

Shropshire's Great Outdoors

2018-2028



The Mere at Ellesmere from the air

*Inspiring action to improve health, prosperity and happiness
by cherishing Shropshire's Great Outdoors*



*"There is pleasure in the pathless woods.
There is rapture on the lonely shore.
There is society where none intrudes, by
the deep sea and music in its roar. I love
not man the less, but Nature more."* –
Lord Byron, Poet, 1788 –1824





Preface

“Shropshire is one of the most picturesque counties in Britain, steeped in history and culture with a fabulous landscape. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the vast range of activities on offer and the natural beauty available throughout the county.

Being outside and active in the Great Outdoors has been shown to provide great benefits to individuals’ health and mental wellbeing. In a time when people are under greater pressures and stresses from their everyday lives it is essential that they have opportunities to get out and relax, reinvigorate and re-energise.

I welcome this Great Outdoors Strategy for Shropshire which has the potential to provide many and varied opportunities for people to participate in sport and recreation in the natural environment and I encourage all to work in partnership for its successful delivery.”

Cllr Lezley Picton, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure.



Contents

Section	Page no.
1.0 Executive Summary	4
2.0 Introduction	9
3.0 Why do we need it?	10
4.0 What makes Shropshire's Great Outdoors so special?	10
5.0 What are the benefits of the Great Outdoors?	11
6.0 What have we achieved in the last 10 years?	12
7.0 What state are the outdoor assets in currently?	14
8.0 How are outdoor assets being used?	17
9.0 What key opportunities and challenges are we trying to address?	18
10.0 How are we delivering against national and local policy?	21
11.0 Who have we consulted?	22
12.0 What difference will we make?	22
13.0 What are we trying to achieve?	23
14.0 How will we achieve this?	24
15.0 Who will be involved?	24
16.0 Who will oversee delivery?	25
17.0 How will improvements be funded?	25
18.0 How will we know we have succeeded?	25
19.0 What are the priorities?	26
20.0 Risk Management	38
21.0 Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnerships Policies	39
22.0 Statutory Duties	39
23.0 Action Plan	40
24.0 Conclusion	41
25.0 Glossary	43



Figure 1- Interpretation of the Hoffman Kiln at Llanymynech Limeworks

1.0 Executive Summary

Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 sets out the strategic direction for the management and development of publically accessible greenspace, Rights of Way and other access in the Unitary Authority area of Shropshire, aiming to inspire action to improve health, prosperity and happiness by cherishing Shropshire's Great Outdoors. The strategy fulfils the statutory requirement of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan but broadens the remit to deliver across multiple policy areas and integrate activity across Local Authority services and partner organisations.

This is a draft strategy, developed in partnership with a range of key organisations and users and informed by data analysis and research. It will be available for three months for public consultation.

With Shropshire being the only county in England to have part of two World Heritage Sites, the third highest number of listed buildings (6,906) and Registered Parks and Gardens (30), and the fourth highest number of Conservation Areas (127), 23% of county designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 14 Internationally important wetland sites, 7 Special Areas of Conservation (of European significance), 107 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and more varied geology than anywhere else in Britain and possibly the world, it is rightfully recognised as an exceptionally historic and beautiful county.

There are tremendous opportunities to get out and about in this remarkable historic and natural environment whether on some of the around 13,000 ha of publically accessible Country Parks and Heritage Sites, the many canals and waterways or the third longest Rights of Way network in England.

These fantastic outdoor assets are not just important for heritage and wildlife; they bring in over £100 million to the local economy, employ at least 2,200 people and make a significant contribution to improving mental and physical health and wellbeing.

There are a number of opportunities and challenges likely, however, over the next ten years:

- Participation in outdoor activities is increasing more quickly in Shropshire than in England as a whole and is likely to continue to do so. Whilst we welcome this, when coupled with planned population increases of 9% by 2036, there will be more pressure on already limited resources. All organisations involved in maintaining and improving outdoor assets are having to find additional funding, whether through grants, membership fees donations or income generation. More partnership working may help address these issues.



Figure 2- Colemere Heritage Site

*"The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.*

*Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.*

*And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.*

*She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness."*
— William Wordsworth, Poet. 1770 –1850

- Volunteering is becoming increasingly important and many local people are contributing significantly to the management of their local sites, canals and Rights of Way.
- Shropshire is one of the most sparsely populated counties in England and it is easy to assume that everyone living in the county can easily access natural spaces near their homes. Analysis of greenspace and the Rights of Way network, however, illustrates inequality across the county, with significant parts of the north and east of the county having little or no Accessible Natural Greenspace (as set out by recognised Natural England standards) and a patchy Rights of Way network. Some of these areas have a higher than average incidence of long-term physical and mental health conditions, despite having a younger population, and it can be assumed that, as part of a holistic approach, increasing greenspace and countryside access here could help reduce these health issues over time. This would also help those who are least likely to access the natural environment regularly; the over 65's, people who are economically disadvantaged, those with a disability and the unemployed. For these people, accessible greenspace needs to be near to home or on a public transport route. Even in the Shropshire Hills, where there are a plethora of promoted routes and high quality publically accessible parks and sites, many of these are limited to those who are physically fit.
- Some sites are culturally or environmentally sensitive and therefore not suitable for increased visitor numbers. New recreational greenspace and promoted routes need to be developed to protect these, especially where the sites are near market towns where there is significant new development.
- The importance of being physical active in the outdoors is well recognised nationally but has yet to be fully incorporated in treatment for people with long-term physical and mental health issues.
- The outdoor assets provide much of the visitor economy infrastructure but there is limited investment in physical improvements, visitor facilities and marketing of the outdoors.
- Changes to agricultural and rural business support could help address some of these issues but it is not yet clear what new measures will be introduced or the impact they might have.
- Antisocial behaviour by a small minority of users and landowners can result in conflict and increased use has resulted in more incidents.

The priorities outlined in this strategy are in line with national thinking and will help deliver against national, regional and local policies, working with bordering organisations where appropriate.



Figure 3- Hay Meadow Festival at The Bog

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

Rachel Carson, Biologist. 1907-1964

Vision: By the end of 2028, people will be happier, healthier and more prosperous by being better connected to Shropshire's Great Outdoors through safe and cherished publically accessible outdoor assets.

Targets:

- Increase economic return by 25% (to £125m).
- Increase the amount of accessible natural greenspace from 1.66ha/ 1,000 population to 2.0ha.
- Create four new visitor facilities across the county.
- Increase outdoor volunteering per 1,000 population by 20%.
- Increase visits to the natural environment from 57% to 65% of the population.
- Increase participation in physical and mental health initiatives by 25%.
- Increase users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoor website from 135,000 to 200,000.
- Ensure the Best Value Performance Indicator for the Rights of Way network at or above 70%.
- Increase the ORVAL Welfare Value of sites (TBC as the new version of this is being published soon).

Aims:

- Happy- Encourage enjoyment of Shropshire's Great Outdoors by more people, of all ages and abilities.
- Healthy- Benefit the health of residents and visitors through increased physical activity and improved mental wellbeing in the Great Outdoors.
- Prosperous- Promote opportunities to improve the local economy by sympathetic commercial use and development of the outdoor assets.
- Connected- Bring people together within their communities to appreciate the potential and make decisions locally about their outdoor assets and actively participate in its maintenance and improvement.
- Cherished- Conserve and enhance special places that are important for nature, heritage and people.
- Safe- Ensure Shropshire's outdoor assets are safe and well maintained to meet statutory obligations and new opportunities now and in the future, within current financial restrictions.

"There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes."

— James Rebanks, The Shepherd's Life: A People's History of the Lake District



Figure 2- Some of the wonderful Walking for Health walks leaders

Strategies:

- Management- maintaining and improving outdoor assets
- Communication- providing information, interpretation and marketing
- Learning- improving education and skills
- Governance- ensuring strong and representative oversight, advisory bodies and monitoring
- Funding- bringing in income and grants to increase the scope and impact of improvements
- Partnership- working with landowners, users and other interested parties to achieve the best results
- Policy- ensuring other policies and strategies maximise the benefits of the outdoor assets
- Research- identifying and addressing gaps in our knowledge that are hindering the management of the outdoor assets

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board (acting as the Local Access Forum) will oversee delivery of this strategy. National and local data will be assessed as part of the evaluation, with the strategy being reviewed after five years and rewritten after ten.

A rolling three year action plan will be monitored and updated annually. Some of the key actions currently planned are:

- Creation of new Supplementary Planning Guidance to enhance the quality, quantity and connectivity of greenspace in new developments
- New family cycling hub at Dudmaston Estate, extension of visitor facilities at Severn Valley Country Park and development of Swan Hill Depot on The Mere
- Montgomery Canal Landscape Partnership Scheme delivery
- Develop better co-ordination of outdoor volunteering opportunities between partners
- Develop Shropshire's Great Outdoors website to include partner sites and promote fully-gated walking routes
- New data network for biodiversity
- New user campaign based on the Countryside Code
- Development of Healthy Outdoors for Schools
- Inspection and improvements to Rights of Way bridges and other major infrastructure

A full list of Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnerships Policies are included.



Figure 3- Inclusive cycling route at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms



Detailed research and analysis can be found in the appendices, along with the reviewed and new Shropshire Council Policies for Outdoor Partnerships.

A Glossary of the key terms used in this strategy can be found at the end of the document.

Working in partnership within and around Shropshire, Local Authority services, relevant organisations and users groups can make a real difference to residents and visitors to Shropshire by raising the profile and improving the quality of Shropshire's Great Outdoors as a fantastic asset to improve health, strengthen the local economy and look after the precious historic and natural environment of the county.

"I am keen that heritage be preserved and explored. It is sometimes difficult to balance the needs and mores of different users, but education can help. I have only recently moved here from Kent, but like what I have seen so far"

User Survey respondent 2018.



2.0 Introduction

Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 sets out the strategic direction for the management and development of publically accessible outdoor assets across the Unitary Authority area of Shropshire.

'Outdoor assets' refer to:

- Public Rights of Way, permissive paths, Unclassified County Roads, open access land (including commons), cycleways not alongside roads, canal towpaths, verges where relevant and stretches of road and pavement which link the above together
- Country Parks, Heritage Sites, nature reserves, forests with public access and other publically accessible sites,

It does not cover paid-for visitor attractions, urban and small scale greenspace or play areas.

The document addresses the statutory requirement of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) but is broader reaching; setting out priorities that cover the health, social, economic and environmental benefits of the entire outdoor assets, as described above.

