

# Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28

## Appendix 1- Examining the Evidence

There is a plethora of research demonstrating the benefits of the Great Outdoors to the local economy, health and the environment. A selection of the more relevant data are presented here, along with feedback from partners and the results of local surveys. These have informed the development of Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28.

The research is presented at a national and local level for each of the key objectives; enjoyment, health and wellbeing prosperity, community, natural and cultural heritage and statutory requirements.

### 1.0 Enjoyment of the outdoors

#### 1.1 National Headlines

##### Natural England-Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2015/16<sup>1</sup>

The latest results from Natural England's annual survey on how people engage with the natural environment shows that:

- 3.1 billion visits to the Natural Environment
- 58% visit at least weekly- significant increase on previous years
- 1.51 billion walking with a dog (48%)
- 869 million walking without a dog (28%)
- 519 million use paths/ cycleways/ bridleways
- 10% of the population never visit the natural environment- no change
- 1.45 billion visits in towns and cities
- 1.35 billion visits in the countryside
- Health and exercise most likely motivation- risen from 24% in 2009/10 to 47% 2015/16
- Lack of time due to work most likely barrier to visiting

##### Heritage Lottery Fund's (2016) State of the UK Public Parks 2016<sup>2</sup>

- 57% of UK population visit local parks >monthly
- 90% of families with children under 5

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-2015-to-2016> <sup>2</sup>  
<https://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016>

- 70% of people aged 25-34

#### **Department for Transport's Local Area Walking and Cycling statistics for 2014/15 in England<sup>2</sup>**

- 86% of people walk at least once per month (38.3 million people)
- 81% of adults walk at least once per week- 43% for recreational reasons
- 15% of adults cycled at least once a month (6.5 million people)
- 10% cycled at least once a week- 5% for recreational reasons

#### **Rides of Way- Cycling UK's Off-Road Report 2017<sup>3</sup>**

Cycling UK had responses to their national survey from 11,482 cyclists. Some of the key findings were:

- 31% of cyclists cited health and fitness as the main motivation for cycling off-road (the tops reason)
- Over 30% use footpaths at least weekly, 65% citing this is because of lack of choice and 52% to avoid traffic danger
- Over 50% back increased access as the number one off-road campaign goal
- 91% rate off-road cycling as fairly or very important to their mental health
- 90% say off-road cycling is fairly or very important to their physical health
- 74% consider the Rights of Way system unsuitable
- Almost 80% prefer single-track paths, ideally in broadleaf or coniferous woodland
- Almost 40% report verbal altercations, mainly with walkers
- 16% of cyclists were unaware of Rights of Way distinctions
- 27% of men prefer downhill trails and jumps (only 4% of women)

#### **The British Equestrian Trade Association's National Equestrian Survey (2015)<sup>4</sup>**

The survey found that:

- Riding for pleasure, at 96%, was the most popular equestrian activity, with 59% of riders taking part in non-affiliated competitions.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/walking-and-cycling-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wqhd3wgez9o01d8/AAA14X13JYmn\\_8mQpG0grMgAa?dl=0&preview=RidesOfWayCyclingUKOffRoadReport.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wqhd3wgez9o01d8/AAA14X13JYmn_8mQpG0grMgAa?dl=0&preview=RidesOfWayCyclingUKOffRoadReport.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.beta-uk.org/pages/news-amp-events/news/national-equestrian-survey-2015-shows-increased-consumer-spending.php>

- The overall number of those who ride has fallen, from 3.5 million in 2011 to 2.7 million in 2015.
- There has been a decline in regular riders, from 1.6 million in 2011 to 1.3 million in 2015.
- However, there has been significant growth in the number of riders aged between 16 and 24, rising from 368,000 in 2011 to 403,000 in 2015.
- There remains a strong gender bias, with females representing 74% of the riding population. In 2015, there are an estimated 962,000 female regular riders compared with 348,000 males.

### **Canal and River Trust**

The inland waterways are predominantly used for leisure and recreation. They support a range of water-based activities from boating and rowing with canoeing becoming increasingly popular and widespread. Angling is also very popular. Much larger numbers of people use the waterways for information recreation such as walking, cycling, birdwatching and waterway heritage.

During 2016-2017, 4.3 million people made regular visits to the canals and rivers managed by the Canal & River Trust, with an estimated 380 million visits made in total. Of those regular visits 2 million people used the towpath for walking, 1.3 million either jogged or cycled, 180,000 fished, and 680,000 visited a canalside attraction.

The canal towpath is freely open for everyone to access and which everyone can benefit from regardless of their level of fitness. Waterways provide easily accessible opportunities for people of all ages to experience tranquillity or participate in recreation in a safe and predictable environment. Based on national evidence towpaths can help towards strengthening the local rural economy through:

- Increased visitor numbers
- Increased visitor spend
- Increased leisure activity
- Stimulating regeneration and development activity

By opening-up the waterway for all year round walking and cycling the canal becomes an important resource to bring both economic and social benefits to the adjoining communities and businesses.

It has been estimated that similar canal access schemes in Shropshire will bring a 10% growth in visitor numbers to the towpath although in more urban areas an uplift of 50% has been measured. An improved canal corridor, along with the high quality rural setting, will help to enhance the attractiveness of the area to visitors, reduce seasonality by enabling access throughout the year and increase visitor dwell time and expenditure in the local economy.

Improvements to the canal corridor in Shropshire will benefit visitors to the area by:

- Offering an easy accessible route for walking and cycling which will encourage users to explore the canal's key destinations, surrounding network of pathways and adjacent communities
- Making the towpath available to all

- Improving access at key points
- Encourage boating visitors to moor in the area and increase visits to local services

### ***Waterways & Wellbeing – Building the Evidence Base, Canal & River Trust 2017***

In 2017 the Trust launched its first outcomes report ‘Waterways & Wellbeing -Building the evidence base’

This sets out how the Trust will measure, impact and validate the difference waterways are making to individuals, communities and society. To demonstrate that the waterways ‘transform places and enrich lives’.

This is being measured in terms of:

- How they are being used by others as platforms for a wide range of activity;
- The difference that our activities and interventions are making to local people’s lives; and
- The contributions that are making to the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the nation.

Trevor Basin, centrally located within the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal WHS, is one of fourteen sections of waterway corridors across the network which will be the focus of in-depth measurement and evaluation. The most recent surveys completed at Trevor Basin found an overwhelming positive response (considerably higher than the national average) to questions regarding enjoyment of visit, feeling safe, greater appreciation of wildlife and access to greenspace. The results demonstrate that a high-quality environment encourages greater use of the towpath and associated countryside, bringing with it benefits around health & wellbeing<sup>5</sup>.

## **1.2 Shropshire Headlines**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/how-we-make-a-difference>

## Natural England-Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) 2015/16<sup>6</sup>

Average visits per week



57% of Shropshire residents visited the natural environment in 2015/16, up from 48% in 2009/10. This is the equivalent of 149,000 Shropshire residents aged 16 and over by 1.3 visits on average to 4.5 visits per respondent per week for those who visited at least once (3.2 visits per week nationally) Volume of visits by individual people can be estimated at 35 million in 2015/16.

Figure 1- Average visits to the Natural Environment/ week in Shropshire

Despite high levels of access in Shropshire, there are still some population segments who are less likely to access the natural environment, including the over 65s, those with a disability, the unemployed, and socio-economic groups C2 and DE.

Access is slightly higher for men compared with women (58% compared with 57%), is highest amongst the 35-44 age segment and for the AB socio-economic classification.

- 13% of visits were with children
- 68% of visits were made alone
- The average party size was 2.2 people
- The average number of adults per party was 1.9

The highest proportion of visits was to the countryside (57%) ahead of green space within towns and cities (42%)

Groups least likely to access the natural environment, 2015/16

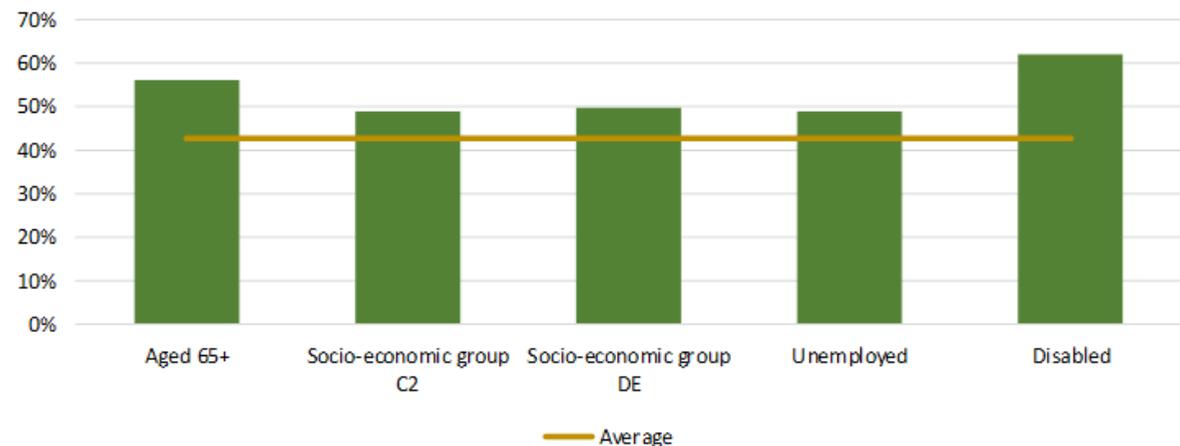


Figure 2- Sectors of the population that are least likely to visit the Natural Environment

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-2015-to-2016>

Two-thirds of visits involving walking with a dog, and a quarter walking without a dog.

Other common activities include eating/drinking out, visiting an attraction, playing with children and wildlife watching.

Walkers – especially those with a dog – are most likely to be frequent visitors to the natural environment.

- More than two-thirds of Shropshire residents travel 2 miles or less. 25% travel less than 1 mile.
- 77% of visits were made on foot, while 20% were accessed via a car or van.
- Most visits last between half an hour and three hours, with the highest proportion lasting between 1 and 2 hours.
- There is a definite correlation between distance travelled and length of trip – all visits lasting less than 15 minutes were within a mile’s journey time while no visits lasting less than an hour were more than 5 miles away.

