



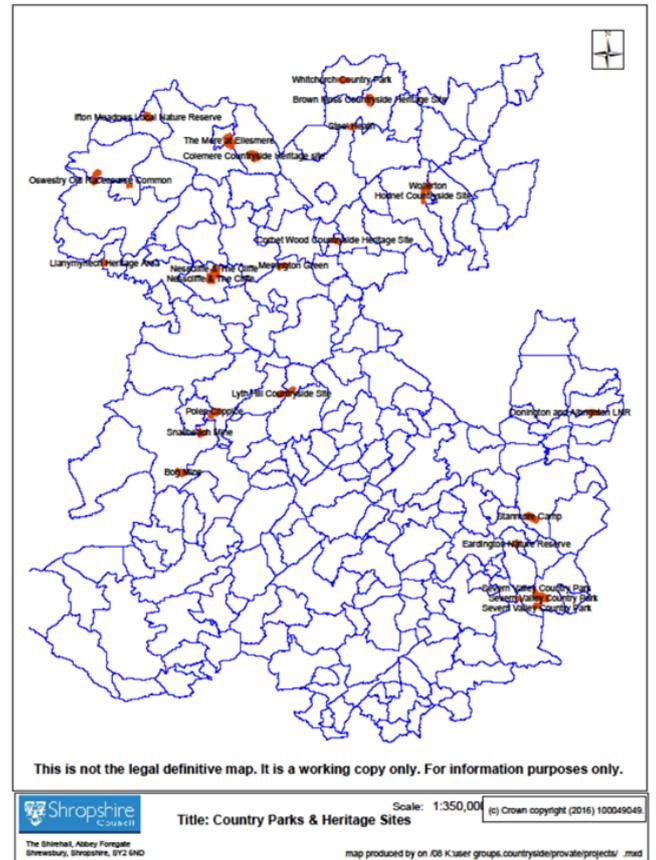
Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey Analysis 2018

The Outdoor Partnerships User Survey ran from Jan to March 2018. The survey helps the Outdoor Partnerships service at Shropshire Council focus activity on priorities defined by people who use Rights of Way and other access routes and the Country Parks and Heritage Sites managed by Shropshire Council, as shown on the map.

Results

426 people responded to the Annual Survey in 2018, down from 601 in the previous year. 79% were over 45 and 31% were over 65. 53% were female, almost all were white British and lived in Shropshire.

The survey was filled out by fewer users of Countryside Sites and more horse riders and motorised users than in previous years. 77% used the Rights of Way and Parks and Sites for walking, 35% for walking their dog, 28% were horse riders, 20% cyclists and almost 16% motorised users. Bird watching and running were mentioned as popular activities in the 'other' category.



87% were outdoors to improve their health, which is consistent with result over the past 6 years. 82% were enjoying wildlife and nature (up from 56% in 2012/13) and 63% were looking for peace and quiet (compared to 51% in 2012/13). 51% meet with friends, up from just 28% in 2014/15.

60% of people don't volunteer, 20% were Parish Paths Partnership volunteers and 13% were Walking for Health walks leaders.

49% were put off by overgrown vegetation, 37% by physical obstructions and 34% by poor signage.

The majority of people use circular or long-distance walks (71% and 40% respectively). With 42% of respondents using circular and long distance bridleways. 27% use green lanes and other routes suitable for vehicles. Only 17% used off-road cycle tracks.

77% used the provision once/ week or more and 52% used then for 2 hours or less.

Only 21% of respondents were under 45, compared with 76% of users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website, most of whom are using it to find walking routes, so the survey results are unlikely to represent the opinion of the majority of the 134,000 users of the site.

Just over 50% were satisfied with the Rights of Way network in their area, although only 38% have seen improvements in the last 12 months. 52% of respondents are satisfied with the parks and sites but only 28% have seen improvements in the past 12 months.

92% felt better for taking exercise, enjoyed it and wanted to do more.
99% felt that getting outdoors had a positive or very positive impact on their quality of life.

In terms of improvements, 42% asked for better signage, 40% for more circular walks and 30% for walks with gates instead of stiles.

42% got information from printed leaflets and guidebooks, 41% from organised groups and 32% from the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website. Whilst the popularity of social media is growing, it is still only used by a minority of respondents.

