

Rea Valley Cycleway & Footpath

Feasibility Study

Final Report

March 2010

PREPARED BY:
THE INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT & TOURISM



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Rea Valley Environmental Network has identified an opportunity to establish a new leisure trail for cycling, walking and potentially horse riding on a former railway line between Hanwood and Minsterley. As part of the process of working up the project, it commissioned the Institute of Transport & Tourism to undertake a feasibility study to evaluate the potential of the proposed trail as a tourism and recreational facility.

Potential use of the trail

The initial proposal is to link the villages of Hanwood, Pontesford, Pontesbury and Minsterley, however, the long-term aspiration is to continue this trail through to Shrewsbury.

It is envisaged that, during phase one of the proposed trail, the route will attract primarily day or part-day trips from home and a small number of tourism trips from holiday bases in the area. It is estimated that the levels of demand shown below will be achieved within the first two years of opening, and if the network of cycle routes in the area is extended and marketing sustained demand will continue to rise.

Estimated demand for the proposed trail (phase one)

	Cyclists	Walkers
Part-day	9,547	10,596
Full-day	4,069	4,516
Holiday	731	812
Utility	965	1,071
Total	15,312	16,995

If the trail is connected to Shrewsbury the level of demand rises significantly. The majority of users on the extended trail will continue to be recreational; however, the number of holiday and utility users will increase.

Estimated demand for the proposed trail (phase one & two)

	Cyclists	Walkers
Part-day	15,490	14,649
Full-day	6,602	6,244
Holiday	1,154	1,091
Utility	3,004	2,841
Total	26,250	24,825

Business development benefits

The development of the trail offers opportunities for business development in the area in terms of:

- Generating additional business for the local shops and public houses in villages and hamlets along the trail;
- Encouraging the development of new refreshment businesses;
- Boosting visitor numbers and income for visitor attractions and events in the area;
- Encouraging the development of new small scale visitor attractions and events;
- Diversification of farms into B&B, horse riding and livery stables;
- A possible opportunity for a small scale cycle hire, repair and sales business;
- Possible scope for the development of small scale campsites;
- Some additional business for existing accommodation businesses in the area.

Economic impact

Based on the indicative demand figures for recreational and tourism usage of the trail it is estimated that phase one of the Minsterley to Hanwood trail when established will generate an estimated £185,000 each year for the local economy. For phases one and two combined it is estimated that this will increase to £274,000 each year.

As a result of increased expenditure locally and the business development opportunities that the use of the trail will give rise to it is estimated that phase one will create or safeguard 5 full-time equivalent jobs locally; increasing to 8 with phase two. The majority of these will be in the accommodation and food & drink sectors, as these are the main recipients of route user spending.

Critical success factors

Key factors that will ensure the success of the trails network as a tourism and recreational product are identified as follows:

- Design of the trails, particularly the route for day visitors, to provide an predominantly traffic-free recreational experience;
- The development of feeder routes from surrounding urban areas and train stations;
- A strong theme/ identity for the trails, again particularly for the day visitor route, to aid their marketing;
- Interpretation of heritage, landscape and wildlife features along the trails and artworks to add interest;
- An infrastructure of facilities such as cycle racks, seating and drinking fountains;
- Signage to/from the trails;
- Effective, well-resourced maintenance of the trails.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Context of the study**
- 1.2 Policy framework**
- 1.3 The benefits of developing trails**

2.0 THE PROPOSED REA VALLEY CYCLEWAY AND FOOTPATH

- 2.1 The original railway**
- 2.2 Factors in the success of multi-user trails**
- 2.3 Land ownership**

3.0 LANDOWNER AND COMMUNITY VIEWS

- 3.1 Landowner opinion**
- 3.2 Community opinion**
- 3.3 Consultation with the local authority and other organisations**

4.0 ASSESSING DEMAND FOR THE PROPOSED TRAIL

- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 Pattern of recreation and tourism demand**
- 4.3 Recreation and tourism demand for the trail**

5.0 ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED TRAIL

- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Estimating recreation and tourism expenditure**
- 5.3 Recreation and tourism expenditure on the proposed trail**
- 5.4 Employment creation**
- 5.5 Summary**

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Conclusions**
- 6.2 Recommendations**

References

Appendices

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of study

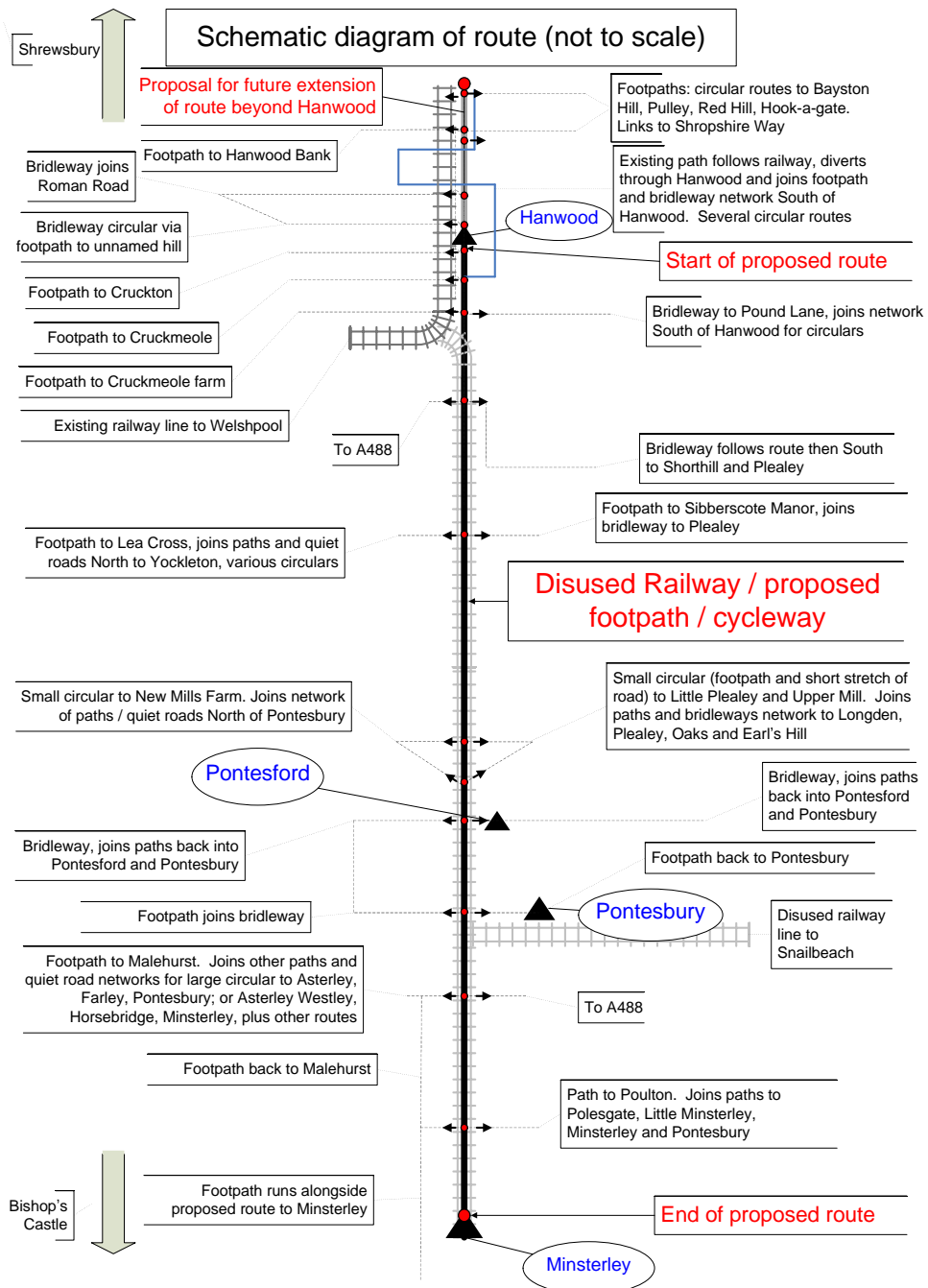
This study seeks to:

- Evaluate the level of community support for an off road multi-user route in the Rea Valley
- Clarify ownership of the old railway trackbed and opinions of current owners regarding the development of such a route
- Estimate demand for such a route and estimate economic impact accordingly

It is envisaged that a draft business plan will be drawn together in the future so as to advise the partnership group as to how it might progress the project.

The vision behind the development of such railway routes, principally as walking and cycling trails, is about improving the quality of life for residents. They are commonplace across continental Europe and in North America and increasingly rail trails are being developed in Australasia. In every case the prime reason for developing the route is about improving the health and wellbeing of near residents followed by the encouragement of local economic impact from visitors. Given the rural nature of Shropshire there are many abandoned railway routes that offer the potential for development as rail trails. The Minsterley Branch line is one such route worthy of investigation.

The Minsterley Branch line railway was opened in 1861. The original proposal was to build a railway from Shrewsbury to the Welsh coast via Montgomery and Newtown but in reality the railway was extended from Cruckmeole Junction to Minsterley only. It operated for both freight and passenger traffic. The latter stopped in 1951 and freight ceased in 1967. There was also a narrow gauge Snailbeach District Railway that operated from an exchange siding at Pontesbury to the mines at Snailbeach. Ore was transported to the branch and in return coal to the mines. This has a bearing on the study as a traffic free route extending to Snailbeach for the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has considerable appeal.



Since the closure of these railways the line of route, in both cases, remains more or less intact; there has obviously been encroachment of scrub and tree cover. The short section that is currently open for walking, cycling and wheelchair use at Pontesbury provides an indication of how the natural appeal of such a route can be maintained whilst recreational and utility potential developed. There are no firm estimates of demand on this short section but it is well used by the local community.

