained that one approved spot close to the toilet block might be in conflict with the Sculpture Trail and so may be moved closer to the town hall. It was hoped to discuss the location of the markers to ensure they were placed in harmony with the Sculpture trail initiative.

7. LET'S TALK

7.1 The Chairman drew attention to the responses from the previous meeting which had been circulated.

7.2 Issues raised on the tables included:

- It would be an asset to Ellesmere if the Boat House were to be open in the evenings, especially in the summer to make better use of it.
- There is a lack of facilities for Committees to hold events / meals.
- A query was raised about the availability of accommodation in Ellesmere as it was felt that there was a lack of accommodation for tourists to stay in the area.
- Ellesmere is let down by the state of the Library building which is an eyesore.
- Improvement to footpaths required from Whitemere to Town Centre.
- Car parking charges.

ACTION

Councillor Davenport informed the meeting that a full consultation on Car Parking would be undertaken from April. It was hoped that a response would be available at the next meeting.

- Thank you to the Friends of the Mere for clearing up 'The Crimps' of all rubbish. The area is now much more attractive.
- In response to a query about who manages Cremorne Gardens, Councillor Davenport informed the meeting that the contract was currently being looked at.
- Toilet facilities in Cremorne Gardens are currently boarded up.

Councillor Davenport confirmed that temporary toilets would shortly be delivered. Work was ongoing to possibly link the bungalow and the toilet facilities.

- Signage needs to be good, clear and visible.

Councillor Hartley reported that £45k of Market Town Initiative money was being used to overhaul the signage in the town and make it more uniform.

- Surprised that no mention was made of walking in the area during the Tourism presentations and it was suggested that the Shropshire Way Project Officer be invited to the next meeting.

It was confirmed that the Shropshire Way would reach Ellesmere in the next six months.

- Meres and Mosses project. It was requested that someone from Shropshire Wildlife Trust HQ in Shrewsbury attend a future LJC meeting to describe and explain the project.

The meeting was informed that the whole area would soon receive funding to upgrade the mosses and footpaths etc. The Meres and Mosses Project covered an area from Ellesmere to Whitchurch and Malpas, and was being managed by Shropshire Wildlife Trust. The funding should lead to a variety of improvements to access to the Meres and Mosses; to improve interpretation, and improve the quality of water in the Meres etc.

- More needs to be made of the Meres, their wildlife and trees etc. Need to consider access to all seven Meres, to include circular walks.
- More emphasis was needed on walking around Ellesmere for day visitors, which could include trails by tractor, trail from the Mere through the Town to the Wharf for children eg following swans in pavement etc. The Mere and Canal buildings could be linked by a vintage bus carrying visitors between the two via the town.

ACTION

- Concern about possible damage to the warehouse on the wharf.

It was confirmed that planning permission had recently been approved for the warehouse and work would be starting fairly soon.

- Why, in a year of frozen Council Tax do we have to pay 14% more to Ellesmere Town Council when inflation is approximately 2%?

In response, Councillor Clarke explained that the Town Council had had to increase it's portion of the Council Tax in order to make one off payments in relation to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, Pensions payments (as the number of staff employed by the Town Council had increased) and replacing the Christmas lights. He explained that the Town Council had also had to take on responsibility for the public toilets in the town centre.

- Councillor Symes informed the meeting that The Sun Inn at Welshampton would be reopening in the spring.

- 7.3 The Chairman confirmed that these issues would be taken back for investigation and progress would be reported at the next meeting.

Community
Action
Officer

8. LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE BUDGET

- 8.1 The Community Action Officer introduced the report, which set out details of grant funding applications which had been received (copy attached to the signed Notes). Applicants were given the opportunity to explain why the funding was required.

8.2 RESOLVED:

A. To approve the following applications :

- £250.00 to Ellesmere Rotary Regatta to fund the cost of providing 20 life jackets for use in water based events.
- £180.00 to Mere Melodies Choir for reproduction costs.
- £500.00 to Lyneal with Colemere Parochial Church to replace the carpet pew runners with washable tweed pew cushions.
- £1000.00 to Ellesmere Bowling Club to replace one floodlight pillar that has rotted.
- £1000.00 to Friends of The Mere for repairs to Trish's Hut in Cremorne Gardens to enable group to use it as a base for educational visits to the Mere.

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- 8.2
- £750.00 to Criftins Parish Hall to improve the building security system following the moving of the Post Office to within the Hall.
 - £500.00 to Ellesmere Ducklings to allow them to extend their sensory equipment for children with learning difficulties.
 - £2000.00 to Welshampton Caterpillars to allow them to add a covered walkway and new entrance to the rear elevation of the building.
 - £1500.00 to Ellesmere Cricket Club for the purchase and installation of two bay cricket nets to support training sessions for 60 youth members and 40 seniors.
 - £1000.00 to Friends of Cockshutt School towards an all weather outdoor play area within the school to encourage active play.

B. Resolved to defer the following application:

- Cockshutt Millennium Hall Group – installation of CCTV to the hall building and perimeter.

C. Resolved to not approve the following applications during the current funding round but to invite the applicants to reapply in the next round:

- Ellesmere Patients Group - to fund 3 parking bays for patients in the Comrades Club.
- Shropshire Union Canal Society - contribution towards the Ellesmere Boat Rally.
- Welshampton Parochial Church - towards the hire of an additional marquee.

9. FEEDBACK FORMS

- 9.1 The Chairman requested that members of the public complete the feedback forms available on the tables and indicate the issues they wished to discuss at future meetings so that the correct officers could be invited.

10. LOCAL NEWS AND INFORMATION

- 10.1 An update from the Community Action Officer had been circulated. The Community Action Officer was available to support any local organisations who could contact her if they required any assistance.

		ACTION
11.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
11.1	The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting would take place at 7pm on Thursday 26 July 2012 in the Cockshutt Millennium Hall.	
11.2	The dates of future meetings were confirmed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Thursday 6 December 2012 – Welshampton Village Hall (venue to be confirmed)Thursday 14 March 2013 – Welshfrankton Village Hall or Criftins Village Hall (venue to be confirmed).	ME

Chairman:.....

Date:.....