

# Wrekin Forest Partnership

## Notes of meeting, Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Wellington Library

### Present:

Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome  
Andrew Jenkinson, Shropshire Geological Society  
Jayne Madeley, Little Wenlock Parish Council  
Fay Easton, Wellington Town Centre  
Pat Fairclough, Wellington Town Council  
Brian Herring, Wellington LA21  
Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Manager (Chair)  
John Hughes, Shropshire Wildlife Trust  
Jenny Joy, Butterfly Conservation, local resident and SWT trustee

### 1. Welcomes and Apologies

Apologies had been received from Dag Saunders (Walkabout Wellington), Harry Barnard (Raby Estates), Robert Saunders (Wellington LA21), Cllr Jacqui Seymour (Telford & Wrekin Council), Dorothy Roberts (Wellington Town Council), John Winterbourne (Forestry Commission), Jayne Davidson (Little Wenlock Parish Council), Fran Lancaster (Telford & Wrekin Council).

### 2. Notes of meeting 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017

These were accepted.

### 3. Brief Updates from partners

AONB Partnership – A charity, the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust, has been formed for fund-raising, and the Partnership and Trust now jointly run the Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB scheme. Formal proposal has been submitted to Defra to create an independent AONB Conservation Board – outcome awaited. Sustainable Tourism Strategy is being reviewed this year, and the AONB Management Plan over the next 18 months. Project ideas in development include educational/youth work and support for volunteers on heritage sites.

LA21 – 'Explore the Wrekin' website is nearly ready for publication. *Further info from Robert by email after meeting: LA21 is developing a comprehensive 'Explore The Wrekin' web resource, featuring information on local habitat features, sites and wildlife. Will focus on sustainable tourism, outlining options for exploring by road bike and on foot. Will be creating a mobile phone app showcasing circular walking routes between The Ercall, The Wrekin and Wellington. Also a community notice board for organisations from around the district to post news items and details of upcoming events. If anybody would like to know more, or to get involved please e-mail [Wellingtonla21@gmail.com](mailto:Wellingtonla21@gmail.com) via Twitter: <https://twitter.com/wellingtonla21>.*

Shropshire Geological Society – No real progress with proposed SJ60 project - had hoped to get going through HLF bid. Lacking capacity to develop it at present. Geology of the Wrekin leaflet is out of print – awaiting developments before any reprint/ update.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust – John gave feedback on HLF decision not to support Landscape Partnership bid – competition for HLF funds is increasing, minor queries on level of involvement of some partners, but main issue was high cost of proposed parking/ visitor facilities and perceived value for money. There could be another HLF bid for a different grant, but not a

Landscape Partnership. Youth project on Wrekin and Ercall is going well. Honeypot Café at Forest Glen has been running since Easter – still adapting to the market, but going well.

Walkers Are Welcome – Bob said the Shropshire Way now goes through Dothill Nature Reserve and Wellington Town Centre. Two free self-guided walks leaflets from Town Centre to north new in May, which link to another 7 walks from Wrockwardine. Walking Festival in 5<sup>th</sup> year 11-17 Sept with 27 events <http://www.wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk/Festival.html>. Path maintenance carried out at Limekiln Woods, and work on reinstatement of rights of way on former coal site.

Wellington Town Centre – Fay talked about work on town centre regeneration, and how tourism promotion in relation the Wrekin seemed to be very limited. Market towns within TWC area have suffered from decline. Discover Telford has £100k of EU funding for tourism this year, but Wellington have struggled to link with activity from this.

Butterfly Conservation – Jenny said area was important for species like Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak. Telford Butterfly Group has been relaunched and is developing good links. There is great educational potential in butterflies in the area – they are indicator species for the health of the environment. Maddox Quarry is a good site but deteriorating due to growth of woodland.

Wellington Town Council – Pat said a Promotions and Liaison meeting had recently been held. A number of the Councillors are supportive of conservation matters.

Little Wenlock PC – Jayne is relatively new as Clerk of LWPC, but is and has been Clerk to a number of other PCs, including The Gorge. Main current issue for the PC is car parking, so discussion moved into that agenda item.

#### 4. **Car parking at Forest Glen**

Jayne said this issue has dominated recent Parish Council meetings and the annual parish meeting of residents. West Mercia Police have also been in touch with concerns, since some incidents where road access for emergency vehicles had been restricted. Though parking and road issues are longstanding, they are felt to be getting worse and action is needed. LWPC have proposed that Jayne convenes a working group to address this and try to find solutions. Members of the Partnership fully supported this proposal. Phil circulated the section from the Wrekin Forest Plan on car parking, which indicated the general consensus that improved parking provision was needed at the base of the Wrekin. Other measures such as encouraging people to walk/cycle etc were useful in addition, but were not a substitute for more actual safe parking capacity. Hopefully there was enough agreement about the principle of providing more car parking to enable discussions to focus on the difficult 'how' questions of what provision, where, design, how would it be paid for, who would manage it, etc.

Bob commented that the working group should include a 'user' representative, and said he or someone else from Walkers Are Welcome would be willing to do this.

Jayne was grateful for support and would progress the working group – **ACTION Jayne**.

#### 5. **Litter**

In Robert's absence this was discussed briefly. Bob said that Chad Addison the Pride Officer at TWC was a key contact who could provide support. The Partnership felt that relevant authorities should be encouraged to do their bit, but that any voluntary effort that might be generated would also be useful. Jenny commented that quite a lot of walkers do pick up rubbish and bring it down. Jayne said she would follow up the contacts.

## 6. **Halfway House**

Jenny said there was an opportunity for a community group to buy into the Halfway House and work with the owner to provide a visitor facility. After discussion, there was much support for this idea from the Partnership, but recognition that it would be a lot of work for fund-raising and running it. It was felt there would be support from the local community, including volunteer time and financial donations, and it was a question of whether this could be tapped into in sufficient quantity in the timescales needed. There was no obvious existing organisation to take this on.

There was discussion about similar ventures, and any contacts which might be useful should be forwarded to Jenny – **Action ALL**.

The Partnership and organisations within it would provide whatever support they could, but this would probably be fairly limited. The outcome will depend on whether a core group of people can come together to make something happen.

## 7. **Maddock's Hill Wood and Quarry**

Jenny highlighted the availability of this site for sale, which was an important conservation site, part SSSI and part local Wildlife Site. It was a good opportunity if any organisation was in a position to buy it.

## 8. **National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative**

Phil reminded members that this funding was available due to the high voltage electricity line across the southern side of the Wrekin. Projects would have to be developed with relevant landowners in the close vicinity of the line, and contacts or ideas from members of the Partnership were very welcome. The AONB Partnership had to be the applicant, and were keen to develop a project but had not so far been able to devote much time to it. A bid to this fund had been intended to be included as match within the proposed Landscape Partnership, but now would probably have to be a stand-alone project. Nationally the uptake was understood to be a bit slow. The scheme was open for a few more years.

## 9. **AOB**

It was mentioned that moves towards the sale of the Ironbridge Power station site were progressing. A stakeholder meeting had apparently been held.

Spout Lane was now officially a 'Quiet Lane' and was signed.

10. **Date of next meeting** - Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017, at Wellington library.