



A Development Plan for Walking, Cycling and Outdoor Activities in Shropshire

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Prepared for:

Shropshire Council, Culture, Leisure & Tourism

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This Development Plan was commissioned by Shropshire Council, funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. through the Great Outdoors initiative, to show how walking, cycling and other outdoor activities can strengthen the visitor economy. It draws on national tourism trends, local stakeholder insights and targeted visitor research to evaluate current provision and highlight priority areas for development. The Plan supports local aims to foster healthier lifestyles, widen access to nature and grow Shropshire's visitor economy through low impact, experience rich offers.

Overview of Shropshire's current outdoor activity offer

In 2024 Shropshire received 10.2 million visits, of these 86% were day trippers. However, the 14 % who stayed overnight accounted for half of all visitors spend and they stayed on average 3.2 nights each. Most spending was on food and drink, with shopping next. Increasingly people want to take nature trips that help protect the environment.

Walking is Shropshire's main outdoor activity, with several long-distance trails including the Shropshire Way, Offa's Dyke Path and the Severn Way. Clearer signage, easier access, better public transport and short themed walks would make the network stronger.

Cycling is increasing on the Shropshire Cycle Way, market town loops and mountain-bike tracks in the Shropshire Hills. Horse riders use long bridleways such as the Jack Mytton Way and the Humphrey Kynaston route.

Rivers, canals and meres provide locations for canoeing, kayaking and wild swimming. There is a clear opportunity for the River Severn to become a leading water trail.

Walking festivals and trail runs are common, but there are few cycling or water events. Linking hotels and other places to stay with activity hubs and themed routes could attract visitors to stay longer and help local businesses.

Full details of Shropshire's outdoor activity offer and market opportunity are available in *Annex 1: Situational Analysis*.

Current visitor market

Most visitors to Shropshire are older adults with good incomes who travel from the West Midlands. They come mainly to walk and to enjoy fresh air, quiet countryside and scenic views. Many stay only for the day; those who stay two or three nights often book Airbnb or mid-range hotels. They focus on cafés, pubs and restaurants when planning their trip, yet awareness of the Shropshire Great Outdoors website is low. Their main concerns are for clearer signage, better kept paths and improved parking.

An online panel survey of visitors and non-visitors interested in outdoor activities gathered insights into demographics, behaviour, motivations and trip preferences. The findings are presented in *Annex 2: Visitor and Non-Visitor Survey*.

Current Position

Strengths

**Natural Assets and biodiversity**
Natural Assets and biodiversity . Peat Bogs, River Valleys, Woodlands, Heathlands

**Trail and Route Infrastructure**
Shropshire Way, Offa's Dyke Path, Severn Way

**Conservation and Nature Recovery**
Stepping Stones, Marches Mosses Initiative

**Cultural and Heritage Assets**
Ludlow Castle, Ironbridge, Shropshire museum

**Community Involvement**
Local walking, cycling and conservation groups

Challenges

**Trail routes and Infrastructure Gaps**
Infrastructure inconsistencies

**Fragmented Visitor Information**
No single digital platform that consolidates all touristic information

**Water Activity Constraints**
Lack of designated launch points, equipment hire and signage

**Inconsistent Food and Beverage Offer**
Limited availability of cafes, pubs, and food outlets along trails


**Lack of Accessible Green Space**
Limited number of well-maintained and well-promoted sites

**Limited Information Social Prescribing**
Few mapped and maintained trails for individuals with mobility challenges

**Over Reliance on Volunteer Maintenance**
Lack of funding for the maintenance of trails and public rights of way.

**Lack of Co-ordinated Funding**
Funding streams are limited and fragmented.

Opportunities

**Strengthen Shropshire's outdoor activity offer**

**Put restoration and sustainability at the centre of every new project**

**Conservation and Nature Recovery**

**Protect carbon stores and biodiversity and prepare the landscape for climate change**

- Repair worn paths
- Re-wett peatlands
- Improve river quality
- Stabilise eroded heritage sites

The Way Forward

To achieve this aspiration and align with Shropshire's wider strategic goals, four strategic initiatives are recommended.

These initiatives will be underpinned by sustainable and nature restoration principles and supported by 8 new Development Opportunities and 7 ongoing Partner Projects that are detailed in *Annex 3*. The Development Opportunities are listed in the graphic below.



INTRODUCTION

This Development Plan was commissioned by Shropshire Council through the Great Outdoors initiative to guide how walking, cycling and outdoor activities can support the visitor economy in Shropshire. The report and was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

It draws on national tourism trends, local stakeholder insights, and targeted visitor research to assess current provision and identify priority areas for development. It also reflects local ambitions to support healthier lifestyles, encourage more inclusive access to nature, and strengthen Shropshire's visitor economy through low-impact, experience-rich offers.

The strategic initiatives and development opportunities outlined in this document directly support the Great Outdoors objectives with a focus on:

- Encouraging physical activity and wellbeing
- Improving access and infrastructure
- Embracing experiential and seasonal tourism
- Enhancing digital visibility and marketing
- Reaching new audiences while supporting local participation.

This Development Plan presents four strategic initiatives. Sustainable and regenerative development principles underpin each of these initiatives. To facilitate their delivery, each strategic initiative has priority actions which are embedded in new and existing development opportunities.

This Development Plan report is accompanied by three Annex documents:

Annex 1: Situational Analysis - provides the detailed research and analysis

Annex 2: Visitor and Non-Visitor Survey - provides the survey analysis and questionnaire

Annex 3: Development Opportunities - provides the templates for 8 new development opportunities and 7 existing partner projects.

Together, these strategic initiatives and development opportunities aim to help Shropshire develop a more connected, inclusive, and resilient outdoor tourism offer, which benefits both residents and visitors.

1. STRATEGIC AND MARKET CONTEXT

1.1 Strategic Priorities

Shropshire is a mainly rural county on the Welsh border next to Cheshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. The unitary district of Telford and Wrekin is outside the study area. Shrewsbury is the county town, and the Shropshire Hills National Landscape shapes the south of the county.

Local and regional plans see walking, cycling and wider outdoor recreation as drivers of economic growth, public health and stronger communities.

The priorities behind these strategies fall into six themes:

- Active Travel and Transport Improvements
- Economic Growth through Outdoor Tourism
- Heritage and Cultural Integration
- Health and Wellbeing Benefits
- Community Engagement and Accessibility
- Inclusivity and Access for All

By investing in these themes, Shropshire can advance its wider sustainability goals. Every new initiative should follow clear and measurable sustainability standards.

1.2 Residents, Visitors and Access Overview

Shropshire's population is increasing slowly and is getting older, which means every new outdoor offer must be easy to reach, inclusive and age friendly. About four million potential day and short break visitors live within a two-hour drive of Shrewsbury, giving the county a large catchment market when it provides clear reasons to visit.

In 2024, Shropshire welcomed 10.2 million visitors. Day trippers made up 86% of trips, yet the 14% who stayed overnight generated half of all visitor spending and stayed for an average of 3.2 nights. The county aims to move the mix toward 80% day visitors and 20% staying visitors. Spending is led by food and drink, followed by shopping.

With Shrewsbury as the main rail hub, there are 19 National Rail stations across the county served by West Midlands Railway and Transport for Wales, including the Heart of Wales Line where each train carries twelve bicycles. The county road network of A and B roads is quieter than roads in busier destinations such as the Lake District, so it is popular with leisure cyclists. Rural buses are limited, but the Shropshire Hills seasonal weekend shuttle bus and the county Bus Service Improvement Plan help visitors reach trailheads without a car.

1.3 Domestic Tourism

The cost-of-living crisis has reshaped domestic travel patterns, with many prioritising overseas summer holidays over UK short breaks. However, demand for authentic, nature-based, and sustainable experiences is growing, offering strong opportunities for destinations like Shropshire.

Tourism trends that are driving the domestic visitor market include:

- *Health and wellbeing* – Walking and cycling support physical and mental health and are easy for all ages. Younger adults embrace the Joy of Missing Out and look for digital detox in nature.
- *Experiential tourism* – Visitors want genuine connection with local people and places, making Shropshire's landscape and heritage assets central to the offer.
- *Sustainability and ecotourism* – Travellers expect visible green management, from charging points to recycling and low impact practices.
- *Inclusivity* – Products should be accessible to people with differing abilities, ages and needs.
- *Technology* – Apps for route planning, navigation and on demand information enhance outdoor experiences.
- *Family travel* – Parents value shared learning and time together, so family friendly outdoor activities are a strong opportunity.

The full Situational Analysis evidence base is presented in Annex 1.

2. SHROPSHIRE'S ACTIVITY OFFER

2.1 Introduction

The product assessment conducted for this study was informed by desk research, stakeholder engagement and consultation workshops. It evaluates the current outdoor activity offer across walking, cycling, horse riding, water-based recreation, birdwatching, cultural sites, and other related tourism services. Information on established routes was gathered from the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website and supplemented by stakeholder insights.

To support spatial analysis, an Outdoor Activities Interactive Map was created using Google My Maps. This visual tool helped assess the geographic distribution of outdoor activities across the county, highlighting clusters, gaps and opportunities for improved connectivity. A link to the map is provided in the Annex 1, together with the full product assessment.

2.2 Outdoor Activities

2.2.1 Walking Routes

Shropshire benefits from a diverse walking offer with over 5600km of public rights of way, the 1/3 largest network in the country, underpinned by a network of well-established routes. These routes showcase the county's scenic landscapes, biodiversity and heritage assets, making walking a central activity for both residents and visitors.

Walking routes are well distributed across Shropshire, with notable concentrations in the Shropshire Hills and around some of the market towns. Many trails pass through areas of natural beauty and heritage value, connecting market towns, rivers and cultural landmarks. Locations such as Shrewsbury, Church Stretton, Ironbridge and Ludlow serve as access points to nearby trails that link outdoor recreation with historic and archaeological sites.

Routes such as the Shropshire Way, Offa's Dyke Path, and Severn Way stand out as strategic assets due to their geographical reach, existing maintenance, and visitor recognition. These long-distance trails form the backbone of the county's walking network and offer opportunities for further development, promotion, and integration with circular trails and visitor experiences. **The Shropshire Way** is particularly valuable as it circles the county in a figure of 8, with Shrewsbury at its centre.

There is clear potential to strengthen this offer by improving waymarking, accessibility, and public transport links, particularly in areas where infrastructure is inconsistent, or signage is lacking.

Circular routes present a key opportunity to feed into and articulate long-distance trails, increasing flexibility and encouraging exploration of less-visited areas. They also offer scope to develop themed walks such as those focused on history, food and drink, or

wellness, helping to attract diverse audiences and spread visitor impact more evenly across the county.

*To maximise the value of this network, **priority actions** include better promotion supported by enhancing trail continuity, signage and connectivity with towns and transport nodes. Strengthening infrastructure and accessibility will help ensure the walking offer remains inclusive and competitive, while protecting Shropshire's landscapes through well-managed visitor flows.*

2.2.2 Cycling Routes

Cycling routes are distributed across Shropshire, with notable clusters around Ludlow, North Shropshire, and the Shropshire Hills. Routes range from quiet lanes and off-road trails to shared-use roads and paths.

Shropshire has a strong cycling offer that appeals to leisure and road cyclists alike, benefiting from picturesque landscapes and well-established rural networks. The **Shropshire Cycle Way**, which circles the country, and a series of town-based routes, such as those from Church Stretton, Cleobury Mortimer, and Bishop's Castle are well aligned with tourism experiences and outdoor recreation.

However, the rapid growth of mountain biking across the county, particularly in the Shropshire Hills, has created new challenges. While it highlights growing demand, this growth has outpaced infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, leading to unregulated trail use and potential conflicts with landowners and other users. Eastridge Woods is one such example, where stakeholder consultations are underway to resolve access and usage concerns.

Other site-specific challenges include inconsistent signage, limited bike hire and repair facilities and pressure points such as Bucknell, where demand for mountain bike trails is rising but infrastructure is lacking.

***Priority actions** include capitalising on the circular Shropshire Cycle Way, expanding cycle-friendly services including bike hire for visitors, developing clear trail management strategies, strengthening connectivity to public transport to support car-free cycling tourism and working with the mountain bike community to develop sustainable, well managed use.*

2.2.3 Horse Riding Routes

Horse riding routes are present across much of Shropshire, with stronger concentrations around Ludlow, Shrewsbury, and the Shropshire Hills. While key areas in the south offer well-established trails, provision in the north of the county is notably more limited. Some routes are relatively well connected, but infrastructure quality, signage, and rider-friendly facilities vary considerably between locations.

Shropshire has a diverse network of bridleways and equestrian trails that showcase the county's scenic landscapes and rural character. The availability of heritage-rich routes such as the **Jack Mytton Way** provides a strong foundation for leisure horse riding and

equestrian tourism, particularly in the south. There has also been a recent development of the FiPL Path Finder Project which has developed new routes in the Shropshire Hills, these new routes should be now supported with greater promotion.

Opportunities exist to improve connectivity between isolated bridleway segments and integrate horse riding more closely with the wider outdoor activity offer. There is potential to promote multi-use trails and develop equestrian-friendly amenities such as parking, mounting blocks, and overnight accommodation, especially in underrepresented areas. Enhancing digital and on-site trail information can also help attract new audiences and support rider safety and confidence.

Strategically, the Jack Mytton Way and the Humphrey Kynnaston stand out as key long-distance routes. These trails are established, scenic, and offer strong potential for development and promotion as part of Shropshire's wider outdoor recreation offer.

Challenges include the uneven distribution of trails, and inconsistent signage and facilities across the network. In some areas, lack of infrastructure makes circular or long-distance rides difficult to plan.

***Priority actions** include addressing gaps in trail continuity, improving wayfinding and developing equestrian infrastructure to support access and visitor experiences across the county. Also, evaluating whether promoting an evocative high profile riding route, e.g. the Jack Mytton Way, could elevate Shropshire as a horse-riding destination.*

2.2.4 Water Sports

Water-based activity in Shropshire is largely concentrated in the north and east of the county, particularly around **Ellesmere**, the canal network, **the River Severn** and several local reservoirs and meres. Shropshire benefits from a variety of natural water bodies that support activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and wild swimming. Sites such as Ellesmere and sections of the River Severn already attract visitors and are supported by local recreation groups, informal access points, and proximity to scenic landscapes.

There is clear potential to expand multi-activity opportunities, linking water sports with walking and cycling routes, and nature-based tourism. Some existing launch points already connect well with trails and accommodation, offering a strong base for further development. Improved visibility, signage, and digital resources could further support visitor navigation and confidence.

The iconic River Severn traverses Shropshire from the west to south east. The longest stretch of the UK's longest river has the potential to be promoted as a signature route for Shropshire's water-based activities.

However, provision remains inconsistent, with many sites lacking formal infrastructure, designated access points, or facilities such as parking, toilets, and safety signage. Additionally, some locations remain disconnected from the broader outdoor network, limiting their appeal to casual or inexperienced users.

Priority actions include mapping launch sites, improving basic infrastructure, promoting responsible use through information and community engagement, and assessing potential of the River Severn to be a signature water activities route.

2.2.5 Birdwatching

Birdwatching sites are well distributed across Shropshire's wetlands, woodlands, and nature reserves, with concentrations around Venus Pool, Severn Valley, and Haughmond Hill. These sites support diverse habitats and offer access to seasonal species in scenic landscapes, contributing to wildlife engagement opportunities across the county.

Shropshire's varied habitats provide strong year-round appeal for birdwatchers, with key locations accessible via public footpaths. There is significant potential to improve signage and visibility of birdwatching sites, and to better link them with nearby walking trails and interpretation materials. This would encourage more purposeful nature-based visits and enhance the value of Shropshire's ecological assets.

Priority actions include improving on-site interpretation, strengthening partnerships with local nature reserves, and embedding birdwatching into themed walking experiences could support more inclusive and eco-conscious tourism.

2.2.6 Cultural Experiences

Outdoor-accessible cultural sites, such as stone circles, hill forts, castles and archaeological landmarks, are distributed across Shropshire's landscapes. Locations like Mitchell's Fold, Hoarstones, and Old Oswestry Hill Fort are located near panoramic viewpoints and walking trails, but some remain under-promoted or difficult to access. The county's rich cultural and historical landscape, combined with its numerous market towns, adds depth to outdoor recreation, offering opportunities for immersive, story-driven experiences that bridge nature and heritage.

Priority actions should involve developing themed outdoor activity routes that link these cultural sites. This would enhance Shropshire's appeal to wider leisure audiences particularly if interpretation, access, and wayfinding are improved.

2.2.7 Events

Shropshire hosts a strong calendar of walking festivals and trail-running races that showcase its natural landscapes and attract both casual walkers and endurance athletes. These events are mainly concentrated in spring and summer, with limited activity during the autumn and winter months. However, there is a clear gap in cycling events, as well as adventure and water-based festivals. While food and cultural festivals are popular, they rarely incorporate outdoor or nature-based elements.

There is a clear opportunity to diversify the events offer and attract new visitor segments:

- Integrating food tourism (e.g. guided food walks, foraging tours) into outdoor experiences could boost engagement and benefit rural businesses.
- Developing family-focused nature events would also broaden appeal.
- Expanding the seasonality of outdoor events could support year-round tourism.

- Strengthening promotion of existing events and creating new events particularly cycling, family, food and off-peak programming, could reach new audiences.
- Providing targeted support for challenge events with integrated support for supporters and family activities and joint promotion.

2.3 Accommodation

2.3.1 Tourism Accommodation Profile

Shropshire offers a wide variety of accommodation for visitors, including both serviced and non-serviced options. These range from hotels, guesthouses, and B&Bs in Shrewsbury and key market towns to boutique-style properties and spa hotels. However, branded serviced accommodation is less prominent.

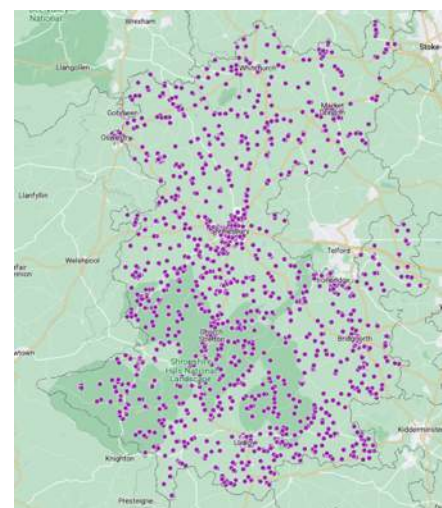
Non-serviced accommodation represents most of the tourism stock by bed spaces (75%), with caravan and camping sites making up over half of this segment (54%). Serviced accommodation accounts for the largest share of staying visitors (42.3%), followed by those staying with friends and relatives (34.6%). Most serviced accommodation providers (86%) are small businesses with 10 rooms or fewer. Although non-serviced accommodation represents only 15% of the visitor volume, it contributes significantly to the local economy, accounting for 49% to the local economy.

Airbnb listings have increased significantly in recent years and are spread across the county. Average occupancy rates are around 60%, suggesting consistent demand for short breaks. Figure 2 gives a visual map of Airbnb distribution around Shropshire, highlighting the potential to engage accommodation providers across the county to create outdoor activity short break packages.

2.3.2 Accommodation Assessment

To understand the properties that already promote outdoor activities, a review was conducted using listings on Visit Shropshire, Visit England, Booking.com and Airbnb identifying a strong concentration of walking- and cycling-friendly accommodation, particularly in the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow (See the full Accommodation Assessment in Annex 1). However, there is limited promotion of stays linked to horse riding or water sports. Currently, only seven providers hold Green Tourism Certification (Bronze, Silver, or Gold).

There is significant potential to better connect accommodation with activity hubs and themed routes, encouraging longer stays and supporting local economies. Expanding and promoting eco-certified accommodation could appeal to environmentally conscious travellers and strengthen Shropshire's nature-based tourism offer.



*Figure 1: Distribution of Airbnb properties in Shropshire, Jan 2025
Source: AirDNA*

Priority actions include enhancing visibility and marketing around accommodation for outdoor activities. By linking providers to specific trails, developing route-based packages, and working with Airbnb owners to enhance their knowledge of outdoor activities in their area. This is key to future development and strengthening the local economy.

3. SHROPSHIRE'S MARKET POSITION

3.1 National Ranking

To better understand Shropshire's position as an outdoor activity destination, national comparisons provide helpful context. A 2021 study by outdoor retailer Millets assessed the top UK counties for adventure, based on the number of walking trails, mountain bike routes, climbing sites, campsites, and natural features such as lakes and peaks.

Shropshire ranked ninth in the UK, with over 1,200 mapped outdoor facilities. The research also highlighted leaders for specific activities:

- Cumbria: Most walking/running and climbing routes
- Aberdeenshire: Most mountain biking and horse-riding trails
- North Yorkshire: Highest number of campsites

Figure 2: Top 10 UK Destinations for Outdoor Activities

Rank	County	Walking/Running Trails	Mountain Bike Trails	Climbing Routes	Canoeing/Kayaking Centres	Outdoor Skiing Slopes	Horse Riding Trails	Campsites	Number of Lakes	Number of P600 Mountains	Total
1	North Yorkshire	884	1037	189	9	0	247	530	13	0	2,909
2	Highland	850	1001	282	0	4	26	99	309	56	2,627
3	Cumbria	1,000	256	500	7	2	21	315	21	4	2,126
4	Aberdeenshire	68	1555	117	0	0	273	44	6	2	2,065
5	Perth and Kinross	842	661	60	0	0	19	47	33	6	1,668
6	Staffordshire	909	255	57	0	0	105	105	8	0	1,439
7	Derbyshire	757	1	332	18	0	1	215	15	0	1,339
8	Scottish Borders	265	761	48	0	0	237		9	1	1,321
9	Shropshire	443	492	39	16	0	115	171	3	0	1,279
10	West Sussex	704	318	14	17	0	63	115	1	0	1,232

Source: [Sustain Health](#) [Millets Research 2021](#) Notably, counties with National Parks (e.g. Cumbria, Highland in Scotland, and North Yorkshire) dominate the top rankings, with over 2,000 recorded activities. However, Shropshire's diversity of landscapes and growing infrastructure, combined with its proximity to the Midlands, position it as a competitive and accessible alternative.

3.2 Digital Visibility

To evaluate how Shropshire's outdoor activities are represented online, search engine visibility, keyword performance, and third-party platform rankings were analysed. The analysis included Google search results, TripAdvisor listings and keyword rankings. The full list in Annex 1).

Shropshire's outdoor experiences are more discoverable via external search engines like Google than within internal searches on platforms such as TripAdvisor, where paid adverts and high engagement skew visibility. Official tourism platforms, particularly Visit Shropshire, tend to underperform in key areas like adventure tourism, water sports, and niche interests.

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors site ranks well for walking, cycling, and general adventure queries. Specialist sites such as Sustrans and Cicerone help amplify cycling and walking content, and user-generated content (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, TripAdvisor reviews) already contributes to the region's online footprint.

There is clear potential to boost the visibility of official platforms by:

- Expanding content on underrepresented themes like water sports, birdwatching, and adventure tourism.
- Increasing use of interactive formats such as videos, visitor testimonials, and curated itineraries.
- Forming partnerships with high-ranking content platforms (e.g. TripAdvisor, Komoot, AllTrails) to boost reach and referral traffic.
- Enhancing promotion of family-oriented activities, which are often overshadowed by accommodation listings.

Current reliance on third-party platforms limits control over messaging. To strengthen Shropshire's digital presence, official websites must invest in strategic SEO, content diversification and stronger cross-platform collaborations.

3.3 Bookable Experiences

A review was undertaken to evaluate the availability and visibility of bookable outdoor experiences in Shropshire across Expedia, Airbnb Experiences, and Tripadvisor.

Findings showed limited listings under "Shropshire" on Expedia and none on Airbnb Experiences, with some results redirecting to Welsh locations. While Tripadvisor's internal search presented few entries, broader Google searches uncovered a wider selection, including canoeing, paddleboarding, guided walks, and horse-riding, often hosted across fragmented channels.

Despite the variety of outdoor experiences available, many are promoted independently via provider websites, social media, or user-generated content on platforms like YouTube and Facebook. Experiences are also dispersed across Komoot, AllTrails, and other niche activity platforms, with inconsistent visibility and categorisation.

Shropshire's current offer of bookable outdoor experiences is underrepresented on centralised platforms. There is significant potential to raise visibility and create a more user-friendly booking environment through improved SEO, platform partnerships, and better indexing under a unified "Shropshire" identity.

Opportunities to improve the digital profile of Shropshire's outdoor activity offer:

- Encourage local operators and experience providers to list outdoor experiences on mainstream platforms such as Expedia, Airbnb Experiences, and Tripadvisor to improve discoverability and increase bookings.
- Shropshire Council and The Great Outdoors team to explore partnerships with high-ranking third-party platforms (e.g. Komoot, AllTrails, Tripadvisor) to consolidate listings under a unified Shropshire identity and strengthen destination branding.
- Destination marketing organisations (e.g. Visit Shropshire) to lead improved SEO strategies for official tourism websites, ensuring outdoor activities are better indexed and appear in top search results for relevant keywords.
- DMOs and project partners to support businesses with content marketing and digital visibility, including guidance on creating engaging listings, user-generated content, and themed itineraries that align with the wider Shropshire offer.
- Align all promotional efforts, of public and private sector stakeholders, around a consistent message and visual identity for Shropshire's outdoor experiences, ensuring coherence across digital platforms, booking channels, and strategic projects.
- Distribute consistent brand messaging that businesses can share.
- Provide training for accommodation and food and beverage suppliers (especially pubs) on outdoor activities near them and how to link to the Great Outdoor website to amplify consistent promotions.

4. VISITOR, NON-VISITOR AND RESIDENT INSIGHTS

In February 2025, an online panel survey was conducted with visitors and non-visitors to Shropshire interested in outdoor activities. The research gathered insights into visitor demographics, behaviours, motivations and trip preferences. Findings were complemented by data from the Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey 2024, providing a fuller picture of how both residents and visitors engage with Shropshire's outdoor offer. Key insights are highlighted below and the full analysis is available in Annex 2: Visitor and Non-Visitor Survey.

- **Who visits now:** 28% come from the West Midlands and fewer than 10% from Wales. 58% are aged 55 or older and 30% earn more than £80,000 pounds, pointing to good spending power and a need for accessible experiences.
- **Trip length and where they stay:** Day trips account for 34% of visits. A further 32% stay two to three nights and 23% stay four nights or more. Airbnb is the top choice for short breaks, while three- and four-star hotels are popular with older guests.
- **Why they come:** Fresh air, scenery and peace are the leading draws. Walking is the main activity for 89% of visitors, followed by cycling at 17%. 10% are keen to learn heritage or conservation skills, showing the value of linking culture with outdoor offers.
- **Food and drink:** Cafés, pubs and restaurants are key trip-planning factors and top areas of spend. A targeted audit could reveal gaps and new opportunities.
- **Season and planning habits:** Most visits happen in warm months, yet one quarter of respondents have no seasonal preference, which opens space for off-season products. 82% plan walks and rides on their own, mainly with Google Maps and other apps, and only a third follow marked routes.
- **Digital visibility:** Only 13% know the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website, but 96% of those users rate it useful. Raising its profile is a clear quick win.
- **Barriers on the ground:** Parking, vegetation, poor signage, livestock, dog mess and limited transport links top the list, yet more than one third say nothing would stop them getting outdoors.
- **Potential new visitors:** Among non-visitors, 55% are already over 55. 80% are aware of or interested in Shropshire, and walking ranks first at 89% with a strong preference for marked routes. Their concerns mirror those of current visitors, suggesting that the same improvements will open the door to new markets.
- **Residents:** 90% walk for recreation, 36% walk the dog and family activities rate higher here than in the visitor sample. Health, nature and quiet are prime motivations. Overgrown paths and missing signs are common complaints, while 14% say nothing deters them.

5. CURRENT POSITION

5.1 Overview

The analysis of Shropshire's strengths and challenges as an outdoor activity destination has been informed by the research findings and consultations with more than 60 stakeholders involved in walking, cycling, and outdoor activities across Shropshire. These included representatives from Shropshire Council, Natural England, Forestry England, the National Trust, tourism organisations, activity groups, and local businesses. The detailed SWOT analysis is provided in Annex 1.

5.2 Strengths

Natural Assets and Biodiversity: Shropshire's diversity of natural assets is central to its appeal. The county's varied and unspoilt landscapes including peat bogs, river valleys, ancient woodlands and heathlands offer an exceptional setting for nature-based tourism. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape contributes significantly to its tranquillity and ecological richness and the county's appeal to visitors.

Trail and Route Infrastructure: Nationally, the county ranks highly for its extensive network of long-distance routes combined with a network of shorter circular routes suitable for diverse audiences. The primary long-distance routes are the Shropshire Way, Offa's Dyke Path, the Severn Way for walkers, and the Shropshire Cycleway for road cycling. The River Severn supports paddling activities, and for equestrian users the Jack Mytton and Humphrey Kynnaston Ways are the primary trails.

Conservation Initiatives and Nature Recovery: Shropshire is home to several significant conservation and nature recovery initiatives that support outdoor access. Notable examples include the Stepping Stones Project in the Shropshire Hills, Marches Mosses peatland restoration, and efforts along the River Severn and Montgomery Canal. These projects combine habitat restoration with visitor access, working with local communities, farmers, and volunteers to enhance ecological connectivity and promote low-impact recreation.

Cultural and Heritage Assets: The county's rich cultural heritage including landmarks such as Ludlow Castle, Ironbridge Gorge, and Shrewsbury Museum offers further opportunities to enhance visitor experience. While some outdoor routes currently pass heritage sites, there is strong potential to develop and promote more integrated heritage-themed trails that link Shropshire's cultural and natural assets.

Community Involvement and Volunteering: Shropshire has a well-established tradition of active community engagement. Local walking, cycling, and conservation groups play an important role in trail maintenance, guided experiences, and advocacy, particularly in the Shropshire Hills, helping to maintain access and quality across the outdoor network.

5.3 Challenges

Trail routes and Infrastructure Gaps: Infrastructure inconsistencies such as uneven trail surfaces, poor wayfinding and limited accessible facilities affect both the connectivity and inclusivity of Shropshire's outdoor network. For example, gaps in the cycling infrastructure, especially the lack of continuous, safe and family-friendly routes, create barriers for wider participation in active travel. A lack of signage or route clarity can also lead to tensions between user groups (e.g. walkers, cyclists, and horse riders).

Fragmented Visitor Information: The visitor journey is hindered by fragmented promotion and a lack of centralised, up-to-date information on route options. The Great Outdoors provides some trail information but there is no single digital platform that consolidates route options, public transport links, outdoor events, and real-time trail conditions. This limits trip planning, particularly for longer stays and visitor engagement.

Water Activity Constraints: Water-based outdoor activities are constrained by a lack of designated launch points, equipment hire facilities and signage. Issues with water quality also limit opportunities for wild swimming and paddleboarding, despite strong interest in these activities.

Inconsistent Food and Beverage Offer: Although Shropshire has a good reputation for its local food offer, visitors engaged in outdoor activities often find it difficult to locate places to eat near walking and cycling routes, particularly during the low season. Limited availability of cafes, pubs, and food outlets along trails reduces opportunities to link outdoor recreation with local gastronomy, affecting both visitor experience and potential spend in rural areas.

Lack of Accessible Green Space: There are a limited number of well-maintained and well-promoted sites like Carding Mill Valley, Attingham Park, Comer Woods, Forestry England sites, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Severn Valley Country Park, Stanmore Country Park and Nesscliffe Country Park. These sites that offer high-quality paths, signage, and visitor amenities, are more accessible and therefore attract large volumes of visitors, particularly during peak seasons. This can result in seasonal congestion and pressure on facilities while lesser-known areas with underdeveloped infrastructure remain underutilised.

Limited Information for Social Prescribing: Although social prescribing is gaining traction, there are few mapped and maintained trails that meet the needs of individuals with mobility challenges or long-term health conditions. The lack of dedicated resources limits health professionals' ability to integrate walking and cycling into preventative health and wellbeing strategies.

Over Reliance on Volunteer Maintenance: The lack of funding for the maintenance of trails and Public Rights of Way means that ongoing maintenance is largely volunteer-dependent. With rising visitor numbers, this model is increasingly unsustainable and overgrown paths, trail erosion, littering and dog fouling are recurring issues.

Lack of Co-ordinated Funding: Current funding streams are limited and fragmented. There is no central body to coordinate funding from multiple sources e.g. public sector grants, community initiatives and private sector partnerships, to deliver an outdoor offer that is resilient and can maximise the sector's potential to deliver the strategic benefits the country aspires to.

5.4 Opportunities

There is a clear opportunity to strengthen Shropshire's outdoor activity offer by putting restoration and sustainability at the centre of every new project. Repairing worn paths, rewetting peatlands, improving river quality and stabilising eroded heritage sites will protect carbon stores and biodiversity while preparing the landscape for climate change. Investment in low-impact infrastructure, local supply chains and integrated active-travel links can open more inclusive routes and spread visitors beyond current hot spots.

Existing partner-led projects including the Marches Mosses BogLIFE Tourism Project, the Stepping Stones project and the Fix the Fort initiative already show that habitat recovery, heritage conservation and visitor enjoyment can advance together. For further details of the Marches Mosses BogLIFE and the Stepping Stone projects see Annex 3.

The partner-led projects listed below support this Development Plan. Each will need to be designed on clear sustainability principles, so they enhance Shropshire's outdoor offer while safeguarding its natural capital:

- Severn Canoe Trail
- Marcher Castle Way Off-Road Mountain Bike Route
- Opening Up Attingham Park Estate
- Montgomery Canal Restoration
- Montgomery Canal Paddle Sports Development.

Annex 3: Development Opportunities provides full details of these partner-led projects as well as new development opportunities.

6. THE WAY FORWARD

6.1 Shropshire's Ambition for Outdoor Activities

Shropshire aspires to capitalise on its tranquil and diverse landscapes and outdoor activity offer to attract a wider range of longer staying visitors and engage residents more effectively with its green space.

To achieve this aspiration, align with Shropshire's wider strategic goals, and addressing the outdoor-activity sector's challenges, this Development Plan sets out to deliver five core objectives:

- Enhance and capitalise on existing routes
- Increase the visitor length of stay and disperse visitors across the county
- Appeal to wider audiences: new visitor segments and more residents
- Increase accessible and inclusive green space
- Embed sustainable practices and nature restoration within the sector.

To achieve these objectives, and align with the Great Outdoors Strategy, four strategic initiatives are recommended. All these initiatives will be underpinned by sustainable and nature restoration principles.

- Outdoor Activity Knowledge Hub
- Shropshire's Signature Trails
- Market Town Hubs
- Accessible Inclusive Green Spaces

Figure 3: Delivery of Outdoor Activity Objectives by Proposed Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Initiative	Enhance Existing Routes	Increase length of Stay	Appeal to Wider Audiences	Increase Accessible Green Space
Embedded Sustainable and Nature Restoration Practices				
Knowledge Hub	✓	✓	✓	
Signature Routes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Market Town Hubs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inclusive Green Spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓

Following the description of each initiative below, is a list of Priority Actions and associated Development Opportunities, which are presented fully in Annex 3.

6.2 Strategic Initiatives and Priority Actions

A. Outdoor Activity Knowledge Hub

Description

Develop and enhance Shropshire's Great Outdoors website to create an integrated digital resource hub to collect and disseminate current information between stakeholder partners, residents and visitors while championing sustainability and landscape restoration.

A comprehensive knowledge hub would facilitate the development and promotion of outdoor activity products, themed short break itineraries and strengthen online promotion, visitor management and monitoring, including the development of the Signature Trails (see Strategic Initiative B below).

By linking to partner websites across Shropshire, the hub will widen access to information for residents and social prescribers, and guide visitors toward outdoor activities that protect and restore local landscapes while promoting sustainable business champions.

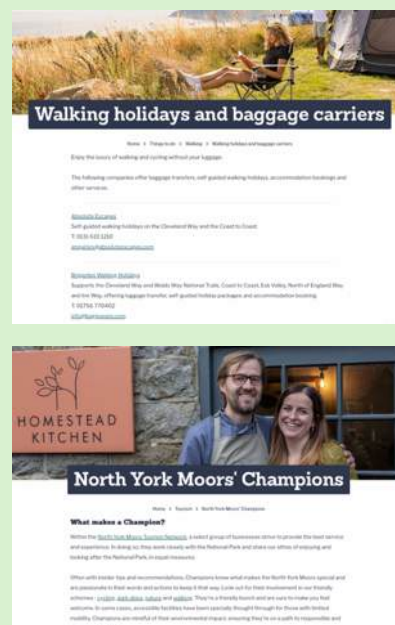
Alignment with the Great Outdoors Strategy

Aims: Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, Connected, Cherished

Strategies: Management, Communication, Learning, Funding, Partnership

CASE STUDY: North York Moors National Park Website and Information Hub

The North York Moors National Park website is an example of how a comprehensive digital hub can drive a well-informed website for outdoor activity tourism. As one of the UK's top-rated destinations for outdoor recreation, its platform www.northyorkmoors.org.uk offers an integrated experience, connecting visitors with walking and cycling routes, curated itineraries, accommodation, events, and local services. Features such as detailed trail information, inspirational blogs, and a "Plan Your Visit" tool support trip planning and encourage longer stays. The site also promotes local businesses, including walking holiday providers and baggage carriers, while showcasing the region's rich heritage and natural assets. Crucially, the Park highlights sustainability through its climate and nature recovery programmes and features "Tourism Champions", local businesses committed to sustainable practices. See Annex 3 for more information.



