

Central Shropshire Walking Forum

Notes of Meeting

2pm, Friday 26th February 2016

The Wilfred Owen Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

Attendees:

John Newnham (Chair)	Shrewsbury Ramblers	john.newnham@btinternet.com
Bill Hodges	Shrewsbury Ramblers	vibill@phoncoop.coop
Phil Barnes	Shrewsbury Ramblers	phil@trigpoint.me.uk
Trevor Allison	Shrewsbury ramblers	eta-06@tiscali.co.uk
Anne Suffolk	Telford & East Shropshire Ramblers	annesuffolk1@gmail.com
Naomi Wrighton	Wellington WaW, Walkabout Wrekin	info@wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk
Dick Bailey	Much Wenlock WaW & WfH	gdickson.bailey@virgin.net
Clare Fildes	Outdoor Partnerships	clare.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk
Mick Dunn	Outdoor Partnerships	mick.dunn@shropshire.gov.uk
Helen Beresford	Outdoor Partnerships	Helen.beresford@shropshire.gov.uk
David Hardwick	Outdoor Partnerships	david.hardwick@shropshire.gov.uk

Apologies:

Barbara Martin
Bob Coalbran
Geoff Sproson
Phil Wadlow

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. Lost Ways Project (JN)

Shrewsbury Ramblers have three volunteers who would carry out research for the Lost Ways Project. If any other groups have volunteers could they please forward the names to John before the end of March so he can produce a consolidated list? Shona Butter (access & mapping team leader) will provide some training for volunteers.

MD informed the meeting that the Dereg guidance due out in April has been delayed. The point of Dereg is to cut down bureaucracy and to make the legal process around ROW easier however evidence will still be required to support claims. Shona will update the forum once more details of the Dereg Bill are known.

4. Severn Way Update (CF)

Unfortunately due to the weather and high river levels the surveys of the Severn Way have not be completed (theses will be completed soon). CF will be looking for volunteers to assist with maintenance (particularly overgrowth) and interpretation for the Severn Way. CF will arrange a meeting in the next few months with key stakeholders & partners.

TA has recently walked a long stretch of the Severn Way and has produced a list of issues. [ACTION TA is requested to share this information with DH](#)

JN stated that much of the Severn Way is on road and would it be possible to re-route this closer to the river.

5. Volunteering

a. Parish Paths Partnership Volunteering Update (HB) - 66 active groups covering 68% of the County geographically with Pontesbury and Shrewsbury groups doing work in areas outside their patch

Volunteering hours (County total) – 6755 hrs representing £58,872.50

Southern Area - 2712

Central Area – 2092

Northern Area – 1951

450 Individual Improvements have been made

All running costs grant should now have been processed. The total amount of grants requested is just under £5500 which is £600 below last years' requests even though we have had more groups applying for grants.

New footpath group in Farlow to compliment the already established bridleways group. Hanwood has now established a group and had their first work day. They have already done a lot of work surveying their network, and it is a relatively small Parish, so are already in a position to address issues. Beckbury have a new group and have identified some work as priorities. They will mainly be focussing on bridleways.

Priority areas which were identified for 2015/16 and now have groups are: Kinnerley, Uffington, Alveley, Llanfair Waterdine and Clee St Margaret. Worthen and Shelve also have had some tentative interest from a group. I have contacted two people in Selattyn and Gobowen to arrange a meetings with to see if they would like to be involved in the scheme. Priority Areas which still require action are Ellesmere, Welshampton, Rushbury, Chelmarsh, and Mainstone (although Bishop's Castle have suggested that they take on some of that work).

Meres and Mosses programme - £2650 available, to be spent on training by the end of the project in June 2017. "Skills in Land Management". Within this there are 3 headings relating to footpath maintenance: installing countryside furniture; using brushcutters and strimmers; and managing rights of way. I have sent out a survey to glean interest and establish what people would like to see in the programme, when these are all back we will start putting together a programme.

b. Parish Paths Partnership Central Area (DH) - The Shrewsbury Ramblers P3 have had a very good write up in the Shropshire Star detailing their work in particular the recent improvements on the Severn Way near the Mount in Shrewsbury. A previously very wet muddy stretch of path has been surfaced and revetted, it has coped well following recent floods. This has been a long term winter project with many volunteer days and extra help also provided by volunteers from Shropshire Wild team and Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Shrewsbury Ramblers P3, Church Stretton P3 and Shropshire Wild Team have also been active in improving the path network around Rushbury and Wall under Heywood following a request for help from the local Walking for Health group. There is still more work to complete in this area.

