

Shropshire Hills Forum

Notes from 11th Meeting

Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms

10 am – 12.00 noon Friday 9th October 2015

Attendees: Sue Jones (*Ramblers*), Helen d’Albert (*Shropshire Council*), Clare Fildes (*Shropshire Council*), Keith Pybus (*Shropshire Way Assoc. & Chair of Shropshire Hills Forum*), Chris Chillingworth (*Ludlow / Wheathill P3*), Val Simpson (*Cleobury Mortimer WAW and CCL tourism*), Nigel McDonald (*Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership*), Michael Holland (*Ludlow P3*), Marion Law (*Ramblers area secretary/ Rail Rambles*), Dick Bailey (*WAW Much Wenlock*), Helen Beresford (*Shropshire Council*), Charles Edwards (*P3, Vice Chair G.C.L.*), Gill Steed (*Ramblers*), Colin Carson (*HF holidays*), Rick Summers (*Ludlow P3 / Whitcliffe Common*), Steve Levers (*WaW / Walking Festival B.Castle*), Jacqueline Wigglesworth and Peter Wigglesworth (*Clun Shamblers*), Peter James (*Clun P3*), Paul Butter (*Maintenance team S.C.*), Patrick Edwards (*N.T. Ranger Long Mynd*), Catherine Collier (*Promotions and Marketing manager GCL*), Janet Radford (*C.E. for G.C.L.*).

Apologies: Mike Beazley, Ted Laidlar, Gill Mortimer, Mandy Smith.

Notes of Meeting	Action
<p>Welcome and Introductions: See list of attendees. Helen thanked everyone for coming and commented how wonderful it was to have such a large turnout for the meeting.</p> <p>Feedback focused on the 3 priorities identified by members: The new Shropshire’s Great Outdoors Website and branding (Clare Fildes)</p> <p>Overview of the new website: www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk Use, features and plans for future developments.</p> <p>Website is a recreational resource for the general public to find out about the outdoor facilities and opportunities in the county. It includes walking, cycling, horse riding, play areas, parks and sites information and volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>The website is still under development, with certain features, such as ‘<i>Top Outdoor Experiences</i>’ (to prompt people to get outdoors), not yet operational.</p> <p>At this stage concentrating on getting foundation and information of the website correct. Aim is to develop and link with partners such as the National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust etc.</p> <p>Communication methods discussed. Website not interactive, as do not have sufficient staffing resources. Facebook is current interactive mechanism used. Information goes out via the newsletters – sign up to these is available through the website.</p>	<p>H.B. / C.F.</p>

Feedback welcomed. All encouraged to look at the website and contact Hd'A & H.B. with feedback – Hd'A and HB will then collate comments and together with CF address accordingly.

**All /
C.F. / Hd'A /
H.B.**

Any relevant news / events you have coming up and would like advertised via the website – please provide in WORD format to C.F.

All / C.F.

Promoted routes: (Clare Fildes)

Interactive map on new Shropshire's Great Outdoors website shows a selection of current promoted routes in county.

V.S. raised issue of cross border routes, and advised of a new cross border route (Bewdley area)

Can everyone please look at their area and see what promoted routes are on the map. Identify which are priority routes and if any key promoted routes are missing advise C.F. accordingly. Limited resources mean that new promoted routes will only be considered where there is a proven need.

All / C.F.

Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre (SHDC) as a Walking Hub:

Janet Radford CE & Charles Edwards (Vice Chair) presented vision and plans for SHDC as a walking hub– see the copy of power point presentation circulated with the meeting notes.

Catchment area for walks identified as those starting from SHDC or within a 10 min drive.

Rail rambles suggested by group as another possible idea.

Please refer to the final slide of the presentation for Action points by our group. Contact Catherine Collier to provide feedback and if you would like to participate in helping them with further discussions/ ideas session to support their excellent work.

**C.C / All who
are interested
in
participating
in ideas /
planning
session**

Volunteering Updates:

P3: (Helen Beresford)

At present: 63 P3 Groups and 21 PPWs. Approximately 297 P3 Volunteers across the county

2015/16 so far.....

Volunteer hours – 3941

- 206 individual improvements
- 1289 hours of vegetation clearance
- 72 hours of surfacing works

- 454 hours of surveying paths
- Total value of P3 volunteering - £27,587

Priority areas within Shropshire Hills area 2015/16

- Worthen & Shelve
- Rushbury
- Cardington
- Mainstone (BC interested)

New groups establishing in south

- Worthen & Shelve – Tentatively starting
- Farlow (footpaths group) – Installed first kissing gate with them, they have a number of jobs in pipeline and are due to install a bridge shortly. All work full time but very keen to fit in works when they can. Susan Sharp has expressed interest in helping support them through the CMFA

Other news

- Contact List – about half the co-ordinators have responded positively
- Bushmoor to Marshbrook Bridleway Work Day with Shropshire Housing Volunteers. Wed 14th October. Hope is to clear whole route and install some gates.