Case Study: Data Collection for Monitoring - Devon Website Visitor Survey

To improve monitoring and collect visitor feedback, the Southwest Visitor Economy Hub (SWVEH) collects visitor insights via pop-up surveys on key tourism websites (e.g. Visit Devon, Visit Exeter, Visit South Devon). Users landing on these sites are prompted to complete a short survey, incentivised by a prize draw for a weekend break donated by a local hotel. Since its launch in October 2024, the survey has gathered 25,000 responses, including 12,000 from recent visitors, providing valuable monitoring data on trip planning, activities, demographics, and motivations. See Annex 3 for more information.

Priority Actions:

- Make Shropshire's Great Outdoors the single county digital hub for outdoor activity information.
- Draft a development plan and funding bids to grow the hub's content and tools.
- Form a public, private, and community network to feed data into the hub.
- Add a county events calendar and themed itineraries based on existing routes.
- Launch an incentivised visitor survey on both main tourism sites to track key indicators.
- Map three ancient-landscape routes, weave in stories, and sell them as a museum-linked walking product.
- Undertake a Green Destinations Business Sector Sustainability Scan (BSSS), provide follow-up sustainability training, and prioritise promotion of certified champions.
- Share local green projects through stories and volunteer calls and explore full destination sustainability certification.

These actions can be delivered as part of Development Opportunity:

DO-1: Shropshire's Great Outdoors Website Development, supported by:

DO-2: Developing Themed and Circular Walks for Niche Interests.

Details on supporting development opportunity projects and actions can be found in Annex 3: Development Opportunities.

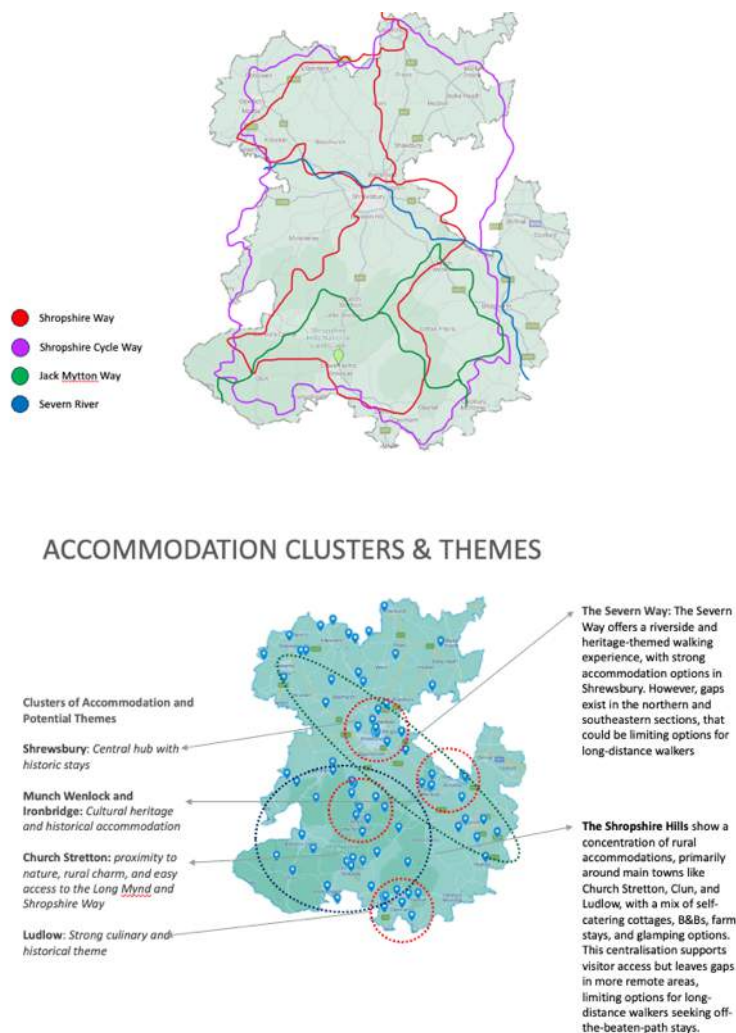
B. Shropshire's Signature Trails

Description

Capitalise on Shropshire's existing routes to create a collection of Signature Trails for walking, cycling, horse riding and water activities. By directing investment to these corridors, we can improve facilities, visitor services and conservation management, building a high-quality network that is both enjoyable and environmentally beneficial.

Focusing on routes that already exist will boost awareness of Shropshire's diverse outdoor offer for the short-break market while channelling visitor spend into trail maintenance, habitat restoration and low-impact infrastructure.

Figure 4 & 5: Proposed Shropshire Signature Trails; Potential Accommodation Clusters



Alignment with the Great Outdoors Strategy

Aims: Prosperous

Strategies: Communication, Partnership

Case Study: Hadrian's Wall National Trail (7-day guided tour)

Guided, 7 days walk. 6 days rambling the Hadrian's Wall path from Hexham to Carlisle. Transfers to start and finish points included. 3-star accommodation, half board basis. Entrance to Carvoran Roman Army Museum.

Why It's a Good Example:

- A guided long-distance trail that blends history and nature
- Encourages short break visits using local accommodation
- Cultural highlights like the Carvoran Roman Army Museum add thematic depth
- Reduces logistical challenges for participants, enhancing the walking experience.



Priority Actions:

- Set up a working group for each trail, walking, cycling, horse riding and water sports.
- Map and group nearby businesses to see who can offer stays food experiences and transport
- Run short training for those businesses so every trail has a clear offer and local sellers.
- Create a single look signage and story style for all Signature Trails.
- Add trail maps and promo content to the Great Outdoors website for wider sharing.
- Build an interactive online map that links each trail to its services.
- Upgrade water trail points and safety signs for canoe kayak and paddle board users.

These actions can be delivered as part of Development Opportunity:

DO-3: Creating Signature Routes for Outdoor Activities in Shropshire

Details on supporting development opportunity projects and actions can be found in Annex 3: Development Opportunities.

C. Market Town Hubs

Description

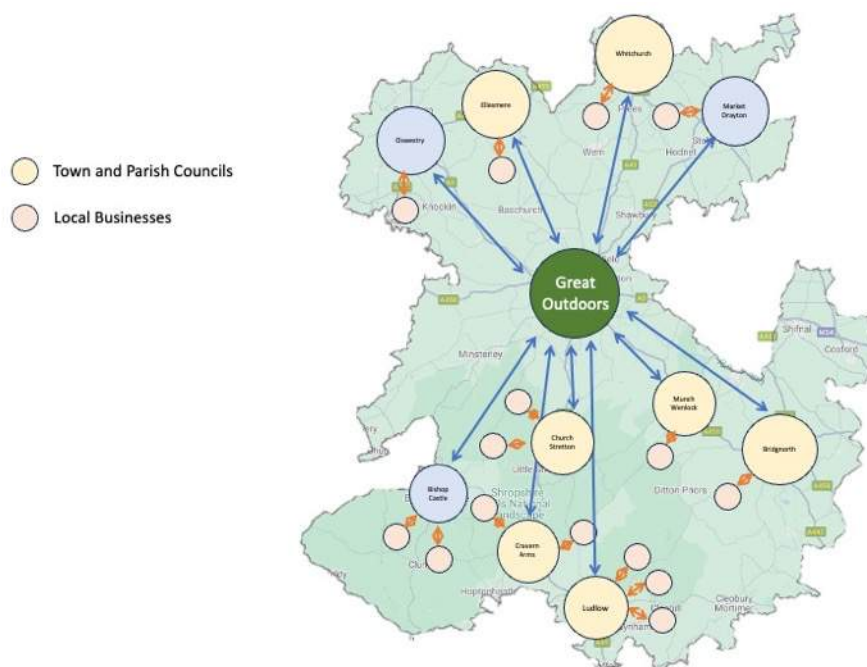
Establish a network of market town hubs across Shropshire. The network would contribute to, and utilise, the Great Outdoors knowledge portal and website.

Each hub would serve as a central point for short breaks that offer circular walking routes in its area, which can be combined with other local outdoor activities. Additionally, these hubs could increase accessibility to local green space for residents and social prescribers.

This process involves residents and local businesses in the growth of Shropshire's outdoor activities. It would assist in distributing visitors around the county, showcasing local heritage and activities to attract diverse audiences and reduce overtourism hotspots.

The hubs would feed information to the Great Outdoors website, where it would be curated for promotional campaigns that benefit the market towns and local service providers that need additional visitors.

Figure 6: Flow of Information to and from Accommodation Providers, Market Towns to the Great Outdoors



Alignment with the Great Outdoors Strategy

Aims: Prosperous, Connected, Cherished

Strategies: Management, Communication, Learning, Partnership

Case Study: Community-Led Walking Hub – Winchcombe

Winchcombe in Gloucestershire has leveraged this scheme to become a noted walking hub. As one of the first Walkers Are Welcome towns, Winchcombe is accredited as an excellent base for hiking, meaning the town ensures well-maintained footpaths, ample trail information, and a warm welcome for walkers. The local community hosts an annual walking festival and even created the “Winchcombe



Way,” a 42-mile figure-of-eight trail centred on the town. This structured hub model boosts the local economy by attracting walkers to stay, explore the area on foot, and patronize local businesses, all while encouraging sustainable travel (walking instead of driving). Winchcombe’s example shows how a small market town can become a successful outdoor activity hub through community engagement and targeted walking tourism initiatives.

theguardian.com www.winchcombewelcomeswalkers.com/

Priority Actions:

- Form working groups in each market town hub.
- Use the Great Outdoors website as the shared digital platform for itineraries, events and visitor updates.
- Add clear walking, cycling, horse riding and canoe route information at rail and bus stations, including QR linked maps.
- Partner with tour operators and accommodation to create multi activity packages that start from Shrewsbury.
- Run an “Outdoor Adventures from Shrewsbury” campaign that links every town page to trails, events and stays.
- Audit and upgrade circular walks around each town with help from local volunteers.
- Provide training so businesses can build car free, walking friendly short break offers.
- Offer one-to-one support to improve business visibility on Google Maps, TripAdvisor and booking sites.
- Review walkers are Welcome offering across the county and support towns who may be interested in joining this network.

These actions can be delivered as part of Development Opportunity:

DO-4: Shrewsbury as a Hub and Spoke Destination for Outdoor Activities Linking with Market Town, supported by:

DO-5: Accommodation Activity Hubs.

Details on supporting development opportunity projects and actions can be found in Annex 3: Development Opportunities.

D. Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces

Description

Support the development and appropriate promotion of accessible natural green space to encourage diverse and less confident users to experience the great outdoors.

This initiative involves collaboration between stakeholders to share knowledge of accessible routes, suitable facilities and find creative solutions to fund local parking and toilet and catering facilities. The proposed Outdoor Activity Knowledge Hub and Market Town Hubs would facilitate this process.

Alignment with the Great Outdoors Strategy

Aims: Happy, Healthy, Connected

Strategies: Management, Learning, Funding, Partnership

Outline project descriptions can be found in Annex 3: Development Projects.

Case Study: “Miles Without Stiles” – Lake District National Park

‘Miles Without Stiles’ in the Lake District proves that a single, well-promoted library of 50+ graded, stile-free trails, each page listing toilets, cafés, bus links and even Trampler mobility-scooter hire, can give wheelchair users, families and older walkers the confidence to explore countryside independently. The scheme is maintained and funded by a wide partnership of the National Park, county council, National Trust, utilities and local landowners, showing how shared stewardship and micro-donations can underwrite access improvements. In short, it delivers clear digital information, inclusive facilities and cooperative funding to open green spaces to everyone.

visitlakedistrict.com



Priority Actions Include:

- Pilot an “outdoor friendly business” donation scheme where cafés, pubs and farm shops offer toilets, water points and parking in return for voluntary donations

- Work with local businesses to back the shuttle bus, adding visitor incentives such as discounts for bus users.
- List every Walking for Health route and other easy access trails on the Great Outdoors website, with filters for short circular and buggy friendly options.
- Build an online map that shows accessible toilets, rest stops and water points, including details like step free access and opening hours.
- Equip the shuttle bus with bike racks and market it to cyclists heading for trailheads.
- Work with Cycling UK on the further development and promotion of the Marcher Castle Way linking it to accommodation and food and drink businesses.
- Create short safe paddle routes on the Montgomery Canal for families, linking them to nearby food and drink stops.
- Launch a seasonal calendar on the website that highlights inclusive walks, easy rides and paddle sessions.
- Design simple multi activity itineraries that combine paddling, walking and cycling with local attractions.

These actions can be delivered as part of Development Opportunity:

DO-6: Walking for Health Hub - Expanding Accessible Walking Routes for Wellbeing, supported by:

DO-7: Themed Routes linked to Public Transport-Linked to Rail Rambles programme and the Shuttle Bus.

DO-8: Community Facilities and Honesty Schemes.

Details on supporting development opportunity projects and actions can be found in Annex 3: Development Opportunities.

6.3 Development Opportunities and Partner Projects

The table below provides a prioritised timeframe for the phased delivery of the recommended Development Opportunities. Full details of each opportunity are provided in Annex 3.

Priority table*

High	Medium	Low
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No	Project Name	Supporting Strategic Initiative	Priority			Time Frame			Description
DO-1	Shropshire's Great Outdoors Website Development	Outdoor Activity Knowledge Hub	H	M	L	Short 1-2yr X	Medium 3-5 yr X	Long 5+ yrs X	Create a single, upgraded Great Outdoors website that serves as Shropshire's digital hub for outdoor activities, linking visitors to top trails and attractions, offering clear accessibility details, and connecting seamlessly to partner sites, so online promotion, information quality and the overall user experience all improve.
DO-2	Developing Themed and Circular Walks for Niches Interests	Outdoor Activity Knowledge Hub	H	M	L	Short 1-2yr X	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs	Design niche circular trails that blend walking or cycling with heritage, wellness, wild swimming and local food-and-drink experiences, partnering with businesses to turn each route into an immersive, high-spend short break.
DO-3	Creating Signature Routes for Outdoor Activities in Shropshire	Shropshire's Signature Trails	H	M	L	Short 1-2yr X	Medium 3-5 yr X	Long 5+ yrs X	Create a branded "Signature Trails" collection that unites the Shropshire Way, Shropshire Cycle Way, Jack Mytton Way and the River Severn to boost marketing, upgrade infrastructure and spur business packages for sustainable outdoor tourism.
DO-4	Shrewsbury as a 'Hub and Spoke' Destination for Outdoor Activities Linking with Market Towns	Market Town Hubs	H	M	L	Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr X	Long 5+ yrs X	Make Shrewsbury the county's outdoor gateway, linking its transport hub to town-based activity hubs and circular trails, so visitors can start multi-day walking, cycling or water adventures and local communities and businesses gain through "Walkers are Welcome" volunteering and services.

DO-5	Accommodation Activity Hubs	Market Town Hubs	H	M	L	<table><tr><td>Short 1-2yr</td><td>Medium 3-5 yr</td><td>Long 5+ yrs</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>X</td><td></td></tr></table>	Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs		X		Create accommodation-led hubs where visitors can book car-free itineraries that link public transport with local trails, heritage, food and events, while providers get digital marketing support and an events calendar that boosts footfall and funds for route upkeep.
Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs											
	X												
DO-6	Walking for Health Hub – Expanding Accessible Walking Routes for Wellbeing	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	H	M	L	<table><tr><td>Short 1-2yr</td><td>Medium 3-5 yr</td><td>Long 5+ yrs</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>X</td><td></td></tr></table>	Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs		X		Create a county-wide hub that maps, upgrades and promotes easy-access “Walking for Health” routes, linking them to social-prescribing schemes so residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy safe, wellbeing-focused walks.
Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs											
	X												
DO-7	Themed Routes Linked to Public Transport – linked to Rail Rambles programme + Shuttle bus	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	H	M	L	<table><tr><td>Short 1-2yr</td><td>Medium 3-5 yr</td><td>Long 5+ yrs</td></tr><tr><td>X</td><td>X</td><td></td></tr></table>	Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs	X	X		
Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs											
X	X												
DO-8	Community Facilities and Honesty Schemes	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	H	M	L	<table><tr><td>Short 1-2yr</td><td>Medium 3-5 yr</td><td>Long 5+ yrs</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>X</td></tr></table>	Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs			X	Pilot an “honesty scheme” in which cafés, pubs and farm shops open their toilets, parking and water taps to walkers and cyclists, with QR signs and contactless donation points so visitors can fund upkeep and help make Shropshire’s trails genuinely outdoor-friendly.
Short 1-2yr	Medium 3-5 yr	Long 5+ yrs											
		X											

The table below summarises the existing and planned Partner Projects that support the Development Opportunities. Full details of each project are provided in Annex 3.

No	Name	Strategic Initiative	Lead Partner	Other Partners	Description
PP-1	Severn Canoe Trail	Shropshire's Signature Trails	Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Canoe Foundation, Sport England, Local Businesses, Landowners, Shropshire Council	Create an online Severn Canoe Trail that pairs upgraded river-access points and an environmental code of conduct with maps of nearby cafés, pubs and stays, so paddlers can explore Shropshire's stretch of the Severn safely, sustainably and in ways that boost local business.
PP-2	Marcher Castle Way Off-Road Mountain Biking Route	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	Cycling UK	Cycling UK, Local Landowners and Farmers, Shropshire Outdoor Partnership, Local Tourism Businesses, National Trust, Forestry England	Develop partnerships with cycling UK to promote and package the Marcher Castle Way into a well-known off-road mountain bike tour by refining bridleway access, working with landowners, and publishing digital maps and GPX guides that lead riders to bike-friendly accommodation, food stops and repair stations.
PP-3	Stepping Stones Project – Shropshire Hills	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	National Trust	Shropshire Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Shropshire Hills National Landscape	Restore and link heathland, grassland, woodland and wetland across 200 km ² of the Shropshire Hills AONB, creating wildlife “stepping stones” between the Long Mynd and Stiperstones while improving trails, engaging farmers and volunteers, and giving walkers and cyclists richer, more resilient nature to enjoy.
PP-4	Opening Up Attingham Park Estate	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	National Trust	Shropshire Council, Local Community Groups, Environmental Agencies.	Open up the eastern side of Attingham Estate by creating multi-use trails that link regional walking and cycling routes, bike hire, additional visitor facilities and heritage interpretation, host education and community events, and pair active recreation with habitat restoration, turning one of Shropshire's flagship sites into a hub for nature, history and healthy travel.
PP-5	Montgomery Canal Restoration	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	Canal and River Trust	Shropshire Council, Natural England, Shropshire Union Canal Society (SUCS), Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Rivers Trust.	Restore 56 km of the Montgomery Canal from Gronwen to Newtown, reviving heritage structures, protecting sensitive habitats and upgrading towpath, cycleway and boating facilities, to create a green corridor that links the Severn Way, Offa's Dyke and nearby visitor hubs, driving sustainable tourism and local economic growth.
PP-6	Montgomery Canal Paddle Sports Development	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	Canal and River Trust	Shropshire Council, Visit Shropshire, British Canoeing	Upgrade launch points, signs and safety on the Montgomery Canal, partner with hire firms and accommodation to sell canoe and paddle-board packages, and market the canal as a welcoming, sustainable paddle sports destination.

PP-7	Marches Mosses BogLIFE Tourism Project	Accessible and Inclusive Natural Green Spaces	Natural England	Natural Resources Wales, Shropshire Wildlife Trust	The six-year Marches Mosses BogLIFE project (2016-2022) restored Britain's third-largest lowland raised peat bogs, Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses plus Wem Moss, by re-wetting peat to boost biodiversity and lock away carbon. Alongside the ecological work, it installed trails, visitor facilities and interpretation that support walking, birdwatching and other nature-based tourism, involved local businesses, and ran robust education and volunteer programmes, offering a model that pairs conservation success with community engagement and sustainable outdoor recreation.
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ANNEXES

1. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Introduction

This Annex provides the supplementary material referenced throughout the main report, Walking, Cycling and Outdoor Activities Development Plan for Shropshire.

It includes the findings from the desk research, consultations and product audit that inform the current situation and position of outdoor activities in Shropshire.

1. AREA ASSESSMENT

1.1 Population of Shropshire

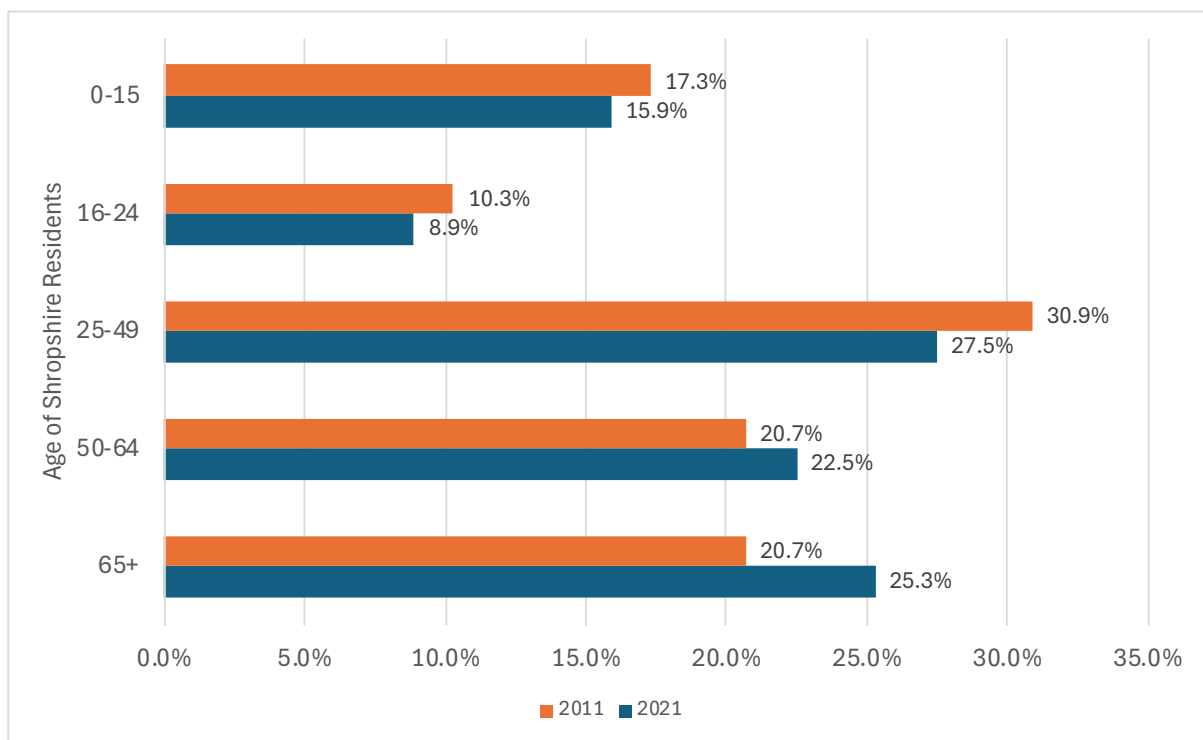
1.1.1 Demographics

There were an estimated 323,600 people living in Shropshire in 2021¹ which increased to 329,260 in the 2023 mid-year population estimates. Shropshire's population accounts for a 5.4% share of the total population of the West Midlands.

Shropshire's population has increased by 5.7% between 2011 and 2021, lower than the English average (6.6%), the West Midlands average (6.2%) and the average of that of neighbouring Telford & Wrekin borough (11.4%).

Shropshire has an ageing population and the average age of Shropshire residents increased from 44 to 48 between 2011 and 2021. The number of people aged between 50 and 64 has increased by 14.7% while a 29.5% increase in people aged 65+ was also noted, higher than the English average (20.1%). There has also been a fall in numbers of children aged under 15 (2.5%) while in England numbers have been rising by 5.0%.

Figure 1.1: Age of Shropshire Residents, 2021



Source: ONS

Projecting ahead, the Shropshire Plan² estimated that there will be 4.9% increase in the population between 2020 and 2025 and the older populations continue to grow at the fastest rates. The 65+ age group is growing by 12.8% while the 80+ is growing by 20.3%.

¹ [2021 Census, Shropshire, ONS](#)

² [The Shropshire Plan 2022-2025](#)

In addition, there are projected to be more households in Shropshire between 2020 and 2025, an increase of 6.4% (3.9% West Midlands average; 3.5% England average).

It is estimated that around 57% of the population live in rural locations. The largest share of Shropshire's urban residents live in Shrewsbury (23.4% share of the total population) followed by Oswestry (5.4%), Bridgnorth and Market Drayton, each with a 3.6% share.

Table 1.1: Populations of towns in Shropshire, 2021

Town	Population
Shrewsbury	75,992
Oswestry	17,509
Bridgnorth	12,182
Market Drayton	12,066
Ludlow	10,039
Whitchurch	9,855
Shifnal	8,984
Albrighton	6,988
Wem	6,285
Broseley	5,600
Bayston Hill	5,226
Ellesmere	4,275
Church Stretton	3,576
Highley	3,307
Gobowen	3,048
Cleobury	
Mortimer	2,962
St Martin's	2,693
Craven Arms	2,565
Baschurch	2,008

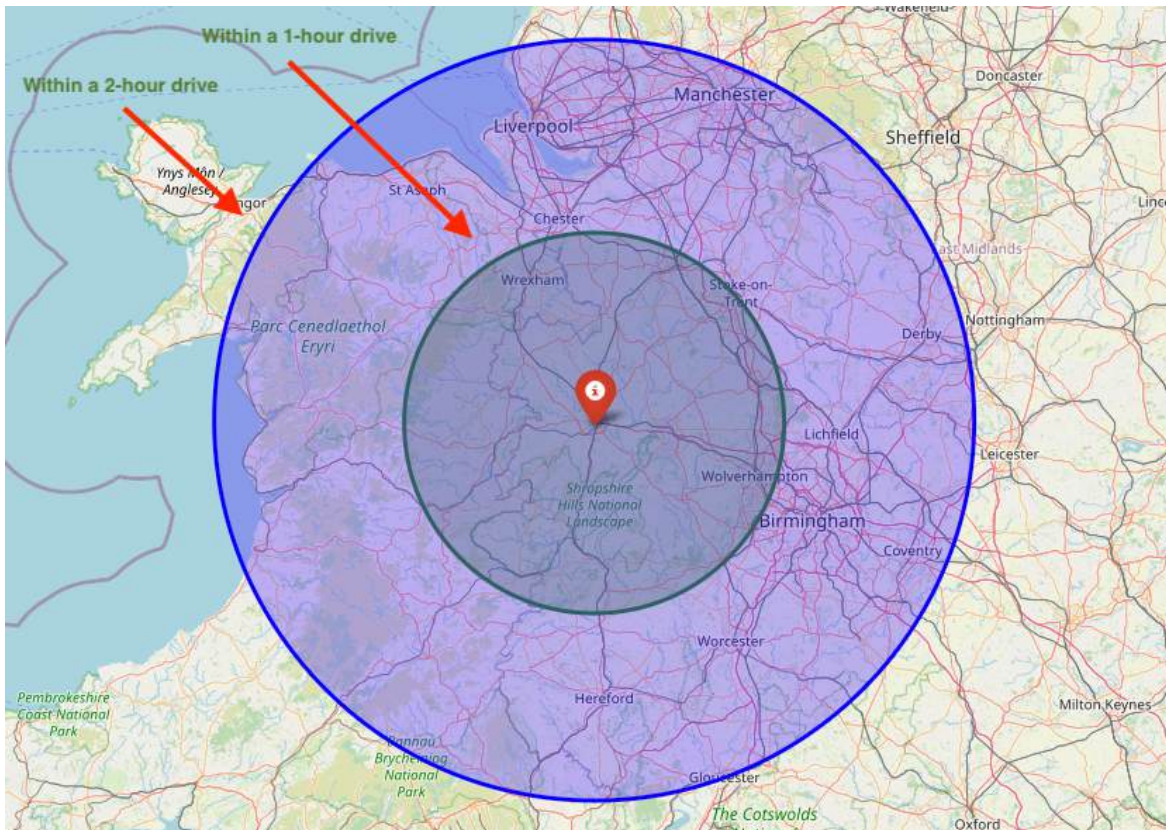
Source: ONS

1.1.2 Visitors' Proximity to Shropshire

Considering the population within a one-hour and two-hour drive from Shrewsbury as potential visitors to Shropshire involves considering a number of factors such as road networks and geographical issues. However, an approximate guide to local populations shows that there are significant numbers of potential visitors within easy reach of the county:

- **Within a one-hour drive:** key population centres within approximately one-hour's drive include Telford, Wolverhampton, Wrexham and Chester. Total estimated population – 750,000.
- **Within a two-hour drive:** key population centres within approximate two-hour's drive in addition to the above include Birmingham, Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent

and Coventry. A reasonable estimate of a potential visitor base would be 3-4 million people.



1.2 Transport Connectivity in Shropshire

1.2.1 Overview

Shropshire has good connections by road and rail. With one Shuttle Bus that operates in the Shropshire Hills during the summer months, it provides good access to visitors.

1.2.2 Road

Shropshire has a good road network of typically A and B roads; there are no motorways. Some of the key routes to Shrewsbury are outlined in the table below.

Table 1.2: Key road routes to Shropshire

Route	Road	Distance
<i>Outside County</i>		
Telford to Shrewsbury	M54 / A5	16 miles
Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury	M54 / A5	32 miles
Wrexham to Shrewsbury	A5	33 miles
Stoke-on-Trent to Shrewsbury	A53	38 miles
Chester to Shrewsbury	A483	45 miles
Birmingham to Shrewsbury	M6 / M54 / A5	47 miles

Hereford to Shrewsbury	A49	53 miles
Derby to Shrewsbury	A38 / M54 / A5	70 miles
Liverpool to Shrewsbury	M53 / A55 / A483 / A5	72 miles
Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury	A44	76 miles
Manchester to Shrewsbury	M56 / A483 / A5	85 miles
Llandudno to Shrewsbury	North Wales Expressway / A5	85 miles
Cheltenham to Shrewsbury	M5 / M54 / A5	91 miles
Cardiff to Shrewsbury (non-motorway)	M4 / A449 / A49	108 miles
Cardiff to Shrewsbury (motorway)	M4 / M5 / M54 / A5	147 miles
London to Shrewsbury	M1 / M6 / M54 / A5	160 miles
Swansea to Shrewsbury	A4067 / A40 / A438 / A49	113 miles
Sheffield to Shrewsbury	M1 / A38 / M54 / A5	115 miles
<i>Local Routes</i>		
Much Wenlock to Shrewsbury	A458	13 miles
Church Stretton to Shrewsbury	A49	14 miles
Ellesmere to Shrewsbury	A528	17 miles
Oswestry to Shrewsbury	A5	19 miles
Bridgnorth to Shrewsbury	A458	20 miles
Whitchurch to Shrewsbury	A49	22 miles
Market Drayton to Shrewsbury	A53	22 miles
Ludlow to Shrewsbury	A49	29 miles
Cleo Mortimer to Shrewsbury	B4363 / A458	33 miles

Source: Google

Like many large market towns in England, Shrewsbury suffers from traffic congestion that impacts residents, businesses and visitors. The North West Relief Road (NWRR) to bypass the town was granted planning permission in 2023 subject to conditions, to link the northern and western parts of the town. Work on the road is expected to commence in summer 2025 with completion due in winter 2027.

However, despite congestion on some roads, the local network of small roads is less busy than many parts of the country, making it attractive to cyclists.

1.2.3 Rail

Shropshire has several national rail stations on various railway lines and the county is well-served by rail services. Shrewsbury is the main station, and others include stations at Church Stretton, Ludlow, Wellington, Cosford and Whitchurch.

The West Midlands Railway provides rail links from Shrewsbury to Telford Central, Wolverhampton, Birmingham New Street and Coventry. Travel by train to/from London requires a change in Birmingham.

Transport for Wales operates several services throughout Shropshire on several lines as shown in the table below.

Table 1.3: Transport for Wales Train Lines through Shropshire

Train line	Selected Stations on Route
North Wales South Wales Service	Holyhead, Llandudno Junction, Chester, Wrexham, Shrewsbury , Ludlow , Newport, Cardiff Central
North Wales Coast Line	Holyhead, Llandudno Junction, Gobowen , Shrewsbury , Wellington , Birmingham
Marches Line	Manchester, Crewe, Whitchurch , Prees , Wem , Yorton , Shrewsbury , Ludlow , Newport, Bridgend, Camarthen, Fishguard Harbour/Milford Haven
Cambrian Line	Pwllheli, Shrewsbury , Wellington , Birmingham
Heart of Wales Line	Shrewsbury , Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Broome, Hopton Heath, Bucknell , Swansea
Crewe to Shrewsbury	Crewe, Whitchurch , Prees , Wem , Yorton , Shrewsbury

Source: Transport for Wales

The Heart of Wales Line has recently added facilities for some of its trains to carry up to 12 bicycles. By summer 2025 it is expected that six bike trains will be operating.

1.2.4 Bus

The public bus service in Shropshire is made up of commercial bus services, revenue support funded bus services and subsidised bus services which account for most local bus services.

Bus operators include Arriva Wales, Arriva Midlands, Minsterley Motors, Tanat Valley Coaches, and Lakeside Coaches. However, access to services in rural areas is limited, with many problems including poor frequency and availability of services.

Efforts are underway to improve services through initiatives like the [Shropshire Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\)](#). The aim of BSIP is to create an opportunity for the bus to become the first choice of travel for residents and visitors.

Figure 1.2: Public Transport Map in Shropshire, 2024



The Long Mynd & Stiperstone Shuttle Bus operates in the Shropshire Hills during the summer months and is due to start again on 10th May until 28th September 2025. It provides a ‘hop-on, hop-off’ service from Church Stretton to Snailbeach, stopping at several places including Carding Mill Valley and the Stiperstones Nature Reserve. Several walks are accessible from the shuttle bus stops.

1.3 The Shropshire Tourism Landscape

Shropshire is a predominantly rural county with a large county town, Shrewsbury, and several market towns. With an area of 3,197km², it is one of England’s most sparsely populated counties and the second least densely populated in the West Midlands area with an area equivalent to around one football pitch per resident (101.2km²).

The Shropshire Hills are a key outdoor tourism asset for Shropshire, a designated National Landscape area (formerly an Area of Natural Beauty, AONB) that covers around one quarter of Shropshire’s landmass. It is popular for walking and there are a range of varied and high quality walks of different lengths. Other walking and cycling routes are possible throughout the county, including the Shropshire Way, a long-distance circular trek, the Shropshire Cycle Way and the Jack Mytton Way, a horse riding and cycling route.

As well as Shrewsbury, market towns include Ludlow, known for its food and drink offer, Church Stretton, the hub for the Shropshire Hills, Bridgnorth, for access to Ironbridge Gorge in neighbouring Telford & Wrekin borough, Oswestry and Market Drayton.



Built heritage is well-represented in Shropshire and there are several National Trust properties including Attingham Park and Dudmaston Hall, and a collection of castles, priories and abbey managed by English Heritage. Museums are widespread including the Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Ludlow Museum and the Shrewsbury Museum and Art

Gallery. Ironbridge Gorge is a World Heritage Site. Important cultural festivals include the Ludlow Food Festival, the Shropshire Folk Festival and the Oswestry Balloon Carnival. There are seven Visitor Information Centres and two heritage railways in Shropshire, the Cambrian Heritage Railway in Oswestry and the Severn Valley Railway in Bridgnorth.

1.4 Tourism Accommodation Profile

1.4.1 Accommodation Stock in Shropshire

Tourism accommodation in Shropshire is a mix of serviced and non-serviced accommodation. The majority of tourism stock by bed spaces is in self-catered accommodation, accounting for 77.4% of all stock.

There is a wide concentration of serviced accommodation in the county in hotels, B&Bs, and guesthouses around the Shrewsbury and large market towns including country house hotels with spa facilities (e.g. Fishmore Hall and Hawkstone Hall and Gardens), and boutique style properties (e.g. Darwin's Townhouse and The Castle Hotel). However, serviced accommodation is under-represented in major brands. Macdonald and Mercure properties are currently present along with budget brands Premier Inn, Holiday Inn and Travel Lodge.

The largest share of self-catering accommodation bed spaces are found in the caravan and camping sector (57.4%).