It is also envisaged that a route, which would be for the most part traffic free, could be developed from Shrewsbury in due course. This could add to the investment in cycling and walking within Shrewsbury as part of the English Cycling Cities project.

The study reports the findings of each key task and summarises the overall findings in relation to the proposed route.

1.2 Policy framework

The development of walking and cycling tourism in the Rea Valley fits well with a number of policy frameworks at a regional and unitary authority level.

Cycling and walking as sustainable forms of transport

Cycling and walking as forms of sustainable transport (both of which are almost carbon neutral) is the subject of strategic planning at regional level in the form of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (Government Office for the West Midlands, 2008). This document sets out the fundamental principles of planning and development throughout the region. It is appropriate to note the way in which a proposed walking and cycling route in the Rea Valley would contribute the tenets of sustainable development set out in the spatial plan. In relation to paragraph 2.1 of the plan the following four core principles are introduced:

(a) Social progress which recognises the need for everyone

The proposed cycle and walking route would allow open access for all communities in the valley (approximately 8,000 people) and residents of Shrewsbury and Atcham (approximately 100,000).

Walking and cycling are low cost activities requiring little equipment. They enhance social progress by offering opportunities for health giving activity.

A route designed in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act frameworks would also encourage wheelchair users and others with walking difficulties.

(b) Effective protection of the environment

The old railway corridor is currently little used for farming purposes or for recreational access other than the in the section developed in Pontesbury.

Experience from other rail trails in the UK, continental Europe and USA supports the view that wildlife habitats can be enhanced by careful management with

minimal impact from users. Long-standing trails in the Peak District National Park pass many SSSIs and there are very few reported impacts on these habitats. The client has advised us that Shropshire Wildlife Trust has expressed an interest in being involved in protecting and managing the line side habitat.

(c) Prudent use of natural resources

There is currently little use of the existing trackbed and thus a re-use for transport and recreational purposes will allow an effective use of a cultural and heritage resource which can be put to good use for utility. The upgrading of the route would be necessary but use of aggregates and fencing from local sources would minimise impacts.

(d) Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and development

The proposed route would provide access to schools, local employment opportunities especially at Minsterley, and into Shrewsbury. The route would enhance the potential of the area for recreation and tourism with gains for local inns, shops and other traders.

The Spatial Strategy also refers to the need to reduce travel and shift modes from the car to other forms of transport. This scheme would be of direct benefit to the reduction of traffic at work and school peak hours (para 2.6). It also has a direct input into the reduction of CO₂ emissions in relation to climatic change (para 2.10). In particular, it fits very well with the aims of the Rural Regeneration Zone especially in the improvement of quality of life for residents through the provision of well designed walking and cycling facilities. The study has taken note of paragraph 5.6 with regard to the importance of engaging local communities, skills and knowledge in this study. This study has therefore involved a household survey of recreational needs in the principal villages of Hanwood, Minsterley, Pontesbury and near hamlets.

In order to meet sustainability targets, local journeys by foot or bicycle are being encouraged by Shropshire Council. This is part of the Countryside Access Strategy and is interlinked in this respect to the Shropshire Local Transport Plan (LTP). According to the Shropshire LTP Delivery Report, the most recent LTP (2001-6) had targets for increasing walking and cycling routes. It reported that levels of walking and cycling increased. Local employment travel schemes have been responsible for reducing commuting car trips and replacing them by greater numbers of walking or

cycling journeys. School trips have been made safer due to DfES/DfT grant funding for crossings and other related infrastructure. The increase in routes has also contributed to social inclusion.

In order to develop walking and cycling further, elements of the new plan (LTP2: for the period 2006/2011) are aimed at addressing some of the deficiencies identified in the original LTP delivery report. In terms of cycling this relates to: improving monitoring of numbers by introducing cycle counters, increasing 'push' factors such as road pricing, continued development of 'smarter choices' schemes and training initiatives and further improvements to infrastructure. Accessibility for walkers is also prioritised; including the installation of crossing facilities on busy 'A' roads and trunk roads. There is also an acknowledgement of the Government's objective to encourage the use of the UK's waterways, by utilising the towpaths for both walking and cycling.

In line with the Countryside Access Strategy, access to the network is to be further improved, and there are also plans to increase use of urban green spaces. In urban pedestrian environments, lighting and security and provision for access of disabled people are important areas of development. Figures for walking and cycling to school and work are particularly high in the Shrewsbury area (63% of children walk or cycle to school) and this is a useful indicator of what might be achieved if the Rea Valley route is developed.

Rural walking and cycling is being addressed in the second LTP, in a number of different ways, including more routes that give priority to non-motorised modes, and setting lower speed limits in villages. Cycle use is generally lower in rural communities and this is associated with perceived safety issues. Promoting circular walking and cycling routes and co-ordinating cross boundary infrastructure (national cycle routes and long-distance trails such as the Six Castles Way) are means of encouraging greater recreational usage of the current cycle network. The work of the 2nd LTP is to be reviewed and developed, including consultation with user groups, walking and cycling forums and surveying the public.

The development of Shrewsbury as an English Cycling Town and the advent of the Connect 2 project in the town provide an additional excellent opportunity for the development of walking and cycling in the town. It provides a momentum and opportunity for linkages with a proposed Rea Valley route.

The West Midlands Strategic Health Authority aim policies at increasing physical activity, and the Regional Transport Strategy aims policies at increasing sustainable transport. In both cases, encouraging walking and cycling are important components of policy. Shropshire Council is supporting the Shropshire Outdoors project, and Walking for Health Schemes that would be main beneficiaries from the development of this route.

Cycling and walking as a form of recreation and tourism

The Regional Development Agency for the West Midlands (Advantage West Midlands) stresses the importance to tourism as the fourth largest contributor to the regional economy. Tourism West Midlands was established to guide the delivery of the current Visitor Economy Strategy (Advantage West Midlands, 2008). This document sets out the broad strategic directions for tourism development and thus does not deal specifically with walking and cycling. However, the Strategy does relate to the need to develop culture and heritage, liveable and visitable places and local pride. It also refers to the need for sustainable tourism and less damaging forms of consumption (as recognised by the New Economics Foundation in the advocacy of Sustainable Economic Well Being). Shropshire Tourism also highlights the importance of activities and sustainable tourism within the county this adding to the contextual background for the development of such routes out of Shrewsbury. The Sustrans National Cycle Network route 44 has been opened and passes through the Rea Valley although this route is marketed as more of a challenge for experienced cyclists.

Shropshire Council has produced a Countryside Access Strategy, based on the requirements of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and associated with a Rights of Way Improvement Plan by November 2007. Following the commencement of its implementation in April 2008, a review is planned in 2011, although continual review in response to changing needs reflects the dynamic nature of the document.

In terms of provision for walking routes, there is an extensive rights of way network in Shropshire (estimated at 3,400 miles, plus 10,000 of open access land 34 nature reserves and 16 Countryside Heritage sites). This includes a range of different types of paths, tracks and open spaces owned by various landowning bodies, and managed by Shropshire County Council or Shropshire Wildlife Trust, for example. In particular the Shropshire Hills and bordering Rea Valley have good footpath access.

Expansion of the network is planned, including greater linkage between routes to improve access. Surveys of countryside users have indicated that access is widely important and well used. There is widespread support for the provision of recreational access in its many forms. Maintenance of existing routes to preserve quality and usability is also prioritised. Voluntary groups (Parish Paths Partnerships groups for example, are a key to success of this strategy. This is important in the Rea Valley, as there are several such groups that are committed to maintaining and improving rights of ways.

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has outlined its approach to the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty in relation to the protected landscapes that border the study area. It is important to include the Shropshire Hills in this policy framework as a continuous route from Shrewsbury to Minsterley and potentially to Snailbeach will allow people opportunities to visit the special landscapes of the AONB in a sustainable way through the extension of loops and linking cycle and walking routes. The AONB Management Plan (2009) sets out five priorities:

- Valuing, conserving and enhancing what we have

The proposed route would provide opportunities to enhance heritage and habits on its northern borders.

- Keeping the Shropshire Hills countryside thriving

The route fits with the aspiration to maintain sustainable communities.

- Shifting to low carbon

The route meets the needs for a low carbon access strategy from one of the main generators of visitors-Shrewsbury.

- Adapting for the future, working alongside nature

The proposed route meets the aim of social and economic adaptation to a low carbon future.

- Helping people connect with the AONB

The route will provide a major opportunity for local community involvement and access to the northern fringes of the AONB.

Thus, a proposed route in the Rea Valley leading to Minsterley, surrounding villages and the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) fits well with the overall policy frameworks for transport and rural tourism and in particular with the aspirations of the Rural Regeneration Zone and the Shropshire Hills AONB. There are good reasons at a strategic and policy level to look to ways to implement this type of scheme.

1.3 The benefits of developing trails

The impacts of multi use routes for leisure span several areas, which can be broadly categorised as social, environmental and economic.

Social benefits

(a) Health

There is substantial research to support the health benefits of such trails. The existence of a trail increases the possibilities for local residents and visitors to an area to engage in healthy travel as part of their everyday, habitual lifestyles (Saelens *et al*: 2003). Regular physical activity has been proven to provide benefits to combat problems such as obesity (Gortmaker: 1999), low levels of exercise (Van Sluijs *et al*: 2007) and coronary heart disease (Leon *et al*: 2007). Walking and cycling are both activities that improve physical and psychosocial health (Mason: 2000). Whilst undertaking regular walking or cycling has positive effects on mental well-being, these benefits can be compounded by the negative effects of nearby traffic such as the fear of accident, etcetera (McCarthy: 2003). Therefore, a traffic-free trail designed mainly for the use of walkers and cyclists can also be a positive mental benefit.

