

New Shropshire's Great Outdoors scheme to launch in time for Christmas

Shropshire Council's outdoor partnerships team are today launching a new membership scheme in a bid to secure the future of the county's country parks.

Perfect for dog-walkers, those who ride horses, cycle or if you just enjoy walking, the new Shropshire's Great Outdoors membership scheme offers perks including free parking, invites to member exclusive events and being first to hear about news and offers.

For £3 a month, you will be supporting some of Shropshire's most iconic, accessible and interesting countryside sites and helping people enjoy our Great Outdoors. Funding will help improve habitat management, encourage wildlife to flourish and look after historic monuments.

If you join before Christmas you'll get December completely free.

Stuart West, Shropshire Council's Cabinet member for leisure and culture, said:

"Shropshire Council asked residents earlier this year how they would like us to prioritise the way we spend our budget. Following this conversation it was clear that we needed to find new ways of ensuring the future of our country parks, heritage sites and Rights of Way.

"We want to work with people to protect the future of our countryside, and the Great Outdoors membership scheme is a fantastic, and affordable, way of doing just that. And just in time for Christmas, so it could be an ideal Christmas present for someone who loves the Shropshire outdoors."

The scheme will also help us make improvements to the Rights of Way network. We have over 5,500km of public Rights of Way in Shropshire – the same distance as Shrewsbury to New York on your doorstep.

Join us online at www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/join to support your local countryside.

For more information, contact Shropshire Council's outdoor partnerships enterprise manager Clare Fildes on **01743 255067** or email clare.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk.

Further information

Rather than cease the active management of the countryside sites, as proposed in the council's current Financial Strategy, we have put an ambitious plan together to raise income and reduce council support over the next few years...working towards a cost-neutral parks service.

This will ensure these wonderful sites are safeguarded for everyone's enjoyment now and in the future.

We would also like to do more to promote and upgrade access to Shropshire's Great Outdoors through the extensive network of footpaths and bridleways across the county – one of the largest networks in the country.

All proceeds raised through the Great Outdoors membership scheme will go to:

- Support your local country park, countryside heritage site or local Rights of Way
- Keep these sites and routes accessible and looked after for everyone to enjoy
- Help us encourage people to get out and active in the countryside
- Improve access to Shropshire's countryside
- Encourage the development of promoted walking, cycling and horse riding routes across the county and other outdoor activities
- Improve habitat management, encourage wildlife and help look after important historic monuments.

Your support will help enable us to retain our specialist staff, who can apply for funding for new projects that help people enjoy the parks, sites and Rights of Way.

In return, we will give you:

- A Shropshire's Great Outdoors membership card, which will entitle you to free parking at the country parks
- Special members-only events and guided walks
- Information about upcoming events and the latest news
- Family-friendly walks brochure, with some great short walks for all at our sites
- A priority copy of future walking and riding leaflets/booklets.