Table 1.4: Tourism Accommodation Stock in Shropshire, 2024

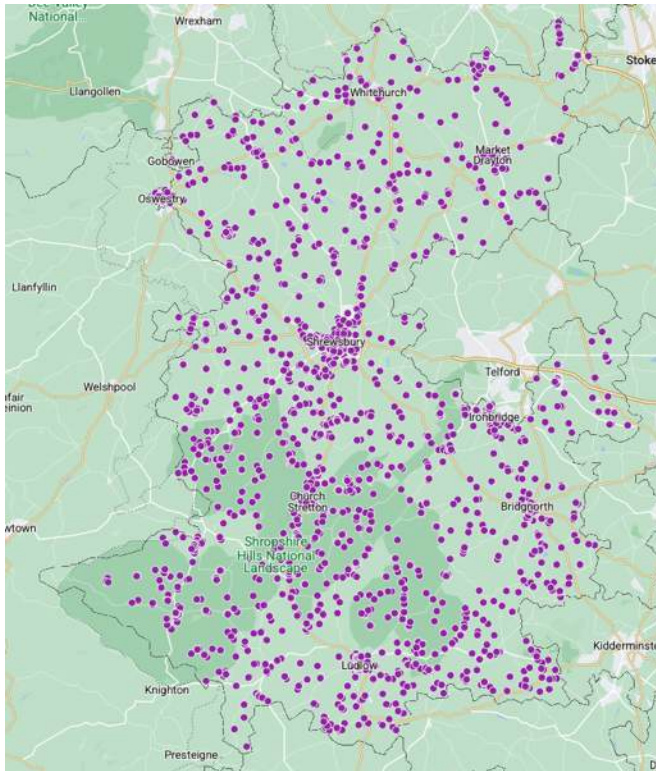
Accommodation	Properties	Bed Numbers	% Share of Beds
51+ rooms	12	2,545	45.7%
11-50 rooms	39	1,813	32.6%
10 rooms or less	128	1,206	21.7%
Total Serviced Accommodation	179	5,564	100.0%
Self-catering	516	4,380	23.0%
Caravan and camping	125	10,948	57.4%
Youth hostels	11	812	4.3%
Short-term lets	n/a	2,939	15.4%
Total Non-serviced Accommodation	652	19,079	100.0%

Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

1.4.2 Airbnb

The Airbnb market is performing strongly in Shropshire. In January 2025, there were 2,492 active listings on the platform, an increase of 56% over the past three years. Properties are widely spread across the entire county.

Figure 1.2: Distribution of Airbnb properties in Shropshire, January 2024



Source: AirDNA

Shropshire has an impressive Airbnb market score of 93 out of 100, a score that is determined by benchmarking against every UK market across five metrics of investability, rental demand, revenue growth, seasonality and regulation. This means it is a very attractive destination for short breakers, with a good range of properties available.

These factors are also reflected in Airbnb's performance indicators for Shropshire. Occupancy rate was an average of 60% in 2024, an increase of 3% year on year and there was an average length of stay of 3.1 days. Revenue for hosts increased by 12%.

2. DOMESTIC TOURISM IN ENGLAND AND WALES

2.1 Overview

Domestic tourism in England and Wales showed a mixed picture in 2023. Tourism day visits in England increased in number but declined in Wales between 2022 and 2023. Expenditure has also fallen in real terms, likely as a direct consequence of the cost of living issues that continue to affect British people and any disposable income they can allocate to travel.

2.2 Tourism Day Visits

There were 1 billion tourism day visits in England in 2023, up 8% compared to 2022. Visit Britain defines a tourism day visit as a trip that lasts at least 3 hours, includes at least one leisure activity, is undertaken less often than once a week, and takes place outside of the local authority where the trip began. A tourism day visit is the standard measure and the most useful indicator of day trip volume.

Expenditure on tourism day visits in England totalled £44.4 billion, a nominal increase of 15% compared to 2022, but a real increase of 7% once inflation is considered. This results in a £44 average spend per day visit, a rise of 6% against 2022, but a 1% drop in real terms.

Table 2.1: Tourism Day Visits in England, 2022-2023

Indicators	2022	2023	% change (nominal)	% change (real)
Tourism day visits (mn)	945	1,021	8%	-
Expenditure (£mn)	£38,740	£44,430	15%	7%
Average spend per visit (£)	£41	£44	6%	-1%

Source: Great Britain Tourism Day Visit Survey, 2023

In Wales, tourism day visits fell by 5% in 2023 vs 2022. While the table below shows that expenditure increased by 3% and average spend increased per trip by 8% in nominal terms, figures that factor in inflation are not currently available.

Table 2.2: Tourism Day Visits in Wales, 2022-2023

Indicators	2022	2023	% change (nominal)	% change (real)
Tourism day visits (mn)	62	59	-5%	-
Expenditure (£mn)	£2,400	£2,475	3%	n/a
Average spend per visit (£)	£39	£42	8%	n/a

Source: Great Britain Tourism Day Visit Survey, 2023

2.3 Overnight Trips

Domestic overnight trips in England and Wales have declined in 2023, compared with 2022. In England, number of trips fell by 4.95 and number of nights by 9.6%. Expenditure

also fell, by 2.7%, before inflation is taken into account. However, average expenditure per trip rose slightly, although not taking inflation into account.

Table 2.3: Overnight Trips in England, 2022-2023

Indicators	2022	2023	% change
Total Trips (mn)	104.5	99.4	-4.9%
Total Nights (mn)	310.2	280.3	-9.6%
Total Expenditure (£mn)	26,765	26,045	-2.7%
Average nights per trip	3.0	2.8	-5.0%
Average spend per trip (£)	256.12	262.02	2.3%

Source: GBTS (Great Britain Tourism Survey) – Overnight Trips, 2024

The picture of domestic tourism in Wales is one of decline between 2022 and 2023. Overnight visitor numbers declined by 2.5%, and nights by 5.75. Expenditure also fell by 6.3%, before inflationary issues were taken into account.

Table 2.4: Overnight Trips in Wales, 2022-2023

Indicators	2022	2023	% change
Total Trips (mn)	8.65	8.43	-2.5%
Total Nights (mn)	25.94	24.47	-5.7%
Total Expenditure (£mn)	2,019	1,892	-6.3%
Average nights per trip	3.0	2.9	-3.2%
Average spend per trip (£)	233.41	224.44	-3.8%

Source: Visit Wales

3. THE VISITOR ECONOMY IN SHROPSHIRE

3.1 Overview

Shropshire is situated in the West Midlands on the border with Wales in the east, and neighbouring English counties of Cheshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. There are large population centres within a comfortable travel time for both day and staying visitors, with good road and rail links into the county.

The areas of greatest potential for Shropshire are local and regional, including the large population centres of Greater Manchester, the Birmingham conurbation, and Wales. The south east of England is also recognised as a potential source market.

3.2 Day and Staying Visitors

3.2.1 Arrivals

There were 10.2 million day and staying visitors to Shropshire in 2024³, representing a decline of 2.5% increase compared to 2023. These figures remain 7.8% less than those achieved in 2019, pre-pandemic (11.1 million visitors). The majority of visitors to Shropshire are domestic.

Table 3.1: Visitor Arrivals 2019-2024

Indicators	2019	2022	2023	2024	% change 2023-2024	% share 2024
Day Visitors (‘mn)	9.7	8.6	9.1	8.8	-2.7%	86.3%
Staying Visitors (mn)	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	-0.9%	13.7%
All Visitors (mn)	11.1	10.0	10.5	10.2	-2.5%	100.0%

Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

Most visitors were day visitors, accounting for around 1 in 9 visitors. Day visitors to Shropshire fell by 2.7% (8.8 million visitors) and numbers of staying visitors also fell by 0.9%, to 1.4 million overnight stays (figures in Table 1.3 above have been rounded). A key priority remains to adjust the ratio between day and staying visitors from 90:10 to 80:20.

3.2.2 Economic Impact

Economic impact of the tourism sector nominally grew by 4.2% in 2024, but once inflation was taken into account, economic impact actually declined by 0.7%⁴.

Day visitors’ economic impact in real terms fell by 2.7% between 2023 and 2024 while by contrast, staying visitors’ contribution to economic impact rose by 1.5% compared to

³ STEAM Report for 2019-2023, Global Tourism Solutions

⁴ Economic impact 2023 figures indexed to 2024

2023. By share, day visitors also accounted for a greater share of economic contribution (50.2%), although compared with 2023, share has broadly evened.

Table 3.2: Economic Impact of Visitors to Shropshire, 2019-2024

Indicators (£mn)	2019	2022	2023	2024	% change 2023-2024	% share 2024
Day Visitors (£mn)	423.76	425.65	470.15	457.41	-2.7%	50.2%
Staying Visitors (£mn)	367.40	444.45	446.35	453.09	1.5%	49.8%
All Visitors (£mn)	791.16	870.10	916.50	910.50	-0.7%	100.0%

Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

3.2.3 Spend per Visit and Average Length of Stay

While day visitor spend has declined by 2.7% between 2023 and 2024, staying visitor spend increased by 1.5%.

Table 3.3: Spend per Visit and Average Length of Stay, 2019-2024

Indicators	2019	2022	2023	2024	% change 2023-2024
<i>Day Visitors</i>					
Total Day Visitor Spend (£mn)	423.8	425.7	470.15	457.41	-2.7%
Day Visitor Spend per Visit (£)	43.52	49.35	51.76	51.78	0.0%
<i>Staying Visitors</i>					
Total Staying Visitor Spend (£mn)	367.4	444.5	446.35	453.09	1.5%
Staying Visitor Spend per Visit (£)	269.55	315.21	301.10	324.80	7.9%
Staying Visitor Spend per Day (£)	90.93	100.11	97.51	101.98	4.6%
Average Length of Stay	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.2	-

Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

In 2024, day visitors spent an average of £51.78 per day, much the same as in 2023. By contrast, staying visitors spent almost twice as much per day (£101.98) which also represented a 4.6% increase in daily expenditure compared to 2023. Spend per visit also increased by 7.9%.

Average length of stay for staying visitors was 3.2 days, a slight increase compared to 2023.

3.2.4 Staying Visitors and Accommodation

Serviced accommodation was the most popular choice among staying visitors in both 2023 and 2024. 2 in 5 visitors chose to stay in serviced accommodation (40.5%) followed by staying with friends and family (34.8%), a similar picture to that in 2023 although

distribution differed. The serviced accommodation sector witnessed a decline in visitor arrivals of 5.4% while the non-serviced sector experienced an increase in arrivals of 5.7%. The staying with family and friends sector also declined slightly (0.9%).

Table 3.4: Staying Visitors' Arrivals in Accommodation, 2024

Visitor Arrivals (mn)	Serviced Accommodation	Non-serviced accommodation	SFR	Total
2022	0.573	0.345	0.492	1.41
2023	0.597	0.327	0.489	1.413
2024	0.565	0.346	0.485	1.395
% share 2024	40.5%	24.8%	34.8%	100.0%
% change 2023-2024	-5.4%	5.7%	-0.9%	-1.3%

Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

Overall, economic impact contribution by staying visitors in 2024 grew by a nominal 6.5% but in real terms increased by 1.5% once inflation was taken into account⁵.

The non-serviced sector experienced economic growth of 4.4%, in line with the increase in visitor arrivals. Consequently, the economic contribution made by non-serviced sector increased by 1.4 percentage points to 50.3%. The serviced accommodation sector and Staying with Friends and Relatives (SFR) declined by 1.4% and 0.9% respectively.

Table 3.5: Staying Visitors' Economic Impact in Accommodation, 2024

Economic Impact (£mn)	Serviced Accommodation	Non-serviced accommodation	SFR	Total
2022	163.45	223.63	57.37	444.45
2023	168.22	218.27	59.85	446.34
2024	165.81	227.94	59.34	453.09
% share 2024	36.6%	50.3%	13.1%	100.0%
% change 2023-2024	-1.4%	4.4%	-0.9%	1.5%

Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

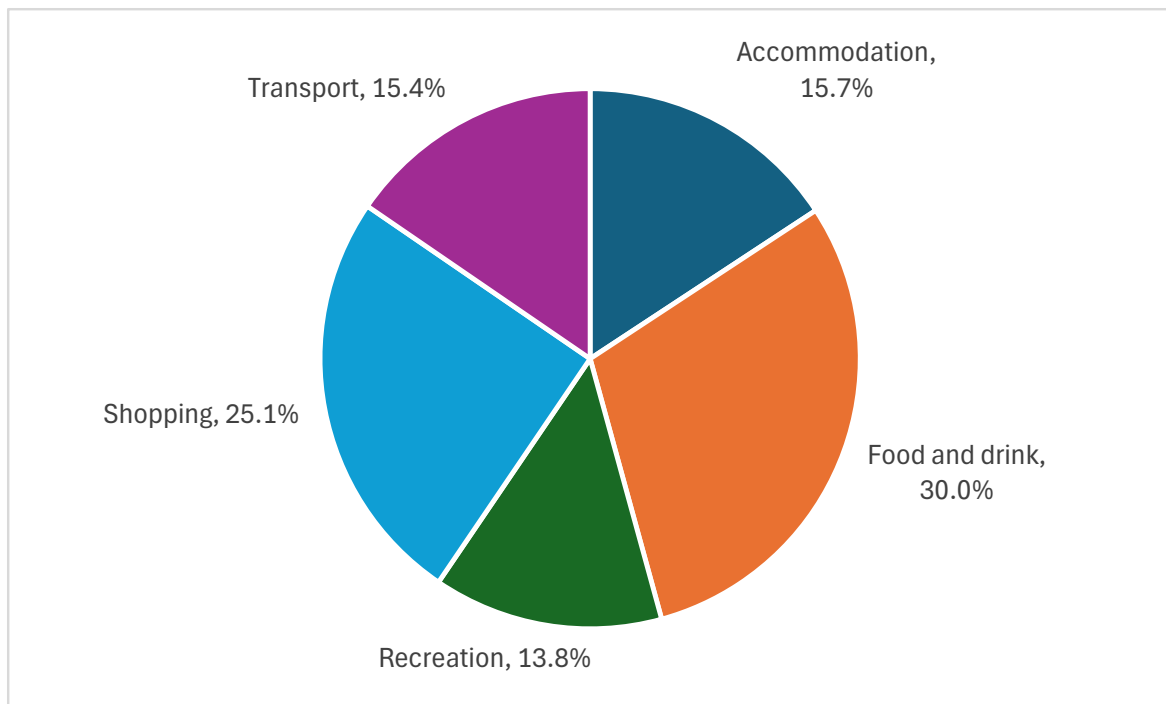
Overnight visitors staying in non-serviced accommodation stayed the longest (6.5 days). Serviced accommodation accounted for the fewest days (1.8 days) and staying with friends and relatives accounted for 2.4 days.

3.2.5 Expenditure by Sector

Expenditure on food and drink contributed the most to economic impact (30.0%) followed by shopping (25.1%) and accommodation (15.7%). All sectors witnessed decline, 0.6% overall. Accommodation experienced the slowest decline (0.4%) and shopping the highest (1.1%).

⁵ Economic impact 2023 figures indexed to 2024

Figure 3.1: Share of Expenditure Sector by Economic Impact, 2024



Source: STEAM Report for 2019-2024, Global Tourism Solutions

4. DOMESTIC TOURISM OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

4.1 Outlook for Domestic Tourism

The cost-of-living crisis is the key factor that has impacted domestic tourism in recent years. It has meant that many people prioritise their main summer holiday, often overseas, over short breaks in the UK. However, there were signs of recovery emerging in 2024 in terms of market volume and value. In particular, the demand for sustainable and local experiences provides opportunities for local providers. The desire for authentic breaks and eco-friendly holidays that support local communities and environments are especially pertinent for outdoor activity providers.

Leading market research agency Mintel believes the future for domestic tourism holidays is positive. Assuming a growing economy into 2025 and beyond, improved consumer confidence will enable British residents to take more holidays each year, and the ageing population creates opportunities to attract this age group who are keen to take holidays closer to home.

Other interesting findings from Mintel's research include:

- 59% of British nationals intend to take a domestic holiday in 2025.
- British people are keen to explore quieter destinations – 86% of those planning to take a holiday in the UK find less crowded destinations more appealing.
- Families of young children are a key market for domestic short breaks. 80% of parents with children under 18 planning a UK holiday are more likely to take a short break in the UK than travel overseas.
- While city breaks (40%) and beach holidays (36%) remain the most popular holiday types among respondents, cottage holidays in the countryside are the next most popular option (22%), and physical activity holidays, e.g., walking and cycling (15%) are more popular than a wellness break (9%).
- Regarding future intent, 40% of respondents indicate the desire to take a cottage holiday in the future, as do 21% to take a physical activity holiday.
- Last minute staycations are appealing to people of all ages.
- Older generations are less bothered by unfavourable weather conditions than their younger counterparts. The unpredictable UK weather would deter 53% of people aged 25-44 from booking a UK holiday, but only 33% of those aged 45-64, and 23% aged 65+

The West Midlands region is one of the least favoured regions to visit for a domestic holiday (9%), just above the East Midlands (8%). However, to capitalise on the trend for quieter, less visited places, opportunities for these regions include encouraging off-peak visits through discounts or packages in low seasons. Promoting unique local experiences and attractions and partnering with other businesses are other techniques commonly used.

4.2 Domestic Tourism Trends

As has already been outlined in the brief for the Development Plan for Walking, Cycling and Outdoor Activities, Shropshire is in an enviable position to take advantage of key trends that are shaping the outdoor activities sector. These include:

- **Health and well-being**, driven by the desire to improve and maintain health, even while on holiday or a leisure break. Outdoor activities like walking and cycling are well-known for their positive impact on health, and walking in particular is easily accessible by people of all ages and all abilities. Outdoor activities also have a close link with wellness that can be harnessed for benefit and are increasingly appealing to the 18–40-year-old audiences, the Millennials and Gen Z. This also links to the new **JOMO** trend, the Joy of Missing Out, the desire to switch off and tune out of the digital world.
- **Experiential tourism**, where tourists seek authentic, unique experiences that connect them more fully with the people and places they visit. In destinations like Shropshire, where the landscape is a major asset, authentic outdoor experiences should be a key feature of the tourism product.
- **Sustainability and ecotourism**, as people are ever more demanding that the places they visit are committed to sustainable practices that minimise harm and maximise benefits to people, places and planet.
- **Inclusivity**, making tourism and activities accessible to all. This involves recognising varying disabilities and differences, but also understands that age and other needs not related to disability are also important.
- **Use of technology**, where the creative use of apps can help enhance outdoor experiences through mapping and route planning, and provide useful information at point of need.
- **Family travel**. As we have seen, families in the UK are key markets for domestic holidays. This is a key benefit to providers of outdoor activities as parents' increasingly like to interact with their children, spending time together but also providing a learning experience for their children. This could be trying a new activity or enjoying something they like to do together in a different environment, to make memories and strengthen family bonds.

5. AUDIT OF CURRENT PRODUCT

5.1 Introduction

This section presents an overview of the existing walking, cycling, and outdoor activity opportunities in Shropshire, forming the foundation for the Walking, Cycling, and Outdoor Activities Development Plan. The findings are based on the audit currently being undertaken for the Great Outdoors website and an additional assessment and analysis of assessment infrastructure, projects and tourism-related services, covering walking, cycling, horse riding, water sports, cultural sites, accommodation, events, and online presence. These insights provide a clear picture of the current offer, establishing a basis for identifying strengths and areas for improvement across the county.

5.2 Existing Development Projects

As part of this assessment, 81 projects related to outdoor activities have been identified across Shropshire. These projects vary in scope, covering areas such as trail improvements, accessibility enhancements, tourism infrastructure, and sustainable visitor engagement. The assessment highlights a mix of ongoing, planned, and completed initiatives, reflecting a range of approaches to developing outdoor recreation across the county.

While many of these projects contribute indirectly to walking, cycling, and other outdoor activities, a subset has been identified as particularly relevant to the strategic objectives outlined earlier. These projects focus on improving access to outdoor spaces, enhancing trail usability, and integrating cultural and natural heritage into the visitor experience.

The geographic distribution of projects shows a concentration in the Shropshire Hills and Marches region, where outdoor tourism activities are well represented. Fewer projects have been identified in the north and west of the county, where outdoor recreation infrastructure appears to be less developed.

Regarding infrastructure and accessibility, some projects aim to improve access to outdoor spaces, such as the All-Ability Trail initiative, which includes an accessible walking route. There are also projects related to wayfinding and visitor information, such as the Shropshire Hills Visitors Map. Fewer projects specifically address cycling infrastructure compared to walking-related developments.

Projects related to cultural and heritage integration include initiatives such as the March the Marches project, which references Offa's Dyke as a cultural asset, and the Shropshire Hills Visitors Map, which incorporates walking and cycling routes linked to historical landmarks.

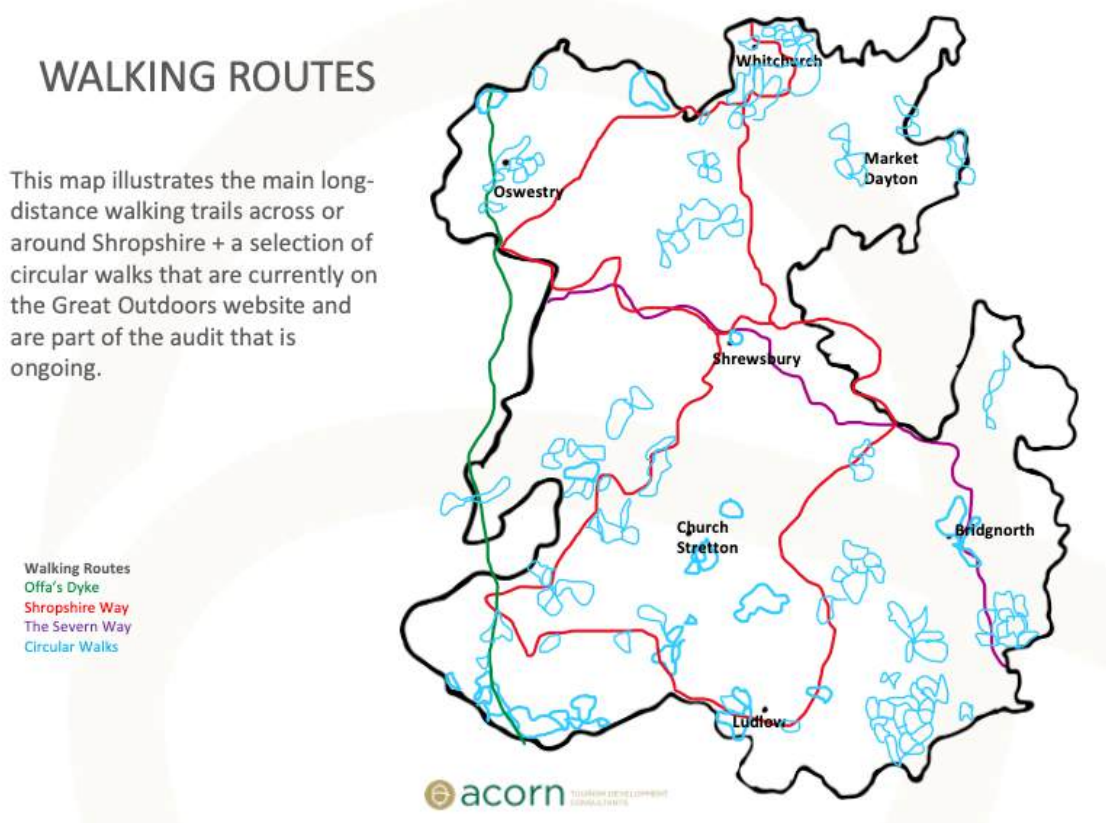
5.3 Walking Routes

The walking routes reviewed for this assessment are those audited for the Great Outdoors website, focusing on established long-distance trails and circular walks. The main walking routes include:

- Offa's Dyke Path
- Shropshire Way
- The Severn Way
- Circular Walks

Walking routes are distributed across the county, with Shropshire Hills, Ellesmere, and Ludlow being particularly well-served with scenic trails. Many routes traverse natural landscapes, river valleys, and historic sites, creating a strong link between outdoor recreation and cultural tourism. Certain areas, such as Shrewsbury, Ironbridge, and Ludlow, feature walking trails that pass near historical landmarks, stone circles, and archaeological sites, providing opportunities for heritage-based walking experiences. The assessment notes differences in trail infrastructure, waymarking, and connectivity to public transport across the routes. Some routes include circular options, while others follow long-distance paths that connect different counties.

Figure 5.1: Main Long Distance Walking Trails and Circular Walks



5.4 Cycling Routes

The cycling routes reviewed in this assessment have been taken from the Great Outdoors website, focusing on the National Cycle Network, local cycleways, bridleways and designated leisure cycling paths. The key routes considered include:

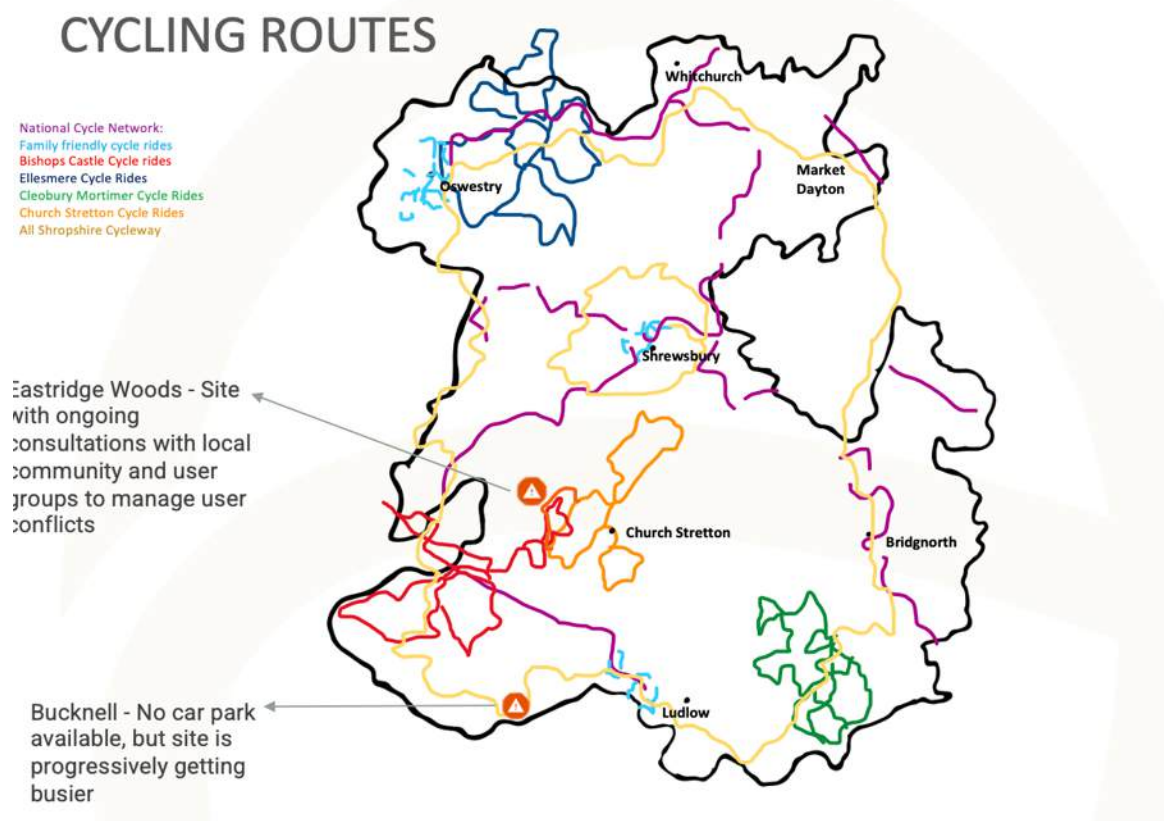
- National Cycle Network (Shropshire sections)
- Family-Friendly Cycle Rides
- Shropshire Cycleway
- Bishops Castle, Church Stretton & Cleobury Mortimer Cycle Rides

Cycling routes are present in different parts of the county, with several of them located around Ludlow and North Shropshire. The assessment showed variations in cycle lane infrastructure, signage, and connectivity between cycling destinations. Some areas include facilities such as bike hire stations and cycle-friendly accommodations, while others do not have these provisions identified.

Some routes serve as multi-user paths, including the Bishop's Castle to Craven Arms route, where different factors such as landowner agreements and environmental considerations are noted. Certain routes follow off-road or traffic-free sections, while others are part of road-sharing infrastructure.

The assessment also identified specific locations with noted issues. As shown in the map below, at Eastridge Woods, there are ongoing consultations with local communities and user groups to address conflicts between different types of users. In Bucknell, the site is experiencing an increase in usage, but no parking facilities have been identified, which may affect access and visitor experience.

Figure 5.2: Existing Cycling Routes



5.5 Horse Riding Routes

The horse-riding routes reviewed in this assessment have been taken from the Great Outdoors website, focusing on bridleways and long-distance equestrian trails. The key routes considered include:

- The Jack Mytton Way
- Humphrey Kynaston Way
- Blue Remembered Hills
- Circular routes:
 - The Betchcott Ride
 - Baschurch circular
 - The Ratlinghope Ride
 - Montford Circular
 - The Habberley Valley Ride
 - Nesscliffe Circular
 - The Minton Hill Ride
 - The Stiperstones Ride
 - The Wenlock Edge Ride
 - Rushbury Ride
 - The Acton Scott Ride
 - Wetnor Ride
 - The Acton Burnell Ride
 - Lyth Hil Circular Ride

Horse riding routes are present in different parts of the county, with several trails located around Ludlow, Shrewsbury, and the Shropshire Hills. The assessment identifies differences in bridleway connectivity, signage, and rider facilities across various locations. Some areas include established bridleways, while others show fewer dedicated horse-riding routes.

The review also includes observations on equestrian infrastructure, noting existing facilities and areas where integration with other outdoor activities is present. Certain locations have marked bridleways and connections to long-distance trails, while others indicate gaps in equestrian infrastructure.

Figure 5.3: Horse Riding Routes

HORSE RIDING ROUTES

1. Humphrey Kynaston Way
2. Blue Remembered Hills bridleway
3. Jack Mytton Way
4. Sabrina Way
5. Kerry Ridgeway
6. Long Distance Ride
7. Circular rides
8. Circular Bridleway



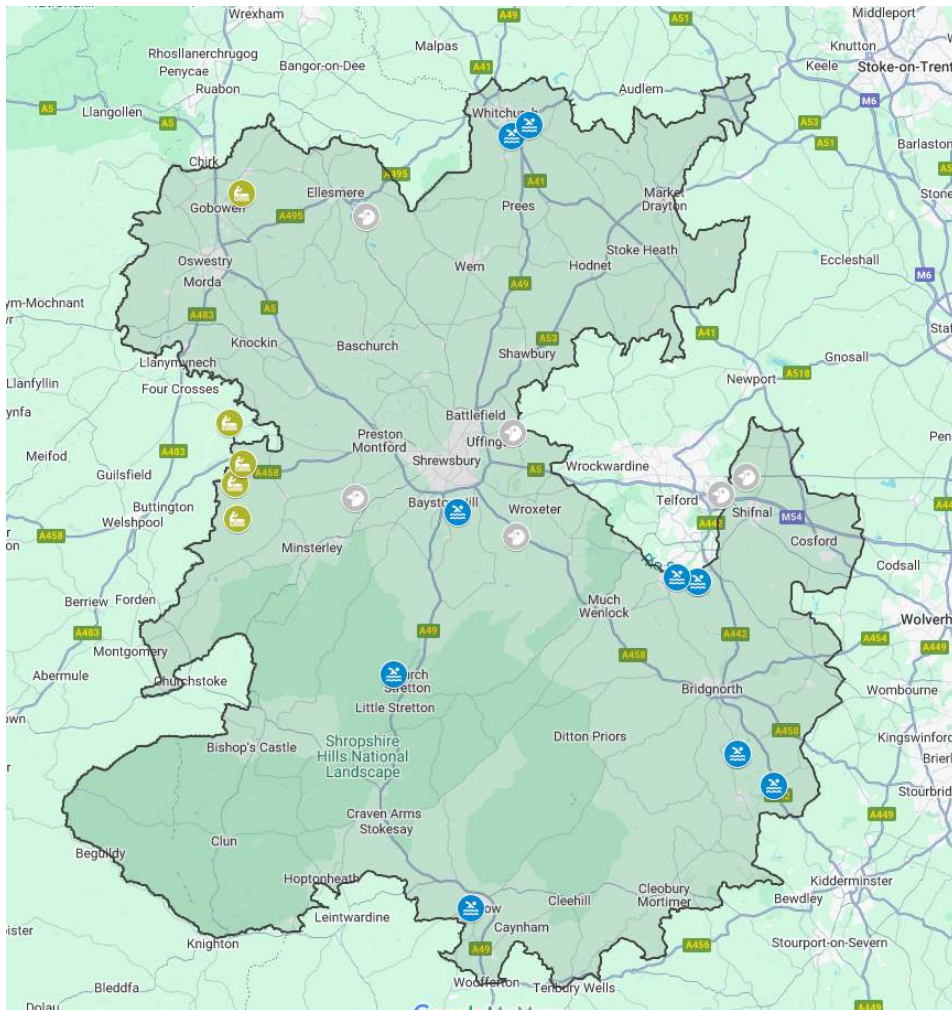
5.6 Water Sports

The water sports locations reviewed in this assessment have been identified through desk research and stakeholder insights, which informed the development of the [Outdoor Activities Interactive Map](#). This map provides a visual representation of key locations where water-based activities, such as swimming, canoeing, and kayaking, take place across Shropshire.

The assessment outlines formal and informal water-based activity sites, primarily located near Ellesmere, the River Severn, and reservoirs across the county. Figure 5 below illustrates the distribution of these water sports locations, highlighting sites where canoeing, kayaking, and swimming are commonly practiced. The map also identifies canal restoration projects, which may introduce new opportunities for expanding water-based recreation.

As shown in Figure 5.4, water sports locations are concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the county, particularly around major waterways such as the River Severn and the lakes in Ellesmere. While some locations are situated near existing walking and cycling routes, others lack clear connections to outdoor activity networks, presenting opportunities for better integration and accessibility improvements.

Figure 5.4: Distribution of Water Sports Locations

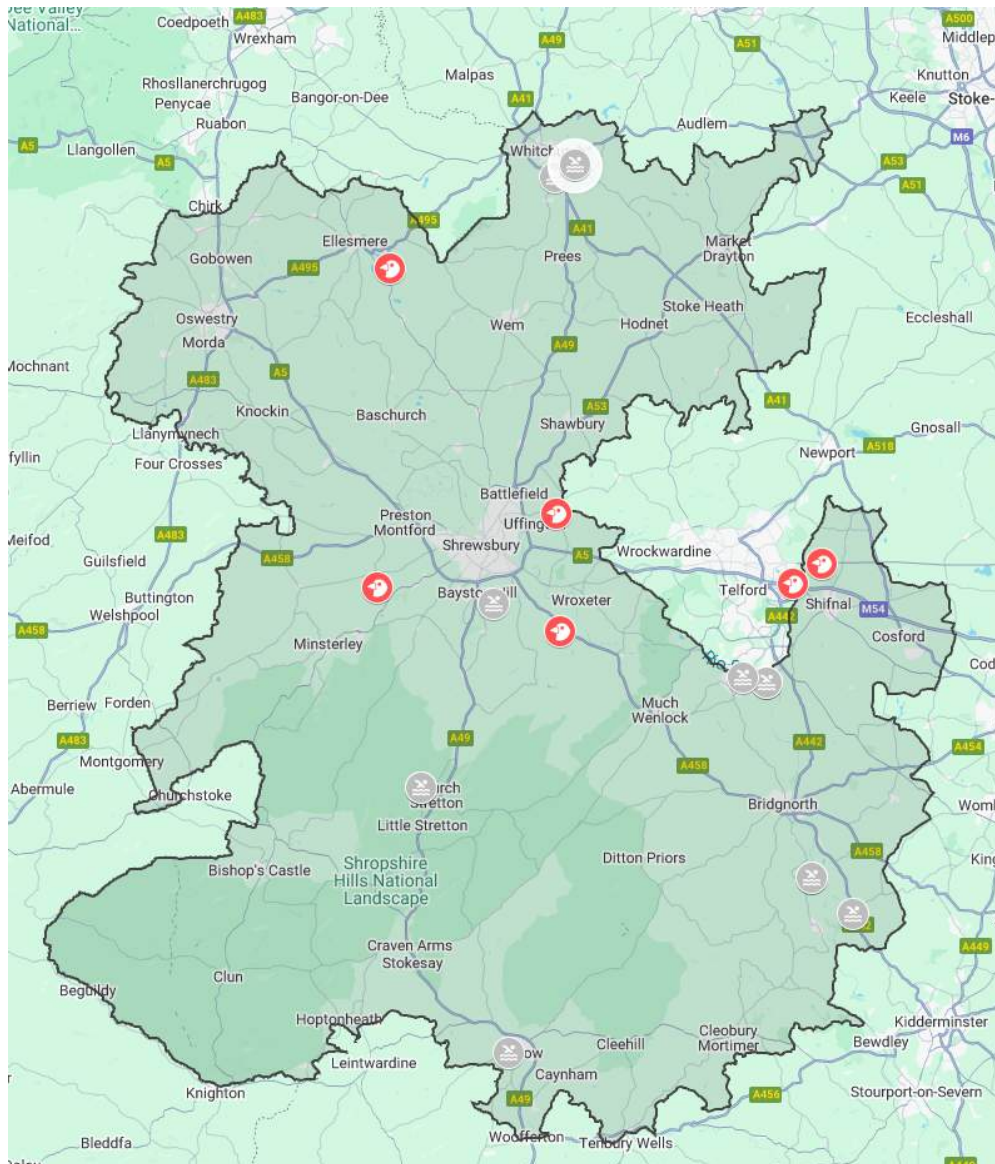


5.7 Birdwatching

The birdwatching locations reviewed in this assessment have been identified through desk research and stakeholder insights, which informed the development of the [Outdoor Activities Interactive Map](#). As shown in Figure 5.5, this map visually represents key birdwatching locations across Shropshire, including nature reserves, wetlands, and other habitats that attract diverse bird species.