(b) Health from reduced pollution

There are many reported adverse physical effects on humans caused by air pollution associated with high levels of traffic including respiratory problems (Wjst *et al*: 1993), abnormal blood pressure (Ibald-Mulli *et al*: 2001) and poor cardio-vascular function (Riediker *et al*: 2004). Thus, there is the potential for health benefits associated with reduced pollution across communities, due to fewer trips being made by car. For example on the school run or to workplaces such as to the plant at Minsterley, there could be a very positive modal shift. It is not possible to quantify this but experience

elsewhere shows that between 10-25% switching of modes is feasible (Pucher & Dijkstra: 2003).

(c) Social Inclusion

Schönfelder & Axhausen (2003) consider an activity space for cycling and walking as an indirect measure of social inclusion. A report on social inclusion and transport suggests that the overall inadequacy of footways in many rural areas often rules out walking and cycling almost totally (Lucas *et al*: 2001). Thus, this type of route offers the potential to encourage sections of the population, such as the young and elderly, recreational opportunities that they would otherwise foregone. This engagement of young and old, for example, is prevalent in the Spanish Greenways programme where many such routes encourage walking for social purposes from local communities.

Environmental and social concerns overlap and Lucas *et al*. (2001) advocate land use planning which encourages sustainable forms of travel, including improved facilities for walking and cycling. The proposed Minsterley walking and cycle route would meet that requirement.

Environmental benefits

(a) Overall reduction of pollution

By reducing car trips, types of pollution are reduced which include acid rain, particulate matter and other air pollutants, plus water and soil pollution, which negatively affect the health of ecosystems and habitats. This assumes that a cycle or walk trip displaces a car trip rather than generating additional car trips. Studies undertaken by the Institute of Transport on the National Cycle Network in the North east of England indicate that most users access such routes directly from home.

(b) Environmental enhancement

There are concerns about certain negative effects of trail-use activities (walking, cycling such as erosion, increased run off and geomorphic degradation (Wilson & Seney: 1994). However with effective management, trails can provide an outlet to educate the population about the importance of the environment, through allowing closeness to nature and clear interpretation. There is clearly a balance. Designing out anti-social use is equally important at an early stage.

There might be a case to include routing trails around particularly sensitive areas (which may contain endangered plants and animals or fragile vegetation), installing barriers to natural areas and continual monitoring and maintenance of the adjacent and surrounding areas (Marion & Leung: 2004).

In the main, however, such routes are considered to deliver greater improvements to local habitats than any serious or lasting negative impact.

Economic benefits

(a) Value of public amenity

A trail can be considered as a public amenity that provides many benefits that are not always measured in monetary terms. For example, cost benefit analyses of cycle and walking routes in the USA (Sælensminde, 2004) take into account the benefits of reduced insecurity and the benefits to physical health provided by increased opportunity to exercise. It is also seen that house prices generally increase marginally when residences are situated adjacent to or nearby trails. Proximity to trails and greenbelts has also been found to influence positive valuation of dwellings in a recent study by Asabere & Huffman (2007).

In addition to calculating impacts using direct and indirect spending, it is possible to derive the potential economic value of a new or existing trail by asking local residents and existing or potential users of the trail how much they would be willing to pay for using it. A study aimed at understanding the value of cycle tourism in North East England (see ITT: 2007) used a contingent evaluation methodology to ascertain the value as suggested by respondents to a survey on cycle tourism. Information was obtained using two methods: firstly using a hypothetical range of values provided and asking potential users to select the one they thought most suitable; secondly by asking an open ended question in which the respondent considered their own valuation without being prompted. Additionally respondent were asked whether they were willing to pay at all. Results showed that typically, c.50% of users were willing to pay an average of £5.59 per trip. Thus, whilst users do not pay an entrance fee they value such local facilities and hence indirect payment through taxes and rates.

(b) Direct user spending

The benefits to an area associated with the development of a trail are likely to include increased revenue to that area, enabling the local economy to grow through a small

number of business developments and increased job opportunities. This has been particularly the case where investment in trails has stimulated tourism development. For example, many destinations in Germany and Switzerland and on many trails in the USA have developed small-scale cycle tourism businesses such as cycle shops and hire, cafes and accommodation providers.

b) Tourism and recreation

Walking and cycling can both be considered as activities undertaken for tourism and recreation, and as such draw people to localities, from other areas, consequently resulting in spending generated externally to that area. It is possible to derive the economic impact of a multi-use trail by taking into account the direct user spend, in addition to indirect spending (associated with the use of utilities and services locally by users, the production of goods which are bought by users, and employment of local residents to provide labour required to produce and sell the goods, and provide the services). For example, Christie & Matthews (2003) calculated that the estimated 527 billion walking trips (undertaken annually in the UK) generate 'between £1.473 billion and £2.763 billion and supports between 180,559 and 245,560 full-time equivalent jobs.'

There are numerous studies of cycle routes which indicate that spending by users filters into local economies where there are opportunities to spend. The type of route being discussed in the Rea Valley has potential to encourage out of region and certainly out of area spending if is designed as a route linking Shrewsbury with the Shropshire Hills. There are several retailers and hospitality outlets that would benefit directly from such a route. Accommodation providers would also see a small growth in staying visitors attracted by cycle tourism opportunities.

The impacts of multi use routes for leisure span several areas, which can be broadly categorised as social, environmental and economic.

2. THE PROPOSED REA VALLEY CYCLEWAY AND FOOTPATH

2.1 The original railway

The Minsterley Branch line is typical of many such lines that were built in the 19th century with high aspirations on the part of the proponents. In reality, it failed to meet the expectations of the early promoters as another route through to the Welsh Coast via Newtown. It did not reach beyond the buffers of Minsterley. However, during its productive life as a railway it carried much freight out of Minsterley, principally from the creamery, the steam sawmills and from agriculture in the Rea Valley. The carriage of lead ore from the Snailbeach District Railways to the exchange sidings at Pontesbury was also a notable feature of the branch line in the mid decades of its existence.

Passenger trains were not very frequent and this was not a strong element of the survival of the branch. Most journeys were to link to the main railway hub at Shrewsbury. Like many such rural services it was withdrawn in 1951. The original railway, however, leaves a strong legacy that could be interpreted to much greater effect than hitherto. The transshipment of ore and coal at Pontesbury is important in this context as is the dairy trains from the Minsterley creamery offer good stories to tell through interpretative techniques.

2.2 Factors in the success of multi-user trails

Factors in the success of multi-user trails

The Rails to Trails Conservancy in the USA has extensive experience of working with communities to develop routes such as the one being discussed in this study. There are well over one thousand such trails in North America. Of particular note, important success factors are:

- (a) Engagement of community interest from inception
- (b) Full and open discussions with landowners as to the advantages and disadvantages of such multi user routes and how these can be mitigated

- (c) Design of a route surface which is appropriate to the locality and fencing/seating to manage route flow
- (d) Extensive tracts of traffic free sections which allow access for walkers and cyclists from local communities
- (e) A strong theme to attract tourist use and to ensure that there are attractive start and end points
- (f) Encouragement of the business sector to use the route for journeys to work, for tourism development, etcetera
- (g) Provision of sections which can be used to good effect for utility purposes such as trips to schools
- (h) The integration of the route with other environmental initiatives in order to maximise on limited resources
- (i) To develop such routes in partnership with other organisations

2.3 Land ownership

The ownership of the Minsterley railway line remained with British Rail for approximately 20 years after closure. In the early 1970's much was then sold back to the neighbouring landowners, apart from a section in the Pontesbury area that was obtained by the local authority as a possible route for a by-pass for the village (it is understood that there are no plans to take this forward in the foreseeable future). Much of the old trackbed has not been reintegrated into the field system and is still visible in the landscape. However, in some cases it has operational value to the owners, who use it on a regular basis.

The redundant railway buildings were also sold and have now, in the main, been converted to residential dwellings.

Approximately half the section owned by the local authority has been surfaced for use as a footpath and cycle route for local residents. This has proved a popular recreational facility with the local community and attracts local walkers and dog walkers. An electronic counter installed alongside this stretch by the voluntary P3 group and we have been advised that it has consistently recorded over 100 'passes' in a 24 hour period, indicating around 50 users if each is walking up to the end of the restored length and then returning

A full breakdown of the landownership is shown in Appendix A.

3. LANDOWNER AND COMMUNITY VIEWS

3.1 Landowner opinion

As part of this study, discussions have taken place with a number of the landowners to ascertain their views about the development of a cycleway and footpath following the trackbed of the old Minsterley railway. The attitude of local landowners to this type of development can be critical to success of such schemes. It is therefore important that their viewpoints are expressed at this early stage of discussion. Whilst in principle there appeared to be support for this type of development, during the discussions a number of concerns were raised:

- **Loss of amenity:** whilst little of the old track bed has been reintegrated into the current field system a number of the landowners make regular use of it as a conduit along which to move machinery and livestock. In other locations the track bed is in use for other purposes; in one case static caravans are sited on it and are used by visitors to the owners business. Therefore, if the old railway were developed into a cycleway and footpath it would cause some disruption, in some cases, to the landowners' existing use of the route.
- **Security:** there was the suggestion that livestock rustling was an issue in the area generally and concerns were raised that clearing and surfacing the old track bed would improve access and potentially add to this problem. There were also concerns about unauthorised access, particularly off-road motorbikes, but also activities such as badger baiting. Again this is seen as a local issue as motor-cross is popular in the area and there have been some incidence on at least one of the local farms. Concern was also voiced that increased access may increase the problems of disease transmitted to livestock.
- **Maintenance:** whilst the railway was under the ownership of British Rail (and its previous private ownership) the responsibility for the maintenance of the hedges and fences alongside the track was the responsibility of the railway company. Now that the line has been returned to the landowners this responsibility falls with them, however, as none the boundaries are external ones the level of security needed is lower. There was concern over who

would be responsible for the cost of improvements to and the maintenance of if the development were to take place. There are also a number of bridges and culverts along the line that are critical for the drainage and maintenance of the land; again the issue of the responsibility for maintenance arose.

