

Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of Meeting Monday 17th May 2010, Buckatree Hall Hotel

Attendees

George Chancellor	Individual member (& Chair of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership)
Mike and Jackie White	Wellington Civic Society
Joanna Deacon	Wellington Museum Partnership
Dorothy Roberts	Wellington Town Council
Paul Kalinauckas	[rep. for Tom Bolger, landowner at Halfway House]
Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership (Chair)
Matt Beech	Small Woods Association
Pat Hutchings	Little Wenlock Parish Council
Dr Chris Meads	Buildwas Parish Council
Pete Lambert	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
George Evans	All Friends Round The Wrekin
Robert Saunders	Wellington LA21
Marilyn Pietroni	Telford Local Access Forum
Cllr Tracy Hope	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr Jacqui Seymour	Telford & Wrekin Council

Apologies

Dr Andy Wigley - Shropshire Council, Ruth Stafford - Shropshire Council, Brian Herring - Wellington Local Agenda 21.

1. New Members

We welcomed two new members –
Marilyn Pietroni, Vice Chair of the Telford Local Access Forum
The Small Woods Association – represented by Matt Beech

2. Update of Terms of Reference

PH outlined proposed minor changes to the Partnership's Terms of Reference, relating to membership and communication. The members list was updated and the clause about circulating minutes to people not belonging to the Partnership was removed. It was proposed that making minutes publicly available through the AONB website was adequate. These changes to the Terms of Reference were agreed by the meeting. GE noted the absence of a 'wind-down' clause. PH felt that since the Partnership was not a constituted body which held funds, this was not required.

Action – PH to update Terms of Reference on website.

Action - PL agreed to produce a membership list to distribute to members.

Action - DR requested that a representative from the Walkers are Welcome project attend further meetings – PL to facilitate.

3. Matters Arising

RS wished to clarify that he attends as the representative of Wellington LA21 group only - future documentation will show this.

RS requested a follow up response to Michael Barker's reference to a possible 'Regional Park' type landscape designation in relation to the Wrekin Forest. PH said that this was not a widely used designation, with no standard structure or funding arrangements – the Lea Valley in East London is the only one in England, with a few in Scotland. GC stressed the importance of the Local Development Framework incorporating aspirations such as a Wrekin Forest Regional Park. PL stated that this would have to be a strategic landscape zoning, as biodiversity criteria alone were not sufficient to encompass the whole Wrekin Forest.

Action – PH to contact Michael Barker requesting expansion of his earlier comment regarding 'Regional Park' and clarifying the concept in relation to Area Action Plans.

4. Quiet Lanes Report (Jacobs) and Sustainable Transport and Access Study Draft report

PH summarised the background as an introduction to this main agenda item. In December 2009 TWC announced that Jacobs had been commissioned to produce a report in relation to a proposed Quiet Lanes scheme for the Little Wenlock area. The report was distributed to the WFP early in 2010. At around the same time the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, in consultation with local interested parties, commissioned a complementary study with broader scope on sustainable transport and access in the Wrekin Forest. Following consultations, the draft of this report had been circulated to WFP members and comments and discussion were invited to give feedback to the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) to complete the report.

RS questioned the security gains to be made by development of Donkey Field, and was supportive of formalising roadside parking.

MW reiterated Wellington Civic Society's position in terms of broad support for a Quiet Lanes scheme, strong objection to the Donkey Field as a site for car park, supportive of the Walkers are Welcome project as a positive contribution, and supporting wider development of walking/cycling/horseriding. MW was supportive of the UCLAN study but felt it should go further, and that the Buckatree Hall Hotel had potential. He felt that there was a lack of detail on variations in traffic levels.

GE felt more research needed undertaking, and that the Donkey Field was not appropriate for development as a car park due to nature conservation/cultural/landscape reasons.

JD felt that the recommendations of the UCLAN study needed to be tighter, with a clearer idea of indicative solutions.

MP welcomed the opportunity to comment on a draft, and felt the document was good considering the short consultation time allowed. MP felt that tight referencing was required particularly in regard to Policy. The report also needed to be up to date regarding RoW changes at Huntington Lane SMS.

GE noted the use of UCLAN and felt that a local consultancy might be more appropriate in the future. PH said that they had been chosen as they did have local links and knowledge.

JD felt that safety in terms of perception and actuality had not been addressed sufficiently well in both reports. She also suggested consideration of carrying capacity for the area.

GC noted the issue of through traffic using the Wrekin Forest as a short cut between M54 Jct. 7 and Coalbrookdale.