Figure 6.5 illustrates the distribution of major birdwatching sites, including Venus Pool, Haughmond Hill, Priorslee Balancing Lake, Eardington Nature Reserve, and Severn Valley Country Park. These locations span wetlands, woodlands, and open countryside, providing crucial habitats for species such as Meadow Pipits, waders, and wintering waterfowl.

Figure 5.5: Distribution of Birdwatching Locations Across Shropshire

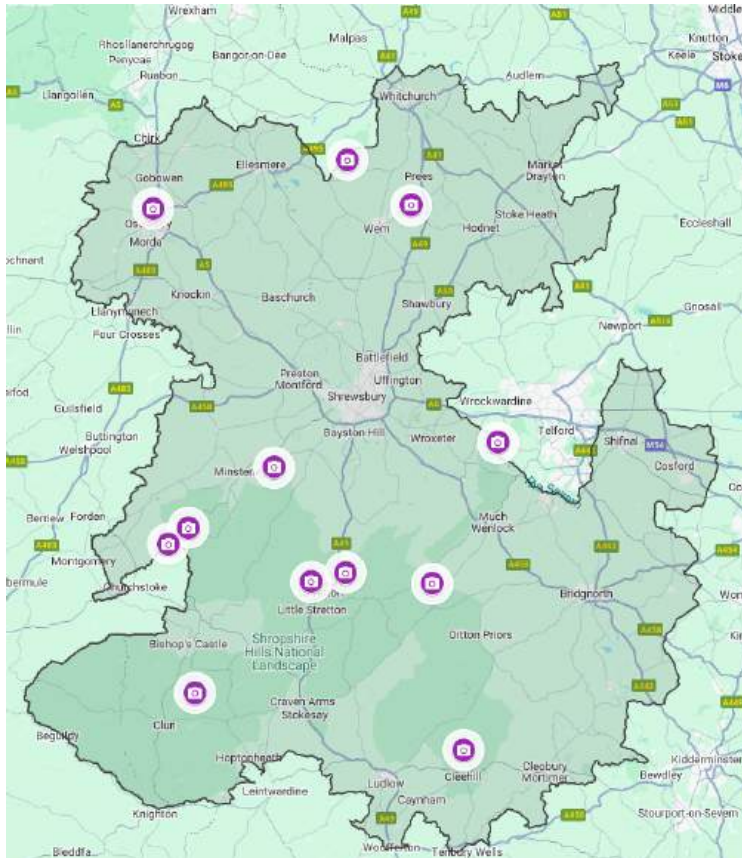


5.8 Cultural sights

The cultural sites reviewed in this assessment have been identified through desk research, compiling information on historical and archaeological sites located in outdoor settings across Shropshire. The assessment includes stone circles, hill forts, and other culturally significant locations that are accessible for outdoor recreation.

Figure 5.6 highlights a variety of cultural locations, including Mitchell's Fold and Hoarstones stone circles, as well as Old Oswestry Hill Fort, Bury Ditches Hill Fort, and Caer Caradoc Hill Fort. These sites are positioned in rural and upland landscapes, with several located near existing walking routes. Some are already integrated into long-distance trails or circular walks, while others are in areas where walking access could be further developed.

Figure 5.6: Distribution of Cultural Sites



5.9 Accommodation

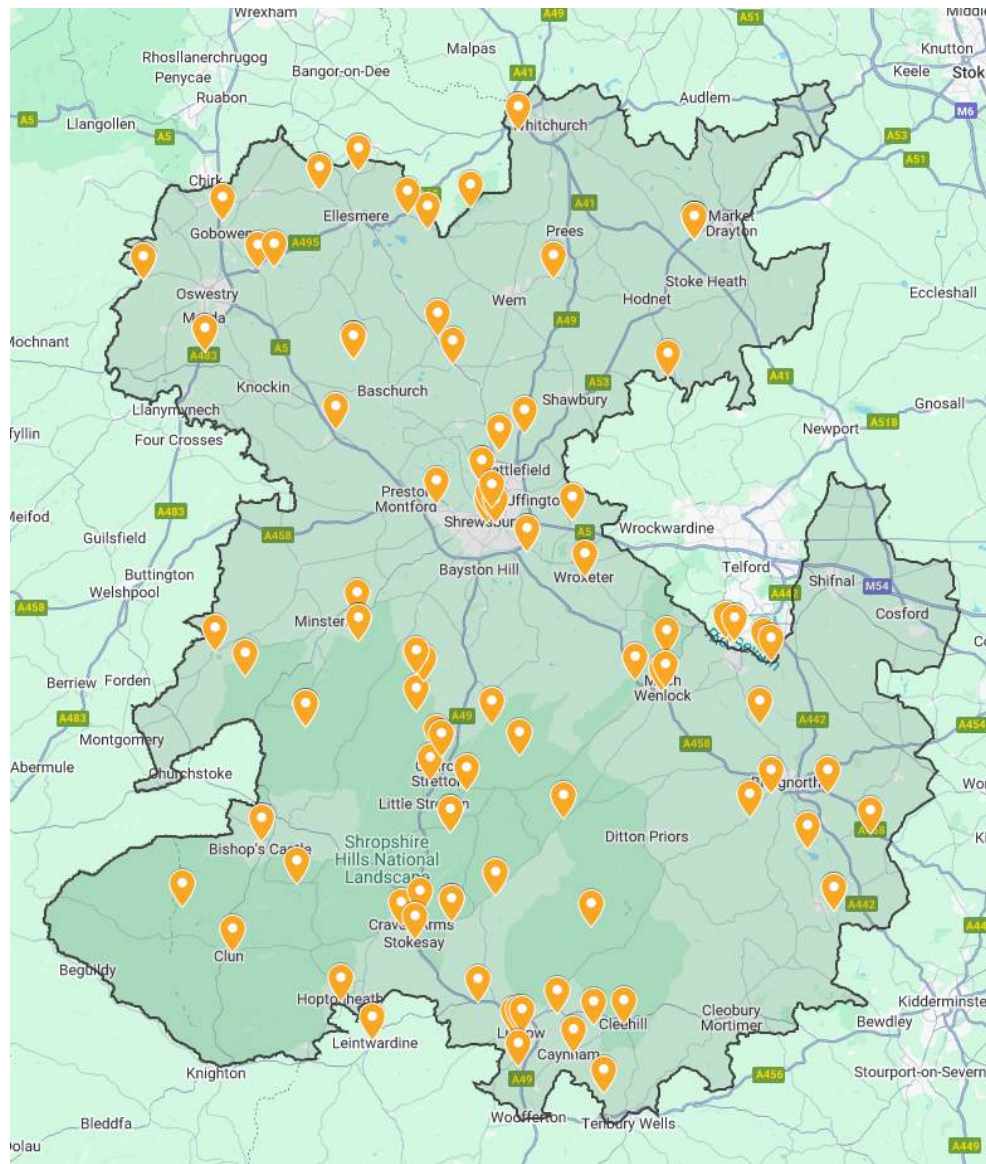
The accommodations reviewed in this assessment have been identified through Booking.com, Visit England, Visit Shropshire, and Airbnb, focusing on listings that promote outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, horse riding, and water sports. The assessment provides an overview of accommodation types and their distribution across Shropshire, based on information from these listings.

Accommodations are primarily concentrated in regions with well-established outdoor activities, particularly walking and cycling. The Shropshire Hills and Ludlow have a notable number of accommodations promoting these activities. Walking-friendly stays are commonly found near established trail networks, while cycling-friendly accommodations are more frequently listed around Ludlow and its surrounding countryside.

The assessment also highlights variations in accommodation offerings for different types of outdoor activities. While walking and cycling are widely promoted, there are fewer accommodations specifically advertising horse riding and water sports. This suggests potential gaps in marketing or infrastructure to support these activities.

Additionally, several accommodations highlight Shropshire's historical and cultural significance, with some promoting heritage experiences alongside outdoor activities. Figure 5.7, a screenshot from the Outdoor Activities Audit Map, illustrates how accommodations catering to outdoor activities are distributed across Shropshire.

Figure 5.7: Distribution of Outdoor-Focused Accommodations in Shropshire



5.10 Sustainable Accommodation

Currently, seven accommodations in Shropshire have obtained Green Tourism Certification at Bronze, Silver, or Gold levels. This certification recognises businesses that demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility, such as reducing carbon emissions, minimising waste, and promoting local and ethical sourcing. Expanding the number of eco-certified accommodations and integrating them into Shropshire's outdoor activity marketing could help attract eco-conscious travellers and further support the county's position as an outdoor and nature-based tourism destination.

5.11 Events

The events reviewed in this assessment include walking festivals, trail-running races, food and cultural festivals, and agricultural shows held across Shropshire. The data has

been compiled from Visit Shropshire, Shropshire Festivals, and other publicly available sources. These events reflect a mix of outdoor recreation, endurance sports, heritage tourism, and seasonal festivities.

A significant number of events focus on walking and running, indicating that these activities are well-established in Shropshire.

- Walking festivals such as the Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival, Bishop's Castle Walking Festival, and the Ironbridge to Much Wenlock Walk feature prominently, showcasing the region's scenic landscapes and attracting a mix of casual walkers and long-distance hikers.
- Running events, including the Shropshire Way 80k, Mammoth, Comer Woods Trail Runs, and the Piece of Cake Trail Marathon, cater to trail runners, highlighting the county's appeal for endurance athletes.

While there are numerous opportunities for water-based activities and adventure sports in Shropshire, no dedicated water sports festivals were identified in the assessment.

- Events such as Shropshire Raft Tours and canoe/kayak outings are available but are not part of larger festival programs.
- Additionally, no adventure-based festivals—such as climbing competitions, survival challenges, or multi-sport adventure races—were listed, indicating a potential gap in outdoor event offerings.
- These events integrate local gastronomy with outdoor experiences, contributing to the region's food tourism appeal.
- Additionally, seasonal festivals such as the Shrewsbury Flower Show and Shropshire Petal Fields Festival add diversity to outdoor event offerings.
- However, these festivals primarily focus on food and drink rather than outdoor experiences such as guided food walks, foraging tours, or farm-based adventure experiences.

Family-friendly outdoor festivals are limited, with Camp Severn - Kids Festival being one of the few explicitly designed for families.

- While some walking and running events may be suitable for families, they are not marketed specifically as family-focused outdoor experiences.
- Events such as junior obstacle courses, nature-based scavenger hunts, or multi-generational outdoor challenges were not identified in the assessment.

The seasonal distribution of events shows a higher concentration during spring and summer, with fewer outdoor events in autumn and winter.

1. Spring (March-May): Features walking festivals, trail races, and flower shows.
2. Summer (June-August): Includes food festivals, agricultural shows, and endurance races.

3. Autumn (September-November): Features some road races and late-season walking events.
4. Winter (December-February): No notable outdoor events listed.

The assessment highlights that most outdoor events are concentrated in warmer months, with fewer activities programmed for autumn and winter.

5.12 Online Marketing Position

The online visibility of Shropshire's outdoor activities was assessed through search engine analysis, TripAdvisor visibility tests, and keyword ranking reviews. This assessment identifies which platforms dominate search results and where content gaps exist.

Google search results indicate that many outdoor activities in Shropshire are more visible through general searches than within TripAdvisor's internal search function. When searching via Google, pages that are indexed and SEO-optimised appear prominently, often revealing TripAdvisor listings that do not always show up when searching directly within TripAdvisor. The TripAdvisor search algorithm prioritises paid listings and high-engagement activities, which means that many Shropshire-based outdoor experiences remain hidden within its internal search system unless viewed through Google.

A keyword analysis was conducted using search terms related to outdoor activities in Shropshire, including walking, cycling, adventure tourism, horse riding, birdwatching, family holidays, water sports, and eco-tourism. Findings indicate that Great Outdoors performs well across multiple outdoor categories, including walking, cycling, and general adventure activities, while Visit Shropshire appears in various tourism searches but does not rank as strongly for adventure tourism or water sports. Additionally, third-party platforms such as TripAdvisor, AllTrails, Komoot, and Facebook frequently outrank official tourism websites, suggesting that visitors rely more on these external sources for outdoor activity information.

Walking and cycling content ranks highly in search results, with niche platforms such as Cicerone Press and Sustrans providing detailed route planning resources. In contrast, adventure activities appear more fragmented, with private providers like Manor Adventure, The Edge Adventure, and JCA Adventure dominating search results. Birdwatching content is strongly represented by expert-led platforms like Shropshire Ornithological Society, Jim Almond, and Fat Birder, while horse riding activities are promoted primarily through independent stables such as Horsetreks, Walcot Stables, and Springhill Farm, rather than through a centralised tourism strategy. Family holiday searches tend to focus more on accommodations such as Landal, Farm Stay UK, and Hoseasons rather than activity-based experiences.

5.13 Bookable Experiences (Packages)

The availability of bookable outdoor experiences in Shropshire was assessed through Expedia, Airbnb Experiences, Tripadvisor, and other online travel platforms. The

assessment reviewed how outdoor activities are listed, where they are primarily available, and how they are presented across booking platforms.

Search results for outdoor activities in Shropshire on Expedia and Airbnb Experiences returned limited direct listings, with many results redirecting to locations outside the county, particularly in Llangollen and Froncysyllte, Wales. On Expedia, the only listed experience specifically under Shropshire was the Air Force Museum, while all water-based activities were located outside the county. No experiences for Shropshire were found on Airbnb Experiences, suggesting that local operators may not be utilising the platform.

A review of Tripadvisor's internal search function revealed that only a limited number of outdoor activities appeared under Shropshire. However, using Google search in incognito mode, additional activities surfaced that were not visible within Tripadvisor itself. These included canoe hire, rafting, paddleboarding, and kayaking in Shrewsbury and Ironbridge, as well as guided walking tours and national trails. Horse-riding experiences such as pony trekking and equestrian centre visits were also identified through Google but were not always prominently listed within Tripadvisor's internal results.

Outdoor activities in Shropshire appear to be fragmented across multiple booking platforms. Some are listed on Tripadvisor and local business websites, while others rely on activity-specific platforms like Komoot and AllTrails. There is no centralised system where visitors can browse and book activities in one place. Water-based activities, such as canoeing and kayaking, are available through provider websites and Google Maps, while guided walking tours and cycling routes are spread across blogs, tourism websites, and niche platforms. Adventure activities, including climbing, survival skills, and gliding, are mainly marketed by private operators rather than through mainstream travel booking sites.

The assessment also observed that many outdoor experiences are primarily found through Google searches, social media, and third-party review platforms, rather than through Shropshire's official tourism websites. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Google My Business rank highly in searches, with independent businesses marketing their services independently, leading to inconsistent visibility across different platforms.

6. SWOT Analysis

6.1 Strengths

Diverse Trail Network

- Multiple long-distance trails (Offa's Dyke Path, Shropshire Way, Severn Way) cater to all levels, from flat riverside paths to challenging hill climbs. Themed trails link castles, museums, and nature reserves, attracting cultural and nature enthusiasts.
- Family-friendly and all-ability routes (e.g., The Bog Centre's accessible trails).
- Strong potential for developing a signature cycling route, such as the Shropshire Cycleway or an End-to-End route.
- Existing walking networks provide opportunities for circular and themed routes (e.g. dog-friendly, wellness walks).
- Cycling provides opportunities for wildlife observation, particularly at reserves and rural landscapes, enhancing nature-based tourism experiences.

Natural & Cultural Assets

- Mostly unspoilt natural environment due to a high proportion of National Landscape, low population density and relatively low visitor numbers
- Rich ecological diversity: heathlands, peat bogs (Marches Mosses), woodlands, and river valleys.
- Integration of heritage sites: Shrewsbury Museum, Ludlow Castle, Clun Castle, and Offa's Dyke.
- Seasonal appeal: spring wildflower walks, autumn foliage tours.
- The River Severn has strong potential as a flagship outdoor activity hub, integrating canoeing, walking, and cycling.
- Opportunities to expand heritage and archaeology tourism linked to outdoor activities.

Sustainability & Community Engagement

- Projects like the Stepping Stones Project combine visitor access with habitat conservation.
- Wide range of local outdoor activity user groups especially walking and cycling (e.g. Ramblers, Breeze UK women's cycle groups, Aqua Swim)
- Strong local community involvement in trail maintenance and heritage preservation.
- Public transport options, primarily trains via Shrewsbury and Church Stretton Shuttle in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape contribute to reducing car use and emissions.
- Growing interest in conservation tourism, with visitors willing to pay for nature-based and heritage skills experiences.
- Sustainable tourism opportunities through equestrian routes, cycling, walking and water-based activities.

Supportive Infrastructure

- Good access to Shrewsbury by road, rail and bus.
- Good accommodation availability along major trails, including walker-friendly services (e.g., packed lunches).
- Train stations near trailheads (e.g., Shrewsbury, Craven Arms) facilitate access for car-free visitors.
- Museums incorporate/ encourage walking tourism (e.g., Shrewsbury Museum’s “Fire & Earth” exhibit).
- Strong base of outdoor events, such as trail running championships and walking festivals, which can be better promoted.
- Equine tourism infrastructure exists but needs expansion for horse-friendly accommodations and services.

Water-Based and other Outdoor Activities

- The longest stretch of the River Severn, England’s longest river, runs through Shropshire.
- Paddleboarding, canoeing, and kayaking opportunities in rivers, lakes, and meres (e.g., Ellesmere Mere).
- Wild swimming hotspots particularly along the River Severn.
- Horse riding routes and bridleways, especially in the Shropshire Hills and Wenlock Edge, catering to both beginners and experienced riders.
- Birdwatching and nature-based activities linked to conservation projects like the Marches Mosses.
- Cycling routes that integrate with walking trails, offering multi-activity possibilities.
- Potential to create multi-activity tourism packages combining walking, cycling, and paddling experiences.
- Shropshire is an emerging destination for bushcraft, digital detox, and well-being retreats.
- The Montgomery Canal extension project will allow a traffic-free cycling route from Ellesmere to Llanymynech, with further links to Llangollen and Chirk Castle.
-

Target Markets and Events

- Outdoor activity offers appeals to a wide range of niche market and demographics
- Large urban markets (including Birmingham, Wolverhampton) within 2 hours drive.
- More than 30 different walking and cycling events from Easter to October.

6.2 Weaknesses

Infrastructure and Accessibility Challenges

- Overcrowding at hotspots (Carding Mill Valley, Attingham Park) and underdeveloped trail infrastructure in less-promoted areas.
- School groups concentrate on a few key sites increasing visitor pressure.

- Limited facilities for children, older visitors, and people with special needs.
- Water-based activity gaps: Few designated kayak/canoes launch points and limited paddleboard rental options.
- Inconsistent accessibility for wild swimming and paddleboarding spots due to water safety concerns
- Equestrian infrastructure gaps: Limited horse-riding trails and weak bridleway connectivity.
- Inadequate signage, public transport gaps, and outdated information in rural areas.
- Need for Walkers and Cyclist welcome accommodation.
- Need for more equestrian-friendly low cost accommodations with secure horse stabling.
- Road crossings and loose dogs present safety concerns for horse riders.
- The designated cycling routes out of town are quite discontinuous, with difficult road crossings, making cycling daunting for less confident riders.
- Cycling infrastructure is often inaccessible for all-ability cyclists, such as those using tricycles or tandem-assisted riding, due to barriers and solid kerbs.
- Poor road surfaces in both urban and rural areas create safety hazards for cyclists and other outdoor activity participants.
- Presence of hazards such as glass, thorns, and mud on cycling routes and shared pathways negatively impacts outdoor recreation experiences.

Environmental & Maintenance Issues

- Lack of accessible green space with adequate facilities close to picnic sites (parking, toilets, catering, benches) and play provision.
- Trail maintenance underfunded—especially on quieter routes—leading to overgrowth and safety concerns.
- Over reliance on volunteers to maintain Public Rights of Way network.
- Urgent need to find creative ways to fund route maintenance especially if increased visits are generated by promotion
- Littering, dog fouling, and off-leash dogs causing wildlife disturbances.
- Vulnerable ecosystems suffer from high footfall without proper management.
- Water quality concerns in rivers and meres, impacting wild swimming and paddleboarding opportunities
- Seasonal trail damage, requiring sustainable funding for maintenance.
- Erosion and conservation concern due to increased outdoor activity use.
- Landowner resistance to opening more access points for water sports and equestrian routes.
- Uncontrolled dogs create safety issues for walkers and cyclists, increasing the risk of accidents and injuries.

Visitor Experience Limitations

- Lack of a unified digital platform for trail maps, closures, and public transport info.
- Some accommodation providers resist one-night stays, limiting multi-day itineraries.
- Tensions between user groups (walkers, cyclists, horse riders) in certain areas.
- Seasonal fluctuations impact tourism businesses.

- Limited promotion of walking, cycling, and water-based routes, despite strong product potential.
- Water quality perception concerns impact wild swimming and paddling appeal.
- Lack of coordination between outdoor activity groups (e.g., horse riders, cyclists, runners).
- Lack of printed maps (e.g. Shropshire Cycle Way)
- Promotion to hard-to-reach groups, need to use images with multi ethnicity.
- Majority of visitors don't travel more than one km away from picnic spots or parking.

6.3 Opportunities

Diversifying Visitor Experiences

Signature Routes

- Develop signature walking, cycling and equestrian routes to position Shropshire as a top destination for adventure tourism.

Walking

- Develop themed itineraries (e.g., Castles and Countryside, Food and Walk) linking cultural heritage and natural landscapes.
- Promote “multi-activity” itineraries blending walking, cycling, paddling, and cultural stops.
- Introduce short, interactive walking loops for families and educational trails highlighting local ecology.

Cycling

- Strengthen branding of Shropshire as a premier cycle touring destination, leveraging low-traffic routes and cycling-friendly public transport.
- Repackage the Shropshire Cycleway with updated maps, GPX files, and waymarking to increase its visibility and usability.
- Develop and promote the Offa's Dyke Path Cycle Route (Chepstow to Prestatyn) as a long-distance cycling challenge with strong branding potential.
- Improved transport integration could strengthen Shropshire's positioning as the Cycle Touring Capital of the West Midlands.

Watersports

- Expand Outdoor Recreation including paddleboarding, kayaking, and wild swimming routes in safe, designated areas.
- Enhance canoeing and kayaking along the River Severn with better access points and infrastructure.

Riding

- Enhance bridleways for horse riding and create multi-use trails that minimize user conflicts.

Nature

- Introduce seasonal activities (e.g., guided bird-watching, wildflower tours, and mushroom foraging)

Leveraging Technology and Marketing

- Promote underused trails (e.g., Marches Mosses) to disperse visitors and ease pressure on honeypots.
- Mark horse-riding trails, canoe/kayak launches, and wild swimming zones.
- Events: Promote trail running and outdoor sports events more effectively to attract national audiences.
- Create a unified digital hub integrating maps, transport info, and trail updates (e.g., Shropshire's Great Outdoors).
- Use QR codes for historical facts and wildlife spotting along trails.
- Interactive Mapping for Outdoor Activities: Include water safety alerts for paddlers and wild swimmers.
- Develop an app for mapping routes, sharing real-time trail conditions, and reporting issues.
- Increase marketing through influencer campaigns and social media storytelling.

Expand promotion of routes using Komoot and Cycle.travel to target a wider audience of outdoor enthusiasts.

Sustainability & Community Growth

- Expand conservation education within itineraries to attract eco-conscious travellers.
- Encourage “walker/cyclist-friendly” accommodations with luggage transfers and bike storage.
- Support Nature-Based Tourism with eco-friendly paddling and swimming spots with minimal ecological impact.
- Partner with nature reserves for guided activities (e.g., wetland exploration, wildlife photography tours).
- Partner with local businesses to create packages that combine nature, food, and heritage.
- Strengthen support for walking leader training programs to develop local expertise and promote sustainable outdoor tourism.

Develop Shrewsbury as a ‘hub and spoke’ destination for outdoor activities.

- Good transport access to Shrewsbury from NW, Wales, East Midlands, London

- Combined with links signature Shropshire Way walking and cycling routes, rail and bus public transport routes and Severn River

Create Signature routes: focus on established routes

- **Walking:** Shropshire Way + circular loops
- Running: Hills, road and
- **Cycling:** Shropshire Cycle Way + circular loops / country lane network/
- **Watersports:** The Severn Way –
- **Riding:** Jack Mytton Way
- **Family friendly:** Canal Tow Paths + Ellesmere
- **Birdwatching**
- Strengthen relationships with suppliers to build options for accommodation, local food, local cultural activities
- Work with **specialist tour operators to create packages**

Create Themed Route linked to public transport

- **Rail Rambles and Cycle train** – tap West Midlands population; develop North – South rail pass?

Create local accommodation activity hubs + link to Events calendar

- Work with accommodation providers to create a base for car free itineraries using local activities, heritage, food/drink, public transport links

Themed and Circular walks – for specific niche interests

- Hills, history and heritage (fell running)
- Holistic health walks (yoga, eco conscious accommodation, local produce)
- (4x4 – 4 pedals 4 swims)
- Walk Taste Sip - tasting walks/ cycles/ tastings

Income Generation

- Events income to contribute to maintenance
- Private sector businesses – market opportunity to promote provision of parking and toilet to drive business
- Honesty boxes for parking, toilets (can be done digitally)

Sustainability

- Potential for Shropshire to position itself as a sustainable destinations (e.g. Green Destinations Top 100 Best Practice Story Competition)
- Audit of certified accommodation
- Use of Good Travel Scan to assess and support sustainability of sector

6.4 Threats

Environmental Pressures

- Flooding and heavy rainfall impact riverside walks (e.g., Severn Way), causing erosion and temporary closures.
- Overuse of popular sites leads to habitat fragmentation, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss.
- Poor water quality in rivers and lakes limits paddleboarding, kayaking, and wild swimming opportunities.
- Increased water-based activities may disrupt aquatic ecosystems and nesting habitats.
- Climate change risks: droughts, wildfires, and changing wildlife patterns.

Operational and Funding Challenges

- Key projects depend on external funding and volunteers, risking sustainability.
- Closure threats for underfunded trails and visitor centres reduce accessibility.
- Maintenance costs exceed budgets for conservation and infrastructure repairs.
- Difficulty securing consistent funding for voluntary groups managing trails
- Seasonal overcrowding strains infrastructure and exacerbates waste management issues.
- Limited facilities (e.g., safe launching points, changing areas) restrict paddling and wild swimming growth.
- Safety risks linked to outdoor activities (e.g., wild swimming, horse riding) may increase liability costs for operators.

Visitor Management and Competition

- Insufficient public transport increases reliance on cars, raising carbon emissions.
- Competition from neighbouring regions with established cycle routes and water-based tourism (e.g., Wales).
- Accommodation restrictions on one-night stays hinder multi-day itineraries.
- Resistance from landowners complicates expansion of multi-user trails.
- Increased use of shared trails by walkers, cyclists, horse riders, and paddlers may heighten tensions.
- Limited lifeguard coverage and poor signage in wild swimming areas can pose risks to visitors.
- Technology (e.g., Strava route sharing) can lead to increased visitor traffic in unsuitable conservation areas.

Technology

- Digital platforms may drive visitors to ecologically sensitive areas without proper oversight.
- Lack of comprehensive online marketing strategy leads to under-promotion of key outdoor experiences.

7. Consultation List

1. Individual Stakeholders Consultation Interviews	
Simon Cooter	Senior Reserves Manager at the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve
Keith Blundell	March the Marches Forward Partnership
Nigel Mc Donald	Sustainable Tourism Officer, Shropshire Hills National Landscape
Edwards Andrews	Country Park Manager (Colmer and Mere)
Grant Wilson	Manager at The Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre
Peter Bowyer	Natural England
Fay Bailey	Shropshire Council-Museums
Kaitlyn Elverson	Forestry England - Community Engagement
Christina O'Carroll	Celtic Trails
Jessica Bradbury	Energize Shropshire

2. Walking Workshop Attendee's	
Ben Chapman	HF Holidays
Simon Cooter	Natural England
Helen Earley	School Farm holidays
John Gooding	Mayfair Centre Church Stretton
Trish Hall	Heather and stone
William Allen	Shropshire Shamblers
Pete Banford	Shropshire Council
John Brewer	Shropshire Way Association
Harriet Dearden	Andali Events
Amanda Hartley-Newton	Shropshire Way Association and Shrewsbury Ramblers
Andrew Silvey	Andali Events
Helen Upson	Offa's Dyke Conservation Project
Charles Edwards	Ludlow Walkers are Welcome & Parish Paths Partnership
Gwyneth Edwards	Ludlow Walkers are Welcome
Kevin Robinson	Kington Walks
Arthur Edmonds	Trefonen & Treflach P3 Group
Maggie Hill	Oswestry Ramblers
Dennis Powell	Mere Ambles
Roger Ward	Mere Ambles
Elise Johnson	Attingham Park - National Trust
John Mattocks	Co-ordinator for Rail Rambles
Pamela Swales	Secretary Rail Rambles
Christina Anderson	Clun Walking book

Mary Bason	Clungunford P3
Sue Hill	Clun Walking book
jerry Hughes	The Bog Visitor Centre
Henry Hunter	The Castle Hotel, Bishops Castle
Steven Levers	Parish Paths Partnership - Norbury Area
McDonald McDonald	Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team
Bill Naden	Newcastle Parish Council
Joe Penfold	Shropshire Hills National Landscape
Glynn Roberts	Bishop's Castle P3
Glynn Roberts	BCP3
Jean Shirley	ROUND AND ABOUT WALKS
Amber Bicheno	Severn Gorge Countryside Trust
Anne Suffolk	Ramblers Shrops & Telford & East Shrops RA plus Telford T50 Trail & WAW
Anne Suffolk	Shropshire RA & Telford & East Shrops RA, also Friends of Telford T50 Trail, & Walkers Are Welcome
Lynn Turner	Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival
Jane Warman	Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival
John Dinsdale	WEMP3
Barry Fewster	Walkers are Welcome in Whitchurch
Geoff Harding	Myddle, Broughton and Harmer Hill P C
Colin Ruck	Myddle, Broughton and Harmer Hill P C
Marie Burrows	Wild Wolf Movement
David Croker	P3 Warden
Patrick Manuel	Tranquillity Cottage
Rich Mellor	P3 St Martins

3. Cycling Workshop Attendee's	
Edward Andrews	Shropshire Council
Julian Beaumont	River Severn Canoes
Jean Breakell	Cycling 4 All Shropshire
Simon Cooter	Natural England
Kay Dartnell	Wheely Wonderful Cycling
James Dennison	Canal & River Trust
Kaitlyn Elverson	Forestry England
Ruth Finney	MTB Adventures Ltd (trading as Recce)

Alex Grant	Shropshire Wildlife Trust / Cycling UK Shropshire / Cycling 4 All Shropshire
Anne Hendrie	Cycling UK in North Shropshire
Helen Howes	British Cycling Breeze
Keith Jepson	Max Bikes PR
Hannah Lancaster	Freelance
Robin Mager	Independent
Nigel McDonald	Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team
Matt Pearce	Pearce Cycles
Pip Vlok	Old Downton Lodge
Phil Weir	Oswestry Cycle Group
Mark Agnew	National Trust

4. Other Outdoor Activities Workshop Attendee's	
Wendy Bannerman	British Horse Society
Julian Beaumont	River Severn Canoes
Tamara Burgess	Acton Scott Escapes
Ruth Dorrell	Claywood Shropshire
Kaitlyn Elverson	Forestry England
Dan Guy	Kitsquad
Trish Hall	Heather and Stone
Chris Kynaston	Whixall Bridleways Group
Kevin McGarvey	Acorn Wood
Katy Mellor	Pathfinder Project
Sally Mellor	Pathfinder Project
Stephanie Mulrooney	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Rachel Newby	Independent
Seth Oakley	Alderford Lake
Frances Pearson	Kitsquad
Siobhan Urquhart	Shropshire Paddle Sport & Old Mill B&B
Neil Urquhart	Old Mill B&B
Zoe Watson	Alderford Lake
Mark Agnew	National Trust
Tom Wright	Woodland Roots

8. Potential Funding Organisations

1. Government and Public Sector Grants

- Active Travel and Public Transport Funds
- Active Travel Fund
- Capability and Ambition Fund
- Developer contributions
- Environmental conservation funds
- Government grants
- Grants from sustainable transport initiatives
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Historic England
- Historic England Heritage at Risk Fund
- Levelling-Up Fund
- Local Authority contributions
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Shropshire Council Grants
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

2. Conservation, Heritage, and Environmental Funding

- DEFRA's Green Recovery Challenge Fund
- Natural England's Species Recovery Programme
- National Trust
- Historic England
- Environmental conservation funds
- Farming in Protected Landscapes grant
- Heritage Fund and Holiday grant
- Offa's Dyke Conservation Fund

3. Outdoor Activity and Sports-Specific Funding

- Canoe Foundation
- Sport England
- Capability and Ambition Fund (supports cycling and walking infrastructure)
- National Highways (via walking and cycling funding)
- Sustrans
- Public sector active travel grants

4. Community and Local Business Contributions

- Local fundraising
- Private donations
- Volunteer contributions
- Community grants
- Community fundraising
- Corporate sponsorships
- Local business sponsorships
- Commercial partnerships
- Commercial leases
- Visitor contributions
- Advertising revenue

5. Transport and Sustainable Mobility Funding

- Canal & River Trust
- Shropshire Union Canal Society
- National Highways (potential funding for walking and cycling infrastructure)
- Rail and bus partnership contributions
- Visitor fares from sustainable transport initiatives

6. Digital Infrastructure and Marketing

- Public sector funding
- External grants
- Sponsorships
- Advertising revenue
- Local business contributions for tourism marketing
- Private sector sponsorships

2. VISITOR AND NON-VISITOR SURVEY

1. CONSUMER RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

In February 2025 an online panel survey was conducted among visitors and non-visitors to Shropshire who had an interest in taking part in outdoor activities. The survey also gathered data on profile, demographics, psychographics and residency. The opinions of two distinct groups of respondents were sought:

- Visitors to Shropshire since 2018 (251 respondents)
- Non-visitors to Shropshire (500 respondents)

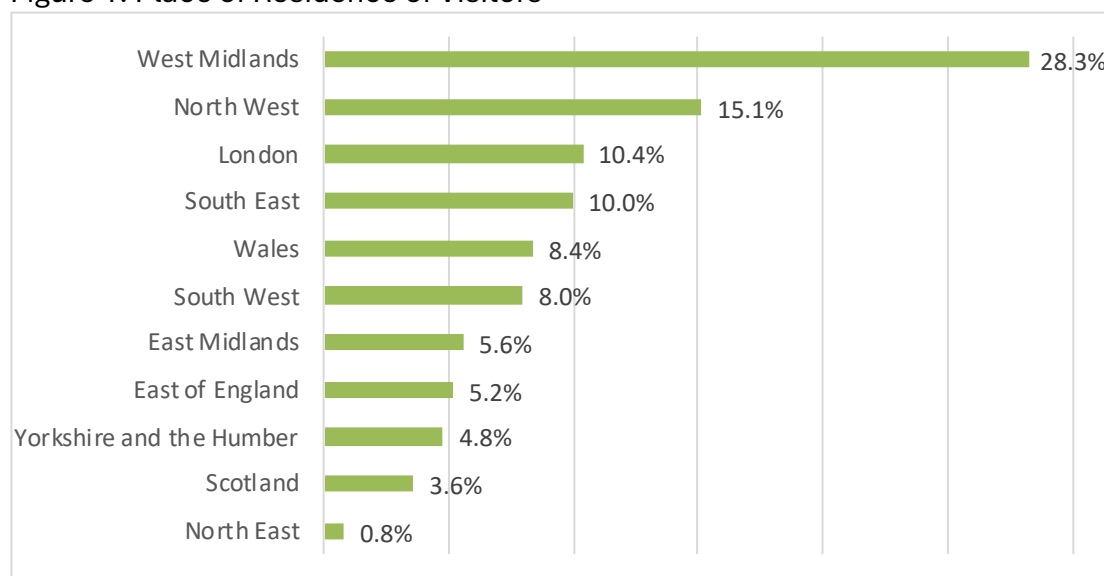
Data pertaining to resident engagement with outdoor activities was analysed from the Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey 2024 to identify differences between visitors and non-visitors.