- **Loss of income:** in several cases the old track bed is being used for activities that are not compatible with public access, for example, shooting. There is a concern that if the development takes place this will result in a loss of income for the landowner.
- **Pollution:** although this would not directly affect the landowners or their business the issue of contamination of the track bed by previous activities, for example lead deposits at the transfer sidings on the edge of Pontesbury, was raised.
- **Intrusion:** some of the residents living near to or in old railway buildings were concerned about the potential for disturbance to the peace and tranquillity of the area.

Evidence from other cycleway and footpath developments demonstrates that these issues have been addressed elsewhere and are not insurmountable. There are well-established design and mitigation processes that minimise disturbance to landowners. Provided local conditions allow, landowners have elsewhere received payment for allowing public access to compensate for the loss of amenity or income, and equally for the maintenance of fences etc. Security issues, particularly unauthorised access, can normally be overcome with the appropriate trail 'furniture'.

3.2 Community opinion

To determine the level of public support for the proposed trail a survey was distributed to households in Hanwood, Pontesbury, Pontesford and Minsterley. The survey asked general questions about the respondents' current levels of walking and cycling as well as their opinions about the proposal and potential issues arising.

The survey was structured around the key themes. The first section asked some general questions about the residents current walking and cycling habits. Secondly it

asked for their opinions regarding the development of the proposal, the likelihood of its use and other related issues. The final section gathered information on the households to ensure it was representative; there were no obvious concerns in this respect. A total of 1,829 survey forms were delivered, of which 341 were returned, giving a response rate of approximately 19%.

Walking for recreation

Over 90% of respondents said that they walk for recreation. Of these 85% take a stroll from home at least once a week and over 90% take short walks, of up to 3-hours, once or twice a month. Although taken less often, almost 50% of walkers also take day walks at least once or twice a month.

Table 3.1: Type and frequency of walk (%)

	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Less than this
Stroll from home	49.4	36.3	12.2	2.0	0.0
Short Walks	14.3	42.4	34.5	6.3	2.5
Day Walks	3.7	12.9	33.1	27.6	22.7

Respondents were asked to consider the most important factor in their choice of walking route. This question produced a wide range of answers, with many aspects of the walking environment suggested as being important. The most common factors are listed below in Table 3.2. Overall the proximity of walking routes to busy roads and traffic plays a very significant part in people's decision-making during their recreational walks. Safety is an important issue. People are also concerned about easy access, the management of paths and avoiding obstructions and stiles. The surrounding scenery and level of noise were also cited as important factors.

Table 3.2: Most important factors in the choice of walking route

	%
Safe routes / away from traffic	17.1
Safe (unspecified)	9.9
Interesting / attractive scenery	8.4
Accessible	6.8
Flat gradient	4.9

When asked about the main barriers to walking respondents were again most likely to cite busy roads and the proximity of walking routes to traffic. Table 3.3 below shows the most frequent answers.

Table 3.3: Main barrier (walking)

	%
Busy roads / traffic	23.3
None	19.8
Lack of safe path / pavements	7.5
Mud / weather / floods	5.9
Farmers / influence on paths	4.0

Cycling for recreation

Almost 40% of respondents to the survey cycle for recreation. Cycling on a daily basis is less frequent than walking, however 47% of cyclists take a short ride from home at least once a week and 59% take a longer ride at least once a month.

Table 3.4: Type and frequency of cycle ride (%)

	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Less than this
Short cycle ride from home	13.1	34.6	32.7	15.0	4.7
Longer cycle ride	1.0	23.0	35.0	29.0	12.0
Day Cycling	1.3	5.3	23.7	25.0	44.7

The most important factors in the choice of cycle route were similar to those cited by walkers. Safety and particularly on roads were thought of as the most important determinant of route choice, with quiet lanes and traffic-free routes preferred.

Table 3.5: Most important factors in choice of cycling route

	%
Safe routes / away from traffic	26.4
Safe (unspecified)	15.7
Quiet lanes / safe roads	14.3
Level of traffic (prefer reduced or minimal)	12.9
Interesting / attractive scenery	7.1

When asked about the main barriers similar answers were given, with the lack of traffic-free routes cited by almost two-thirds.

Table 3.6: Main barrier (cycling)

	%
Busy road / lack of traffic free routes	61.0
Country roads too narrow / dangerous	6.1

Opinion of trail proposal

Respondents were asked on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is “*not a good idea*” and 5 is “*a very good idea*” what they thought the proposed route. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 88% of people selecting ‘5’ “*a very good idea*”. There was very little difference in opinion between those who walk and cycle for recreation and those who do not.

Table 3.7: Is the route a good idea?

	%
1 (<i>not a good idea</i>)	3.0
2	1.2
3	3.3
4	4.2
5 (<i>a very good idea</i>)	88.3

The respondents were also asked whether, if developed, they were likely to use the footpath/cycleway for recreation or functional purposes. Of those that responded, 92% said that they would use it for recreational purposes and 32% said they would use it for other purposes (i.e. non-recreational trips such as getting to work). The route also has the potential to increase the number of recreational walkers and cyclists, with 40% of non-walkers and 90% of non-cyclists saying that they would use it.

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about walking and cycling for recreation, specifically focused on the impacts of trails. The answers were given on a scale of 1-5; where 1 signified strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

There was strong agreement with the statements supporting access to the countryside near to home and away from traffic. There was less agreement about the possible negative effects of the proposed development. The majority did not think

that litter would be an issue, but dog mess was more of a concern. Respondents also thought that there would be an increase in patronage to local businesses from trails. The problem of dog mess was also raised in the ‘further comments’ section of the survey form by a number of respondents; this issue can be minimised with appropriate management.

Table 3.8: Opinion of potential impacts of trails

	%					Median answer
	1	2	3	4	5	
It is important for local residents to be able to walk / cycle near to home	0.9	0.6	2.4	6.4	89.7	5
There is a good level of access to recreation in this area	6.6	15.7	33.0	24.8	19.8	3
A new traffic free walking and cycling trail in the area would improve access to the countryside	2.8	3.4	6.2	10.5	77.2	5
A new walking and cycling route would create litter problems	27.2	26.5	28.1	8.0	10.2	2
The countryside should be accessible for everyone	2.2	2.2	5.6	8.0	82.1	5
A new walking and cycling trail would increase patronage to local business	5.0	7.8	29.0	23.4	34.9	4
A new walking and cycling route would suffer dog mess problems	14.0	25.5	32.4	16.5	11.5	3

Information and travel to walking / cycling destinations

Walkers and cyclists look for information about their route in a number of places, but the majority rely on local knowledge. This demonstrates a strong affinity for local routes and the local nature of the majority of recreational walking and cycling.

Table 3.9: How do you find information about local walks / cycle rides?

	%
Local Knowledge	80.9
Guide Books	24.8
Internet	24.8
Maps	43.2
Other	6.9

The survey found that 57% of walkers and 72% of cyclists will begin most of their trips directly from home, i.e. walk or cycle from their front door; although a significant

proportion of walkers who will use a car to reach the beginning of some of their walks (42%). Whilst the majority of walkers go out alone (58%), cyclists are more inclined to travel in groups on recreational trips (64%).

A full list of the comments from the survey is in Appendix B

3.3 Consultation with the local authority and other organisations

As part of the study a number of individuals within the local authority and other interested organisations were consulted. Both at a general level and in this specific case there was support for this type of proposal. The main concerns were focussed on the issue of land ownership. The main points of the discussions are summarised below:

- **Countryside access** – there was support for the additional opportunities for countryside access this proposal would offer, particularly in respect of the creation of circular walks close to the villages. It also supports work being done locally to support healthy living under the ‘Change 4 Life’ scheme.
- **Transport** – the proposal supports a number of the aims of the local transport plans, increasing opportunities for travel by more sustainable modes. The development is not seen as an alternative to the proposed improvements to the road and walkway between Minsterley and Pontesbury.
- **Tourism** – whilst there are few tourist attractions along the route of the proposed footpath and cycleway it offers pleasant views of the surrounding countryside and the neighbouring Shropshire Hills. It can also be seen in the wider context of other developments for cycling, which have the potential to give Shropshire a ‘critical mass’ to attract holidaying cyclists.
- **Historical value** – currently little is being done to preserve the history of the railway in the Rea Valley; the development of the old trackbed would offer opportunities to preserve some of this history and to inform local residents and visitors about the impact of the Minsterley Railway on the surrounding countryside and economy.
- **Sustainability** – the development of the proposed route would support the policies of other organisations that are keen to promote sustainable access, such as the Shropshire Hills AONB and the National Trust at Carding Mill Valley.

4. ASSESSING THE DEMAND FOR THE PROPOSED TRAIL

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the estimated usage that the proposed trail will generate. It presents the estimated number of route users and the profile of route users according to activity and trip type.

The methodology used to estimate the demand and economic benefit of cycling and walking tourism on the trail involves four stages:

1. Route matched to user profiles
2. Estimated usage
3. Spend generation estimated
4. Impacts on employment estimated

Stage one compares the proposed route to others where Sustrans has conducted Route User Surveys; from this the route is matched to an appropriate user profile. Automatic cycle count data is then used to generate a figure for the number of users on each route. Using the proxy user profiles, an estimated number of users for each of the categories are generated.