There are considerable statutory requirements associates with Rights of Way and publically owned greenspace, which are discussed further in Section 22.0. Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 will raise the profile of the exceptional outdoor assets that we have in Shropshire, identify gaps, clarify the opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and community cohesion, the local economy and the environment and bring together partner organisations with similar goals, encouraging more co-ordinated, cost-effective approaches. It will not attempt to duplicate other plans and strategies but will link to them where appropriate.

There is a glossary at the end of this document that explains some of the terms used.

This draft strategy is the culmination of research, data analysis and consultation between key partners and user groups.



Figure 4- Enjoy the Great Outdoors at Severn Valley Country Park

"We visited the Severn Valley countryside centre, today for the very first time. What an absolute gem of a place, we will definitely visit again.

We came to see the Flying Scotsman. Can we say that the facilities are brilliant, parking, the cafe, food and the staff, toilets, and the mini bus service that you put on today for the trains.

Top marks for customer service. Well done!!"

Visitor to Severn Valley Country Park

3.0 Why do we need it?

The Public Sector has seen significant change since the last Countryside Access Strategy (Rights of Way Improvement Plan) was produced in 2008; in particular, the current economic climate and associated budget pressures, economic growth aspirations aiming to significantly increase the population and business base of Shropshire and the growing need for outdoor recreation for health and wellbeing. This is having an impact on the voluntary sector and there is now even greater need to have a clear, evidence-based, and prioritised plan to target limited resources whilst giving the greatest public benefit. A new approach is needed, delivering across multiple policy areas and integrating activity across Local Authority Services and partner organisations.

4.0 What makes Shropshire's Great Outdoors so special?

Shropshire is a beautiful, diverse county, with well-preserved natural and cultural heritage, as reflected by 23% being designated as the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and parts of the two World Heritage Sites at Ironbridge and Llangollen that span our borders.

We are lucky in Shropshire to have the third largest Rights of Way network in the country; 5,600km, which is the same distance as Shrewsbury to New York... right on our doorstep (Figure 7). We also have around 13,000 ha of publically accessible parks, heritage sites and nature reserves, which help conserve and enhance natural and cultural heritage for people and wildlife, as well as offering space to play and enjoy the outdoors. The geology of Shropshire is more varied than any other area of comparable size in Britain and possibly the rest of the world, with examples of 11 out of the 12 geological periods.

Shropshire is the only county in England that has parts of two World Heritage Sites, the third highest number of listed buildings (6,906) and Registered Parks and Gardens (30), and the fourth highest number of Conservation Areas (127). There are 138 Scheduled Monument where one or more of our Rights of Way provide public access. These vary considerably in type but in broad terms include prehistoric hillforts, Roman military and civilian sites, medieval castles, moated sites and deserted settlements, and industrial archaeological sites.

The county is one of the most sparsely populated in England and offers residents and visitors the opportunity to get away from some of the pressures of modern life.



Figure 5-5,600km of Rights of Way.... equivalent to the distance between Shrewsbury and New York... on your doorstep



Figure 6- Oswestry Old Racecourse. One of the many beautiful Heritage Sites in Shropshire.



5.0 What are the benefits of the Great Outdoors?

There has been extensive research showing the social, environmental and economic benefits of the Great Outdoors. These are considered in detail in appendix 1. Alongside physical activity the innate need for humans to interact with nature, means that being active outdoors can significantly help physical and mental wellbeing.

In summary, getting out and about in the Great Outdoors;

- Helps increase physical activity, which can reduce the risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer by up to 50% and lower the risk of early death by 30%.
- Increasing accessible open spaces could reduce healthcare costs in the UK by more than £2 billion annually (equivalent to £10m in Shropshire).
- Reduces stress and anxiety and can help treat acute mental health issues. The total cost of mental health problems in England in 2009/10 was £105.2 billion. Based on a correlation with the Shropshire population, this would be equivalent to £642 million in Shropshire.
- Can help encourage people back into work, through active volunteering.
- Increases social interaction and reduces loneliness.
- Can reduce hospital admissions associated with mental health issues.
- School children benefit from increased educational attainment and reduced anxiety/ behavioural issues
- Is free!

Having a high quality outdoors offer:

- Encourages visitors, locally and from away- the total value of visits to the Natural Environment in Shropshire is estimated at £100-115m per annum.
- Supports 2,200 jobs in Shropshire.
- Increases house prices by up to 20%.

The outdoor assets support important habitats for wildlife and make our cultural heritage accessible. The Marches Ecosystem Assessment demonstrates that the ecosystem of the Marches provides services worth £14.8 billion.

All references for these figures and more detail can be found in appendix 1.

"My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was sixty. She's ninety-seven now, and we don't know where the heck she is."

— Ellen DeGeneres, American comedian



Figure 7- Physical activity- a miracle cure!

"If I could not walk far and fast, I think I should just explode and perish."

— Charles Dickens, English Novelist.1812-70

6.0 What have we achieved in the last ten years?

The Countryside Access Strategy 2008-18 was reviewed in 2017. It focused on access rather than the broader aspects of this document. The past 10 years have seen considerable improvements to access, with extensive work on new promoted routes, improvements to the Definitive Map and increased access and information on our parks and sites, whilst still being managed for wildlife and heritage. Visitor numbers have increased and over 1,000 local people volunteer with the Outdoor Partnerships team at Shropshire Council and many more volunteer with partner organisations.

The network is 66% accessible (from a high of 85%), reflecting the Rights of Way budget halving over that period. We have the third largest network in the country, so increasing this to over 70% will be a challenge.

We have increased awareness of the health benefits of our outdoor assets and continue to deliver a range of initiatives for older people, those with physical and mental health issues, disabilities and learning difficulties.

The introduction of the new Shropshire's Great Outdoors website has raised awareness with many more people; 134,000 users connected with the site in 2017/18 (Figure 6).

A full review of the Countryside Access Strategy 2008-2018 can be found here:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/6802/countryside-access-strategy-for-shropshire-2008-review-draft.pdf>

Alongside the achievements associated with the Countryside Access Strategy, we have fulfilled our statutory duty to protect designated land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and internationally important wetland designation RAMSAR sites, again with significant budget and staff cuts within the Public Sector. We have raised the profile of the conservation of Shropshire's rare and sometimes unique flora and fauna, enhanced the management of habitats and ecosystems for the benefit of wildlife and visitors and seen an enhanced desire to protect wildlife and habitats.

Shropshire has become a hotspot for Walkers Are Welcome towns, with nine towns now registered within the wider county of Shropshire. Associated with these are Walking Festivals and events, further raising the profile of Shropshire as a walkers haven.



Figure 8- Shropshire's Great Outdoors website.

"Having lived near Bridgnorth for a number of years I have always enjoyed the Shropshire countryside and local walks. Imagine my pleasure on recently finding your website Shropshire's Great Outdoors. Having now tried some of the walks my congratulations to whoever has pulled together this little treasure trove of information.... The level of information, ability to drill down by different criteria, and its understated health message are just right."

Resident

Some significant projects have been delivered: Two Landscape Partnership Schemes (LPS) have been successfully completed- one in the Meres and Mosses area, led by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the other focusing on Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country, led by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership; a new Landscape Partnership Scheme has started on Montgomery Canal, led by the Canal and River Trust and a pilot project on the Long Mynd, working in partnership with local commoners, has contributed to the development of a new commons project, led locally by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

Other successes include, the Canal and River Trust delivering a successful 'Share this Space' campaign and raised awareness of the potential issues associated with dog walking through "Doggie Do-Da Days!"; the Shropshire Hills Shuttles remain a crucial service encouraging people to access the hills without using their cars (Figure 11); the Local Nature Partnership has led the development of the Marches Ecosystem Assessment, quantifying the value of natural capital in Shropshire and Herefordshire and the Forestry Commission and National Trust leading the provision of mountain bike tracks, encouraging responsible use by all users.

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership has set up a new Trust, which raises funding for specific conservation projects in and around the AONB.

The National Trust at Carding Mill Valley have 38,000 school visits annually and run a self-funding education service. Around 1,200 children visit Severn Valley Country Park on school visits to experience the Great Outdoors and take part in activities such as pond dipping. The Shropshire Hills AONB Team and Shropshire Wildlife Trust have worked with 347 children from 12 schools since 2011 to help them achieve the John Muir Award (Figure 12).

Figure 9- After a good walk, enjoy the delights of our country pubs by jumping on the Shropshire Hills Shuttle.



Figure 10- Children from Clunbury School completing their John Muir Award

"One thing I will remember from the John Muir Award is the enjoyment the children got when looking at the views and learning about the nature - especially the less able children who produced some fantastic writing about the scenes and nature they saw and experienced."

Teacher, St. George's Junior School Shrewsbury



7.0 What state are the outdoor assets in currently?

Shropshire has the third largest Rights of Way network in the country; 5,600 km (Figure 13). The majority of the network in Shropshire are footpaths, which make up over 77% of the overall network compared to 19% of bridleways and the remainder are restricted byways and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT's).

An assessment of the Rights of Way network is shown in appendix 2. The annual Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) survey for Rights of Way suggests approx. 70% of the network is accessible. This has increased from 38% in 2004 but has declined from a high of 85% in 2009. Almost 1,000 issues are reported annually on the Public Rights of Way network. There are a large number of outstanding claims and anomalies which require amendment to the Definitive Map and Statement. With the current funding pressures, higher priority work will need to be identified. Cross path obstructions are still the most frequently reported issues. In particular, cropping and vegetation clearance are two of the highest categories and these need to be prioritised accordingly. The impact of the proposed amendments to Public Rights of Way legislation put forward in the Deregulation Act 2015 will also have to be taken into account.

There are around 65 major bridges and other infrastructure that need engineering support. These have not been inspected since 2012-14 and there are many outstanding issues. This needs to be addressed to ensure the network is safe going forward.

There are a number of all-ability routes in Shropshire and the policy to replace stiles with gates or gaps, where possible, has made access easier. Those routes that are fully gated need to be added to the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website.

There are a plethora of promoted routes, especially in the Shropshire Hills. These will need to be prioritised to ensure the key routes are maintained to a high standard and any permissive parts of these routes have up to date agreements with landowners.

The current policies that determine works and action on the Rights of Way network have been amended to reflect the priorities identified in this document. The new policies are shown in appendix 5.

