

Wrekin Forest Partnership

Notes of meeting, Tuesday 9 September 2014, Wellington Library, Civic Centre

Present:

Michael Barker, Telford & Wrekin Council, Assistant Director: Planning Specialist
John Bryant
George Chancellor, individual member and AONB Partnership Chair
Bob Coalbran, Wellington Walkers Are Welcome
Jayne Davidson, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Brian Herring, Wellington LA21
Chris Hogarth, Natural England
Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Manager (Chair)
Paul Kalinauckas, All Friends Round The Wrekin
Pete Lambert, Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Jim Roberts, landowner, Upper Huntington Farm
Robert Saunders, Wellington LA21
Harry Vane, landowner, Raby Estate
Mike & Jackie White, Wellington Civic Society

1. Apologies

Cllr Jacqui Seymour, Telford & Wrekin Council
Juliet Esp, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Shelia Hutchison, Little Wenlock Parish Council
Dorothy Roberts, Wellington Town Council

2. Notes of meetings 17 Feb and 15 April 2014

These were accepted.

3. Progressing the new Wrekin Forest Plan

Pete recapped that SWT had secured some funding for him to work on a new Plan and reported that he had started work on this. It would be a bit simpler in structure than the previous one, e.g. reducing from the 15 Action Areas in the last Plan (N.B. these were written into the WFP Terms of Reference and so the Terms of Ref should ideally be updated at some point). A questionnaire would be devised on which to base a public consultation exercise, gathering evidence on people's **views**.

Michael said that the Local Plan could incorporate a designation for the area, recognising its landscape, wildlife, heritage and recreation value. This would need evidence gathering in a sound way. The Plan should have greater connection to the planning system than the last one. There was a discussion on various existing forms of designation. The AONB was limited in this area as the boundary was drawn tight around the hill. The new AONB Management **plan defines a 'zone of influence' around the boundary, but this does not confer any planning protection. The 'setting' of an AONB can be taken into consideration in planning decisions, but this is not always a strong mechanism. There is a recent new designation of Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) which can be 'locally determined', though again this does not confer protection. As discussed at previous meetings, there is no ideal 'off the shelf' solution.**

There was discussion on a new alternative proposal that the Local Plan could simply designate the **area as 'The Wrekin Forest', describing it and defining protective policies in whatever way it wished, without the need for an additional label.**

There was some discussion on the boundary. On the whole this was felt to be more or less OK from the last Plan, but may need fine tuning in a few places.

Visitor and access issues were discussed. It was reported that Little Wenlock Parish Council had received complaints about dog mess in bags left on or near the main paths. Jayne reported that they had recently been informed that the road at the junction at Forest Glen was to be resurfaced on 26 Sept. There were apparently plans for double yellow lines, markings for parking on an angles in the layby, and a right turn island being created.

The potential for use of the Shooting Range or the Donkey Field for car parking was discussed. A planning permission for a car park at the Donkey Field had been approved but funding had not been secured so this seemed unlikely to progress.

A funding bid has been made for a Quiet Lanes scheme.

Harry said that fly tipping was a regular problem, and it was felt this could affect small dispersed parking areas, as had been found in the past. The importance of reporting tipping was highlighted, so that the authorities get an accurate picture of what is happening.

Woodland management was discussed, and the use of large vehicles on small tracks and roads for logging was raised. Raby Estate had held a meeting for consultation on its woodland management proposals.

Access issues on foot, bike and horse were mentioned, and a suggestion of a separate Local Access Forum for the Wrekin Forest, though it was not clear how this could be administered.

Wrekin News was mentioned as a possible outlet for publicising the new 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 2 December 2014.