

The Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting - Monday 1st November 2010, Buckatree Hall Hotel

Present:

Phil Holden [Chair] Shropshire Hills AONB; Pete Lambert [Officer] Shropshire Wildlife Trust; Marilyn Pietroni, Vice Chair TLAf; Glenn Symington, Bryn and Helen King – Wrekin Co-operative Allotment Society; Joanna Deacon, The Wrekin Museum Partnership; Mike and Jackie White, Wellington Civic Society; George Chancellor, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Chair; Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford and Wrekin Council; Brian Herring and Robert Saunders, Wellington LA21; Naomi Wrighton, Wellington Walkers are Welcome.

Apologies:

Matt Beech, Small Woods Association; Trevor Parkin, ENTEC; George Evans, All Friends Round The Wrekin; Dr Andy Wigley, Shropshire Council; Michael Barker, TWC.

1. Matters arising

- a. **PL to distribute membership list** – task complete post meeting.
- b. **PH to contact Michael Barker regarding response relating to WFP support for the carrying forward of the Quiet Lanes scheme and response to queries relating to concept of ‘Regional Park’ and its relevance to status of ‘The Wrekin Forest’ landscape.**
- c. **PL to distribute updated LEADER bid in its amended form** – task complete post meeting.

2. The Wrekin Co-operative Allotment Society –

Glenn Symington and Helen King of the WCAS gave an excellent presentation on their plans to establish a new community based allotment. The group had formed in July this year, already grown to 30 members and received a grant from Wellington Town Council. The group was formed in response to the lack of allotment space in the Wellington area. They were very keen to grow local varieties, to work with schools, young people and produce local food. The group had looked a number of sites including the Wrekin Rifle Range. Glenn and Helen were keen to get the views of the WFP on this location in particular. The responses varied from making note of its local heritage value, public access negative and positive, aspect [reduced growing period], benefits of active use, soil type, distance from population centres, security and proximity to SSSI. On balance it was felt by the WFP members that the Wrekin Rifle Range would not be a suitable location for a vulnerable enterprise such as a community allotment. Alternative suggestions included Lightmoor Village – Bournville Village Trust, contacting Lawley Greenspaces Group and Ketley Millennium Village. PL and Cllr Jacqui Seymour suggested that land in the Beanhill and Dothill area might be more appropriate, JS suggesting approaching TWC Asset and Property Dept. PL offered support to the group as he was involved in Local Nature Reserve designation process under way in Dothill.

3. The Wrekin Forest Sustainable Transport and Access Study – commissioned by Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership – authors University of Central Lancashire.

The study was generally welcomed as a well researched document that established a clear baseline statement of the condition of the access network at present and the range of issues faced by users and land use managers in relation to resident and visitor access. It was felt by some members that the action points, though strategically sensible, did not go far enough to establish a clear plan of activity to address the issues raised. Much of the work to deliver enhanced access will fall at the feet of

Telford and Wrekin Council and their counterparts in Shropshire Council. PH will undertake to write to both to highlight the publication of the study and seek their views on the Local Authority's role in delivery. The debate following identified that a number of access initiatives were already under way, each led by the voluntary sector and could by sensitive collaboration help deliver a strategic series of measures to address the access needs of the Wrekin Forest. It was proposed by PL that a working group was established to support co-ordination and improve communication to ensure minimum negative overlap and maximum benefit for all users. It was noted that projects might be applying to the same funders which might cause confusion and difficulty. PL suggested he might be able to take up role dependant on funding. It was also proposed that the study be presented to the Telford Local Access Forum, Marilyn Pietroni offered to facilitate this action.

Actions:

- a. PH to write to TWC/SC
- b. Recommend establishing a Wrekin Forest Trails Group in line with aspirations in the Wrekin Forest Landscape Management Plan.
- c. MP to facilitate study presentation at Telford LAF.

4. Wellington Walkers are Welcome project – speaker Naomi Wrighton

NW gave an entertaining summary of all that has been achieved by the WaW project including distributing copies of the walking guide. Wellington via the work of the steering group has achieved 'Walkers are Welcome' status and working closely with TWC has begun physical improvements to signing and raising issues relating to path condition. WFP members liked the map leaflet and interested in future possibilities of the group. NW mentioned that they would like to support a walking festival.

5. Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership update

- a. PH confirmed that £2k had been paid to Shropshire Wildlife Trust to cover the costs of running the WFP meetings and communications. He hoped some funding would continue to be available.
- b. PH distributed a copy of Discover Local leaflet and AONB Annual Review document.
- c. A Sustainable Tourism Strategy is being prepared for the AONB which will include the Wrekin Forest area.
- d. National Trust have done extensive consultation about after use of Wenlock Edge quarries.
- e. SDF is supporting two projects in the Wrekin Forest: Wellington LA21 for the Five Towns Trail and Shropshire Wildlife Trust for the Wrekin Forest Small Mammals survey – results to be presented at Annual WFP open meeting, see below.

6. AOB

- a. The defunct toilet block at base of Wrekin is to be demolished in the next couple of months. The WFP had agreed to look again at this time at visitor infrastructure, in line with this PL had approached the Buckatree Hall Hotel to ask if their refurbishment programme included business diversification to meet needs of regular visitors, the answer was no.

The next meeting will be our annual open meeting, PL will arrange speakers and approach groups who are active in the Wrekin Forest and might like to display there projects. We have booked **Little Wenlock Village Hall for Monday 31st January 2011, 7.30pm – 9.30pm.**

If you have any suggestion regarding speakers and display please get in touch with Pete on 01743 284285 or petel@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk, thanks.