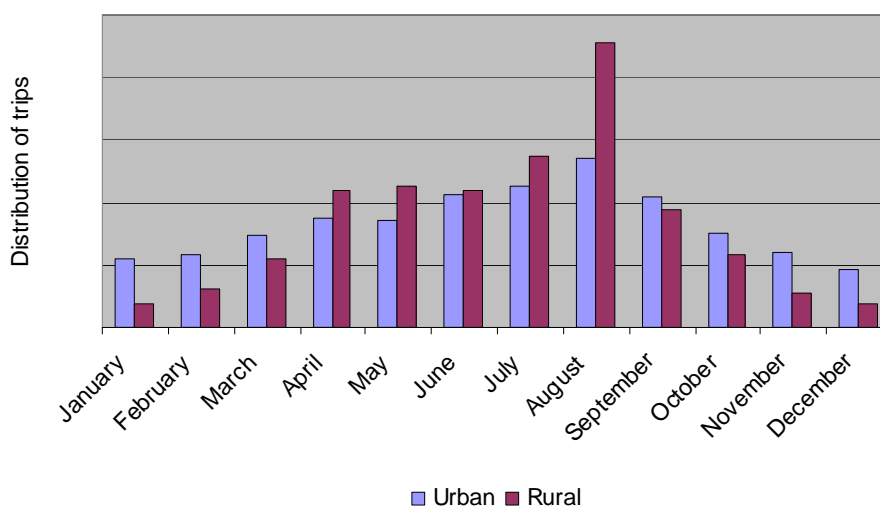
The next stage uses the numbers of recreational and tourism users generated in the previous stage and spend data to estimate an aggregate spend figure for the trail. The data from the surveys was analysed to generate user profiles for the average ratio of cyclists to walkers and urban/leisure to recreation/tourism users. These averages were tested to ensure that they were representative of the sub-samples.

Stages 3 and 4 will be presented in the next section of the report.

4.2 Pattern of recreational and tourism Demand

The pattern of demand on routes varies according to a number of factors. The distribution across the year is strongly influenced by location. We can see from the chart below that the level of demand on urban routes is more stable whereas on rural routes, especially those that are popular with holiday visitors and tourists, there is a distinctive peaking of demand during the summer months.

Figure 4.1: Seasonal demand on cycle routes



The distribution of trips will also vary between weekdays and weekends and at different times of the day, dependent on the location and type of route. Typically urban routes will see peak flows on weekdays during the morning commuter times and late afternoon. Rural and recreational routes see higher demand between 10:00 and 15:00, although this may extend to early evening during the summer months.

4.3 Recreation and tourism demand for the trail

The initial proposal is to link the villages of Hanwood, Pontesford, Pontesbury and Minsterley by creating a cycleway and footpath along the track-bed of the old Shrewsbury to Minsterley rail line; however, the long-term aspiration is to continue this trail through to Shrewsbury. This second ‘phase’ of development is likely to have significant impacts, both in terms of the overall demand for the trail and its composition.

Phase one

It is envisaged that phase one the proposed trail will attract primarily day or part-day trips from home and a small number of tourism trips from holiday bases in the area. This will include those staying with friends and family or on short breaks in the area and the surrounding parts of Shropshire.

Users of trails of this nature can be broken down into two main groups. The following estimates of demand for the proposed trail are based on these groups; they are:

- 1 **Day and part-day users** - these will be people drawn from the local area that choose to cycle or walk the route from home base.
- 2 **Holiday users** are those who participate in day and part day trips while on holiday or staying with friends and family.

The majority of users on the proposed trail will be out-and-back trips, although there may be a small number of circular trips where quiet lanes are used. The key motivational factors will be for informal recreation requiring little skill, primarily seeking social, group-based activity in pleasant surroundings.

Typical breakdown of users (phase one)

	%
Recreation	88.9
Holiday	4.8
Utility	6.3

Based on the analysis of other trail developments the following indicative demand for the Rea Valley Cycleway and Footpath is provided. In producing these estimates certain assumptions have been made. These are in terms of the construction:

- That the trail will be predominantly traffic-free;
- The surface is level and well maintained;
- The route has only gentle gradients.

Estimated demand for the proposed trail (phase one)

	Cyclists	Walkers
Part-day	9,547	10,596
Full-day	4,069	4,516
Holiday	731	812
Utility	965	1,071
Total	15,312	16,995

This is an estimate based on the first 1-2 years of opening; demand will continue to rise if the network of cycle routes in the area is extended and marketing sustained.

Phase two

When the trail between Minsterley and Hanwood is connected to Shrewsbury not only will the level of demand rise significantly but also the ‘typical’ user is also likely to change.

Whilst it is still predicted that the majority of users on the extended trail will be recreational the proportion of utility trips will increase; and although the proportion of

holiday users will fall the overall number will increase. However, the actual outcome will depend greatly on the attractiveness and route of the completed trail.

Typical breakdown of users (phase one & two)

	%
Recreation	84.2
Holiday	4.4
Utility	11.4

The following table presents the estimated demand on the trail once connected to Shrewsbury. As before this assumes that the trail will be predominantly traffic-free. The number of cyclists increases by a larger proportion than walkers, recognising the increased potential for longer periods of traffic-free cycling. Also worthy of note is the increased use for utility purposes as access is created to the employment areas and shopping centres in Shrewsbury.

Estimated demand for the proposed trail (phase one & two)

	Cyclists	Walkers
Part-day	15,490	14,649
Full-day	6,602	6,244
Holiday	1,154	1,091
Utility	3,004	2,841
Total	26,250	24,825

5. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED TRAIL

5.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the estimated expenditure by users of the proposed trail. The methodology uses the numbers of recreational and tourism users generated in the previous stage and spend data to estimate an aggregate expenditure figure for the trail.

5.2 Estimating recreation and tourism expenditure

No allowance was made for spending by utility users as it is assumed this would have occurred regardless of the existence of the trail. Applying the average spending figures from of £8.60 for day visits to the countryside (GB Leisure Day Visits, 2004) and £44.00 for overnight visits (The UK Tourist, 2008).

The estimates of employment as a result of the spending by route users are based on those used in the *South West Tourism Intelligence Project* report. These were: one full time equivalent position created for every £53,000 of direct spending, an employment multiplier of 0.44 for indirect spending and a further induced employment multiplier of 0.05.

5.3 Recreation and tourism expenditure on the proposed trail

Based on the indicative demand figures for recreational and tourism usage of the trail set out in the previous section, available data from case studies and typical spend levels of £2.15, £8.60 and £44.00, for part day, full day and staying users respectively, the following estimated levels of expenditure from recreational and tourism usage of the proposed network have been calculated.

Recreation and tourism expenditure (phase one)

	<u>Cyclists</u>	<u>Walkers</u>
Part-day	£20,526	£22,781
Full-day	£34,993	£38,838
Holiday	£32,164	£35,728
Utility	0	0
Total	£87,683	£97,347

Phase one of the Minsterley to Hanwood trail when established will generate an estimated £185,000 each year for the local economy.

Following the same procedure the expenditure for the phase one and two combined has been estimated.

Recreation and tourism expenditure (phase one & two)

	<u>Cyclists</u>	<u>Walkers</u>
Part-day	33,303	31,496
Full-day	56,777	53,696
Holiday	50,771	48,016
Utility	0	0
Total	140,852	133,208

Once connected to Shrewsbury it is estimated that the Minsterley to Hanwood trail will generate an estimated £274,000 each year for the local economy.

5.4 Employment creation

It is possible to estimate the number of jobs that the trail would sustain or generate as a result of increased expenditure locally and the business development opportunities that the development of the trail will give rise to. The figures used have been derived from other similar and appropriate studies; £53,000 for direct expenditure, an employment multiplier of 0.44 for indirect spending and a further induced employment multiplier of 0.05.

It is estimated that phase one will create or safeguard 5.2 fte jobs locally. The majority of these will be in the accommodation and food & drink sectors, as these are the main recipients of route user spending.

5.5 Summary

It is estimated that phase one of the proposed trail will generate 32,000 cycling and walking trips annually (51,000 with phase two). This will include over 30,000 (45,000) recreation and tourism trips. Holiday users can be expected spend at least one night in the area, therefore generating almost 1,500 (2,200) overnight stays annually. The estimated additional income from the development of the trail is £185,000 (£274,000), creating or safeguarding around 5 (8) jobs.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

This initial study demonstrates that the development of the proposed footpath and cycleway along the trackbed of the old Minsterley railway, linking the villages of Hanwood, Pontesbury, Pontesford and Minsterley, would bring economic, social, environmental and health benefits to local communities. As well as providing a sustainable tourism opportunity, and access to the Shropshire Hills AONB, the trail would encourage healthy travel for recreation and utility by local residents.

A survey of households in the villages along the proposed trail revealed a significant level of support for its development, both amongst potential users and non-users. It also showed a substantial level of underlying demand for such a facility.

It is estimated that demand on the trail would reach 32,000 trips annually within the first two years after completion. If the connection to Shrewsbury was achieved it would grow to over 50,000 trips a year, generating 2,200 overnight stays with local accommodation providers.

Spending by users of the trail would generate over £185,000 (£274,000) for the local economy, which would create or safeguard 5 (8) full-time equivalent jobs locally.

There are likely to be a number of engineering and management issues that will need to be addressed; these are beyond the scope of this study. However, there is only one major road intersection, a bridge over the old line just north of Pontesford, which is maintained by Shropshire Council.

