



Engagement plan to evaluate community views on the future of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm

Acton Scott Historic Working Farm was the vision of Thomas Acton who established the museum to demonstrate historic farming techniques. It has been operated by Shropshire Council, as tenants of the Acton Scott Estate since the 1970's.

Over the past four decades Acton Scott Historic Working Farm has welcomed thousands of visitors from across Shropshire and further afield and in more recent years gained international fame on television. Now is the time to explore a new future for the Farm, a future that builds on its remarkable agricultural heritage and evolves to ensure that it is relevant and engaging to the next generation.

With the broadcast of the BBC's 'Victorian Farm' television programme numbers peaked in 2009 at about 45,000.

After an initial decline visitor numbers plateaued at about 20,000 per year. Since then, the Farm has operated with a deficit of £168k per annum which has been subsidised by Shropshire Council.

Acton Scott Historic Working Farm is highly regarded by both Shropshire residents and visitors. We genuinely welcome the thoughts and suggestions of both the local community and supporters of the Farm from across the county.

Objective of this community engagement.

Regrettably subsidising the site is no longer considered a financially sustainable option for Shropshire Council, particularly given the need for it to prioritise statutory services (a statutory service is one the Council is required to deliver in national legislation such as social care) and publicly owned venues. This may result in Shropshire Council no longer running Acton Scott Historic Working Farm.

Shropshire Council is working with the Acton Scott Estate to find an alternative operating model that provides a sustainable future for the Farm.

Shropshire Council will act as facilitator in collating community feedback and proposals. These will be passed on to the Acton Scott Estate to consider as possible alternative uses for the site.

Issues that will be addressed during the engagement:

Acton Scott Historic Working Farm currently trades with a substantial deficit. Shropshire Council is looking at alternative operating models.

Shropshire Council wishes to understand:

- the views of different stakeholders about this issue
- options for viable alternative uses of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm
- options for alternative organisations who are interested in operating the site
- visitors' perceptions of the Farm and the services it offers. These perceptions will inform the future operation of the site.

Information Pack

An information pack will be available online or reference at all Shropshire libraries.

Methods of engagement:

Cecelia Motley, Portfolio holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, will attend the Parish Council meeting on 25 January to explain Shropshire Council's position and receive feedback.

Shropshire Council will attend a Shropshire Hills Tourism Group meeting to clarify our position and receive feedback.

Stakeholder meetings.

In order to ensure a detailed and constructive dialogue with different stakeholders, a series of meetings will be held in February either online or face to face.

We will invite representatives from the different stakeholder groups to attend one of the following meetings.

- **The local community and the Friends of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm Facebook group.**
 - This meeting will be in Silvester Horne Institute, Church Stretton on 9 February 2022 at 7.30. It will be open to invited representatives of the Friends of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm Facebook Group and the local community.
 - To express an interest in attending this meeting, contact actonscottengagement@shropshire.gov.uk confirming your interest in the meeting on 9 February.
- **Skills and education sector**
 - This meeting will be open to invited representatives of the education and heritage skills sector.
 - The meeting will be held online on 17 February at 4.00PM (Subject to confirmation).

- To express an interest in attending this meeting, contact actonscottengagement@shropshire.gov.uk confirming your interest in the Skills and Education meeting.
- **Acton Scott Historic Working Farm staff**
 - This meeting will be open to the staff at the Farm.
 - The meeting will be held at the Farm.

Agenda for all meetings

- Welcome
- Background to why Shropshire Council is looking at alternative operational models for Acton Scott Historic Working Farm
- Overview of the options that the Council has considered
- Questions from the floor
- Workshops to inform future operations will vary and include subjects such as;
 - How do you think it could be made more relevant for the next generation?
 - How could the site be made more popular?
 - Additional thoughts and comments?
- Feedback from workshops
- Close

Subject to availability stakeholder meetings will be chaired and attended by senior managers from Shropshire Council's Culture, Leisure and Tourism team, an elected member, a representative from the Acton Scott Estate.

Online Survey

Any interested party can provide feedback about this matter through an online survey.

This will be available to complete from Monday 31 January – Monday 14 March.

Questions will establish participants':

- perceptions of the Farm and its services
- views about the Council's position
- ideas for alternative viable uses for the site
- suggestions for organisations that could operate the site
- interest in supporting the Farm financially or as a volunteer

Hard copy information packs and surveys.

A hard copy of the information pack along with copies of the survey will be available at all Shropshire libraries.

Other means of engaging with Shropshire Council about this matter.

Interested parties can write to Shropshire Council about this issue or request a hard copy or large format survey forms to be sent to them by post.

Contact details are:

Acton Scott Engagement
Acton Scott Historic Working Farm
Acton Scott
Church Stretton
SY66QN
Shropshire
actonscottengagement@shropshire.gov.uk

Engagement findings

The findings from this engagement will be put into a report which will be shared with Shropshire Council's Cabinet, the Acton Scott Estate and published online.