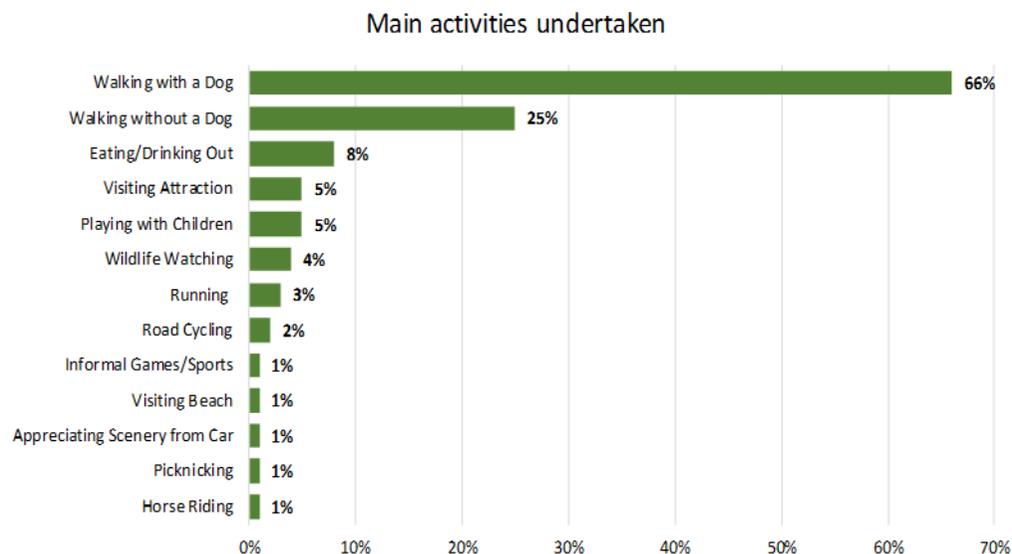


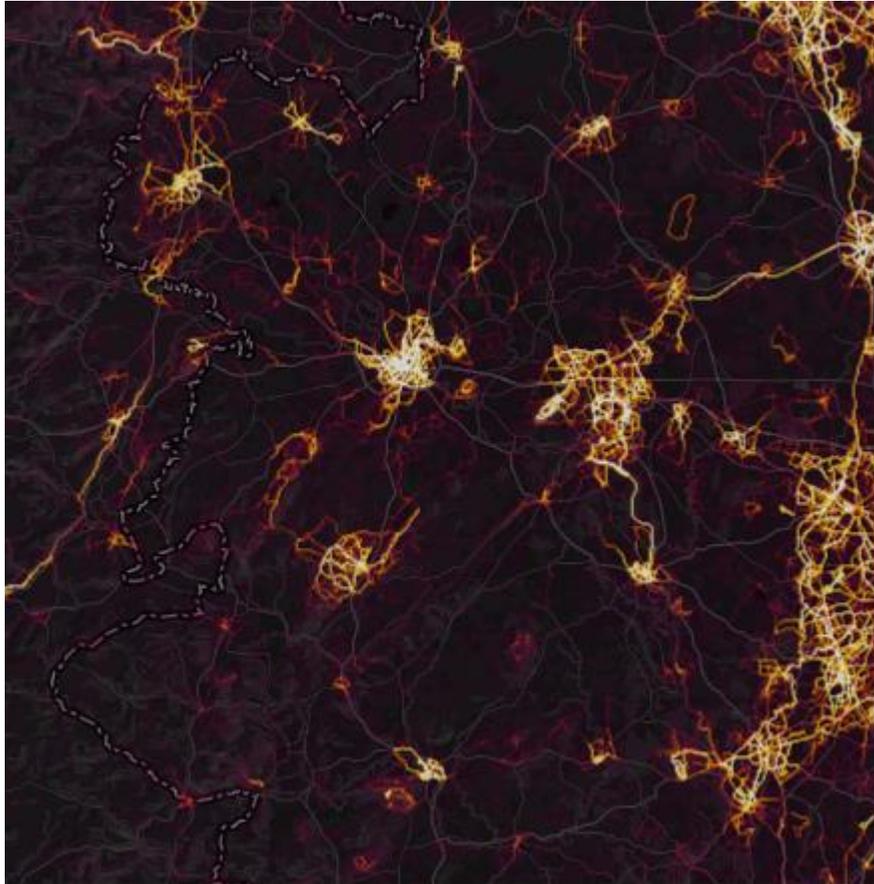
Figure 3- Main activities undertaken whilst visiting the natural environment in Shropshire

House prices increase between 2 and 20% if they are within close proximity of a park or open space<sup>7</sup>.

### Strava mapping

Strava Engineering has developed a web platform that monitors activity from a smart phone app. The app monitors where people are going and allows people to record times to complete an activity and to compete against others. The Strava Heatmap<sup>8</sup> is useful to demonstrate popular routes, some of which may not be on Public Rights of Way. The mapping can distinguish between cyclists and walkers.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.opengreenspace.com/opportunities-and-challenges/economic/property-values/> <sup>8</sup> <https://labs.strava.com/heatmap/>



The map to the left shows the Strava activity for Shropshire. Strava mapping can be a useful tool to establish demand for routes and popularity of Country Parks and Heritage Sites.

Strava Heatmap hotspots outside the towns are:

- Attingham Park
- Colemere
- Dudmaston Hall and Comer Wood
- Eastridge Woods
- Haughmond Hill
- Hawstone Park
- Long Mynd
- Mortimer Forest
- Nesscliffe and The Cliffe
- Stiperstones
- Wyre Forest

It should be remembered that Strava mapping will only show people who have downloaded the app and favours off-road cyclists, who commonly use this as a tool to measure speeds to complete certain routes.

*Figure 4- Strava heatmap of Shropshire*

### **Feedback from partners**

Initial consultation with key partners (National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Ramblers Assoc., Cycling UK, British Horse Society, Strutt Parker, National Farmers Union, Country Landowners and Business Association, Forestry Commission, Canal and River Trust, Historic England, Natural England, Wild Wednesday Wheelers, Walking Forums, Riding and Carriage Driving Forum) has informed the development of this strategy and a summary of the key feedback related to visitor enjoyment is listed below.

Visitor numbers to visitor centres, National and Local Nature Reserves and other sites are increasing.

Visitor management needs to be improved at a number of key sites, where visitors are exceeding capacity at peak times, including:

- Cardingmill Valley
- Attingham
- Dudmaston
- Stiperstones NNR
- Brown Moss (not so much the visitors but their dogs)

The current level of visitor usage on some sites is having an impact on wildlife – access levels need to be compatible with maintaining wildlife interest and protecting natural and cultural heritage. Dog walking is putting unacceptable pressure on some ecologically sensitive sites.

The introduction of car parking charges to help manage visitor pressure on some sites and to increase income.

Shropshire Hills Shuttles are important in the Shropshire Hills AONB to help disperse visitors and encourage local people to experience the outdoors.

Easy access trail at the Stiperstones is well used and more all-ability access is needed.

There needs to be a campaign to educate users on the legal use of public ROW and the Countryside Code. There is concern that some uneducated members of the public are not following the countryside code, which causes significant problems for landowners and colours their perception of the general public as a whole. There can also be a clash between users on some sites, especially mountain biking and walkers and to a lesser extent horse riders.

A few motorised users are giving others a bad name, resulting in conflicts and lack of enthusiasm to promote motorised off-road routes. 4x4 vehicles can offer people with reduced mobility a useful way of accessing the countryside and promotion of some routes for sensible 4x4 access should be encouraged.

Farmers are supportive of the public accessing the outdoors for recreation as it is an opportunity to explain countryside management and food production but there needs to be a better understanding by users of the business requirements of the farming industry:

*“In anticipating more public access there should be flexible means of temporary stop orders (e.g. at lambing) or make it easier for permanent diversions of PROW. Overall however, it should be in education of the general public as to the Countryside Code and how to behave responsibly in the countryside.”*

Some land owners do not abide with the law - particularly in relation to restoring paths after cultivating land for crops.

There is demand for more off-road family cycling on Forestry Commission and other sites but these groups are difficult to engage with.

There were concerns about poor or slow maintenance on many paths and lack of signage, particularly at road side, that can deter people accessing the outdoors. It was acknowledged that lack of Public Sector funding is having an impact on this.

More multi-user routes are needed.

- Cycleways should become multi-use routes
- More off-road cycling provision needed

- Development of more multi-user routes
- Bridleway creation
- Interlinking circular routes for riders

*“Shropshire’s Great Outdoors Strategy should have policy to increase multi-user routes across publically owned sites wherever possible.”*

We should continue to encourage more people to walk - both in groups and individually/with family friends.

Geographically, a few priorities came to the fore:

- Strava mapping encouraging fast downhill descents using footpaths on the Long Mynd is dangerous. ○ The North West Relief Road should have a separate multi-use route running alongside.
- Downhill mountain bike routes on Nesscliffe are causing problems with other users and eroding the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Better signage and other management approaches are needed.
- There are opportunities for canal side development, including:
  - Market Drayton
  - Whitchurch
  - Ellesmere
  - Llanymynech
- The Forestry Commission are considering the demand for mountain bike routes at Haughmond Hill, which has traditionally been developed for family activity.
- Some Scheduled Ancient Monuments are at risk<sup>8</sup>. The most significant are:
  - Oswestry Old hillfort
  - Battlefield- issues with development
  - Offa’s Dyke monument

Priorities for new activity include:

- Development of the Severn Way and a canoe trail down the River Severn
- Shrewsbury Big Town Plan access opportunities
- Severn Valley Country Park extension to visitor centre and heritage interpretation

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<sup>8</sup> Heritage at Risk register: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>

- Wrekin- better visitor management on the western fringes
- Fenns and Whixall access plan needed
- Development of old railway from Telford to Craven Arms as multiuse trail

## User Feedback

### Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey

A User Survey has been conducted annually since the launch of the Countryside Access Strategy in 2008. This is circulated around groups who volunteer for Outdoor Partnerships at the Council as well as on websites, therefore the results are likely to be biased towards regular users and those already involved with the work of the Council. Full details can be found here:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-partnerships/plans-policies-and-strategies/>

601 people responded to the survey in 2017. The results show:

- Walking is still the main activity (77%)
- Most people are enjoying the outdoors to improve their health and experience nature
- Circular walks and Country Parks and Sites are most commonly used
- Respondents were most likely to use the provision 1-3 times per week, for 2 hours or more with family and friends

The primary concern was cuts to funding and the ability for these services to be maintained in the current financial climate.

### Key messages from the User Survey:

- The outdoor assets are appreciated and people are aware of how important the provision is for health and wellbeing
- Better promotion of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website and the work of the Service is needed

## 1.4 Conclusions

- Visits to the natural environment are increasing substantially nationally and, even more so in Shropshire.
- Walking is by far the most frequent activity but other forms of access are important and need to be accommodated.
- A joined up approach to providing safe routes for mountain biking and off-road family cycling is needed.
- Whilst visits generally to the natural environment are higher than the national average, key segments of the population are missing out. We need to provide more access for the over 65's, disabled and disadvantaged, near where they live or that can be accessed by public transport.

- Visitor management of 'honey pot' sites needs to be improved, with visitors being encouraged to visit other sites where there is more capacity and/or less likely to be an impact on the natural and cultural heritage.
- Countryside sites are important to families and facilities should reflect this.
- New multi-user routes should be a priority.
- There needs to be a campaign to increase understanding by all users of the Countryside Code and legal use of Rights of Way and to encourage more responsible behaviour in the countryside.
- Landowners should be encouraged to abide by their legal responsibilities with regard to Rights of Way.
- Motorised users should be encouraged to use routes safely and responsibly. Private alternatives should be promoted for those looking for more challenging off-road routes.

## 2.0 Health and wellbeing

There is extensive international research demonstrating the importance of getting out and about in the Great Outdoors for physical and mental health.

### 2.1 National Headlines

#### **Outdoor recreation as a potential level for health improvement: A review of the health benefits, barriers and opportunities for the sector. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)<sup>9</sup>**

Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) conducted a literary review that draws together evidence on both the physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation. The review concluded that “investment in outdoor recreation offers a considerable opportunity for a meaningful return on investment, yet these benefits have remained largely untapped.” Outdoor exercise delivers an estimated £2.2 billion of health benefits to adults in England each year.