6.2 Recommendations

This study has created an increased level of interest in the development of a trail along the old Minsterley line, in the local population, by starting a dialogue with landowners and in discussions with officers from the local authority. In order to maintain the impetus the report makes three main recommendations:

- To publicise the findings of the report, perhaps through a series of local public meetings in the villages (or by way of news bulletins) in order to encourage participation and discussion at this stage. This might be organised in association with each respective parish council.
- Here, as with other areas where trails have been developed, it is difficult at this stage for landowners to perceive the potential benefits of such development. It is recommended that a study day (or half day) should be arranged so that landowners can see best practice elsewhere, and to discuss potential mitigation measures that might be adopted if the route is progressed. This would best be taken forward in association with Shropshire Council as officers responsible for the development of cycling would be able to add their experience to this type of event.
- In order to explore and develop possible working partnerships that would take the proposal forward this report should be presented to major stakeholders such as Shropshire Council (Local Joint Committee) and the Shropshire Hills AONB. This could be done, for example, at a workshop so as to decide the best way to progress from this point.

References

- Advantage West Midlands (2008) West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy March 2008 Birmingham: Advantage West Midlands
- Asabere, P. K. & Huffman, F. E. (2009) The Relative Impacts of Trails and Greenbelts on Home Price. *The Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics* 38(4)
- Christie, M. & Matthews, J. (2003) The Economic and Social Value of Walking in Rural England, report for the Ramblers' Association
- Downward, P, Lumsdon, L. & Weston, R. (2009) Visitor Expenditure: The Case of Cycle Recreation and Tourism *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 14(1) pp. 25–42
- Gortmaker, S. L, Peterson, K, Wiecha, J, Sobol, A. M, Dixit, S, Fox, M. K. & Laird, N. (1999) Reducing Obesity via a School-Based Interdisciplinary Intervention Among Youth *Archives of Paediatric Adolescent Medicine* 903(153) pp.409-418.
- Government Offices for the West Midlands (2008) Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands Incorporating Phase 1 January 2008 London: TSO
- Ibald-Mulli, A, Stieber, J, Wichmann, H. E, Koenig, W. & Peters, A. (2001) Effects of air pollution on blood pressure: a population-based approach *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(4) pp.571-577
- Institute of Transport & Tourism (ITT), with Downward, P. & Sustrans (2007) The Economic Impact of Cycle Tourism in North East England: Final Draft Report, February 2007
- Lucas, K. Grosvenor, T. & Simpson, R. (2001) Transport, the environment and social exclusion: Report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation York: York Publishing Services Ltd
- Marion J L & Leung Y F (2004) 'Environmentally sustainable trail management' in Buckley, R. (Ed) (2004) Environmental Impacts of Ecotourism, Ecotourism Book Series, Volume 2 International Centre for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University,

Mason, C. (2000) Transport and health: en route to a healthier Australia? The medical profession can show leadership in promoting "active transport MJA 2000; 172: 230-232

McCarthy, M. (2003) 'Social determinants of health' in Marmot, M. G. & Wilkinson, R. G. (2003) Transport and Health 2nd Ed Oxford: Oxford University Press

Pucher, J. & Dijkstra, L. (2003) Promoting Safe Walking and Cycling to Improve Public Health: Lessons From The Netherlands and Germany American Journal of Public Health 93(9) pp.1509-1516

Riediker, M, Cascio, W. E, Griggs, T. R. Herbst, M. C, Bromberg, P. A, Neas, L. Williams, L. W. & Devlin, R. B. (2004) Particulate Matter Exposure in Cars is Associated with Cardiovascular Effects in Healthy, Young Men American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine 169(8) pp.934-940

Sælensminde, K. (2004) Cost–benefit analyses of walking and cycling track networks taking into account insecurity, health effects and external costs of motorized traffic Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice 38(8) pp.593-606

Saelens, B. E, Sallis, J. F, Black, J. B. & Chen, D. (2003) Neighborhood-Based Differences in Physical Activity: An Environment Scale Evaluation American Journal of Public Health 93(9) pp.1552-1558

Schönfelder, S. & Axhausen, K. W. (2003) Activity spaces: measures of social exclusion? Transport Policy 10(4) pp. 273-286

Shropshire County Council (2006) Shropshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006-2011 Shrewsbury: Shropshire County Council

Shropshire County Council (2006) Local Transport Plan 2001-2006 delivery report Shrewsbury: Shropshire County Council

Shropshire County Council (2008) Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008 – 2018 Shrewsbury: Shropshire County Council

Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (2009) Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014

Wjst, M. Reitmeir, P, Dold, S, Wulff, A, Nicolai, T, von Loeffelholz-Colberg, E, F. & von Mutius, E. (1993) Road traffic and adverse effects on respiratory health in children. *BMJ* 307(6904)

van Sluijs, E. M. F. McMinn, A. M. & Griffin, S. J. (2007) Effectiveness of interventions to promote physical activity in children and adolescents: systematic review of controlled trials *BMJ* 335(703)

Wilson, J. P. & Seney, J. P. (1994) Erosional Impact of Hikers, Horses, Motorcycles and Off-road bicycles on Mountain Trails in Montana *Mountain Research and Development* 14(1) pp.77-88

Land Ownership

No	Grid ref from	Grid ref to	Ownership	Comments
Hanwood				
1			Peter Middle Old Short Hill	
2		SJ418075	Lady Kingsland Sibberscote Manor	This is almost certainly tenanted to someone else
3	SJ418075	SJ418075	Mr Geoff Colley Plealey Old Station Plealey Shrewsbury	Buildings converted to residential use and the track-bed forms part of the garden.
4	SJ418075	SJ415072	Pat & Julian Potter Spring Lea Fishery Plealey Road Lea Cross Shrewsbury	Part used for guest caravans – some ballast removed from the remainder on this section.
5	SJ415072	SJ411069	Tom Haymer Upper Hill Farm Pontesford Shrewsbury SY5 0UF 01743 790692	
6	SJ411069	SJ411069	Little Halsten House	Currently up for sale
7	SJ411069	SJ397063	Shropshire Council	Part surfaced as footpath/cycleway
Pontesbury				
8	SJ397063	SJ393064	Shropshire Council	
9	SJ393064	SJ385062	David Evans Boycott Farm Pontesbury Shrewsbury	
10	SJ385062	SJ385062	Mr Stewart Malehurst	Owns house next to line with garden on the line. Pro-cycling but has concerns about unauthorised access and disturbance to the 'peace and quiet'. Also does not want this scheme to be seen as an alternative to the improvement of the highway.
11	SJ385062	SJ380056	Neil Manning Malehurst Farm Minsterley Shrewsbury	Uses the old track bed to move machinery and stock around the farm. Concerned that development of the route may interfere with his business.
12	SL380056	SJ379055	Mr D Jones	Strong concerns that development of the route may interfere with his business.
13	SJ379055	-	St Ivel Station Road The Creamery Minsterley Shrewsbury SY5 0BN 01743 791301	
Minsterley				

Comments from Community Survey

I would love the old rail line to be opened for cycling. It would mean I would stop in Minsterley – at the moment it's too dangerous to cycle there.
It would be even better if the route could be extended between Hanwood and Shrewsbury town estate.
Excellent survey. Hope that our area is seriously encouraged to expand its walk / cycle routes. It's an ideal terrain to suit everyone, and it's very beautiful.
We've waited for a footpath from Pontesbury to Minsterley for 30yrs+ about 1 mile required. Never happened yet. So good luck, I'll never live long enough to see any change in this area. It's always promises, nothing done (but they say miracles do happen, don't they??)
I have always wanted me and my children to cycle to school in Hanwood, but as I live up in the Caradoc View, feel it is unsafe for my little boy on the path to cycle next to that busy road. It would be great if there was a trail that we could take to build confidence in the in the riding skills. I'm a keen MTB biker and my partner who works in Minsterley would start using it for work & to get to Eastridge without having to use the car.
Having lived, walked and cycled in and around Hanwood for 22 years we have often said what a great cycle route the old Shrewsbury – Minsterley railway line would make!!
Absolutely wonderful plan for a safe walk – (If it could be lit even better so accessible all year round).
It would be a good idea for dog droppings along the proposed walk – this would decrease the fouling problem. You would also have to ensure that the motor bikes (small type) cannot get access.
We have an excellent network of footpaths in Pontesbury – and for longer walks leading out of the village. OK – sometimes they become overgrown and extremely muddy but we are very fortunate in our location. Cycling is a different matter. We lack safe routes out of the villages mainly for beginners and those less confident. We have Eastridge for the mountain bikers but only the narrow lanes for those less energetic. The opening of the old railway route would be marvellous for cyclists and add another dimension to villages.
Cyclists are selfish and (unlawfully) seem to see themselves superior to walkers and dogs and n.b. I cite towpaths on city canals.
Would there be separate cycle and walking lanes marked on any new path between Hanwood and Minsterley? Litter bins and dog mess bins need to be installed. Would the new paths easy access to Rea Cross Pub! At present it is not easy to walk there from Pontesbury without using the A488.
I wholeheartedly applaud this initiative.
Bins and lighting in the Pontesbury area need increasing. And speed on rural fast roads
The litter and dog mess problems could be helped by placing bins along the route. Particularly dog mess, as people don't want to walk around for an hour or so carrying dog poop.
Regards to your questionnaire most of the questions are not appropriate to myself. I am 80 years of age and suffer from a heart problem which precludes me from walking, cycling running etc. much to my disgust. As the saying goes old age catches up with us all. However may I wish you all the very best in your proposals to link the villages with a safe cycle and walking route. It's a wonderful idea.
Opening up the railway is an excellent idea. The disadvantages of litter and dog-mess have to be acknowledged – but open areas such as Wark (?) Hill do not have serious problems (most people take their litter and 'mess' home) and with appropriate signs I think the majority of walkers and cyclists will respect positively. I look forward to using it. Good luck.
I am 86 years of age, have two badly injured knees. Very hard of hearing and therefore do not concern me, but then we are an untidy nation are we not?
It would be good to have a more accessible pushchair and pram walking. For example, to walk to our local farm shop we either have to cross stiles or walk on the walk on the road. I think a path to Pontesbury and Hanwood is a very good idea and would be well used.
Our village is surrounded by pasture and arable land. The numerous footpaths and little used. Problem: (1) Bulls and other cattle (2) Cropped fields not being re-installed (3) Signposts being damaged or altered (4) Resentment by farmers, including ones neighbours and friends. 1, 2, 3 are legislated for. But who enforces the law? 4. This is tricky. Walkers prefer the safety and pleasantness of paths. The farmers can't see why they don't use the

