

Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting, Tuesday 11th June 2015, Little Wenlock Village Hall

Present:

Michael Barker, Telford & Wrekin Council, Assistant Director: Planning Specialist
Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome
Jayne Davidson, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Brian Herring, Wellington LA21
Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Manager (Chair)
Pete Lambert, Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Dorothy Roberts, Wellington Town Council
Dag Saunders, Walkabout Wellington
Robert Saunders, Wellington LA21
Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford & Wrekin Council

1. Apologies

George Chancellor, individual member and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Chair
Juliet Esp, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Andrew Jenkinson, Shropshire Geological Society
Harry Vane, landowner, Raby Estate
Michael Vout, Telford & Wrekin Council, Team Leader Environment and Planning Policy

2. Notes of meeting 23 April 2015

These were accepted. Actions – Michael and Michael had provided input to the draft Plan on planning matters. The brief for the Landscape Sensitivity Study had not yet been circulated – **ACTION Michael Vout**. It was clarified that the study would not be complete before the launch of Shaping Places, but it was intended to provide evidence to support it. Some members had submitted further comments to Pete on the draft of the Plan. Phil had been in touch with Peter Holt and had arranged to meet him for an informal discussion.

3. Developing the new Wrekin Forest Plan

Pete thanked members for comments, and especially those from Telford & Wrekin Council on planning and the structure of the Plan.

Pete queried members on their views on 'key issues' for a range of topics, including interpretation, volunteering, Quiet Lanes, car parking, access, recreation, archaeology and geology. Some points made included:

- the value of trying to distribute and disperse access and recreation pressures, while needing to manage the ongoing concentrated use on the main path up the hill
- hopeful inclusion of Quiet Lanes scheme in forthcoming TWC Cabinet agenda
- the past problems with anti-social behaviour at car parks, and the suggestion that any possible future new car parking would be best constructed to be quite open and visible and located near the road to minimise this, while being sensitively designed.
- safety issues with mountain biking, and lack of information on where they could go
- risk to archaeological sites if the value of them was not understood
- scrub growth diminishing value of geological exposures e.g. in old quarries

Pete then invited views on potential actions by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust to improve the Forest Glen, as potential funding bids were being explored. There were some basic improvements needed e.g. to surfacing, steps, noticeboards etc. Other possibilities were discussed including seating, sculpture/artwork, picnic facilities and play features – these were on the whole felt to be a lower priority at the car park area itself, as this was not particularly a place where people were likely to linger, and it made sense to maximise the parking capacity of the space. The desirability of some seating and picnic areas was supported however in the vicinity of the lower part of the hill, but the SWT land was not felt to be the best location for these. The possibility of ‘permeable tarmac’ for surfacing the Forest Glen car park was discussed – though expensive to instal, this could provide the best low-maintenance long term option, while not causing problems with water run-off. A proposal by the Trust to invite donations from visitors towards upkeep of the car park by text from a mobile phone was also discussed.

The process and timescale for completing the Plan was discussed. Pete would update a final draft for circulation once more for final comments, with the aim of approval by the Partnership at its next meeting. **Action – Pete, and All for comments.**

The possible need for changes to the Plan later in the year was mentioned, but it was agreed after discussion that the Plan would carry greater weight if approved as the ‘Final Plan’ rather than held as a final draft. Changes could be made to a working version of the Plan at any stage before a full review if the Partnership felt this was necessary. Making the Plan public and enabling it to feed in to the Shaping Places Local Plan were key considerations.

4. Update to Wrekin Forest Partnership Terms of Reference

Phil mentioned the re-matching of names of those who attended to categories in the Terms of Reference which he had done, along with separating a ‘copy to’ list in addition to actual members. Some relatively minor suggested amendments to update the Terms of Reference were suggested by members. The Partnership felt that the Terms of Reference were mostly still very relevant, and agreed to endorse the updates with no need to bring the Terms of Reference back to the next meeting. **Action – Phil and Pete to co-ordinate updates within the Terms of Reference and the new Wrekin Forest Plan and publish these.**

Following discussions with Shropshire Council, Tim Simmons (Area ROW Officer) had been added as SC rep and would attend occasionally. The desirability of getting further landowner representation was mentioned. Phil also agreed to contact the Parish Councils on the Shropshire side to invite them to nominate representatives – **Action - Phil.**

5. Updates from partners

Bob circulated Wellington Walkers Are Welcome leaflets.

Robert mentioned that Marc Petty of LA21 was progressing a Weald Moors walk leaflet.

6. Any other Business

Robert suggested the Partnership hold a public meeting in the autumn to present the new Plan, and perhaps allow the Raby estate further to discuss their management work, and to cover developments on geology.

7. Date of next meeting

Thursday 23rd July 2015, 7-9pm, Little Wenlock Village Hall