The Stiperstones and Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme have managed to achieve funding for many access improvements at Poles Coppice, Nills Quarry and Pontesford Hill near Pontesbury, the local P3 group are and will continue to be active in finishing these.

New P3 groups at Pulverbatch, Hanwood and Worthen are continuing to move towards a formal formation. In the Pulverbatch area a bridleways maintenance team of volunteers has recently reformed and will become active on improving riding routes. There is also interest from new wardens to help with rights of way maintenance at Westbury and Rushbury.

c. Walking for Health – (MD) Walking for Health continues to do well in the Central Shropshire area. Much Wenlock maintain their excellent numbers and groups in Broseley, Albrighton, Alveley, Highley, Marden and the Ladies Walk have had their highest ever numbers in recent months. Numbers in Bridgnorth are picking up and we have just carried out a poster and leafletting campaign in the town. A new group has been started in Bicton Heath. Walk Leader training will take place in Shrewsbury on Friday 11th March.

d. Shropshire Wild Teams – (HB) The Shropshire Wild Team's Alpacas are going from strength to strength, at present the team membership has risen to 12 and are now working independently. They have established an ongoing working partnership with both the National Trust on the Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge as well as the Discovery Centre in Craven Arms and have been doing a lot of clearance work for them.

Much work has also been done in Rectory Wood and they have installed a number of kissing gates around the area. In the pipeline are new partnerships with the AONB's River Clun project and with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust's local reserves. They are also due to revisit earlier projects such as the Long Mynd's Red

Grouse count, the Curlew survey around Clee Hill as well as the Pied flycatcher and Redstart bird box survey around Ratlinghope.

The two other teams are also working well with Shrewsbury membership up to 6 and Oswestry now has between 10 and 12 members. Both groups have been working in partnership with the Canal and River Trust, Cambrian Railway Heritage Project, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

6. **Public ROW a guide to Landowners and Farmers (MD)**

The ROW guide for Landowners and Farmers have now been printed and are available in hard and electronic versions. The electronic version is available at <http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/public-rights-of-way-a-guide-for-landowners-and-farmers/> . Shona Butter is also looking at producing a guide for ROW users (walkers, riders and cyclists).

7. **Ploughing and Cropping (MD)**

The enforcement team will be sending initial letters to persistent offenders (reminding them of their legal duty) and anyone who has been reported for P&C issues in the past year. Follow up inspections will be carried out by the team with assistance from the Ramblers groups in the North where most of the issues are. Stage two letters will be issued at this stage if paths have not be reinstated followed by legal notice. If necessary the maintenance team will reinstate the path and the costs reclaimed. In addition the landowner will be reported to the Rural Payments Agency.

8. **Shropshire Way Circular Route (AM)**

A meeting was held on Monday 22nd Feb with representatives from Ramblers groups across the County. The following observations/suggestions were raised:

- a. We need a Shropshire Way Association to further the reinstatement of the Shropshire Way Long Distance Route.
- b. Other individuals were identified who may join and contribute:
 - Tony Ecclestone – Wem Walkers
 - Andrew Careless – Senior ROW officer Telford and Wrekin Council
 - Paula Doherty – Telford and Wrekin Ramblers
 - Luke Neil – Meres & Mosses
 - Liz Evans – North Shropshire Walking Forum
- c. Need to ensure the Long Distance route is on the OS Map? Deadline may be imminent.
- d. It is important to have a distinct waymark for the LD route.
- e. The recommended direction for walking the route should be carefully considered.
- f. The link to Whitchurch should be named as such rather than the link to the sandstone trail.
- g. Links or signs to other long distance paths would be useful.
- h. Bodies identified for possible funding.
- i. A formal SWA could apply for external grants.
- j. Needs more clarity on project. Another meeting with Deb Hughes and CF would be useful. ACTION CF is requested to look at a suitable date for a meeting.

9. **Other Updates**

a. Permissive Paths (JN) – John raised concerns that permissive paths or unauthorised diversions may be used as a viable alternative to using the law to get blocked rights of way opened up. MD assured the form that even if permissive paths were agreed that this would not negate the need for the official line to be open and available. If there are cases where unofficial diversions have been created MD requests that the details are forwarded to Shona Butters team for investigation.

b. Shropshire Council Financial Strategy (CF)

The Financial Strategy for 2016/17 and 2017/18 has been ratified by the Cabinet.

The Council are prioritising essential services which will be ring fenced - including Adult Social Care and Children's Services; other services come under the mandatory bracket - these include ROW (funding for which will continue but at a reduced level). Other discretionary services will be cut unless the settlement from Central Government improves.