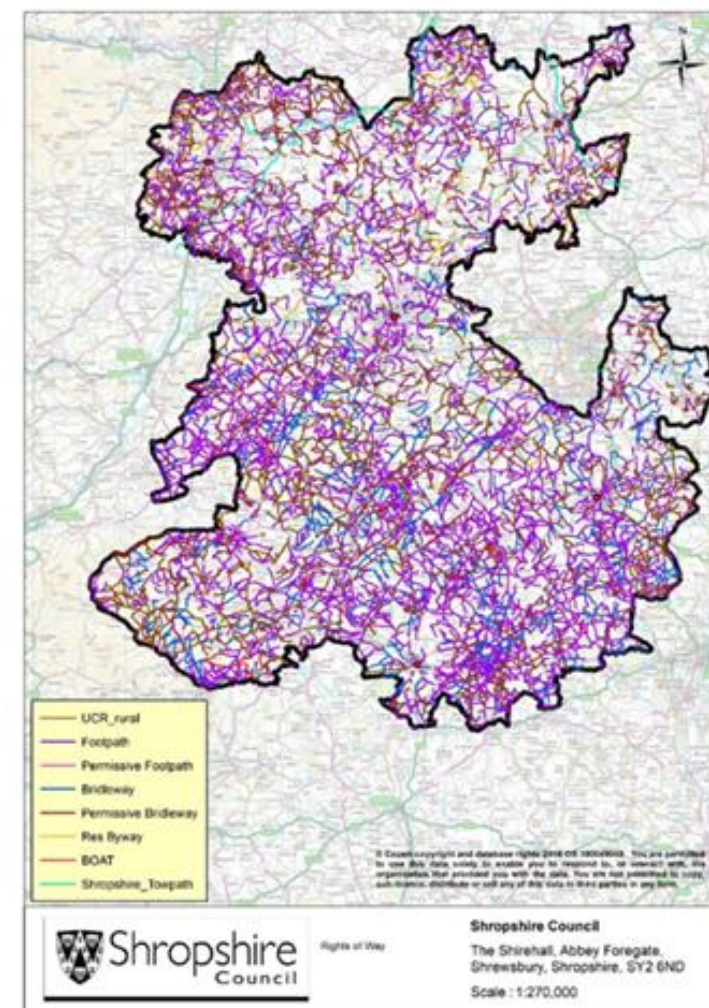


Figure 11- Public Rights of Way network in Shropshire

There are a range of publically accessible Country Parks and Heritage Sites, shown in Figure 14. In summary:

- National Trust sites= 5,619 ha
- Forestry Commission sites = 4,171 ha
- Natural England National Nature Reserves (NNR) = 1,639 ha
- Shropshire Council owned Country Parks and Heritage Sites= 680 ha

There are also a range of designations:

- World Heritage sites = 410 ha
- Registered Common = 4,746 ha
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments = 987 ha
- Local Nature Reserves = 827 ha
- Open Access Land = 6,998 ha
- Shropshire Hills AONB = 80,324 ha

A review of the publically accessible natural green space (appendix 3) applies the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space criteria and demonstrates that, whilst the Shropshire Hills area has large areas of green space and open access land, the north and east of the county doesn't. This, when coupled with the Rights of Way network, shows that there are few opportunities for people based in the north and east to access the natural environment and, even where there are Rights of Way, these are likely to be through agricultural land, which will not be as pleasant for a leisurely walk. In particular there are very few bridleways where people can cycle and ride in these parts of the county.

Even in the Shropshire Hills there are few opportunities to be active in the outdoors if you have limited mobility.

The need for more, better connected and higher quality natural green spaces has been highlighted in the revised Open Space Needs Assessment, due for publication shortly.

Car parking can be an issue in some places, with space for parking not keeping pace with the increase in demand.

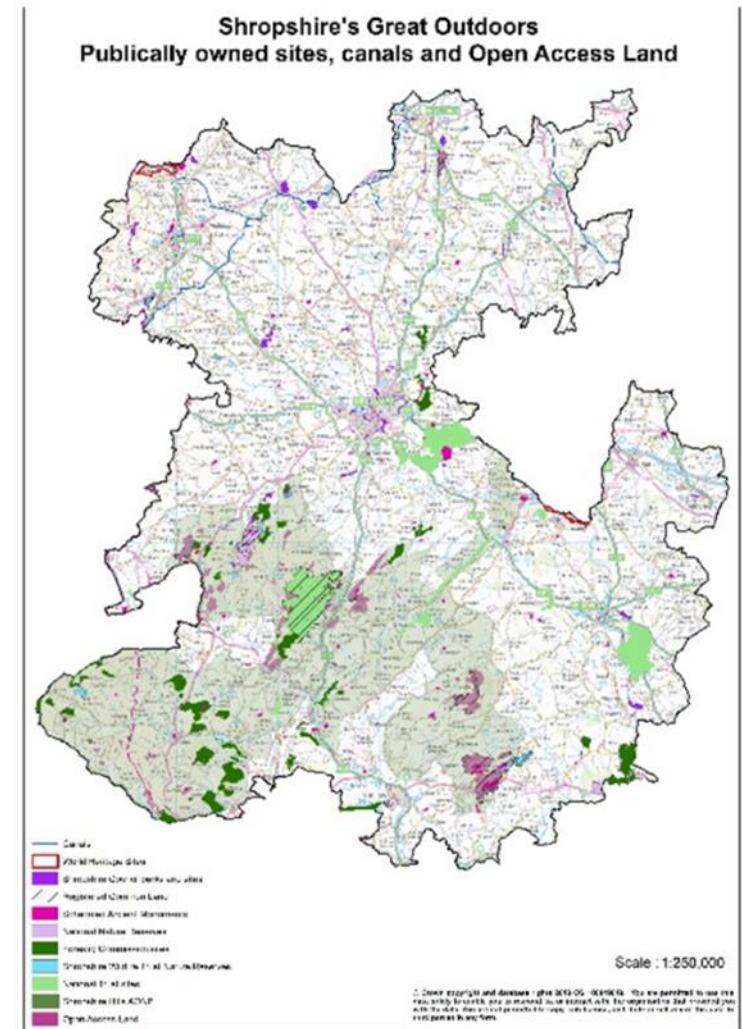


Figure 12- Publicly owned and managed sites, canals and open access land

Shropshire has a varied and extensive historic environment. Shropshire's Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of information about the historic environment of the county – archaeological sites, finds and features, historic buildings, structures and landscapes.

Shropshire is the only county in England to have parts of two World Heritage Sites- Ironbridge Gorge and Pontcysyllte Aquaduct and Canal, both of which straddle the Shropshire Unitary Authority border. It also has the third highest number of listed buildings (6,906) and Registered Parks and Gardens (30), and the fourth highest number of Conservation Areas (127) per local authority area in England.

Shropshire also has the seventh highest number of Scheduled Monuments (434) per local authority area in England, of which 138 (32%) are publically accessible by one or more rights of way. These vary considerably in type but in broad terms include prehistoric hillforts, Roman military and civilian sites, medieval castles, moated sites and deserted settlements, and industrial archaeological sites.

Of these 138 Scheduled Monuments, 22 (16%) were included by Historic England on the 2017 Heritage at Risk Register.

More details and references can be found in appendix 1.



Figure 13- Hoffamn Kiln, Llanymynech Limeworks- A Scheduled Ancient Monument

8.0 How are the outdoor assets being used?

Access to the natural environment in Shropshire is generally good. Analysis of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) data from Natural England shows that, on average 57% of Shropshire residents visited the natural environment in 2015/16, up from 48% in 2009/10. These people visit 4.5 times per week (compared to 3.2 visits per week nationally). The overall number of visits have increased by 73.5% in the last six years (estimated at 35 million in 2015/16). The majority of people were aged 35-44 and were from the AB socio-economic class (appendix 1). Partners report that visits to parks and Heritage Sites have increased, with some National Trust and Natural England sites having too many visitors at peak times.

Most people are walking their dog (66%) or just walking (25%) and 77% of people accessed the outdoors on foot (Figure 17). People were also enjoying the countryside for other activities, such as eating and drinking out, visiting attractions, playing with children and wildlife watching. Partners have reported increasing mountain biking on some sites. All visits lasting less than 15 minutes were within a mile's journey, while no visits lasting less than an hour were more than 5 miles away. The overall numbers of people horse riding nationally fell by 23% between 2011 and 2015, despite more 16-24 year old riders. According to the Outdoor Partnership User Survey 2017, most people are enjoying the outdoors to improve their health and experience nature, and circular walks and Country Parks and Sites are most commonly used

Despite this, there are still some segments of the population who are less likely to visit the natural environment, including the over 65s, those with a disability, the unemployed and those who are economically disadvantaged.

As a result of the high quality and accessibility of the landscape in the Shropshire Hills, this area is important for visitors.

There are some issues with Right of Way and heritage sites that are caused by irresponsible use, for example, mountain bikers eroding the Iron Age Hillfort at Nesscliffe Country Park and motorised users destroying Rights of Way in the east of the county. Cycling UK's survey found that over 30% of respondents cycle footpaths at least weekly.



Figure 14- Walking in the Shropshire Hills

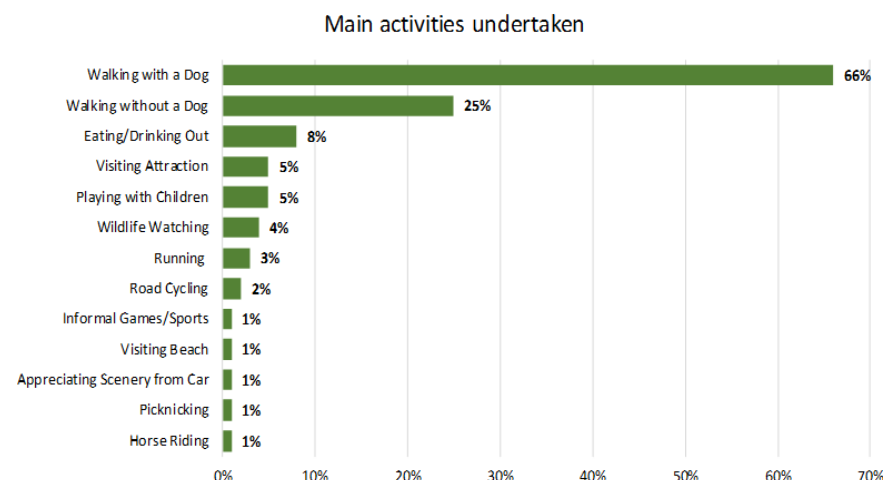


Figure 15- Main activities undertaken. MENE data for Shropshire.