Their recommendations included:

- Using ecotherapy as an economic intervention to reduce stress, depression and anxiety in the workplace- the cost of stress to the UK economy stood at £6.8bn in 2014, with ACAS figures reporting that mental ill-health (including stress, depression and anxiety) caused 91 million lost working days each year, with sickness absence costing £8.4 billion each year, £15.1 billion loss in reduced productivity, and £2.4 billion in the cost of replacing lost staff, with current estimates of the cost to UK employers of mental ill-health standing at £30 billion per annum.
- Using green exercise as a preventative measure, including to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Encouraging ‘free play’.
- Reframing outdoor exercise as ‘restorative recreation’; encouraging people to take pleasure in the sensory and aesthetic pleasure of being with nature.
- Consider the integration of outdoor recreation as a therapeutic intervention with NHS commissioners, with the associated NICE guidelines.

**University College London (2014) looked at the use of natural solutions to tackle health inequalities<sup>10</sup>** and found that:

- Accessible green space can lead to increased physical activity levels
- The most affluent 20% of wards in England have five times the amount of accessible green space that the most deprived 10% of wards
- Green space may provide health benefits through better sleep, improved immunity, greater social interaction and physical activity
- There are trends in reduced hospital admissions for mental illness associated with more green space, even after controlling for levels of deprivation and population density
- Less green space in a living environment is associated with a greater risk of anxiety and depression, feelings of loneliness and perceived shortage of social support

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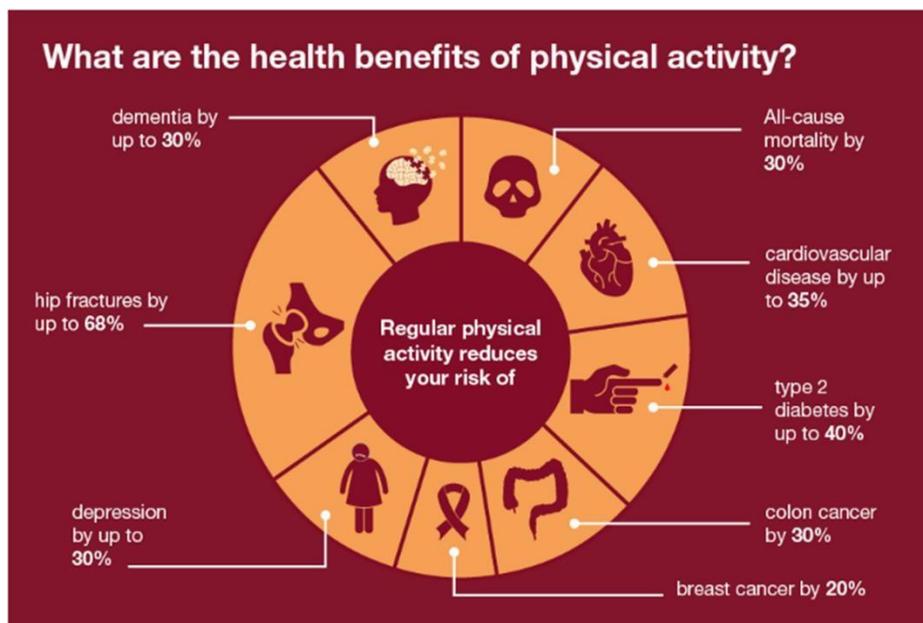
<sup>9</sup> <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/617906/1/MMU%20literature%20review%20health%20benefits%20of%20OR.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-solutions-for-tackling-health-inequalities-conference-report>

- Contact with nature has been linked to improved mood and reduced stress and anxiety.

**Public Health England- Everybody Active Every Day<sup>11</sup>**

The benefits of physical activity can be summarised as:



Physical activity can be seen as a ‘miracle cure’ for many long-term physical and mental health issues. It helps people remain independent for longer, staying at home and reducing the need for Social Care in the older population.

It is also important for increasing mental health, helping address depression, dementia and acute mental health problems in the entire population.

Figure 5- Benefits of physical activity

**An estimate of the value and cost effectiveness of the expanded Walking the Way to Health Initiative scheme 2009 (TIN055)**

Natural England suggest that increasing accessible open spaces could reduce healthcare costs in the UK by more than £2 billion annually.

In Shropshire adequate provision of accessible open space could save £10m every year (based on average UK saving multiplied by Shropshire population)<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-getting-every-adult-active-every-day/health-matters-getting-every-adult-active-every-day>

<sup>12</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35009>

### **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines for increasing physical activity<sup>13</sup>**

NICE have produced a range of detailed guidelines to increase physical activity, including through the development of public open spaces and green infrastructure, the workplace, schools and for older people. Key recommendations include the incorporation of infrastructure within transport and planning policies to prioritise walking and cycling and the provision of easily accessible green space.

### **Economic and social costs of mental health problems<sup>14</sup>**

The total cost of mental health problems in England in 2009/10 was £105.2 billion. Based on a correlation with the Shropshire population, this would be equivalent to £642 million in Shropshire.

### **Outdoor education**

Educating children in the outdoors can lead to significant benefits, according to two pilot projects that took place in 2016:

**Natural England (2016) Learning in the Natural Environment project<sup>15</sup>** demonstrated that having lessons outdoors helped students:

- Achieve higher grades in reading, maths, science and social studies
- Make approximately three months' progress in terms of learning outcomes
- Greener school environments have been linked with better motor skills in children.

**Plymouth University (2016) Natural Connections Demonstration Project<sup>16</sup>** demonstrated that children involved in the project reported:

- Enjoyment of lessons - 95%
- Connection to nature - 94%
- Social skills – 93%
- Engagement with learning – 92%
- Health and wellbeing – 92%
- Behaviour – 85%
- Attainment – 57%

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph8/chapter/1-Recommendations#public-open-spaces>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/economic-and-social-costs>

<sup>15</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6636651036540928>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/englands-largest-outdoor-learning-project-reveals-children-more-motivated-to-learn-when-outside>

## 2.2 Shropshire Headlines

### **Marches Ecosystem Assessment (2016): Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG)<sup>17</sup>**

The most immediate health benefit that could be valued is the effect of 'green' exercise (recreational walking and cycling only) on reducing mortality rates.

The direct effect of the existence of greenspace on people's exercise levels in The Marches has been valued at £146.9 million annually or £3.1 billion capitalised over 25 years.

It was estimated that 46 deaths are prevented each year due to the existence of natural accessible greenspace.

### **Emma Sandbach. Shropshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Priorities<sup>18</sup>**

Overall the health of the population in Shropshire is good, both male and female life expectancy is significantly higher than the national figures.

Similarly, rates of premature mortality (under 75 years) for cancer and cardiovascular males and females are significantly lower than the national figures. Life expectancy has increased in the total population in the last decade. However, inequalities in health persist in Shropshire and the increases in life expectancy and reductions in all age all-cause mortality have not had equal impact across all sections of the population.

In the most deprived fifth of areas in Shropshire there has been no significant increase in life expectancy in either males or females, although there has been a significant increase in life expectancy in the most affluent fifth of the population. There are also significantly lower rates of life expectancy in the most deprived fifth of areas compared to the most affluent fifth for both males and females, and this gap appears to be increasing.

The percentage of adults classified as overweight or obese in Shropshire is 59%; similar to those for the West Midlands and England. Excess weight in adults is recognised as a major determinant of mortality and avoidable ill health.

The following overarching health and wellbeing priorities for Shropshire include:

- Ageing well
- Reducing the incidence of Long Term Conditions, such as diabetes, cardio-vascular disease, dementia and cancer
- Reducing falls
- Increasing physical activity
- Addressing health inequalities
- Encouraging healthy lifestyle choices, thus reducing obesity, smoking and poor nutrition
- Addressing mental health problems

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/2737/marches-ecosystem-assessment-2016.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/BrandPartnerGlobal/shropshireandtelfordVPP/docs/Shropshire-Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessment-DRAFT-FINAL.pdf>

However, the health and wellbeing issues that have an impact on different parts of Shropshire are not distributed equally. For example, there are higher prevalence's of certain long-term conditions in some parts of the county compared to others. It is therefore important to understand how improving access to green space can be utilised as a method of supporting improvements in the populations health and wellbeing. It is of equal importance to identify how this agenda can be supported by other areas, e.g. planning and transport policy to deliver the best outcomes for Shropshire's population.

By using data and information from the Locality JSNA which is analysed at place plan level it is possible to identify which areas have significantly worse or better health and wellbeing outcomes compared to the overall Shropshire population. This in turn can support better local developments across the county that will enable utilisation or establishment of green space to be integrated into future planning activity for transport, housing, tourism and various other sectors.

Additionally, the information can be used to target populations with higher prevalence of disease in order to prevent increased inequalities in health. This approach has already been implemented to support the development of public health interventions that rely on having access to green space.

Such initiatives include Social Prescribing and Physical Activity Clinical Advisor Pads, which will encourage health professionals to prescribe physical activity and social activities.

The following table highlights indicators around prevalence of disease that could be improved by access to or improved design of green space (table 6). The table also includes factors that influence disease prevalence, such as socio-economic deprivation and rurality. Whilst there are many factors that influence this, including the average age of the population, it does highlight areas to focus on, such as Albrighton, Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Ludlow and Whitchurch. The health issues in Albrighton and Whitchurch, in particular, do not reflect the age profile as expected. Whilst this is likely to be the result of many factors, an increase in greenspace in these areas might be expected to improve the populations' health.



## 2.3 Partner feedback

Health and wellbeing will be the key new strategic direction for the Canal and River Trust going forward, whilst retaining focus on heritage and investment. A new outcomes framework for health and wellbeing is being developed. Other partners are also seeing health and wellbeing as a significant driver for the future, with the Wildlife Trust focusing on health inequalities and sports development officers being employed by the National Trust. *“Exploiting/expanding the message as to the economic benefits of walking to the Shropshire economy and the public health benefits of walking and access to good quality outdoor space.”*

Integration of Walking for Health more with Ramblers Group Walking programmes.

Otherwise, health and wellbeing did not feature strongly in the feedback from partners, indicating that there was still some way to go to embed the therapeutic powers of the outdoors within the environmental sector as well as with our health colleagues. Where it was discussed, there was a general feeling that, whilst there was a growing interest nationally, this had yet to be embedded locally within the health sector.

## User feedback

### 2.4 Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey 2017

- 99% of respondents think that getting into the Great Outdoors has a positive or very positive impact on their quality of life

#### Quotes from Users

*“The work of Shropshire’s Outdoor Partnerships is hugely important to the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of the community. I truly hope that sufficient funding is available to continue its work.”*

*“Outdoor activities have great physical and mental health benefits, so should be encouraged at all times.”*

*“Anything that encourages more people to exercise outdoors is to be acclaimed. Money spent on activity provision is saved in the long term by having a healthier population needing less NHS support.”*

### 2.5 Conclusions

- Being outdoors in the natural environment is good for our physical and mental health and can contribute to population level wellbeing.
- There needs to be increased awareness of the therapeutic benefits of the natural environment within the health sector, including the NHS, especially when it comes to mental health.
- More all ability and easy access routes should be encouraged, with continued use of the least restrictive principle applied to the improvement of the Rights of Way network.
- Priority should be given to improvements to outdoor assets that contribute to health and wellbeing priorities in Shropshire, including increasing physical activity, especially around centres of population and areas of disadvantage, design of paths and parks for an ageing population and the provision of facilities and activities for young families.

