

## Wrekin Forest Partnership      Minutes of meeting Monday 4th July 2011

### Little Wenlock Village Hall

#### Attendees:

George Chancellor	Individual member
Joanna Deacon	Wrekin Museums Partnership
Brian Herring	Wellington LA21
Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership [WFP Chair]
Pat Hutchings	Little Wenlock Parish Council, Chair
Sheila Hutchison	Little Wenlock Parish Council access officer
Pete Lambert	Shropshire Wildlife Trust [Wrekin Forest Project officer]
Jan Mees-Robinson	Wrekin Forest for All project representative
Luke Neal	Small Woods Association
Marilyn Pietroni	Telford Local Access Forum/Trundle project.
Cllr Dorothy Roberts	Wellington Town Council
Robert Saunders	Wellington LA21
Cllr Jacqui Seymour	Telford & Wrekin Council (TWC)
Naomi Wrighton	Wellington Walkers Are Welcome

Apologies – Mike and Jackie White - Wellington Civic Society; Peter Holt - landowner; Michael Barker - Telford & Wrekin Council; John Winterbourne - Forestry Commission; Andy Wigley - Shropshire Council; George Evans - All Friends Round the Wrekin.

#### **1. Matters arising**

1.1 A request was made by members for a formal update at the next meeting in September on the Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy being developed by TWC. Marilyn Pietroni said that the strategy included an off-road trail linking The Wrekin with Telford Town Park, of which the Trundle is part. Clarification was sought on whether the Strategy took forward the concept which had been mooted of a 'Wrekin Forest Regional Park' or 'Wrekin Forest Park', and the implications this. **Action: PL to contact Michael Barker on these matters.**

It was also requested that an update be sought from TWC in relation to sustainable transport, quiet lanes, etc. **Action: PL to contact Stuart Freeman on these matters.**

1.2 Cllr Dorothy Roberts [DR] was concerned that Donkey Field parking issue had been raised at the last meeting of the WFP as an element of the Wrekin Forest 4 All project. Jan Mees-Robinson representing WF4All asked that it be recognised that visitor management is a priority issue. A letter from Peter Holt was read out at this point which stated that the Donkey Field was in the opinion of the Orleton Trust not of wildlife interest, was the subject of a farm tenancy and had been offered at a peppercorn rent to help alleviate the visitor infrastructure problems of the area at the base of the Wrekin Hill. Peter supported the idea of a shuttle bus, but felt that it would only meet a small part of the need and saw the junction as a major problem for road safety. In discussion it was highlighted that creation of a new car park would require planning permission and that there was no credible proposal at the current time.

Pete Lambert stated that irrespective of the ecological value or otherwise of the Donkey Field, he was not clear that a long term business plan had been presented to cover not only the capital but revenue needs of developing a car park on the site. George Chancellor [GC] suggested that debate needed to be moderated until or unless a solid proposal was forthcoming. As a footnote GC had recently had a positive discussion with Tom Bolger [Halfway House] regarding composting toilets. It was felt that **Anthony Francis-Jones should be invited to a later WFP meeting to update the members on the development of the WF4ALL project, Action: PL.**

## **2. Explore More of The Wrekin Forest LEADER project**

Pete Lambert said that the WFP was integral to this project being run by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust in the area with LEADER funding from the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership. It would build on earlier work with the Wrekin Forest Volunteers. Pete asked WFP members for feedback/comment/ideas on the following areas:

- Landscape interpretation – Following a meeting with Marc Petty [Wellington LA21] regarding a new trails booklet it was agreed to focus the next booklet on the characteristic wildlife of The Wrekin Forest. Ideas from those present included putting an emphasis on geology, exploring seasonal themes, soils, booklet size to fit into pocket rather than A5, connections to Shropshire Hills AONB website, Wellington Town Council website and other local links. Draft to be sent to WFP members for comment – Action Pete L.
- Touring display – suggestions were sought to in regard to a touring display. There was a useful debate including the suggestion of producing 3D model.
- Wrekin Forest 'logo' or branding – A budget had been included in the project to produce a logo and explore a brand for the Wrekin Forest. It was quickly clear that a logo was unpopular and did not have an easily defined purpose or clarity of ownership. A very helpful discussion ensued and it became clear that long term developments such as the concept of a Wrekin Forest Park would make a branding exercise at this time premature. It was however felt that a possible development of identity might include welcome signs at the highway entry points to the Wrekin Forest area.

Pete was very grateful for the contributions made to the project development and would make amendments to the project accordingly.

## **3. Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow 2011– 2016**

A summary of the Strategy & Action Plan had been circulated. Phil Holden explained that this was a summary the full report from consultants, which was now out for a 3 month period of consultation. The project had been led by the AONB Partnership, working closely with Shropshire Council. The Strategy was not just for the AONB, but for the wider Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Destination Development Partnership [DDP]. This Group, which was the main body for tourism co-ordination in the area, linking the

Council with the business sector, had endorsed and adopted the Strategy. Phil felt that for this group to have adopted a Sustainable Tourism Strategy as the mainstream strategy for tourism in its area was a significant step. It was clarified that the Shropshire Hills & Ludlow DDP did not include The Wrekin and Wellington, as it was envisaged by Shropshire Council that this area would come under a similar DDP encompassing Ironbridge, Telford & Bridgnorth. Such a structure was not yet in place, and it was not clear when or how this might happen. Some members were disappointed with the limited reference to Wellington and The Wrekin in the Strategy. Phil said he felt it was right for the Strategy to focus on the DDP area, and that tourism interests around the Wrekin and Wellington should develop links with Ironbridge and Telford. He agreed however that there should be more mention of the Wrekin/ Wellington/ Telford/ Ironbridge in the Strategy and how they link to the Shropshire Hills, and he would try to address this. **Action: PL to contact TWC to clarify local DDP status.**

Marilyn Pietroni felt that progress had to be made to create a local identity that would contribute towards the harmonising of landscape connections. She said the Strategy was a good document that stood as an exemplar model of how to achieve positive momentum. Robert Saunders [RS] hoped that the development of a local DDP will address the dominance of Ironbridge and redress the balance to benefit the market towns. He added that green tourism has its own accolades and this could bring further opportunities for such initiatives as community owned wind-power and seek genuine reductions in the local carbon footprint. Luke Neal added that a thriving woodfuel network could support green technologies such as wood fuelled boiler systems. Finally at the end of a lively debate it was suggested that Steve Miller of the Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust is invited to a subsequent WFP meeting. PL pointed out that the September speaker was to be Chris Fry, Wellington Town manager who will be presenting the recently published 'Collaborate and Compete' vision document for Wellington. Mr Miller could be considered for the November WFP meeting.

Meeting closed at 9pm.

**Next meeting Little Wenlock Village hall, main hall 7 – 9pm Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011.**

Agenda items please to [petel@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:petel@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk) by 9 Sept, thanks.