9.0 What key opportunities and challenges are we trying to address?

These are uncertain times and there are a number of key issues that we currently have to face, many of which offer new and potentially exciting opportunities providing we are able to take advantage of them.

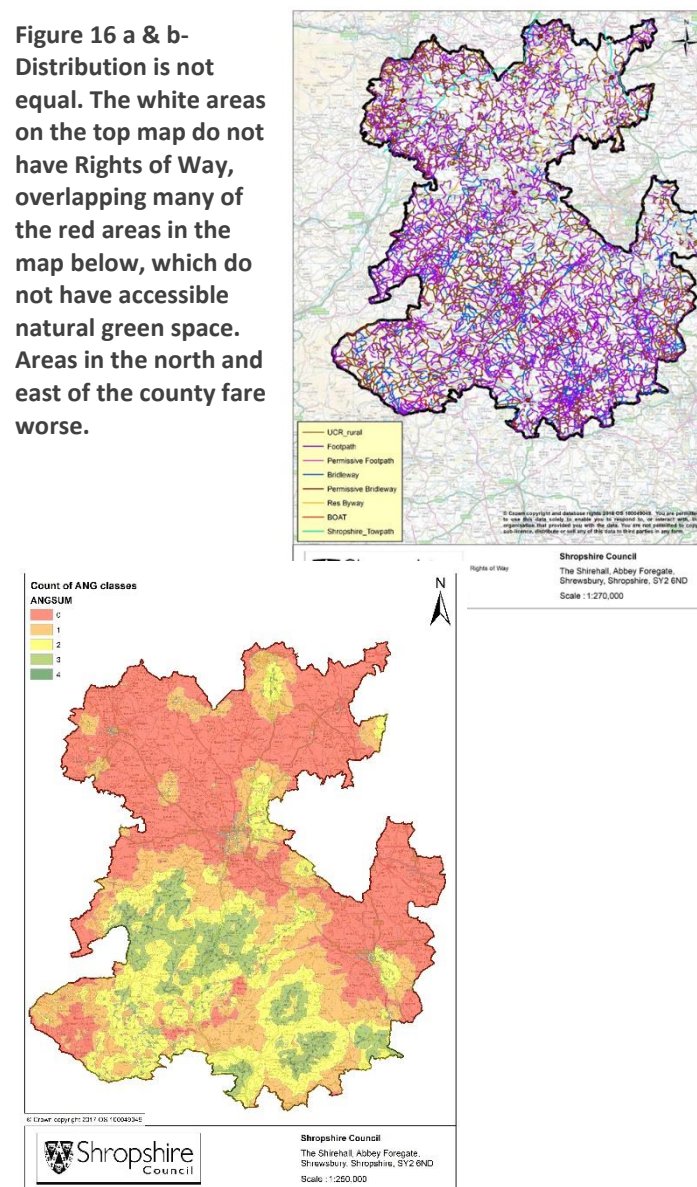
The provision of outdoor assets is not consistent as they were mostly developed through the historic registration of Rights of Way, purchasing of high quality habitats or heritage sites and by philanthropic donations of ex-industrial or estate owned land. This means that the opportunities for outdoor recreation do not necessarily correspond to need, areas of disadvantage or significant centres of population. In particular, there is insufficient green space and Rights of Way in northern and eastern parts of the county (Figure 18). The prevalence of long-term health issues in Albrighton and Whitchurch in particular, do not reflect the age profiles of the population and signify that increasing greenspace should be a priority here. More detail on this can be found in appendices 1 and 3.

Participation in outdoor activity is increasing, with more people walking and cycling and visitors increasingly looking to be active on holiday and to connect with nature. There is also likely to be an increase in leisure time as jobs become more fragmented and there is more home working. Lack of funding and capacity to address this growing demand for outdoor recreation, and the quality expectations of those people using our outdoor assets, means that it is increasingly difficult to fulfil statutory requirements, as well as improvements needed to meet demand. Austerity measures in the Public Sector are putting increasing pressure on voluntary sector organisations to fill some of the gaps and are increasing the imperative to generate income where possible (Figure 19). Despite this, the need for statutory funding should be emphasised and paid for through the Public Sector.

With this increased usage comes the opportunity to engage with and empower our communities to learn about and help deliver management on these special sites. Country Parks and Heritage Sites in many rural settings are the 'common ground' within otherwise increasingly fragmented and isolated individuals and families. Loneliness is emerging as a serious element of rural living, therefore volunteer groups should be encouraged and developed with appropriate resources and partnership working with other relevant organisations.

Despite the increase in visits, certain sections of the community are still not accessing the natural environment regularly. This includes the over 65's, people who are economically disadvantaged, people with a disability and the unemployed.

Figure 16 a & b- Distribution is not equal. The white areas on the top map do not have Rights of Way, overlapping many of the red areas in the map below, which do not have accessible natural green space. Areas in the north and east of the county fare worse.





There is also increased pressure to grow the local economy, potentially at the detriment of the environment. This could have significant impact on the outdoor assets and on the natural beauty of the county.

The fact that many of our most popular sites are also the most important for biodiversity and heritage can lead to damage to environmentally and culturally sensitive sites. This is likely to be exacerbated by increases in housing and population and if changes to agricultural support result in higher stocking rates, for example, on open access commons. The landscape through which the Rights of Way pass is part of the 'asset' and the impact of changes on the wider countryside should also be considered in light of this. Likewise, new developments should not impact negatively on the setting of Country Parks and Heritage Sites or degrade Rights of Way by increased private vehicular access.

We all know that being outdoors is good for us and recent research has confirmed this but, whilst health organisations and research bodies are aware of the benefits of being active outdoors, this is not translating into funding for core prevention and rehabilitation activities associated with the outdoors, that maximise health benefits for those most in need.

Political uncertainty is making forward planning more difficult. Whether this is the impact of leaving the EU on Local Authority funding, access and greenspace provision and rural development, the likely introduction of the Deregulation Bill or Government intervention through the 25 year Environment Plan, future political interventions are likely to have a significant impact over the next five years. There is also a greater aspiration for Localism and it is not yet clear on the implications of commissioning services to Town and Parish Councils or the development of devolved authorities, including more powers going to the Welsh Government.

The outdoor assets are essential for many businesses and the visitor economy has been identified as a priority in the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire. There has been limited investment in some of the outdoor assets in recent years and there is an opportunity, as a key part of the visitor infrastructure, for them to make a greater impact on the local economy. For example, the River Severn is the longest river in the country and runs diagonally across Shropshire. It is used by canoe activity companies and individuals, anglers and rowing enthusiasts, along with the Sabrina river boat in Shrewsbury but there is much more opportunity to develop this.

"We are getting to a point where the service is almost too successful. The population of Shropshire is expected to further increase substantially in the next few years and those people will want to explore the local countryside. However many path surfaces in our countryside sites and across nearby agricultural land are already becoming eroded by over-use."

User Survey Respondent 2017

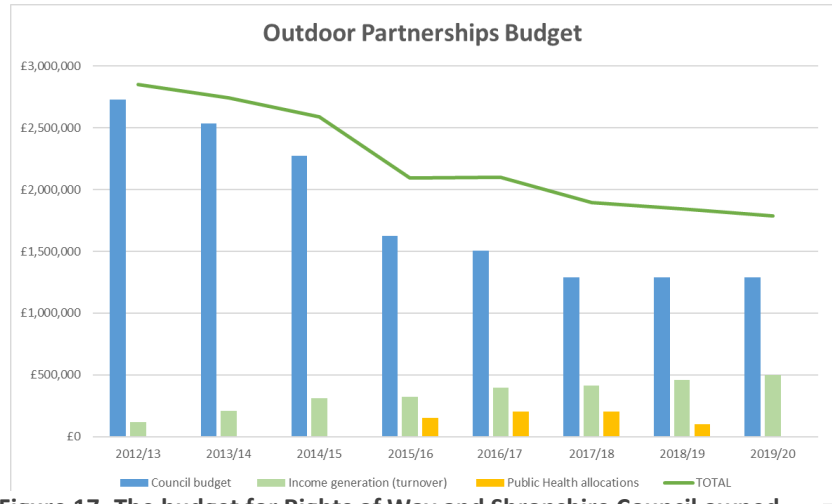


Figure 17- The budget for Rights of Way and Shropshire Council owned parks and sites has more than halved in recent years, partial offset by increased income



The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an environmental designation and should be developed sustainably. It is an important destination for tourism in the county. The application to extend the Europarc European Charter for Sustainable Tourism should be supported and promoted.

Spend on countryside visits has fallen, which may be because the main respondents were regular walkers but it could also be an indication that, with rural pubs and shops closing, there are not enough opportunities to spend.

Whether this is in planning new commercial and housing developments, marketing the outdoors, key interpretation themes for Shropshire, increasing awareness with a wide range of users or upskilling and co-orientating volunteers, better joint working could increase opportunities, enhance innovation and help avoid duplication.

Antisocial behaviour and the attitude of a minority of landowners and users of our outdoor assets can result in conflicts between different types of users and between users and landowners where there is a lack of understanding and awareness of the law, the Countryside Code and the need for mutual respect (Figure 20). Landowners and developers have been known to illegally block paths (Figure 21) and Rights of Way are not always given sufficient priority in planning decisions.

There is an estimated 9% increase in population planned for Shropshire (an extra 28,000 people) by 2036, according to Productivity Growth Forecasts for the review of the Local Plan (appendix 1). As many people move to Shropshire because of the high quality of the environment, this will increase the usage of Rights of Way, Country Parks and Heritage Sites.

The review of the Local Plan for Shropshire offers opportunities to develop new access and greenspace, working with planners and developers. A joined up, master-planning approach would help ensure these opportunities are grasped, to the benefit of residents and businesses in the new developments and existing communities.



Figure 18- Damage to Rights of Way caused by irresponsible use by the minority of 4x4 drivers

Figure 19- Developer blocking a footpath in Shrewsbury



"Footpaths are not always well kept and housing developments often encroach onto them, disturb the footpath and make it uneven or make them very enclosed" User Survey Respondent 2017

10.0 How will this deliver against national, regional and local policy?

The priorities outlined in Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 are in line with national thinking and will help deliver against a range of national, regional and local strategies, as shown in detail in appendix 4.

