



## Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Partnership

### Notes of Meeting at Drovers House, 25<sup>th</sup> April 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
Gina Wilding	Ludlow Town Council
Tish Dockerty	Destination Ludlow
Rob Dingle	Offa's Dyke Path National Trail
Mathew Mead	Shropshire Council, Community Enablement Team
David Hardham	Shropshire Churches Tourism
Jane Carroll	Bishop's Castle Town Council
Stan Abbott	Gravity Consulting Ltd

#### 1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were received from:

Simon McCloy	Shropshire Tourism
Catherine Collier	Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre (Grow Cook Learn)
Carol Cooper	Bridgnorth Town Council
Lisa Bedford	Shropshire Council, Community Enablement team
Mary Jones	Shropshire Gold
Manager	Holiday Property Bond

David Hardham and Stan Abbott were welcomed to the meeting.

#### 2. Notes of last meeting 10th January 2017 and matters arising

The notes were accepted as accurate.

Kate Davies has left English Heritage, replacement rep to be confirmed - **Action Nigel.**

Regretfully Shropshire Tourism's bid to Defra for European funding (EAFRD) for Tourism Cooperation funding had been unsuccessful. Destination Telford and Visit Herefordshire bids had been successful.

Anthony Webb has stepped down as the DP Bridgnorth rep and will be replaced at the meeting by Carol Cooper.

Phil reported that he had received some progress updates on the Strategy from partners. Any further reports on progress on the Tourism Action Plan are welcome. **Action – All.**

Paul reported on the recent meeting of the Local Nature Partnership topic group on tourism (related to agenda item 7). Some work had progressed on county branding and the group have adopted the name 'Discover Shropshire.' The group is also working on a shared platform to allow social media posts to be coordinated, programmed and evaluated more

effectively. Phil mentioned that the group had started with a focus on natural environment and tourism, but had grown due to the lack of a working co-operative body at county level for tourism more generally. The scope of the group was now clearer since terms of reference had been agreed.

### **3. EAFRD Growth Programme tourism co-operation project**

Stan Abbott reported on the progress of the project (a progress report will be circulated to all members). The partners discussed the issues raised concerning the strength of the destination in terms of its recognition, markets and competition, market trends, poor quality of mobile coverage and the shortage higher quality rated accommodation in some important locations.

Stan reported on the next stages of the project including; the setting up of a focus group in Manchester, signing up the 60 businesses, developing the themes and the online products. Stan is anticipating soft launching some products (possibly walking, cycling and food and drink) in early June then establishing a rolling programme of launches through the summer season.

### **4. Renewing the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Europarc Federation Charter**

An outline timetable for preparing the new sustainable tourism strategy had been circulated. This was based on using 'in house' resources from within the DP, having been unable to secure funding for the Strategy from the EAFRD funds. The importance of the Strategy was reiterated in developing our own initiatives as well as influencing the work of others. Phil referred to the draft Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy which mentioned the intention for a new Visitor Economy Strategy for the county. Phil agreed to circulate the AONB Partnership response to this consultation. **Action Phil.**

The support of partners in the DP both in terms of content of the Strategy and wider consultation was requested, and volunteers sought for a working sub-group. Tish and Paul agreed to provide support to this. Partners were asked to consider their local needs and priorities for tourism development over the next 5 years in their areas, and this would be discussed in a future meeting. **Action All.**

The value of Gravity's work in helping to shape the new strategy was recognised.

Phil said that the AONB Partnership hoped to renew the Europarc Federation Charter for Sustainable Tourism if finances allowed, and the support of the Destination Partnership was important to this. After completion of the new Strategy, an application form had to be submitted by December and would then be validated by a Europarc approved assessor.

It was agreed that, given we had already achieved Charter status, it would be a backwards step not to renew it. Tish asked that we report what we have achieved as a result of obtaining Charter status as part of the renewal process. Phil felt it had added rigour to the Strategy process, and provided a reason for the AONB Partnership to continue support for the DP. Any contributions from DP members towards the renewal fee would help greatly.

### **5. Destination Branding**

The existing branding and use of the destination logo was discussed. It was agreed that there was scope through the Sustainable Tourism Strategy review (and informed by Gravity's work with businesses) to fine tune the branding and guidance - use of the logo, the key

messages, etc, though it was felt this should build on what we had, rather than starting again. There was a suggestion that Ludlow could be removed from the logo, which was generally supported. The links with the high profile of Ludlow were valuable, but this could be done in other ways. The value of businesses and tourism groups using the words 'Shropshire Hills' was seen as important, in addition to use of any logo e.g. as per Church Stretton's new guide 'Visit Church Stretton – the Heart of the Shropshire Hills' and the 'Great Days Out in the Shropshire Hills' leaflet. Phil mentioned that there were some indications that Highways England might now view proposals differently for signage on the A49, and this could perhaps be revisited.

