

Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting, Tuesday 2nd December 2014, Wellington Library, Civic Centre

Present:

Michael Barker, Telford & Wrekin Council, Assistant Director: Planning Specialist
Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome
Jayne Davidson, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Juliet Esp, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Brian Herring, Wellington LA21
Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Manager (Chair)
Pete Lambert, Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Nigel McDonald, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Sustainable Business Officer
Jim Roberts, landowner, Upper Huntington Farm
Robert Saunders, Wellington LA21
Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford & Wrekin Council

1. Apologies

George Chancellor, individual member and AONB Partnership Chair
Chris Hogarth, Natural England
Dorothy Roberts, Wellington Town Council
Harry Vane, landowner, Raby Estate
Mike & Jackie White, Wellington Civic Society

2. Notes of meeting 9 Sept 2014

These were accepted.

The recent Highways work at Forest Glen was discussed. It was felt that the realigned junction was better but that parking had been displaced elsewhere. Little Wenlock PC had met with the Police about enforcement, and also felt the double yellow lines should be extended on the Wrekin side. A number of people mentioned surface water on the new road surfacing at the junction which would be a problem when it froze.

Little Wenlock PC had not secured Quiet Lanes funding but hoped to be able to go ahead with some of the proposals anyway.

Use by visitors of the domestic bin belonging to Halfway House was mentioned, and a suggestion that TWC be approached to provide dog bins at the bottom of the main track.

3. Developing the new Wrekin Forest Plan

Pete updated that the opinion survey to inform the new Plan was currently out, using Survey Monkey on-line and also paper questionnaires. There had been 186 returns so far. A session had been run at Wellington with Bob's help, and one on Sunday at the Wrekin. The survey had been quite well publicised. Pete talked through the preliminary results from the survey which prompted various discussions. There was a lot of support for giving greater protection to the Wrekin Forest, for a conservation trust and for doing more to support wildlife. The answer to whether car parking was adequate was currently 50:50 yes:no. The written comments are also very interesting.

One theme discussed at some length was whether the 'Wrekin Forest' was an effective title for the area. The survey returns appeared to indicate that this name did not have any real currency among the public, for whom 'The Wrekin' is what they know and use. Some members of the group also felt that the 'Forest' part could be misleading, or that trying to push a name which was not widely used and understood was difficult. Others felt that there

was a need to describe the wider area (more than just the hill itself), including for planning protection, and that this name was now established to some extent and maybe there wasn't really a better one. It was suggested that as a name for planning protection or for this Partnership it didn't matter too much, but that if there were to be a move to create more of an identity to build support for conservation e.g. through signage or perhaps creation of a Trust to raise money, having a name that people would identify with would become much more important. This topic may need revisiting at a future date.

Deer management was also discussed, including some concerns about public safety with regard to shooting. The responsibility lay with the landowner regarding this, and the risks from unauthorised poaching were felt to be greater. There was a sense of better understanding among the public about the need for deer management and the recent efforts to improve communication had helped.

Co-ordination of signage was mentioned, and links with the Local Access Forum (both Bob and Jim are on this).

The survey closes on 19 December. Pete will circulate the full results before the next meeting – **ACTION Pete.**

The end of March is the target for completion, partly due to the requirements for the Local Plan. There would need to be some sort of consultation on the draft Plan, and members felt a breakdown of the proposed stages for completing the plan with a timetable would be useful – **ACTION Pete.**

The timescale the Plan should cover was touched on. Typically this is five years, perhaps with Actions for slightly less, though the desirability of including a longer term (e.g. 20 year) vision was mentioned. This would improve ties with the Local Plan.

4. Brief updates from partners

This item was dealt with briefly and not minuted.

5. AOB

There was no other business.

6. Date of next meeting

Tues 13 January 2015, Little Wenlock Village Hall.