1.2 Visitor Engagement

1.2.1 Demographics of Visitors to Shropshire

There were 251 visitor respondents who had visited Shropshire within the last 8 years, since 2018. More than one quarter of visitor respondents (28.3%) lived in the West Midlands followed by the North West (15.1%). Visitors from London and the South East accounted for the next largest groups of visitors (10.4% and 10.0% respectively).

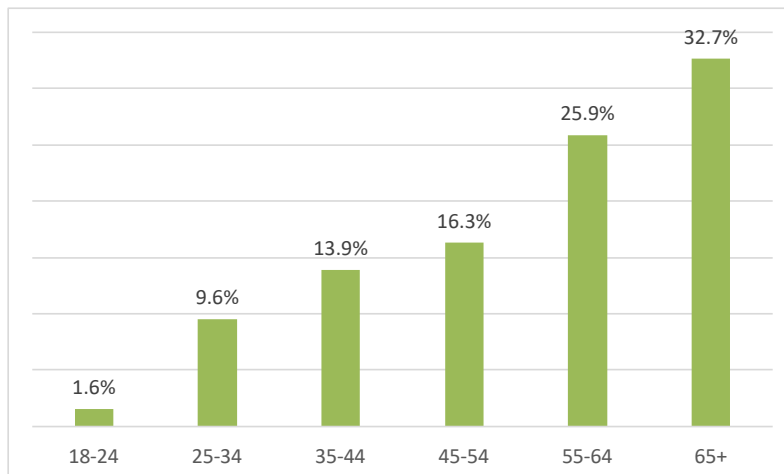
Figure 1: Place of Residence of Visitors



It is interesting to note that visitors from Wales accounted for less than one in 10 visitors (8.4%) in spite of their proximity to Shropshire.

Visitors to Shropshire were predominantly from the older age brackets with almost three in five visitors older than 55 years old (58.6%) and almost one third aged 65+ (32.7%). However, the 35 to 54 age group was reasonably well represented, account for more than one quarter of respondents (30.2%).

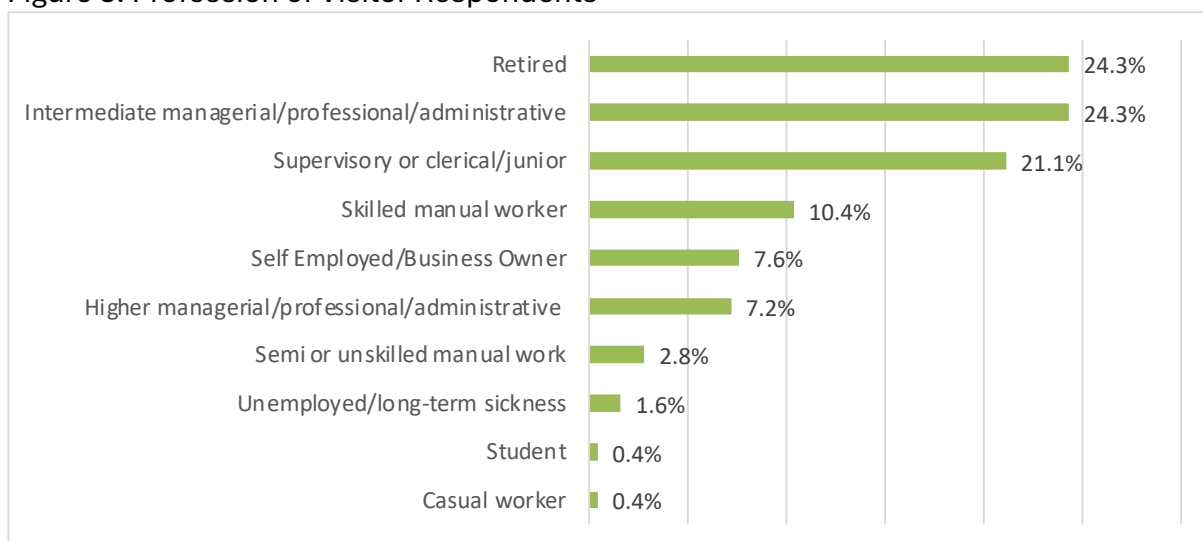
Figure 2: Age of Visitor Respondents



Almost quarter of visitor respondents were retired (24.3%) which, based on the predominant age of respondents, is to be expected. However, it is interesting to note that a good proportion of the 65+ age group are not yet retired.

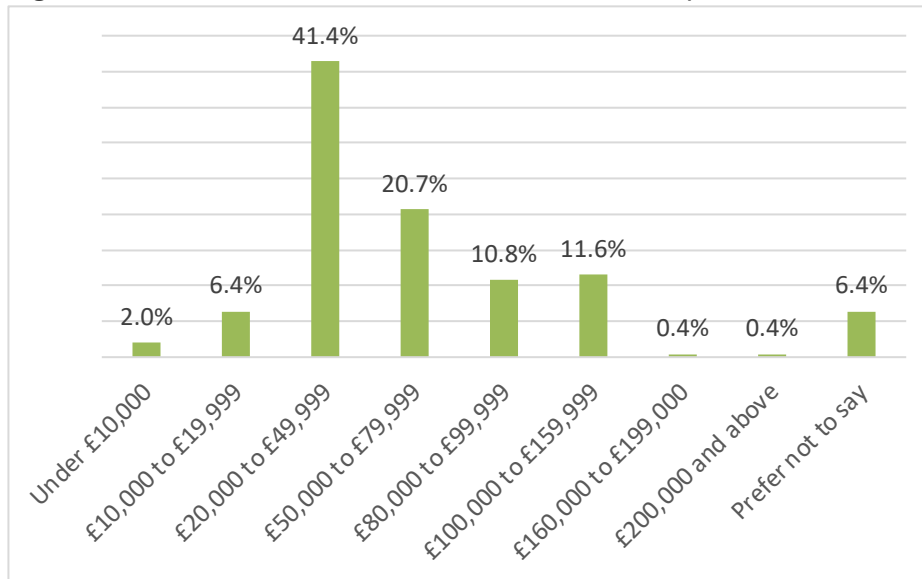
The same number of respondents were also in the intermediate managerial category (24.3%), followed by supervisory or clerical category (21.1%). These categories account for more than two thirds of visitors to Shropshire.

Figure 3: Profession of Visitor Respondents



Two in five visitor respondents stated annual household income in the £20,000 to £49,000 followed by those in the £50,000 to £79,000 bracket (20.7%). A further 22.4% visitors said their annual household income was between £80,000 and £159,000 indicating that more one in five visitors have a reasonably healthy disposable income.

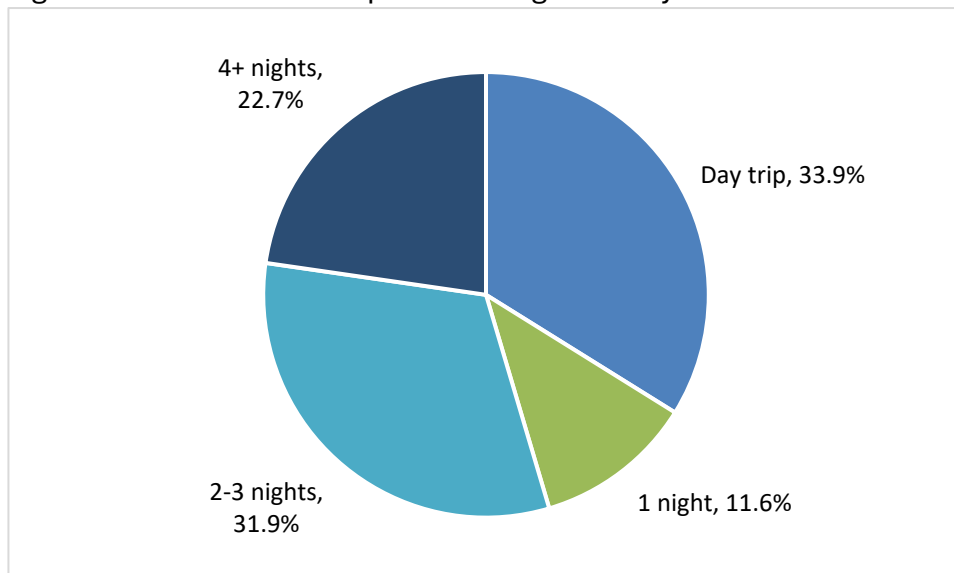
Figure 4: Annual Household Income of Visitor Respondents



1.2.2 Visitor Trips to Shropshire

One third of visitor respondents were day trippers (33.9%) and almost a further third stayed overnight for 2-3 nights (31.9%). This suggests that Shropshire is a good destination for short breakers. Interestingly, four-night stays in Shropshire were more popular than single night stays (22.7% and 11.6%) respectively, which is a further indicator of Shropshire's popularity as a place to stay for a good length of time.

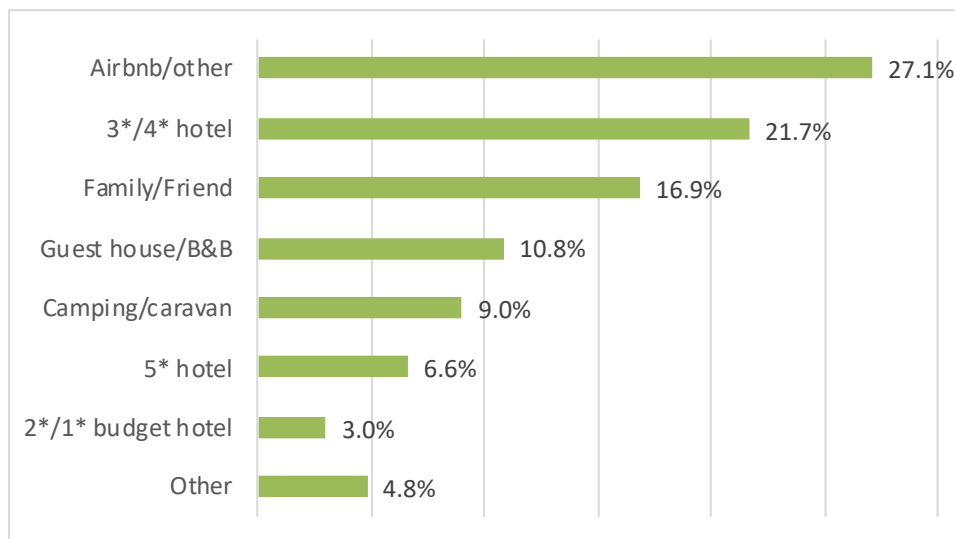
Figure 7.5: Visitors to Shropshire – Length of Stay



Airbnb was the most popular choice of accommodation for staying visitors, accounting for over one quarter of respondents (27.1%) followed by 3 star/4 star properties (21.7%). Budget options camping and caravanning and 1 star/2 star properties were among the least popular options (9.0% and 3.0% respectively) along with 5 star properties (6.6%).

At this stage, it is unknown what 5 star accommodation is available in the region but it is likely to be less widespread than other options.

Figure 5: Accommodation by Staying Visitors



1.2.3 What do Visitors think of Shropshire?

Beautiful, rural and green countryside are the predominant impressions that visitors have of Shropshire. Peaceful, pretty and scenic, nature, picturesque and quiet are all words used to describe the county. This is a clear reflection of visitors' understanding of the rural nature of the county and a key reason why people visit. However, the cultural offer is also noted, with historic, heritage and interesting stated frequently, along with cultural hotspots of Shrewsbury, Ironbridge and Ludlow.



Visitor respondents were asked to rate Shropshire for its facilities, where 5 is excellent and 1 is poor. The county was rated most highly for pubs and bars, along with being easy to get to by car. Other places to eat and drink (cafés and restaurants) and well-marked walking trails were received the next highest ratings.

The factors given the lowest ratings were public transport, accessibility, and access to instruction facilities.

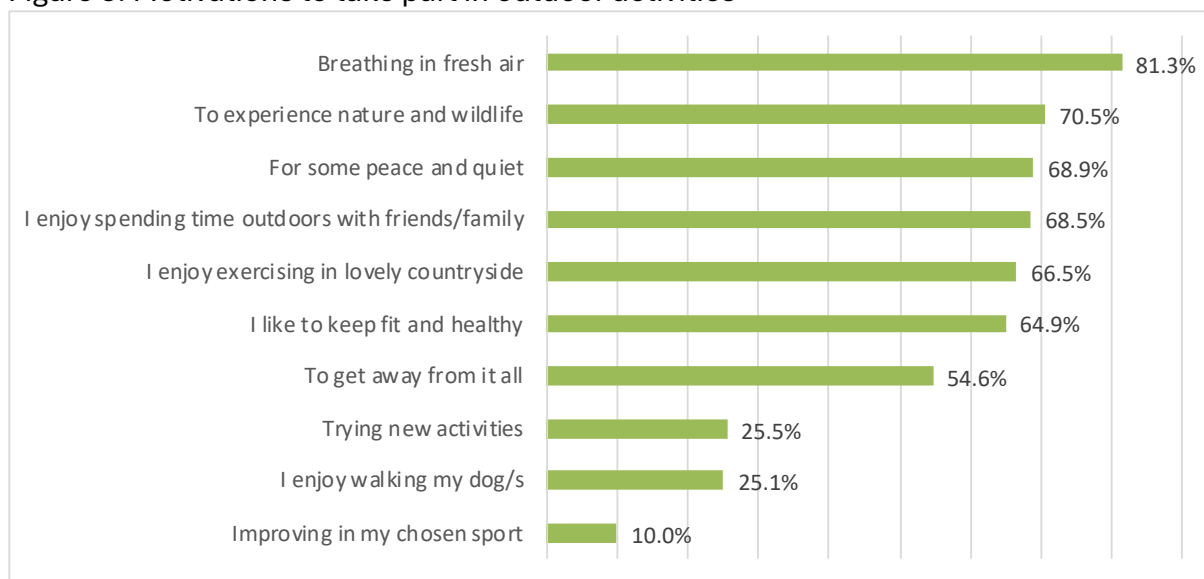
Figure 7: Rating of facilities in Shropshire by Visitors (average)

Figure 7: Rating breakdown in Europe by visitors (average)	
Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars)	3.9
Easy to get to by car	3.9
Well-marked walking trails	3.8
Places to eat and drink (cafes)	3.8
Places to eat and drink (restaurants)	3.7
Places to stay (3-4 star)	3.6
Family friendly activities	3.6
Well-marked cycling routes	3.5
Places to stay (camping/caravanning)	3.5
Places to stay (budget 1-2 star)	3.4
Places to stay (luxury)	3.4
Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc)	3.4
Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding	3.3
Accessibility for people with disabilities	3.3
Easy to get to by public transport	3.1

1.2.4 Motivations and Activities undertaken by Visitors to Shropshire

Fresh air is the key motivation for taking part in outdoor activities, stated by more than 8 in 10 respondents (81.3%). In addition, the natural environment, peace and quiet and spending time outdoors with family and friends are top motivators for more than two thirds of respondents (between 68.5% and 70.5%). Personal goals, like exercising and keeping fit are also important motivators, 66.5 and 64.9% respectively. The high importance places on these motivations clearly indicate that being outdoors is a key wellness priority today.

Figure 8: Motivations to take part in outdoor activities

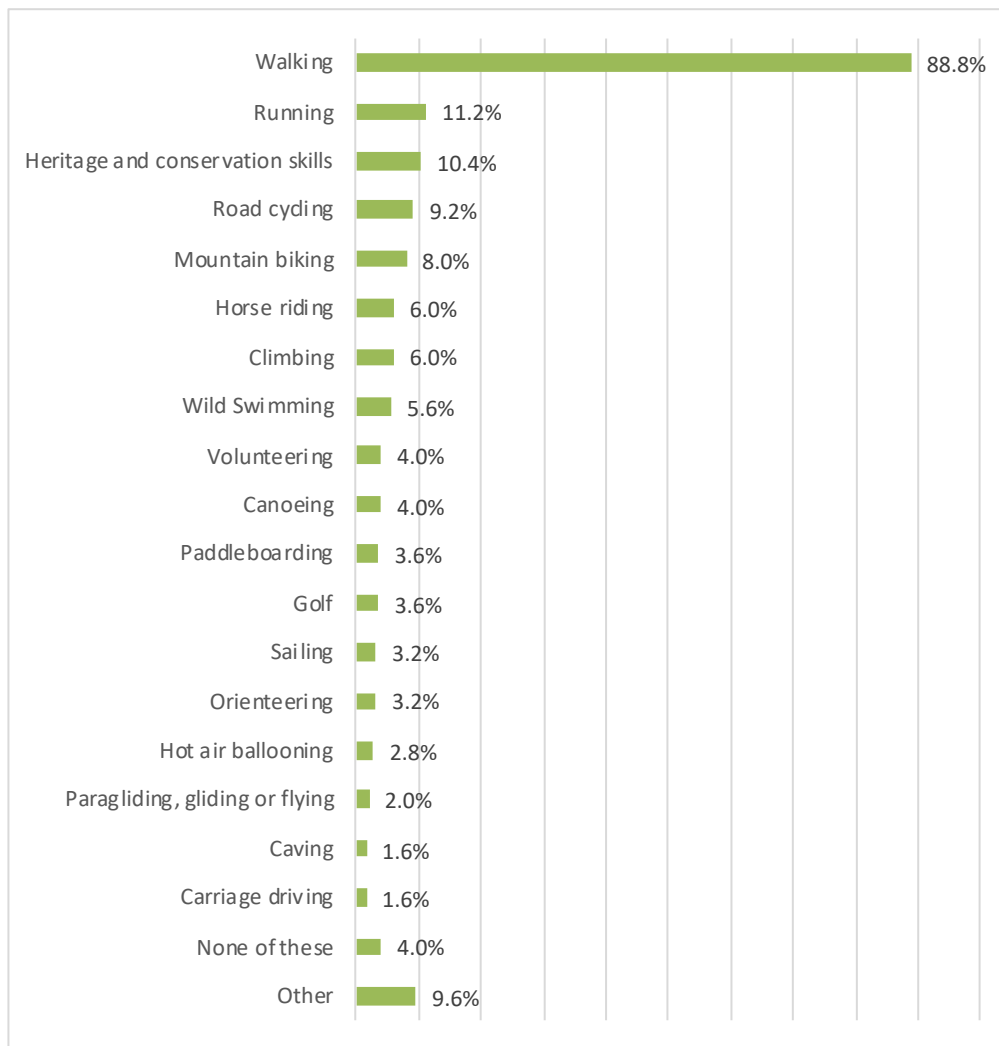


Over half of all visitors also like to get away from it all (54.6%) but trying out new activities and dog walking were deemed less important than the wellness priorities, stated by just over one quarter of respondents (25.5% and 25.1% respectively). Only 10.0% of respondents made the connection between the outdoors and improving in their chosen sport, indicating how the outdoors is an important leisure factor, but less so for health.

Walking in Shropshire was overwhelmingly the most popular activity undertaken by visitors to Shropshire – almost 9 out of 10 visitors participated (88.8%). Running was the next most popular activity (11.2%) followed by heritage and conservation skills (10.4%).

Road cycling and mountain biking were also popular (9.2% and 8.0% respectively; 17.2% combined), meaning that almost one in five visitors enjoyed some form of cycling whilst on a trip to Shropshire.

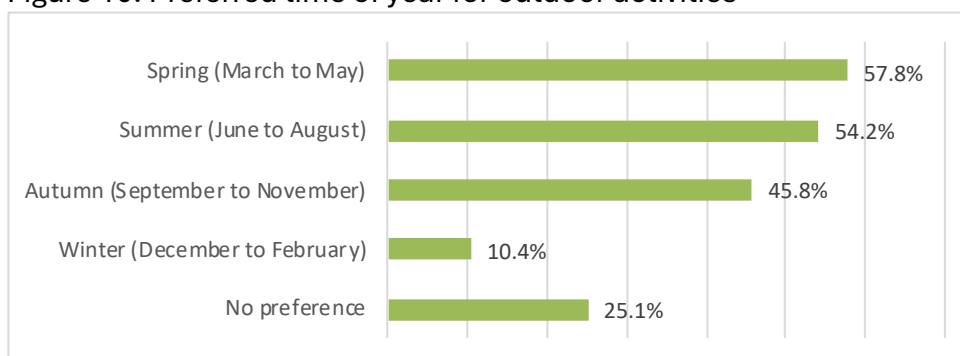
Figure 9: Activities undertaken during trip to Shropshire



Horse riding, climbing and wild swimming were the next most popular activities, accounting for 6.0%, 6.0% and 5.6% of respondents respectively. It is interesting to note that although participation was not in great volumes, visitors were taking part in a wide range of possible activities in the county.

Spring and summer were the most popular times to take part in outdoor activities (57.8% and 54.2% respectively), closely followed by Autumn (45.8%). Although only 10.4% stated winter was their preferred time, one quarter of respondents stated they had no preference which provides an opportunity to attract relevant markets off season.

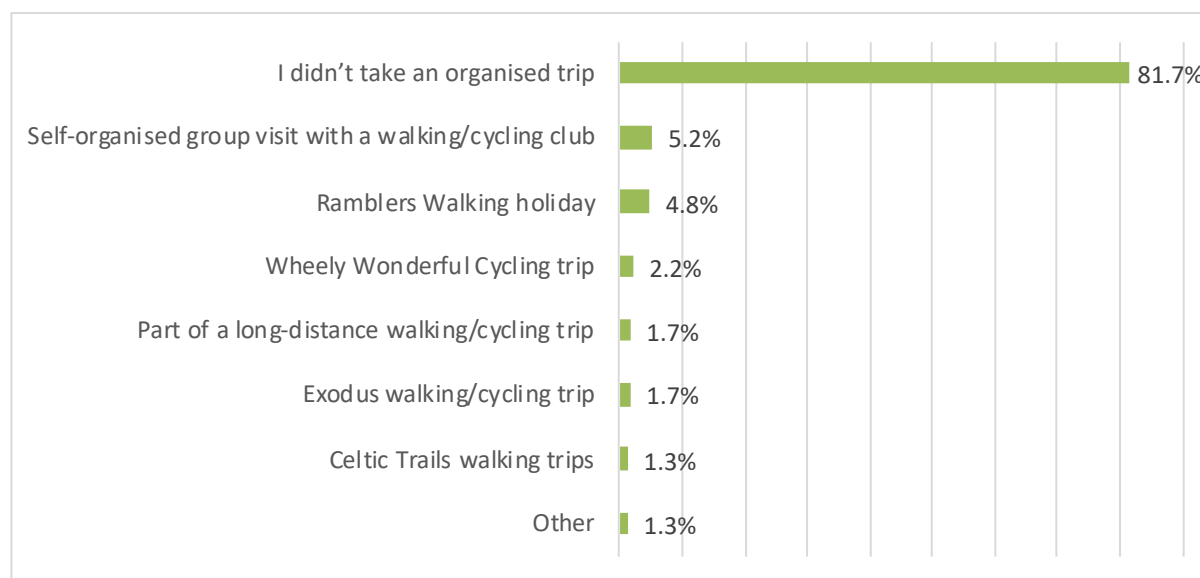
Figure 10: Preferred time of year for outdoor activities



1.2.5 Visitor Walkers and Cyclists in Shropshire

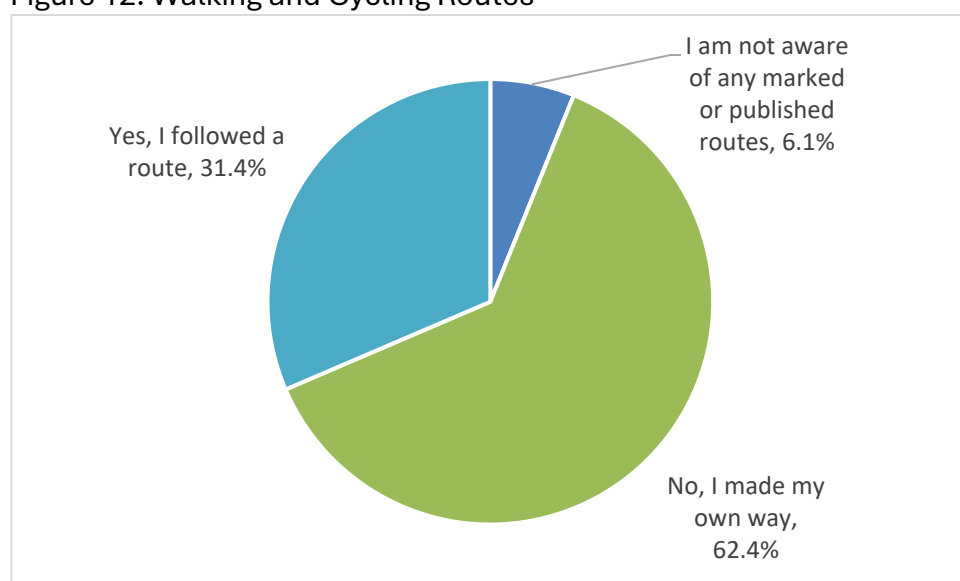
Most walkers and cyclists made their own arrangements when they visited Shropshire (81.7%). Self-organised group trips with walking or cycling groups accounted for 5.2% of respondents, while group trips with Ramblers and Wheely Wonderful Cycling tour operators accounted for 4.8% and 2.2% respectively.

Figure 11: Trip Types amongst Walkers and Cyclists to Shropshire



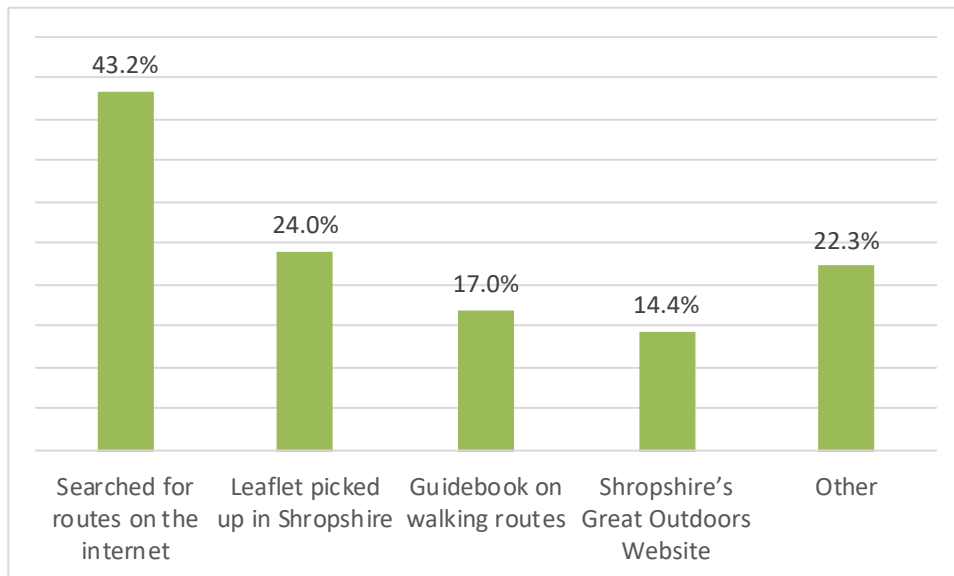
Almost two thirds of respondents decided to make their own walking or cycling routes (62.4%) versus nearly one third that followed marked routes (31.4%). 6.1% of respondents were not aware of any routes.

Figure 12: Walking and Cycling Routes



Almost half of walking and cycling respondents searched for routes on the internet (43.2%), while almost one quarter used a leaflet sourced in Shropshire (24.0%).

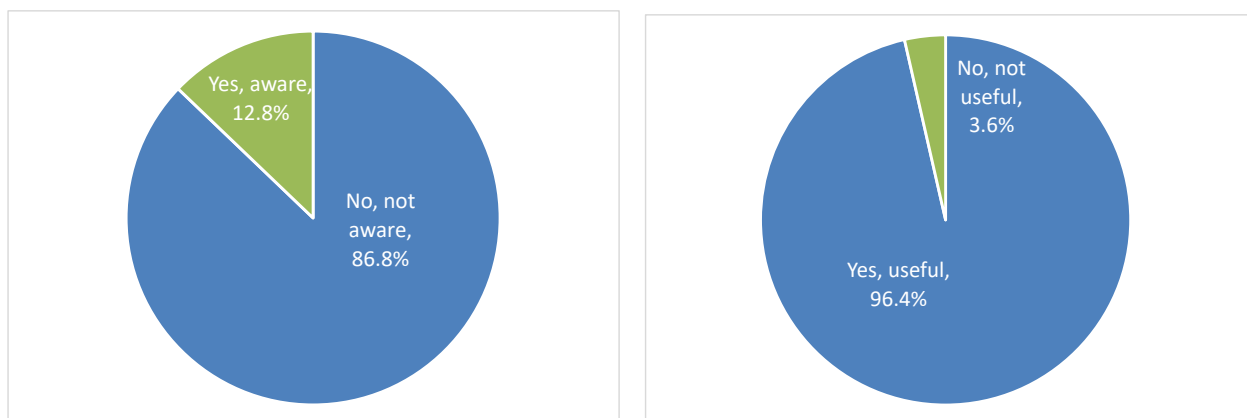
Figure 13: Sources of information



Of the high percentage of those that selected other, word of mouth was the most stated source of information.

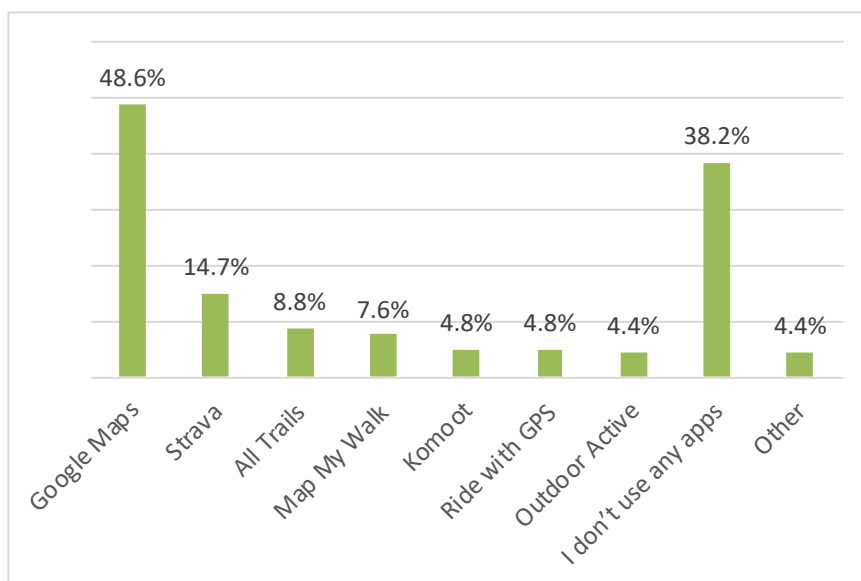
The Shropshire Great Outdoors Website had a low recall among visitors (86.8%). However, among those who were aware of the website, almost all of them found it useful (96.4%).

Figure 14: Awareness and Usefulness of Shropshire Great Outdoors



Google Maps is the most used app by walkers and cyclists (48.6%) followed by Strava (14.7%), All Trails (8.8%) and Map My Walk (7.6%). Although around two in five visitors don't use any apps at all (38.2%), it is key to note the important role technology plays to three out of five walkers and cyclists on a trip.

Figure 15: Use of Apps



1.2.6 Leisure Trips to Enjoy Outdoor Activities by Visitors

Visitors were asked about the elements that were important to them when spending time on outdoor activities in places away from home.

Good places to eat and drink are the most important factors when planning a trip to enjoy outdoor activities. Destinations also need to be easy to reach by car, and with well-marked walking trails. Good value accommodation options and family-friendly activities were ranked in the middle.

Least important factors are those around instruction and equipment rental, suggesting that people predominantly prefer to make their own arrangements. Luxury and budget accommodation were less important which could be a reflection of the trends of the short break market seeking good value alongside an excellent food and drink offer.

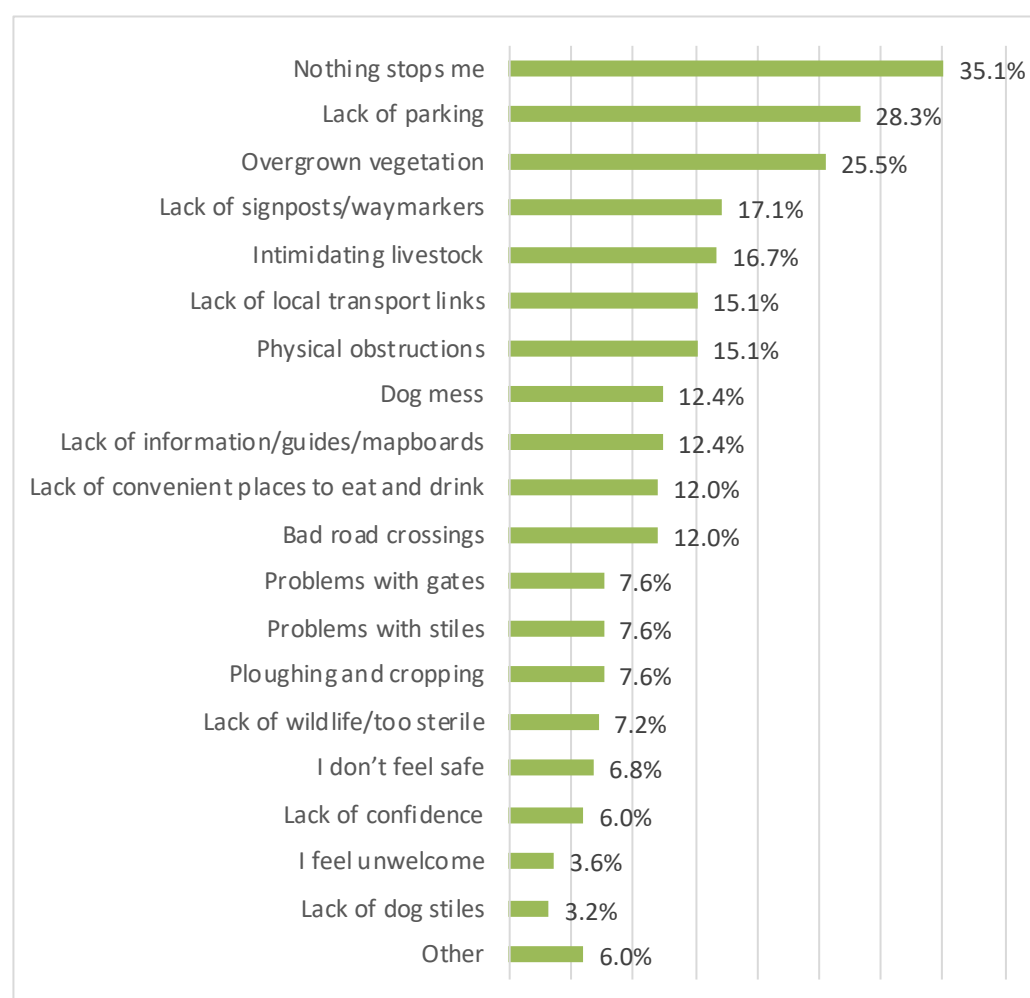
Figure 16: Elements important on a trip to enjoy Outdoor Activities

Places to eat and drink (cafes)	4.1
Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars)	3.9
Easy to get to by car	3.8
Well-marked walking trails	3.7
Places to eat and drink (restaurants)	3.7
Places to stay (3-4 star)	3.3
Family friendly activities	2.9
Places to stay (budget 1-2 star)	2.8
Easy to get to by public transport	2.7
Good accessibility for people with disabilities	2.6
Well-marked cycling routes	2.5
Places to stay (luxury)	2.5
Places to stay (camping/caravanning)	2.5
Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc)	2.3

Parking problems were the most cited issue that puts people off from going out to enjoy the great outdoors, affecting 28.3% of respondents, followed by overgrown vegetation (25.5%), lack of signposts (17.1%) and intimidating livestock (16.7%). Considering the responses to Figure 17.16 above, a lack of convenient places to eat and drink was mentioned by only 12.0% of respondents.