- New natural greenspace should be encouraged where there is insufficient currently and the need has been identified through the local population. This should include planning meaningful greenspace and non-motorised access associated with new developments.
- More work should be done with schools and young people to embed the mental and physical health benefits of being outdoors and in the natural environment

### 3.0 Prosperity

The outdoor assets form an important infrastructure for economic growth through the development of the visitor economy, outdoor activities and local visits to the natural environment that helps support rural pubs, cafes and shops. Volunteering in the Great Outdoors can also help get people back into work and address high social care bills for Local Government.

#### 3.1 National Headlines

##### **Reconomics Plus, Sport and Recreation Alliance<sup>19</sup>**

Outdoor recreation makes a significant contribution to national and local economies.

- Total visitor spend on being active outdoors was £17 billion in England
- Average spend per person was £23.95
  - £17.07 food and drink
  - £3.66 car parking
  - £22.51 admission fees
  - £11.60 transport

##### **Natural England (2015) Annual report from the 2013-14 survey**

- 45 million overnight trips were made that involved outdoor recreation
- £11.8 billion was spent on trips involving outdoor recreation

##### **Visit England (2016) GB Tourism Statistics 2015<sup>20</sup> Visit England's GB**

##### **Day Visitor report (2015):**

- 255 million day visits in Great Britain involved outdoor activities or which 113 million had outdoor activities as the main activity

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/research-publications/reconomics-plus1>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/gb\\_tourist\\_report\\_2015.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/gb_tourist_report_2015.pdf)

- £2.1 billion was spent on day trips in England
- The average amount of money spent was £23 per visit

The most popular activities were:

- 83 million did a long walk/ hike/ ramble
- 46 million did centre-based walking
- 33 million visited a country park
- 17 million cycled
- 12 million went running/ jogging or orienteering

### **Economic Value of Heritage**

In 2017, heritage generated £11.8 billion in GVA nationally and directly employed over 278,000 people<sup>21</sup>.

### **Walking and cycling**

Claiming the Health Dividend: A summary and discussion of value for money estimates from studies of investment in walking and cycling (2014) demonstrated an average return of 5.62:1 for walking and cycling initiatives<sup>22</sup>.

Research conducted by Sustrans (2015)<sup>23</sup> discovered that leisure and tourism cycling on the National Cycle Network supports over 15,000 jobs and directly contributes £650m to the economy each year.

Research conducted on the South West Coast Path in 2015<sup>24</sup> found that walkers spent £468 million during 2014, supporting over 10,000 jobs and 200 businesses.

### **Equestrian**

The British Equestrian Trade Association's National Equestrian Survey (2015)<sup>25</sup> found that the economic value of the equestrian sector stands at £4.3 billion of consumer spending across a wide range of goods and services each year. This has increased from £3.8 billion in 2011.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2017/heritage-and-the-economy-2017.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/371096/claiming\\_the\\_health\\_dividend.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371096/claiming_the_health_dividend.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/news/cycle-tourism-boosts-economy>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/research/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.beta-uk.org/pages/news-amp-events/news/national-equestrian-survey-2015-shows-increased-consumer-spending.php>

## Creating Jobs and Skills

Data from 'The Economic Contribution of Outdoor Recreation: The Evidence', Sport and Recreation Alliance (2014)<sup>26</sup> shows around 500,000 jobs are associated with Outdoor Recreation:

- 245,000 walking tourism
- 37,400 freshwater angling
- 28,000 horse riding (excluding racing)
- 26,400 outdoor activity industry
- 23,000 cycling economy
- 14,900 boating tourism

## Flexible working

Flexible working increased 37% in the three years to 2015 and is predicted to continue to rise<sup>27</sup>.

### 3.2 Shropshire Headlines- Emma Smith, Shropshire Council Insights Team

In Shropshire in 2016 there were an estimated:

- 0.9 million overnight visits, worth £173 million to the local economy.
- 9.63 million tourism day visits, worth £240 million to the local economy.
- 6.32 other leisure visits, worth £138 million to the local economy.
- The volume of overnight visits increased by 20.2% while spend increased by 113.6%.

The most common activity undertaken whilst on an overnight trip to the countryside was outdoor activities, including long walks, with 39% participating. Visitors to the countryside also frequently participate in outdoor activities excluding long walks and to visit parks and gardens.

### Activities undertaken while on countryside trips (overnight)

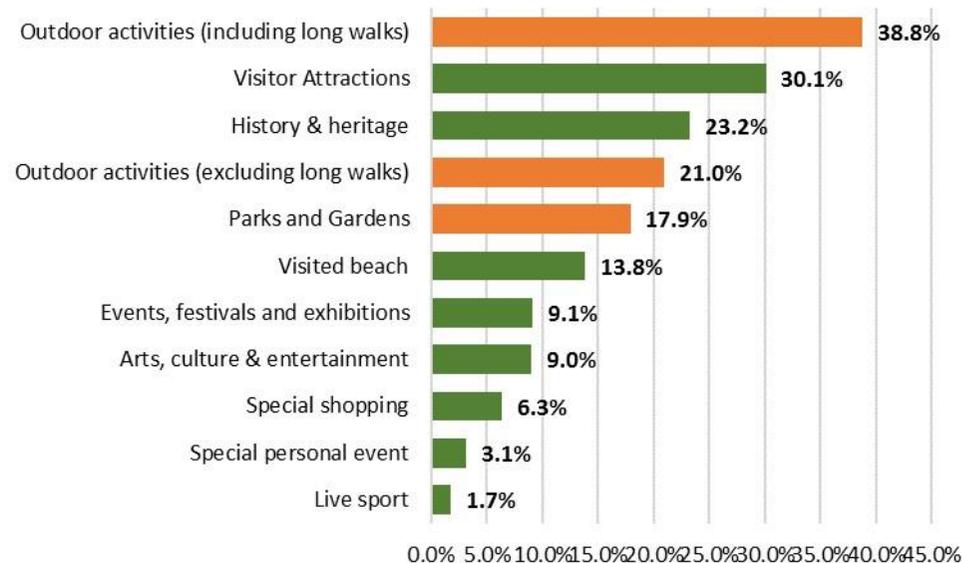


Figure 7- Activities undertaken whilst on countryside trips

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/policy-areas/economic-and-social-value-of-sport-and-recrea>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.fm-world.co.uk/news/fm-industry-news/flexible-working-trend-on-the-rise-in-uk/>

Overnight trips involving outdoor activities in Shropshire: 0.35 million trips worth £67.5 million

1.8 billion day tourism day trips were made in Great Britain in 2016, generating visitor spend of £64 billion

Outdoor activities are amongst the top five things to do.

15% of all tourism day trips to rural locations involved outdoor activities:

- 8% involved a short walk (770,000 Shropshire trips)
- 6% involved a longer walk or ramble (578,000 Shropshire trips)
- 3% involved a visit to a country park (289,000 Shropshire trips) □ 15% in total: 1.44 million in Shropshire, worth £18 million

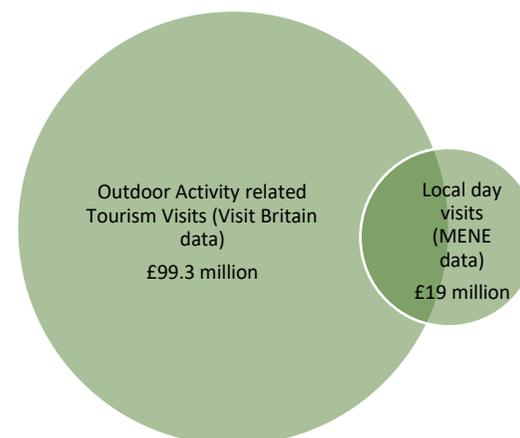
### Visit Britain

National figures suggest that 17% of all day visits (both tourism and other leisure) to rural destinations involve outdoor activities.

This suggests that in addition to tourism day visits involving outdoor activities, there are also 1.27 million leisure visits to Shropshire during which outdoor activities are pursued, generating a value of £13.8 million.

Value of Shropshire Outdoor Activity Visitor Economy, 2016

	Visits million	£ million	Spend per visit
Overnight Visitors	0.35	£67.5	£192.31
Tourism Day Visitors	1.44	£18.0	£12.50
Other Leisure Day Visitors	1.27	£13.8	£10.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>£99.3</b>	<b>£32.44</b>



12,400 people are directly employed in the tourism sector in Shropshire, of which 2,200 can be attributed to outdoor activities. This level of employment is expected to increase to 2,400 by 2036.

Figure 8- Value of the Great Outdoors

**Combined visits to the natural environment:= £100-115 million**

Tourism makes a contribution of £245.5 million to the Shropshire economy (4% of the total), of which outdoor activities could account for 18%, which is the equivalent of £44.2 million.

### Productivity Growth Forecast for Shropshire (1991-2035)<sup>28</sup>

According to the Productivity Growth Forecast used as evidence in the Local Plan review, the tourism sector is going to be the fastest growing sector, worth £397.4m by 2036.

