

Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2011-2016

SWOT analysis of progress against Strategy, May 2014

(collated from questionnaire with partners)

Strengths:

- High quality tourism products and services:
 - Funding secured to renovate Bishop's Castle Town Hall as an Information Centre.
 - Some very popular businesses bringing new people into the area e.g. Holiday Property Bond, HF Holidays, Ludlow Food Centre
 - Mountain biking becoming more popular with new businesses servicing this sector. Several sites have good routes.
 - Major project completed to restore Hopton Castle
 - Heritage project development in the Clee Hills and delivery of the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme
 - Strong creative skills offer - The Arvon Centre, Westhope College, Moor Hall, Acton Scott etc.
- Lots of annual events and festivals:
 - Walking festivals - Bishop's Castle and Church Stretton
 - Food Festival, Ludlow
 - Arts festivals - Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton
 - Beer Festivals - Bishop's Castle, Clun
 - Music Festivals - Farmer Phil's, Party in the Park
 - Green Man, Clun
 - Michaelmas Fair, Bishop's Castle
- Strong local food offer:
 - Promotion of local food through Shropshire Gold
 - Shropshire Hills Buy Local initiative
 - Discover Local project
 - Local to Ludlow initiative
 - Ludlow Food Centre
 - Ludlow Food Festival
 - Thriving Farmers' Markets
- Strong focus on walking:
 - Most towns in DDP area now Walkers Are Welcome towns - Church Stretton, Much Wenlock, Cleobury Mortimer, Bishop's Castle, Clun, Wellington, Knighton, (Ludlow-applying)
 - Formation of the Shropshire Hills Walkers are Welcome group, including Wellington
 - New walking routes in Much Wenlock and Pontesbury/ Minsterley.
 - Development of the Shropshire Way, with new Harvey Map for Shropshire Hills section.
 - 18 new WWO walking routes, promoting local businesses.
 - Walking Co-ordinators organising Southern Shropshire Walking Forum, Walking for Health and other initiatives
 - Walking Festival organisers involved with the 'Talking Walking' WWO Conference
 - Walks leader training (WWO)
 - Good selection of themed guided walks, including very popular dark skies walks delivered by National Trust, WWO walks, fungal forays from SWT, ale and food trails - Magnalonga in Ludlow, Cleobury Mortimer,
- Good quality marketing and promotion:
 - New branding and core values for the area
 - Marketing Strategy completed
 - Suite of destination print: Shropshire Hills Events Guide, Shropshire Hills Visitor Guide, Discovery Map. Also Walking with Offa (WWO) booklet and self-guided walks leaflets, reprint of Clun Walks Book
 - Promotion of Shropshire Museums including Acton Scott, Ludlow and Much Wenlock

- Promotional campaigns: Victorian Farm TV series helped raise profile of area, with ongoing support for Tudor Farm and Christmas specials, Much Wenlock Olympiad campaign, Outdoor Writers weekend, Volkswagen and Muller adverts filmed in Shropshire Hills
- Joint promotion with Welsh border through Irresistible Offa campaigns and new map
- Better web based information- improvements to AONB website, Shropshire Tourism, Shropshire Hills Tourism, new Travel Shropshire Website, outdoor activity website, Church Stretton; "Heart of the Hills", Shropshire Gold website and app with suggested itineraries
- Email circulation to accommodation providers.
- Town maps and trader directories created by town.
- Interpretation improved e.g. time line and heritage trails in Church Stretton
- National promotion through Holiday Property Bond literature and website
- Synergy between AONB Management Plan and Sustainable Tourism Strategy, ensuring priority is given to maintaining a high quality environment
- Extension of the Conservation Area in Church Stretton
- Some good examples of business engagement:
 - Shropshire Gold - networking between members and with other organisations, marketing seminar, familiarisation trips
 - Sense of Place training (WVO)
 - Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme
 - Encouraging businesses in Bishop's Castle to publish origin of ingredients and food scores.
- Shropshire Hills Shuttles still running. New Castle Connect service has been popular.
- First meeting of the Bridgnorth Area Tourism Action Group December 2013. Includes much Wenlock.
- New Visitor Survey for whole destination area completed in 2013.