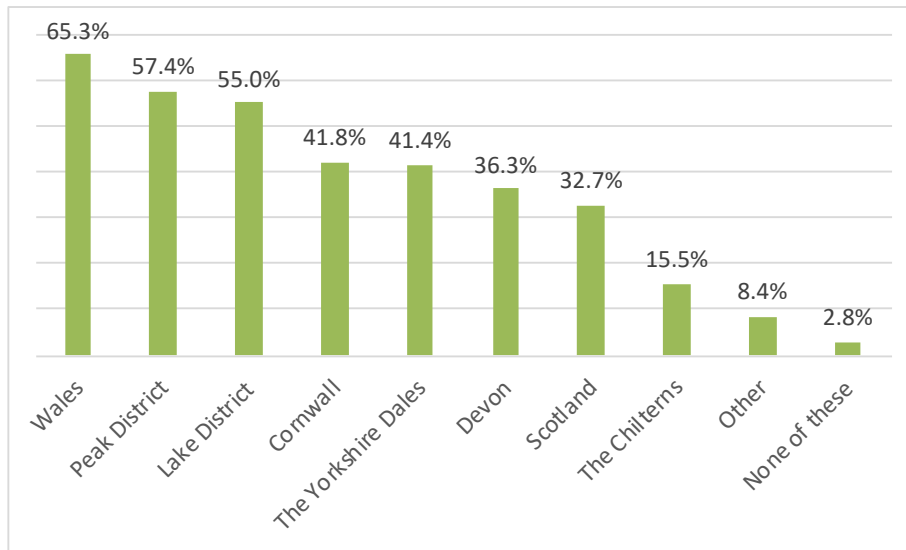
However, the largest proportion of respondents stated that nothing would stop them from going out (35.1%).

Figure 17: Barriers to enjoying the Great Outdoors among Visitors



Analysis of competing destinations found that the most popular destinations for outdoor activities among visitor respondents were Wales (65.3%), the Peak District (57.4%) and the Lake District (55.0%) which are all well-known for their outdoor offer. Other competing destinations like Cornwall, the Yorkshire Dales and Devon are also cited as top places to visit to enjoy outdoor activities.

Figure 18: Competing destinations



Among the 'other' category, destinations were varied and included Norfolk and Suffolk, the Cotswolds, the south east, and Northumberland.

Tourism board websites are a good source of information for visitors (50.2%) along with word of mouth (44.2%). Other digital channels together account for 43.4%. Having a well-planned and proactive digital marketing strategy is therefore key to continue to attract new visitors.

Figure 19: Inspiration to visit Shropshire

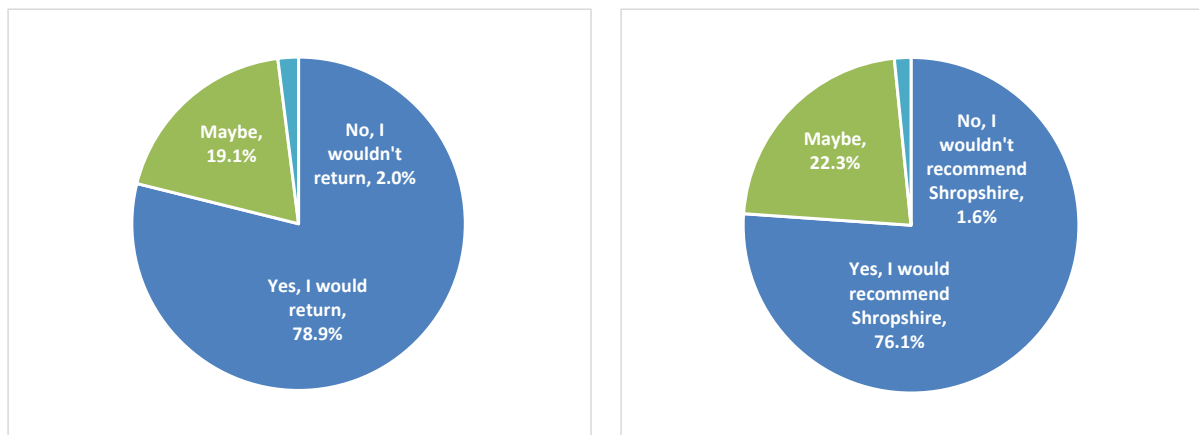


1.2.7 Visitor Sentiment about Shropshire

Shropshire's natural beauty and stunning landscapes are the top inspirations for visitors to visit (45.5%). However, recommendations and word of mouth from friends and family also play an important part (40.6%). Visitors are also inspired by their personal interest (35.9%) and also by Shropshire's strong cultural offer (26.3%).

Visitors to Shropshire were overwhelmingly positive about their trip to the county. Almost four out of five visitors say they would return (78.9%) and more than three quarters state they would recommend Shropshire as a destination for outdoor activities.

Figure 20: Visitors' Return/Recommend Sentiments

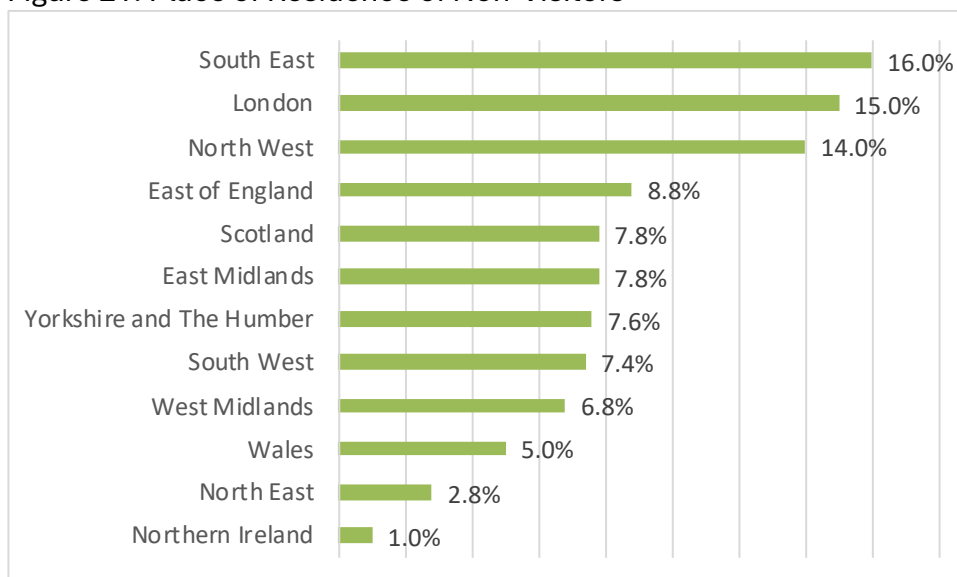


1.3 Non-Visitor Engagement

1.3.1 Demographics of Non-Visitors to Shropshire

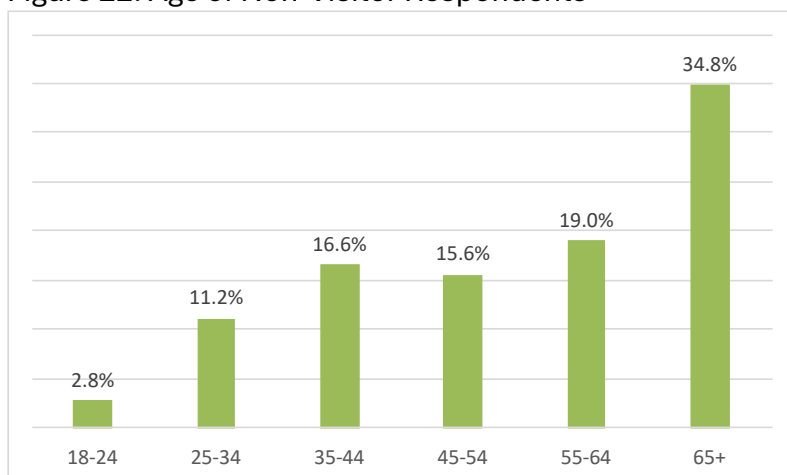
500 non-visitor respondents were consulted for this panel survey. The South East, London and the North West were the most common places of residency for non-visitors to Shropshire, accounting for 16.0%, 15.0% and 14.0% respectively of respondents. Other regions except for Wales and the North East were broadly evenly represented.

Figure 21: Place of Residence of Non-Visitors



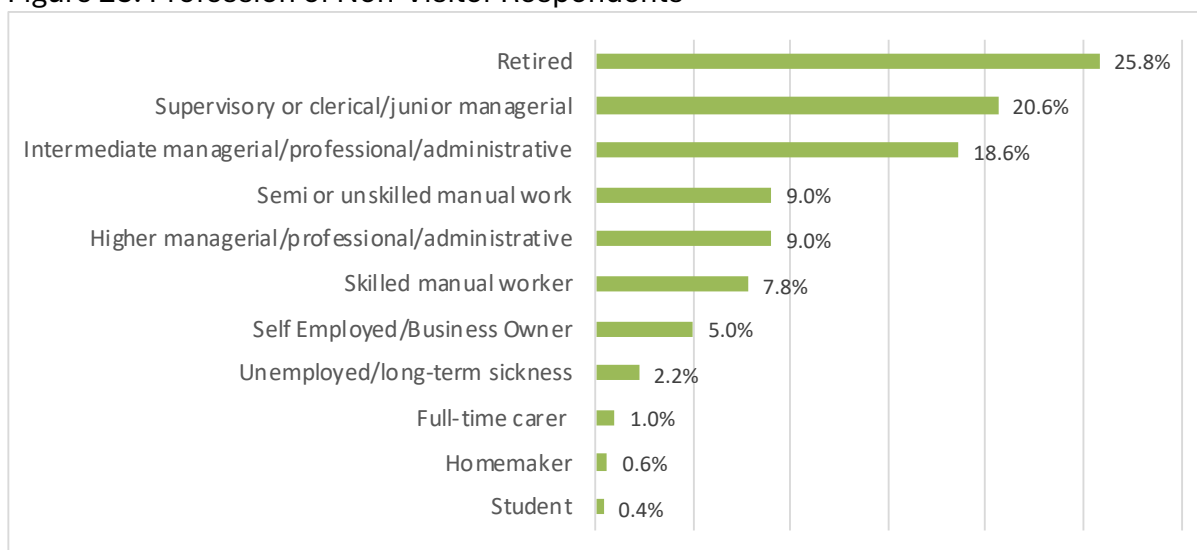
The largest group of non-visitor respondents were aged 65+. Age groups 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 were broadly evenly represented.

Figure 22: Age of Non-Visitor Respondents



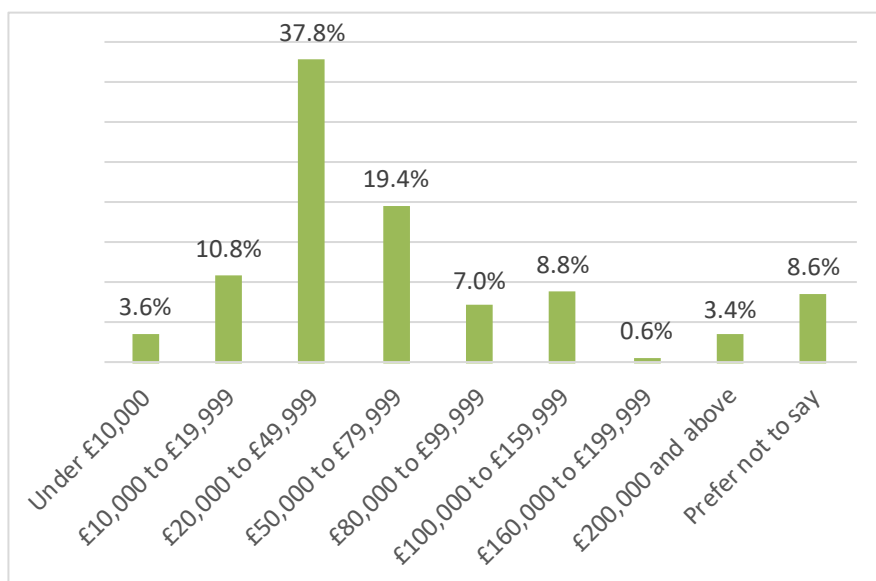
In line with the age of non-visitor respondents, more than one quarter of respondents stated they were retired (25.8%), although fewer than reported being 65+. Also well represented were the categories of supervisory/junior management (20.6%) and intermediate management (18.6%).

Figure 23: Profession of Non-Visitor Respondents



Household income for non-visitors was predominantly in the lower brackets, up to £79,000. More than one third of non-visitor respondents stated an annual household income of between £20,000 to £49,000 (37.8%) followed by the £50,000 to £79,000 bracket (19.4%). 10.8% reported income of between £10,000 and £20,000. Nevertheless, one fifth of respondents reported an annual income of <£100,000.

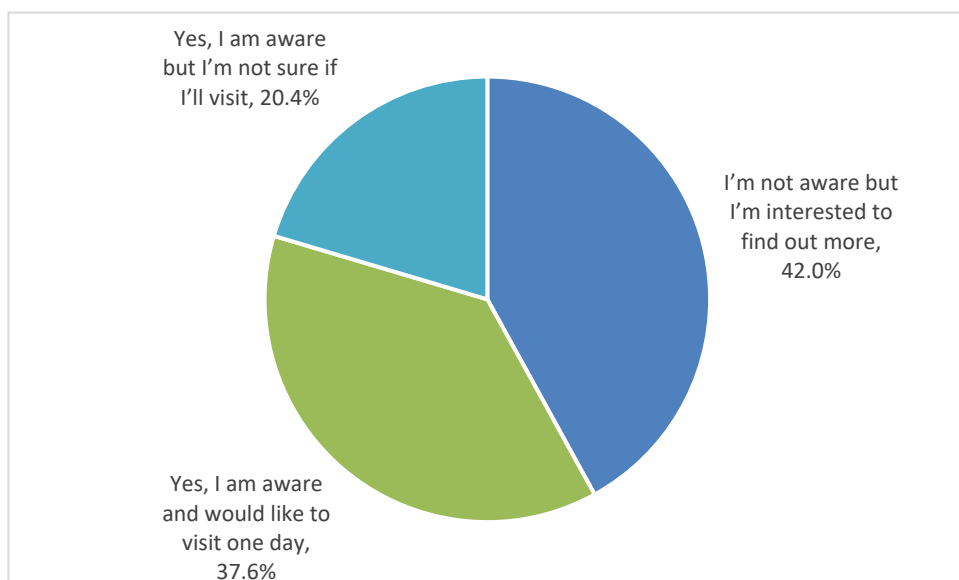
Figure 24: Annual Household Income of Non-Visitor Respondents



1.3.2 Awareness of Shropshire as a Destination for Outdoor Activities

Amongst non-visitor respondents, there was a high interest in Shropshire as a destination for outdoor activities. Almost four out of five respondents (79.5%) stated they were either aware of Shropshire as a popular county for outdoor activities and would like to visit, or not aware but would like to find out more about it.

Figure 25: Awareness of Shropshire as a Destination for Outdoor Activities for Non-Visitors



1.3.3 What do Non-Visitors think of Shropshire?

Non-visitors to Shropshire are clearly aware of the county's reputation as a rural, countryside destination. Awareness of the major urban destinations (Shrewsbury and Ironbridge) was also high. However, by comparison with visitors, fewer descriptive

Based on an average of responses ranging from very strong to not at all, Shrewsbury had the strongest association, followed by Ludlow Castle and sunset over the Shropshire Hills. Outdoor activities (walking, climbing, cycling and paddleboarding) indicated the least strong associations. This concurs with the word cloud and lack of awareness of outdoor activities possible in Shropshire amongst non-visitors.

Figure 27: Non-Visitor Associations with Shropshire (average)

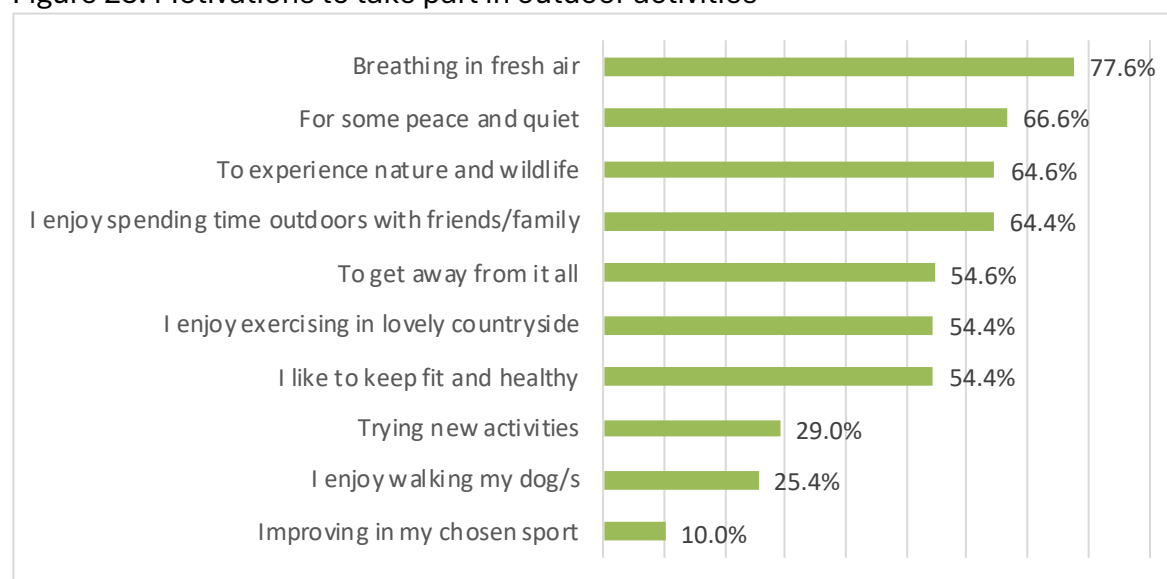
Quintessential market town of Shrewsbury	3.0
The imposing Ludlow Castle	2.9
Sunset over the Shropshire Hills	2.9
Hiking in the Shropshire Hills	2.8
Food Festival at Ludlow Castle	2.7
Rolling hills above Church Stretton	2.7
Carding Mill Valley	2.6
Self-guided walking opportunities in Shropshire	2.6
Climbing the Stiperstones	2.5
Cycling to enjoy glorious Shropshire views	2.5
Paddleboarding on the River Teme by Ludlow Castle	2.4
Oswestry Balloon Festival	2.3

1.3.4 Motivations and Activities undertaken by Non-Visitors on a Trip

Like visitors, non-visitors value being able to enjoy fresh air while they enjoy outdoor activities (77.6%), along with peace and quiet (66.6%), experiencing nature and wildlife (64.6%) and spending time with family and friends (64.4%).

Getting away from it all, exercising outdoors and keeping fit were also important for more than half of all non-visitor respondents (54.6%, 54.4% and 54.4% respectively).

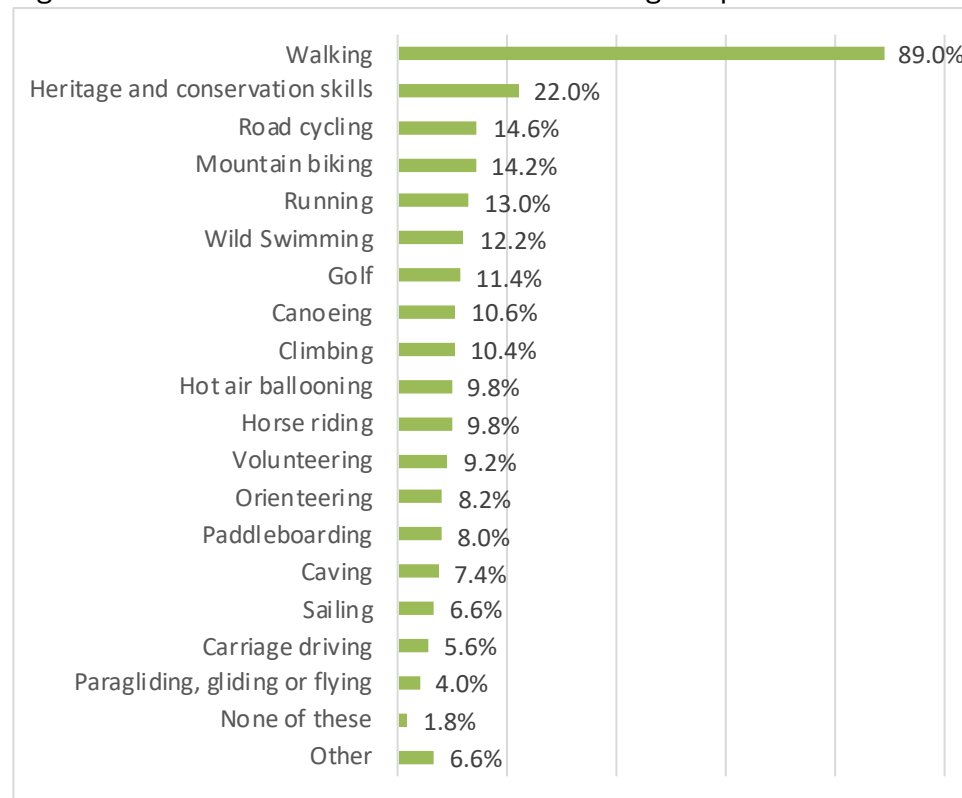
Figure 28: Motivations to take part in outdoor activities



As with visitors, walking is the top outdoor activity undertaken during a trip in the UK, popular among almost nine in 10 respondents (89.0%). Other activities undertaken include road cycling and/or mountain biking (18.8% together), heritage and conservation skills (22.0%), and running 13.0%. Wild swimming has a similar following of 12.2%.

Fishing and bird watching activities featured among the ‘other’ responses.

Figure 29: Outdoor Activities undertaken during a trip in the UK

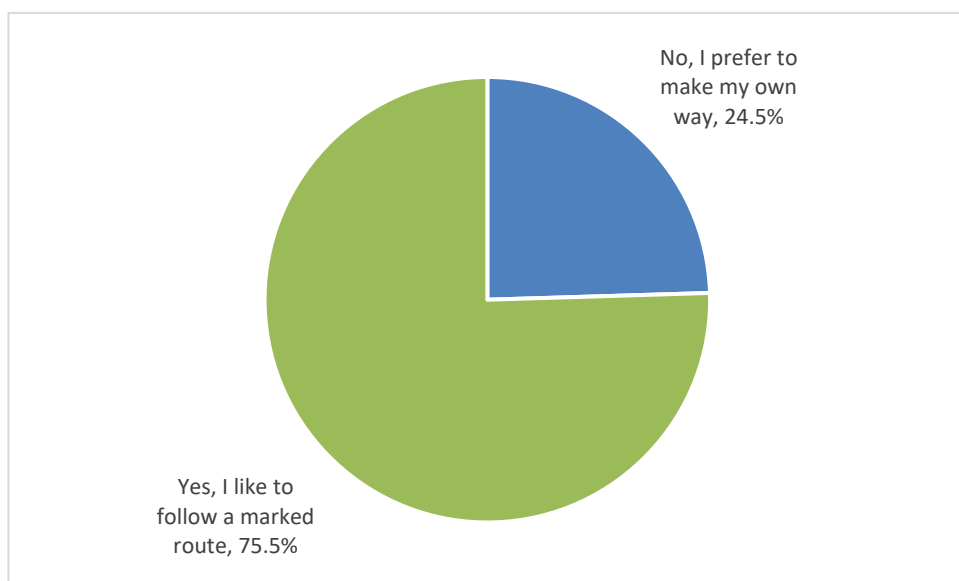


Compared with visitors, more non-visitors take part in other activities during trips in the UK, suggesting that Shropshire has the potential to reach a wider audience.

1.3.5 Non-Visitor Walkers and Cyclists

Three quarters of non-visitor walkers and cyclists prefer to follow marked routes while on a trip in the UK (75.5%).

Figure 30: Walking and Cycling Routes



16.8% of non-visitor walkers and cyclists were aware of the Shropshire Great Outdoors website, a higher proportion than the visitor group. Of those, almost all found the website useful (97.4%).

Figure 31: Awareness and Usefulness of Shropshire Great Outdoors

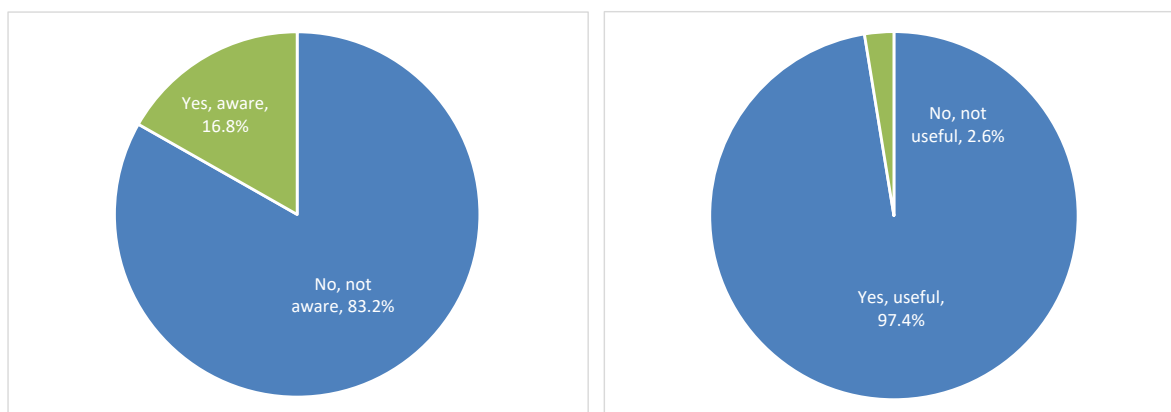
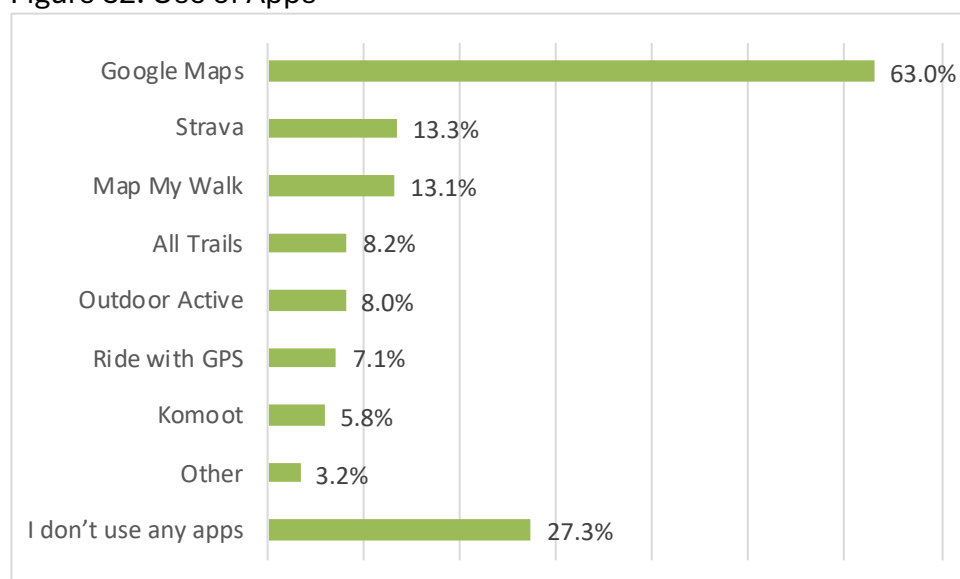


Figure 32: Use of Apps

Google Maps was the most use app by non-visitors, used by almost two thirds of respondents (63.0%), followed by Strava and Map My Walk (13.3% and 13.1% respectively). A further 27.3% did not use any apps at all.

Figure 32: Use of Apps



1.3.6 Non-Visitor Leisure Trips to Enjoy Outdoor Activities

Non-visitors were asked about the elements that were important to them when spending time on outdoor activities in places away from home. Similarly to visitors, the most important elements for non-visitors were places to eat and drink and easy access by car. Good value and budget accommodation were also important elements to this group.

Figure 33: Elements important on a trip to enjoy Outdoor Activities

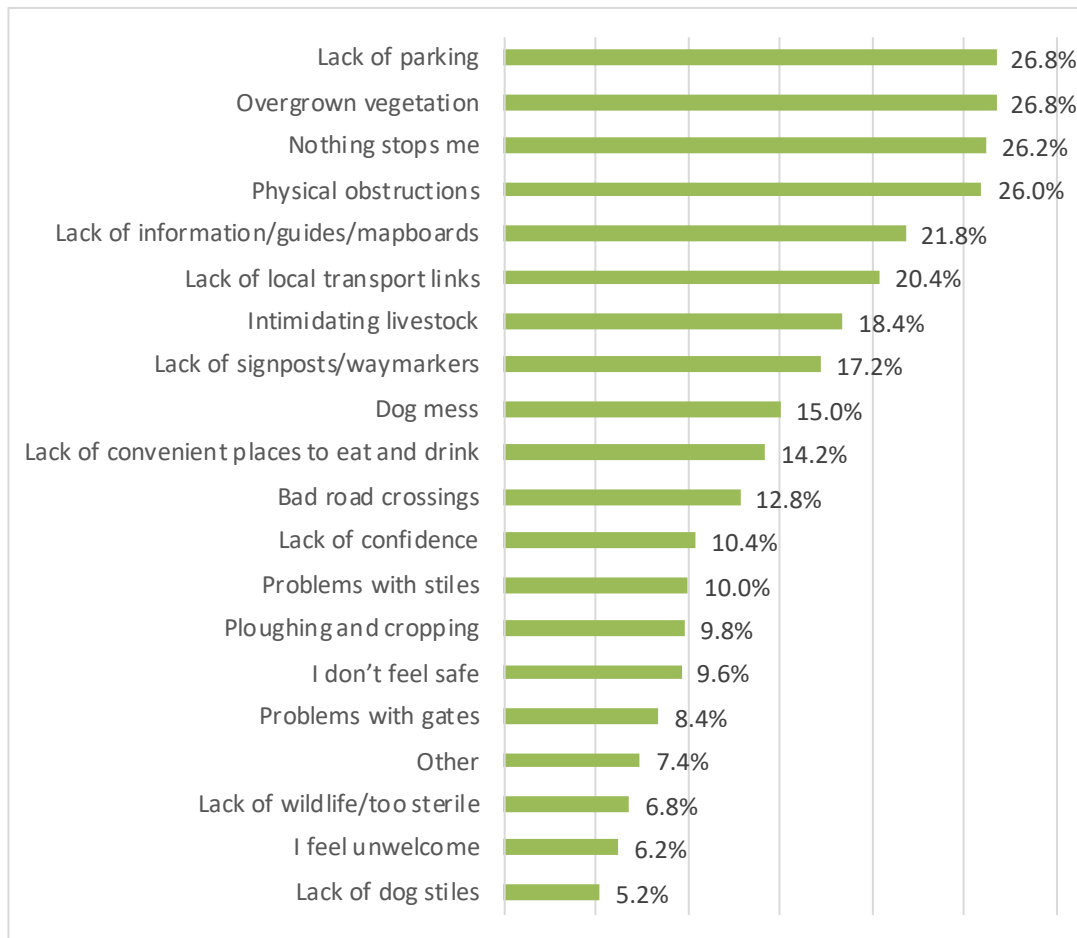
Places to eat and drink (cafes)	3.9
Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars)	3.8
Easy to get to by car	3.8
Places to eat and drink (restaurants)	3.7
Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc)	3.6
Places to stay (3-4 star)	3.5
Places to stay (budget 1-2 star)	3.2
Family friendly activities	3.2
Easy to get to by public transport	3.1
Good accessibility for people with disabilities	2.9
Well-marked walking trails	2.8
Places to stay (luxury)	2.7
Well-marked cycling routes	2.6
Places to stay (camping/caravanning)	2.5
Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding	2.4

Interestingly, although walking was the most popular activity for non-visitors by some margin, well-marked walking trails featured lower in the list. Access by public transport and accessibility were more important to this group than both well-marked walking trails and cycling routes.

Non-visitors were particularly concerned with the lack of parking, overgrown vegetation and other physical obstructions when asked what prevented them from enjoying the outdoors (26.8%, 26.8% and 26.0% respectively). However, broadly the same number stated that nothing prevented them (26.2%).

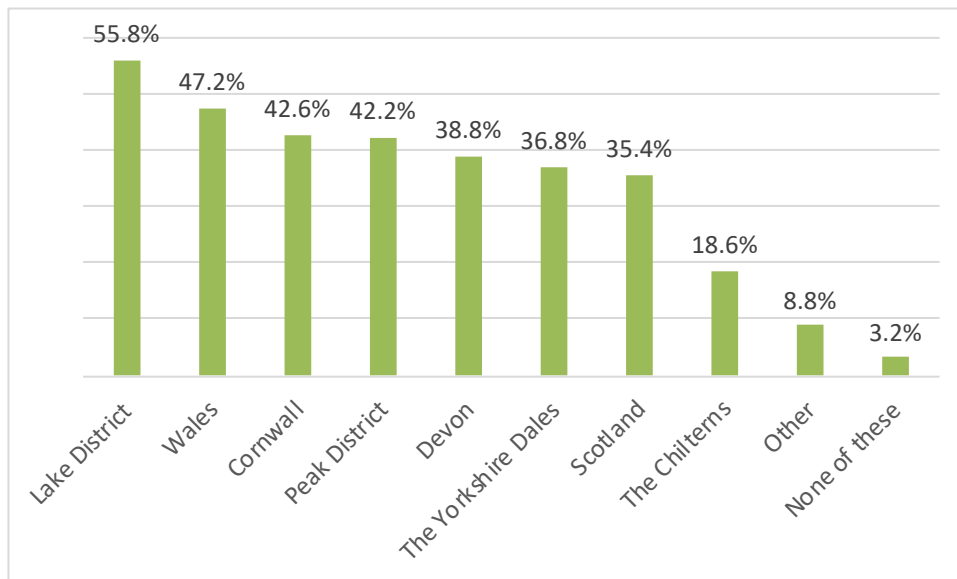
Other barriers included lack of information (21.8%), poor local transport (20.4%) and intimidating livestock (18.4%). Dog mess was mentioned by 15.0% of respondents.

Figure 34: Barriers to enjoying the Great Outdoors among Non-Visitors



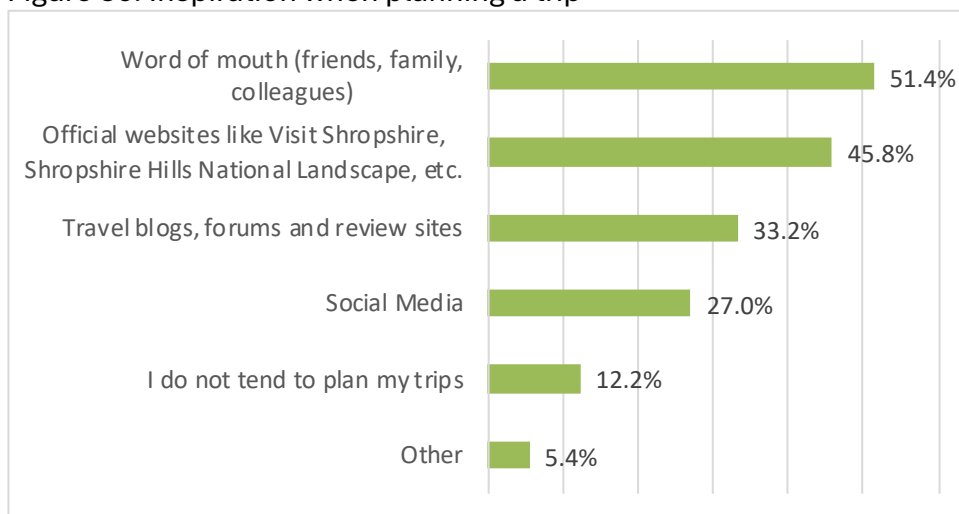
Analysis of competing destinations found that the Lake District was the most visited destination by non-visitors for outdoor activities (55.8%) followed by Wales, Cornwall and the Peak District (47.2%, 42.6% and 42.2%) respectively.

Figure 35: Competing Destinations for Non-Visitors



Word of mouth was the most important source of information used by non-visitors when planning a trip (51.4%) followed by sources such as tourist board websites (45.8%). Like visitors, digital platforms continue to play an important role in planning trips, highlighting the importance of digital marketing planning.

Figure 36: Inspiration when planning a trip



1.4 Resident Engagement

The Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey 2024 was analysed to provide relevant information about resident motivation, behaviour and barriers to taking part in outdoor activities. The annual survey considers the use, maintenance and protection of public rights of way, country parks, the countryside and heritage sites, green spaces and play areas by residents of Shropshire.

2. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SHROPSHIRE VISITORS AND NON-VISITORS PANEL SURVEY

Aim of Research:

- To assess awareness of Shropshire as a destination for outdoor activities among Shropshire visitors and non-visitors to Shropshire
- To identify barriers to visiting Shropshire and taking part in outdoor activities
- To identify engagement with technology and trends in outdoor activities



THE SURVEY

	<p>Delivery method: Panel Survey to UK base, 750 total respondents</p> <p>Screening Question 1: Do you like to take part in outdoor activities when on a trip in the UK?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No (<i>thank and close</i>) <p>Screening Question 2: Have you been to Shropshire before, since 2018 (7 years)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – branch to one set of questions, 250 respondents (VISITORS) • No – branch to another set of questions, 500 respondents (NON-VISITORS) 	
Q	Visitors	Non-Visitors
	<p><i>Standard questions provided by Norstat:</i></p> <p>Age Gender Social Grade Income Where they live (postcode)</p>	<p><i>Standard questions provided by Norstat:</i></p> <p>Age Gender Social Grade Income Where they live (postcode)</p>
Q1		<p>Do you know that Shropshire is a popular county for outdoor activities and offers a wide range of things to do in the great outdoors?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I am aware and would like to visit one day • Yes, I am aware but I'm not sure if I'll visit • I'm not aware but I'm interested to find out more • I won't be visiting Shropshire (<i>thank and close – don't include as a complete response</i>)

Q2	<p>How long did you stay in Shropshire? If you have visited Shropshire multiple times, think about your longest trip.</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day trip (if selected, jump to Q4) • 1 night • 2-3 nights • 4+ nights 	
Q3	<p>Where did you stay in Shropshire?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5* hotel • 3*/4* hotel • 2*/1*/budget hotel • Guest house/B&B • Camping/caravan • Airbnb/other • Family/Friend • Other, please specify 	
Q4	<p>What motivates you to take part in outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like to keep fit and healthy • I enjoy exercising in lovely countryside • I enjoy walking my dog/s • I enjoy spending time outdoors with friends/family • Breathing in fresh air • Trying new activities • Improving in my chosen sport • To get away from it all • For some peace and quiet • To experience nature and wildlife 	<p>What motivates you to take part in outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like to keep fit and healthy • I enjoy exercising in lovely countryside • I enjoy walking my dog/s • I enjoy spending time outdoors with friends/family • Breathing in fresh air • Trying new activities • Improving in my chosen sport • To get away from it all • For some peace and quiet • To experience nature and wildlife
Q5	<p>What time of the year do you prefer to take part in outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring (March to May) • Summer (June to August) • Autumn (September to November) • Winter (December to February) • No preference 	<p>What time of the year do you prefer to take part in outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring (March to May) • Summer (June to August) • Autumn (September to November) • Winter (December to February) • No preference

Q6	<p>What three words do you most associate with the county of Shropshire?</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>	<p>What three words do you most associate with the county of Shropshire?</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>
		<p>We'd like to know what your impressions are of Shropshire. <i>Scroll through these images of Shropshire.</i></p> <p>[Selection of 10 images]</p> <p>Thinking of the images you have just seen, what do you associate with Shropshire, and how strongly do you feel they reflect the county?</p> <p><i>Matrix</i></p> <p><i>Not at all – somewhat – strongly – very strongly</i></p>
Q7	<p>What outdoor activities did you take part in during your trip to Shropshire?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <p><i>(If select any of Walking, Road cycling and Mountain biking, answer Q8,9,10)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking • Road cycling • Mountain biking <p><i>(If the following are selected without any of Walking, Road cycling or mountain Biking, jump to Q11)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carriage driving • Canoeing • Caving • Climbing • Golf • Heritage and conservation skills • Horse riding • Hot air ballooning • Orienteering • Paddleboarding • Paragliding, gliding or flying • Running • Sailing • Volunteering • Wild Swimming • None of these • Other (please specify) 	<p>Which outdoor activities do you like to take part in when on a trip in the UK?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <p><i>(If select any of Walking, Road cycling or Mountain biking, answer Q9)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking • Road cycling • Mountain biking <p><i>(If the following are selected without any of Walking, Road cycling or Mountain biking, jump to Q11)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carriage driving • Canoeing • Caving • Climbing • Golf • Heritage and conservation skills • Horse riding • Hot air ballooning • Orienteering • Paddleboarding • Paragliding, gliding or flying • Running • Sailing • Volunteering • Wild Swimming • None of these • Other (please specify)

Q8	<p>If you took part in an organised walking/cycling trip to Shropshire, what type of trip was it?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheely Wonderful Cycling trip • Ramblers Walking holiday • Exodus walking/cycling trip • Celtic Trails walking trips • Self-organised group visit with a walking/cycling club • Part of a long-distance walking/cycling trip • I didn't take an organised trip • Other, please specify 	
Q9	<p>Did you follow any marked or published routes, like the Shropshire Way and other circular routes for walkers, or the stages on the Shropshire Cycleway for cyclists?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I followed a route • No, I made my own way • I am not aware of any marked or published routes 	<p>Do you like to follow marked or published routes on walking and/or cycling trips?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I like to follow a marked route • No, I prefer to make my own way
Q10	<p>How did you find out about walking/cycling routes in Shropshire?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shropshire's Great Outdoors Website (<i>if selected, jump to Q12</i>) • Guidebook on walking routes • Leaflet picked up in Shropshire • Searched for routes on the internet • Other, please specify 	
Q11	<p>When you visited Shropshire, were you aware of the 'Shropshire's Great Outdoors' website which features walking and cycling routes, and other outdoor activities throughout the county?</p> <p>(Show logo image)</p>	<p>Are you aware of the 'Shropshire's Great Outdoors' website which features walking and cycling routes, and other outdoor activities throughout the county?</p> <p>(Show logo image)</p>

	 <p>Shropshire's GREAT OUTDOORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No (<i>If no, jump to Q13</i>) 	 <p>Shropshire's GREAT OUTDOORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No (<i>If no, jump to Q13</i>)
Q12	<p>Did you find Shropshire's Great Outdoors website useful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No 	<p>Did you find Shropshire's Great Outdoors website useful and/or interesting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
Q13	<p>Do you use any of these apps when you take part in outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strava • Outdoor Active • Google Maps • Komoot • Ride with GPS • Map My Walk • All Trails • Other, please specify • I don't use any apps 	<p>Do you use any of these apps when you take part in outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strava • Outdoor Active • Google Maps • Komoot • Ride with GPS • Map My Walk • All Trails • Other, please specify • I don't use any apps
Q15	<p>What is important to you when you spend time on outdoor activities in places away from home?</p> <p><i>Matrix</i></p> <p><i>Extremely important – very important – somewhat important – not very important – not at all important</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-marked walking trails • Well-marked cycling routes • Places to stay (budget, 1*2*) • Places to stay (3*4*) • Places to stay (luxury) • Places to stay (camping/caravanning) • Places to eat and drink (cafes) • Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars) • Places to eat and drink (restaurants) • Easy to get to by car 	<p>What is important to you when you spend time on outdoor activities in places away from home?</p> <p><i>Matrix</i></p> <p><i>Extremely important – very important – somewhat important – not very important – not at all important</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-marked walking trails • Well-marked cycling routes • Places to stay (budget, 1*2*) • Places to stay (3*4*) • Places to stay (luxury) • Places to stay (camping/caravanning) • Places to eat and drink (cafes) • Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars) • Places to eat and drink (restaurants) • Easy to get to by car

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to get to by public transport • Family friendly activities • Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc) • Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding • Good accessibility for people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to get to by public transport • Family friendly activities • Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc) • Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding • Good accessibility for people with disabilities
Q16	<p>What factors prevent you from going out to enjoy the great outdoors? <i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of signposts/waymarkers • Ploughing and cropping • Intimidating livestock • Problems with stiles • Problems with gates • Overgrown vegetation • Physical obstructions • I don't feel safe • Bad road crossings • Lack of information/guides/mapboards of • Lack of local transport links • Lack of parking • Lack of confidence • I feel unwelcome • Lack of dog stiles • Dog mess • Lack of wildlife/too sterile • Lack of convenient places to eat and drink • Nothing stops me • Other (please specify) 	<p>What factors prevent you from going out to enjoy the great outdoors? <i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of signposts/waymarkers • Ploughing and cropping • Intimidating livestock • Problems with stiles • Problems with gates • Overgrown vegetation • Physical obstructions • I don't feel safe • Bad road crossings • Lack of information/guides/mapboards of • Lack of local transport links • Lack of parking • Lack of confidence • I feel unwelcome • Lack of dog stiles • Dog mess • Lack of wildlife/too sterile • Lack of convenient places to eat and drink • Nothing stops me • Other (please specify)
Q17	<p>Thinking about Shropshire, how would you rate the county for its facilities, where 5 is excellent and 1 is poor: <i>Matrix</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-marked walking trails • Well-marked cycling routes • Places to stay (budget, 1*2*) • Places to stay (3*4*) • Places to stay (luxury) • Places to stay (camping/caravanning) • Places to eat and drink (cafes) • Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places to eat and drink (restaurants) • Easy to get to by car • Easy to get to by public transport • Family friendly activities • Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc) • Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding • Accessibility for people with disabilities 	
Q18	<p>Which other places do you like to visit for a good range of outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peak District • Lake District • Wales • Devon • Cornwall • The Chilterns • The Yorkshire Dales • Scotland • None of these • Other, please specify 	<p>Which other places do you like to visit for a good range of outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peak District • Lake District • Wales • Devon • Cornwall • The Chilterns • The Yorkshire Dales • Scotland • None of these • Other, please specify
Q19	<p>How do you typically plan your trip to a destination for outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official websites like Visit Shropshire, Shropshire Hills National Landscape, etc. • Social Media • Travel blogs, forums and review sites • Word of mouth (friends, family, colleagues) • I do not tend to plan my trips • Other, please specify 	<p>How do you typically plan your trip to a destination for outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official websites like Visit Shropshire, Shropshire Hills National Landscape, etc. • Social Media • Travel blogs, forums and review sites • Word of mouth (friends, family, colleagues) • I do not tend to plan my trips • Other, please specify
Q20	<p>What inspired your decision to visit Shropshire?</p> <p><i>Tick many</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations from friends/family • The natural scenery • Specific heritage or cultural attractions 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal interest, e.g., walking, cycling, wildlife etc • I saw it on social media • Other, please specify 	
Q21	<p>Would you return to Shropshire for its range of outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Maybe 	
Q22	<p>Would you recommend Shropshire for its range of outdoor activities?</p> <p><i>Tick one</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Maybe 	

2.1 Visitor Survey Tables

Place of Residency	No.	%
West Midlands	71	28.3
North West	38	15.1
London	26	10.4
South East	25	10.0
Wales	21	8.4
South West	20	8.0
East Midlands	14	5.6
East of England	13	5.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	12	4.8
Scotland	9	3.6
North East	2	0.8
Total	251	100.0

Age	No.	%
18-24	4	1.6
25-34	24	9.6
35-44	35	13.9
45-54	41	16.3
55-64	65	25.9
65+	82	32.7
Total	251	100.0

Profession	No.	%
Intermediate managerial/professional/administrative	61	24.3

Retired	61	24.3
Supervisory or clerical/junior managerial/professional/administrative	53	21.1
Skilled manual worker: employed or self-employed	26	10.4
Self Employed / Business Owner	19	7.6
Higher managerial/professional/administrative	18	7.2
Semi or unskilled manual work: employed or self-employed	7	2.8
Unemployed or not working due to long-term sickness	4	1.6
Casual worker	1	0.4
Student	1	0.4
Total	251	100.0

Income	No.	%
Under £10,000	5	2.0
£10,000 to £19,999	16	6.4
£20,000 to £29,999	30	12.0
£30,000 to £39,999	40	15.9
£40,000 to £49,999	34	13.5
£50,000 to £59,999	25	10.0
£60,000 to £69,999	15	6.0
£70,000 to £79,999	12	4.8
£80,000 to £89,999	13	5.2
£90,000 to £99,999	14	5.6
£100,000 to £119,999	20	8.0
£120,000 to £139,999	6	2.4
£140,000 to £159,999	3	1.2
£160,000 to £179,999	1	0.4
£180,000 to £189,000	0	0.0
£190,000 to £199,000	0	0.0
£200,000 and above	1	0.4
Prefer not to say	16	6.4
Total	251	100.0

Length of Stay	No.	%
Day trip	85	33.9
2-3 nights	80	31.9
4+ nights	57	22.7
1 night	29	11.6
Total	251	100.0

Type of Accommodation	No.	%
Airbnb/other	45	27.1
3*/4* hotel	36	21.7
Family/Friend	28	16.9
Guest house/B&B	18	10.8

Camping/caravan	15	9.0
5* hotel	11	6.6
Other	8	4.8
2*/1* budget hotel	5	3.0
Total	166	100.0

Outdoor Activity Motivations	No.	%
Breathing in fresh air	204	81.3
To experience nature and wildlife	177	70.5
For some peace and quiet	173	68.9
I enjoy spending time outdoors with friends/family	172	68.5
I enjoy exercising in lovely countryside	167	66.5
I like to keep fit and healthy	163	64.9
To get away from it all	137	54.6
Trying new activities	64	25.5
I enjoy walking my dog/s	63	25.1
Improving in my chosen sport	25	10.0
Total	251	100.0

Preferred Time of Year	No.	%
Spring (March to May)	145	57.8
Summer (June to August)	136	54.2
Autumn (September to November)	115	45.8
Winter (December to February)	26	10.4
No preference	63	25.1
Total	251	100.0

Outdoor Activities	No.	%
Walking	223	88.8
Running	28	11.2
Heritage and conservation skills	26	10.4
Road cycling	23	9.2
Mountain biking	20	8.0
Climbing	15	6.0
Horse riding	15	6.0
Wild Swimming	14	5.6
Canoeing	10	4.0
Volunteering	10	4.0
None of these	10	4.0
Golf	9	3.6
Paddleboarding	9	3.6
Orienteering	8	3.2
Sailing	8	3.2
Hot air ballooning	7	2.8
Paragliding, gliding or flying	5	2.0

Carriage driving	4	1.6
Caving	4	1.6
Other	24	9.6
Total	251	100.0

Organised Walking/Cycling Trip	No.	%
I didn't take an organised trip	187	81.7
Self-organised group visit with a walking/cycling club	12	5.2
Ramblers Walking holiday	11	4.8
Wheely Wonderful Cycling trip	5	2.2
Exodus walking/cycling trip	4	1.7
Part of a long-distance walking/cycling trip	4	1.7
Celtic Trails walking trips	3	1.3
Other	3	1.3
Total	229	100.0

Follow Marked or Published Routes	No.	%
No, I made my own way	143	62.4
Yes, I followed a route	72	31.4
I am not aware of any marked or published routes	14	6.1
Total	229	100.0

How Found Out About Walking/Cycling Routes	No.	%
Searched for routes on the internet	99	43.2
Leaflet picked up in Shropshire	55	24.0
Guidebook on walking routes	39	17.0
Shropshire's Great Outdoors Website	33	14.4
Other	51	22.3
Total	229	100.0

Aware of Shropshire Great Outdoors Website	No.	%
No	190	86.8
Yes	28	12.8
Total	219	100.0

Found Website Useful	No.	%
Yes	27	96.4
No	1	3.6
Total	28	100.0

Apps Used	No.	%
Google Maps	122	48.6
Strava	37	14.7
All Trails	22	8.8
Map My Walk	19	7.6

Komoot	12	4.8
Ride with GPS	12	4.8
Outdoor Active	11	4.4
I don't use any apps	96	38.2
Other	11	4.4
Total	251	100.0

What is Important	Score (1-5)
Places to eat and drink (cafes)	4.1
Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars)	3.9
Easy to get to by car	3.8
Well-marked walking trails	3.7
Places to eat and drink (restaurants)	3.7
Places to stay (3-4 star)	3.3
Family friendly activities	2.9
Places to stay (budget 1-2 star)	2.8
Easy to get to by public transport	2.7
Good accessibility for people with disabilities	2.6
Well-marked cycling routes	2.5
Places to stay (luxury)	2.5
Places to stay (camping/caravanning)	2.5
Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc)	2.3
Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding	2.1

What Factors Prevent You From Going Out	No.	%
Lack of parking	71	28.3
Overgrown vegetation	64	25.5
Lack of signposts/waymarkers	43	17.1
Intimidating livestock	42	16.7
Physical obstructions	38	15.1
Lack of local transport links	38	15.1
Lack of information/guides/mapboards	31	12.4
Dog mess	31	12.4
Bad road crossings	30	12.0
Lack of convenient places to eat and drink	30	12.0
Ploughing and cropping	19	7.6
Problems with stiles	19	7.6
Problems with gates	19	7.6
Lack of wildlife/too sterile	18	7.2
I don't feel safe	17	6.8
Lack of confidence	15	6.0
I feel unwelcome	9	3.6
Lack of dog stiles	8	3.2
Other	15	6.0

Nothing stops me	88	35.1
Total	251	100.0

Rating of County for Facilities	Score (1-5)
Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars)	3.9
Easy to get to by car	3.9
Well-marked walking trails	3.8
Places to eat and drink (cafes)	3.8
Places to eat and drink (restaurants)	3.7
Places to stay (3-4 star)	3.6
Family friendly activities	3.6
Well-marked cycling routes	3.5
Places to stay (camping/caravanning)	3.5
Places to stay (budget 1-2 star)	3.4
Places to stay (luxury)	3.4
Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc)	3.4
Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding	3.3
Accessibility for people with disabilities	3.3
Easy to get to by public transport	3.1

Where Else Do You Like To Visit?	No.	%
Wales	164	65.3
Peak District	144	57.4
Lake District	138	55.0
Cornwall	105	41.8
The Yorkshire Dales	104	41.4
Devon	91	36.3
Scotland	82	32.7
The Chilterns	39	15.5
Other	21	8.4
None of these	7	2.8
Total	251	100.0

How do you Plan a Trip?	No.	%
Official websites like Visit Shropshire, Shropshire Hills National Landscape, etc.	126	50.2
Word of mouth (friends, family, colleagues)	111	44.2
Travel blogs, forums and review sites	62	24.7
Social Media	47	18.7
Other	26	10.4
I do not tend to plan my trips	42	16.7
Total	251	100.0

Inspiration to Visit	No.	%
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The natural scenery	114	45.4
Recommendations from friends/family	102	40.6
Personal interest, e.g., walking, cycling, wildlife etc	90	35.9
Specific heritage or cultural attractions	66	26.3
I saw it on social media	12	4.8
Other	46	18.3
Total	251	100.0

Would You Return to Shropshire?	No.	%
Yes	198	78.9
Maybe	48	19.1
No	5	2.0
Total	251	100.0

Would You Recommend Shropshire for Outdoor Activities?	No.	%
Yes	191	76.1
Maybe	56	22.3
No	4	1.6
Total	251	100.0

2.2 Non-Visitor Survey Tables

Place of Residence	No.	%
South East	80	16.0
London	75	15.0
North West	70	14.0
East of England	44	8.8
East Midlands	39	7.8
Scotland	39	7.8
Yorkshire and The Humber	38	7.6
South West	37	7.4
West Midlands	34	6.8
Wales	25	5.0
North East	14	2.8
Northern Ireland	5	1.0
Total	500	100.0

Age	No.	%
18-24	14	2.8
25-34	56	11.2
35-44	83	16.6
45-54	78	15.6
55-64	95	19.0
65+	174	34.8
Total	500	100.0

Profession	No.	%
Retired	129	25.8
Supervisory or clerical/junior managerial	103	20.6
Intermediate managerial/professional/administrative	93	18.6
Higher managerial/professional/administrative	45	9.0
Semi or unskilled manual work	45	9.0
Skilled manual worker	39	7.8
Self Employed/Business Owner	25	5.0
Unemployed/long-term sickness	11	2.2
Full-time carer	5	1.0
Homemaker	3	0.6
Student	2	0.4
Total	500	100.0

Annual Household Income	No.	%
£10,000 to £19,999	54	10.8
£100,000 to £119,999	20	4.0
£120,000 to £139,999	12	2.4
£140,000 to £159,999	12	2.4
£160,000 to £179,999	2	0.4
£180,000 to £199,999	1	0.2
£20,000 to £29,999	68	13.6
£200,000 and above	17	3.4
£30,000 to £39,999	59	11.8
£40,000 to £49,999	62	12.4
£50,000 to £59,999	49	9.8
£60,000 to £69,999	27	5.4
£70,000 to £79,999	21	4.2
£80,000 to £89,999	16	3.2
£90,000 to £99,999	19	3.8
Prefer not to say	43	8.6
Under £10,000	18	3.6
Total	500	100.0

Awareness of Shropshire	No.	%
I'm not aware but I'm interested to find out more	210	42.0
Yes, I am aware and would like to visit one day	188	37.6
Yes, I am aware but I'm not sure if I'll visit	102	20.4
Total	500	100.0

What Motivates You To Take Part In Outdoor Activities?	No.	%
Breathing in fresh air	388	77.6
For some peace and quiet	333	66.6
To experience nature and wildlife	323	64.6

I enjoy spending time outdoors with friends/family	322	64.4
To get away from it all	273	54.6
I like to keep fit and healthy	272	54.4
I enjoy exercising in lovely countryside	272	54.4
Trying new activities	145	29
I enjoy walking my dog/s	127	25.4
Improving in my chosen sport	50	10
Total	500	100

Preferred Time of Year	No.	%
Spring (March to May)	242	48.4
Summer (June to August)	290	58.0
Autumn (September to November)	194	38.8
Winter (December to February)	45	9.0
No preference	121	24.2
Total	500	100.0

Associations with Images	Scale (1-4)
Quintessential market town of Shrewsbury	3.0
The imposing Ludlow Castle	2.9
Sunset over the Shropshire Hills	2.9
Hiking in the Shropshire Hills	2.8
Food Festival at Ludlow Castle	2.7
Rolling hills above Church Stretton	2.7
Carding Mill Valley	2.6
Self-guided walking opportunities in Shropshire	2.6
Climbing the Stiperstones	2.5
Cycling to enjoy glorious Shropshire views	2.5
Paddleboarding on the River Teme by Ludlow Castle	2.4
Oswestry Balloon Festival	2.3

Outdoor Activities	No.	%
Walking	445	89.0
Heritage and conservation skills	110	22.0
Road cycling	73	14.6
Mountain biking	71	14.2
Running	65	13.0
Wild Swimming	61	12.2
Golf	57	11.4
Canoeing	53	10.6
Climbing	52	10.4
Horse riding	49	9.8
Hot air ballooning	49	9.8
Volunteering	46	9.2
Orienteering	41	8.2

Paddleboarding	40	8.0
Caving	37	7.4
Sailing	33	6.6
Carriage driving	28	5.6
Paragliding, gliding or flying	20	4.0
Other	33	6.6
None of these	9	1.8
Total	500	100.0

Like to Follow Marked Routes	No.	%
No, I prefer to make my own way	114	24.5
Yes, I like to follow a marked route	351	75.5
Total	465	100.0

Aware of Shropshire Great Outdoors Website	No.	%
No	387	83.2
Yes	78	16.8
Total	465	100.0

Found Website Useful	No.	%
Yes	76	97.4
No	2	2.6
Total	78	100.0

Apps Used	No.	%
Google Maps	293	63.0
Strava	62	13.3
Map My Walk	61	13.1
All Trails	38	8.2
Outdoor Active	37	8.0
Ride with GPS	33	7.1
Komoot	27	5.8
Other	15	3.2
I don't use any apps	127	27.3
Total	465	100.0

What is Important	Score (1-5)
Places to eat and drink (cafes)	3.9
Places to eat and drink (pubs/bars)	3.8
Easy to get to by car	3.8
Places to eat and drink (restaurants)	3.7
Equipment rental facilities (bicycles, helmets, canoes/kayaks etc)	3.6
Places to stay (3-4 star)	3.5
Places to stay (budget 1-2 star)	3.2

Family friendly activities	3.2
Easy to get to by public transport	3.1
Good accessibility for people with disabilities	2.9
Well-marked walking trails	2.8
Places to stay (luxury)	2.7
Well-marked cycling routes	2.6
Places to stay (camping/caravanning)	2.5
Instruction facilities, e.g. horse riding	2.4

What Factors Prevent You From Going Out	No.	%
Overgrown vegetation	134	26.8
Lack of parking	134	26.8
Physical obstructions	130	26.0
Lack of information/guides/mapboards	109	21.8
Lack of local transport links	102	20.4
Intimidating livestock	92	18.4
Lack of signposts/waymarkers	86	17.2
Dog mess	75	15.0
Lack of convenient places to eat and drink	71	14.2
Bad road crossings	64	12.8
Lack of confidence	52	10.4
Problems with stiles	50	10.0
Ploughing and cropping	49	9.8
I don't feel safe	48	9.6
Problems with gates	42	8.4
Lack of wildlife/too sterile	34	6.8
I feel unwelcome	31	6.2
Lack of dog stiles	26	5.2
Other	37	7.4
Nothing stops me	131	26.2
Total	500	100.0

Where Else Do You Like To Visit?	No.	%
Lake District	279	55.8
Wales	236	47.2
Cornwall	213	42.6
Peak District	211	42.2
Devon	194	38.8
The Yorkshire Dales	184	36.8
Scotland	177	35.4
The Chilterns	93	18.6
Other	44	8.8
None of these	16	3.2
Total	500	100

How Do You Plan A Trip?	No.	%
Word of mouth (friends, family, colleagues)	257	51.4
Official websites like Visit Shropshire, Shropshire Hills National Landscape, etc.	229	45.8
Travel blogs, forums and review sites	166	33.2
Social Media	135	27.0
Other	27	5.4
I do not tend to plan my trips	61	12.2
Total	500	100.0

3. DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

The development opportunities presented in this Annex 3 build on strategic priorities identified through the stakeholder consultation and study research, to help strengthen Shropshire's position as a sustainable, inclusive, and well-connected destination for walking, cycling, and outdoor recreation.

Some of the initiatives aim to enhance and scale up existing programmes, while others introduce new approaches that can be developed when funding is available, to address gaps in access, infrastructure, destination awareness, digital integration and community engagement. Each development opportunity template outlines a framework for development, including proposed actions, rationale, anticipated benefits, lead and supporting partners, funding opportunities and future development potential.

These eight development opportunities have been divided into four priority levels:

1. **Active/ High priority for development:** Initiatives that are critical for immediate implementation and will have a direct impact on Shropshire's outdoor tourism.
2. **New with strong potential subject to future funding:** Initiatives with significant potential, but reliant on future funding opportunities.
3. **Future development potential:** Initiatives that require further research, planning, and/or partnerships to be fully realized.

In addition, there are seven live **Partner Projects** that are being delivered or are under development and that support the delivery of the strategic objectives and priorities and complement other ongoing efforts within the region.

DO-1. Shropshire's Great Outdoors Website Development	
Project type	Revenue – Digital Infrastructure, Marketing, Promotion
Lead partner	Shropshire Council – Great Outdoors
Other partners	Local Authorities, National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, English Heritage, Natural England, Canal and River Trust, Community and Voluntary Groups, local businesses.
Summary	The project focuses on further developing and enhancing Shropshire's Great Outdoors website. It aims to create an integrated digital resource hub, connecting visitors with key outdoor attractions, improving accessibility information, and linking to other significant websites within Shropshire. This approach will strengthen online promotion, visitor information, and facilitate seamless user experiences.
Rationale	This project is important for inclusion in the Walking, Cycling, and Outdoor Activities Development Plan as it establishes a central, comprehensive digital platform linking with other primary websites, promoting greater accessibility, coordinated information sharing, and enhanced visitor experiences. This coordination is essential for improving engagement with outdoor activities, fostering inclusivity, and boosting regional tourism.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised, comprehensive resource for visitors and residents. • Increased accessibility and inclusivity for diverse visitor groups. • Enhanced collaboration between tourism and outdoor activity providers. • Increased promotion and visibility of outdoor recreation options. • Economic benefits from increased visitation.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous funding for web maintenance, content and upgrades. • Ensuring effective partnership collaboration and content coordination. • Maximising digital outreach and accessibility for diverse user groups. • Updated information.
Potential for future development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing one-stop information for all outdoor activities in Shropshire. • Development of stronger inter-website linkages and partnerships between local tour operators, and local businesses. • Integration of relevant outdoor events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting health and wellbeing initiatives through social prescribing • Highlight sustainability efforts • Monitor visitor satisfaction through surveys and data collection • Enable potential visitors to fully plan their trip, encouraging longer stays by promoting packages or experiences. • Improve engagement with and accessibility to green space for both visitors and residents. • Strengthen business-to-business (B2B) marketing, allowing tourism operators to promote relevant activities. • Boost sustainable tourism by guiding visitors to less crowded areas and spreading visitor impact.
Future costs	Continuous maintenance and administration for updates, marketing and promotion
Initial timescale	2025-2028
Priority	High Priority for Development
Status	Active

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Position Great Outdoors as the county's main outdoor-activity knowledge hub	x		
Prepare a development plan and funding bids to expand the hub's content and functions	x	x	
Build a stakeholder network (public, private, third sector and market-town reps) to feed data into the hub	x		
Shropshire Way Association.	x		
Launch an incentivised visitor-survey link on Great Outdoors and Visit Shropshire to track key indicators	x		
Run the Good Travel Scan with Visit Shropshire businesses to assess sustainability performance	x		
Deliver sustainability training to businesses based on Scan findings		x	
Build a Sustainable Business Hub section on Tourism in Shropshire B2B portal, showcasing certifications, case studies and "champion" firms		x	
Promote Shropshire's green projects on Great Outdoors with stories, updates and volunteer calls-to-action	x		
Assess the feasibility of destination-level sustainability certification (e.g. Green Destinations)			x

DO-2. Developing Themed and Circular Walks for Niche Interests	
Project type	Revenue - Product Development
Lead partner	Shropshire Council – Great Outdoors
Other partners	Visit Shropshire, Local Walking & Cycling Groups, Yoga & Wellness Retreats, Local Accommodation Providers, Food & Drink Producers, Sustainable Tourism Networks, Outdoor Adventure Businesses
Summary	<p>This project will develop a series of themed and circular walks catering to niche visitor interests, combining outdoor activities, cultural heritage, wellness, and local food & drink experiences. By collaborating with local businesses and experience providers, the initiative will create immersive, multi-activity trails, encouraging longer stays and higher visitor spending. Proposed themed routes could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hills, History & Heritage: Fell running routes incorporating historic landscapes, castles, and cultural landmarks. • Holistic Health Walks: Wellness-focused trails integrating yoga, eco-conscious accommodations, and local organic produce. • 4x4 – 4 Pedals, 4 Swims: A multi-modal adventure combining cycling, walking, wild swimming, and nature escapes. • Walk, Cycle, Taste: A food and drink-themed route featuring local breweries, local gastronomy and artisanal producers, encouraging sustainable rural tourism. <p>Supporting Offa's routes: As part of this project, the team will audit and refresh the Walking with Offa circular walks, adding new walker-friendly cafés, farm shops and heritage stops where pubs have closed and tying the routes more closely to Offa's Dyke walk. This keeps a much-loved asset fresh while feeding it into the wider themed-trail offer.</p>
Rationale	Walking and cycling tourism are a key growth area for Shropshire, but there is untapped potential to develop specialist experiences that attract high-value niche markets. By curating unique, themed trails, this project will diversify Shropshire's tourism offer, increase engagement with local businesses, and encourage sustainable travel choices.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands Shropshire's outdoor tourism offering beyond general walking routes. • Enhances visitor experience by integrating history, wellness, adventure, and food & drink. • Supports local businesses by linking walks to accommodations, food producers, and activity providers. • Encourages longer visitor stays through multi-day itineraries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes sustainable tourism, reducing car dependency by focusing on walking, cycling, and public transport-linked experiences. • Supports the development of Accommodation Activity hubs (see Project 11)
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging a diverse range of businesses and experience providers to create well-rounded packages. • Ensuring trail maintenance and wayfinding meet visitor expectations. • Marketing themed experiences effectively to niche visitor groups. • Developing pricing models for paid experiences (e.g., food & drink tastings, yoga retreats).
Potential for future development	A wide range of themed itineraries can be developed depending on market trends and availability of new products and experiences.
Future costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route maintenance and waymarking • Business and experience provider engagement • Marketing and digital promotion • Event planning and management
Relevant Example	<p>South West Coast Path's Food & Drink Trails – A model linking walking routes with local producers, tasting experiences, and accommodations to boost tourism and local spending.</p> <p>https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/walk-coast-path/trip-planning/food-drink/</p>
Priority	New with strong potential subject to future funding
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Map three ancient-landscape themed routes with interpretation, community stories and business links		x	
Create a bookable walking product based on those three routes, linked to the museum		x	
Create a dedicated themed-trail section on the Great Outdoors website, with bookable packages linked to local businesses and overnight stays.		x	

DO-3. Signature Trails for Outdoor Activities in Shropshire	
Project type	Revenue- Outdoor Recreation and Destination Development
Lead partner	Shropshire Council
Other partners	Visit Shropshire, Natural England, Canal & River Trust, British Canoeing, Sustrans, Shropshire Cycle Hub, Local Tourism & Outdoor Activity Businesses, Wildlife Trusts, Private Sector Accommodation & Hospitality Providers, Specialist Tour Operators, Ramblers Association, Shropshire Way Association.
Summary	<p>This project aims to create a collection of Signature outdoor activity trails across Shropshire, leveraging established walking (Shropshire Way), cycling (Shropshire Cycle Way), equestrian (Jack Mytton Way), and water-based (the River Severn) trails to position Shropshire as a prime destination for lovers of the great outdoors.</p> <p>These Signature trails can provide a focus to strengthen marketing, route infrastructure, integrate private sector engagement, creating high-quality, well-connected trails that support both recreational users and sustainable tourism growth. Partnerships with local businesses and tour operators would encourage the development of accommodation, food, and experience packages, making Shropshire a more attractive destination for outdoor activity enthusiasts and leisure visitors.</p>
Rationale	Shropshire has a strong foundation of established outdoor routes, but they lack coordinated promotion, private sector engagement, and product packaging. Strengthening key routes through better connectivity, improved business partnerships to provide better visitor services, and can enhance visitor experience, increase overnight stays, and boost the local economy.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a unified identity for Shropshire as an outdoor activity destination • Develops a cohesive network of signature trails that can be the foundation for developing special interest experiences and activities suitable for a range of visitor segments e.g. family friendly birdwatching. • Encourages visitor engagement through guidebooks and digital communications. • Improves infrastructure (waymarking, signage, digital tools) to enhance accessibility. • Engages local businesses to offer accommodation, dining, and cultural experiences linked to the routes. • Supports specialist tour operators in packaging guided experiences and multi-day trips. • Promotes low-impact outdoor activities.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires coordination across multiple outdoor activity sectors and stakeholders. • Ensuring adequate infrastructure and maintenance for growing visitor numbers. • Encouraging private sector investment in accommodation and experience development. • Balancing visitor access with conservation and landowner concerns.
Potential for future development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of branded experience packages combining trails with themed stays, food trails, and cultural activities. • Creation of a digital interactive map integrating all signature routes and key services. • Expansion of self-guided itineraries and guided tour offerings through specialist operators. • Potential for cross-regional partnerships to link Shropshire trails with those in Wales and surrounding areas.
Relevant Example	The Cotswold Way: https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/exploring/the-cotswold-way-and-other-long-distance-paths/the-cotswold-way/
Priority	High Priority for Development
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Establish a working group for each Signature Trail with the objective of improving it. Work closely with the Shropshire Way Association (walking), Cycling UK/Shropshire Cycle Hub (cycling), Relevant stakeholders/Jack Mytton Way partners (equestrian), and Shropshire Wildlife Trust/Canoe Foundation (water).	x		
Each group will map and cluster tourism businesses along signature routes to identify accommodation providers, food and drink businesses, experience providers, and transport options.	x		
Develop and deliver a business training programme supporting businesses around each route to align with the Signature Trails brand and value proposition. Including local tour operators to sell the Signature Trails.	x		
Develop a unified identity, signage standards, and storytelling framework to be used across the Signature Trails.		x	
Integrate signature routes maps and promotional materials into Great Outdoors Website to distribute the information to local authority websites and marketing channels across Shropshire, ensuring alignment with destination branding and broader tourism promotion efforts		x	
Develop a digital interactive map for each Signature Trail and associated services (accommodation, food, experiences)	x	x	

