



Shropshire Hills Discovery
Centre Advisory Board

4 February 2010

10.00am

Item / Paper

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Public

NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2009

10:00 am – 11.30am

Responsible Officer Tim Ward

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PRESENT:

Members

Craven Arms Town Council	Miss J Hoskins
South Shropshire Tourism Ltd.	Mr L Chapman
Craven Arms Community Centre/ Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	Mr D Gibbon
Secret Hills Network	Mr N Stephens

Officers

Shropshire County Council	Ms Z Griffin	(Centre Manager - Secret Hills)
	Mr A Lee	(Arts Manager)
	Mr T King	(Tourism Officer)
	Mr T Ward	(Committee Officer)

The Centre Manager welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Charmley (SC) and Adrian Williams (Library Service)

In the absence of Mrs Motley, Mr Stephens took the Chair

Note of Previous Meeting

2. The note of the meeting held on 5 November 2008, as circulated, was confirmed as a correct record.

3. The Centre Manager advised the meeting that no work had been done yet regarding the Ragwort on the roof but that she may hire a cherry picker as there were a number of jobs that needed doing.

Performance and Developments at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the Period April 2009 to October 2009

4. A report outlining performance and developments at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the period April to October 2009 had been circulated.
5. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that use of the library continued to increase with overall loans being up 19%. She went on to say that there were 4 local reading groups which used the library and that the Rhyme Time sessions continued to be well attended, and that there were two classes from Stokesay School who made weekly visits to the library. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the Centre had recently taken part in the National Library adult user survey and that the results would be available in the New Year. She added that this survey was the first since the relocation of the library.
6. The Centre Manager distributed a table showing the Centres performance over the period April to October and giving a comparison to the previous year.
7. The Centre Manager informed members that total Centre users and the numbers of people visiting the exhibition or doing one of the various led activities had been almost identical to the previous year which given the prevailing economic climate was very good. She went on to say that receipts remained at a similar level to the previous year and that there had been a review of the price structures for catering and school visits
8. The Centre Manager advised the meeting that the Retail Consultants were continuing to introduce a wider range of Shropshire related products
9. Miss Hoskins asked whether there had been any further progress on developing a seating area outside the Café. The Centre Manager advised her that it was still an aspiration but that she needed to source funding.
10. The Centre Manager reported that the Wednesday work parties in the Onny Meadows continued and had been enhanced by joint working with Shropshire Outdoors Project. She went on to say that monthly Dads & Kids Forest School continued to be popular but that attendance at the Meadow Fun sessions was disappointing and that following a review these sessions were being rebranded as Toddle Time. She went on to say that the Centre had applied to the Local Joint Committee for funding to enable them to deliver Forest School sessions to primary schools within the LJC area. Mr Gibbon commented that he had been in discussion with various parties in an effort to expand the forest school curriculum to look at agri forestry.
11. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the Centre's advertising plan had seen a shift in emphasis, with more money being spent on family specific publications and less on advertising to the coach group market, and whilst there had been no change in the number of coach group visits there had been a significant increase in uptake of family activities.
12. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the Centre had received a small grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund which was being used to increase awareness of what activities the Centre carried out.
13. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the marketing plan for 2010/11 was being finalised and would include: -
 - A full page feature in the Shropshire Hills Events brochure.

- Development of Centre's presence on Facebook. And consideration of running a trial on Twitter.
 - The onsite and offsite leaflets will be combined into one larger leaflet, and we will have a larger print run to reflect this change.
 - Free listing on key websites for events will be more fully exploited.
 - Investigation of ways to capitalise on the success of Acton Scott.
 - Collection of more email addresses from customers to improve our mailing list and allow us to keep them updated in a cheaper and greener way than traditional mail shots.
14. Mr King commented that there was need for the Centre to have a stand alone website rather than the one within the Shropshire Council website which was rather difficult to find. It was agreed that a formal request should be made to IT to see if this could be done.
15. The Head of Arts commented that a lot of the signage needed updating. It was agreed that this would be looked into.
16. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the events and activities had attracted the highest attendances ever with several good events taking place. She went on to say that all major aspects of the events programme for 2010 were in place and would include all regular sessions and the following family activities: -
- February half term – Digging for Dinosaurs
 - Mid March – National Science week workshop
 - Easter – Scrambled Eggs
 - May half term – Pond Dipping
 - Summer – Orienteering Antic, Three Little Pigs, Minibeast Safari
 - September – Heritage Open Days and ArtWalk
 - October half term – Paper Making

She went on to say that together with the AONB a series of guided walks and days out in the Shropshire Hills would be offered and that the Local History Group would be doing a number of "Who Do You Think You Are" workshops in the autumn.

17. Mr King commented that the increase in people taking part in the activities was particularly good as the thought that everyone would "holiday at home" because of the economic downturn was a myth.
18. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the usual community project and activities continued to be held with volunteers from the History Group available on a Friday morning to help people with any enquiries. The Group also continues to hold program of talks and workshops on the first Wednesday evening of the month continues. She went on to say that the Farmers' markets continued to be well attended and there was a core group of stallholders who came every month.
19. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that a partnership project between Ludlow 21, Community Food – Church Stretton and Craven Arms, Craven Arms Community Centre, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, the Rocksprings Community Centre and the primary schools in Ludlow and Craven Arms had recently won funding in excess of £250,000 for a four year project to roll out and develop the Community Garden concept. This will include the appointment of a full time project co-ordinator and a full time gardener to work across the sites involved. She went on to say that working with the Community Centre and various other parties in town, up to £50,000 of funding had been approved in principle to improve play opportunities for 8 – 13 year olds in Craven Arms and that the project was still in the planning stages but was likely to include a BMX track and some natural play structures.

- 20. In closing her report the Centre Manager commented that the Centre had had a busy and successful season and that the work within the community should have secured long lasting benefits.
- 21. The Chair thanked the Centre Manager and her staff for all the work they did in making the Centre a success. This was echoed by other members present.

Other Business

- 22. Mr Chapman expressed regret that there was no member of Shropshire Council present at the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

- 23. It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 4 February 2010 at 10.00am

CHAIR.....

DATE