

# Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting, Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Wellington Library

## Present:

Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome  
Jayne Davidson, Little Wenlock Parish Council  
Brian Herring, Wellington LA21  
Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Manager (Chair)  
John Hughes, Shropshire Wildlife Trust  
Andrew Jenkinson, Shropshire Geological Society  
Fran Lancaster, Telford & Wrekin Council, Planning Ecologist  
Julia Owen, Landowner, Leasows Farm  
Dorothy Roberts, Wellington Town Council  
Dag Saunders, Walkabout Wellington  
Robert Saunders, Wellington LA21  
Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford & Wrekin Council

## 1. Welcomes and Apologies

Apologies had been received from Richard Thomason, Small Woods Association.

## 2. Notes of meeting 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016

These were accepted. Matters arising were:

New Wrekin page on AONB website – this had been published in February  
<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/enjoying-the-shropshire-hills/places-to-visit/the-wrekin/>.  
Amendments could be made at any time.

### Update on Telford & Wrekin Strategic Landscapes Study and the Wrekin Forest Plan.

The Strategic Landscapes study was complete and formed part of the evidence supporting the new Telford & Wrekin Local Plan. The study had already been influential in a couple of planning appeals defended by TWC. A letter had been written to the Partnership from Severn Gorge Countryside Trust expressing concern about lack of clarity regarding the boundary of the Wrekin Forest Plan. After some discussion on this, the maps in the Plan had been amended to remove the red circle, and minor text changes made to better reflect the stated position that the Plan did not define any strict boundary. Phil felt that with the Landscape Partnership Scheme now in preparation (which would need to have its own boundary defined for operational reasons), further retrospective amendments to the Wrekin Forest Plan were not worthwhile. This was supported. Jacqui understood that the urban boundary had not been changed as a result of the Strategic Landscapes study and associated policies.

Phil said that already the Wrekin Forest Plan had been a stepping stone to better planning protection for the area through the Strategic Landscapes (albeit not as extensive as hoped), and also to the Landscape Partnership Scheme, and together this was a significant achievement. The slightly amended Plan is at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Wrekin-Forest-Plan-2015-20-v6.pdf>.

## 3. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)

This item was added, as information had just been received and circulated from National Grid about its launch. Phil talked through the main aspects of the initiative – grants would be applied for by the AONB Partnership but working with partners. Funding was available until 2021 with two application periods each year. This timescale and the objectives of the initiative meant it could fit very well with the proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS),

and the two could probably be combined as match funding for each other. It was therefore proposed not to apply to the LEI this year, but to work ideas into the LPS development. Discussion would be held with National Grid at the appropriate time about matching the programmes. Some specific ideas were discussed, including the potential for sensitively carried out improvements to footpaths on the Wrekin aimed at reducing damage from volume of use. Members were encouraged to consider any possible ideas for the initiative.

#### 4. Update on proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) for Wrekin area

John reminded members that the deadline for the stage 1 submission to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was the end of May. John had been having many discussions and had circulated a list of potential activities and outputs, and a map of a proposed boundary.

HLF required a firm boundary for the Scheme and it would limit where and with whom the Scheme could work. It also needed to be a 'coherent' landscape area. It was therefore proposed to include Wellington and urban areas to the east around Lawley, Dawley and Lightmoor. Julia had expressed a wish for her land at Leasows Farm to be included, as much landscape and conservation work had been done and there was potential to do more. The possibility of including the power station site was discussed, and also where to draw the line towards Coalbrookdale. It was accepted that the Gorge was a different 'coherent landscape area', but also suggested that the LPS could help to define the linkages and relationship of the Wrekin area to it. This was historical (e.g. charcoal from the Wrekin woods feeding early industry in the Gorge), habitat connections, and also in terms of visitors, e.g. access routes and the potential for Shuttle bus linkages. This would be discussed further, and it was noted that changes to the boundary could be made later during the Development Phase of an LPS.

Features and areas north of Wellington were discussed but it was felt these were going into the different landscape area of the Weald Moors. In terms of visitors and recreation, it was felt important that the Scheme highlighted features and areas in addition to the Wrekin itself, as this would help to reduce pressures there. The need was stressed to avoid activities which would be seen as statutory work on rights of way, though more general access such as path and trail improvements additional to statutory responsibilities were supported. Quiet Lanes and Slow Travel were mentioned, and the strong support from the Wrekin Scout Camp and the opportunities offered by this facility.

Members were asked to submit any comments to John – **ACTION AII**. John would progress the application and circulate a draft for the next meeting in May – **ACTION John**.

#### 5. Updates from partners

Phil mentioned current proposals for reorganisation at Shropshire Council affecting the AONB Partnership. The Partnership had submitted alternative proposals for the AONB structure to become independent, and discussions were ongoing.

Wellington Walkers Are Welcome had been ranked in the top 10 of Walkers are Welcome towns in Britain. Leaflets were circulated.

Wellington LA21 had launched their Weald Moors booklet.

#### 6. AOB

The Shropshire Star had on 12<sup>th</sup> April reported that planning issues at Halfway House had been resolved.

#### 7. Date of next meeting

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm at Wellington library.**