



Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Partnership

Minutes of Meeting at Drovers House, 10th January 2017

Present:

Phil Holden	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership (Chair)
Nigel McDonald	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Paul Davis	Shropshire Hills Tourism
Bob Welch	Church Stretton Town Council
Joe Bubb	Shropshire Council, Economic Development Team
Sonja Belchere	Destination Ludlow
Kate Davies	English Heritage
David Palliser	Bishop's Castle & Clun Tourism
Mary Jones	Shropshire Gold
Jane Carroll	Bishop's Castle Town Council
Manager	Holiday Property Bond

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were received from:

Rob Dingle	Offa's Dyke Path Officer
Clare Fildes	Shropshire Council, Outdoor Partnerships
Catherine Collier	Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre (Grow Cook Learn)
Anthony Webb	Bridgnorth Area Tourism Group
Carol Cooper	Bridgnorth Town Council
Simon McCloy	Shropshire Tourism
Lisa Bedford	Shropshire Council, Community Enablement team

Kate, Sonja and Joe were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Notes of last meeting 15th September 2016 and matters arising

The notes were accepted as accurate. Louise Cross and Suzy Gibson have both taken early retirement. Sarah Green will be acting manager for Acton Scott Historic Working Farm until a new manager is appointed.

3. EAFRD Growth Programme tourism co-operation project

Joe Bubb reported on the progress of the EU funded project. She explained the scope of the project, brief and selection of the consultants. At the time of the meeting, the details of the contract with the selected company were being defined. (The contract was let to Stan Abbott and Linda Tuillet of Gravity Consulting Ltd).

The outline of the project is that Gravity will be working with 60 businesses to define five new tourism 'products' for the area (including Bridgnorth and Cleobury Mortimer areas). These would be focussing on the themes of food and drink, outdoor activities, crafts and

events. Each business would sign up to report for the next three years on increases in visitors and income resulting from involvement with the project. Joe circulated a paper outlining the themes, outputs and criteria of the project, which would run till Dec 2017.

Bob Welch, Clare Fildes, Cath Collier, Paul Davis, Nigel and Phil offered to form a working/consultation group to support the project as required and feedback to the DP. A working group meeting with Gravity would be organised - **ACTION Nigel**.

The DP wished to express their thanks to Joe, Tim King and Louise Cross for their work in securing the funding.

Nigel would find out if Shropshire Tourism has been successful with their bid and if any co-ordination of activity is possible - **ACTION Nigel**.

Joe said that further EU funding for capital projects would be launched the following week.

4. Renewing the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Phil reported that the Strategy produced in October 2011 for 5 years was now due for review and updating. An update of the strategy had been included as an original output in the stage 1 bid for the Tourism Co-operation project, however it was not included in the stage 2 bid as it had turned out not to be eligible. It was in the interests of the DP (e.g. in relation to any funding bids) to keep the Strategy current, and in absence of any funding, it was proposed that the DP should seek to update the Strategy itself. This was agreed, and it was felt that the strategic direction is still valid, with only certain aspects needing changing.

As a first stage, the actions table had been circulated and members were asked to add information on progress against any of the actions. Bob suggested that in review it would be more effective to have a shorter list of achievable rather than aspirational targets. It was agreed that previously achieved actions could now be removed and progress updates would be amended to cover recent progress in the last year or so.

Jane asked about our capacity to fulfil some of the actions in the strategy. Bob suggested prioritising the activities. Kate suggested adding in measuring and impact criteria.

Phil asked for progress updates on the actions from the group by the end of January if possible, and the update could then be published - **ACTION All**.

A proposed process for review and update of the Strategy by the DP would be brought to the next meeting – **ACTION Phil and Nigel**.

Phil mentioned that the Europarc Federation Sustainable Tourism Charter was on a similar five year cycle and had been due for renewal in December. He understood the scheme was flexible in order to encourage participation, which was not high in the UK. The process of obtaining the Charter had been very valuable, but at the current time it seemed unlikely that the AONB Partnership would be renewing it, purely because of the cost.

5. Local Nature Partnership Visitor Economy group

Phil reported that a sub-group of the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Partnership had been formed to look at the value of our natural environment to the visitor economy. This was because the LNP felt that the natural environment and landscape was very important in the appeal of the county for tourism, and more could be made of this in promotion. The group has met a number of times, and has drawn in heritage organisations

and other tourism interests, since it appears there is somewhat of a gap in co-ordination of tourism at the county level. The group are currently mapping the county's natural and heritage assets and recording/estimating visitor numbers (where known). In addition an audit is being done of members' social media activity to see if this could be co-ordinated to reach visitors more effectively. The group recognised the need to define its role and terms of reference, but was felt to be worthwhile and likely to continue.

6. News and updates from members present

Bishop's Castle – Jane reported that the Town Hall is still managing to break even, despite economic pressures and lack of funding available. BC Arts Festival is being held at the end of February. The Walks Festival link and where to stay is now on the Town website.

Church Stretton – The CIC is being restructured and plans are under way to revamp the town website. The Church Stretton visitor guide would be published in time for the leaflet swap event on 29th March. Pressure for housing developments is likely to continue.

Ludlow – Sonja reported an excellent year for Ludlow Castle, receiving 63,000 visitors in 2016. The next Destination Ludlow Partnership meeting would be Friday 13th Jan.

Shropshire Hills Tourism – David reported that the Great Days visitor guide would be published in time for the leaflet swap event on the 29th March. Paul reported on the success of last year's photo competition, and the orientation visits provide for SHT members who visited Shrewsbury Music Hall and the Sabrina boat. He reported that this year's theme for Visit England/Britain is Literary Heroes and that SHT had responded to requests for information from Visit England.

Shropshire Gold – Mary reported that SG had started work to improve their website.

English Heritage – Kate introduced herself, saying that she is responsible for the EH sites in the West Midlands. 2016 had been a good year across the area. Now EH had achieved charitable status it was able to be more commercial. At Stokesay, EH have bought the tearoom adjacent to the car park and will be opening it for this season. The Ironbridge restoration project would start soon, with the bridge being behind scaffolding for 18 months.

AONB Partnership – Phil reported that the two Councils and Partnership had submitted a formal request to Defra to form an independent Conservation Board. Discussions had started on this but the outcome and timetable was not known. Nigel reported on progress for the Leaflet Swap event that would be held at Stokesay Court on the 29th March. He is expecting over 20 business to exhibit and (going on last year) 60+ individuals from the tourism sector to come to swap print and network.

7. Any other business

None.

8. Date of Next meeting

Not set at the meeting, but now fixed for **Tuesday 25th April at 2pm** at the AONB Partnership offices, Drovers House, Craven Arms.