Figure 9- Productivity growth forecast for Shropshire by sector

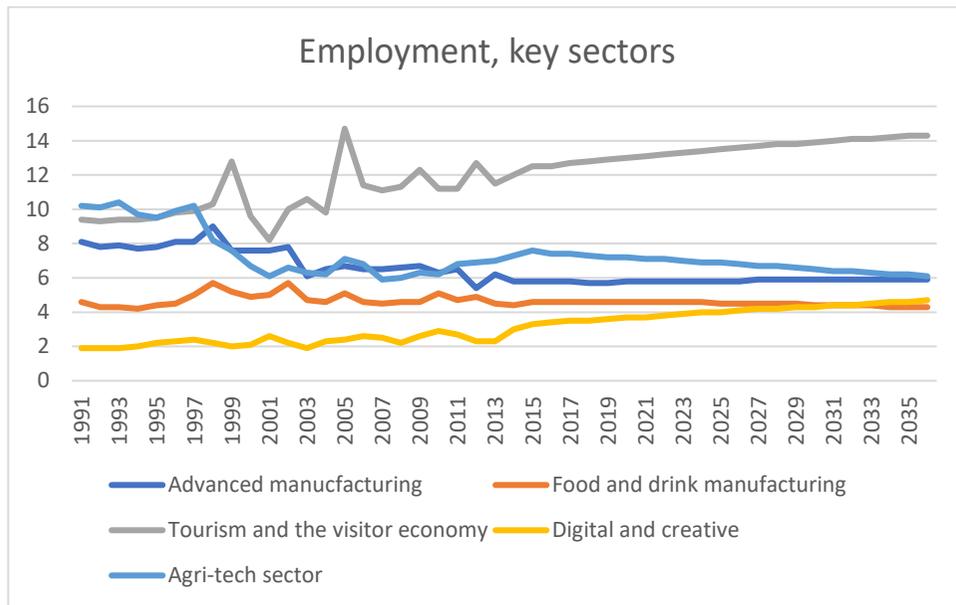
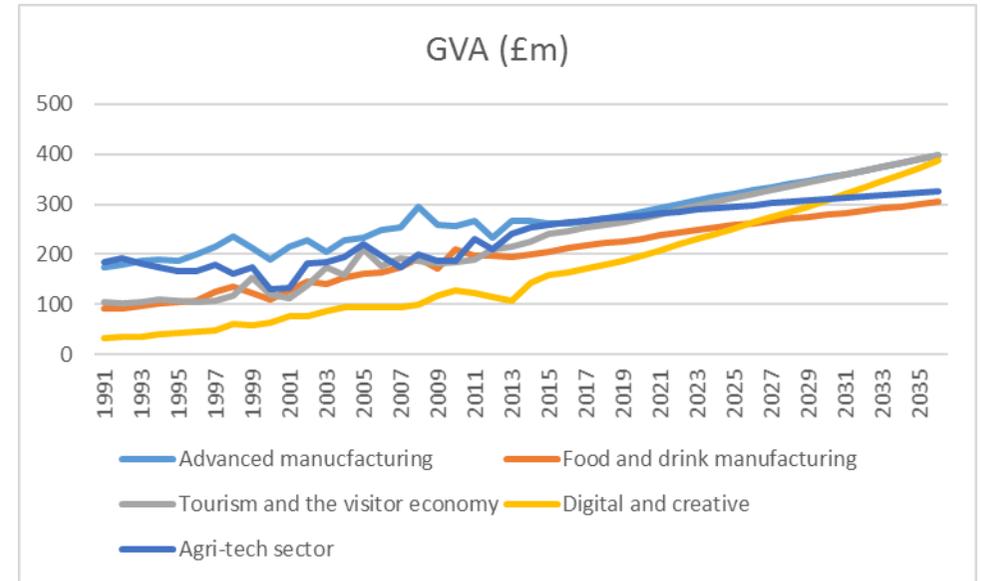


Figure 10- Employment forecasts by sector

According to Figure 10, tourism and the visitor economy is by far the fastest growing sector for jobs in the future.

<sup>28</sup> <https://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-planning/local-plan-partial-review-2016-2036/evidence-base/>

## **Outdoor Recreation Valuation (ORVal)**

The ORVal Tool is a web application developed by the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy (LEEP) Institute at the University of Exeter with support from DEFRA<sup>29</sup>. ORVal's primary purpose is to provide information that might be useful to government, businesses and communities in understanding the benefits that are derived from accessible greenspace in England. It is map-based and allows users to explore the distribution of greenspace across England, plotting out the locations of recreation sites, be those beaches, recreation areas like parks and nature reserves, paths through the countryside or along river banks.

The estimated welfare value of sites in Shropshire is estimated at £43,882,161.

## **Use of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website<sup>30</sup>**

Google analytics reports on the usage of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website show there have been 134,000 users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website in the past 12 months (to 22nd February 2018), 77% of these are under 45, 12.5% of users were from London, with those from Shrewsbury, Birmingham, Telford and Cannock the next most frequent. This shows the interest in outdoor activity and the attraction of the area from those outside Shropshire.

## **Getting people back to work.**

The Shropshire Wild Teams have been running for the past three years, helping people with acute mental and physical health issues. Of the 103 people who have been involved so far, 12 have been able to return to work or taken up volunteer posts and the Wild Teams have been an important contributory factor to enable this.

### **3.3 Key findings from partners**

All partners recognised the need to increase awareness of the direct and indirect economic benefits of outdoor assets, especially with decision makers, including the need for a more joined up approach to the visitor economy. A new cross-partner 'Discover Shropshire' group has been formed to develop a more co-ordinated approach to promoting the natural and cultural assets to visitors.

A new initiative is being investigated by Shropshire Council's Communication Team to develop an Augmented Reality app, where information is uploaded by residents and visitors to highlight local heritage and points of interest. This could be gamified for children and would encourage more extensive use of outdoor assets and health and wellbeing outcomes as well as contributing to economic growth.

There should be some thought about 'future proofing' sites- electric charging points, driverless cars, number plate recognition instead of parking machines.

Initiative such as 'Walking with Offa'; a series of walks from rural pubs and cafes, has been successful and could be considered to help develop the rural economy.

The Shropshire Hills Shuttles are important for rural businesses on the Long Mynd and Stiperstones.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/>

The number of events is increasing, with challenge events becoming increasingly popular. These include events such as the triathlon at The Mere, the Severn Valley Trail Race and many fell runs and fun runs across the Long Mynd. These can bring 1,000s of people into the local area, which will be helping accommodation, hospitality businesses and local shops. Talks and walks about local heritage are also popular.

With visitor numbers increasing across the sites, there may be more opportunities to provide catering, possibly through mobile or temporary units.

Some sites, such as The Mere at Ellesmere offer the opportunity for new business development, potentially in outdoor activities or creative arts.

Nearly Wild Camping<sup>31</sup> could offer opportunities to develop low-level camping facilities on some sites, bringing in income and helping local businesses.

### 3.4 User Survey

The Outdoor Partnerships Service Annual User Survey showed that:

- Respondents are most likely to get information from:
  - Shropshire’s Great Outdoors website and other local websites (51%)
  - Printed leaflets and guidebooks (40%)
  - Organised groups (38%)
  - Local Newspapers (29%)
  - Social media (26%)

Quotes from the User Survey that sum up the key messages:

*“I think Shropshire are far ahead of other areas in the UK, the website is probably the best I’ve seen in the UK.”*

*“The walks in Shropshire are definitely an asset to the area.”*

*“Shropshire has much to offer the walker and well maintained paths will attract business to the County.”*

*“This is vital provision for the people of Shropshire and for visitors to Shropshire who contribute to the local economy.”*

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<sup>31</sup> <https://nearlywildcamping.org/>

### 3.5 Conclusions

- Shropshire’s outdoor assets are important to the economy of Shropshire, bringing in an estimated £100-115 million annually.
- Tourism and the visitor economy are extremely important to Shropshire and are predicted to be the fastest growing sector in terms of GVA and employment. This will be reliant on the high quality environment and access to the Great Outdoors.
- Websites are increasingly important to provide information to people locally and visitors to the area.
- Volunteering in the Great Outdoors can help people become work ready and encourage them to get back into the workplace.
- Activities such as challenge events and wild camping can bring further income into the local area.
- We need to be working more closely with businesses to maximise the opportunities presented by the Great Outdoors and to prioritise spending on those routes and sites with most economic potential.

## 4.0 Communities

Shropshire has a growing and aging population and the Great Outdoors can offer great opportunities to bring people together, strengthen communities and reduce loneliness and isolation.

### 4.1 National Headlines

#### Overview of the UK population: July 2017. Office for National Statistics<sup>32</sup>

- In 2016 the population of the UK was 65.6 million, its largest ever.
- The UK population is projected to continue growing, reaching over 74 million by 2039.
- The population in the UK is getting older with 18% aged 65 and over and 2.4% aged 85 and over.
- In 2016 there were 285 people aged 65 and over for every 1,000 people aged 16 to 64 years (“traditional working age”).
- Births are continuing to outnumber deaths and immigration continues to outnumber emigration, resulting in a growing population.

### 4.2 Shropshire Council Key Facts and Figures 2016/17<sup>33</sup>

- Population figures- the population of Shropshire has increased 10.6% since 2001 (from 283,300 to 313,400 in 2016).
- It is expected that our population will increase in size by approximately 9% by the year 2039 and the structure of our population will change as a result. The proportion of our population aged 65+ will increase at a rate greater than the National trend, with 54% increase in the over 65s and 152% increase in the over 85’s.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation/july2017>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/5320/shropshire-council-key-facts-and-figures-2016-17.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.shropshiretogether.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CSP-data-analysis-for-JSNA.pdf>

- In comparison to other parts of England, Shropshire is not particularly deprived. However, as with all other regions, when compared to the County as a whole, there are certain small areas of Shropshire that are deprived.
- The population density in Shropshire was 0.96 people per hectare compared to 4.09 in England
- In 2016 the median age of residents in Shropshire was 47.
- The age profile of Shropshire shows that over 45% of residents are aged over 50. This is higher than the rate for both Great Britain and West Midlands which stands at 37%.
- It is estimated that the population of people over 65 will increase from 74,300 in mid-2016 (23.7% of the population) to 113,700 by mid-2039 (33.4% of the population)
- 95.4% are white, British.

### **New housing and commercial developments**

The Local Plan for Shropshire is currently being revised, with the aspiration of ‘high’ housing growth over the next 20 years<sup>35</sup>.

#### **Current Proposals:**

- ‘High’ housing growth of 28,750 dwellings, equivalent to an average delivery rate of 1,430 dwellings per year for the whole of Shropshire; and
- Existing housing completions, commitments and allocations amount to 18,583 dwellings, so the net additional housing now required is 10,347 dwellings.

The proposals are that there is an ‘Urban Focused’ distribution of development:

- Shrewsbury – around 30%
- Principal Centres – around 24.5%
- Key Centres – around 18%
- Rural Areas – around 27.5%

With new development at strategic sites such as Ironbridge Power Station and Clive Barracks, and potential new Garden Village settlements in strategic locations.

#### **Place Plan priorities**

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) health data for Shropshire is now mapped to Place Plan areas, with Shrewsbury and Oswestry divided into smaller areas to highlight the differences between different parts of the towns, as mentioned in the ‘Health’ section above. Each health indicator shows the county average and then highlights areas which are performing below or above this average. The approach gives a consistent record that can be measured over time.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/7632/preferred-options-consultation-final.pdf>

A similar approach could be adopted to present the economic data, such as employment figures, household income etc. and environmental data to give an evidence based approach to community development in these areas. This is being considered currently.

The 300m access to 2ha of natural greenspace and the Rights of Way network has been assessed and the results are below.

