

Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting, Thursday 21st January 2016, Little Wenlock Village Hall

Present:

Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome

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

1. Welcomes and Apologies

Apologies had been received from:

Dag Saunders, Walkabout Wellington

Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford & Wrekin Council

Harry Vane, landowner, Raby Estate

Dorothy Roberts, Wellington Town Council

Jayne Davidson, Little Wenlock Parish Council

Janine Hayter, Leighton & Eaton Constantine Parish Council

2. Notes of meeting 12 November 2015

These were accepted. Update on identified actions:

Hard copies of the Wrekin Forest Plan had been sent to local libraries.

National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative – still no word on of Ofgem approval, so no further action had been taken yet.

Proposed new Wrekin page on AONB website – Phil had made some amends to the draft from comments received, but had not been able to launch the new page yet.

3. Update on Telford & Wrekin Local Plan and Strategic Landscapes Study

Michael reported that the Local Plan would be released as a 'Publication version' from 1 Feb for 6 weeks. Following earlier stages, this was not a full consultation. He felt the Plan was very strong on safeguarding the quality of rural areas, especially through policies SP3, HO10, HO11 and NE7. The 'Strategic Landscapes' study had been published in December 2015 and references the Wrekin Forest Plan. As a result of discussion with the Partnership, its boundary for the Wrekin Forest had been moved east in one limited area, but the amendment was small. It was suggested that the Wrekin Forest Plan should also reference back to this Study, and maybe this could be done as an Addendum to the Plan rather than changing the body of it. This was discussed and agreed, and it was felt that an Addendum should say that the Partnership had had aspirations to secure greater protection for an area extending further east than the Strategic Landscapes boundary. Phil undertook to draft the Addendum and circulate for comments/agreement before adding it to the Plan – **ACTION Phil**.

The part of the Wrekin Forest Strategic Landscape area extending into Shropshire Council's area was discussed. Michael said Shropshire Council were supportive, though it was unknown how this may be recognised. Phil said the AONB Partnership would encourage Shropshire Council to recognise the Strategic Landscape area if the opportunity arose.

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

John said that the time seemed right for an LPS for the Wrekin and with the new Plan and the established Partnership the building blocks were there. The deadline for a Stage 1 bid was June. There would need to be consultation, possibly a workshop day and/or public meetings. John had held discussions with the Scout Camp and with Wellington Walkers Are Welcome and others. He was gathering information and wanted ideas, e.g. should traffic management and better car parking be included? The Trust were seeking permission for a mobile catering unit at Forest Glen and hoped to use this also as a means of consulting. Geology would be an element of the Scheme.

There was discussion on the necessary structures for a Landscape Partnership Scheme. Phil felt that there would not be capacity to run a Wrekin Forest Partnership as well as an LPS Board, and proposed that the Partnership basically turned into the structure need for the LPS for the period of the Scheme. This would mean changes to the Partnership, but was a pragmatic solution. It was acknowledged that the LPS may not include certain issues if they were not going to be deliverable, and that the Partnership structure once in place for the LPS would have to be focused on the needs of the Scheme.

The use of the Ercall and Limekiln Woods was mentioned, and the Bradt Slow Shropshire guide which had a walk from Wellington to the foot of the Wrekin. It was agreed that dispersing visitors was difficult in practice to achieve.

John would prepare a timeline working back from the submission date to guide further involvement from the Partnership – **ACTION John.**

5. Updates from partners

Phil mentioned the AONB Partnership's Conservation Fund which gave small grants, and the current progress to establish this as a charity. He also said that as part of the AONB Partnership's involvement in tourism he had attended the new Telford Visitor Economy Forum. A planning issue at Halfway House was briefly discussed.

Andrew said that some of Shropshire Geological Society's proposed project activity for OS square SJ60 would probably be incorporated into the proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme. Other aspects outside the LPS area would be taken forward in different ways.

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.

6. AOB

Bob raised concerns about damage to footpaths in Limekiln Woods. These were shown on TWC's cycling map as bridleways which he felt was wrong. This had also been raised at the Local Access Forum. It was felt that this should be taken up directly with TWC rights of way department.

7. Date of next meeting

Not set – to be determined by needs of LPS Stage 1 application.