Walking for Health: (Helen d'Albert)

Overall the 14 walks going well. Difficulty recruiting more volunteer walk leaders, despite extensive & varied promotion. 8th Oct: 8 volunteers attended training. Further 3 have expressed interest.

Feedback about priority areas – Craven Arms walks commenced 1st July. Numbers building. 3 volunteers trained in Oct.

Despite concerted promotion one of Ludlow's walks has been discontinued due to poor attendance. Focusing instead on providing 2 tiers within popular Monday walk (one slower and one slightly longer and quicker walk) to meet walker's needs. Requires double up of leaders available.

Numbers have increased in Church Stretton Grade 1 walk after further promotion.

Clun now has 2 walk leaders, work focusing on increasing walker numbers.

Bishop's Castle now has 5 walk leaders and numbers still modest but gradually building.

New posters being produced for all groups, using photos of local walkers to give local context. Focusing on social aspect- as surveys show this is main draw for people attending walks.

Wild Team: (Hd'A for Simon Brown)

Shropshire Wild Teams is a Public Health funded project focused on increasing physical activity levels within inactive population groups through outdoor activities in the natural environment.

Shropshire Council's Outdoor Partnerships Service co-ordinates initiative via Outdoor Development Officer (Simon Brown).

There are currently two teams. One based in Shrewsbury and one in/around Craven Arms. While numbers are relatively low, both groups have regular volunteers.

Groups started ten months ago and began with clearance work and gate installation via various council, National Trust and Stiperstones and Corndon Hill partnership projects sites. Other activities since, have included hedgelaying & brush cutter training and wildlife surveys for various organisations.

The Craven Arms based team is now ready to work independently. Simon, has arranged regular work for them with Discovery Centre, National Trust on the Long Mynd; and Rectory Wood via David Hardwick, Area Officer.

Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre: ([Catherine Collier](#))

Lots of areas to maintain. Focusing on enhancing visitor experience. Using a core of a few volunteers working to support staff to provide better interpretation of the outdoors. Practical meadows work continues, with activities such as Himalayan Balsam clearance. Catherine working with Partnership organisations and groups for help with these activities. Exploring corporate social responsibility opportunities with local organisations such as Shropshire Housing Group.

Expressed need to get the message out as a priority that the facility is run by Grow Cook Learn (GCL) highlighting that they are a charity. Suggestion made of flyers to alert those parking at the centre.

'*Ramblers Holidays Charity Trust*' suggested as possible funding source for GCL to access.

National Trust: ([Patrick Edwards- new Ranger at Long Mynd](#))

Lots of volunteering opportunities - Heather moorland conservation work, tearoom, shop, recruiting, parking help, meeting with public: 5,000 acres site. Rely heavily on practical volunteer help. Brought newsletter leaflets to share with group. National Trust hand out information as people park to advise of the volunteering opportunities and walk routes.

AONB – update – ([Nigel McDonald](#)):

AONB has just moved offices to Drovers House Craven Arms.

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Drovers House, The Auction Yard, CRAVEN ARMS, SY7 9BZ

www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk www.twitter.com/ShropHillsAONB

Given swift move to new premises mobile numbers or emails are best used till communication systems are fully sorted.

nigel.mcdonald@shropshire.gov.uk 07990 086383

- Shuttle buses – a good year. Numbers up. Full review being done. Some funding from Natural England has been withdrawn, which is worrying. Still have funding from National Trust. Buses to continue next year. Looking at Ludlow route, a lot of effort put into promotion this year. Excellent feedback received from all over Europe about customer experiences.
- Working with Shropshire Hills Tourism Association to update Discovery Map- self-funding though advertising.
- Focusing on what people do when they get to the area
- Relunched business scheme – Shropshire Hills Business Network – feedback good
- All led walks run this year were well attended. Now reviewing what to do with future walking plans and these ideas link in well with the development of the Discovery Centre as a walking hub.
- Caer Caradoc- would like to run a project to look at the hill; erosion is a concern. Good relationships with landowners. Aim: to look at wayfinding issues, erosion and interpretation of hillfort and locality.
- In their move, a folder has been located with a wealth of hard copies of (printed) walks in the area, in various formats. These routes may no longer be actively promoted but could provide ideas for new walks. Contact Nigel to access folder or to add other routes.
- Public transport links with Shuttle buses raised as a problem, issue discussed, difficulties acknowledged and limitations as to what further can be done were outlined. N.Mc. explained Arriva are considering promoting walker friendly links.