Place Plan Area	ONS_Pop (2016)	# households with ANG	# households without ANG	Total Households	Average people per household	People with ANG	People without ANG	% With ANG	Sig difference to Shropshire	ROW (m)	PP_Area_Ha	Metres of ROW Per Ha	Metres of ROW Per person
Albrighton	7,758	100	3110	3210	2.42	242	7,516	3.1%	Lower	50251	6105	8	6.48
Bishop's Castle 2	10,694	499	4624	5123	2.09	1,042	9,652	9.7%	Lower	970163	52416	19	90.72
Bridgnorth 2	24,200	2765	8837	11602	2.09	5,767	18,433	23.8%	Higher	577785	30323	19	23.88
Broseley	5,618	443	2241	2684	2.09	927	4,691	16.5%	Lower	53972	3272	16	9.61
Church Stretton 2	8,523	986	2941	3927	2.17	2,140	6,383	25.1%	Higher	381645	17499	22	44.78
Cleobury Mortimer 3	7,996	246	3250	3496	2.29	563	7,433	7.0%	Lower	481521	18149	27	60.22
Craven Arms 3	6,437	112	3056	3168	2.03	228	6,209	3.5%	Lower	510142	20578	25	79.25
Ellesmere2	8,788	656	3359	4015	2.19	1,436	7,352	16.3%	Lower	113624	12843	9	12.93
Highley 2	4,133	29	1909	1938	2.13	62	4,071	1.5%	Lower	76369	1965	39	18.48
Ludlow3	16,205	1546	6826	8372	1.94	2,992	13,213	18.5%	Similar	297397	12678	23	18.35
Market Drayton	23,339	399	9578	9977	2.34	933	22,406	4.0%	Lower	191185	21089	9	8.19
Much Wenlock	4,893	260	2102	2362	2.07	539	4,354	11.0%	Lower	174600	10431	17	35.68
North Oswestry	11,434	127	4956	5083	2.25	286	11,148	2.5%	Lower	194065	8120	24	16.97
Oswestry Town	17,657	3126	5590	8716	2.03	6,333	11,324	35.9%	Higher	15599	882	18	0.88
Pontesbury and Minsterley 2	5,023	50	2216	2266	2.22	111	4,912	2.2%	Lower	114725	4711	24	22.84
Shifnal	8,262	600	3735	4335	1.91	1,144	7,118	13.8%	Lower	52900	6397	8	6.40
Shrewsbury North East	31,846	5297	9264	14561	2.19	11,585	20,261	36.4%	Higher	29964	1809	17	0.94
Shrewsbury Rural donut	19,725	324	8668	8992	2.19	711	19,014	3.6%	Lower	557084	40780	14	28.24
Shrewsbury South	25,776	4146	8377	12523	2.06	8,534	17,242	33.1%	Higher	46508	1880	25	1.80
Shrewsbury West and Central	20,804	5558	8175	13733	1.51	8,420	12,384	40.5%	Higher	25066	975	26	1.20
South & East Oswestry	12,844	119	5423	5542	2.32	276	12,568	2.1%	Lower	299993	16606	18	23.36
Wem	16,309	83	7260	7343	2.22	184	16,125	1.1%	Lower	253938	19948	13	15.57
Whitchurch	15,109	961	7126	8087	1.87	2,323	13,314	11.9%	Lower	182445	10852	17	12.08
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>313,373</b>	<b>28,432</b>	<b>122,623</b>	<b>151,055</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>56,775</b>	<b>257,125</b>	<b>18.4%</b>	<b>Similar</b>	<b>5650941</b>	<b>320308</b>		<b>18.03</b>

Figure 2- Table showing Accessible Natural Green Space (ANG) (2ha within 300m) and Rights of Way (ROW) by Place Plan area

The table demonstrates that Albrighton fares worst, with just 6.48 m Rights of Way per person and 97% of the population having insufficient access to natural greenspace. In terms of population without access to natural greenspace, Market Drayton fares worst and only has 8m pp Rights of Way. Whitchurch is another area with little greenspace and low Rights of Way provision. All three of these areas have had or are expected to have considerable areas of development and development of new

greenspace and access associated with these developments will be needed to ensure this situation does not get worse. In terms of the areas highlighted in the health section above, Albrighton has little access to greenspace or Rights of Way but Church Stretton, Craven Arms and Ludlow fare well in terms of greenspace and/ or Rights of Way. In these areas, however, much of the countryside is inaccessible to those who are less mobile and it may be that more all-ability routes are required. This is work in progress (see appendix 3) and will be fine-tuned over the coming months.

The central message coming from key partners with regard to communities was that there needed to be more consideration to wildlife, heritage, non-motorised access and the provision of greenspace through the planning process.

*“Impacts of new development not being considered on adjacent Rights of Way and farmland.”*

*“Housing development and planning department not taking into consideration existing Rights of Way or the need to provide good access to high quality outdoor space. Also not considering the need for high quality inter community/development walking/cycling routes.”*

*“Bridleways being used as private access for businesses, which can be tarmacked and increase traffic.”*

*“New road developments should include multi-use route alongside.”*

*“Horse riding not being considered in decisions esp. around new development. “*

Whilst all partners sang the praises of their considerable volunteer workforce, the reliance on volunteers was felt to be a concern, with a shortage of volunteers in some areas and that volunteers were mostly from the older population. It was also felt that we could be working better together to offer more joined up volunteering opportunities.

*“P3 volunteer programme works well- but needs to continue and expand.”*

*“Working with the Parish Path Partnership to identify issues and look at combating them as soon as possible. Utilising our volunteer groups to carry out the work.”*

*“Age profile of volunteers is over 60.”*

Some partners are working more with colleges and universities.

There is an opportunity to encourage better understanding of farming business and the countryside through access to outdoor assets.

*“Farmers are supportive of the public accessing the outdoors for recreation as it is an opportunity to explain countryside management and food production.”*

#### **4.4 Annual User Survey**

There were several comments about the need for users of the Rights of Way network to know more about farming.

*“There might be a right away across a field. But that field is the home of the animals grazing in it. They have the right to feel safe in that field. Even groups of walkers without dogs will upset ewes and lambs. The ewes become tense as is a mothers instinct.”*

The need for taking the impact of development on Rights of Way seriously was highlighted by several people.

*“Compared to other places I have visited recently we seem to have a huge lack of bridle ways. Everything keeps being shut down or built on. Forcing riders on the dangerous country roads.”*

There was also concern about the growing demand for outdoor assets due to population increases.

*“We are getting to a point where the service is almost too successful. The population of Shropshire is expected to further increase substantially in the next few years and those people will want to explore the local countryside. However many path surfaces in our countryside sites and across nearby agricultural land are already becoming eroded by over-use. Winter erosion will not always recover in the next season if it is too severe. This problem is bound to get worse and resources will be needed to identify and implement solutions which might include seasonal closure of some paths or laying down crushed stone to provide an all-weather surface.”*

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

- The predictions indicate a significant increase in population, new developments and employment opportunities in the next 18 years. This will increase the demand on the outdoor assets and there needs to be a more planned approach to the development of green space and access to benefit disadvantaged communities and those with insufficient outdoor assets currently, and to protect environmentally sensitive sites.
- Better planning of new developments is needed to identify meaningful greenspace and access routes. These will encourage community events and volunteering as well as giving people the opportunity to be active outdoors within their community.
- Areas in the north and east of the county would especially benefit from the provision of more natural green space.
- Continued support of volunteers and community decision making is essential, building on Parish Paths Partnerships and other volunteer groups.
- There is concern over the impact of reform to agricultural support in terms of safeguarding hill farming and prioritising access and greenspace.
- There is an opportunity to engage more with young people through schools and colleges.

## 5.0 Natural and cultural heritage

### 5.1 National Headlines

#### **25 Year Environment Plan- Annex 1- Supplementary Evidence report<sup>36</sup>**

There have been significant declines in species and ecological communities in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems in England over the last 50 years or more, with land use change and pollution being major drivers of this change.

There has been an improvement in the condition of nationally protected sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSIs). In 2016, 38.5% of SSSIs were in a good condition (favourable) in England, up slightly from five years ago. A further 57.4% of SSSIs are in recovering condition (unfavourable improving), up from 13% in 2003.

Despite these improvements in condition of SSSIs and priority habitats, the most important habitats (those for which the UK has a European level responsibility) remain in relatively poor condition (71% unfavourable for the UK versus an EU average of 30%). The main factors causing unfavourable condition are intensification of agriculture; under- and over-grazing by farmed livestock; grazing by wild deer in woodlands; air and water pollution; and changes in drainage.

There has been a long-term decline in abundance continuing for many priority species up to 2015. However, 40% of these priority species increased in abundance in the latest five years. Data on distribution are available for a larger number of priority species and the percentage of these becoming less widespread is currently balanced by those becoming more widespread.

The long-term trend for breeding farmland birds in England shows a decline, with 57% declining in numbers since 1970 (see figure 2.7). In the short term 32% of farmland bird species have increased, 32% have declined and 37% show no change. The index for breeding woodland birds in England has declined by 25% over the same time period.

The Lawton Review acknowledged that re-creating large expanses of continuous natural habitat was not a feasible option over most of England, though recommended that attempts to establish significantly 'bigger and better' areas should be made. It also proposed that in addition to a network of high quality protected sites, ecological connections such as buffer zones, wildlife corridors and smaller but still wildlife-rich 'stepping stones' were developed between sites.

An estimated 1 million hectares of soils in England and Wales are at risk of erosion from wind or water.

#### **UK Biodiversity Indicators 2017, Defra<sup>37</sup>**

Whilst the area of land in agri-environment or woodland schemes has increased in the last 15 years, the status of UK priority species has declined, including farmland, woodland and wetland birds and insects.

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<sup>36</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/673492/25-year-environment-plan-annex1.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673492/25-year-environment-plan-annex1.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/635832/UKBI2017\\_rev.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635832/UKBI2017_rev.pdf)

## 5.2 Shropshire Headlines

### 5.2.1 Historic Environment

Shropshire has a varied and extensive historic environment. Shropshire's Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of information about the historic environment of the county – archaeological sites, finds and features, historic buildings, structures and landscapes<sup>38</sup>.

Shropshire is the only county in England to have two World Heritage Sites- Ironbridge Gorge and Pontcysyllte Aquaduct and Canal, both of which straddle the Shropshire Unitary Authority border. It also has the third highest number of listed buildings (6,906) and Registered Parks and Gardens (30), and the fourth highest number Conservation Areas (127) per local authority area in England.<sup>39</sup>

Shropshire also has the seventh highest number of Scheduled Monuments (434) per local authority area in England, of which 138 (32%) are publically accessible by one or more rights of way. These vary considerably in type but in broad terms include prehistoric hillforts, Roman military and civilian sites, medieval castles, moated sites and deserted settlements, and industrial archaeological sites.

Of these 138 Scheduled Monuments, 22 (16%) were included by Historic England on the 2017 Heritage at Risk Register – see table below.

ListEntry	Name	AREA_HA
1003013	Offa's Dyke: section 2/3 mile (1170m) long, N from southern boundary of Rownal Covert	2.38
1003716	Roman military site at Rhyn Park	31.17
1003797	Offa's Dyke: section one mile 750yds (2290m) from Dudston Covert to a point 300yds (274m) N of Lack Brook Also in Powys: Wales	5.44
1006259	Offa's Dyke: two sections running 400yds (370m) S of Camlad Stream Also in Powys: Wales	0.18
1008392	Castle Tump, a motte castle and causeway, 150m west of Teme Bridge	0.21
1010496	Lower Cleeton moat, a moat and fishponds 380m south east of Cleeton Court	1.19
1012455	Upper Barn moat	0.66
1012855	Camp Ring motte and bailey castle, enclosure, fishpond and ridge and furrow 400m east of Culmington Farm	3.10
1012856	The Mount motte and bailey castle, 120m north east of Hill House Farm	1.76
1012864	Motte and bailey castle 150m north east of Wilmington	0.46
1014866	Snailbeach lead mine	11.38
1015290	White Ladies (St Leonard's) Priory	1.42
1017347	Bowl barrow at The Napp	0.07

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/historic-environment/historic-environment-record/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/2017-conservation-areas/indicator-data/#Section7Text>

1017764	Snailbeach new smeltmill, 350m north east of Green Acres	1.34
1019650	Moated site and associated ridge and furrow cultivation remains, 145m south of St Mary Magdalene's Church	0.83
1019828	Callow Hill Camp: a small multivallate hillfort	1.18
1020617	Wat's Dyke, 420m long section, 190m west of the junction between Preeshenlle Lane and St Martin's Road	0.88
1020899	Offa's Dyke: section 175m east of Cefn Bronydd	6.55
1020901	Offa's Dyke: section 400m south west of Springhill Farm	3.12
1020903	Offa's Dyke: section 890m north west and 320m west of Little Selley	5.80
1020905	Offa's Dyke: section 90m south of Brynorgan	0.36
1021073	Norton Camp: a large multivallate hillfort	11.45

#### Priorities:

- Seek opportunity to secure enhanced benefits from and appreciation of the World Heritage Sites in relation to their Management Plans.
- Promote and support improved management and enhance visitor understanding of Offa's Dyke and the associated National Trail in line with the Conservation Management Plan jointly produced by the Offa's Dyke Association, Historic England and Cadw.
- The Scheduled Monuments on the at Risk Register inevitably form the main priority for action over the next few years, and this might include providing enhanced access and interpretation as part of a wider package of management improvements.
- Linking to Environmental Stewardship schemes to the provision of enhanced public access and look at public access to some of the other heritage designations (particularly Registered Parks and Gardens).