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

Issues:

- Other users who are inconsiderate and think they are the only ones entitled to be there.
- Poor attitude of other users to others using legal rights of way, mainly experienced when mountain biking or using motorised vehicles.
- Eradication of over-cropping of right of ways by farmers. Particularly, rape and maize crops. Also, ploughing up right of ways and failing to reinstate them, both across fields and around field boundaries (more and more fields are being ploughed to the hedgerow and destroying the footpaths).
- I'm mostly concerned about personal safety with dogs being on leads while I run alone and around children play areas, so better signage about dog owner responsibilities (including dog mess) would be very helpful.

Improvements needed:

- More accessible paths would be helpful and the Stiperstones accessible path has helped my disabled wife to get out and enjoy this part of the Shropshire Hills.
- Mainly very pleased with Shropshire rights of way, have been to many other areas and Shropshire is up there with best. Would like to see more education of people to accept and respect other people's rights of way. Particularly for motorised vehicle users as by comparison with other activities there are very few legal byways to use. Better signage would promote more responsible use of these lanes and prevent misuse of lanes that are not legal byways for vehicles.
- More off road riding in north Shropshire and better safe links between routes. Lanes getting busier due to farm developments, anaerobic digesters, chicken farms and larger farm vehicles travelling further distances due to share farming etc.
- Better parking
- More Cafe's on or near sites.
- Regulation of Mountain Bikers fast cycling, and riding off designated routes.
- I would love more focus on bridleways, on maintaining them & looking at ways to open new ones. The roads have become more and more dangerous for riders so it is more important than ever that horse riders have safe bridleways to use instead.

General comments:

- Footpaths are definitely far more used than they were 5 years ago.
- My local site is now properly funded via the increased precepts from the two local parish councils and the volunteer group is very active so improvements are becoming visible and long may this trend continue.
- Shropshire has some truly stunning countryside... gates and well maintained and sign posted footpaths provide the most straightforward way to enjoy it!
- Maintenance of existing signs and stiles is important.
- Very good overall.
- Keep up the good work
- It is important that Shropshire Council continues to support P3 Groups and the work they do on maintaining and improving then Rights of Way network.
- I understand that maintaining all of the Public Rights of Way in Shropshire is a big task and I appreciate all the hard work that goes into maintaining it. I have noticed there has been a lot of work done over the last few years on replacing stiles with gates in areas where there tend to be a lot of people walking
- Please please please find the funding to keep bridleways open and access maintained. They are a particular lifeline to older horse riding people, living on their own, who otherwise would not be able to continue to keep a horse & ride in the countryside, with all the physical & mental health benefits this brings...to me and many, many others, of all ages.
- Access to public outdoor spaces is extremely important for the physical and mental health of residents. The rights of way, parks and heritage sites should be supported and improved and not allowed to become victims of the latest round of public funding cuts.
- Maintenance of ROW is an ongoing commitment. Their extensive use plus the effects of bad weather requires constant attention to keep them in good shape. This requires manpower and material. Shropshire has a particularly extensive network of ROW which is slowly being improved. It is important to our tourist industry that it is continued.
- Shropshire is a beautiful and welcoming place for all ROW users, you're a credit to the UK.

62 people asked to be kept informed about the work of the service and volunteering.

Key messages from the User Survey:

- Walking is still the major activity but other users are enjoying the countryside and their needs should be taken into account
- People are well aware of how important the provision is for health, wellbeing and quality of life
- The Service is appreciated and users understand that lack of funding makes maintenance of the network more difficult
- More needs to be done to increase respect between different types of users- this message has come from all user groups about all other users
- More needs to be done about overgrown vegetation and ploughing and cropping issues
- Concerns over impact of housing and other developments
- Support for more all-ability routes and replacing stiles with gates on footpaths
- More investment is needed in horse riding routes

Priority actions as a result of the survey:

Outdoor Partnerships will work towards the following priorities over the next 12 months as a result of the feedback from this survey and from other conversations throughout last year:

- Promotion of all-ability and fully-gated routes on the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website
- Promotional campaign aimed at increasing respect between different user groups, including the creation of a new Users Guide based on the Countryside Code and control of dogs in the countryside
- Continue the ploughing and cropping campaign to reduce blockages on Rights of Way
- Continue support for Parish Paths Partnerships, Walking for Health and Volunteer Rangers
- Development of Supplementary Planning Guidance for the provision of greenspace and off-road routes within and to new developments
- Continue maintenance programme for the Rights of Way, Parks and Sites within the resources available
- Tendering for mobile cafes on some of the key Country Parks where there is no café facilities at present
- Prioritisation of multi-user routes (bridleways) in north Shropshire, where anomalies are preventing better use

Thank you to everyone that took the time to complete the survey.