



Executive Summary

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

July 2025

Prepared for:

Shropshire Council, Culture, Leisure & Tourism

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 Myton 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



Opportunities



Challenges



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.