In particular:

- The 25 Year Environment Plan, Defra- Better connecting people, health and the outdoors, especially for young people and to benefit those with mental health issues; improving the delivery of biodiversity and greenspace gains through the planning process and raising awareness of the economic benefits of the outdoors.
- Everyone Active Every Day, Public Health England- Encouraging regular physical activity.
- The Cultural White Paper, DCMS- Maximising the opportunities to transform communities through natural and cultural heritage.
- The Industrial Strategy, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy- Strengthening cultural assets and developing skills.
- Strategic Enterprise Plan, Marches LEP- promoting Shropshire as a business investment opportunity, building on individuals' quality of life, staff wellbeing and company reputation.
- Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy- developing the visitor economy, agricultural support following exit from the EU, developing skills, improving Quality of Life and ensuring attractive environments.
- Shropshire's Local Plan- Better planning of meaningful greenspace and non-motorised access, new destination country parks, protecting environmentally-sensitive sites.
- Shropshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy- harnessing the power of the outdoors to increase physical activity, address mental health issues and help people stay independent for longer.
- Local Transport Plan for Shropshire- encouraging walking and cycling.
- Shropshire Council Corporate Plan- helping deliver across the board: resilient communities, healthy people and prosperous economy.



Figure 20- Nordic walking with a private company at Severn Valley Country Park



Figure 21- Restoring Offa's Dyke SAM



11.0 Who have we consulted?

Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 has been developed with the help of a Working Group of interested parties and the Strategy Board. We have spoken to a wide range of representatives from the partner organisations and forums mentioned below in the 'who will be involved?' section, focusing on people who use or visit outdoor assets, landowners and those with a specific interest in the Great Outdoors. We have presented the findings to partners, Town and Parish Councils and Walking and Riding Forums and had a workshop session with partners to agree priorities and actions.

This document will be available for public consultation for three months, after which it will be finalised and agreed by Shropshire Council's Cabinet. Your comments and ideas are welcome and will be carefully considered alongside other feedback before the final document is published.

12.0 What difference will we make?



By the end of 2028, people will be happier, healthier and more prosperous by being better connected to Shropshire's Great Outdoors through safe and cherished publically accessible outdoor assets.

We will aim to increase:

- Economic return by 25% (to £125m)
- The amount of accessible natural greenspace from 1.66ha/ 1,000 population to 2.0ha.
- Visitor facilities at four sites across the county
- Volunteering per 1,000 population by 20%
- Visits to the natural environment from 57% to 65% of the population
- Participation in physical and mental health initiatives by 25%
- Users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoor website from 135,000 to 200,000
- Best Value Performance Indicator for the Rights of Way network to or above 70%
- The ORVAL Welfare Value of sites (TBC as the new version of this is being published soon)



Figure 22- Achieving the Green Flag award for the 14th consecutive year at Severn Valley Country Park



Figure 23- Pond dipping at Severn Valley Country Park



13.0 What are we trying to achieve?



Happy- Encourage enjoyment of Shropshire's Great Outdoors by more people, of all ages and abilities.



Healthy- Benefit the health of residents and visitors through increased physical activity and improved mental wellbeing in the Great Outdoors.



Prosperous- Promote opportunities to improve the local economy by sympathetic commercial use and development of the outdoor assets.



Connected- Bring people together within their communities to appreciate the potential and make decisions locally about their outdoor assets and actively participate in its maintenance and improvement.



Cherished- Conserve and enhance special places that are important for nature, heritage and people.



Safe- Ensure Shropshire's outdoor assets are safe and well maintained to meet statutory obligations and new opportunities now and in the future, within current financial restrictions.



Figure 24- Oswestry Parish Paths Partnership group's first kissing gate.

"Last Friday, I was past the gate we installed (my wife wanted to see what the latest madness was that I had been up to). We were looking at the gate and there was an elderly gentleman in the field, walking with the aid of a stick. He had a big smile on his face and asked if we knew who had put the gate in. I explained that we had and about the P3 groups. He said that we had made his day as it was 15 years since he had been able to get into that field which was just a few minutes walk from his house. He asked that thanks to be passed to all concerned and encouraged us to keep up our marvellous work."

Parish Paths Partnership (P3) volunteer





14.0 How will we achieve this?

These will be achieved through effective:

- **Management**- maintaining and improving outdoor assets
- **Communication**- providing information, interpretation and marketing
- **Learning**- improving education and skills
- **Governance**- ensuring strong and representative oversight, advisory bodies and monitoring
- **Funding**- bringing in income and grants to increase the scope and impact of improvements
- **Partnership**- working with landowners, users and other interested parties to achieve the best results
- **Policy**- ensuring other policies and strategies maximise the benefits of the outdoor assets
- **Research**- identifying and addressing gaps in our knowledge that are hindering the management of the outdoor assets

15.0 Who will be involved?

Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 will be achieved by partnership working across a wide range of organisations and individuals, which includes:

- Statutory Authority- Shropshire Council
- Landowners- Shropshire Council, National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, English Heritage, Natural England, Canal and River Trust, farmers and other landowners
- Users- British Driving Society, British Horse Society, Byways and Bridleways Trust, Cycling UK, outdoor activity and equipment providers, Ramblers Association, Walking Forums, Riding and Carriage Driving Forum, Green Lane Association Ltd. and other user groups
- Volunteers working on the outdoor assets
- Other interested parties- Historic England, English Heritage LEADER Local Action Group, Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, Marches Local Nature Partnership, Open Spaces Society, Public Health, Rural Community Council, Rural Services Network, Severn River Trust, Shropshire Council, Shropshire Disability Network, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Sustainable Transport Shropshire, West Mercia Police, Town and Parish Councils, bordering Local Authorities and Local Access Forums.





16.0 Who will oversee delivery?

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board will oversee the delivery of activity and advise a wide range of organisations. More details and the current membership of the Strategy Board can be found on the Shropshire Council website¹.

17.0 How will improvements be funded?

Improvements to outdoor assets highlighted in the priorities below will mostly need to be funded outside core Public Sector funds. Increasingly external funding will need to be found, this could include:

- Earned income from parks and sites, events and commercial activities
- Project funding from external sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England, Arts Council and other charities and trusts
- Countryside Stewardship or alternatives following the introduction of the new schemes
- Business support or sponsorship
- Funding associated with new housing and commercial developments and the provision of greenspace
- Memberships, donations and legacies

Funding is becoming increasingly competitive and joint working between partners will be key.

18.0 How will we know we have succeeded?

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually and there will be a major review of the strategy after five years. Overall evaluation of the strategy will be assessed by monitoring some overarching indicators:

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment health indicators
- Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment
- Assessment of the provision of Accessible Natural Greenspace
- Shropshire's Great Outdoors Annual Survey
- Best Value Performance Indicator for Rights of Way
- Visit Britain data

¹ <https://shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-partnerships/countryside-access-and-public-rights-of-way/the-countryside-access-team/shropshires-great-outdoors-strategy-board/>





The output monitoring is outlined in the Priority section below and in more detail in the attached Action Plan (Appendix 7).

A new 10 year plan will be published following a full evaluation of Shropshire’s Great Outdoors in 2027.

19.0 What are the priorities?

19.1 Happy- Encourage enjoyment of Shropshire’s Great Outdoors by more people, of all ages and abilities

Key messages

- Being outdoors is fun
- Everyone can get into the Great Outdoors
- There are opportunities to increase access for users, including those with limited mobility

We will....

Management	Ensure high quality management of prioritised outdoor assets, within current financial restrictions, seeking to secure external funding for new activity where possible.
Management	Develop and promote new multi-user routes, where possible, and support the development of canal towpaths for all users; improving connectivity of off-road routes, linking roadside verges and considering 20mph schemes for linking routes.
Management	Investigate opportunities to increase access and recreation on suitable existing sites and develop new recreational Country Parks and greenspace where there is identified need, targeting the underrepresented groups, and/ or where existing sites are environmentally or culturally sensitive.
Communication	Improve information and awareness of all ability and easier access across the outdoor assets, seeking to develop new opportunities where possible.
Communication	Develop on-line promotion of the outdoor assets across partners, better linking websites, maximising the use of social media, encouraging people to explore beyond the obvious and highlighting sites that are suitable for specific activities.
Communication	Interpret natural and cultural heritage in engaging ways as a ‘hook’ to encourage people to get out and about and to better understand the diverse and fascinating heritage of the county.
Partnership	Ensure better engagement with a range of user groups to promote suitable access, identify gaps, address issues and get feedback on current facilities. This includes disability groups, the off-road cycling community and motorised users, highlighting businesses that specialise in off-road adventures for the ‘thrill seekers’.
Learning	Better engagement with young people to encourage more school, pre-school and family visits to the outdoor assets.





Learning	Increase awareness of the principles of multi-user approaches, encouraging everyone to have respect for others.
Funding	Identify external funding opportunities to address identified needs.
Governance	Maintain support for walking and riding forums and develop a new off-road cycling forum.
Research	Investigate opportunities presented by new media, such as augmented reality, Strava mapping, to understand popular routes and sites and better meet user needs.

Outcomes

- More people will be enjoying Shropshire’s Great Outdoors, especially those who do not do so at present
- Provision for different types of users will be identified and better promoted
- More schools and families will be visiting the outdoor assets
- People will be better informed about the outdoor assets
- There will be better understanding between different user groups and more responsible use by all users

Monitoring and evaluation

- Website usage
- Social media coverage
- Membership numbers
- Visitor numbers
- School visits
- Attendance at events and festivals
- Visitor surveys



Figure 25- The joy of the Great Outdoors.

“It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men’s hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.”

—Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish novelist. 1850-94.



19.2 Healthy- Benefit the health of residents and visitors through increased physical activity and improved mental wellbeing in the Great Outdoors.

Key messages

- Being outdoors is good for you
- Active volunteering helps improve physical activity and mental wellbeing
- Outdoor activities can rehabilitate people with chronic conditions as well as help prevent them

We will...

