

## Wrekin Forest Partnership Annual Public meeting, Wellington Civic Centre 2 Feb 2010

Chair – Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Manager  
Wrekin Forest Project Officer – Pete Lambert, Telford Living Landscape Officer,  
Shropshire Wildlife Trust. (Approximately 40 people in attendance).

- 1. Huntington Lane Surface Mine Site** - UK Coal presentation - by Craig Ball, UK Coal Planning and Development Manager and Trevor Parkin, Technical Director, ENTEC.

A comprehensive presentation of the main phases of the site was followed by Q and A session with the audience. The development is due to commence later in Spring 2010. A Community Liaison Committee is being established, a sub-committee of which will administer a Community Fund which has been secured under the planning conditions. The follow on debate included discussion of the long term future of the land concerned, Rights of Way issues and transport infrastructure. Trevor and Craig were thanked for agreeing to present and take part in the evening's proceedings.

- 2. Wrekin Hillfort restoration project** – presentation by Pete Lambert, project co-ordinator.
  - 2009 was year 1 of a three year English Heritage funded project to repair erosion damage, restore habitats and provide better information for visitors to the Wrekin Hillfort. Pete gave a realistic appraisal of the work achieved so far. Survey work in the snow had revealed a previously unknown rampart feature, supporting calls for an updated survey of the whole Hillfort.
  - The bracken control work had made modest beginnings; bracken damages sub surface archaeology and dominates the heath land habitat, control efforts will be enhanced in 2010.
  - Erosion repair was carried out on Hell Gate, involving careful rebuilding of the original earthwork profile and new planting of heather, bilberry and specific grasses. A number of local schools had assisted in the work and taken part in storytelling events across the year.

An end of year 1 review was to be held shortly and the 2010 project programme is due to start at the end of March. Thanks were offered to the Raby Estate, Dr Andy Wigley of Shropshire Council and English Heritage.

- 3. Shropshire Wildlife Trust 2009 Wrekin Forest activity review**

- 2009 began with the completion of a new footbridge in the Ercall woodlands and other footpath improvements targeted at increasing visitor safety whilst exploring the Wrekin Forest. These works were funded by Natural England's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.
- February saw a buzz of publicity in the annual attempt to conserve the toads of Cluddley reservoir. We marked the end of winter a horse logging demonstration day in the Ercall Woodlands.
- The Viva Veolia project entered its second year providing Forest School activities for young people in the Ercall woodlands. The funding also paid for new fencing at the rear of the Forest Glen to protect nesting birds, removal of the graffiti on the Ercall quarries, and a new entrance for the Dairy Pit coppice.
- The staff of RICOH joined the Trust and local bird expert in making and installing 80 nest boxes to benefit Pied Flycatcher conservation. The boxes were installed

in early spring and a June monitoring visit successfully recorded at least a third occupancy of this tiny summer visitor.

- The Trust education team supported 4 local schools through the John Muir Award, a conservation based challenge which involved each school in a 5 day intensive week in various locations around the Wrekin Forest.
- The Wrekin Forest Volunteers enjoyed a moth night on the summit of the Wrekin and a late night bat walk, both producing new species records for the Hill. A mixed group in early May also completed the Wrekin to Ironbridge walk, the Wrekin Forest contribution to the Ironbridge Walking Festival.
- A three day woodland event saw the Ercall visited by a charcoal kiln and woodland craftsmen, all part of the continuing Dairy Pits Coppice project.
- Forthcoming events are to include a Woodland Open day of charcoal burning and horse logging on Saturday 27th March 2010 and later in the New Year a small mammal survey.

## **AOB**

1. PH summarised the history of the Wrekin Forest Partnership and its role as a working group of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, bringing a local focus to this most northern part of the AONB. PH also made clear that the WFP would communicate its minuted discussions via the AONB website. The SWT website is under re-development but will also hope to support dissemination of information in relation to landscape conservation activity in the Wrekin Forest.
2. PH also clarified that funding had been earmarked for SWT project officer time to support the co-ordination of the WFP, provide secretariat support and support WFP development. The funding from Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council secures 13 days of officer time, Pete Lambert currently is the nominated Trust officer.
3. PH outlined the procurement of a Sustainable Transport and Access study for the Wrekin Forest area. The study has been contracted to a team from the University of Central Lancashire Transport research group. The study will be completed later in 2010.
4. TWC has commissioned a report into the feasibility of a Quiet Lanes scheme for the Wrekin Forest. This report will be published later in 2010.
5. Cllr Dorothy Roberts announced that Wellington would be seeking recognition as a 'Walkers are Welcome' town. The project would be launched at an event on 17<sup>th</sup> March.
6. SWT are taking the lead in developing a funding bid to the LEADER fund stream which is administered by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership. Members of the WFP are active in helping to shape the range of ideas which relate to landscape interpretation, volunteer engagement and rural heritage.
7. Q&A session - A wide ranging open debate covered various topics including communication, toilet and visitor facilities. We would like to thank everybody who contributed to a lively and helpful discussion.

Meeting closed at 9pm