roads provided. But traffic is getting busier and farm machines bigger. The path can stretch from one verge of a narrow lane to the other one would have thought the farmers would prefer the walker off the roads. I have been walking within a radius 4 miles from my house for 16 years and all the problems mentioned are from my personal experience.
Cycle routes should be separated from traffic not a few lines about 18 inches wide at the side of the road. Parking of cars should be banned in cycle lanes and on pavements!
People cycling, riding themselves or walking should they go onto land owned by other people also have insurance.
As a keen cyclist and a member of the Minsterley branch line it would be a wonderful idea. Cycling to Shrewsbury from Hanwood is a nightmare. When I cycle to Pontesbury I turn off Main A488 as soon as possible into the side roads.
Provide more litter / dog waste bins, change stiles to kissing gates. Public maps on notice boards showing footpaths and amenities and sites of interest.
It would be nice to consider the people who drive horses as I have noticed a number of horse drawn vehicles in the area – they would obviously need wide gates. Many thanks
Foreseeable problems – litter and dog mess increase. Solutions – Provision of bins for litter / dog mess as in the quarry.
When walking you have to be very aware of dog mess on pavements etc. Why don't owners clear up after them?
Very pleased with work done so far on old railway line in Pontesbury would be great if this was extended to Minsterley and Hanwood – I love to walk with grandchildren and dogs.
A cycle route such as this would be excellent. It would allow me to cycle to work (Pont – Minsterley). If away from roads, it would allow me to take the children out on their bikes too, which we hardly do at present – we have to take the bikes in the car to find somewhere safe and flat enough.
We are concerned re proposed scale of woodland at Pontesford Hill, that this may restrict access to walkers.
I haven't filled this in as at 86, although I still walk unfortunately not as I used to! I cycle to school and when my husband was stationed in Fyed (?) (Suez canal) in the (illegible) we only had bikes!! On retirement my husband shot and I learnt to beat (?) with one dog while I held the other. I do not understand the young who only seem to stay indoors on the internet – consequently they are unfit and fat. Hope you will be able to encourage them to get out and enjoy themselves. Please teach them road mapping! As a driver they worry me. Good luck. Yours, an elderly walker.
On some of the out lanes, the gutters and drains are not cleaned out, so the paths etc get flooded and become impassable. Not enough pavements to walk on.
I have a bike and did use it to cycle Hanwood to Pontesbury and Hanwood to town. No longer do so. Traffic is heavy and must be used to get to lanes. Farmland with crops and animals low-lying not the best walking country. Pontesbury Hill area much better and car to get there easiest. I think a cycle route is an excellent idea. It also opens up further countryside beyond Minsterley for bikers who have to use busy road to get there at present. Surface prob. Not same requirements for bikers and walkers. I believe I would get out my bike again for exercise if I had access to a safe and quiet route from Hanwood.
We would consider a cycle and walking route long overdue especially on bus routes, it makes the walk to Pontesbury from Minsterley very dangerous
My Grandchildren would love to cycle to Pontesbury school, but it is far too dangerous, even for teenager because the road is dangerous
I think a walking and cycling trail is a fantastic idea. We need something like this in Minsterley so more people can get to walk and cycle, at the moment you can't walk very far, because the traffic is really bad as this is a main road from Bishop's castle to Shrewsbury. Please, please build us a footpath. Thank you
There are some lovely walks from our house but we have had to find them ourselves – we need more circular routes. Cycle paths along the roads would be a good idea to avoid traffic and keep safe. They should be built everywhere.
My family and I believe the local area would benefit greatly from a route. I constantly cycle between these villages with my children on the back. However, the road is very busy and can be dangerous for walkers / cyclists. We would most definitely support this and hope this scheme gets the approval.
Litter bins and poop scoop bins at intervals along the route would help to reduce litter and

dog mess problems.
Whilst it's a good idea to consider a cycle / walking route from Hanwood to Minsterley, I'm not sure it would attract walkers walking for pleasure, but can see it would be good for children walking to school in Pontesbury from Minsterley. However I believe they probably travel on school buses or public transport so wouldn't walk by choice as the distance would be too far by today's standards.
It would be a great amenity to have this route along the old railway line but procedures must be put in place to address the litter and dog fouling
We would really like to have a cycle route. It would encourage our 2 children to cycle more if a safe route acme available
This is an excellent idea and I would fully support any fundraising in conjunction with this
Designated walks are needed! It is still to walk on either main roads or lanes in the cycle area.
It would be useful to have a pathway to walk and cycle on. It would save me driving to Shrewsbury town and would be a great benefit to most people on foot or by bike. It is too dangerous to walk to Shrewsbury or Minsterley or Pontesbury because of not footpaths and busy traffic
Existing paths and roads should be properly maintained before new ones done new / outside people come to the area and crime increases
Your questions don't really account for those of us who have to cycle to work. It's not just for recreation but a necessity. The cycle route proposed would need to follow a route from Hanwood towards Shrewsbury as well as in Minsterley direction. Many of us would walk to town if there was a footpath.
Having been unable to obtain a driving licence due to a congenital eyesight defect, I have had to rely on my pedal cycle or the local bus services for mobility. During my working life I cycled to church in Shrewsbury, a ten mile round trip, or took the bus in inclement weather. Since retiring I cycle to Shrewsbury (to the local bookies!!) two or three times a week, and also use my cycle for short journeys within my local village. I do not take part in organised cycling trips or walks! I may possibly use the old Shrewsbury / Minsterley Railway line route should the proposal be approved.
Some answers seem contradictory, but the likelihood of a new path to lead to litter and dog mess does not mean it shouldn't mean it shouldn't go ahead. It would need litter wardens but would be worth the trouble and expense.
As a disabled person with a non-disabled husband, I believe that inclusive access is imperative to this project without compromising an experience in the countryside. Often country sidewalks named 'Abilchytrails' (?) are too short and made to be outside the remit of regular walks. Enjoyment of the countryside and equal access should be well researched and considered without compromising the experience for disabled and non-disabled people together. Thank you
Would the cost be a lot? The distance to Minsterley from Pontesbury is not very far. However it would be ideal for the walking for health groups. There are other walks to Minsterley from Pontesbury but probably involve hilly terrain. A circular route would be a good idea rather than just walking to Minsterley and turning round to walk back. It all depends on the cost! (A walk from Pontesbury towards Shrewsbury might be more interesting).
A cycle / walking route using the obvious disused railway track should have been developed years ago, but better late than never. It will be a wonderful facility and encourage many more people to get walking and on their bikes, and open up this area to many others recreationally, as well as reducing traffic excursions.
Access has been vastly improved by Pontesbury volunteer based P path group maintenance and erecting new gates / stiles and improved through route into Shrewsbury would be a good project.
We do some cycling on the railway path up to where it ends (towards Lea cross) and feel it would be very positive if it could be developed and would like to be kept informed about the proposals. Thanks for the survey as it is an opportunity to give our voice.
Why not use the railway line to more freight from the two local factories, thus making the roads safer for cyclists and saving the money proposed for this project. I have used a cycle for approx. 75 years. I cannot do so now. I do think the roads should be made safer. Using the railway line for the purpose it was laid down for would in my opinion be the most cost