Identify and improve infrastructure for water-based recreation including canoe/kayak/SUP launch points, signage, and safety measures	x	x	
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DO-4. Shrewsbury as a Hub and Spoke Destination for Outdoor Activities Linking with Market Towns Network	
Project type	Revenue- Destination Development -community engagement, promotion
Lead partner	Shropshire Council
Other partners	Visit Shropshire, Shrewsbury BID, Network Rail, National Highways, Transport for Wales, West Midlands Railway, Local Bus Operators, Local Tourism and Outdoor Activity Businesses, Natural England, DEFRA.
Summary	<p>This integrated project positions Shrewsbury as the central gateway for outdoor activities across Shropshire, linking it to a network of town hubs across the county. By enhancing Shrewsbury's existing transport infrastructure and linking it to key walking, cycling, and water-based routes, Shrewsbury will become the starting point for multi-day outdoor experiences. Additionally, each market town in Shropshire will have a dedicated outdoor activity hub, facilitating access to local circular walking routes and other outdoor activities, strengthening the area's appeal for short breaks. The hubs will integrate with Shrewsbury's transport links, creating a seamless experience for visitors.</p> <p>The project will enhance visitor infrastructure and information services in Shrewsbury and surrounding towns. It will foster stronger community involvement by recognizing and supporting volunteers in maintaining and promoting walking routes, while encouraging businesses to engage in the "Walkers are Welcome" network.</p>
Rationale	Shrewsbury is well-connected by train, road, and river but has yet to be marketed as a starting point for outdoor tourism. By integrating the town with key outdoor routes, Shrewsbury can provide a cohesive, sustainable visitor experience, increase visitor stays, and encourage use of sustainable transport. At the same time, developing outdoor activity hubs across Shropshire will provide town-specific experiences, benefiting both residents and visitors by improving access to green spaces, promoting local businesses, and enhancing the region's outdoor tourism offer.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes Shrewsbury as a key outdoor tourism gateway, supporting multi-activity tourism (cycling, walking, paddling, heritage tourism). • Expands outdoor activity opportunities with a structured network of town hubs offering circular walks and local outdoor activities. • Enhances integration of transport and active travel, reducing car dependency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports local businesses by attracting visitors to key towns, increasing overnight stays and spending. • Strengthens community involvement by engaging and recognizing volunteers in maintaining local routes. • Promotes sustainable tourism by linking towns via public transport and promoting walking and other outdoor activities. • Encourages regional collaboration and multi-day itineraries, enhancing Shropshire's standing as a prime destination for outdoor activities.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination between transport operators, tourism bodies, and outdoor activity providers. • Securing sustained funding for infrastructure, marketing, and ongoing maintenance. • Engaging local businesses to join the "Walkers are Welcome" initiative and participate in the development of walking packages. • Encouraging balanced visitor dispersal across hubs to prevent overcrowding in popular areas. • Ensuring accessibility, clear wayfinding, and user-friendly digital information.
Potential for future development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of multi adventure itineraries linking walking, cycling, and water-based activities. • Creation of bike and kayak hire points at transport hub. • Enhanced signage and digital mapping to integrate routes with transport links. • Development of walking and cycling festivals, and other events to attract visitors. • Cross-regional collaboration with neighbouring destinations to create extended multi-day routes • Potential for introducing sustainable transport discount schemes for visitors who use public transport and engage in outdoor activities.
Future costs	Marketing and promotion, ongoing infrastructure maintenance and potential investment in transport-linked cycle hire schemes.
Relevant Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Example: visittuscany Terre di Casole Bike Hub – A network of cycle routes and services in Tuscany, Italy, showcasing how rural towns can become nature tourism hubs through coordinated routes, local partnerships, and outdoor recreation. • National Example: Walkers are Welcome Network – A UK initiative promoting towns as hubs for walkers by improving infrastructure and services for outdoor visitors. Walkers are Welcome
Priority	New with strong potential subject to future funding
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Set up the Market Town Hub working groups	x		
Use the Great Outdoors website to establish a central digital coordination platform, where market town hubs feed visitor information, itineraries, and event updates into the Great Outdoors Website as the main hub, and local accommodation providers contribute content to their respective town hub pages.	x		
Integrate outdoor activities and public transport information at arrival points ensuring walking, cycling, horse riding and canoeing route information is available at train/bus stations through signage, maps, and QR-linked itineraries.	x		
Work with local tour operators and accommodation providers to develop multi-activity itineraries starting from Shrewsbury, create ideas for visitor-friendly packages combining train arrival with walking, cycling, horse riding or water sports with overnight stays and local experiences.	x		
Launch a visitor campaign around 'Outdoor Adventures from Shrewsbury' using the Great Outdoors platform, local tourism partners, and social media to promote the town as the base for exploring Shropshire outdoors' activities. Integrate market towns ensuring each town has a dedicated section featuring trails, experiences, local events, transport links, and accommodations.		x	

DO-5. Accommodation Activity Hubs Connecting Visitors to Local Experiences and Events	
Project type	Revenue (Business Engagement)
Lead partner	Shropshire Council – Great Outdoors
Other partners	Visit Shropshire, Local Accommodation Providers, Local Tourism & Outdoor Activity Businesses, Public Transport Operators, Digital Marketing Experts, Event Organisers
Summary	This project will develop local accommodation activity hubs by working with accommodation providers to create car-free travel itineraries that integrate local activities, heritage, food and drink experiences, and public transport links. These hubs will serve as central points for visitors, encouraging sustainable travel while supporting local businesses. The project will also provide business support in digital marketing (TripAdvisor, Google Maps, and online booking platforms) to enhance visibility and visitor engagement. Additionally, an events calendar will be linked to these hubs to drive visitor numbers and support income generation for trail maintenance and local services.
Rationale	Many accommodation providers are well-placed to act as hubs for walking, cycling, and heritage-based tourism, yet lack structured itineraries and marketing support. Additionally, visitor infrastructure (parking, toilets, wayfinding) often requires additional funding. By linking accommodation hubs with events and income-generation strategies, this project will enhance visitor experiences, boost local business engagement, and support the sustainable development of Shropshire's outdoor tourism offer.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a network of accommodation hubs that support car-free short-breaks. • Increases visitor spend by linking local activities, food/drink, and cultural experiences. • Provides business support and digital marketing training for accommodation providers and activity operators. • Encourages private sector contributions for visitor infrastructure, such as parking and toilet facilities. • Supports sustainable tourism development by promoting public transport and non-motorised travel.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging accommodation providers and ensuring buy-in for the hub model. • Developing structured itineraries that appeal to different visitor segments. • Creating and funding an effective marketing strategy to promote accommodation hubs and events, in conjunction with the Great Outdoors
Potential for future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of accommodation hub network across more locations, increasing options for visitors.

development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of themed itineraries (e.g., historic stays, food and drink trails, wellness retreats) related to local experiences • Integration with the Great Outdoors website and other apps for real-time event listings, itineraries, and visitor contributions. • Creation of a visitor loyalty or pass system offering discounts on local experiences.
Future costs	Ongoing business support and, marketing and digital promotion, maintenance of visitor infrastructure (e.g., parking, toilets, trails), event coordination and promotion.
Relevant Example	Dark Sky Accommodation Hubs – Northumberland – A network of small-scale accommodations linked to outdoor experiences, local food, and night-sky tourism, supported by event-based revenue streams. https://www.visitnorthumberland.com/explore/destinations/darkskies/experiences
Priority	Future development potential.
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Audit and improve circular walking routes around each town collaborating with walking groups and local volunteers to assess, waymark, and enhance local circular trails linked to each hub.	x	x	x
Deliver training workshops with accommodation providers, cafés, attractions, and shops to co-create walking-friendly, car-free short-break itineraries that integrate public transport, local routes, and experiences such as heritage, food, and nature.	x		
Training workshops and one-to-one support to help accommodation providers improve their presence on platforms like Google Maps, TripAdvisor, and booking sites, while connecting to the Great Outdoors event calendar and itinerary tools.	x		
Encourage market towns to join the ‘Walkers are Welcome’ (WaW) network by supporting the creation of local volunteer groups responsible for maintaining walking routes, updating visitor content, and promoting their town’s outdoor offer, with formal recognition given through the WaW status.		x	

DO-6. Walking for Health Hub Expanding Accessible Walking Routes for Wellbeing	
Project type	Revenue
Lead partner	Shropshire Council – Great Outdoors
Other partners	NHS Shropshire, Local Walking for Health Groups, Ramblers UK, Town & Parish Councils, Natural England, Visit Shropshire, Community Health and Fitness Organisations
Summary	<p>This project aims to establish a central hub to map, promote, and improve Walking for Health routes and opportunities through organisations offering walking for health programmes across Shropshire, making easy-access walking more available to residents. The initiative will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refine existing health walks, ensuring routes meet accessibility standards. • Work with Town and Parish Councils, local walking groups, and public health bodies to improve route signage, maintenance, and safety. • Integrate Walking for Health routes into the existing digital hub and printed resources, creating a comprehensive directory for easy access and promotion. • Promote the benefits of walking for physical and mental wellbeing, targeting older adults, those with limited mobility, and people seeking gentle outdoor activity. • Strengthen partnerships with NHS services and community groups to integrate walking routes into social prescribing and wellbeing programmes.
Rationale	Walking for Health initiatives have proven health benefits, yet many residents are unaware of available routes or face accessibility barriers. By mapping and improving walking routes, this project will increase participation in physical activity, improve community health, and support local wellbeing programmes and social prescribers.
Benefits	<p>Expands access to Walking for Health routes, making them more inclusive for all residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages active lifestyles, improving physical and mental wellbeing. • Supports social prescribing by integrating walking into health and community care. • Creates a more connected walking network, improving signage and accessibility. • Strengthens local community engagement, involving walking groups, councils, and health services.
Challenges	<p>Ensuring route accessibility improvements meet the needs of diverse users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing long-term funding and maintenance partnerships.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness and engagement to increase participation. • Developing a comprehensive mapping and promotional strategy that is easy to use for all demographics.
Potential for future development	<p>Expansion of the digital hub to include guided audio walks, fitness tracking, and wellness content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of themed health walks (e.g., mindfulness walks, sensory trails, community-led walking groups). • Integration with public transport to improve accessibility for non-drivers. • Collaboration with parks, nature reserves, and local attractions to expand routes and increase engagement.
Future costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route maintenance & accessibility improvements. • Marketing & digital platform development. • Business and community engagement • Promotion
Relevant Example	<p>Paths for All (Scotland) – A national programme promoting accessible walking routes for health, with strong integration into community wellbeing initiatives.</p> <p>https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/</p>
Priority	High Priority for Development
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Integrate all accessible walking routes developed through the Walking for Health Hub into the Great Outdoors website, alongside family-friendly and buggy-accessible trails, with filters for short, circular, easy-access routes and nearby facilities like toilets, cafés, and play areas.	x		
Create a digital map of accessible community facilities Develop an online map (linked to the Great Outdoors platform) showing locations of accessible toilets, rest stops, and water points provided through the honesty scheme, including accessibility features like step-free access and opening hours		x	
Promote the health benefits of walking through local GP surgeries, libraries, and community centres.		x	

DO-7. Themed Routes Linked to Public Transport <i>linked to Rail Rambles programme and Shropshire Hills Shuttlebus</i>	
Project type	Revenue - Travel and Outdoor Recreation Development
Lead partner	Shropshire Council
Other partners	Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, Transport for Wales, Visit Shropshire, National Highways, Sustrans, Local Cycling & Walking Groups, Outdoor Tourism Businesses, Rail Rambles
Summary	<p>This project complements the Market Hubs concept and aims to develop themed walking and cycling routes that are directly linked to public transport to encourage car-free travel and sustainable tourism. The initiative will build upon the Rail Rambles programme, integrating key transport corridors with cycling and walking networks, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East-West Rail Rambles, using cycle-friendly train services from Swansea to Shrewsbury on Heart of Wales line. • A North-South Rail Pass, facilitating seamless travel between key destinations in Shropshire and beyond, promoting multi-day active travel itineraries. <p>The project will work with transport providers, local businesses, and outdoor tourism operators to create well-signed, easily accessible routes linking train stations with walking and cycling trails, local attractions, and accommodation options. This project will also link to the ongoing Shropshire Hills Shuttle Bus Service, which directly supports the objectives of this initiative by providing sustainable, regular transport to key outdoor recreation areas such as the Long Mynd and Stiperstones. The shuttle service complements the Rail Rambles programme by linking outdoor attractions with public transport, further promoting car-free travel and sustainable tourism across Shropshire. Future developments for the shuttle bus could include expanding its routes, increasing frequency, and integrating with train schedules to improve seamless multi-modal travel for visitors.</p>
Rationale	Shropshire has strong rail connections, but opportunities to integrate these with outdoor experiences remain underdeveloped. By promoting themed routes linked to public transport, the county can reduce car dependency, increase sustainable travel options, and attract new visitors from urban centres. A North-South rail pass and expanded Rail Rambles network would enhance accessibility, offering visitors seamless connections between Shropshire's natural and cultural assets.

Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles. • Expands Rail Rambles to include cycling-friendly routes, increasing appeal to urban populations. • Develops new multi-modal travel products, such as a North-South rail pass, to facilitate long-distance exploration of Shropshire. • Supports rural economies by directing visitors to towns, attractions, and businesses near transport hubs. • Enhances accessibility and inclusivity by linking public transport with well-marked trails.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with multiple transport operators to align services and infrastructure. • Marketing and awareness efforts required to change visitor behaviour and encourage public transport use. • Ensuring infrastructure (bike storage, signage, transport schedules) supports seamless multi-modal travel. • Balancing visitor numbers to prevent overcrowding of popular locations
Potential for future development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of Rail Rambles programme to include guided walks and themed itineraries. • Development of integrated digital maps and journey planners, allowing visitors to easily navigate between public transport and trails. • Potential cross-regional collaboration with Wales and Midlands destinations to create extended multi-day walking and cycling routes. • Introduction of rail and bus discount schemes for walkers and cyclists to encourage greater uptake.
Relevant Example	<p>Lake District Bus & Rail Integration Scheme – A successful initiative linking bus services with train routes to provide seamless visitor transport while reducing car usage in rural areas. Lake District Bus & Rail Integration Scheme – A successful initiative linking bus services with train routes to provide seamless visitor transport while reducing car usage in rural areas.</p> <p>https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/smarter-travel</p>
Priority	High Priority for Development
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Partner with local businesses to support the shuttle bus operations and offer visitor incentives. Encourage cafés, pubs, shops, and	x		

attractions to provide discounts or added value offers to shuttle users.			
Develop and promote on the Great Outdoors Website the Marcher Castle Way Off-Road Mountain Biking Route		x	
Develop family-friendly paddle experiences along the Montgomery Canal. Create and promote short, safe, and scenic paddle routes suitable for beginners and families. Link to local food and drink stops to enhance the visitor experience and encourage longer stays.			x
Collate inclusive/family outdoor activities and events information into the Great Outdoors Website, launching a seasonal calendar of water-based and recreational activities (e.g. paddle sessions, accessible walks, easy rides) designed to engage a diverse audience.			x
Develop multi-activity itineraries linking paddle, walking, and cycling routes. Create easy-to-follow, family-friendly itineraries that combine short paddle trails with nearby walking or cycling routes and local attractions.			x

DO-8. Community Facilities and Honesty Scheme	
Project type	Revenue-Outdoor Activity Support, Private Sector Engagement
Lead partner	Shropshire Council
Other partners	Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team, Local businesses (cafés, B&Bs, farm shops), Parish Councils
Summary	This project aims to make Shropshire a truly outdoor-friendly destination by addressing the lack of visitor facilities on popular walking, cycling, and other outdoor activities routes. It will pilot a flexible “honesty scheme” model encouraging local businesses to open up private facilities (toilets, parking, water points) to outdoor users, supported by clear digital and on-site messaging. Contactless donation points and QR-enabled signage will offer simple ways for visitors to contribute voluntarily towards upkeep and support of these services.
Rationale	Many walkers, cyclists, and families face barriers due to the limited availability of toilets and resting areas in rural Shropshire. Meanwhile, small businesses often have underused facilities that could support tourism. This initiative provides a practical, low-cost solution to enhance the visitor experience and reduce pressure on public infrastructure while directly benefiting the local economy.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves access to essential facilities for outdoor users. • Enhances Shropshire’s appeal as an accessible, outdoor-friendly destination. • Generates voluntary income to maintain infrastructure. • Strengthens the local economy by incentivising business involvement. • Encourages positive visitor behaviour and shared responsibility.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring local business participation and community buy-in. • Developing clear, trusted messaging around donations. • Managing usage impacts on private facilities. • Technical setup and maintenance of digital donation tools.
Potential for future development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County-wide “Outdoor-Friendly Business” recognition • Integration into walking and cycling apps with facility maps. • Expanded facility partnerships including churches, community halls, and farms.
Future costs	Device maintenance, business liaison, promotion and digital updates
Relevant Example	Honesty Box Schemes in Scotland's Outdoor Recreation Areas:

	https://awayfromtheordinary.com/2024/07/29/honesty-boxes-in-scotland/
Priority	Future development potential.
Status	New

Priority Actions	Timeframe		
	S	M	L
Pilot an 'Outdoor-Friendly Business' Donation Scheme recruiting a small group of local businesses (e.g. cafés, pubs, farm shops) to offer access to facilities like toilets, water points, and parking, with visible signage and digital listings. Then use this as a proof of concept to demonstrate viability, test donation methods and refine messaging.	x	x	
Showcase participating businesses on the Great Outdoors website with clear information about accessible toilets, water points, and parking.	x	x	
Raise visitor awareness of the scheme through signage and social media.		x	

PARTNER PROJECTS

PP-1. Severn Canoe Trail - Shropshire

Lead partner Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Other partners Canoe Foundation, Sport England, Local Hospitality Businesses, Landowners.

Summary The [Severn Canoe Trail](#) project focuses on enhancing outdoor recreation along the River Severn as it passes through Shropshire. The initiative aims to develop an online guide that promotes safe and responsible exploration of the river, offering information on local hospitality businesses, a code of conduct to minimize user conflicts, and features to improve river access and environmental care. By improving physical access to the river at key locations and collaborating with businesses and landowners, the project ensures up-to-date, informative content and encourages sustainable recreation. The Severn Canoe Trail strengthens Shropshire's position as a premier destination for multi-activity outdoor experiences, supporting active travel, water-based tourism, and ecological protection. This project not only provides canoeists, kayakers, and paddleboarders with safer access but also boosts the local economy and encourages environmental stewardship, ensuring the responsible use and care of the river while integrating local hospitality businesses.

Challenges

- **Funding Acquisition:** Securing ongoing financial support for continuous development and maintenance.
- **Stakeholder Coordination:** Aligning interests and cooperation among diverse stakeholders, including businesses, landowners, and recreational users.
- **Environmental Impact:** Managing increased recreational use to prevent negative effects on the river ecosystem.
- **User Safety:** Ensuring that users adhere to safety guidelines to prevent accidents and emergencies.

The Severn Canoe Trail project aims to expand the trail to new sections of the River Severn and connect with nearby waterways. Future development includes educational programs on river ecology and safety, community engagement through volunteer and clean-up events, and digital enhancements like mobile apps and interactive maps. Anticipated costs will cover website maintenance, infrastructure improvements, and staffing. Active since 2021, the project's next phases depend on funding and will span multiple years. It remains a high priority for enhancing outdoor recreation, supporting local economies, and promoting environmental conservation.

PP-2. Marcher Castle Way Off-Road Mountain Biking Route

Enhancement and Promotion

Lead partner	Cycling UK
Other partners	Cycling UK, Sustrans, British Cycling, Local Landowners & Farmers, Shropshire Outdoor Partnership, Local Tourism Businesses, National Trust, Forestry England
Summary	<p>This project will refine, improve, and promote the Marcher Castle Way as an off-road touring route for mountain bikers, ensuring it is fully accessible, well-marked, and well-supported. While developed by Cycling UK, the route requires refinement to improve access, signage, and local engagement. Key actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and refining local routes, ensuring bridleways are correctly used and accessible for mountain bikers. • Engaging with landowners and farmers to maintain positive relationships and responsible route management. • Developing promotional materials, including maps, digital guides, and GPX files for mountain biking visitors. • Working with tourism businesses to promote bike-friendly accommodations, food stops, and repair stations. • Raising awareness of the route through targeted marketing and engagement with cycling communities.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing landowner and farmer relationships to ensure access remains open. • Balancing conservation with increased cycling activity in rural and protected landscapes. • Funding for infrastructure improvements, including signage and wayfinding tools. • Ensuring riders follow responsible access guidelines, reducing conflicts with other trail users.

The future development of the Marcher Castle Way Bikepacking Experience includes expanding multi-day cycling itineraries that integrate local accommodations. Supporting services such as bike hire, repair stations, and shuttle services will be enhanced, while making the route more accessible through integration with public transport links. Additionally, mountain biking events and guided tours will be hosted to promote the route and attract more visitors.

PP-3. Stepping Stones Project - Shropshire Hills

Lead partner	National Trust
Other partners	Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Shropshire Hills National Landscape, Upper Onny Farmers Group, Middle Marches Community Land Trust
Summary	<p>The Stepping Stones Project is a landscape-scale nature conservation initiative spanning over 200 km² in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Its goal is to create, restore, and connect habitats such as heathland, flower-rich grassland, woodland, and wetland, enhancing ecological connectivity. The project works in collaboration with farmers, landowners, community groups, and volunteers to establish wildlife corridors and "stepping stones" between key conservation sites like the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones. The project addresses the urgent need for habitat restoration and enhances access to nature for walkers, cyclists, and outdoor enthusiasts. It strengthens the region's outdoor network by improving biodiversity along key walking routes and making the landscapes more resilient and appealing for recreation. By integrating walking trails, wildlife corridors, and habitat restoration, the project fosters community engagement, encourages responsible access, and supports sustainable land management. This initiative directly contributes to Shropshire's vision for sustainable outdoor recreation, ensuring both the long-term health of ecosystems and enriching visitor experiences. The project's benefits include biodiversity enhancement through habitat restoration, community engagement, promotion of sustainable agriculture, and improved ecological connectivity, helping species to thrive in the region.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Sustainability: Securing ongoing financial support to maintain and expand conservation efforts. • Landowner Engagement: Encouraging widespread participation among landowners to adopt conservation practices. • Habitat Fragmentation: Overcoming existing landscape fragmentation to establish effective ecological networks. • Monitoring and Evaluation: Implementing robust systems to assess the impact of conservation interventions on target species and habitats.

The Stepping Stones Project has significant potential for future development, including the expansion of conservation areas to include more habitat restoration sites and buffer zones. Opportunity exists to enhance community programs by developing educational and citizen science initiatives, involving the public in monitoring and conservation activities. The project also aims to influence policy by advocating for supportive land use and biodiversity conservation policies at local and national levels. Additionally, research opportunities will be explored through collaborations with academic institutions to study the long-term ecological impacts of habitat connectivity projects. Ongoing costs will include habitat management, species monitoring, community engagement programs, and administrative expenses, future funding requirements depending on the scope of continued activities. Significant progress made over the past two years, and future phases are expected to extend over multiple years, depending on available funding.

PP-4. Opening Up the Attingham Park Estate

Lead partner	National Trust
Other partners	Shropshire Council, Local Community Groups, Recreational Organizations, Environmental Agencies.
Summary	The Opening Up the Attingham Estate project aims to enhance public access to a previously restricted area of the estate, developing a network of multi-use trails for walking, cycling, running, and other outdoor activities. Located east of the main site, this area is rich in history, featuring Roman heritage, agricultural evolution, and World War II airfield remnants, offering visitors diverse exploration opportunities. As one of Shropshire's most visited heritage sites, Attingham Estate is well-positioned to become a key hub for activities and active travel. By linking with regional walking and cycling routes, the project will improve public access to nature while maintaining the site's historical and environmental integrity. The expansion of trail networks, enhancement of visitor facilities, and promotion of sustainable recreation will strengthen Shropshire's outdoor activity infrastructure, encouraging greater community participation and reinforcing the region's reputation as a premier destination for heritage, nature, and active tourism.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Acquisition: Securing adequate financial resources for development and ongoing maintenance. • Environmental Impact: Ensuring increased footfall does not negatively affect the ecosystem. • Stakeholder Coordination: Aligning objectives among diverse partners and managing varying expectations. • Infrastructure Development: Constructing trails and facilities that are both sustainable and minimally invasive to the natural landscape.

The Opening Up the Attingham Estate **project offers significant potential for future development, including expanding trail networks to connect with regional paths and neighbouring communities. It aims to establish educational programs through guided tours, workshops, and interactive exhibits focused on the estate's history and ecology. The space will also be used for hosting community events, outdoor performances, and seasonal festivals. Additionally, conservation initiatives will focus on habitat restoration and species protection. Future costs are anticipated for trail construction, facility development, interpretative materials, staffing, marketing, and ongoing maintenance. The project is in its planning stages, with timelines dependent on funding acquisition, stakeholder collaboration, and environmental assessments. This initiative is a high priority due to its potential to enhance public access to green spaces, promote community well-being, and preserve the cultural and natural heritage of the Attingham Estate.**

PP-5. Montgomery Canal Restoration

Lead partner Canal & River Trust

Other partners Shropshire Council, Natural England, Shropshire Union Canal Society (SUCS), Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Rivers Trust.

Summary The **Montgomery Canal Restoration** project focuses on restoring a 56 km stretch of the canal from Gronwen to Newtown across four phases, with an emphasis on ecological conservation, heritage restoration, and enhancing tourism and economic opportunities. The project supports infrastructure improvements along a key recreational corridor that connects to major long-distance walking and cycling routes, such as the Severn Way and Offa's Dyke. It aims to improve accessibility, link multiple visitor hubs, and promote sustainable outdoor recreation while preserving important ecological and heritage assets. The restoration enhances multi-user access for walking, cycling, and boating, strengthens links to strategic routes, supports sustainable tourism, boosts local economies through increased visitor spend, conserves biodiversity, and offers new heritage-based recreation opportunities.

Challenges

- Engineering complexity of bridge reconstructions.
- Ensuring ecological protection (SSSI and SAC designated areas).
- Securing sufficient funding and volunteer resources.

The Montgomery Canal Restoration project has significant potential for future development, including expanding southwards towards Newtown and exploring commercial opportunities such as marinas and visitor hubs. The project aims to extend the towpath network to include more canals, enhancing connectivity between towns, heritage sites, and nature reserves. It will support the Canal & River Trust in developing a tourism strategy, boosting visitor engagement and the active self-promotion of canals. Partnerships with local businesses will be developed to create opportunities for canal-side accommodations, cafés, and experience providers, benefiting from increased foot traffic. The project will also improve marketing and awareness through digital tools, guided route materials, and sustainable travel itineraries, expanding walking and cycling opportunities along historic canals. With maintenance costs anticipated, phases 1-3 of the project are expected to be completed within 10 years, with full completion around 2029.

PP-6. Montgomery Canal Paddle Sports Development

Lead partner Canal & River Trust

Other partners Shropshire Council, Visit Shropshire, British Canoeing, Local Paddle Sports Clubs, Outdoor Adventure Businesses, Natural England, Montgomery Canal Partnership

Summary The Montgomery Canal Paddle Sports Enhancement project focuses on improving and promoting paddle sports opportunities, specifically canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), along the canal. The project aims to strengthen partnerships between local authorities, businesses, and paddle sports organisations to enhance access, visitor facilities, and safety. Infrastructure improvements, such as better launch points, wayfinding, and safety measures, will support responsible paddling. The initiative will increase promotion of the Montgomery Canal as a paddle-friendly waterway, attract visitors, and encourage sustainable outdoor recreation. It will also develop partnerships with local businesses, including canoe hire providers and accommodations, to create package deals and experiences. The project will secure funding to support ongoing maintenance, infrastructure upgrades, and marketing efforts. Shropshire has significant potential to grow paddle sports tourism, and the Montgomery Canal, though underutilised, offers a valuable resource that can be maximised with these improvements. The project will increase paddle sports participation, enhance safety, strengthen local business collaborations, encourage sustainable tourism, and raise awareness of the canal as a paddle sports destination.

Challenges

- Securing long-term funding for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance.
- Ensuring environmental protection while increasing recreational use.
- Encouraging local businesses to invest in paddle tourism opportunities.
- Balancing use between different recreational and conservation interests along the canal.

Future development includes expanding guided paddling experiences, such as heritage-themed canoe tours, and developing canoe-camping and multi-day paddle trails to encourage longer stays. The project will also introduce paddle sports festivals and events to attract new users and integrate paddle sports with cycling and walking routes to create multi-activity itineraries. Future costs will cover infrastructure maintenance, safety improvements, marketing, and digital promotion, as well as business engagement and training.

PP-7. Marches Mosses BogLIFE Tourism Project

Lead partner	Natural England
Other partners	Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT), Natural England
Summary	<p>The Marches Mosses BogLIFE project, a six-year initiative (2016-2022), focused on restoring the Fenn's, Whixall, and Bettisfield Mosses, as well as Wem Moss Nature Reserves, which are Britain's third-largest lowland raised peat bogs. The project aimed to enhance biodiversity through habitat restoration and species recovery, as well as climate mitigation by improving carbon storage in re-wetted peatlands. It also contributed to sustainable tourism by providing new infrastructure, walking trails, visitor facilities, and interpretation materials. The project promoted nature-based tourism through activities such as walking, birdwatching, and wildlife observation, while increasing local tourism business involvement. Community engagement was fostered through education, volunteering, and local partnerships, making it a model for balancing conservation with outdoor recreation access.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing conservation with increased visitor access to sensitive peatland habitats. • Long-term maintenance and monitoring required to sustain ecological gains. • Ongoing funding needs beyond the original LIFE programme to support infrastructure and engagement. • Limited awareness of peatland value among some visitors, requiring continued education and interpretation. • Cross-border coordination with Welsh partners and multiple stakeholders.
<p>Future development of the Marches Mosses BogLIFE project includes continued collaboration with local tourism businesses and the strengthening of partnerships to maintain increased visitor engagement. There is also potential to expand educational activities, building on the established community and educational connections. Additionally, the project aims to enhance skills within local communities, which can be leveraged for future nature conservation and tourism development projects.</p>	

BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

1. North York Moors National Park – Activity Information Hub

The North York Moors National Park offers a good example of a digital model for how a single platform can act as a central hub for different outdoor activities. Ranked as the UK's top destination for outdoor activities, its official website (northyorkmoors.org.uk) functions as an integrated gateway, seamlessly connecting visitors to the full breadth of experiences available in the region.

Key Features Supporting Visitor Engagement and Planning:

Trail Discovery Made Easy: The site hosts extensive information on walking and cycling routes, including themed trails, difficulty levels, and access information. This allows users to easily explore and choose routes tailored to their interests and abilities.

Curated Experiences and Blogs: Through engaging blog content like, “[A Fabulous Family Day Out](#)”, the site curates visitor experiences and recommends activity combinations (e.g. a scenic walk paired with family attractions), inspiring tailored day-out ideas and seasonal itineraries.

Centralised Visitor Planning Tools: The “[Plan Your Visit](#)” section acts as a one-stop planning tool, linking walking and cycling trails with accommodation, food and drink, events, and practical visitor information, all in one place.



[Home](#) > [Things to do](#) > [Walking](#) > [Walking holidays and baggage carriers](#)

Enjoy the luxury of walking and cycling without your luggage.

The following companies offer baggage transfers, self-guided walking holidays, accommodation bookings and other services.

[Absolute Escapes](#)

Self-guided walking holidays on the Cleveland Way and the Coast to Coast.

T: 0131 610 1210

enquiries@absoluteescapes.com

[Brigantes Walking Holidays](#)

Supports the Cleveland Way and Wolds Way National Trails, Coast to Coast, Esk Valley, North of England Way and Inn Way, offering luggage transfer, self-guided holiday packages and accommodation booking.

T: 01756 770402

info@brigmovers.com

Business Integration: The site promotes tour operators, including walking holiday providers and baggage carriers, encouraging overnight stays and supporting the local visitor economy.

Heritage and Nature Connected: Outdoor experiences are closely tied to heritage and ecology, with resources and themed trails showcasing the area's rich cultural and natural assets (e.g. [Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage](#)).

Commitment to Sustainability and Community:

The park is actively engaged in sustainability through dedicated programmes on [climate change](#), [nature recovery](#), and [landscape care](#). A particularly inspiring initiative is the promotion of local “[Tourism Champions](#)”, businesses that exemplify sustainable practices and contribute positively to the local community. These champions are given additional visibility on the website, incentivising others to adopt greener operations and highlighting the park's commitment to low-impact tourism development.



[Home](#) > [Tourism](#) > [North York Moors' Champions](#)

What makes a Champion?

Within the [North York Moors Tourism Network](#), a select group of businesses strive to provide the best service and experience. In doing so, they work closely with the National Park and share our ethos of enjoying and looking after the National Park, in equal measures.

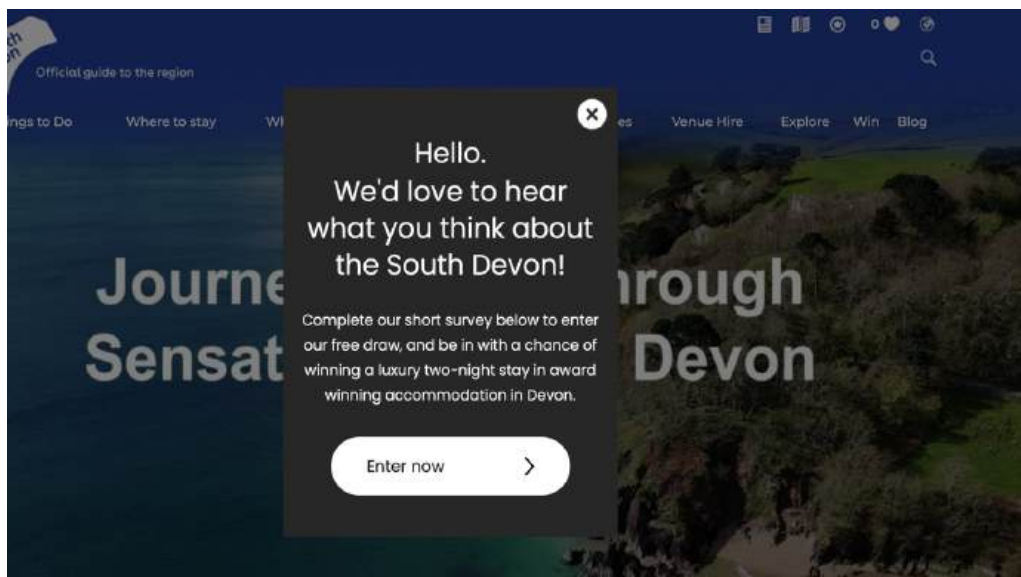
Often with insider tips and recommendations, Champions know what makes the North York Moors special and are passionate in their words and actions to keep it that way. Look out for their involvement in our friendly schemes - [cycling](#), [dark skies](#), [nature](#) and [walking](#). They're a friendly bunch and are sure to make you feel welcome. In some cases, accessible facilities have been specially thought through for those with limited mobility. Champions are mindful of their environmental impact, ensuring they're on a path to responsible and sustainable activity.

This example demonstrates the power of a well-structured, content-rich, and regularly updated digital platform. By acting as a central hub for outdoor activities, heritage, and sustainability, the North York Moors site not only improves visitor planning and flow but also supports local businesses, fosters environmental stewardship, and reinforces the destination's brand as a leading model for sustainable rural tourism.

2. Devon Website Visitor Survey

Understanding visitor behaviour, satisfaction and economic contribution is essential for developing responsive and sustainable tourism strategies. By integrating simple digital tools at key visitor touchpoints, destinations can gather valuable insights that inform decision-making and marketing. The South West Visitor Economy Hub (SWVEH) offers a strong example of how regional collaboration and technology can support effective data collection from visitors across multiple locations. The South West Visitor Economy Hub (SWVEH) is utilising consumer-facing websites across Devon (Visit Devon, Visit South Devon, Visit Exeter, Visit Plymouth, Visit English Riviera, and Visit Exmoor) to collect data from recent visitors to the area.

All person landing on the home pages of these websites are shown a pop-up message (see below) inviting them to complete an online survey, with an incentive of winning a weekend break in Devon (donated by a hotel in the county).



Over the period since its launch (October 2024) to the end of March 2025, there have been 25,000 responses to the survey, of which 12,000 were visitors to the county over the last 6 months. These respondents complete 12 questions relating to their most recent trip, including pre-trip planning, on trip activities, and various demographic and sociographic details.

3. Slovenia Green - A National Model for Sustainable Tourism

Slovenia's "Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism" (Slovenia Green) is an internationally recognised model for regions like Shropshire aiming to transition toward sustainable tourism. Developed as a national certification and development programme, Slovenia Green integrates internationally recognised sustainability standards through its partnership with Green Destinations (recognised by the GSTC) into a tailored national framework. It encourages destinations, tourism businesses, and protected areas to commit to sustainability via a structured 12-step process, which includes signing a Green Pledge, engaging stakeholders, developing action plans, and undergoing regular audits.

Key to Slovenia's success is national coordination and support: certified businesses receive funding incentives, technical guidance, and promotional visibility. The programme has created over 60 certified destinations and nearly 300 sustainable operators, aligned under shared values of environmental care, local culture, and quality experiences.



Innovative features like Slovenia Green Routes promote local businesses through curated, story-rich travel itineraries that highlight certified champions and connect rural areas.

Shropshire can draw from this model by forming a sustainability taskforce, identifying its "green DNA," and engaging tourism providers in a unified effort. With tools like the Good Travel Seal already in place and momentum around local sustainability, a Shropshire Green framework could elevate the county's appeal, distribute tourism impact more evenly, and support its long-term environmental and economic resilience.

SLOVENIA GREEN ROUTES

„We aim to curate unforgettable experiences by partnering with certified destinations and sustainable businesses, all while weaving unique cultural narratives into our adventures amidst green landscapes.“