<i>Management</i>	Develop and maintain easy access and all-ability trails and sites and better promote fully-gated routes on the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website and social media.
<i>Management</i>	Develop 'micro-volunteering' and explore new technology to make it easier for people to become involved.
<i>Management</i>	Map areas of disadvantage to available outdoor assets and plan new resources or better design of existing ones.
<i>Communication</i>	Promote the benefits of outdoor activity on health and well-being, including the opportunity motorised use brings to get the least mobile into the countryside. Promotion should encourage people to go further, using safe, well-marked paths to discover and learn about wildlife and culture.
<i>Communication</i>	Promote opportunities to volunteer in the outdoors across a range of partner organisations.
<i>Partnership</i>	Develop and promote a joint approach with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Mental Health Partnership Board to help prevent and treat chronic health conditions, including working more closely with Adult Social Care, Public Health and other organisations to reach those who need support most.
<i>Partnership</i>	Work with Public Health colleagues to support involvement of physical activity and volunteering in the roll out of Social Prescribing across the county.
<i>Partnership</i>	Support a range of outdoor activities that encourage exploration and increase use of parks, sites and Rights of Way e.g. fell running, orienteering, canoeing, countryside management skills, hedge laying, wildflower meadow management, bird watching, wildlife photography, geocaching, dark sky astronomy on sites, arts in the countryside.
<i>Learning</i>	Develop new programmes for young people that encourages physical activity in the outdoors.
<i>Funding</i>	Identify funding to continue to support volunteering, including Shropshire Wild Teams and co-ordination of Walking for Health.

Policy	Work with the Planning Policy Department to encourage a master-planning approach to new housing and commercial developments that prioritises greenspace and non-motorised access.
Policy	Raise awareness of the health and wellbeing benefits of natural and cultural heritage and access in any new strategies being developed, for example, the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan 4 and the Cultural Strategy for Shropshire.

Outcomes:

- Residents and visitors to Shropshire will be more physically active, helping avoid the onset of chronic health conditions.
- More people will connect with their local communities and build social networks as a result of their involvement with the Great Outdoors, improving their mental wellbeing.
- People with chronic physical and mental health conditions will be better able to live independently for longer.
- Children will be more physically active; increasing educational attainment, reducing issues with weight and anxiety and improving overall wellbeing.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Attendance records from health initiatives, events and volunteering.
- Surveys with those involved.
- Analysis of school attainment data.
- Observations and participant feedback.



Figure 26- The Zombie Wild Team conserving wildlife habitat at Copthorne Park

"I have seen many good outcomes of increased confidence, sense of pride through achievement, and increase in self-worth. This has led to several attendees being able to be discharged from CMHT support due to the benefits attending has brought. One attendee in our group was able to secure paid employment as a direct result of attending. The Wild Team is a great resource that mental health services can benefit from."

Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) Support Worker.

19.3 Prosperous- Promote opportunities to improve the local economy by sympathetic commercial use and development of the outdoor assets.

Key messages:

- There is growing interest in the Great Outdoors and many people are looking to enjoy it as part of their everyday lives and when they are on holiday.
- Outdoor Recreation is worth £17 billion to the English economy and £100-115 million to the economy in Shropshire.
- Shropshire's natural environment makes a substantial contribution to the County's appeal as a tourism destination and to inward investment.
- Outdoor assets can be developed alongside businesses to help develop their market.
- A more joined up approach to marketing the Great Outdoors will bring benefits to all and will be implemented through the new 'Discover Shropshire' sub-group of the Marches Nature Partnership.

	We will...
Management	Agree key visitor sites and promoted routes that will be invested in to ensure a high quality visitor experience.
Management	Increase access alongside waterways by revamping the Severn Way, developing a new route alongside the River Teme and alongside canals.
Management	Support routes from, or linking to, rural pubs, cafes and other relevant businesses.
Management	Ensure the development of the visitor economy is sustainable, especially in the Shropshire Hills AONB, working to the Europarc European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.
Management	Investigate the possibility of a major new multi-user path, possibly along old railways, to link market towns and provide economic opportunities for businesses.
Management	Plan for the development of five new visitor facilities at key sites across the county.
Management	Further the aspiration for new Country Parks where there is an established need and consider the commercial advantages of further green space in and around other market towns.
Communication	Promote the importance of outdoor recreation to the local economy and to attracting inward investment as a driver for businesses and individuals to relocate to Shropshire.
Communication	Improve more diverse photographic coverage across Shropshire, including all the little countryside sites and hidden gems. New media approaches such as augmented reality and drone footage can help in this promotion of sites and key promoted routes, (try before you buy) for visitors to UK and Shropshire to walk a path virtually before committing to come here.
Communication	Work with partners, Theatre Severn, museums and cultural attractions to develop more joined up promotion and development.
Partnership	Develop better joint working between partner organisations to maximise economic benefit, whilst protecting natural and cultural heritage.
Partnership	Work more closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership to strengthen the outdoor assets infrastructure and increase awareness of the importance of this infrastructure to the local economy and the attractiveness of the county to incomers.

Partnership	Encourage partners to work together to contact outdoor activity providers and other relevant businesses to access funding, identify development opportunities and grow their businesses. This includes working with tourism networks, business groups and Chambers of Commerce.
Funding	Develop externally funded projects that increase investment in key assets for economic growth.
Funding	Successfully deliver the £2.2m LEADER funding in Southern Shropshire and secure at least 74 new jobs by 2020.
Policy	Raise awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation to the local economy and to attracting inward investment as a driver for businesses and individuals to relocate to Shropshire when the Economic Growth Strategy is revised.
Funding	Encourage involvement in rural development programmes for the future, building on the LEADER experience.
Research	Conduct new visitor and tourism research, in partnership with relevant organisations.
Learning	Offer training opportunities for young people, including student placements and apprenticeships.

Outcomes:

- There is a greater contribution to the local economy from the Great Outdoors.
- There are more opportunities for people to gain employment in the outdoor assets.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Visitor surveys
- Business surveys
- Website analysis
- Number and extent of new routes and green spaces
- Number and take up of training opportunities

"Just to say thank you to you and your smashing team for a great Trail Race yesterday. The course was lovely and all the Marshalls were great, very encouraging!!! I thought the event was well organised and I will definitely be back."

Participant in the Severn Valley Trail Run



Figure 27- Severn Valley Trail Run.



19.4 Connected- Bring people together within their communities to appreciate the potential and make decisions locally about their outdoor assets and actively participate in its maintenance and improvement

Key Messages:

- The outdoor assets should be a key consideration in planning
- You can make a difference to your outdoor assets
- Your concerns will be listened to
- Working together can be effective and rewarding
- Getting involved with active volunteering is good for you and your community
- The natural environment must be protected as the public's awareness and love of flora and fauna increases.

	We will....
Management	Work with volunteers and Town and Parish Councils to identify, prioritise and maintain important local outdoor assets.
Management	Continue support and development of volunteering opportunities, user forums and 'Friends of' groups and work with young people, encouraging people to become more involved with management planning to better understand natural and cultural heritage management. Encourage more self-sufficient volunteer groups where appropriate.
Management	'Master planning' approach enforced through the revised Local Plan, with the introduction of a local investment fund for larger scale green space and access.
Communication	Increase awareness of the importance of vibrant volunteer groups for health and wellbeing, social inclusion and community cohesion in rural communities.
Communication	Better promote the remarkable achievements of volunteers throughout the county.
Partnership	Work with partners to promote the value of the outdoors for health and the economy, and to encourage them to invest in the management of these assets.
Partnership	Develop better partnership working to help support volunteering and site management and to deliver landscape scale projects.
Partnership	Discuss Corporate Social Responsibility with businesses, highlighting the difference businesses can make to their local community through development of outdoor assets.
Policy	Conduct master planning of six market towns to plan countryside access and green space provision at a town level in response to new housing and employment land development.



Policy	Develop Supplementary Planning Guidance for access that encourages access, worthwhile greenspace and outdoor activities in new developments.
Policy	Ensure the Local Transport Plan 4 encourages active travel and identifies desire lines and links between communities for non-motorised access.
Policy	Input into Neighbourhood, Town and Parish Plans where appropriate and closer working with the Planning Department to prioritise access.
Funding	Seek to secure external funding at a local level for new multi-user routes and improved recreational green space where there is identified need.

Outcomes:

- The value of country parks, greenspace and Rights of Way to local communities are truly understood, especially by decision makers.
- New green space and access secured where there is evidence of need.
- More people are involved and making a difference to their local outdoor assets.
- Businesses are actively supporting and contributing to the management of the Great Outdoors.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Attendance and hours committed to volunteering.
- Funding brought in by the community and businesses to improve the outdoor assets.
- Policy improvements.
- Impact of planning decisions on the outdoor assets.



Figure 28- New interpretation boards erected by volunteers at Stanmore Country Park.

“Through the Shropshire Council website, I was put in touch with Shaun Burkey in response to my enquiry regarding the possibility of installing a memorial bench on Brown Moss. Brown Moss was loved by my parents throughout their lives, and I cannot think of a better memorial than this. Hopefully it will be enjoyed and appreciated by many other locals too.” Resident

19.5 Cherished- Conserve and enhance special places that are important for nature, heritage and people.

Key messages:

- Publically accessible parks and sites are important to wildlife and heritage as well as people.
- Sensitive habitats and important heritage should be safeguarded for future generations and you can help make a difference.
- There are hidden gems just waiting to be explored.
- Well maintained green spaces perform important functions which have an economic value, such as absorbing pollution, which provides people with clean air and reduces pressures on public services. These functions are known as ‘ecosystem services’. By understanding what an area of land is made up of, its quality, how it is managed, used and the functions it performs, we can better understand the value it provides to a local or wider area, to businesses, communities and society.

	We will....
Management	Help ensure that access is limited or improved to minimise impact on environmentally and culturally sensitive sites, finding the balance between recreation and conservation.
Management	Ensure compliance with legal obligations on designated sites and species, including the NERC Act (Biodiversity Duty) which is likely to become more stringent.
Management	Provide accessible natural environments rich in wildlife and culture for people to enjoy and experience, maximising their natural capital.
Management	Seek to protect soil quality and clean air and water on publically owned sites.
Management	Support volunteering on environmentally sensitive sites based on Management Planning for wildlife and heritage.
Management	Embed sustainability principles in new activities and developments.
Management	Work with schools to develop more wildlife friendly grounds and outdoor classrooms.
Management	Designate more Local Nature Reserves to better protect important habitats and species.
Management	As a minimum both habitat maps and species lists should be fully refreshed every 10 years; more frequently for particularly sensitive habitats and species.
Management	Secure enhanced benefits form and appreciation of the World Heritage Sites in relation to their Management Plans.
Management	Promote and support improved management and enhance visitor understanding of Offa's Dyke.
Management	The Scheduled Monuments on the at Risk Register inevitably form the main priority for action over the next few years, and this might include providing enhanced access and interpretation as part of a wider package of management improvements.
Communication	Increase understanding of how outdoor assets help mitigate climate change and the range of ecosystem services they provide.