Big Path Watch: (Marion Law and Sue Jones)

- Current flagship campaign of the Ramblers. Involves walking every kilometre square of the county and reporting about these. Anyone from general public can participate. Routes available via Ramblers website- 'The Big Path Watch'.
- An easy to use system and there are plenty of squares still to do in the Shropshire Hills. It can be done via the website, or a phone app. You can take printed information out to the walk site, then enter your findings via the internet on your return.
- There are a few priority squares in Shropshire Hills but all need to be completed. The results will be reported electronically to the council. It is hoped that it will not all be negative feedback. It is important for the council to know which footpaths are open and those that are not. M.L. pointed out the need to be realistic that the council will not be able to do anything about some of the footpath issues.

Update on OS mapping of Shropshire Way: (Hd'A for Mapping &

All

Enforcement Team)

- Confirmation received from OS they have processed the changes to the Shropshire Way using the up to date details sent to them by the Council's Enforcement team and OS mapping liaison officer. It will appear on the electronic OS maps and on the printed versions when these are next produced by OS.
- N.B. if any other amendments made in future please advise team, so layers can be updated and OS informed to ensure it is kept up to date.
- Question raised "has Open Source mapping been informed?"
- Issues have been raised about the new Shropshire Way routes. Some confusion between the linear and circular routes in terms of waymarking. The path is now more of a network of paths across the county and there is a need to define one route that is the 'Shropshire Way' for those wanting to complete a long distance route.
- There has been a complaint about the Shropshire Way around Church Stretton by a self-guided holiday company. **Need P3 groups to look at the routes and let Right of Way Maintenance team know if there are particular issues.**
- OS printed maps kept and used by many for years and become out of date- no easy solution to this.
- Ludlow P3 have done a lot of work on southern part of Shropshire Way – Titterstone Cleve – Stokesay. Latest plan is to remove stiles and replace with gates (½ dozen in total)

Hd'A to ask Enforcement team

P3 Church Stretton, David Hardwick (Maintenance team) and Lucy McFarlane (Enforcement team)

Mayflower Voyage 400 year anniversary 2020: (Keith Pybus)

- K.P had been asked to seek the Forum's views on the benefits of a Mayflower promotion. The Forum was in favour.
- Walk held as part of Wenlock Walking Weekend this year - passes from Brockton via Larden to Shipton. The story of the four 'More' children from Larden Hall who were on the Mayflower. Will need to be turned into a circular walk. Shipton Hall are aware of and support proposed plans.
- Need the help of the Much Wenlock P3's. HB also trying to contact Corvedale P3.
- The development of a Mayflower Trail could be a focus for work, with the opportunity to bring people and thus revenue to the area. 12 million Americans claim to be descendants from the Mayflower. Other areas of Britain already planning events.
- Other ideas discussed to celebrate the anniversary locally: children's events, history, and evening events – Discovery Centre / AONB. This would widen appeal- needs careful planning.
- Suggestion made that P3 and AONB apply for grant funding to pay for it to be done properly, especially if promoted across world, to maximise the opportunity.
- C.F. recommended a smaller focus group comes together to explore the broader picture and events ideas.

KP will look at a return leg

HB / DB to contact once KP has completed

War walks on the Home Front: (Keith Pybus)

- 2015 has been a big success. Key features – pleased to see a significant number of women on walks, and to have a lively level of interest and participation on both walks.
- Date for diary: walk to take place in Ludlow [amended subsequent to meeting] 28th May 2016: Joint leaders Clive Richardson, author, and KP.
- Shropshire VCs – Hopesay to Sibdon Castle – links with the family which designed and still makes the VC.
- Simon Evan’s Way – Simon Evans a postman, who was badly injured in the war.
- War Walk on the Home Front no. 5 was created from his story. V.S. reported on the great success of the walk and the positive future implications. Brought a locally made clay bust to show the group, specially created for the Cleobury Mortimer Walking weekend.
- Excellent feedback received about the weekend events. Val explained having started out with a story and a walk, things snowballed – from a 4 day event, to producing a calendar and now an annual S.E. festival is likely to be created as a result. Val to document this and write a case study to demonstrate what can be achieved.
- In a similar way, although not promoted as one of the War Walks, the SHAONB had taken the paintings of Bruce Bairnsfather of Stokesay Castle, Downton and Clun to launch a walk from the Stokesay Inn [Old Bill mural] to Stokesay church and the “Old Bill” war memorial.
- Idea put forward – should we be looking at themed walking festivals- maybe location based are not necessarily the way forward?
- Names and contact details of walks participants are very hard won by all individual groups and events. Thoughts of collating names and contacts and sharing with partners with view to alerting them of similar events of interest were discussed, but data protection issues would need to be investigated.

Dates for next meetings set as follows:

Friday 5th February 2016 venue to be confirmed

Friday 3rd June 2016 venue to be confirmed.

Please note all agreed action points are highlighted in bold print.

K.P.

V.S. / C.F.

KP will look at the market