



PROGRESS WITH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

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Summary

This paper provides a brief update on actions implementing the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for 2024-29, adopted in December 2023.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the information provided.

Background

Brief updates are shown here under each of the Strategy themes. Updates relate to actions defined under each theme in the Strategy, and aim to cover delivery activity by all relevant partners, not just by the National Landscape Team.

Theme 1 Setting an ambitious sustainable vision for tourism and engaging people with this.

- Sustainable tourism is embedded in the new draft [Shropshire Hills Management Plan 2025-30](#) as part of a wider vision for the area, incorporating regenerative principles. The Plan emphasises a sense of shared responsibility for looking after the Shropshire Hills, including visitors and tourism businesses.
- The **Doughnut Economics model** is also embedded in the new Shropshire Hills Management Plan. This encourages a mindset shift in what our economy is for – delivering people's wellbeing within environmental limits, as well as a framework for monitoring and understanding where we are.
- The Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy and the team's input at county level has helped sustainable and regenerative tourism principles to be present in the new draft **Shropshire Destination Management Plan (DMP)**. The National Landscape Team are continuing to work with key staff to ensure that the ambition of the DMP's aims is consistent through the document and is supported by clearly defined actions. The Plan is shortly to go out for public consultation.
- **Wider activity that seeks to conserve and enhance the Shropshire Hills landscape**, continues, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- The [Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust](#) continues to fund-raise for the Conservation Fund, including through Friends of the Shropshire Hills, providing a channel for people

to give back to the area. The Trust is preparing for its 10th anniversary in 2016 with additional promotion.

- '[Talking Tourism](#)' the annual **Shropshire Hills Tourism Information Exchange event** on 19th March at Acton Scott was well attended by tourism businesses and as always provides means of showcasing sustainability.

Theme 2 Improving provision of sustainable tourism services which draw on the area's special qualities.

- Developing a **visitor ethic in promotion material** - regenerative tourism is the central message of this year's Shropshire Hills visitor map which has been distributed widely, has a consistent demand from venues, and is very popular with visitors. We distributed an estimated 15,000 maps this year with only limited stock remaining in key visitor hubs.
- The **National Landscape rebranding** continues to become better embedded with partner organisations.
- Links have been strengthened with the **Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre** to make more of its potential as a shop window for the National Landscape, and now also as a registered Visitor Information Centre.
- The **Shropshire's Great Outdoors Project** led by Shropshire Council has led the creation of a new brand for the county called 'IN Shropshire' which has been adopted by Visit Shropshire and other partners. It has also led the production of a county access strategy, undertaken promotion of walking, cycling and low impact recreation, and created a digital image library for use by tourism partners under the new IN Shropshire brand. The National Landscape Team have supported this work.
- Projects have been delivered through Defra's **Access for All capital works** at a range of visitor locations – new funding for 2025/6 has allowed this work to continue with a number of ambitious projects in development.
- A creative arts project engaging new audiences [Whispers of the Hills](#) was delivered in the Shropshire Hills as part of the national 'Nature Calling' arts project led by the National Landscapes Association and inspired by the area's geology, landform and nature.
- The **Shropshire Good Food Partnership** has continued to develop a local food culture through the [Good Food Trail](#) and [farming case studies](#), the Shropshire Hills featuring prominently in both, with products including pasture-fed meat, milk and fresh vegetables. The National Landscape Team have supported this work.
- A **new permissive walk** from Brow Farm at Ratlinghope is in development to explore the nearby hillforts.
- The National Landscape Team have provided advice for the **installation of a hide** at Cefn Einion overlooking the new beaver enclosure.
- **Outreach and engagement** work by the National Landscape Team's Engagement Ranger is continuing to reach and engage new groups and audiences.

Theme 3 Supporting and encouraging environmental practices and behaviours by businesses and visitors.

- The [2025 Shropshire Hills Shuttle bus season](#) has been very successful, with the help of a new digital ticket machine (allowing contactless payment), excellent weather, affordable ticketing and an improved timetable. 1,611 passengers were

carried, generating £5,500 income over a 42 day service period. £13,500 funding was provided by Shropshire Council, Church Stretton Town Council, National Trust, Natural England and Visit Shropshire Hills.

- **Sustainability messaging** has remained a strong focus in our communications, and increased prominence has been given to encouraging **connection to nature**.
- A number of projects by farmers and landowners funded through the [Farming in Protected Landscapes programme](#) have been delivering new visitor facilities and information or interpretation.
- Cycling UK launched the **Marcher Castles Way**, a 180 mile partly off-road cycle tourism route centred on the Shropshire Hills. Their uptake of the Team's input was mixed, and the promotional material didn't mention the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, but it does provide a new route for the area to encourage cycle tourism.

Theme 4 Managing the effects of localised visitor pressure, mitigating impacts, and sharing economic benefit by promoting visitor activity across the area.

- The National Landscape team have been working with site providers and communities to address **visitor management issues** around Snailbeach, the Wrekin, Church Stretton and Bury Ditches.
- Earlier work on a car parks audit has fed in to the **Open Horizons project** led by Shropshire Council to promote a number of accessible viewpoints in the Shropshire Hills, with support from the National Landscape team including a Defra Access for All grant.
- Visitor information hubs continue to provide **visitor information to help encourage dispersal** away from main visitor hot spots. For the National Landscape team, dispersal remains a consistent element when providing advice to Visit Shropshire on PR, press and other campaigns to promote the area.
- Partners including the National Landscape team have been working with landowners to find solutions to inappropriate use of private land by **mountain bike and electric mountain bike** users.

Theme 5 Co-ordinating and adding value to sustainable tourism delivery.

- The National Landscape team is working with and supporting the work of **Local Visitor Economy Partnership** and Shropshire Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Tourism project.
- The new **Shropshire Hills Management Plan** provides a mechanism to further integrate aims and work between Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council regarding sustainable tourism.
- The **Doughnut data portrait** for the Shropshire Hills has developed monitoring of metrics and factors important to sustainability, some of which may not all be easy to measure.
- The National Landscape team works directly with **Visit Shropshire** to help plan promotional activity.
- We participate actively in the EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism **Charter network** and in National Landscape **sustainable tourism networks**.
- The developing **Landscape Connections project**, while not directly aiming at tourism outputs, includes work on engaging new audiences, which include current and potential day visitors.

- **Partnership structures** for the Shropshire Hills National Landscape are being refreshed with a new and wider Forum which will be able to involve tourism businesses and providers and link them with other stakeholders.

List of Background Papers

Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024-29 <https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/our-work/area-initiatives/sustainable-tourism>

Progress update on Sustainable Tourism Strategy Actions for Partnership meeting 13th November 2024

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None