Weaknesses:

- Marketing
 - Membership of Sustainable Business Scheme is not growing, limited use of Buy Local website
 - Images of area over-used
 - Shropshire Hills presence in county wide and national promotion
 - Few joint marketing campaigns with Shrewsbury and Ironbridge/ Severn Valley
 - Little promotion of creative breaks in the Shropshire Hills
 - Poor promotion of out of season and family activities
 - Little joined up promotion of the range of outdoor activities available
- Tourism products and services
 - Limited off-road leisure cycling routes in the Shropshire Hills
 - Few facilities for road cyclists
 - Wenlock quarries not purchased by National Trust
 - Church Stretton no longer has a Farmers' Market
 - Inconsistent Broadband access and speeds
 - Shropshire Link and other public transport services have been cut
- Community and business engagement
 - Wrekin Forest Partnership not currently active
 - Southern Shropshire Walking Forum not covering same geography as DDP
 - Bridgnorth Chamber of Trade needs resurrecting
- Research
 - Not enough up to date research on tourism activity
 - Little cross-border research
 - No cost-benefit analysis of current tourism funding

Opportunities:

- Marketing
 - Market town tourism action plans
 - New gallery of high quality photos
 - Website development- Bishop's Castle, Clun
 - Improved visitor facilities- Bishop's Castle Town Hall, Discovery Centre relaunch, new site for VIC in Church Stretton
 - Development and promotion of a winter programme of activities and events
 - Better promotion of the area within the county and nationally
 - Creative breaks promoted under collective banner, possible through development of a comprehensive website with bookable product
 - Shropshire Hills wide emails to accommodation providers
 - Shorter supply chains and more promotion of local food in hospitality and tourism businesses
- Tourism products
 - Woodland tourism - bushcraft, ropes, innovative accommodation
 - Improving the experience of the Wrekin
 - World War I centenary celebration- guided walks and events
 - More mountain biking tracks and support businesses
 - Development of leisure routes on old railways e.g. Shrewsbury to Minsterley, Bishop's Castle to Craven Arms, Craven Arms to Much Wenlock and Ludlow to Clee Hill.
 - Development of the Buy Local initiative and Shuttles
 - More cycle-friendly businesses.
 - New Humphrey Kynaston Way bridleway from Church Stretton to Grinshill
 - Investigate possible tourism usage of Wenlock quarries
 - More wildlife viewing
 - Develop 'dark skies approach, including links with The Spaceguard Centre in Knighton
 - 800th anniversary of Church Stretton market; Medieval Fare 20-22 June 2014.
 - Electric charging points for cars
- Facilities and services
 - Another 10 units are planned by Holiday Property Bond in 2015.
 - Brokering service for outdoor activities
 - Visitor giving scheme
 - Better public transport information (should be through Travel Shropshire?) and cooperation with community transport providers
- Business and community engagement
 - Better partnership working- reduced funding mean we all need to become more effective e.g. Tourism groups and P3 groups working more closely together
 - More collective market towns approach
 - Spend a fiver campaign(?)
 - Promotion of Buy Local initiative, with time to engage businesses one to one
 - More business engagement in developing local distinctiveness and Sense of Place
- Funding
 - The next round of the Rural Development Programme has tourism as a priority and will offer opportunities for businesses and collectives from 2014/15 onwards

Threats:

- Funding
 - Public funding is being reduced dramatically. This will impact on: Rights of Way maintenance, Visitor Information Services, Shuttles, staff support for economic and community development.
- Environment
 - Some concerns about mountain biking on the Long Mynd causing erosion.
 - Changes to planning policy and SAMDev will increase development outside current limits and may threaten both aesthetics and tranquillity.
 - Changes in Common Agricultural Policy agri environment scheme could impact on the quality of the landscape. Not clear what those changes might be yet.