PL suggested that the recommendations of both documents should be worked up into an Action Plan.

RS suggested that a dispersal approach could be used in relation to mountain bike use. PL responded that work had been done in this area and that dispersal would be very difficult as the Wrekin Forest offers the best off road cycling in the Borough. RS also noted that a roundabout at the junction of Wellington Road and Ercall Lane was out of the question, though other options such as changing the priority were suggested. DR noted the possibility of bike shelter in Wellington.

RS raised a question related to the Quiet Lanes report, which fails to provide evaluation evidence of the case studies – did they work?

MP felt that roadside parking is a long recognised problem, and was undesirable and dangerous. She said parking at the Buckatree Hall Hotel could be safely linked to the Wrekin, and consideration be given to an outdoor users bar.

RS commented that there was some evidence to show that roadside parking had the effect of slowing traffic, as drivers perceive a hazard, and removing roadside parking could increase the speed of traffic.

MB asked if there were alternatives to the Donkey Field for a car park such as the Rifle Range? It was reported that the landowner here was not keen.

GC raised the issue of the unhappy history of unsupervised car parking in the area – some former car parks had been closed due to persistent vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Drawing together the discussion, a vote was taken about the desirability of developing the Donkey Field as a car park. A significant majority of those present were against this, with two votes in favour and a small number of abstentions. The following Actions were agreed:

Action – PH to write on behalf of the Partnership to Telford & Wrekin Council to support and welcome the recommendations of the Quiet Lanes report (with the exception of the Donkey Field car park proposal), and request that it be taken to implementation stage with appropriate public consultation.

Action- PH to feed comments back to the UCLAN team and oversee completion of the Sustainable Transport and Access Study, with as clear recommendations as possible. Any specific comments from WFP members on the draft would be welcomed.

Action – On completion of the Sustainable Transport and Access Study, PH to circulate report and write formally to both Councils to seek their support in implementing its findings.

Action – On completion of the Sustainable Transport and Access Study, PL to review Section 3 of Wrekin Forest Plan.

5. Wrekin Museum Partnership

Joanna Deacon reported on the recent WMP AGM. An action plan has been prepared which JD summarised. Key actions are enthusing and gaining support, recruiting new members and working to positively support local network. Members will receive a newsletter detailing progress on the main aims of the WMP. WMP aims to enhance the attraction of Wellington to visitors from near and far. WMP have launched website see www.wrekinmuseumpartnership.co.uk – they are keen that the website will strengthen the local network for similar organisations and individuals.

6. UK Coal Huntington Lane Surface Mine Site

The UK Coal Liaison Committee and Community Fund sub-committee are now established. For minutes and other documentation of the proceedings of the Liaison Committee see www.littlewenlock.org.

7. Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership news

PH outlined that the AONB Partnership's Natural England grant for 2010-11 was at 99% of the level of the previous year. The £2,000 in the budget for support for the Wrekin Forest Partnership therefore should be secure. Together with an additional £600 pledged by TWC, this would cover 13 days of PL's time.

'Natural Assets' funding had been secured for a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Shropshire Hills.

Allocation of grants from LEADER in the Shropshire Hills was now at about half of the available funds.

About £40k had been allocated for this Financial Year under the Sustainable Development Fund – this included grants to Wellington LA21 (cycle route), and SWT (Wrekin Small Mammals survey phase 2).

8. LEADER bid update

PL explained that due to recent changes in central Government, currently all decisions relating to LEADER programmes have been suspended. *(Post meeting note – these restrictions have been lifted, and the Wrekin LEADER bid will be considered at a Grants Panel meeting on 8 July).*

Action – PL to distribute summary of the Wrekin LEADER bid to WFP members.

9. Walkers are Welcome update

Dorothy Roberts on behalf of the Walkers are Welcome committee gave an update on the progress made so far – including the formation of a steering group, preparation of a new walking map, and surveying of routes courtesy of the Wrekin Forest Volunteers.

10. Wrekin Forest small mammals survey

PL reported on the small mammals survey, supported by the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund. Phase 1 last Financial Year involved construction of dormouse boxes and installation in 4 locations in Wrekin Forest. Phase 2 was to commence shortly with survey of nestboxes and training event for volunteers in July to be held in the Ercall. Further details will be circulated to members.

Meeting closed at 9pm

Next meeting Monday 4th October at Buckatree Hall Hotel 7pm – 9pm

Agenda items to petel@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk or 01743 284285