Council Tax will increase - with all councils working towards no central government funding by 2020. Council to derive own funding from Council Tax and business rates.

All swimming pools, Council owned leisure centres, parks and open spaces are under threat of closure by March 2018. The aspiration is for the Council not to provide these services after that date. This is a 'worst case scenario', and a strong adverse reaction is expected from the public. It is hoped this, together with lobbying, will generate a more positive outcome.

Parks and sites are under threat. The reality is they cannot just be fenced off and closed. It is possible that local Parish and Town Councils may take on urban greenspace and play areas, but the Countryside Heritage Sites require special management and are of benefit to a much wider area. Options for managing these differently are being considered.

- c. Shropshire Great Outdoors Launch – (CF) There will be a “soft Launch” of the Shropshire’s Great Outdoors website before Easter. This will include the “top experience” section which is being finished by the designers.
- d. Annual ROW Survey – (CF) Forum members were reminded to encourage as many people as possible to complete the Annual ROW survey which will close on the 21st March 2016 <http://new.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/outdoor-recreation-annual-public-survey/>
- e. Walking Festivals and Events – (MD) a list of all walking festivals, Charity walks and events is being compiled (list can be found at Annex A). All forum members are requested to pass on the details to their group members and encourage them to support their local walks. If anyone knows of any other events could they please pass them on to MD. All events will be advertised on Facebook and the Shropshire Great Outdoors Website.

10. Group Updates

a. Shrewsbury Ramblers – (JN) Thanks to the efforts of our Publicity Secretary, Amanda Hartley-Newton, we have, since the beginning of this year, received tremendous coverage in the News media. Firstly a 4 page spread in the January edition of the Shropshire magazine, and then a full page in the Shropshire Star and a subsequent one in The Shrewsbury Chronicle extolling the work of our P3 Group in repairing and maintaining footpaths.

A new Programme has just been issued, listing walks up until the end of June. The compilation of the walks is now in the hands of some 6 members of the Group, each with responsibility for differing days in the week. Included in the Newsletter section of the Programme is an appeal from me for volunteers to do research work on the Lost Ways project. Details are there, too, of a Walk Leader Training Workshop to take place in Upton Magna Village Hall on Saturday, 23rd April. We obviously hope it will result in more members coming forward to lead walks on future programmes.

JN recently had a meeting with Mike Connor (Shrewsbury Tourist Association) about Shrewsbury becoming a Walkers are Welcome town. Mike has requested letters of support from walkers and local business. 4500 “Walks in and around Shrewsbury” guide books have now been sold and a further 1500 are being printed.

b. The Big Path Watch – (TA) The initial results from the Big Path Watch have been sent out to local footpath secretaries. In Shropshire over 1621 kilometre squares were surveyed. All 318 kilometre squares were surveyed in Telford and Wrekin.

	Shropshire	Telford
Negatives	1300 missing signs	700 missing signs
	250 paths not found	125 paths not found
	145 unsafe stiles	60 paths with some form of obstruction
	100 missing stiles and bridges	
	250 undergrowth obstructions	
	175 crop obstructions	

Positives	over 400 attractive views 80 interesting trees Over 650 welcoming features	over 200 attractive views over 50 interesting trees
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- c. Telford and East Shropshire Ramblers – (AS) A lot of work has been carried out on the footpaths in the Telford and Wrekin area. It is now possible to report ROW issues on line in Telford and Wrekin. Andrew Careless is now looking at the Shropshire Way and Severn Way in the Telford and Wrekin area.
- d. Wellington WaW and Walk about Wrekin – (NW) Walking for Health Volunteer Walk Leader training will take place 13th April 2016. The Wellington Walking Festival will take place between 12th & 18th Sep 2016.
- e. Much Wenlock WaW and WfH – (DB) WfH continues to do well in Much Wenlock. New Walker Registration forms have been completed for most walkers. The P3 group are holding a recruitment drive to recruit younger members to assist in the heavier tasks. There has been a lot of positive feedback from visitors who walk in and around Much Wenlock.
- f. Marches LDWA – (GS) Unfortunately Geoff was unable to attend the meeting but provided the following update. The leaflets for Elsie's walk have now been produced and the route is waymarked (some waymarks have been removed in the area between Upper Vessons and the Paddock Farm but will be replaced) There is also a website for the walk <http://www.sproson.com/elsieswalk.html>
The South Shropshire Circular is on Saturday 27th Feb from Clun, and the Wenlock Olympian walk is on July 18/19 following a 100K route over the Clees, Wenlock Edge, Caradoc and the Lawley.