effective answer.
I would support this idea as we do need safe cycling – we cannot at present take our grandchildren as we have no safe cycle paths
Money should be spent making it safer for villages on the outskirts of Shrewsbury, able to cycle or walk into town. Money always seems to be spent in the town. I.e. the widening of paths (Telford Way) on both sides of the road, what is the logic of that??
The area around Minsterley is wonderful for walking and cycling but most of the roads are very narrow and winding with no footpaths or cycle paths, another hazard is walking past houses where a dog roams free and runs out at you, this has happened on numerous occasions. It would be fantastic to have the Minsterley rail line connected to Hanwood, Pontesbury and Pontesford
A route using the abandoned Minsterley – Shrewsbury appears to be reasonably believable (?) as a walking route a quite cheap option to improve for cyclists would require an appreciate capital sum. This assumes ownership of land issues are resolved. Some stretches of the embankment are currently accessible to walkers, particularly in the Minsterley / Pontesbury area.
Safe cycle or walking route to town would be ideal. Trains not stopping in Hanwood is a missed opportunity. Cycle route following existing rail line might be possible? We would definitely cycle to town if there was a safe route from Hanwood.
This is a farming area. Farmers must be able to properly operate their businesses whilst recognising the legal rights of way etc. They should be helped and encouraged to enable walkers, especially to appropriately access routes around or across their property. Example: A local farmer has a time limited local access path along the Rea Brook and railway line between Hanwood and Hook a gate. He plans to oppose any attempt to extend the time limit which expires in 2010. His reason – irresponsible dog owners who have allowed their animals to worry his sheep with sometimes fatal consequences in the brook. I sympathise with him. But I also sympathise with dog owners and the responsible owners. No doubt the farmer receives some payment for making access possible. Such compensation must cover any distress / loss to his stock. And suitable signage must in form walkers of the risks / problems they may cause
I should be thrilled to bits if item is became a reality. I have already walked on parts of this but it would be great to be able to walk the full length
We would love to be able to walk or cycle the opposite direction into Shrewsbury but can't because of the A5 and the awful, dangerous roundabout Edgebold. I work in Pontesbury so a safe walking or cycling route would be brilliant.
I would like to be able to cycle, but will not cycle on main road
The use of the old railway line is a good idea. At least cyclists and walkers (particularly the farmer) would have no problems with traffic, and children could ride their cycles, this would encourage them to cycle more often. The A488 (which links the main towns) would be avoided – this is an extremely busy road at times. In the Hanwood area the walking facilities are quite good.
I would particularly like to see a link into Shrewsbury – a simple path behind the hedges from Hanwood to the A5 roundabout and again behind the hedge to Redbrook. It is currently too dangerous to let inexperienced cyclists onto the main road (A488). The old rail line route is a fantastic idea should be implemented and added to.
There is a ninety year old, unable to walk far through wear and tear and frailty, in this household. The person has her own wheelchair, blue card and attendance allowance. But is not eligible to be registered disabled. This person would love to be pushed along a safe wheelchair friendly route through the local countryside, but good access would be needed for the benefit of the pusher.
Walking from our house (Plox Green Road) would be greatly improved if the footpath / pavement continued up to Drury Lane. This would give easier access to some lovely walks. At the moment it's not particularly safe walking on the main road and the grass verge can be very muddy. I notice that there are some children who came down from Drury Lane on the 'walking bus' and for their sake alone, a footpath would improve safety
(1) Damage to a wildlife habitat and more people using this will disturb wildlife. If it becomes 'neat and tidy' it will become a disaster for wildlife in the area. (2) Litter. More people will cause more litter, more traffic (ironically) if they drive to the route (which they will) and again more damage to wildlife (3) Assuming this goes through anyway, why no provision for horse

riders). There are plenty of footpaths in the area for people to walk on but the bridle ways all come out on the main roads – FAR MORE DANGEROUS for horses than for cyclists. Why not include somewhere for horse riders to go so they can avoid a busy road
Having used the old railway walk in Staffordshire, I feel this is an excellent idea. Helping children / walkers safe from the heavy traffic which now uses our roads
Need lots of access for groups i.e. scouts etc, walking for health, school children, pleasure with friends
A walkway from Minsterley to Hanwood following the old railway line would not be safe for adults or children. A walkway needs to be visible, well lit and not isolated. A walkway or path along the main road would be preferable.
There are no local bike parking facilities in Pontesbury or Minsterley village so usually attach bikes to nearest street sign – this might be worth thinking about and the local focus seems to be on mountain biking not bike parking for people who might wish to cycle then walk e.g. in Eastridge or Earls Hill. I am very excited about the idea of a cycle path using the old railway line as I would then be able to at least consider cycling to work again
I think it would be a very lonely walk / cycling route from Minsterley to Hanwood with all the trees on either side. Where are the cable and tractors, which now use the old line, to go? On the main road? I understand that quite a few difficult surveys have been carried out on land between Minsterley and Pontesbury with a view to making a walking / cycling route along side of the main road. All this no doubt has cost a lot of public money already, but not such a lovely route
I am in my 80s and until a few years ago my chief delight was walking. We were members of the rambling club and our holidays were always walking and cycling based but unfortunately most of the questions are now irrelevant to our present status
There are plenty of lovely footpaths over the South Shropshire Hills. Sadly at age 86 I am no longer able to take advantage of them
The proposal to use the old railway line is one of the best ideas I have heard for a long time and would really enhance my life
It would be wonderful for our family and the population of Minsterley to have access to the proposed cycle / walk trail, we would definitely use it on a regular basis for cycling, jogging or walking.
This sounds like a fantastic idea. Please keep us informed
I do not feel safe walking on my own
There is only pavement on one of the other side of the road through Pontesford and the speed of the traffic is far in excess, most of the time, o the time. Of the speed limit of 30 miles an hour. One lady of 88 cannot safely cross the road and even with someone with her it is hazardous
Concerned about more crime on route from Minsterley to Shrewsbury if railway line was accessible to cyclists
This survey has been completed on behalf of an elderly relative who is unable to make use of walking and cycling as recreation. I think the idea put forwards in point 15 is a very good one. It seemed inappropriate to fill in some of the questions. I think that good access, safe for all to the countryside is vital.
Pontesbury
Put signs up
Provide bus
Q6 I cycle to work 20 mile round trip 120 times this year - Q17 possibly depends what happens at Hanwood A488 not safe to cycle into town or beyond Hanwood - a footpath/cycleway is essential between Minsterley and Pontesbury, using the old rail line may be too far of the direct route and therefore would only attract recreational use & not those with a purpose to their journey
Haughmond Hill is completely spoilt now by dog mess. Need more access to information on local walks. A yellow sign posted walk sometimes crosses another one and have got lost several times. A notice boards showing the route the paths take in the area is a great idea. Leaflets are not always available. Pontesbury has made a great job of clearing local footpaths and put in great stiles and gates making the walks accessible. Biggest problem is the same everywhere – dog mess! Until the penalty for not clearing up by owners is enforced and they are made responsible for their animals, all the good work is ruined

<p>I would be very concerned if such a project linking the villages of Hanwood, Pontesford, Pontesbury and Minsterley were to result in additional dog mess and litter. This would be my main objection and very careful consideration should be given to these points. Otherwise, as indicated, it would receive my full support.</p>
<p>Maps of walks in the area would be very useful, not aware of the County Council doing this. The archaeology section of SCC organised a brilliant walk in Hanwood some years ago. A repeat or map of the route would be great. Very unhappy that a footpath to one of the best walks in the area was closed because of house building recently. No point in bringing it up at the parish council as the building development was at the behest and on the land of the chair and another member of the parish council</p>
<p>It would be even better if the cycle path could link to Shrewsbury. We love this area, walk a lot and only don't cycle because of the traffic, apart from it being dangerous, it is no pleasure cycling on busy roads. And even on the small roads cars are travelling too fast.</p>
<p>The council have been trying to fund a pedestrian link between villages on the A488. The proposed route would stop this and inconvenience everyone in the village</p>
<p>We are fortunate that a very active group in Pontesbury helps to maintain footpaths / stiles, etc. My main bug bear is where horse riders turn paths into a quagmire impassable for walkers. A farmer in Habberley who fails to maintain hedges, fences and gates which his livestock trample into a quagmire.</p>
<p>Yes, if poo bins were provided</p>
<p>This questionnaire does not cover disability issues</p>
<p>It would be good to have a proper footpath connection from Hanwood to Shrewsbury</p>

Organisational consultations

Contact	Address
Clare Fildes	Shropshire Hills AONB Craven Arms Shropshire
Deb Hughes	Countryside Access Shropshire Council Shirehall Shrewsbury
Jim Stabler	Countryside Access Shropshire Council Shirehall Shrewsbury
Pete Carty	National Trust Carding Mill Valley Church Stretton Shropshire
Tim King	Tourism Shropshire Council Shirehall Shrewsbury
Samantha Tharme	Transport Shropshire Council Shirehall Shrewsbury
Andy Wigley	Historical and Archaeological sites Shropshire Council Shirehall Shrewsbury
Mansel Williams	Shrewsbury Railway Heritage Trust Shrewsbury mansel.williams@shrewsbury.gov.uk
Chris Rolands	Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway The Pump House Shrewsbury

The Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Co Ltd
The Pump House
Coton Hill
Shrewsbury
SY1 2DP

T 0845 260 5233

W www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk

17 November 2009

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Wrexham Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company

We at Wrexham and Shropshire Railways, have a clear policy of encouraging rail travel and increasing sustainable tourism to Shropshire and Wrexham. With our DVT rolling stock, which can safely and securely carry passengers own cycles and even tandems, and which no other rail provider to Shropshire has available, we are keen to support fresh initiatives that will increase the number of sustainable tourists to Shropshire.

We were particularly interested to hear about the proposal by the Rea Valley Environmental Network (ReaVEN) to create a dedicated walking and cycling tourist trail from Shrewsbury to the South Shropshire Hills, mainly using the disused Minsterley Rail Branch Line. We feel that this would be an extremely worthy project, injecting much needed tourism into Shropshire and a project that Wrexham and Shropshire Railways is happy to support. We have researched similar routes in other parts of the UK and they have been seen to have a very positive benefit in supporting local communities.

The proposed route, once completed, should encourage many new "eco" tourists to the area, and would fit in well with the existing investment Wrexham and Shropshire Railways has already made in supporting the local economy, and jobs whilst encouraging sustainable tourism to the area.

Chris Rowlands
Business Travel Manager

Jonathan Brown
7, The Grove
Minsterley
Shropshire
SY5 0AG

5 June 2009

Dear Jonathan

Rea Valley cycle and footway feasibility study

Having read your application for Shropshire Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, I can confirm that we would support the proposal to carry out a feasibility study to provide a cycle and footpath through the Rea Valley, as described in your application.

The proposed scheme, has the potential to improve the walking and cycling network within the county which we support. In addition I see no particular impact on work we are taking forward separately, and there may be opportunities to gain added benefit.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Tharme (Ms)
Principal Transport Planner
Development Services
samantha.tharme@shropshire.gov.uk
255438