<i>Communication</i>	Encourage people away from the obvious ‘honey pot’ sites to discover hidden gems.
<i>Communication</i>	Improve awareness and understanding of cultural and natural heritage and management techniques, through better interpretation and promotion, including a programme of talks and events about wildlife and heritage.
<i>Partnership</i>	Support partnership projects to develop a landscape scale approach to habitat management and to encourage Environmental Networks.
<i>Partnership</i>	Work more closely with partners to share skills and resources to maximise benefits to nature and culture
<i>Governance</i>	Work more closely with Marches Local Nature Partnership to highlight threats to natural and cultural heritage and to increase awareness of Natural Capital.
<i>Learning</i>	Improve countryside management and surveying skills of volunteers and work with Universities and Colleges to increase skills and understanding.
<i>Funding</i>	Work with Defra to develop opportunities to fund better conservation and enhancement of important natural and cultural heritage sites, including the provision of enhanced public access, through agricultural support.
<i>Funding</i>	Secure external funding for specific heritage projects.
<i>Research</i>	Identify the key metrics needed to assess changes in ecosystem services and develop means to regularly report on these.

Outcomes:

- Better conservation of sensitive habitats, key wildlife species and important heritage.
- Better understanding of why these sites are so important.
- Dissipation of visitors from key sites.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Management plan monitoring.
- Wildlife and heritage surveys.
- Attendance at events and feedback.
- Website analysis.



Figure 29- Least water lily at Colemere; the only site in England that this rare plant is found



19.6 Safe- Ensure Shropshire’s outdoor assets are safe and well maintained to meet statutory obligations and new opportunities now and in the future, within current financial restrictions

Key messages:

- Public Sector funding is required to meet the statutory requirements for Rights of Ways, Highways, parks and sites, which is being compromised through lack of resources.
- Income generation and external funding will be needed to deliver above statutory improvements.

Strategy	Priority
Management	Ensure the Rights of Way network in Shropshire is at least 70% accessible, within current funding restrictions.
Management	Fulfil our legal duty to protect and effectively manage Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation, Wildlife Sites, internationally important wetland RAMSAR sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and species of flora and fauna under threat.
Management	Ensure parks and sites adhere to Health and Safety standards to protect the public.
Management	Further prioritise outstanding Formal Applications and anomalies, along with case files from the Discovering Lost Ways project in the north.
Management	Work with planners and developers to maximise green space and off-road access quantity, quality and connectivity.
Management	Revision and digitisation of the Definitive Map and Statement.
Management	Prepare for the likely increase of claims for unrecorded Rights of Way as a result of the Deregulation Bill and monitor impact of any other statutory changes.
Management	Ensure effective procedures to keep volunteers safe as the volunteering groups become more self-sufficient.
Management	Ensure bridges and other major structures are inspected and works needed are prioritised and completed.
Management	Review of promoted routes to prioritise and inspect key routes and formalise any permissive routes.
Management	Reduce blockages to Rights of Way, including cross path issues and vegetation overgrowth.
Communication	Better mapping and signage of Rights of Way across Country Parks and sites.
Communication	Show route closures and changes to routes on Shropshire’s Great Outdoors website.
Communication	Communicate with neighbouring Authorities to ensure common approaches where appropriate.
Partnership	Work more closely with partners to maximise available budgets, share skills and develop joint approaches.
Policy	Advise Defra on possible changes to the Common Agricultural Policy with regard to countryside access and green space provision.
Policy	Work with Defra to prioritise access as part of any new agricultural schemes, working with Outdoor Partnerships to prioritise routes, encouraging landowners and users to work together to identify opportunities that ensure new access adds constructively to the network.
Policy	Develop new policies on Planning, Drones and Neighbourhood Disputes involving Rights of Way.

<i>Governance</i>	Continue the development of the new Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board, ensuring better advice to the Council and other agencies and stronger links with other agendas, such as community, health and the local economy.
<i>Research</i>	Continue to conduct the BVPI to assess the accessibility of the Rights of Way network and the annual User Survey and find ways to better monitor usage of promoted routes, Country Parks and sites.
<i>Funding</i>	Secure funding for bridge inspections and necessary capital improvements to bridges and major infrastructure.
<i>Funding</i>	Continue to develop income generation, including business sponsorship and crowd funding, and secure other sources of funding to help sustain developments in the future.

Outcomes:

- Outdoor assets are well managed and meet statutory requirements.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- BVPI- Best Value Performance Indicator on the accessibility of Rights of Way
- Accident monitoring
- Monitoring of closures and complaints
- Assessment of designated sites e.g. SSSI status
- Enhanced monitoring of key species and habitats and reference to Shropshire and National Biodiversity Action Plans / working with partners.
- Inclusion of priorities in other policies and strategies.



Figure 30- New steps at Gough's Coppice

"Many of you will be interested to know that great improvements have been made to the footpaths through Gough's Coppice. The top stile has been replaced with a gate and a walkway has been created along the top of the woods where before there was a sloped, very boggy section. There is also a small bridge over a difficult dip on one of the paths. Gough's Coppice is mainly used by the lower level groups, but it is a lovely wood especially at bluebell time."

Walks leader

20.0 Risk management

The risks as stated here are those that we are able to identify currently. This strategy has been written at a time when the world is changing; Public Sector austerity, rising adult social care bills and uncertainties over the impact of coming out of the European Union mean that the risks associated with the delivery of the strategy may change considerably over the 10 year period. They will be updated as part of the annual action plan review.

<i>Description of risk</i>	<i>Likelihood</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Risk Rating</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
<i>Continued reduction in Public Sector funding results in statutory duties and Health and Safety standards not being met.</i>	3	3	High	Better promotion of benefits to Public Health and the local economy, especially to financial decision makers. Income generation will be pursued to subsidise Public funding where possible.	Ongoing
<i>Being unable to secure health sector funding to develop preventative and therapeutic health initiatives in the outdoors.</i>	3	2	High	More stringent evaluation of the benefits of these initiatives, working with health sector representatives to promote benefits.	2018/19
<i>Off-road access and greenspace not being prioritised in new developments.</i>	2	3	High	Work closely with Shropshire Council Planning Policy and Development Management to develop better master-planning approach and raise awareness of impact of greenspace and off-road access on health and wellbeing and the economy.	2018/19
<i>Access and greenspace not prioritised through changes to agricultural support following the UK withdrawal from the European Union.</i>	1	3	Medium	Proactive involvement with decision makers through the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board and partner representatives.	2018
<i>Damage to Rights of Way and Heritage Sites by unauthorised use.</i>	2	2	Medium	Better partnership working with user groups. Proactive 'policing' of problem areas.	Ongoing
<i>Environmental and Natural Capital benefits being lost through economic development.</i>	2	2	Medium	Support the Marches Local Nature Partnership joint-working approach with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership.	Ongoing
<i>Poor uptake by new volunteers resulting in reduced engagement with local communities.</i>	2	2	Medium	Co-ordination of volunteering opportunities between partners. Development of micro-volunteering.	Ongoing
<i>Insufficient sources of external funding and more competition to secure these.</i>	3	2	Medium	Better partnership working on external funding bids.	Ongoing



<i>Anti-social behaviour by users of the Rights of Way network alienates landowners and impact farming businesses.</i>	1	2	Low	User campaign to highlight responsible behaviour and raise awareness of issues.	2018/19
<i>Lack of compliance by landowners to keep Rights of Way open and accessible.</i>	1	2	Low	Continue with ploughing and cropping campaign to raise awareness of the issues with landowners. Enforcement of responsibilities with repeat offenders.	Ongoing

21.0 Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnership Policies

Shropshire Council has a series of policies that relate to the outdoor assets, which have been revised and updated as part of the development of this strategy. They can be found in appendix 5. The list of policies is shown below:

1. Rights of Way prioritisation of enforcement and maintenance
2. Easier access
3. Rights of Way Enforcement
4. Ploughing and Cropping on Rights of Way
5. Surfacing of Rights of Way
6. Motorised vehicles on Byways Open to All Traffic
7. Statutory provision for stiles and gates
8. Definitive Map and Statement Modification Orders
9. Public Path Orders
10. Planning and Public Rights of Way
11. Countryside Parks & Heritage Sites Management
12. Private and Public Rights of Way
13. Drones and Model Aircraft

22.0 Statutory duties

There are significant statutory duties associated with Public Rights of Way and greenspace, as shown in appendix 6. The Rights of Way form part of the Highways network, as described in the Highways Act 1980 and Open Access Land features in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Whilst there is no statutory responsibility for Local Authorities to provide greenspace, once the sites are in Local Authority ownership and management, there are significant legal responsibilities, many of which apply to other landowners and managers.





23.0 Action Plan

Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-28 is a 10 year strategy, which will be reviewed after five years. With so much change likely over the next few years, it is difficult to apply measurable targets for the entire period, so there is a rolling three year Action Plan. This clearly identifies measurable activity that is planned over the next three years across the partners, which will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Some of the key new actions in the next three years include:

- Creation of new Supplementary Planning Guidance to enhance the quality, quantity and connectivity of greenspace in new developments
- New family cycling hub at Dudmaston Estate, extension of visitor facilities at Severn Valley Country Park and development of Swan Hill Depot on The Mere
- Montgomery Canal Landscape Partnership Scheme delivery
- Develop better co-ordination of outdoor volunteering opportunities between partners
- Develop Shropshire's Great Outdoors website to include partner sites and promote fully-gated routes
- Continue the campaign to encourage landowners to clear Rights of Way following ploughing and cropping
- Improved biodiversity monitoring
- Development of Healthy Outdoors for Schools
- Inspection and improvements to Rights of Way bridges and other major infrastructure
- Remediation of Furbers site at Whixall Fenn
- Development of the canal in Market Drayton as an economic asset for the town.
- Launch of the Shropshire Way Main Route in the north
- User responsibilities awareness campaign
- Development of Healthy Outdoors for Schools
- Walking and multi-user infrastructure improvements through the Local Transport Plan
- Implementing changes to the Local Plan to increase greenspace and non-motorised access in areas of most need and to protect what we already have
- Review of performance indicators and user survey
- Securing new funding for Shropshire Wild Teams and Walking for Health
- Better provision of accessible natural greenspace and walking, riding and cycling routes on and around new developments through revision of the Local Plan
- Feasibility studies into the development of new destination Country Parks

The Action Plan for the delivery of this strategy can be seen in appendix 7.





