

Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting, Thursday 12th November 2015, Wellington library

Present:

Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome

Jayne Davidson, Little Wenlock Parish Council

Brian Herring, Wellington LA21

Janine Hayter, Leighton & Eaton Constantine Parish Council

Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Manager (Chair)

Andrew Jenkinson, Shropshire Geological Society

John Hughes, Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Michael Vout, Telford & Wrekin Council, Team Leader Environment and Planning Policy

Lawrence Munyuki, Telford & Wrekin Council, Planning Policy

1. Welcomes and Apologies

Lawrence and John were welcomed. Apologies had been received from:

Michael Barker, Telford & Wrekin Council, Assistant Director: Planning Specialist

Jim Roberts, Huntington Farm

Dag Saunders, Walkabout Wellington

Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford & Wrekin Council

Richard Thomason, Smallwoods Association

Harry Vane, landowner, Raby Estate

2. Notes of meeting 23 July 2015

These were accepted. Update on identified actions:

The Landscape Sensitivity Study would form part of agenda item 3.

The Wrekin Forest Plan had been published at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/area-initiatives/wrekin-forest/>. Phil apologised that a press release had not been done. Hard copies in local libraries would be done.

National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative. Phil reported that he had not heard of confirmation of Ofgem approval, so no further action had been taken yet. Ideas for local projects and any relevant information were still very welcome.

3. Update on Telford & Wrekin Local Plan

Michael and Lawrence updated members on the process of consultation for the Local Plan, and an accompanying consultants' report on 'Strategic Landscapes'. This was recommending the definition of three areas within the Borough for additional landscape protection – the Wrekin Forest, Lilleshall and the Weald Moors. Policy NE4 in the Local Plan supported these, in addition to the strong policies influencing housing - HO10 and HO11. It was intended that the Strategic Landscapes report be published by Christmas so that it can be used as supporting evidence to the Local Plan (although noting that the Plan itself carries limited weight in planning decisions until it is fully adopted). Michael said the inclusion of defined Strategic Landscapes in the Local Plan was due in large part to the lobbying and interest of the Wrekin Forest Partnership, which was welcomed by the group. The defined area of the Wrekin Forest went beyond the Borough into Shropshire Council's area, though it was unknown how this may be recognised, since Shropshire's Local Development Framework is already further down the line towards adoption.

4. Proposed new Wrekin page on AONB website

Phil had circulated a draft of a web page, aiming to help address management issues and fill a gap. He had received emails with comments from Marc Petty of Wellington LA21, and of general support from Harry Vane and Peter Holt. LA21 are considering a funding bid for a significant web guide to the Wrekin, with community interactive aspects. Phil commented that co-ordination of this with other information sources would be good, but it would be a different thing to the simpler proposed AONB page.

Bob commented that the http://www.wellingtonla21.org.uk/explore_the_wrekin page did provide a good current source of information, but acknowledged that it didn't feature highly in searches, which he felt the AONB website would.

Jayne commented on the value of offering to connect organisers of events with the landowners, and said that use of the Shooting Range area for parking for events had been arranged in the past and had eased problems on the roads.

Other comments were to include information also on the Ercall and Limekiln Woods, and to include a link to Shropshire Geological Society. Phil thanked members for general support and would take forward the publication of the page, incorporating the comments – **ACTION Phil**. The page would be very easy to amend if anyone had further comments later on.

5. Possible Landscape Partnership Scheme for Wrekin area (SWT)

John outlined briefly the Heritage Lottery Fund's programme for Landscape Partnership Schemes. These were intended to provide benefits to heritage (natural and cultural), to people (through skills, participation etc) and to communities. They were large schemes, up to £3million in budget and usually running for 3-5 years. They had to work on a defined 'coherent' area of landscape of 20-200km² and be led by a broad partnership. Typically a range of projects would be delivered under a Scheme, and participation by any landowner, community group etc was entirely voluntary. There were two such schemes currently in Shropshire – the Meres and Mosses <http://www.themeresandmosses.co.uk/> led by the Wildlife Trust, and Stiperstones & Corndon <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/> led by the AONB Partnership.

With the recent completion of the new Wrekin Forest Plan, the Wildlife Trust proposed to develop a Landscape Partnership Scheme for the Wrekin area, for stage 1 submission in June 2016. The involvement of partners was essential, and the scheme would provide a great opportunity to deliver many aspirations of the Wrekin Forest Plan. Discussions would need to include the working area, project ideas, etc, and all suggestions were welcome.

The group were supportive in principle of the proposal, and agreed to focus more time on it at the next meeting.

6. Updates from partners

Phil mentioned that the AONB Partnership team had moved offices to Unit 9 Drivers House, The Auction Yard, Craven Arms, SY7 9BZ. He also mentioned the recent membership review of the AONB Partnership and a proposal to include more seats for Parish and Town Councils.

Andrew updated on Shropshire Geological Society's proposed project for the area covered by OS 10x10km square SJ60, which had remarkably varied geology, much of which was visible expressed in the landscape. The Society were also in discussion with Little Wenlock about

possible recognition of the village/parish as a GeoVillage, which was a European initiative. The Society was also supportive of moves to protect the old bell pits site near the village.

Wellington Walkers Are Welcome. Bob mentioned the successful Walking Festival, and plans to develop a series of circular walks to the north of the town.

Little Wenlock PC. Jayne reported confirmation of Spout Lane as a 'Quiet Lane' following TWC Cabinet's approval of the scheme. It was intended to roll this out to other lanes around the village.

7. AOB

A request had come through Bob for Ironbridge Walkers Are Welcome to join the Partnership. The contact was Graham Burgess. This was agreed.

Phil mentioned that the National Association for AONBs annual conference would be hosted at Lilleshall in July 2016, with visits to the Shropshire Hills and elsewhere.

8. Date of next meeting

Thursday 21st January, 7pm at Little Wenlock Village Hall.