Nigel to send existing brand guidance document to Stan at Gravity. **Action Nigel**

## **6. Leaflet Swap event**

Nigel and Paul reported that the evaluation of the event had been very positive with only one 'exhibitor' stating that they hadn't found the event of value. Most of the exhibitors said that they would want to exhibit again next year. Others have approached Shropshire Hills Tourism for exhibition space next year.

The questionnaire that was sent to attendees returned very high levels of satisfaction, value to business promotion and a strong intention to return next year. It was agreed that next year's event would be held in Ludlow and the following year in Church Stretton, provided suitable venues could be found.

Although the leaflet swap is a Destination Partnership initiative, it was felt that greater efforts should be made to ensure that partners who helped organise it should be fully recognised for their input.

## **7. County level tourism co-ordination**

Covered in matters arising.

## **8. AONB Google listing**

Phil explained that the National Association for AONBs had worked hard with Google to ensure that the UK's AONBs were recorded on Google Maps. This helps to raise awareness of the AONB and the area more generally. The mapped feature and associated listing is for the designated AONB, so it was right that this linked to the AONB website. It was confirmed that the AONB website (which is planned to be revamped soon) does make strong links to Shropshire Hills Tourism's website, but these can be made more prominent if possible. The AONB website does offer some visitor focused information, but is not set up to offer the full range of visitor information and needs to link to accommodation listings etc. offered by SHT.

## **9. News and updates from members present**

**AONB Partnership** – Phil reported that the Business Case for setting up a Conservation Board is being refined before resubmission to Defra, seeking to evidence how the proposed new Board will provide more effective management and long-term sustainability. Defra have informed us that the decision will be after the General Election.

Nigel reported that the Shuttles had started this Easter and would not be running in June. He outlined our plans to seek future funding as the Shuttles are a key part of our commitment to sustainable tourism.

**Ludlow** – Gina reported that the new museum is open and receiving on average 40-50 visitors a day. The Museum has plans for developing its exhibitions and its commercial

operations – exploring merchandising for example. The market has been trading well and is now open 6 days/week.

**Church Stretton** – Bob reported that the new guide had been well received and was now distributed throughout the town and wider. The Town is working to improve its website. The improvement to the visitor information services continues to be tied up with the Library relocation project, and so has been unable to make any progress.

Bob is working with the National Trust and AONB Partnership to seek to manage traffic associated with the peak visitor days in Carding Mill Valley.

**Offa's Dyke Path** – Rob reported that the National Trail has received its full allocation of funding for 2017/18 from Natural England. National Trails nationally are seeking to change the way they are funded – with the main government funds coming direct from Defra rather than through Natural England.

The Trail will feature in two television programmes over the next couple of months: Britain's Ancient Tracks and BBC Wales Borderlines. Filming is going on now, with programmes going to air later in the year. Rob agreed to let us know the exact dates **Action Rob**

Rob reported that Dave McGlade has been very active as the new Offa's Dyke Association chairman. The ODA has secured funding from Powys County Council for the tourist information centre for 2017/18. The launch of the new Offa's Dyke book by Iain Bapty (and others) had gone very well. The ODA are seeking funds to update the archaeological survey.

**Shropshire Hills Tourism** – Paul reported that SHT will be hosting an IT self-help workshop this month at the Stables in Hopesgate. He had responded to Visit England's call for content for the 'Secret Places' promotion. SHT will be taking a stall at Ludlow Food Festival.

**Shropshire Council Economic Development Team** - Joe reported that grants were still available for tourism businesses through the Growth Programme Capital Grants Scheme.

**Shropshire Churches Tourism** - David was invited to become a regular member of the Destination Partnership. He reported that SCT had printed 35,000 copies of the visitor guide to promote visits to churches across Shropshire.

**Bishop's Castle** – Jane reported that £900 had been raised through sponsorship of the new leaflet. The Tourism Group will not be publishing an accommodation guide this year. The budget will be used to support the Town Hall Trust as the Town's VIC.

May is a very busy time for Bishop's Castle and Clun with several festivals planned. Also, the town will be promoting a '30 Lost Pubs' trail, celebrating BC's brewing heritage in time for the July Beer Festival.

**Shropshire Council Community Enablement Team** - Mathew reported that that the team were contributing to several strategies to respond to the planned series of cuts to non-statutory services.

## **10. Any other business**

The speaker at the ODA AGM will be Pete Greaves talking about the Staffordshire Hoard – details on the ODA website.

## **11. Date of Next meeting**

**Thursday August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10am** at the AONB Partnership offices, Drovers House, Craven Arms.