



Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Partnership

Notes of Meeting at Drovers House, 3 August 2017

Present:

Phil Holden Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership (Chair)
Nigel McDonald Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Paul Davis Shropshire Hills Tourism
Hilary Clayton-Smith Church Stretton Town Council
Tim Jenkins Shropshire Council, Economic Growth Team
Mathew Mead Shropshire Council, Community Enablement Team
Jane Carroll Bishop's Castle Town Council
Mike Brogden Shropshire Tourism
Sarah Green Acton Scott HWF
Carol Clayton Bridgnorth & District Tourism Association

Apologies:

Mary Jones Shropshire Gold Manager Holiday Property Bond
Rob Dingle Offa's Dyke Path
David Hardham Shropshire Churches Tourism Group
David Palliser Bishops Castle & Clun Tourism
Chris Tibbits Cleobury Country

1. Introductions and apologies

Tim, Sarah and Mike were welcomed to the meeting. Carol has replaced Anthony Webb to represent Bridgnorth & District Tourism Association. Mike is now representing Shropshire Tourism.

2. Notes of last meeting 24 April 2017 and matters arising

The English Heritage representative is now Heidi Briggs.

3. Update on EAFRD Growth Programme tourism co-operation project (progress update)

Nigel reported on the progress of the project following conversations with Joe Bubb and Stan Abbot at Gravity. Stan is organising a press event and activity days for journalists to promote the 5 product-activities in September/early October.

4. Shropshire and the Visitor Economy (Tim Jenkins)

Tim gave an update on the Economic Growth Strategy, recently published after consultation. This does include a commitment to develop a Shropshire Visitor Economy Strategy. He mentioned that the Council now has a portfolio holder dedicated to Culture and Leisure (Lezley Picton). He stated that one of the priorities for culture and tourism will be to work in

partnership with Shropshire's neighbouring counties to make tourism a higher priority for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Tim also mentioned that the government's new Industrial Strategy is likely to include a section concerning the tourism industry.

Phil reported that he and James Williamson (Chair of the AONB Partnership) had recently had a useful meeting with Lezley Picton.

5. Sustainable Tourism Strategy & Charter (progress update)

Nigel updated the group on the progress of the strategy review. The Tourism Business Survey has had 21 respondents since its publication in mid-July. Nigel asked that all members promote the survey. **Action All**

A sub-group of DP members was meeting that afternoon to work more on the process of the strategy review, which was expected to include some interviews with key stakeholders and a consultation event in the autumn. The full Partnership would be important in finalising and approving the strategy, and this will be a main focus for the next meeting.

Phil reminded us of the timetable for completion of the strategy needed to enable the re-application for European Charter status by December. Approval for this application (and fee) will be sought from the AONB Partnership Transition Board.

6. Discussion on strategy objectives and branding

A discussion ensued concerning updating/amending the aim, associated aims, guiding principles, vision and strategic objectives of the last plan. It was agreed that the format and number of objectives needs to be simplified. **Action: Nigel to circulate revised objectives for comment**

A discussion was had concerning the future availability of public transport and bespoke travel options offered by business like Uber and Co-wheels. It was agreed that the aims should reflect emerging trends in consumer behaviour and technology. However, it was also recognised that the Shropshire Hills, as a very rural destination, will be slow to adopt and benefit from them. It was agreed that sustainability needs to remain the primary focus of the strategy.

Health and wellbeing were also seen as important to the new strategy.

Concerning branding it was agreed that the branding for the Shropshire Hills should be developed separately to Ludlow. However, it should continue to work with Destination Ludlow. It was felt that having two different yet linked destination identities was a benefit to the area's visitor economy. The updated strategy will provide a good way to elaborate and consult on this change.

Phil wondered if it might be possible to have AONB signage on the M54 where it passes the Wrekin.

7. News and updates from members present

AONB Partnership: Phil stated that the business case to create a Conservation Board for the AONB had been resubmitted to Defra. Nigel mentioned that the new café at Stokesay Castle

will be opened on the 10th August. The new exhibition at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre has been launched.

Shropshire Hills Tourism: Paul circulated the draft e-marketing plan. He mentioned that Louise Welsby would be coordinating a regular blog and is looking for content. Paul also mentioned Visit England's call for 2018 stories. **Action: NM to send VE details of Shropshire Hills AONB 60th anniversary in 2018**

Acton Scott HWF: Sara reported that the farm had had a very successful free event with other 1,000 visitors through the gates. The farm will be open for free as part of Heritage Open Day. Sarah volunteered complimentary tickets to help incentivise the tourism business questionnaire. Her support was greatly appreciated.

Community Enablement Team: Mathew reported that Energize had noted visitors using the pool at Bishop's Castle as part of their market research. He stated his desire that community assets such as SPARC should be recognised for their tourism value.

Bishops Castle: Jane reported that the Beer Festival had been very successful, with the Town Hall being turned into a pop-up-pub.

Shropshire Tourism: Mike reported that Shropshire Tourism was undergoing some organisational changes. He mentioned that 2020 will be the 400th anniversary of the voyage of the Mayflower. This will attract visitors to Shipton, where there is a connection to 4 of the children passengers.

Church Stretton: Hilary stated that she will be standing in for Bob until he has recovered his health. CS Town Council has engaged a new town clerk called Danny Chetwood. The town is developing its evening economy. The leaflet has been very well received. Nigel mentioned his work with the web development group.

Bridgnorth: Carol reported that the library will be staying open and continue to host the TIC. Severn Valley Railway are having a good year.

8. Date of Next meeting

Now set for **Tuesday, October 31st at 10am** at the AONB Partnership offices, Drovers House, Craven Arms. Agenda to follow.