24.0 Conclusion

We all know that being in the Great Outdoors is good for us. Research shows that physical activity can reduce the risk of major diseases by up to 50% and lower the risk of early death by up to 30%. Couple this with the innate need for humans to interact with nature and we also see significant improvements to our mental health and wellbeing. Whilst this is recognised in national research, there is much we could do by working with health professionals locally to increase the benefits of outdoor activity for those most in need. Working holistically, through initiatives such as Social Prescribing, we can help reduce social care bills and support more people to be independent in their homes. Existing initiatives such as Walking for Health and Wild Teams are successful and should be prioritised.

Evidence suggests that regular access to and learning in the outdoors can improve behaviour and educational attainment in children and, whilst some organisations are already providing opportunities for schools, there is more we can do, including encouraging families to access our sites more often, encouraging the Daily Mile approach in schools and developing school grounds.

Shropshire's Great Outdoors is important to the visitor economy (contributing £100-115 million), supports 2,200 jobs and encourages people and businesses to move into the area. We can build on this by, for example, improving visitor facilities, organising more challenge events, prioritising routes and sites that give a high quality experience and working more closely together as owners and managers of outdoor assets to promote the area. This needs to be recognised and prioritised by policy makers and Town and Parish Councils.

It also supports the natural capital of the county; providing important conservation habitats, helping conserve wildlife and making our cultural heritage accessible to everyone. We need to protect those sites of special interest and provide recreational greenspace to take the pressure off sites where high visitor numbers are threatening natural and cultural heritage.

Visitor numbers are increasing nationally but more so in Shropshire and many visitors to the county are coming here to enjoy the countryside. Alongside this, we are increasingly seeing irresponsible use by a minority of users and a focused campaign to help increase understanding of the Countryside Code and legal use of the Rights of Way network is planned. We also plan to focus on keeping Rights of Way open across cropped land, using enforcement measures where absolutely necessary.

For such a beautiful and rural county, there are surprising extensive parts of the county that have insufficient access to the natural environment, whether through lack of open space or a poor Rights of Way network, and in many areas those who are least likely to access the outdoors (the unemployed, disabled, over 65s and disadvantaged) have little greenspace on their doorstep. This is most obvious in the north and east of the county but also applies to market towns across the area.

The planned growth in the population of Shropshire (9%) will put increasing pressure on the Rights of Way and sites for which current Public Sector resources are insufficient. Routes and sites will need to be prioritised to try and address this.

We need to prioritise the development of the Rights of Way network in the north and east of the county to address anomalies and identify new routes, possibly through changes in agricultural support following our exit from the EU. We hope to work with landowners to identify those routes that would really increase access





to the network, focusing on multi-user routes where possible. We also need to increase public awareness of the range of sites available to take pressure off the ‘honey-pot’ sites.

We have the opportunity to design nature and outdoor activity into new developments and improvements to our urban environments at little or no extra cost, through the revision of the Local Plan and the development of the Local Transport Plan, working with developers to adopt a planned approach to the provision of greenspace and non-motorised access.

Even in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where there is an extensive Rights of Way network and significant open space, much of this is only accessible to those who are fit. As a result, we need to continue to focus on increasing the number of all-ability routes near to centres of population and/or that are accessible by public transport.

New destination Country Parks near north Shrewsbury, Whitchurch and Albrighton, for example, would help address the proven lack of greenspace in these areas. Whilst it is not clear at this stage how the acquisition of land would be funded, setting the aspiration will hopefully bring forward sites to be considered and made available as and when funding is identified. If they are of sufficient scale, they could be self-sustaining through visitor facilities and car parking charges.

Volunteering is increasingly important to maintain and improve our outdoor assets, especially where increased need does not coincide with increased funding and the reduction in Public Sector funding puts increasing pressure on maintaining the quality of these assets. Volunteering also offers individuals an enjoyable and meaningful way to increase their health and wellbeing.

The new Agriculture Bill being developed by Defra will see the most significant changes in a generation and present the opportunity for some fresh thinking about public access and enjoyment of the outdoors. All partners need to be actively involved in this process to maximise benefits.

The provision of accessible outdoor assets is the responsibility of a range of partners, who are working towards common aims, as described in this document. By working more closely together, within Shropshire and with organisations in neighbouring counties, we can make better use of the funding available, develop projects across sites and better promote volunteering, events and other opportunities to be active outdoors.

In the current financial climate and with the changes likely in the wake of leaving the European Union, activity to deliver this strategy needs to be carefully prioritised and realistic, with the flexibility to adapt quickly to new opportunities. We will do this by using a rolling three year action plan, which is updated annually and by implementing the revised policies included in appendix 5. The action plan will focus on realistic goals, where funding has already been identified, and on a few aspirational activities, where funding has still to be found.

The strategy will be evaluated and updated after the first five years.

Shropshire’s Great Outdoors contributes to the economic, health, environmental, community and cultural wellbeing of Shropshire. By the end of 2028, we want to ensure that people will be happier, healthier and more prosperous by being better connected to Shropshire’s Great Outdoors through safe and cherished publically accessible outdoor assets.





25.0 Glossary

Term	Definition
<i>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</i>	An area of countryside in England, Wales or Northern Ireland which has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value. Areas are designated in recognition of their national importance, by the relevant public body: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, or the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoy levels of protection from development similar to those of UK national parks, but unlike with national parks the responsible bodies do not have their own planning powers. They also differ from national parks in their more limited opportunities for extensive outdoor recreation.
<i>Augmented Reality</i>	The integration of digital information with the user's environment in real time. Unlike virtual reality, which creates a totally artificial environment, augmented reality uses the existing environment and overlays new information on top of it.
<i>Common Agricultural Policy</i>	A system of subsidies and support programmes for agriculture operated by the European Union. This will be changed once we leave the EU.
<i>Definitive Map and Statement</i>	A legal record of the public's Rights of Way in one of four categories (footpath, bridleway, restricted byway or byway open to all traffic). If a way is shown on the map, then that is legal, or conclusive, evidence that the public had those rights along the way at the relevant date of the map (and has them still, unless there has been a legally authorised change). The definitive map is accompanied by a statement which describes each Right of Way in greater or lesser detail. If the statement defines the position or width of a right of way shown on the map, then that information is conclusive evidence of the position or width of the public's right of way at the relevant date. Similarly, if the statement contains a record of any limitation or condition attached to the public's rights, then that too is conclusive evidence of the existence of such a limitation or condition at the relevant date.
<i>Discover Shropshire</i>	A new group of professionals aiming to develop a co-ordinated approach to the development of the visitor economy in regard to natural and cultural heritage.
<i>Gross Value Added (GVA)</i>	A measure of the contribution to an economy of an individual producer, industry, sector or region.
<i>Heritage at Risk Register</i>	A programme managed by Historic England that identifies those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.
<i>Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)</i>	Sets out the current and future health and care needs of local populations to inform and guide the planning and commissioning (buying) of health, well-being and social care services within a local authority area.
<i>Local Enterprise Partnerships</i>	Voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2011 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area. They carry out some of the functions previously carried out by the regional development agencies, which were abolished in March 2012.
<i>Local Nature Partnership</i>	Voluntary partnerships of local authority, business, and public and voluntary sector representatives set up help their local area to manage the natural environment as a system and to embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.





<i>Local Partnership Scheme</i>	Heritage Lottery funded projects that deliver a range of improvements to natural and cultural heritage in a local area, for the benefit of people, heritage and wildlife.
<i>Local Plan</i>	Sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. Adopted local plans provide the framework for development across England.
<i>Micro-volunteering</i>	A term to describe a volunteer, or team of volunteers, completing small tasks that make up a larger project. These tasks often benefit a research, charitable, or non-governmental organization. It differs from normal volunteerism as the tasks take only minutes to a few hours, and the volunteer does not make a long-term commitment.
<i>Open Access Land</i>	Areas of land that have been designated as accessible on foot without having to stick to designated paths. Access land includes mountains, moors, heaths and downs that are privately owned. It also includes common land registered with the local council.
<i>Parish Paths Partnerships</i>	Parish Paths Partnerships are groups of volunteers who come together to help maintain the Rights of Way network in their local area.
<i>Place Plans</i>	Local plans that provide the basis for negotiations with developers in providing these local infrastructure needs. There are 18 Place Plan areas in Shropshire.
<i>Public Rights of Way</i>	Legally designated routes, as defined on the Definitive Map, that are open to the public: Footpaths - for walking, running, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs Bridleways - for walking, horse riding, bicycles, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs Restricted byways - for any transport without a motor and mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs Byways open to all traffic - for any kind of transport, including cars (but they're mainly used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders)
<i>Ramsar</i>	Internationally protected wetland sites. The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties". Under the "three pillars" of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to: •work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; •designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management; •cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.
<i>Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)</i>	Site designated by locally developed criteria, which are currently the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The designation of RIGS is one way of recognising and protecting important Earth science and landscape features for future generations to enjoy.
<i>Socio-economic groups</i>	A method of dividing the population into different groupings, based on the occupation of the head of the household, for the purpose of drawing comparisons across a wide range of people - it is used to see how people in differing socio-economic situations react to the same stimuli. The groups are most often defined as follows:-





	A- Higher managerial, administrative, professional e.g. chief executive, senior civil servant, surgeon B - Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional e.g. bank manager, teacher C1- Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial e.g. shop floor supervisor, bank clerk, sales person C2 - Skilled manual workers e.g. electrician, carpenter D- Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers e.g. assembly line worker, refuse collector, messenger E - Casual labourers, pensioners, unemployed e.g. pensioners without private pensions and anyone living on basic benefits
<i>Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)</i>	Sites designated by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the recommendation of Historic England as nationally important archaeological sites.
<i>Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board</i>	A voluntary group, representing landowners, users and other interested parties who advise Shropshire Council and other agencies on key priorities for outdoor recreation and countryside access. It acts as the Local Access Forum for Shropshire; a Statutory Advisory Committee for Shropshire Council, but broadens the role to cover a wider remit in response to current priorities. The current Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 were published by the Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and came into force on the 19 March 2007.
<i>Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)</i>	Sites designated by Natural England on public or private land that should be legally protected for wildlife or geology.
<i>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</i>	Strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of the Habitats Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive (as amended). The listed habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds).
<i>Unclassified County Road (UCR)</i>	Local roads intended for local traffic that do not have a formal highway classification. Unsurfaced UCRs, which appear to be part of the Rights of Way network are actually included in the highways network.
<i>Walkers Are Welcome</i>	A U.K. wide, community led network of accredited towns whose purpose is to develop and promote walking in areas with something different to offer.

