

All Around The Wrekin



Introduction

The Wrekin is a Shropshire icon. But when part of it came on the market in 2004 it became clear how little is known about the hill and that some areas had slid into a degraded state. However, the public appeal for funds showed it is dear to people's hearts.

How can we harness the power of the Wrekin and use it to encourage local residents and visitors to value, respect and use their greenspace?

Project partners

Telford and Wrekin Borough Council • Wellington Town Council
Wellington Town Council • Little Wenlock Parish Council
Wellington LA21 • Shropshire Hills AONB • All Friends Round The Wrekin

Objectives

- ◆ To develop a plan for conservation, access and promotion of The Wrekin and the surrounding area
- ◆ To involve communities in caring for the local landscape
- ◆ To encourage better understanding and use of the Telford Green Network, of which The Wrekin is the focal point
- ◆ To maximise the economic and social benefit of visitors to land around The Wrekin

Description

The Wrekin and surrounding land provide a superb opportunity for informal countryside recreation. Unfortunately, until recently no one had data on how it was used or by whom. During 2005 the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) has undertaken a visitor survey at The Wrekin. This shows that over 70% of visitors are from Telford and most of the remainder are from no further afield than Wolverhampton.

An electronic counter has also been fitted at the Halfway House. The best current estimate is that The Wrekin attracts upwards of 80 000 visits annually.



Telford's "green gym"

One of the interesting features of the visitor survey is the large number of people overtly using The Wrekin for health and fitness. The Wrekin provides an ideal challenge- it's a modest (but invigorating) climb, good underfoot, perceived to be safe and the summit provides a goal that offers the reward of a superb view.

Project design

While The Wrekin is a splendid destination in its own right, it is equally important to consider how people reach their destination and where they are inspired to go next. Immediately around The Wrekin is some interesting and accessible countryside – The Ercall, Limekiln Wood and Loamhole Dingle leading to the Ironbridge Gorge woodlands. These sites form part of Telford's Green Network – a community facility envied by many other towns.

Project implementation

- ◆ The money was raised by the public appeal to buy The Wrekin; funding has been secured from Heritage Lottery Fund to employ a project officer to produce a Conservation Plan.
- ◆ A Conservation Plan is quite wide-ranging and includes a strategy for conservation of landscape, habitats, species and archaeological features; improvements to public access; improvements to "intellectual access" though better provision of information and interpretation; plus promotion and marketing of the area.
- ◆ The projects officer's role will be to work with existing partners, other community organisations, private land owners and interested individuals.
- ◆ The route to producing the plan will be through active consultation and



involvement and through linking it to exiting strategic work such as Parish Plans and Local Development Frameworks. This process is expected to take two years.

- ◆ An additional role will be for the project officer to engage people to make better use of their local countryside. This will particularly focus on the western fringe of Telford where significant new development is planned. This development will benefit from direct links to The Wrekin, so it is crucial that residents are encouraged to use The Wrekin actively and responsibly. Existing problems are found in poor parking and fly tipping – the Conservation Plan will help to address these issues

should indicate a range of actions to make the most of The Wrekin. The production of the plan should not stop short-term actions that support the plan. An example of this is working with the owner of the Halfway House to develop his café business and help install information and interpretation about the hill.

The plan will only be delivered fully if local people are actively on board. It will be a crucial task of the project officer to engage and involve people in the project, form allowing them to have their say, to developing and supporting active voluntary roles.

Achievements and outputs

The outputs of this project are relatively modest. The key output is to produce the Conservation Plan that can be adopted or signed up to by all partners and interested groups. The plan



Future management and sustainability

This project is the start of a process. The conservation of any landscape is a long-term process that needs to carry on for generations. This is the opportunity to formally develop roles for the wider community, beyond those that chance to own land.

Wider application of the project

This project is about how society values and uses its high green space. In Telford, where we have significant experience of standing up for its Green Network, the pattern is that articulate middle class communities will strongly resist the erosion of their local environment. Communities already suffering disadvantages will not speak up. And so begins a vicious cycle. The Wrekin is a great leveller – used and enjoyed by everyone. It gives us the opportunity to try out new ideas with new people to explore the full social, economic and environmental benefits of Telford's Green Network.

This project delivers against the following themes of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework:

Woodland Cover	✓
The Woodland & Forestry industry	
Wood Energy	
Recycling	
Recreation & Tourism	✓
Health & Wellbeing	✓
Education, Learning & Skills	
Fostering Social Inclusion	✓
Enhancing Biodiversity	✓
Natural & Cultural Environmental benefits	✓
Supporting the Regeneration of the West Midlands	✓

Further information

Shropshire Wildlife Trust
193 Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6AH
Tel: 01743 284280
www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Further reading

Visitors Survey Report, available from the Shropshire Wildlife Trust