#### 5.2.2 Natural Environment

Shropshire has a wide range of regionally, nationally and internationally important sites for biodiversity and geology. These include:

Site type	Number of sites in Shropshire	Total area covered within Shropshire (ha)
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	7	1,703
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	107	16,501
Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)	221	2,107
Internationally protected wetland sites (Ramsar)	14	1,256
Registered Common	86	4,746
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	2	1,639
Local Wildlife Site	813	14714

Many of the sites are in public ownership:

- National Trust sites= 5,619 ha
- Forestry Commission sites = 4,171 ha
- Natural England National Nature Reserves (NNR) = 1,639 ha
- Shropshire Council owned Country Parks and Heritage Sites= 680 ha
- Local Nature Reserves = 827 ha
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust Reserves = 925 ha

**Priorities:**

- Legal obligations with designated sites and species. Public bodies need to consider NERC Act (Biodiversity Duty) which is likely to become more stringent.
- Consideration and development of Environmental Networks
- Identify the key metrics needed to assess biodiversity change and develop means to regularly report on these
- Identify the key metrics needed to assess changes in ecosystem services and develop means to regularly report on these
- Key sites for biodiversity with public access, for example Brown Moss, Colemere, Stiperstones NNR, Whixall Fenn NNR, Cardingmill Valley, need to be protected from too much recreational use.
- Certain rare, declining, and often unprotected species in a global, national and local context. E.g. Curlew, Lapwing, Harvest Mouse, Llangollen Whitebeam, etc.
- Soils – hidden biodiversity and the ability to clog our watercourses. Also biodiverse land may be used to replace productivity of degraded land.
- Clean air- Our area has some of the highest levels of ammonia deposition from the air in the UK. We also have some of the most nitrogen (ammonia) sensitive sites. Deposition rates are increasing dramatically in many places.
- As a minimum both habitat maps and species lists should be fully refreshed every 10 years. More regularly for particularly sensitive habitats and species.

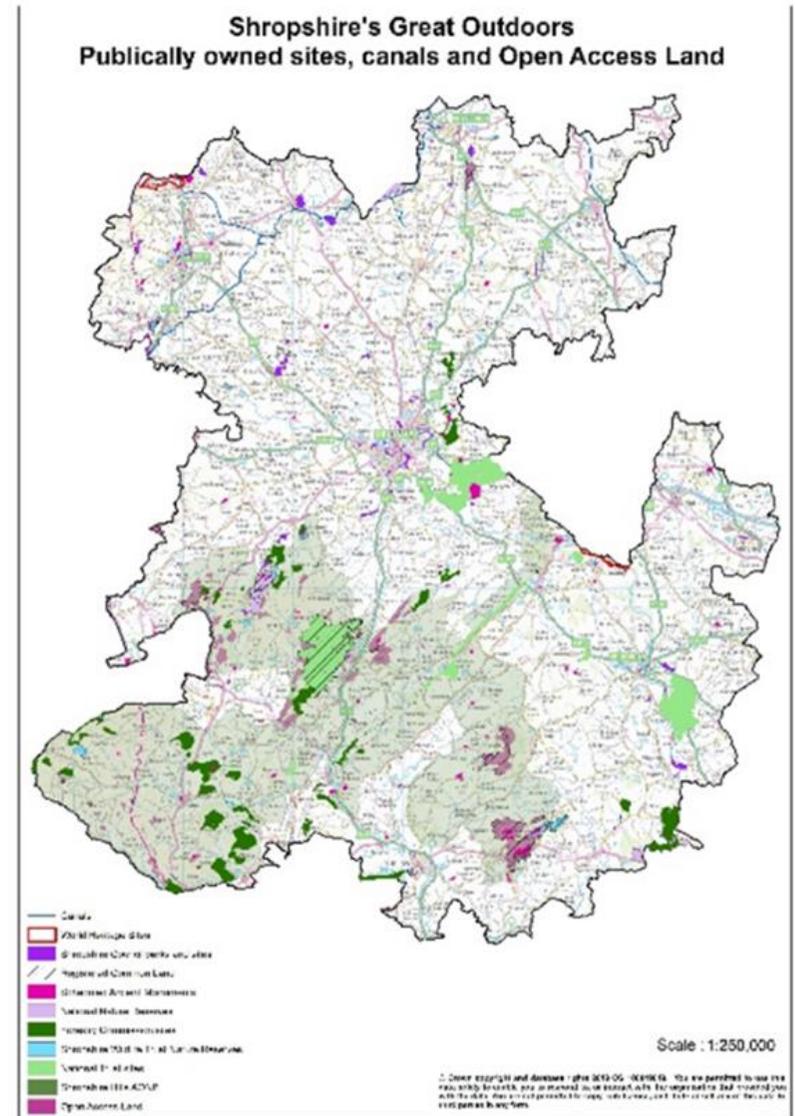


Figure 3- Map showing publically owned sites, canals, open access land and other key designations

## Environmental Network<sup>40</sup>

The Shropshire Environmental Network (SEN) consists of areas of high biodiversity value (core areas) and the areas that act as connective 'corridors and stepping stones' between them. This is referred to through the Local Plan when new developments are planned.

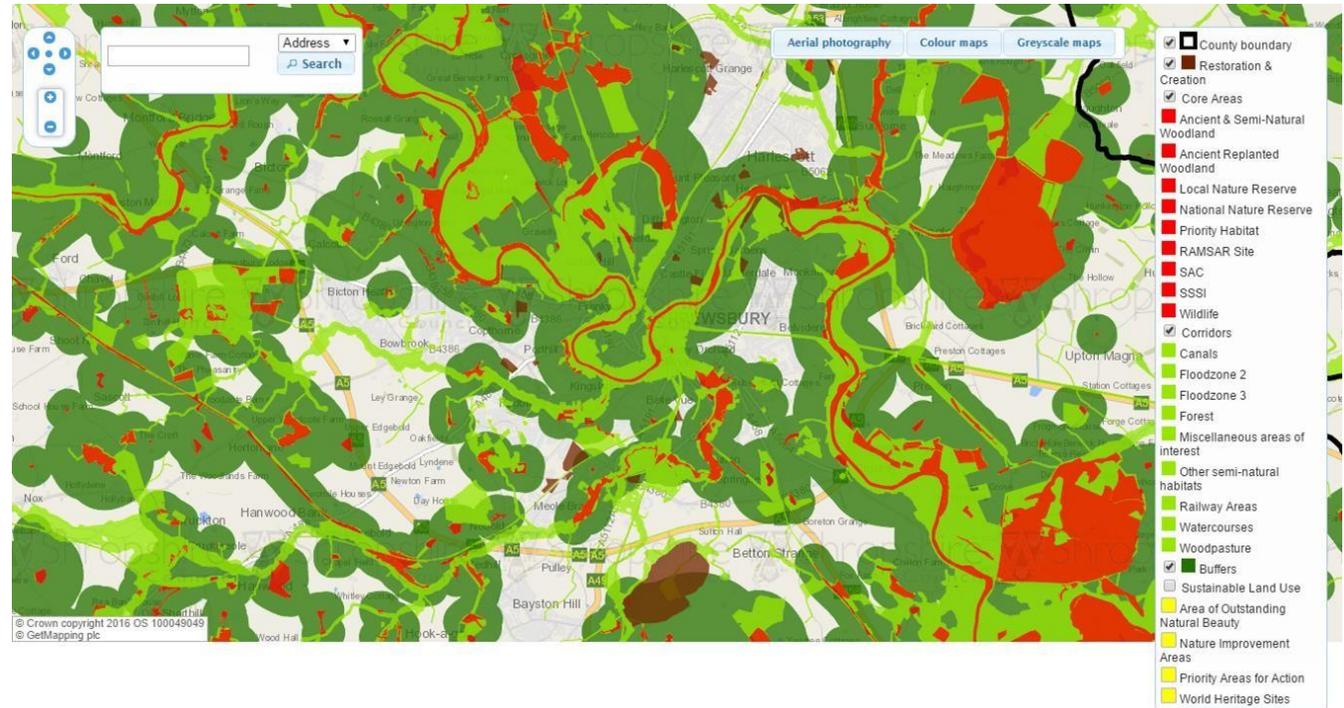


Figure 4- Example of the Shropshire Environmental Network map around Shrewsbury

## Key findings from partners

Publicly accessible sites are important to wildlife as well as people and sensitive sites should be protected.

1. Better visitor management is needed at some sites at peak times, e.g. Stiperstones, Cardingmill Valley, Attingham and Dudmaston.
2. We provide a sensitivity map showing wetland habitats, archaeology and bird nesting areas.
3. Avoid nesting season.
4. Keep events and large numbers of visitors to constructed paths as far as possible.

Some sites have important cultural heritage, which is being damaged by too many visitors. For example, mountain bike tracks are being made over the Iron Age hillfort at Nesscliffe and the Cliffe Country Park, which are eroding the embankments.

There are concerns about the impact of changes to agricultural support, especially to the uplands and commons.

5. Concern re support for commoners post Brexit and worry about return to heavy grazing.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity-ecology-and-planning/shropshire-environmental-network/>

6. Menu of options for future farm subsidies that are tailored to the needs of Shropshire e.g. Curlew conservation. Needs to link with water companies and other private sector interests.

Environmental organisations continue to prioritise landscape scale conservation, ecological networks and wildlife corridors, in line with national policies.

- Wider ecological and landscape conservation is needed.
- Create resilient landscapes and seas (moving beyond sites to think about ecological networks, landscapes and ecosystems, and to become more integrated in our delivery.)

Partners would like to see greater understanding of natural capital.

7. Grow natural capital (help us all better understand what we get from the natural world, and to move away from 'renting' outcomes to securing long term and sustainable environmental investment.)

Heritage should be embedded in the Local Plan.

8. SGO Strategy needs to be an integral part of the Local Plan review and should have specific reference to heritage.
9. More leadership is needed through the planning framework to reduce environmental impact.

Heritage can be used as a hook to encourage more people to be physically active and enjoy the outdoors.

10. "Heritage makes you Happy"- Encouraging the links between heritage and wellbeing- using heritage as a hook to encourage people to go for a walk, especially families- see Heritage Counts data.

Some partners felt that access had less impact than was sometimes perceived and that this should be addressed with landowners.

11. Work with Wildlife Trusts to address 'horses can disrupt wildlife' message.

## Conclusions

- Publically accessible sites should encourage wildlife as well as people and sites should be designed and improved with this in mind.
- Publically accessible sites include important cultural heritage and this needs to be protected.
- Heritage at Risk sites with public access should be prioritised for improvements.
- Protecting environmentally sensitive sites needs to be a priority, especially where visitor numbers are growing. There may be a need to offer alternative sites to take the pressure off places where wildlife and habitat need to be a priority.
- A Natural Capital Approach should be promoted, including the assessment and enhancement of clean air, rich soils and the cultural ecosystem services.
- Landscape scale conservation should be encouraged and the contribution of publically accessible outdoor assets needs better acknowledgment. Partnership approaches to developing landscape scale conservation should be pursued.
- Agricultural support should benefit conservation of natural and cultural heritage and provide funding to increase access where appropriate.
- External funding will be needed to secure more environmental benefits.

## 6.0 Safe and well maintained

### Shropshire Headlines

Rights of Way= 5,600km

- 4,382 km of Public Footpaths
- 1,082 km of Bridleways
- 112 km of Restricted Byways

Distribution of Rights of Way, towpaths and Unclassified Country Roads (UCRs) in Shropshire.

The distribution of access routes across Shropshire can be seen in the map. This is the result of the historic Definitive Map, derived in the 1950's.

The routes represent historic access and are not necessarily ideal for today's needs. Whilst there are dense networks of routes around ex-industrial areas, such as Clee Hill, Snailbeach Mine and the limeworks around Oswestry, other areas, such as the north east of Shropshire and around Albrighton have a limited network.

The Rights of Way Assessment for Shropshire can be seen in appendix 2.

The 65 major bridges and other infrastructure that need engineering support have not been inspected since 2012/13 and there are outstanding issues that haven't been addressed. These need to be prioritised.

### Key findings from partners

Feedback from key partners highlighted the following:

Rights of Way are important and should be open and well signed. The maintenance of paths can be a concern and the lack of funding can result in standards not being maintained.

- PROW's should be fully accessible and signed/waymarked.
- There is poor/slow maintenance on many paths, with poor furniture/ physical barriers.

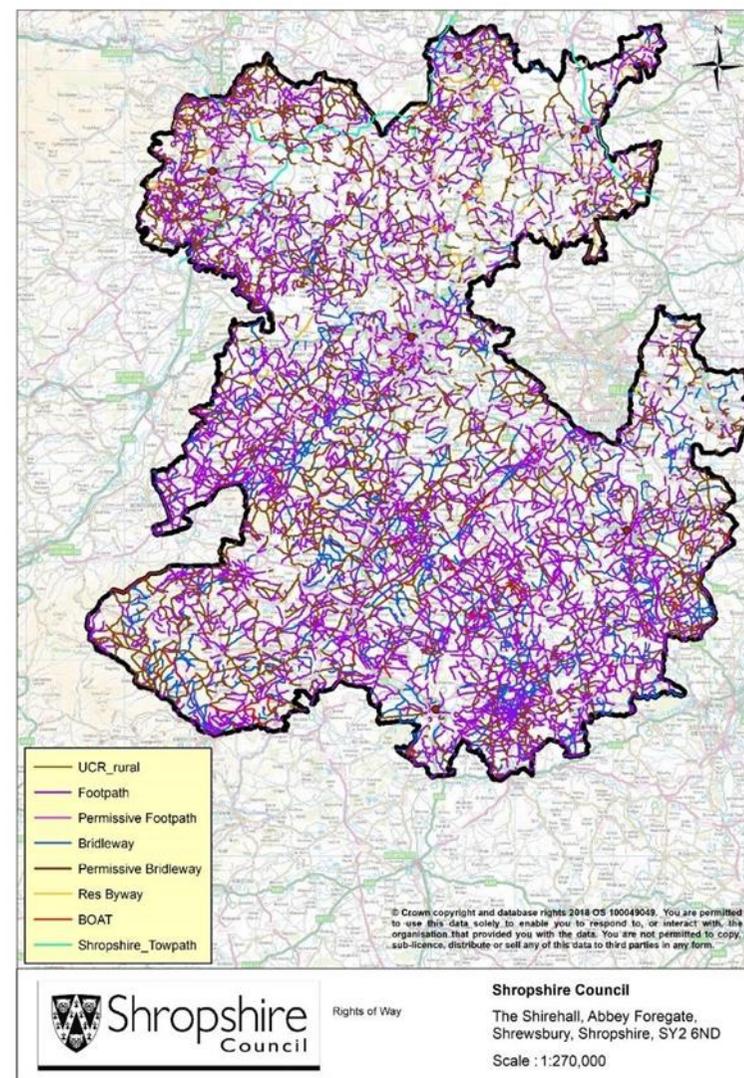


Figure 5- Public Rights of Way network in Shropshire

Lack of signage - particularly at road side

Stiles and wide rickety gates should be replaced where ever possible by gaps or gates (gates within gates for wide gates) ○

Support needed for network maintenance. ○ Need a policy on unauthorised gates.

Partners representing user groups were concerned about the minority of landowners who did not abide by Rights of Way law. Many felt that a stronger approach was needed and that the prosecution of a few repeat offenders would help reinforce the message.

- Land owners indifference to the law - particularly in relation to restoring paths after cultivating land for crops. ○ Timely enforcement of issues needed- prosecutions should be pursued in a few cases. ○ Damage to surfaces caused by landowners should be paid for by landowners.

Partners representing farmers and landowners shared the concerns they come across to public access. They reinforced the need for farm businesses to be recompensed for any impacts on their business.

- Impacts on farm business; trespass (users straying off the path), litter, dogs (livestock worrying, safety around livestock and fouling - disease concerns), signage, inappropriate use (e.g. mini motorbikes and use of agri-environment margins as footpaths), health and safety (e.g. where paths go through farm yards with hazards and working machinery).
- The inherent dislike and distrust of many farms, particularly the older generation, of public access over their land and property.
- Invariably, if there is to be more access then the landowners will want suitable recompense in some way either directly or indirectly. It is not simply just the inconvenience or dis-trust but also the disturbance it causes and issues such a disease transmission etc. that need to be considered.
- We currently communicate with the public about the importance of the countryside code, safety around farms and livestock and will continue to build on this work.
- We have provided signage for farmers concerned about livestock worrying and these have proved popular.

Whilst the provision of footpaths is generally good in most parts of the county, there were calls for more multi-user routes and routes for specific groups, especially mountain bikers, 4 x 4 drivers and horse riders.

- Lack of carriage driving routes (3.5% compared to 6% nationally)
- Is there an opportunity to increase access around working farms e.g. fenced off 'rides' that enable people to experience the changing seasons and connect with farming?
- Develop access to/ leisure activities at heritage sites.

- Joined up approach to MTB route creation- use guidelines from BHS re design to minimise potential conflicts.
- Historic rights of way claims should be prioritised. 2026 deadline for historic routes

Some partners felt there should be a review of Rights of Way law to make it easier to move routes, where they were no longer the best design for modern uses.

- There needs to be a workable system for making changes to the network, for example by relocating unused paths to areas where the public want to walk or where appropriate moving cross field paths to cut down on ploughing and cropping issues and enable walkers to walk near boundaries.
- The current system takes too long and is too costly. Applications for diversions etc. can take many months. Some claims for historic rights of way are unresolved for years.
- Costs and delays when requesting changes to the network e.g. diversions and temporary closures.

Lack of funding was a common issue amongst all partners especially those in the public sector and there was recognition that this was leading to increased competition for external funding. This is reflected in the need to generate income, which is being addressed by all site owners. There is also a need to ensure the lack of funding was not at the expense of heritage or safety.

- All Councils are facing funding issues.
- Funding settlement from central Government unclear.
- Income generation- need to focus on 'Friends' membership, investment and property portfolio and retail opportunities.
- Future lack of funding to maintain the network at a time where outdoor recreation is being encouraged due to its health benefits.
- The reduction in capacity in the Public Sector means that charities need to facilitate more activity e.g. visitor economy development
- Pay and display machines planned for all National Trust sites and a voluntary scheme will be introduced at Natural England sites.
- Reduced central funding.
- Funding especially grant funding is difficult.
- Increased competition for external funding.
- Joint funding applications.
- I think now is an exciting time for partners to work together to improve not just the ROW network but also all public users areas by tapping into each other's expertise and possible budgets.
- Need to generate income.

- Make sure heritage is not damaged and public are not putting themselves at risk.

Many of the partners brought up the subject of Brexit and the impact this might have. It is too early to understand this at the time of writing but it does appear that access will be prioritised in agricultural support going forward.

- Brexit uncertainties.
- Most landowners realise and accept public access is likely to become more important, especially post-Brexit. This gives an ongoing acceptance of what is likely to materialise.

## **Feedback from Users**

### Annual User Survey

- Concerns over impact of housing and other developments
- Concerns about lack of funding and reliance on volunteers
- More investment is needed in off-road cycling and horse riding routes
- Some people are not keen to see car parking charges on sites
- There is demand for 4x4 and motor bike trail riding routes
- Overgrown vegetation and physical obstructions are the most common issues experienced
- The most popular improvements sought were:
  - Better signage
  - More circular walks- although this was down on previous years
  - More walks with gates instead of stiles
  - More online guides and interpretation
  - More cycle tracks

## **Trends**

When these results are compared, where possible, with results from previous years the following trends can be seen:

- Physical obstructions were much more of an issue
- There was a lower satisfaction level with Rights of Way than previous years, with only 31% seeing improvements in the past 12 months
- Whilst 54% were satisfied with parks and sites, only 22% had seen improvements in the past 12 months
- 70% of people did not want to volunteer

### Quotes from users

*"I think the Outdoor Dept. do a very good job considering the horrendous cuts to their budget. If they were to sort out all of the problems of blocked paths etc. the County Council would need to make a considerable increase in investment in Rights of Way. Surely people of Shropshire deserve this."*

*"Footpaths are not always well kept and housing developments often encroach onto them, disturb the footpath and make it uneven or make them very enclosed."*

*"It would be great if there were more extensive routes for off road cycling. Currently a lot of the bridleway network leads to nowhere which means many routes require large portions of on road riding. Secondly there are many bridleways that aren't being kept accessible as gates are being locked or paths are left unattended."*

*"Responsible 4x4 drivers are usually forgotten in these plans."*

### 6.4 Conclusions

- The quality of the Rights of Way network is important to local people and visitors. Support for network maintenance to keep Rights of Way open and well signed is essential.
- The Rights of Way network is deteriorating through lack of funding. This is likely to continue as the population increases and outdoor activities continue to become more popular. Volunteers are invaluable help in keeping the network open but cannot be expected to replace the need to public funding. Income generation will be important to subsidise improvements to the network.
- Landowners that persistently break the law in respect to Rights of Way should be held to account.
- A joined up approach to securing external funding should be encouraged as this gets more competitive.
- Enabling easier changes to be made to the network would benefit users and landowners.
- The development of access should be balanced with farming business requirements.