11. AOB

- a. CF – Is looking at a Heritage Lottery bid to set up and LPS for the Wrekin. Clare will be organising a meeting soon for key stakeholders and partners.
- b. BH – The Holliday Fellowship will be holding their annual meeting in Shrewsbury on the 9th April.
- c. TA – The St Winifred's Pilgrimage walk will take place during the 3rd Sat in June 2016

12. Date of Next Meeting

Fri 13th May TBC

2016 SHROPSHIRE WALKING FESTIVALS / CHALLENGE WALKS / CHARITY WALKS / EVENTS

WALKING FESTIVALS

30th Apr – 08th May 2016. Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival www.visitironbridge.co.uk/walkingfestival

07th May – 15th May 2016. Bishops Castle Walking Festival www.walkingfestival.co.uk

20th May – 22nd May 2016. Whitchurch Walking Festival www.whitchurchwalkers.co.uk

23rd Jun – 26th Jun 2016. Church Stretton Walking Festival www.churchstrettonwalkingfestival.co.uk

09th Sep – 12th Sep 2016. Much Wenlock Walking Weekend www.2shrop.net/wenlock.walks

12th - 18th Sep 2016. Wellington Walking Festival www.wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk

CHALLENGE WALKS

27th Feb 2016. The South Shropshire Circular. 25mile challenge walk
<https://www.ldwa.org.uk/Marches/E/15250/34th-south-shropshire-circular.html>

14th May 2016. The Clun Valley Challenge Walk Choose either the 26 or 16 mile route, both with some challenging Shropshire Hills. www.clunvalleychallenge.com

11th – 12th Jun 2016. The Oswestry Round Walk 33 miles in one day (11th June) or complete the distance over 2 days (11 & 12 June) www.oswestryround.co.uk/events.html

16th – 17th Jul 2016. Wenlock Olympian Walk 100km challenge in 28 hrs www.ladwa.org.uk/marches

11th Sep 2016. The Tour des Marches Walk (formerly the Wistanstow Challenge Walk) follows a stunning route through the South Shropshire Countryside. <http://wistanstowwalk.blogspot.co.uk>

1st – 2nd Oct 2016. Longmynd Hike. The Longmynd Hike is a 50 mile competition hike which takes place over the first weekend of October each year. On line entries will open at 09:00 on Sunday 5th June 2016
www.longmyndhike.org.uk

CHARITY WALKS

5th Mar 2016. The Pontesbury Potter 13 mile Hill and Valley Trail, starting and finishing at the Mary Webb School Pontesbury. In aid of the Severn Hospice www.severnospice.org.uk

20th Mar 2016. Derwin College 10 mile charity walk (Oswestry) <http://www.derwen.ac.uk/visit/events/>

23rd Apr 2016. The Severn Stride 17 mile charity walk in aid of Severn Hospice. The walk starts at the hospice site in Apley, Telford and finishes at Severn Hospice, Bicton, Shrewsbury www.severnospice.org.uk

30th April 2016. Bishops Castle Round and About Walks Ramble Scramble or Amble over a choice of routes (22.5 miles, 13 miles or 9.5 miles) for Leukaemia Research www.bishopscastle.co.uk/tourism/walking/

07th May 2016. Midnight Walk Shrewsbury in aid of Severn Hospice. 8 km midnight walk starting from the Shrewsbury Sports Village at 10pm <http://www.severnospice.org.uk/support-us/events/severn-hospice-events/?ee=195>

21st May 2016. Midnight Walk Telford in aid of Severn Hospice. 8 km midnight walk starting from the Telford College of Arts and Technology at 10pm <http://www.severnospice.org.uk/support-us/events/severn-hospice-events/?ee=194>

22nd May 2016. The Shropshire Regiments Trail. A 7, 4 or 1 mile walk in aid of the Shropshire Regimental Museum. Starting at the Vallets, Richards Castle, Ludlow SY84ET www.shropshireregimentalmuseum.co.uk

25th June 2016. The Mynd Drover 13 or 26 mile charity walk / run in aid of Church Stretton School www.churchstrettonwalkingfestival.co.uk

4th September 2016. Severn Wonders of the Shropshire Hills. 16, 10 or 6 mile walk in aid of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust starting at Minsterly Village Hall and exploring the Outstanding Nature reserves including the Stiperstones, Nipstone, the Hollies and Earls and Pontesford Hill. www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk