

BRECON BEACONS PARK SOCIETY

England & Wales · Charity number 1180841

Details

Other names BBPS, CYMDEITHAS PARC BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2018-11-26

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Brecon Beacons Park Society
c/o CRiC
Beaufort Street
Crickhowell
Powys
NP8 1BN

Phone 01873 812011

Email honsec@breconbeaconsparksociety.org

Website www.breconbeaconsparksociety.org

Activities

Objects: (A) TO ADVANCE THE ENHANCEMENT, PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, THE HERITAGE AND OTHER AMENITIES OF THE BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC.(B) TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN WAYS TO WHICH TO ACHIEVE THE ABOVE INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHY RECREATION AND, IN PARTICULAR WALKING

Activities: The Society is a voluntary organisation open to everyone. Its main purpose is to advance the enhancement, protection and conservation of the countryside and other amenities of the Brecon Beacons National Park for the benefit of the public, working with other public bodies in England and Wales. The Society also runs a series of guided walks throughout the year.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** Amateur Sport, Environment/conservation/heritage
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Blaenau Gwent
- Carmarthenshire
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Monmouthshire
- Powys
- Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Torfaen

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-10-31	£19,288	£14,862	-	-
2023-10-31	£17,288	£11,302	-	-
2022-10-31	£15,065	£14,069	-	-
2021-10-31	£14,111	£8,266	-	-
2020-10-31	£14,001	£8,862	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Martin Vivian Buckle	Chair	2018-11-26
DAVID FRANK THOMAS		2018-11-26
David Burden		2023-06-10
Elizabeth Margaret Bairstow Gibbs		2018-11-26
Iau Counsell		2019-11-26
JAMES MCBRIAR WILSON		2018-11-26
Janet Callear		2023-06-10
Katherine Jordan		2023-06-10
Meryl James		2025-06-28
Philip Bernard O'Shea		2021-06-23
Roy Manning		2022-05-21

BRECON BEACONS PARK SOCIETY

England & Wales - Charity number 1180841

Accounts

Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

**“Friends of the Brecon Beacons” is the working title for the Brecon Beacons Park Society
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841**

**This is the Annual Report of the Activities of
the
Brecon Beacons Park Society for the year
January to December 2024.**

Trustees

The persons who served as Trustees from 1st January 2024 to the 31st December 2024 are: -

Martin Buckle	Hon. Chairman
Janet Callear	Vice Chairman
David Burden	Hon. Treasurer
Sue Hoddell	Hon. Secretary
David Thomas	
Jim Wilson	
Iau Counsell	
Richard Chandler	
Elizabeth Gibbs	
Katherine Jordan	
Phil O'Shea	
Kathryn Silk	
Roy Manning	
Derek Thomas	

Declaration

In accordance with Charity Commission requirements, the Trustees of the CIO confirm that the activities of the Society have been, and are being, delivered for the public benefit.

Chair's report

1. The lead in to the Annual General Meeting is a busy period for our Executive Committee. Completing the Annual Report always features prominently in our preparations. As well as an opportunity to review progress, it also enables us all to celebrate our achievements over the course of the previous year.

Llangorse Lake

2. It was again a pleasure, in June 2024, to meet up with lots of Society members for the AGM, on this occasion in Llangorse Village Hall. Given the location, it was always likely that those who joined the short walk after the meeting would be taking advantage of the proximity of Llangorse Lake. This was much enhanced by the presentation before lunch by Keith Noble, who had given us a fascinating insight into the local biodiversity. Many thanks are due to David Thomas, our Honorary Secretary at the time, for making last year's AGM such a success.

The Walks Programme

3. Our Walks Programme continues to flourish under the leadership of our Walks Secretary Iau Counsell and with the support of the Walks Sub-Committee. Our Walks Leaders and Back Markers are of course also a critical resource, without which we would have no programme. We are grateful too to Clive Counsell, who collects and reports on walks statistics. Over the 12 months to February 2025, an impressive programme of 201 walks was offered, taking place throughout the year, although there were some cancellations due to severe weather. Participants per walk average out around 12. To add variety and interest, a number of these walks take place outside the national park's boundaries. We regularly review our walks programme, listening and responding to our members' wishes and ideas.

Walks Bookings

4. The walks booking system, which has become increasingly automated, is working well, enabling members to manage their own bookings smoothly. We thank David Thomas our Website Officer and Colin Treanor our Website Consultant for their work on this.

Walk Leader Support

5. We currently have 53 leaders, all trained in leading, and with up-to-date first aid certificates and equipment. Our induction courses for new leaders, which are designed and taught by Allan Gibbs, our technical adviser, have proved to be an excellent asset in the recruitment and training of new leaders.

Rights of Way (RoW)

6. An essential component of being able to deliver an effective walks programme, is the ability to promptly resolve any RoW issues that arise. In this context, we are indebted to Phil O'Shea, our RoW Officer, who acts as a conduit between the Society and the National Park Authority in keeping paths open. This is a busy role, with the number of issues averaging around 40pa in recent years. We have an impressive record of getting problems rectified!

7. While much of the workload revolves around site-specific issues, broader consultations have also been undertaken over the past year, and advice offered to our wider membership on broader issues, including:

- Military activities and Ministry of Defence ownership of land;
- The Right to Responsible Access;
- Meeting an unfamiliar dog;
- Rural crime.

The Events Programme

8. The Events Programme has continued to generate a lot of interest over the past year. We are indebted to the interesting range of speakers, but also to Ade Claughan for organising a notable range of topics. The Bear in Crickhowell, as always, provides a welcoming venue. Subjects have ranged across the Beacons, including the River Usk, its wildlife and its water quality, the Waterfall Country and how best to protect it, and the multi-year programme for dualling the Heads of the Valleys Road, soon to be completed. Topics have also extended well beyond our own mountains to the ice and fire of those in Iceland! Details of further talks can be found on our website. Ade is now handing over to Meryl James as Events Secretary. If anyone would like to offer a talk, or to recommend a speaker, please contact Meryl.

Development and Planning

9. In planning matters, the Society strives to ensure that we can all continue to enjoy this wonderful landscape, and that the statutory purposes of the national park are upheld. This applies in particular to the first purpose: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. We do this by constantly monitoring and commenting on planning applications. Our comments do from time to time lead to applications being amended or scaled down, and occasionally refused by the National Park Authority (NPA) or by planning inspectors on appeal.

10. This vital role has been undertaken for a number of years by our planning lead Elizabeth Gibbs. She was joined by David Davies last year, and it is excellent news now that Neil Sumner has also agreed to contribute to this role. Having two members with professional expertise to fill these roles has enabled Liz to step across to the role of Minutes Secretary.

Merthyr Common Wind Farm Proposals

11. It is indeed good news that the wind farm proposals, for six turbines on Merthyr Common close to the National Park boundary, have been refused planning permission by an inspector. Along with a number of objectors at the inquiry, the Society presented evidence which challenged the effect that the development would have on landscape character and visual amenity. With more renewable energy schemes coming forward, the policy developed by the Society to aid the assessment of these projects, and to help to determine when objections may be merited, has proved its value.

Local Development Plan

12. Our concerns remain about the pausing of preparation of the new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the National Park. With the current one approved back in 2013, it is now seriously out-of-date. The NPA has acknowledged our concerns, and the risks for our communities and our landscape associated with lacking an up-to-date plan. We are encouraged that the NPA has committed to securing a Delivery Agreement with the Welsh Government for the replacement LDP. We will continue to press the Authority to dedicate the resources to making this a reality.

Society Membership

13. We are indebted to David Burden who continues to combine the roles of Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary. On the membership front, in the year up to October 2024, we welcomed 71 new members but lost 99, giving a membership total of 966. Over this period, the overall trend was a slight decline in numbers. However, it is important not to read too much into short term fluctuations. From last November, numbers have regained their upward trajectory, and in January alone, we welcomed 40 new members. It is heartening that we can continue to build on a robust level of interest in our activities.

Budgeting

14. It is encouraging that, over the financial year November 2023 to October 2024, our financial position strengthened, with a surplus of £4,425 over the year. This was aided by income from subscriptions increasing by approx £2,000 due to the increase in subscription rates introduced in 2023. As in 2022-23, our total expenditure came in below budget. Some of the money put aside for projects was not utilised, and has been carried forward to the current year. Nonetheless, expenditure was 30% up on 2022-23.

Reserves

15. A key part of the Treasurer's role is to regularly review our Reserves Policy. The reserves help to ensure that sufficient funds are in place to deal with events, such as a fall in income or any unexpected major expenditure. We were able to maintain our income during the difficult years of the pandemic, so our reserves have remained solid. For operational purposes, our policy is to ensure that we have reserves at least equal to one year's budgeted expenditure. With prudent financial management, the Society's reserves at the end of financial year 2023-24 exceeded this figure, providing some scope to fund emerging projects.

Communications

16. Our activities as a Society are of course highly dependent on good communications. Our quarterly newsletter, which is issued to all members, is a key mechanism in keeping us all up to date. Many thanks to Katherine Jordan, who, with the support of a small sub-committee, co-ordinates this and our wider communications activity. We are also finalising a series of promotional leaflets explaining our work, for use at events and for new members.

These will be available at the AGM. In seeking to raise our profile and promote our activities, we have also joined Brecon Beacons Tourism on a trial basis.

17. We have yet to resume production of The Beacon since Chris Barber stepped down as editor of the magazine last Summer. We are much indebted to Chris for this and many other roles on behalf of the Society over the years. We now need some volunteers to form a small team who could take over this role.

18. We are grateful to David Thomas for co-ordinating our website, and to Clive Counsell for managing our Facebook page, but some further assistance with managing social media would be very welcome. Please contact Katherine if you might be interested in assisting with this role, or in otherwise helping with our busy communications agenda.

The Executive Committee

19. Meetings of the Committee continue with a 6 weekly frequency at the Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre (CRIC), usually on a Tuesday afternoon. These continue to take place on a hybrid basis, enabling all to attend remotely if unable to do so in person.

Changing Roles

20. As is the norm with organisations like ours, which rely on people giving up their time freely, we are continuing to see some turnover amongst Committee members, and changes to individual roles. Kathryn Silk stepped down as a trustee earlier in the year. Adrian Claughan has stepped down as Events Secretary, with Meryl James now taking on this role. At the AGM, we will see Richard Chandler and Susan Hoddell stepping down as trustees. Richard has served for a number of years, most recently as a driving force behind our Tramroads Project, in which he will continue to be involved. Sue steps down as Honorary Secretary having previously served as Minutes Secretary, but will continue as a Walks Leader. Derek Thomas is also stepping down as a trustee after previous roles, initially as Membership Secretary and subsequently as Minutes Secretary. This latter role has now been taken on by Liz Gibbs.

21. We are indebted to all of the above in contributing much effort into taking the Society forward. As a charity, we are able to have up to 15 trustees, and we have been operating close to our maximum, so we still have a good core of trustees looking to the future. It is a requirement that one third of trustees step down at each AGM, but with several not standing again, there are trustee vacancies arising for anyone who might like to put themselves forward.

Honorary Secretary Vacancy

22. It will be evident from the above that several vacancies as officers have already been filled. However, the role of Honorary Secretary will need to be filled after the AGM. Anyone who might be interested in taking on that role is welcome to get in touch with me, with Sue Hoddell, or with David Thomas, a previous Honorary Secretary, for a chat.

Fforest Fawr Geopark

23. The Geopark is one of several projects in which the Society works in partnership with the NPA and other partners. We are indebted to Dilys Harlow who attends the Management Committee on behalf of the Society. It is pleasing to know that the Geopark passed its 4 year revalidation by UNESCO last July. A small donation from the Society, which enabled the refitting of the Geopark's Learning Lab at Craig y Nos Country Park, will, we believe, have oiled the wheels!

24. Discussions on an extension to the Geopark's boundary into the fringes of the coalfield have progressed with a feasibility study. Initial results appear favourable but there is much more work to do. In the meantime, the Geopark has been involved in a UNESCO project to look at the effects of climate change on the natural and cultural heritage.

Dark Skies

25. It has been a good year for the Brecon Beacons International Dark Sky Reserve, with a programme of activities guided by the Dark Sky Board. The Society is a founder member of the board along with the NPA and other partners. Many thanks are due to Jim Wilson for his role on behalf of the Society as a board member.

26. The quality of our night skies has been maintained over the past year, and in some areas improved, as evidenced by our annual Dark Sky Quality Survey. The annual Dark Sky Festival continues to be popular, as do the Planetarium Shows, including those aimed specifically at schools. Overall, a notable figure of 17,000 people attended Dark Sky events over the year.

The Tramroads Project

27. This project seeks to safeguard the future of the many historic tramroad routes that are widely spread across the Beacons. It is one of a number of projects being progressed under the umbrella of the Brecon Beacons Historic Environment Partnership, which links the Society with the NPA and a number of related organisations. We are indebted to our trustees Roy Manning and Richard Chandler for their determination in bringing this project to fruition.

28. Progress over the past year has been a little slower than hoped, with the need to resolve some data collection and data management issues. However, this delay has provided the time, with financial support from the NPA's Sustainable Development Fund, to bring on board the services of an archaeologist, Charina Jones, who is now working with our volunteer team. A comprehensive survey of the Brinore Tramroad, which stretches from Talybont-on-Usk to Trefil, is about to commence.

The Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes

29. The Alliance continues to be an important focus for our activities, as a forum for collaboration between the societies from the national parks and national landscapes in Wales. It also provides a forum for liaising with colleagues across England and Wales through the Campaign for National Parks (CNP). Consultations from the Welsh Government continue to generate much discussion, in particular of late around the Welsh Government's proposals for the new national park in North East Wales. In addition, the Alliance provides a focus to ensure that the unfinished business of the Cambrian Mountains is not overlooked. It is a continuing concern that this stunning landscape, proposed as a national park back in the 1970s, still lacks any form of designation or protection.

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841

Brecon Beacons Park Society

Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cymdeithas Parc Bannau Brycheiniog

Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

2023-24

Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841

Brecon Beacons Park Society

Treasurers Report

1st November 2023 – 31st October 2024

The following pages provide a detailed summary of the financial transactions of the Society for the Financial Year ending 31st October 2024.

This year we have analysed our payments slightly differently in the accounts and split them into three broad categories. These are Core Administration Costs, which accounted for 40% of our costs, Services Direct to our Members (46%), and Collaboration with other bodies and projects (14%). We have done this to bring our accounts in line with our Strategic Action Plan, and also to provide, we hope, a clearer understanding to our members as to how we spend their subscription fees.

I am pleased to be able to report that the Society's cash reserves at the end of the Financial Year were substantially improved as a result of three consecutive years of surplus following the pandemic. Full details are shown in the Financial Statement on the following page. At this level, we feel that we have sufficient resources to cope with any unexpected pressure on our finances, and this also gives us the ability to be able to fund the many projects we are planning in the future.

David Burden

Hon. Treasurer

April 2025

Brecon Beacons Park Society
Financial Statement - 31st October 2024

	<u>31st October 2024</u>	<u>31st October 2023</u>
<u>Reserves</u>		
Balance Brought Forward	£41,849.21	£35,862.96
Difference Between Receipts and Payments	£4,425.49	£5,986.25
	-----	-----
	£46,274.70	£41,849.21
	=====	=====
	=	=

<u>Funds</u>		
Unrestricted Funds	£46,274.70	£41,849.21
Restricted Funds	£0.00	£0.00
Endowment Funds	£0.00	£0.00
	-----	-----
	£46,274.70	£41,849.21
	=====	=====
	=	=

The CIO has no other assets and no liabilities except as disclosed above

The Statement of Affairs and the Receipts and Payments Account were approved by the Executive Committee on **22nd April 2025** and signed on its behalf by:

Martin Buckle, Chairman & Trustee



David Burden, Treasurer and Trustee



Beacons Park Society

Receipts

1st November 2023 - 31st October 2024

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2022-23</u>
Membership Subscriptions	1	£15,017	£13,171
Gift Aid	2	£0	£2,442
Grants and Donations		£518	£432
Walk Fees	3	£115	£70
Beacons Way Walks	4	£1,980	£0
Bank Interest		£1,090	£543
AGM Lunches	5	£568	£630
		-----	-----
Total Receipts		£19,288	£17,288
		=====	=====

Brecon Beacons Park Society

Payments

1st November 2023 - 31st October 2024

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2022-23</u>
<u>Core Administration Costs</u>			
AGM	5	£1,237	£1,979
Website		£1,700	£400
Publicity & Communications	6	£1,671	£3,309
Insurance		£179	£179
Administration		£343	£154
Governance Costs		£747	£900
		-----	-----
<u>Total - Core Administration Costs</u>		<u>£5,877</u>	<u>£6,921</u>
<u>Services Direct to Members</u>			
Walks Leaders Expenses, Training & Equip		£3,703	£2,788
Beacons Way Walks	4	£2,250	£0
Talks and Events	7	£862	£107
		-----	-----
<u>Total - Services Direct to Members</u>		<u>£6,815</u>	<u>£2,895</u>
<u>Collaboration</u>			
CNP/BBNPA Collaboration		£1,645	£1,407
Planning & Development Oversight		£34	£35
Geopark Management Group		£46	£0
Tramroads & Trigpoints Project		£295	£0
AfWDL Collaboration		£150	£43
		-----	-----
<u>Total - Collaboration</u>		<u>£2,170</u>	<u>£1,485</u>
Total Payments		£14,862	£11,302
SURPLUS FOR YEAR		£4,426	£5,986

Brecon Beacons Park Society

General Notes to the Accounts

1. These accounting statements have been prepared on a cash accounting basis. That is, according to the date on which monies were received and payments made. These statements do not therefore include accrued income nor expenses. For the avoidance of doubt, receipts and payments are deemed to have been received and made once the relevant transactions appear in the Society's bank account.
2. The cost of individual items of equipment of £1,000 or less is expensed on purchase. There were no single items of purchase above £1,000 in the year. The Society has no fixed assets.
3. Unrestricted Funds are those funds that are available to be spent as the Trustees see fit for any of the Society's Charitable activities, as well as any costs relating to Support and Governance. These comprise the General Fund and Designated Funds.
4. Designated Funds differ from the General Fund in that these are funds the Trustees have set aside or earmarked to be used for a particular purpose. These are not legally distinct funds, and the Trustees can at any time redesignate them for other purposes. As at 31st October 2024 the Society has no Designated Funds in place.
5. Restricted Funds are those funds that the Trustees are obliged to spend only on a particular purpose set out by the donor and should only be used for a specific purpose. There are no Restricted Funds in place at the year-end.
6. Endowment Funds are funds the Society is prohibited from spending as income as laid down in the governing document. Normally these will be investments but may also be property held as endowment for use by the Society. The investment receipts must be spent for the purposes indicated in the governing document. There were no Endowment Funds at the year-end.
7. Core Administration Costs are those payments associated with the Support and Governance of the Society. Support costs include IT systems, Insurance and Fees. Governance Costs are those payments associated with the governance of the Society and include costs relating to Executive and Trustee Meetings as well as the Annual General Meeting.
8. Services Direct to Members are all payments made in undertaking the Society's work to deliver its charitable objectives such as walks and talks.
9. Collaboration covers costs relating to the Society's dealings with external bodies such as the BBPNA and CNP. It also includes projects such as Tramroads and Dark Skies.
10. The Charity Commission recommends that charities should have a robust reserves policy in place to mitigate possible financial risks in the future. The Society's Reserves Policy is reviewed regularly by the Trustees. Various risk factors need to be assessed, including a possible fall in income and any significant unexpected expenditure. The Reserves Policy is normally stated in relation to planned budgeted expenditure for the year. For the Financial Year 2023-24, the reserves were set at equal to one year's planned expenditure. More details of the Society's Reserves policy can be found on our website.

Brecon Beacons Park Society

Notes relating to the 2023-24 Accounts

1. Membership subscriptions are stated net of GoCardless Limited collection fees.
 2. No claims for Gift Aid were made during the 2023-24 Financial Year. This will be rectified in the 2024-25 Accounts.
 3. The income from Walk Fees includes donations made by non-members when joining one of the Society's organised walks.
 4. During 2023-24 the Society organised walks along the Beacons Way over a series of weekends during the summer. These walks were mainly financed by the members participating but the numbers shown indicate the relevant receipts and payments.
 5. Members attending the 2024 AGM paid a fixed cost for the lunches provided. Again, the numbers shown indicate the relevant receipts and payments.
 6. It is worth noting that the figure shown for 2023-24 Publicity and Communications is much lower than the amount recorded in 2022-23. This is because only one edition of "*The Beacon*" magazine was produced during the year.
 7. The amount for Talk and Events includes the purchase of a projector which was a one-off cost to improve the presentations at talks.
-

Independent Examiners' Report to the Trustees of
Brecon Beacons Park Society
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st October 2024.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination of the Financial Statement, the Statement of Receipts and Payments, and the accompanying Notes to the Accounts. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- these accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Date: 30/4/2025

Name: Michael Davies

Relevant Qualification: Retired Bank Manager

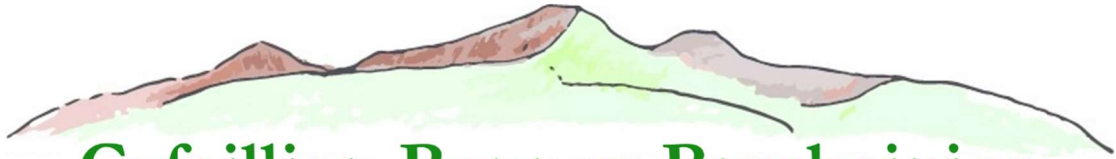
Address: Crickhowell, Powys, Wales

BRECON BEACONS PARK SOCIETY

England & Wales - Charity number 1180841

Accounts

Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

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ANNUAL REPORT

2023

**“Friends of the Brecon Beacons” is the working title for the Brecon Beacons Park Society
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841**

**This is the Annual Report of the Activities of the Brecon
Beacons Park Society for the year January to December
2023.**

Trustees

The persons who served as Trustees from 1st January 2023 to the 31st December 2023 are: -

Martin Buckle	Hon. Chairman
Janet Callear	Vice Chairman (elected at AGM 2023)
Richard Bennett	(Hon Treasurer resigned at AGM 2023)
David Burden	Hon. Treasurer (elected at AGM 2023)
David Thomas	Hon. Secretary
Jim Wilson	(Vice Chairman up to AGM 2023)
Clive Counsell	(stood down January 2023)
Iau Counsell	
Richard Chandler	
Elizabeth Gibbs	
Sue Hoddell	
Katherine Jordan	(elected at AGM 2023)
Phil O'Shea	
Kathryn Silk	
Roy Manning	
Derek Thomas	

Executive Committee

Note that Richard Bennett stood down as a Trustee at AGM 2023.

In addition to the above Alun Flynn joined the committee as an Executive Member, but not as a Trustee.

Declaration

In accordance with Charity Commission requirements, the Trustees of the CIO confirm that the activities of the Society have been, and are being, delivered for the public benefit.

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Chairman's Report – Martin Buckle

The past year has been another busy period for the Society and for its Executive Committee. Inevitably, the Annual General Meeting is always a focus of activity, providing as it does an opportunity to review progress.

Hay Castle

We were again blessed last year with a very fine day for our AGM, and Hay Castle, as anticipated, proved to be an exceptional venue. As always, it was good to meet up again with lots of members. The talk about the restoration of the Castle provided a great example of what can be achieved through commitment and determination in sustaining our unique heritage. This was well-evidenced by the tour of the Castle after lunch. With the location being such a stunning one, the alternative afternoon walk was also a delight. Thanks are due again to David Thomas our Honorary Secretary for making last year's AGM such a success.

The Walks Programme

As a key element of our activities, it's great to see the Walks Programme going from strength to strength, with an extensive agenda throughout the year which aims at providing four walks per week. Great credit is again due to Iau Counsell, our Walks Secretary, to the Walks Sub-Committee chaired by Jenny Cann, and to all the walks leaders and back markers. We can approach the future of the programme with some confidence, there now being over 50 walks leaders in place. We are also seeing a steady supply of new volunteers in this role, supported by our regular induction and training programme. Many thanks again to Allan Gibbs, our technical adviser.

More Kilometres

The aggregate distance walked by all participants is now over 35,000 kilometres a year! All levels of walk from "taster" and "easy" through to "energetic" and "strenuous" seem to be maintaining their popularity. The variety of destinations is also impressive, with a quarter of the programme taking place on routes beyond the national park boundaries. It's good to see that the team behind the programme have no shortage of energy, and of course the same applies to the participants! Thanks are also due again to Clive Counsell for helping to support our walks leaders, and for collecting and managing our walks statistics,

Walking the Beacons Way

Following its success as an element of our Society's 30th Anniversary celebrations back in 2022, the Beacons Way is again being offered as a led

walk over four weekends this summer. What better way is there to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949?

The Events Programme

The Events Programme has sustained its momentum over the past year. Many thanks are due of course to the speakers, but also to Alun Flynn for organising a remarkable range of topics. The Bear in Crickhowell continues to provide a hospitable welcome. Subjects have ranged from local heritage to perspectives across Wales and have extended to mountain ranges even more spectacular than the Brecon Beacons, across the Americas and Asia! Details of further talks can be found on our website. If anyone would like to offer a talk, or to recommend a speaker, please contact Alun.

The Executive Committee

The Committee continues to meet on a regular 6 weekly cycle at the Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre (CRIC), usually on a Tuesday afternoon. We have continued with a hybrid format, so that anyone who cannot easily attend in person can do so remotely.

Changing Roles

Dependent as we are on people giving up their time freely, the past year has again seen a little turnover amongst Committee members, and some adjustments to individual roles. Vacancies have arisen, with a key vacancy filled at last year's AGM. David Burden took over the role of Honorary Treasurer from Richard Bennett, and he has followed Ben Sladen's earlier example of combining this role with that of Membership Secretary. We are grateful to Richard for his hard work in updating our financial systems, and also to Derek Thomas similarly as the former Membership Secretary. Further good news was the willingness of Janet Callear to step up as Vice-Chair, following Jim Wilson into this role. Janet also acts as our lead interface with the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes.

Honorary Secretary Vacancy

The willingness of Society members to step forward when a vacancy arises has been very welcome. A key forthcoming vacancy is that of Honorary Secretary, with David Thomas indicating that he will be stepping down at the AGM. He will, however, continue as a trustee with responsibility for co-ordinating our web site. Anyone who might be interested in taking on the Honorary Secretary role is welcome to get in touch with me or with David for a chat.

Membership and Finance

Fortunately, the pandemic did not affect our membership levels. Numbers have continued to rise steadily over the past few years, and as a result the pandemic did not adversely affect our income levels. However, as discussed at last year's AGM, we were concerned that inflation would threaten our activities and diminish our reserves, with potential impacts on our proposed website development, as well as on the walks programme.

Strengthening Reserves

With rapidly rising inflation last year, a tight rein has been kept on expenditure. In addition, last year's AGM agreed to raise our membership fees for the first time since 2011. This increase in revenue along with careful scrutiny of expenditure has enabled our financial reserves to be safeguarded and strengthened. This will enable several projects to make further progress in the current year.

Communications

Good communications continue to play a central role in our activities as a Society. Close collaboration with the National Park Authority and with the Campaign for National Parks is particularly important in sharing information and in keeping members informed.

In this context, our quarterly online newsletter **Society News** has now reached its fifth edition. Many thanks are due to Katherine Jordan for her dedication in keeping us all so well-informed. If you become aware of newsworthy items, please do share them with her. She would also still welcome some support on the social media front if anyone might be interested in assisting in this role.

The newsletter supplements the printed editions of the Society's journal **The Beacon**, which is produced twice a year in January and July. Thanks are again due to Chris Barber, its editor. For anyone who would like to contribute an article, please contact Chris. He is also pleased to receive letters for publication.

The Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes

The Alliance continues to be an important focus for our activities, as a forum for collaboration between the societies from the national parks and national landscapes (as AONBs are now known) in Wales. It also provides a forum for liaising with colleagues across England and Wales in the Campaign for National Parks (CNP). Consultations from the Welsh Government continue to generate much discussion, with the Sustainable Farming Scheme proposals for agricultural funding being a particular recent focus.

Further Protected Landscapes

The past year has seen the CNP focusing in particular on Wales, with much discussion around the Welsh Government's proposals for the new national park in Northeast Wales. This led to the preparation of a joint statement between the Alliance and CNP on the key principles which should underpin the new national park. In addition, the Alliance provides a key focus to ensure that the unfinished business of the Cambrian Mountains is not overlooked. Proposed as a national park back in the 1970s, it continues to be a concern that this stunning landscape still lacks any form of designation or protection.

Seventy-Five Years

Much activity over the past year has also been concentrated jointly on preparations to celebrate 75 years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 in 2024. This has led, within Wales, to a celebratory event in the Senedd in March, with a keynote speech by Julie James, then Minister for Climate Change. This event also included a presentation on regenerative small-scale agriculture in the Brecon Beacons.

Liaison with the National Park Authority (NPA)

Inevitably, collaboration with NPA staff, their managers, and NPA members features prominently in our activities. Partnership working between the Society and the NPA is critically important to achieving our objectives, as well as those of the Authority. A key collaboration continues to be the Dark Skies Reserve, with Jim Wilson continuing to play a key role. Having recently celebrated its tenth anniversary with impressive levels of outreach, the Reserve's new strategy and action plan should ensure that it continues to prosper. The Society has also opened a dialogue about the Beacons Way with the NPA. We have proposed a joint project to survey the condition of the route, and to reinstate it as the national park's premier long-distance footpath.

Fforest Fawr Geopark

Another key joint initiative between the Society and the NPA, but also including other stakeholders, is the Geopark. With limited budgets, it has been a difficult past year, with the annual Geofest event being cancelled. It is however hoped that there will be events in May/June this year.

We will be using some of our reserves to update displays at Craig y Nos Country Park, which hosts the Geopark Hub. This will aid this year's revalidation visit by UNESCO. The Management Group, on which Dilys Harlow represents the Society, is also being refreshed, with a new action plan under preparation. Consideration is also being given to extending the

Geopark by about 10%, to incorporate coalfield areas in Neath Port Talbot. This will provide a more complete picture of the local geology and industrial heritage.

Rights of Way

A key interface with the NPA involves Rights of Way (ROW) issues. As usual Phil O'Shea, our ROW lead, has had a busy year sharing members' concerns with the NPA and reporting back. He also regularly attends the Local Access Forum. Phil's plea – see his detailed report - is well worth repeating – “when enjoying the countryside, please consider adding one or two relatively unused paths to your walks. It helps to keep footpaths navigable, and you can report problems encountered. **USE THEM OR LOSE THEM.**”

Historic Environment Partnership (HEP)

Another collaboration with the NPA and other stakeholders, this partnership has had another productive year. Following widespread consultation, a five-year Action Plan has now been agreed. This is one of seven key plans and strategies linked to the delivery of Y Bannau – The Future, which is the National Park Management Plan. A key priority for this partnership has been to initiate an audit of the National Park's heritage, including ways of monitoring its condition and safeguarding its future. This audit will be published before the summer of 2024.

Tramroads Project

This project is one of the key partnership proposals in the Historic Environment Action Plan, with the aim of safeguarding the future of our network of historic tramroads. Much of the past year has been spent in putting in place a framework for volunteers to collect data out on site, and to update and add detail to records on the tramroads. The aim is for on-site activity to be well underway through the summer this year. Much credit is due to our Executive Members Richard Chandler and Roy Manning for their determination and persistence in reaching this point!

Planning Proposals

Responding to planning proposals continues to be a very busy area of our activities. We aim to ensure in particular that proposals will not adversely affect the National Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. Key concerns over the past year have included telecommunications masts, the use of fields for car parking for the Waterfalls Country, and new sites for holiday lodges around Llangorse.

Renewable Energy

We have also objected to an application for a windfarm of six turbines close to the southern edge of the National Park on Merthyr Common. With climate change gathering momentum, however, more renewable energy schemes will inevitably be brought forward. As a result, a policy has been developed for the Society to assist in assessing these projects, and to help to determine when objections may be merited.

Planning Workload

We are indebted to Liz Gibbs, who has led for us on planning matters for a number of years. However, with a growing workload, she has now been joined by David Davies in this role, He will focus on the western half of the National Park.

Local Development Plan

We have also previously drawn attention to concerns about the pausing of preparation of the new Local Development Plan for the National Park. The current one was approved in 2013 and is now seriously out-of-date. As a result, we have now formally written to the NPA expressing our concerns, drawing attention to the risks of lacking an up-to-date plan, and encouraging the NPA to recommence work on the replacement LDP with urgency.

Executive Committee Reports

Membership – David Burden

Derek Thomas, who took over as Membership Secretary from Ben Sladen at the 2021 AGM, decided to step down from the role in October 2023. David Burden, who had succeeded Richard Bennett as Treasurer at last year's AGM, offered to take on this additional role as there are many overlaps in the two jobs and processes had been streamlined over the previous year to make the dual role more feasible. David took over on 1st November 2023. This report primarily pertains to the Financial Year 1st November 2022 to 31st October 2023 when Derek Thomas was Membership Secretary.

Over the year (1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023) 142 members joined from 111 households – the difference is due to some households being families. During the same period 115 members from 86 households left. The result at the year-end was an increase in households to 789 which represents a just under 10% increase in the number of households over the year.

At last year's AGM in July, the Trustees agreed unanimously to increase the Membership Subscription Rates – the first such increase since 2011. The new rates were to take effect from 1st July 2023. Members who had signed up to the GoCardless Direct Debit system would have their subscriptions automatically upgraded to the new rates, although this did cause Derek a significant amount of work as he had to change each mandate one by one. Members who used other forms of payment – bank transfer, standing order or cheque – would need to be reminded of the new rates before their renewal. Overall, the transition process went through quite smoothly, due to Derek's hard work. We did experience some issues with members not updating their Standing Orders, which is not in our control, but that is for next year's report.

I am pleased to advise that GoCardless have now upgraded their system to enable such changes to be made globally. As a matter of interest, currently just under 85% of our membership renewals are through GoCardless. Please consider changing to GoCardless as it is a lot less work for our volunteers. We do not see your bank account details; they are held securely by GoCardless.

Financial – David Burden

Richard Bennett decided to step down as Treasurer at last year's AGM, and David Burden succeeded him following that meeting. Richard had spent much of his tenure streamlining the financial processes of the Society, introducing budgetary controls, and developing a robust Reserves Policy. David inherited a Society in a strong financial position, and he continued to build on and develop the systems Richard introduced.

As was mentioned in last year's Annual Report, the COVID pandemic did not have a serious impact on our membership levels – indeed our numbers have continued to rise steadily over the past few years. As a result, our income stream was not seriously affected by the outbreak and subsequent lockdowns. The main concern was that inflation would begin to diminish our reserves. We were particularly concerned about the impact rising costs would have on our proposed website development, and on delivering the walks programme.

A detailed summary of accounts is available elsewhere, but in the Financial Year 1st November 2022 to 31st October 2023, the Society's financial operations produced a surplus of just under £6,000. This was due to a reduced level of expenditure, where our total expenditure of £11,302 comprised only 60% of the total budgeted figure. This was primarily because a couple of major projects budgeted for did not materialize within the year, but it was also an indication of our carefully controlled spending.

As well as keeping a tight rein on expenditure, the Executive Committee proposed that we raise our Subscription Rates to boost our income – the first increase since 2011. This proposal was passed unanimously at last year's AGM and took effect from 1st July 2023. The subsequent increase in revenue along with controlled expenditure had the combined effect of boosting our cash reserves by the end of the Financial Year.

The Trustees also decided to review our Reserves Policy. This is a measure recommended by the Charity Commission to ensure that a charity has sufficient funds in place to be able to deal with unexpected events such as a fall in income or any unexpected major expenditure. The Trustees decided that for the Financial Year 2022-23, the Society should set the level of Designated Reserves at two years budgeted spending, which in monetary terms equated to £38,000. Our total cash reserves on 31st October 2023 were slightly more than that figure. The Reserves Policy is reviewed every year by the Trustees.

We are optimistic that, in the Financial Year 2023-24, with increased revenue from Subscriptions, we will be able to be able to fund a number of projects that we have in mind that require significant expenditure, and that the Society will continue to operate on a financially sound basis. Our Expenditure Budget for 2023-24 is £26,000.

Guided Walks – Iau Counsell

We are now offering four walks almost every week and sometimes more. We are again offering a huge range, from Taster walks, designed for people who are new to walking and perhaps recovering from illness, to Easy (10 inc. tasters), Moderate (56), Energetic (98) and Strenuous walks (35) and in many different areas.

In the year ending 31st March 2024 we led 199 walks totalling 3,259km with a combined distance walked by attendees of 35,631km. The average length of walks was 15km.

Walks were spread fairly evenly across our normal walking days, Sat (54) Sun (56) (some weekends had more than one walk per day), Wed (47) Fri (54) as well as 3 walks on other days. Average walker numbers were Sats 10, Suns 12, Weds 10, Fris 11 with an average of 11 walkers on other walk days.

Distribution across the Park, while improving is still uneven with 33 walks in the West compared with 35 in the Central Beacons, 88 in the East and 57 outside the Park.

Looking at the average numbers of walkers attending, walks across all levels of difficulty were evenly attended. Easy 10, Moderate 10, Energetic 11 and Strenuous 10.

Walks in the West had average of 9 walkers per walk. Central 11, East Beacons 12 and walks outside the Park attracted an average of 11 walkers.

The automated website booking system which started on 1st April 2022 has worked well and is constantly developing as we listen and adapt to our members' wishes and needs. We are anticipating that it will soon be possible for walkers to manage their own bookings including cancellations, relieving officers of much work.

The Beacons Way is again being offered as a led walk this year on the last weekends of June-September inclusive.

Walks Leaders – Iau Counsell

All our 54 walk leaders have up to date emergency outdoor first aid. We are very proud that all of them have undergone leader training either with the nationwide Mountain Training organisation or with our in-house BBPS Induction course devised and run by our esteemed technical adviser, Allan Gibbs. These leaders work enormously hard inventing, trialling and leading walks for our members and guests. We have welcomed 14 new leaders since April 2023, 12 of whom passed our Induction courses, and 2 others, already qualified who asked to join the team. We always welcome new prospective leaders.

In addition to these leaders, we have a team of 7 dedicated “Back Markers” who all have the same first aid certificates as the leaders.

As always, the BBPS funds the first aid and induction courses and supplies any first aid kits and group shelters that leaders may need. Many provide their own. Thank you, leaders!

Events Programme – Alun Flynn

Talks have continued to be held in the comfortable surroundings of The Bear. Since the last AGM, only one talk (on the Hay Castle) failed to attract enough interest to be held. All others have generated significant interest and we average 30 people in attendance.

They have included:

- We were lucky enough to hear the author Tom Bullough on his recent book 'Sarn Helen'.
- Stuart Roberts gave a detailed and fascinating illustrated talk on the wildlife and wild places of the Upper Wye Valley
- Kevin Walker was kind enough to return and deliver a professional illustrated and very engaging talk entitled 'Messing with the Masonry'.
- Well known BBPS member Jim Wilson regaled us with his adventure in the Andes in the 1970s.
- Allan Gibbs gave a brilliant talk on his treks in The Himalayas, bringing fascinating objects from Nepal.
- Janet Callear was kind enough to host an evening with Alan Bowring on the Clydach Tramroads. Unfortunately, the technology failed but Alan has kindly made the slides available to all attendees.

We are extremely grateful to all speakers who give of their time and energy freely. The questions from an enthusiastic audience always demonstrate how well the talk has been received.

Talks arranged for the next few months are as advertised on the website:

- Sue Hoddell will talk about Lundy Island
- Philip Grant will talk about his experiences in Lesotho, and its similarities to Wales.

We have a promise for a talk in July about the Camino de Santiago.

I would be very grateful for recommendations for speakers for the remainder of the year.

I would also be grateful for anyone who could assist in the organisation of these talks, which I hope are valuable to our members.

Rights of Way – Phil O’Shea

Rights of Way (ROW) issues are sent to me by members (and non-members), and I vet the reports before posting the issues on our website and referring on to the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (NPA). Area wardens prioritise the problem in accordance with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

NPA also refers to me reports of applications affecting ROWs. Such reports often run to several pages of A4 – too much to be included on our website. Consequently, I précis these reports before posting on our website and invite members to contact me for the full details. If felt appropriate, I convey the information to Leaders. I submit a report to every meeting of the Society’s EC.

It has been a concern to the EC that it could become problematic if an officer holder, for any reason, becomes unable to perform their role. So, we all now have a back-up. Thanks to Roy Manning for volunteering to step in for me.

There has been much publicity recently about the potential loss of Rights of Way affecting 49000 miles in England and Wales, according to Ramblers. So please report obstructions or other problems you encounter. Issues within NPA to me please, and those outside the Park, to the Local Council. I make my annual plea to Leaders (and individuals enjoying the countryside)

to please consider adding one or two relatively unused paths to your walks. It helps to keep footpaths navigable, and you can report problems encountered. **USE THEM OR LOSE THEM.**

I have produced guidelines, available on our website to enable problems to be reported to me and if the procedure is followed, I am able to identify within a square metre where the problem is located and the code of the affected footpath. Photographs of the problem are always helpful. This facilitates my referral to NPA and helps the Wardens who visit the site. Occasionally, members choose other ways to inform me and, whereas I am always grateful for the report, it is preferable if members follow the guidelines for reporting so I do not need to contact the member. Rarely do I have to visit a site to inspect it but where a visit is necessary, I can call on Angela Morgan (West), Helen Fletcher (Central) and Frank Scott (East) to help. I am indebted to them.

Because each annual report must be drafted in time to go to the printer, the figures below have been produced from 8 monthly reports to EC. Whereas it will not be a year-on-year comparison, it serves to reflect the number of ROW issues coming my way and indicates a considerable reduction in reports from members (nudge, nudge).

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Reports from members	7	29	55	47	21
NPA notices to me	17	7	11	19	16*
TOTAL	24	36	66	66	37

*Includes 10 ROWs affected

I am happy to take phone calls or emails if you have any questions or observations.

Development and Planning – Elizabeth Gibbs

The aim of the society with respect to Development and Planning is to try to ensure that the Statutory Purposes of the National Park are upheld, in particular the first purpose: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. We do this by constantly monitoring planning applications to the National Park.

This year there have continued to be applications for new telecommunications masts. We objected to a particularly badly sited one very close to the Beacons Way on Blaen-yr-henbant above Llanbedr. Not only would it and the proposed access road have been visually intrusive but

it would also have jeopardised the springs supplying local houses. We are pleased to say that this application was refused permission. We have also objected to the use of fields for new car parking for people accessing the Waterfall country, though there is a real need to find ways to alleviate visitor pressures and meet the needs of both those who visit and those who live in the area. We also objected to Tan Troed, a holiday lodge park at Llangorse, on the grounds of visibility from high ground, problems with the access and excessive numbers of such parks around Llangorse.

We have objected to an application for a windfarm of up to 6 Turbines with a wing tip height of 180m at Penmarch, outside the National Park but close to the southern edge on Merthyr Common. Over the next few years there will be many new renewable energy developments to combat the threat of climate change. Wales and the Brecon Beacons National Park will not be immune from these projects, and it is likely that there will be pressure to build them within or adjacent to the Park. The Committee has decided to develop a Policy to assist in the assessment of such projects and to enable a value judgement to be made on whether the Society should support or object to any proposal.

We are delighted that we now have a second member to deal with Development and Planning. David Davies will respond to applications in the west of the Park.

Publicity and Communication – Katherine Jordan

During 2023 I continued to help publicise our “taster walks” and liaised with both the National Park and the Campaign for National Parks via their communications officers.

At the time of writing, the fifth edition of our quarterly online newsletter has been issued and it continues to develop and evolve. Any input from members on the content of the newsletter would be gratefully received. I hope members enjoy reading it and feel it helps to keep them informed of what your Executive Committee is doing! Let me know if you have views on how it could be improved.

Last autumn the Society’s new promotional leaflet went to print and has been distributed to various locations to help promote what we do and hopefully also encourage others to join us. A supply of the new leaflets will be available at the AGM should any members be able to help with distribution in their local area.

In April I represented the Society at an event held by the National Park in Brecon to launch its new management plan and change of name to Bannau Brycheiniog which it now uses in instead of Brecon Beacons. This has proved to be quite controversial, but some would say that little has changed since Bannau Brycheiniog was always the Welsh name for the park, used since it was established in 1957.

The Beacon – Chris Barber

The Society Journal is produced in full colour twice a year (in January and July) and contains a wide range of articles on topics mainly relating to the Brecon Beacons National Park.

A steady flow of material is needed for inclusion in future issues and Chris Barber, the editor would be very pleased to receive contributions from our Members. Articles should be between 500 and 1,000 words in length. Make sure any pictures you send on a CD or e-mail are high quality JPEGs.

Please send your articles, poems, letters etc by email to: cbarber010@aol.com or by post to Chris Barber, Blorengge Cottage, Church Lane, Llanfoist, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 9NG. (Telephone: 018733 85918).

Project Reports

The Dark Sky Project – Jim Wilson

Summary

It has been yet another good year for Brecon Beacons International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR). Highlights include, improved partnership working between the organisations supporting the reserve, ongoing success in fund raising, important surveys carried out, preservation of the high quality of our night sky, and the delivery of an extensive public engagement programme.

Partnership Working

Partnership working in our IDSR is primarily between the members of the Dark Sky Board (DSB) which endeavours to protect and gain the benefits from our dark skies and retain our IDSR status. It is good to be able to report that we have been able to recruit representation from the Wildlife and Research communities onto the Board.

As reported previously, the Society as part of the DSB, was a significant contributor to the new National Park Management Plan and the creation of the Park's Dark Sky Policy. This work has continued with the Society as a major contributor to the development of the indicators used to monitor the implementation of the Dark Sky policy.

Additionally, the organisations that are members of the Brecon Beacons Dark Sky Board (including the BBPS) have collectively developed a long-term Strategy for the IDSR and an Action Plan for 2024 as summarised below :-

The Vision.

Our vision is a dark night sky that safeguards wildlife, supports health and wellbeing and inspires residents and visitors, throughout Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

What does the DSB hope to achieve in the next five years?

- 1. Conserve and enhance dark skies as a Special Quality of the National Park; reduce light pollution.**

- 2. Build appreciation of darkness and help people enjoy the night sky.**
- 3. Ensure the health, wellbeing, cultural and educational benefits of Dark Skies are realised.**
- 4. Maximise the tourism and rural economic benefits of Dark Skies.**
- 5. Maintain Dark Sky status; maintain high profile for Dark Skies; collaborate with the network of Dark Skies Areas across Wales.**

Fund Raising

In addition to the £47,500 funding for dark sky activities in the Brecon Beacons IDSR procured from the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places fund in the last reporting period, a further £4.200 was raised from other sources including Literative Wales, Powys County Council and the BBNPA's Sustainable Development Fund.

Night Sky Quality

Some apparent small degradation of night sky quality in the darkest areas of the Reserve have been observed but are likely to be due to humidity or Autumn measurement (Milky Way more evident).

There have been dramatic improvements in towns in the North of the National Park, such as Brecon, Sennybridge, Talgarth and Crickhowell owing to installation of fully shielded luminaires. Additionally in the South of the National Park there are ongoing improvements to towns such as Penderyn and Brynamman. Overall, the previously increasing LP has been arrested and the high night sky quality of the Reserve has been maintained.

Environmental Survey

As part of the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places funded project, three buildings in the Reserve were identified as particularly problematic re light pollution and its potential environmental impact and improvements to their lighting fitments have been scheduled. They were also surveyed for wildlife impact by Just Mammals using bat monitors. Readings will be taken again next year when the lights have been improved to measure the effects of so doing for the bats. Just Mammals is an ecological consultancy with thirty years' experience of undertaking projects involving mammals and

have specialist knowledge with respect to badgers, bats, dormice, otters and water voles. They have been commissioned by the Society for ecological work in several previous collaborations within the Park such as the Gunpowder Works project.

Public Engagement

An extensive programme of Dark Sky events was run during the reporting period. The 2023 Dark Sky Outreach programme had 155 events enjoyed by a total of 9,984 people (compared to 94 events and 6258 people in the previous year). The Annual Dark Sky Festival was, yet again, a great success and included the third Dark Sky Online Session for school which attracted 30 schools with 1,500 young people taking part.

A Dark Skies exhibition was held in the Castle Gallery of Hay Castle. It was launched at the 2023 Hay Winter Festival and ran until the 7th of January 2024. The event included free Dark Skies themed workshops for local schools in the local community, reaching all children of primary age living in a 10-to-15-mile radius of the town.

A new 360 degree video has been developed which is shown at the start of every planetarium show. It is based on the theme “losing the night,” explaining the damaging effects of light pollution for wildlife, human health, energy saving and conservation, and is localised for the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

To celebrate ten years of our Dark Skies Reserve status we organised a campaign called “A Decade of Darkness” and asked everyone to join us in switching off all non-essential lights hoping to make the stars shine brighter from 19:30 to 20:30 on Friday 17 February 2023. The aim was to not only raise people’s awareness regarding our tenth anniversary but to draw attention as to how everyone could become involved in protecting our dark sky.

Additionally, the communities living in the southern fringes of the Park were offered opportunities to experience planetarium shows. These proved extremely popular and not only offered an educational experience but an opportunity for multi generations to understand the importance of darkness within their communities.

Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark – Dilys Harlow

The last 12 months have been challenging for the Geopark, due to the small budget allocated to us by the BBNPA, who themselves are financially constrained. Because of this we did not organise the annual Geofest, for the first time since the inception of the Geopark. We do, however, hope to be able to organise a limited number of events in May/June this year, some in partnership with the Friends of Bannau Brycheiniog.

BBPS/Friends of Bannau Brycheiniog have very generously offered us a substantial donation which we intend to use to increase the displays and information at Craig y Nos Country Park, which is now the location of the Geopark Hub. We are most grateful for this help.

We are preparing for another revalidation visit by UNESCO this year, only 3 years from the previous one, which was delayed by the pandemic. Unfortunately, due to the short time gap and lack of money, we have made little progress in implementing the recommendations made at the last revalidation.

One recommendation was for the Geopark to progress with the plan to expand by about 10% of its area to include land and communities along its southern fringe. This expansion would incorporate areas of the coal measures and so provide a more complete picture of the local geology and industrial heritage. To this end, we have secured funding from the Levelling Up Fund allocated to Neath Port Talbot to conduct a feasibility study on expansion into this area.

Other achievements this year have been a revision of the Cribarth Geotrail leaflet, with a grant from the Canal and River Trust; and increased involvement with the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers, the Cambrian Caving Council and Brecon Beacons Tourism, including training on the relevant geology for these organisations.

We are updating the membership of the Management Group and will shortly be holding a workshop to determine our action plan for the next 4 years.

Brecon Beacons Tramroads – Roy Manning

Following a long delay agreeing volunteering arrangements with the National Park Authority, we are now up and running with a small cohort of Park Society volunteers. Initial training has begun, and we are hoping that field work focusing on the Brinore Tramroad will commence this summer. I am delighted to announce that Alan Bowring (BBNPA Development Officer for Fforest Fawr Geopark) has joined the project team.

If you are interested in joining the team as a volunteer and in particular, if you have any expertise in Industrial/Community Archaeology please contact Roy Manning through our website.

Brecon Beacons Park Society



2022-23

Annual Accounts

Charitable Incorporated Organisation
No: 1180841

A: Statement of Receipts and Payments

1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Prior Year
A1: Receipts						
Membership Subscriptions	10	13,171	0	0	13,171	12,140
Gift Aid		2,442	0	0	2,442	2,351
Grants and Donations		432	0	0	432	142
Restricted Income		0	0	0	0	0
Sundry Income		1,243	0	0	1,243	432
Gross Income		17,288	0	0	17,288	15,065
A2: Asset Sales						
		0	0	0	0	0
Total Receipts		17,288	0	0	17,288	15,065
A3: Payments						
Charitable Activities	7	7,394	0	0	7,394	9,229
Support Costs	9	1,028	0	0	1,028	2,741
Governance Costs	8	2,879	0	0	2,879	2,099
Total Payments		11,302	0	0	11,302	14,069
A4: Asset Purchases						
	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total Payments		11,302	0	0	11,302	14,069
Net Receipts/(Payments)		5,986	0	0	5,986	996
A5: Transfers Between Funds						
	5	1,350	-1,350	0	0	0
A6: Cash Funds Last Year						
	4, 5, 6	34,513	1,350	0	35,863	32,864
Prior Year Adjustment to A6	1	0	0	0	0	2,003
Surplus/(Deficit)		5,986	0	0	5,986	996
Cash Funds This Year	4, 5, 6	41,849	0	0	41,849	35,863

B: Statement of Assets and Liabilities

1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Prior Year
B1: Cash Funds	4, 5, 6	40,499	1,350	0	41,849	35,863
B2: Other Monetary Assets		0	0	0	0	0
B3: Investment Assets		0	0	0	0	0
B4: Retained Assets		0	0	0	0	0
B5: Liabilities		0	0	0	0	0

These statements were approved by the Executive Committee of the Society on 11 May 2023 and signed on its behalf:

Martin Buckle, Chairman and Trustee

Dated: May 2024

David Burden, Treasurer and Trustee

Dated: May 2024

Notes to the Accounts

1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023

1	<p>These accounting statements have been prepared on a cash accounting basis. That is, according to the date on which monies were received and payments made. These statements do not therefore include accrued income nor expenses. For the avoidance of doubt, receipts and payments are deemed to have been received and made once the relevant transactions appear in the Society's bank accounts. The Prior Year figures shown are those that were stated in the 2021-22 Annual Accounts, which, in the A3 Payments section, were after adjustments that were made at that time.</p>
2	<p>The format of these accounting statements adheres to the pro forma account format recommended by the Charity Commission in their guidance notes CC16 and CC16a.</p>
3	<p>The cost of individual items of equipment of £500 or less is expensed on purchase. There were no single purchases above £500 in the year.</p>
4	<p>Unrestricted Funds are those funds that are available to be spent as the Trustees see fit for any of the Society's Charitable activities, as well as costs relating to Support and Governance. These comprise the General Fund and Designated Funds.</p> <p>Designated funds differ from the General Fund in that these are funds the Trustees have set aside or earmarked from the General Fund to be used for a particular purpose. These are not legally distinct funds, and Trustees can at any time redesignate them for other purposes. The one Designated Fund referred to in the 2021-22 Annual Accounts – the Horner Fund (donations in memory of Steve Horner) valued at £1,060 has been redesignated by the Trustees and will be used towards funding the Beacons Way project.</p>
5	<p>Restricted Funds are those funds that the Trustees are obliged to spend only on a particular purpose set out by the donor and should only be used for a specific purpose. The 2021-22 Annual Accounts reported that there were Restricted Funds of £1,350 in place to be used on the Gunpowder Works at Pontneddfechan in the Melite Valley. The Trustees have decided that, as no more expenditure is planned for this project, these funds should be transferred back into the General Fund and treated as Unrestricted. There are therefore no Restricted Funds in place at the year-end.</p>
6	<p>Endowment Funds are funds that the Society is prohibited by the governing document from spending as income. Normally these will be investments but may also be property held as endowment for use by the Society. The investment receipts must be spent for the purposes indicated in the governing document. There were no Endowment Funds at the year-end.</p>
7	<p>Costs of charitable activities are all payments made in undertaking the Society's work to deliver its charitable objectives for the public benefit. They include walks and talks, collaborations with external bodies such as the BBNPA, and projects such as Tramroads and Dark Skies. Further details are contained in the Annual Return. They could, but do not, include general support costs which are disclosed separately for the sake of clarity.</p>
8	<p>Governance costs are those payments associated with the governance arrangements for the Society and relate to the general management of the Society as opposed to those costs associated with fundraising or charitable activity. They include Executive and trustee meetings and other activities and the governance aspects of the Annual General Meeting.</p>
9	<p>Support costs are those costs incurred in the running of the Society which do not wholly relate to the delivery of any one specific charitable activity. They include such items as systems costs, insurances, and fees.</p>
10	<p>Membership subscriptions are stated net of GoCardless Limited collection fees.</p>
11	<p>The Society's Reserves Policy is reviewed annually by the Trustees. Various risk factors need to be assessed, including a possible fall in income and any significant unexpected expenditure. The Reserves Policy is normally stated in relation to budgeted expenditure, and for the Financial Year 2022-23 is set at two years planned expenditure. More details of our Reserves Policy can be found on the Society's website.</p>

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Brecon Beacons Park Society

Report to the trustees/members of Brecon Beacons Park Society

On accounts for the year ended 31 October 2023

Charity Number 1180841

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/10/2023.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination of the Statement of Receipts and Payments, the Statement of Assets and Liabilities, and the accompanying Notes to the Accounts. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- these Accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed Michael Davies

Date April 2024

Name Michael Davies

Relevant Qualifications Retired Bank Manager - ACIB

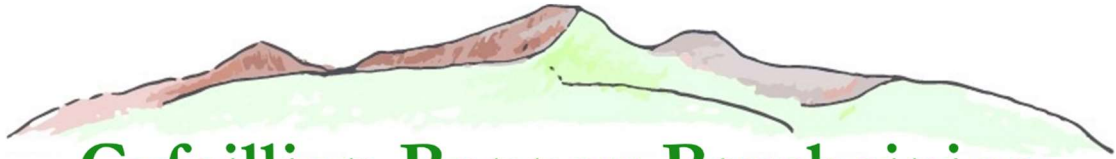
Address Crickhowell, Powys, Wales

BRECON BEACONS PARK SOCIETY

England & Wales - Charity number 1180841

Accounts

Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

**“Friends of the Brecon Beacons” is the working title for the Brecon Beacons Park Society
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841**

**This is the Annual Report of the Activities of the Brecon
Beacons Park Society for the year January to December
2022.**

Trustees

The persons who served as Trustees from 1st January 2022 to the 31st December 2022 are: -

Martin Buckle	Hon. Chairman
Ben Sladen	Hon. Treasurer (up to AGM 2022)
Richard Bennett	Hon. Treasurer (elected at AGM 2022)
David Thomas	Hon. Secretary
James Wilson	Vice Chair
Clive Counsell	
Iau Counsell	
Richard Chandler	
Elizabeth Gibbs	
Sue Hoddell	
Phil O'Shea	
Kathryn Silk (elected at AGM 2022)	
Roy Manning (elected at AGM 2022)	
Derek Thomas (elected at AGM 2022)	
Stuart Bain up to 30 th September 2022 (elected at AGM 2022)	

Executive Committee

In addition to the above Janet Callear, Katherine Jordan, Jenny Cann and Alun Flynn joined the committee as Executive Members, but not as Trustees.

Declaration

In accordance with Charity Commission requirements, the Trustees of the CIO confirm that the activities of the Society have been, and are being, delivered for the public benefit.

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Chairman's Report – Martin Buckle

The Annual Report is a key component in our preparations for the Annual General Meeting, and the lead in to the AGM is always a busy period for our Executive Committee. It was a real pleasure last May to be able again to meet in person with lots of members for the AGM in Llanbedr Village Hall. We were blessed with fine weather for the day, which ensured that the afternoon walks were a real pleasure. The talk before lunch from Eliane Wigzell, based on her book about life in Crickhowell in 1881, was also very entertaining. Of particular note of course, was the presentation to Ben Sladen, who stood down as a trustee, having combined the roles of Treasurer and Membership Secretary for the previous 16 years! Many thanks are due to David Thomas our Secretary for making the AGM last year such a success.

The Walks Programme

It has again been a busy year for all those involved in the Walks Programme, but it is such a pleasure to see it re-established to pre-pandemic levels of activity. The Walking Festival in September, to celebrate our 30th anniversary as a society, was a notable triumph! The concluding tea, with an exceptional supply of cakes on the final day of the month in Llangynidr Village Hall, was a particular highlight. I also really enjoyed several walks with a specific heritage theme. Many thanks must go to those friends from the Brecon Beacons Historic Environment Partnership, who accompanied some of the walks and shared their knowledge. While this year's summer walking festival in July may be a little more modest, I am sure that it will be no less enjoyable.

Having very successfully organised walks over all 30 days in the month of September last year, Jenny Cann handed over as Walks Secretary to Iau Counsell. Nevertheless, Jenny continues to be actively involved as Chair of the Walks Sub-Committee, as well as being a regular Walks Leader.

Many thanks are again due to those members of the Executive, the Sub-Committee, and all the walks leaders and backmarkers, for their efforts in delivering a varied and inspiring programme throughout the year. The aggregate distances walked (over 30,000 kilometres) are quite staggering! The new "taster walks", which started in January 2023, and are designed for people who are new to walking (and to the Society) and perhaps recovering from illness, have been a particularly welcome innovation.

The scale of the walks programme means that it is very much a team effort. Particular thanks are also due to Clive Counsell for collecting and

managing our walks statistics, and in helping to support our walks leaders. Whilst we have a healthy number of walks leaders, further recruits are always welcome, and training is provided. If there are others who might be interested in developing into this role, please contact Iau.

The Events Programme

As with the Walks Programme, it has been great, over the past year, to see the Events Programme fully regain its pre-pandemic momentum, under the able direction of Alun Flynn. The Bear in Crickhowell is well re-established once again as the highly hospitable venue, with audience numbers usually between 30 and 40, supplemented occasionally by visiting tourists. There are a number of further talks already planned, with details on our website. If anyone has ideas for future talks, please contact Alun.

The Executive Committee

In the post-pandemic environment, the Committee has experimented with different meeting formats in returning to a regular 6 weekly cycle. For a while we alternated between remote meetings and meetings in the Bear. More recently, however, we have adopted a hybrid meeting format, supported by the technology in the Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre (CRIC), which enables us to either attend in person or to do so remotely. We are also now alternating between daytime and evening meetings.

As ever in an organisation without paid staff, and dependent on people giving up their time freely, there will always be some turnover amongst Committee members, and some adjustments of roles to reflect people's availability. There will be vacancies from time to time, and I would encourage Society members to keep an eye on our website and newsletters. We were able to fill several vacancies at last year's AGM. The willingness of Society members to step forward has been very welcome. A key forthcoming vacancy is that of Vice-Chair, with Jim Wilson having indicated that he will be stepping down at the AGM. Anyone who might be interested in taking on this role is welcome to get in touch with me or with Jim for a chat about it.

Following Ben Sladen's retirement at the last AGM, the membership and finance functions during the past year were divided between Derek Thomas, the Membership Secretary, and the Treasurer, Richard Bennett. These new personnel have enabled us to review a number of our systems. On the finance front, we have completed a review of financial controls and reporting, and developed a new reserves policy. Financially, the Society has weathered the COVID storm well. However, that experience, combined with recent cost pressures, has led to a fundamental

review of income and expenditure. We are forecasting a balanced budget for this financial year, although this will necessitate subscription increases. Membership numbers have continued to perform well, with a growth of around 5% over the past year, maintaining the trends that we have seen over recent years.

Communications

As ever, communications are at the heart of our activities as a Society. Keeping our members in the picture is critical to our success. Good communications will also be central to the partnerships we are building with other organisations. For much of 2022, we had in place a communications team, with Stuart Bain focusing on social media and Katherine Jordan taking on a broader role and engaging with the local media. Unfortunately, Stuart stepped down in October last. If there is anyone with an interest in taking on this area of activity, please do get in touch with Katherine.

March 2023 saw the launch of the first online issue of our new quarterly newsletter, which was emailed to members. We hope that members will find this a useful addition, alongside the printed editions of *The Beacon*, which is edited by Chris Barber, and is produced twice a year. In support of these media, David Thomas continues to co-ordinate our website. *The Beacon* in particular has, over the past year, played an important role in helping us to celebrate our 30th Anniversary, with lots of interesting material on the early days of the Society, and a number of articles about aspects of our heritage. For anyone who would like to contribute an article, please contact Chris, or Katherine if you have a news item to share.

The Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes

The most recent meeting of the Alliance Executive was hosted by the Gower Society, which has now taken over from us on the administration for the next two years. (The Gower Society can claim some seniority, as they are now in their 75th year!). Janet Callear, who has provided the secretariat for the Alliance during the two years of our administration, has kindly agreed to continue in that role. The Alliance is a good forum for collaboration between the societies from the national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in Wales, and for liaising with colleagues across Offa's Dyke through the Campaign for National Parks (CNP). It is very welcome that CNP have recently appointed, in Gareth Ludkin, their first policy and projects officer with a focus on, and based in, Wales.

Recent discussions at the Alliance have included what can be done to get societies working in those Welsh AONBs where they are currently largely

absent, including Anglesey, the Llyn Peninsula, and closer to home, the Wye Valley. Also featuring prominently in those discussions have been the proposals for a major electricity transmission line from Radnorshire down the Towy Valley towards Llanelli, in the gap between the Beacons and the Cambrian Mountains.

Liaison with the National Park Authority (NPA)

With the new senior management team now well-established at the NPA, liaison with the authority has been making good progress, building on our established collaboration with national park staff.

Of particular note is the further progress on the Darks Skies Reserve, under the guidance of Jim Wilson, our Vice-Chair. The past year, in particular, has seen great strides taken. We also continue to be involved in the Beacons Historic Environment Partnership, with the new draft action plan having recently been out for wider consultation. In addition, we have a regular interface with the NPA on Rights of Way (ROW), where Phil O'Shea, our ROW lead, continues to co-ordinate the sharing of members' concerns with the NPA. We are also involved with the Fforest Fawr Geopark Partnership, where Dilys Harlow represents the Society on the Management Group.

Y Bannau – The Future - The National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

Following extensive consultation, including with the Society, the NPA has recently published its management plan for the period up to 2026. This remains a very ambitious document, although the level of aspiration has been sensibly scaled back from the earlier consultation draft. It will provide the context for further collaboration between the NPA and a wide range of other partners, including the Society.

Brecon Beacons Tramroads

Now one of the components of the Beacons Historic Environment Action Plan, this collaboration with the NPA and other partners continues to gather momentum. Progress has been good, if a little slower than had been hoped. Led by Executive Members Roy Manning and Richard Chandler, dialogue with the NPA and with Clwyd/Powys Archaeological Trust over data collection and the recruitment of volunteers has been really positive. It is hoped to start recruiting before the summer. Early consideration is also now being given to developing a project to safeguard the National Parks network of historic trig points.

Planning Proposals

Much of our oversight on planning proposals involves the NPA as local planning authority. Liz Gibbs, the Society's planning lead, continues to scrutinise and respond to these consultations. The aim of the society is to ensure that the aims of the National Park's Development Plan are upheld, and in particular that the area's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage are conserved. Over the past year the problems caused by excessive phosphate levels on water catchments have had a major effect on planning processes. Planning applications which would increase phosphate loading are being refused. In addition, the NPA has paused preparation of the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) pending greater clarity on the issue. In the meantime, regrettably, the now relatively ancient LDP adopted in 2013 remains in place.

Executive Committee Reports

Membership – Derek Thomas

Following the resignation of Ben Sladen at the last AGM, the membership and finance functions were divided between two Trustees to spread the workload and the expertise. It took some time for the Membership Secretary (Derek Thomas) and the Treasurer (Richard Bennett) to develop the best means of sharing information and resources, and this is now working smoothly. We use various resources to manage the member information and finance some of which (e.g. the website and the bulk emailing system) are administered by the Secretary. All of us provide information to the Walks Co-ordinator in support of the walks booking system.

Over the year (1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022) 127 members joined from 93 households – the difference is due to some households being families. During the same period 82 members from 63 households left. The result at the year-end was an increase in households to 721.

Although outside the scope of the 2021/2022 year, in the five months of the current year (November 2022 to March 2023) the number of households has risen sharply to 793.

The overall trend is an increase in membership of around 5%, and this has been the case for a number of years. Around 30% of members leaving do so within 3 years of joining, and a similar trend has been seen in other outdoor organisations.

For historical reasons, a large number of renewals take place in December and January which affects reported totals depending on the period chosen and has a significant impact on the flow of membership subscriptions.

Financial – Richard Bennett

It has been a busy but productive year, taking over from Ben as Treasurer and working well with Derek to successfully split the Treasurer and Membership Secretary roles. This additional resourcing has beneficially enabled the Society to further develop both functions while also addressing some new and evolving challenges.

One primary area of focus has been to ensure we adhere to best practice as expressed and mandated by the Charity Commission. This has delivered a formal review of financial controls; the development of a robust reserves policy; the development and implementation of a detailed budgetary control regime; and a move to activity based financial reporting to better articulate our charitable work.

Financially, the Society weathered the COVID storm well. Encouragingly, our improved key performance indicators highlight the work being undertaken to regain and further increase our footprint. Our income held up well thanks to the ongoing support of our members and further increases in our membership, although a number of investments had to be made to continue to offer the walks programme at a time of heightened need.

The COVID experience, combined with recent cost pressures and other global financial trends, has highlighted the need for a comprehensive reserves policy and the effective budgetary control of our income and expenditure. We have used reserves where both possible and prudent; have reviewed our expenditure and made cuts where possible; and have set budgets to manage to, while at the same time partially mitigating the impact on our walk leaders of higher fuel costs. We are forecasting a balanced budget for this financial year, although this does include proposed subscription increases.

A full set of financial accounts for the financial year is being sent out to all members with this report and will be presented at the AGM.

Guided Walks – Iau Counsell

We are now offering four walks most weeks, just as before COVID. We are again offering a huge range, from the new “Taster” walks (which started in January 2023, designed for people who are new to walking or perhaps recovering from illness, to Easy (9 inc. tasters), Moderate (54), Energetic (88), and Strenuous walks (44).

In the year ending 31st March 2023 we led 195 walks totalling 2,957km with a combined distance walked by attendees of 30,226km. The average length of walks was 15km, with 26 walks being more than 20km long.

Walks were spread fairly evenly across our normal walking days, Sat (46) Sun (35) Wed (43) Fri (52) as well as 18 walks on days other than these, mostly during the September festival.

The distribution across the Park is still uneven with only 21 walks in the West compared with 34 in the Central Beacons, 103 in the East and 37 outside the Park.

Looking at the average numbers of walkers attending, walks at all levels of difficulty were evenly attended: Easy 11, Moderate 10, Energetic 10 and Strenuous 10.

Walks in the West had an average of 9 walkers per walk. Central and East Beacons both had 10 and walks outside the Park attracted an average of 11 walkers.

The automated website booking system which started on 1st April 2022 has worked very well and is constantly improving. In October 2022, Jenny Cann handed the role of walks secretary to Iau Counsell but not before organising some very successful celebrations to mark the 30th anniversary of our Society, notably the 30 days programme of walks in September which was well received and attended. This festival culminated in a party for all, with trade stands from local businesses and organisations. There were three led walks, which all finished in time for the tea and cakes at Llangynidr Village Hall. In addition, the Beacons Way was walked in stages between June and September.

Walks Leaders – Iau Counsell

All our 43 walk leaders have up-to-date emergency outdoor first aid training. We are very proud that the vast majority of our leaders have also undergone leader training either with the nationwide Mountain Training organisation or with our in-house BBPS Induction course. Our leaders work enormously hard inventing, trialling and leading walks for our members and guests. Sadly, several of our leaders from pre-COVID times have decided not to return to leading, which puts an additional strain on our “frequent” leaders and is the reason why we need to keep training and recruiting new leaders.

We are looking forward to another 6 new leaders joining us after their April 2023 Induction course with our technical adviser, Allan Gibbs.

In addition to these leaders, we have a team of 9 dedicated “Back Markers” who all have the same first aid certificates as the leaders.

As always, the BBPS funds the first aid and induction courses and supplies any first aid kits and group shelters that leaders may need, if they do not already have their own. Thank you, leaders!

Events Programme – Alun Flynn

Talks have continued to be held in the welcoming function room at The Bear, and members/non-members have sometimes accepted the hospitality of the convivial bar. I think it is a great venue, and hope to continue to use it.

Talks have now been advertised on the website. Our Honorary Secretary has reminded members with an e-mail. Some people have struggled to add their names (especially to the waiting list), and non-attenders do not always send their apologies. The audience is usually between 30 and 40 people. I think it remains remarkably good value, and it has attracted tourists visiting the area.

Talks are usually of a very high standard, with most speakers making it multi-media.

We have had to cancel two talks due to health concerns of both speakers. Some people have been approached and declined due to other pressures.

Successful talks have included :-

William Gibbs – Brecon Stones
Alan Bowring – Usk Valley
Isabel Sebastian – Rewilding
Kevin Walker – Nature in the Brecon Beacons
Mark Davis – Drovers Roads
Colin Thomas & Colleagues – Welsh Cobb Society & Mountain Ponies
Paul Daniels – An Indian in the Countryside
Eliane Wigzell – Crickhowell 1881
Dave Combs – Mountain Rescue

Future talks include:

Tom Bullough – Sarn Helen
Ebben Muse – The British Mountaineering Council
Allan Gibbs- The Nepalese Himalayas
Will Renwick – Running all the Welsh Nuttalls
Donna Douglass – Personal Survival

I welcome suggestions from members.

Rights of Way – Phil O’Shea

Rights of Way (ROW) issues are sent to me by members (and non-members) and I vet the reports before posting the issues on our website and referring on to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (NPA). Area wardens prioritise the problem in accordance with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

NPA also refers reports to me of applications affecting ROWs. Such reports often run to several pages of A4 – too much to be included on our website. Consequently, I précis these reports before posting on our website and invite members to contact me for the full details.

At times, information also comes into my possession which I think will be of interest to Leaders and I enlist the help of Iau Counsell to keep Leaders informed. I submit a report to every meeting of the Society’s EC.

	2023	2022	2021	2020
Reports from members	47	55	29	7
NPA notices to me.	19	11	7	17

The table aside reflects

TOTAL	66	66	36	24
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 the ROW issues I receive from all sources on a year by year basis.

The work has more than doubled since my initial involvement. It demonstrates how increasingly people are helping to bring matters to our members and NPA’s attention and for this I’m grateful. Do please continue to provide information. The process outlined on our website is very easy to follow. Generally, I’m able to identify the location and problem from the information you provide, but occasionally I have to contact someone to clarify matters. Fortunately, it has meant that just one site visit was necessary this year.

Thanks to Ceri Jones for his pointing out the discrepancies in the documentation relating to the NPA Waterfall Consultation.

My annual plea to Leaders. When planning your walks, please consider including the lesser walked routes. It’s a little extra work, but it helps to keep footpaths open and to identify ROW problems which we can get rectified.

Development and Planning – Elizabeth Gibbs

The aim of the society with respect to Development and Planning is to try to ensure that the Statutory Purposes of the National Park are upheld, in particular the first purpose: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. We do this by constantly monitoring planning applications to the National Park.

This year the problems caused by excessive phosphate levels on water catchments has continued to have a major effect. All planning applications which would increase phosphate loading within affected catchments have been refused on the instructions of the Welsh Government. As reported last year the National Park made the decision at the end of May 2021, to pause preparation of the replacement Local Development Plan (known as LDP2) for 12 months pending further understanding of the scope for future development to be accommodated in the National Park. We have had no further news of when consultations will restart but meanwhile the LDP adopted in December 2013 remains in place.

We have continued to object to proposals, both large and small. For instance, we objected to the application for a Coach Depot on the edge of Brecon as it would be an inappropriate industrial development in the rural outskirts of the town. The proposal would spoil the wonderful panoramic

view of Pen y Fan and the Beacons currently enjoyed by people entering the both the town and the National Park from the North. On a much smaller scale we objected to an application for 6 Shepherds' Huts at a fairly remote spot in the Black Mountains. Here the objection was due to the narrow road access, the adverse effects on views, and the likely loss of tranquillity.

Recently there has been a rash of applications for new telecommunications masts. These are usually a lattice tower, 25 to 30m tall and with many antennae and transmission dishes. They tend to be taller and in more remote places than previously, the intention being to improve 4G coverage for people living, working and travelling in poorly served rural areas. It can be a difficult balance between the need for mobile connectivity allowing rural business to prosper and rural communities to thrive and to protect the character of the wild and remote areas of the National Park

The National Park is a large area to cover and we would appreciate help particularly for following up applications in the west of the Park. We can be contacted via the society web-site if you become aware of an application of concern.

Publicity and Communication – Katherine Jordan

There have been several important developments during the last year, this being my first complete year in the role of Communications Officer for the Society.

Unfortunately, Stuart Bain who had taken on the role of social media communications officer, decided to step down some months ago despite sterling work increasing our profile on social media platforms during his time in office. We are now looking for someone who would be interested in taking over this position, so if you have the necessary skills please do put your name forward.

I have been busy with various press releases during the year, including promoting our anniversary events last September, and the various taster walks organised for non-members and members who have not been on the hills for some time. In addition, I continue to be the point of contact for communication issues arising between the Campaign for National Parks and the Brecon Beacons National Park.

March 2023 saw the first online issue of our new newsletter which was emailed to members to keep them better informed about the latest news from your Executive, its current projects and other important issues and dates for your diaries. It is intended to send out the newsletter quarterly, and we hope that members will find this a useful addition alongside printed editions of The Beacon which will continue to be produced twice a year.

I would be happy to receive the views of members on how communications could be improved. So please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any suggestions or indeed items of interest for the newsletter or The Beacon.

The Beacon – Chris Barber

The Society Journal is produced in full colour twice a year (in January and July) and contains a wide range of articles on topics mainly relating to the Brecon Beacons National Park.

A steady flow of material is needed for inclusion in future issues and Chris Barber, the editor would be very pleased to receive contributions from our Members. Articles should be between 500 and 1,000 words in length. Make sure any pictures you send on a CD or e-mail are high quality JPEGs.

Please send your articles, poems, letters etc by email to: cbarber010@aol.com or by post to Chris Barber, Blorengge Cottage, Church Lane, Llanfoist, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 9NG. (Telephone: 018733 85918).

Project Reports

The Dark Sky Project – Jim Wilson

Summary

It has been a very good year for Brecon Beacons International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR).

Highlights include, improved partnership working between the organisations supporting the reserve, great success in fund raising, preservation of the high quality of our night sky, and the delivery of extensive public engagement and marketing programmes.

Our work in protecting our night skies was acknowledged by the International Dark-Sky Association, the awarding body for our IDSR status, who described our Annual Report to them as “spectacular”.

Partnership Working

Partnership working in our IDSR is primarily between the members of the Dark Sky Board (DSB) which endeavours to protect and gain the benefits from our dark skies and retain our IDSR status. The DSB continued to be chaired by the Park Society for the first part of the reporting period due to the ongoing lack of senior Park staff on the Board.

It is very good to be able to report that this has been resolved with both the Chief Executive and her Director for Planning having joined the Board. The Society happily passed on the baton of the Chair to the Park (the Chief Executive) where it should have been all along.

Additionally, the Board membership has been extended by the addition of a local business offering dark sky experiences in the Brecon Beacons, and we hope to recruit representation from the Wildlife and Research communities in the near future.

As reported in last year’s Annual Report the Society, as part of the DSB, was a major contributor to the new National Park Management Plan and the creation of the Park’s Dark Sky Policy. This work has continued with participation in the development of Indicators to monitor the implementation of the Dark Sky policy.

Fund Raising

In collaboration with our dark sky colleagues across Wales, we have been focused on raising funding for a large-scale initiative to address reducing light pollution not only across the Brecon Beacons IDSR but over all eight of the Designated Landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in Wales.

The Designated Landscapes in Wales have formed the Welsh Dark Skies Partnership, and we have submitted a funding bid for £522,500 over three years to support work on Dark Skies in our Designated Landscapes. Part of this bid (£325,000) is for an across Wales Responsible Lighting Initiative which includes funding for the Brecon Beacons (£47,500). This funding to be applied to surveying the existing lighting and retrofitting with dark sky friendly lighting where needed.

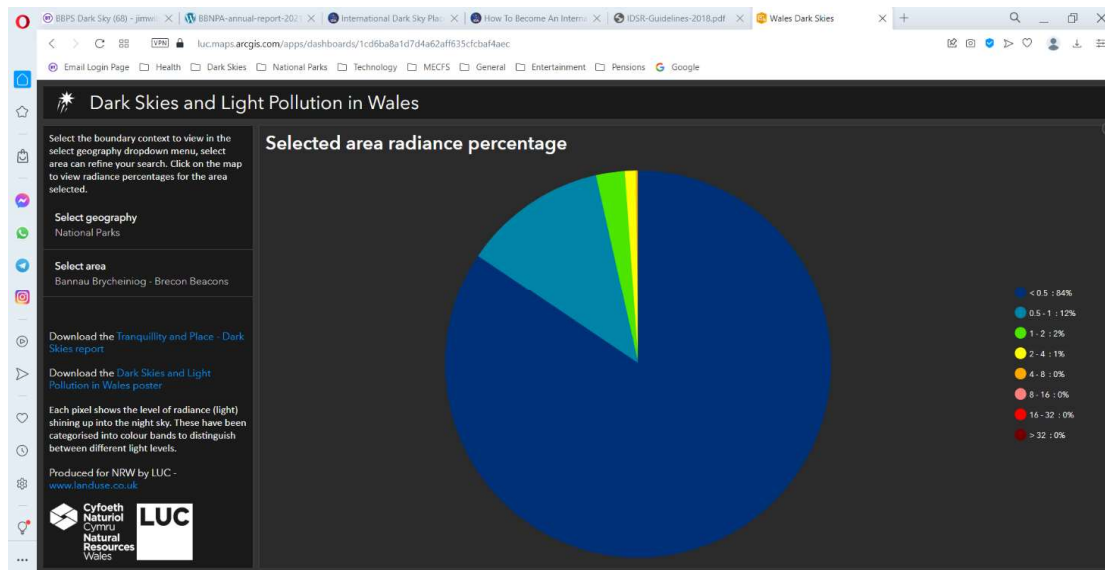
This collaborative bid for funding to improve the quality of external lighting in the Welsh Designated Landscapes (25% of the land area of Wales) has been successful and the full amount of £522,500 granted.

Night Sky Quality

The night sky in the Brecon Beacons has been maintained at a very high quality.

There has been a marginal decrease in quality in the Core Zone (approximately the open access land in the central Beacons) but this is well within the measurement error bars. The urban areas have improved due to better quality street lighting having been installed.

Overall, there has been no significant change with an average of 21 on Sky Quality Meter (SQM) readings in our annual survey. This result is consistent with the Natural Resources Wales Dark Sky report of 2021 (see image below) which records 84% of the Brecon Beacons NP/IDSR at less than 0.5 NW/cm²/sr, which corresponds to SQM readings of greater than 21 (bigger is better).



We plan to move from solely preventing deterioration to actually improving the quality of our night skies. This will necessitate the replacement of poor quality existing lighting. The National Park has no powers in this area so we will need to be done through a campaign to gain support for this aim which is our preferred approach in any case. The funding we have gained will be applied to this change of focus.

Public Engagement

An extensive programme of Dark Sky events was run during the reporting period.

There were 94 events in the programme with 6258 attendees in total. There were many different types of dark sky events including - Astronomy (65 events) covering stargazing; planetarium presentations; talks in schools, societies and other organisations; most in-person, some online. Topics in schools are guided by national guidelines (aka core curriculum). The Park's new hi-spec planetarium was used for 20 of the events (through the year). The damaging effects of light pollution for wildlife and human health, energy saving and conservation, the role of the Dark Sky Reserve status, and stimulation of young people's interest in the study of science were all promoted.

Additionally, there were Cultural and Music events such as the Greenman Festival, Nature events such as bat walks and moth hunts/talks, paddle boarding at night, night hikes and many others.

Marketing of our Dark Skies

To build on the previous year's marketing success we have continued to use digital channels, with the focus this year on reaching out to new audiences.

To this end a successful project was run –

1. To educate target audiences on the importance of protecting the dark sky and the role it has in supporting both human and wildlife health.
2. To encourage target people to turn off their lights when they are not needed.
3. To raise awareness of and signpost measures which can be taken to reduce light pollution.

Highlights

- 250,000 people were reached throughout the whole project.
- Over 94,000 people reached on Facebook through organic Facebook posts
- An increase of over 1,000 followers across all social media accounts
- Over 80,000 impressions across both Twitter accounts
- Over 345,000 impressions across Facebook and Instagram through paid for activity
- 205 page views on the blog

Brecon Beacons Tramroads – Roy Manning

Since the last Annual General Meeting there has been good, albeit slow, progress on the Tramroads Project. We have agreed with Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority that volunteers working on any aspect of the project including mapping, monitoring or maintenance will be covered by the BBNPA's volunteer framework.

The methodology for the collection of data in relation to mapping and monitoring has been developed in collaboration with BBNPA, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) and Cadw. The application QField has been selected for use on hand-held devices and initial field trials are in progress.

In late Spring, volunteers will be invited, from the Society's Membership, to get involved in surveying the historic Tramroads. Please look out for details which will be posted on our website and Facebook.

Brecon Beacons Park Society



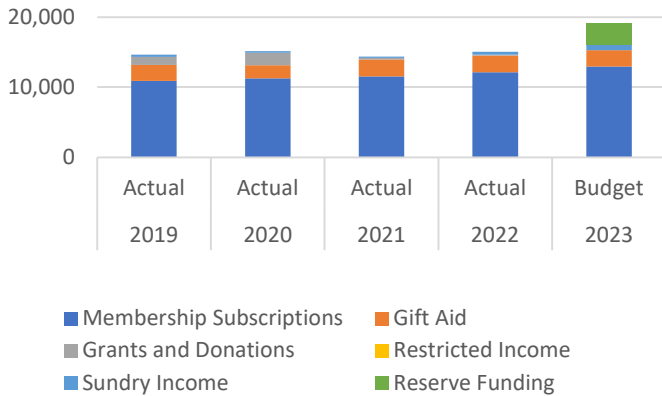
2022

Annual Accounts

Charitable Incorporated Organisation
No: 1180841

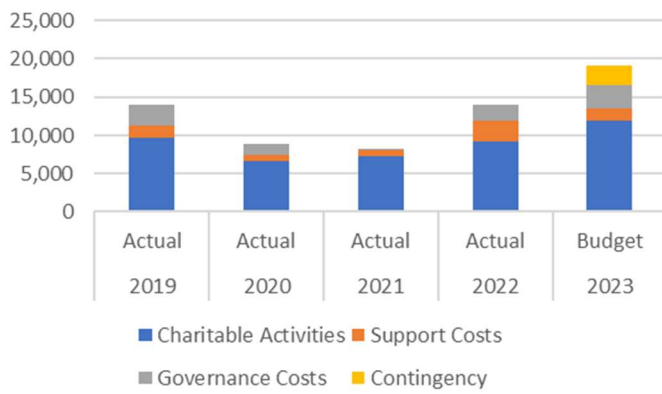
Commentary

1 November 2019 to 31 October 2023



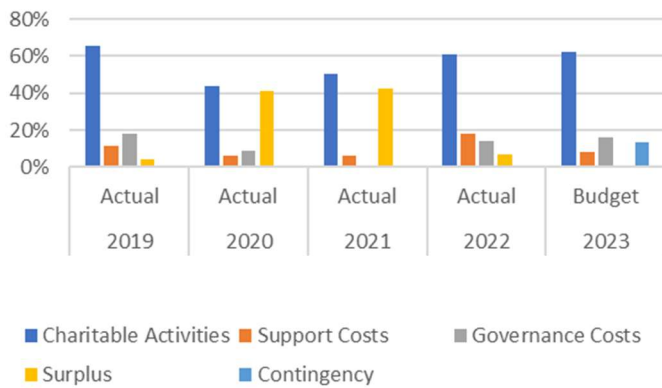
Gross Income

- Relatively static except 2023
- 2023 includes £3,000 funding from reserves
- A history of no subscription increases
- Growth only through increased membership



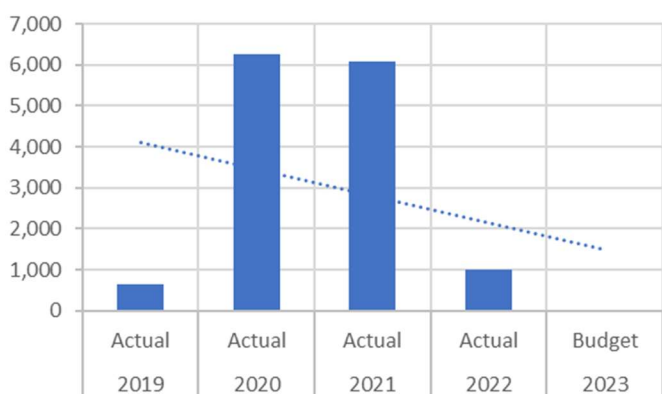
Expenditure

- Overall reductions during covid
- 2023 back to new highs
- 2023 increased spend on charitable activities
- 2023 contingency included in budget



Expenditure as % Gross Income

- Overall reductions during covid
- 2023 charitable activities back on track
- 2023 no forecast surplus
- 2023 does however include contingency



Surplus/Deficit

- Surpluses during covid
- 2023 no forecast surplus
- 2023 however includes contingency
- 2023 includes £3,000 funding from reserves
- 2023 there would be a deficit without reserves
- Emerging trend is down due to cost pressures

A: Statement of Receipts and Payments

1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Prior Year
A1: Receipts						
Membership Subscriptions	10	12,140	0	0	12,140	11,261
Gift Aid		2,351	0	0	2,351	2,434
Grants and Donations		142	0	0	142	253
Restricted Income		0	0	0	0	0
Sundry Income		432	0	0	432	163
Gross Income		15,065	0	0	15,065	14,111
A2: Asset Sales						
		0	0	0	0	0
Total Receipts		15,065	0	0	15,065	14,111
A3: Payments						
Charitable Activities	7	9,229	0	0	9,229	7,243
Support Costs	9	2,741	0	0	2,741	864
Governance Costs	8	2,099	0	0	2,099	159
Total Payments		14,069	0	0	14,069	8,266
A4: Asset Purchases						
	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total Payments		14,069	0	0	14,069	8,266
Net Receipts/(Payments)		996	0	0	996	5,845
A5: Transfers Between Funds						
		0	0	0	0	0
A6: Cash Funds Last Year						
	4, 5, 6	31,514	1,350	0	32,864	27,019
Prior Year Adjustment to A6	1	2,003	0	0	2,003	0
Surplus/(Deficit)		996	0	0	996	5,845
Cash Funds This Year	4, 5, 6	34,513	1,350	0	35,863	32,864

B: Statement of Assets and Liabilities

1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Prior Year
B1: Cash Funds	4, 5, 6	34,513	1,350	0	35,863	32,864
B2: Other Monetary Assets		0	0	0	0	0
B3: Investment Assets		0	0	0	0	0
B4: Retained Assets		0	0	0	0	0
B5: Liabilities		0	0	0	0	0

These statements were approved by the Executive Committee of the Society on 11 May 2023 and signed on its behalf:

Martin Buckle, Chairman and Trustee

Dated: 11 May 2023

Richard Bennett, Treasurer and Trustee

Dated: 11 May 2023

Notes to the Accounts

1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022

1	<p>These accounting statements have been prepared on a cash accounting basis. That is, according to the date on which monies were received and payments made. These statements do not therefore include accrued income nor expenses. For the avoidance of doubt, receipts and payments are deemed to have been received and made once the relevant transactions appear in the Society's bank accounts.</p> <p>However, payments in the prior year (FY21) Accounts were reported on an accrual accounting basis rather than the customary cash basis. £2,003 of payments relating to FY21 were paid in FY22. £1,453 of these payments were included in the payments figure in the FY21 Accounts and deducted from the reported cash balance figure in the FY21 Accounts. A remaining payment of £550 was included in the payments figure in the FY22 Accounts (not in the FY21 Accounts) and deducted from the cash balance figure in the FY21 Accounts.</p> <p>Under the cash accounting basis, the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">. FY21 Accounts closing cash balance would have been £34,867 (being the reported £32,864 plus £2,003). FY22 Accounts opening cash balance would have been £34,867 (as stated above). FY21 Accounts surplus would have been £7,298 (being the reported £5,845 FY21 surplus plus the £1,453 in payments). FY22 Accounts surplus would have been £996 (being less an additional £1,453 of payments recorded in FY21) <p>A £2,003 adjustment to the FY22 opening cash balance has been included in these Accounts to ensure the FY22 closing cash balance is correctly stated. However, the FY21 surplus shown in the Accounts has not been restated (i.e. remains at £5,845 rather than £7,298). The reader should therefore note all FY22 figures are based on a cash accounting basis while the comparative FY21 payment figures are based on an accrual accounting basis.</p>
2	<p>The format of these accounting statements adheres to the pro forma account format recommended by the Charity Commission in their guidance notes CC16 and CC16a.</p>
3	<p>The cost of individual items of equipment of £500 or less is expensed on purchase. There were no single purchases above £500 in the year.</p>
4	<p>Unrestricted funds are those funds the trustees are able to spend for any of the Society's charitable purposes. They comprise the General Fund and Designated funds.</p> <p>Designated funds differ from the General Fund in that these are funds the trustees have set aside or earmarked from the General Fund to be used for particular purposes. They are not legally distinct funds and trustees can at any time redesignate them for other purposes. There was one designated fund at the year-end: Horner Fund (donations in memory of Steve Horner), £1,060. The remainder of the Unrestricted fund balance comprises the General Fund.</p> <p>A Life Fund was previously included in Designated funds. The Life Fund comprised all life membership subscriptions received by the Society. In prior years 10% of each year end fund balance was transferred to the General Fund. There was a change in accounting policy in the year in which the Life Fund was merged into the General Fund.</p>
5	<p>Restricted funds are those funds that the trustees are obliged to spend only on particular purposes set out by the donor or in an appeal document and these particular purposes are narrower than the Society's objectives. There was only one restricted fund at the year-end, Gunpowder Works, Mellte Valley. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority received a significant grant from the Lottery Heritage Fund to prevent further deterioration of this internationally important site, in terms of industrial archaeology and biodiversity. The Society, with funding from the Brecon Beacons Trust, the Gibbs Trust and private sources, led the bio-diversity enhancement work.</p>
6	<p>Endowment funds are funds that the Society is prohibited by the governing document from spending as income. Normally these will be investments but may also be property held as endowment for use by the Society. The investment receipts must be spent for the purposes indicated in the governing document. There were no endowment funds at the year-end.</p>
7	<p>Costs of charitable activities are all payments made in undertaking the Society's work to deliver its charitable objectives for the public benefit. They include walks and talks, collaborations with external bodies such as the BBNPA, and projects such as Tramroads and Dark Skies. Further details are contained in the Annual Return. They could, but do not, include general support costs which are disclosed separately for the sake of clarity.</p>

Notes to the Accounts

1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022

8	Governance costs are those payments associated with the governance arrangements for the Society and relate to the general management of the Society as opposed to those costs associated with fundraising or charitable activity. They include Executive and trustee meetings and other activities and the governance aspects of the Annual General Meeting.
9	Support costs are those costs incurred in the running of the Society which do not wholly relate to the delivery of any one specific charitable activity. They include such items as systems costs, insurances, and fees.
10	Membership subscriptions are stated net of GoCardless Limited collection fees.
11	The Society's reserves policy is stated in its Annual Return.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Brecon Beacons Park Society

Report to the trustees/members of Brecon Beacons Park Society

On accounts for the year ended 31 October 2022

Charity Number 1180841

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/10/2022.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination of the Statement of Receipts and Payments, the Statement of Assets and Liabilities, and the accompanying Notes to the Accounts. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- these Accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed Michael Davies

Date 7 May 2023

Name Michael Davies

Relevant Qualifications Retired Bank Manager - ACIB

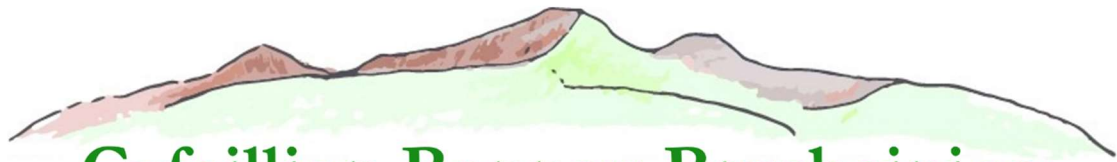
Address Crickhowell, Powys, Wales

BRECON BEACONS PARK SOCIETY

England & Wales - Charity number 1180841

Accounts

Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

**“Friends of the Brecon Beacons” is the working title for the Brecon Beacons Park Society
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841**

This is the Annual Report of the Activities of the Brecon Beacons Park Society for the year January to December 2021.

Trustees

The persons who served as Trustees during the period from the last AGM on 1st January 2021 to the 31st December 2021 are: -

Martin Buckle	Hon. Chairman
Ben Sladen	Hon. Treasurer
David Thomas	Hon. Secretary
James Wilson	Vice Chair

Janet Callear (stood down in July 2021)

Clive Counsell

Iau Counsell

Richard Chandler

Elizabeth Gibbs

Nicholas Groombridge (stood down in July 2021)

Sue Hoddell (elected at the AGM, June 2021)

Phil O'Shea (elected at the AGM, June 2021)

Executive Committee

With a number of changes in the roles of officers of the Society over the past year, there has been some fluidity in attendance at Executive Committee meetings, but at all times the Committee comprises all of the Trustees, plus other officers as appropriate.

Declaration

In accordance with Charity Commission requirements, the Trustees of the CIO confirm that the activities of the Society have been and are being delivered for the public benefit.

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Executive Committee Reports	Pages 9 - 17
Project Reports	Pages 18 - 23

Chairman's Report – Martin Buckle

I am writing this with great optimism that we will again be able to meet up in person for an AGM. I do hope that this optimism is not misplaced. The ability to hold virtual meetings has stood us in good stead, but it is clear that “real” meetings bring a lot of added value. We are now moving towards alternating the meetings of our Executive Committee between virtual and real. It was clear from the recent meeting in early April at the Bear how much we all valued being able to get back together again. Nonetheless, it was good to see many members attending last year's virtual AGM, and many thanks are due to David Thomas our Secretary for making it a success.

The Walks Programme

Again, it has been a challenging year in offering a walks programme through the peaks and troughs of the pandemic. Many thanks are again due to those members of the Committee and of the wider Society for all of their efforts in delivering a varying and inspiring programme. This has been a major challenge with the need for constant adjustments as restrictions have changed. A particular highlight was our first walks festival in the summer. Many thanks are due to Stuart Campbell, who provided much of the initiative for this festival.

During the course of the past year, we have seen Nic and Hilary Groombridge transfer the baton as our Walks Secretaries to Jenny Cann. It has been very encouraging how well momentum has been maintained through this transfer. Much appreciation is due to Jenny, but also to Iau and Clive Counsell in co-ordinating and supporting our walks leaders. Training for walks leaders has been extended, and particular thanks are due to Allan Gibbs for his role in this.

They have been ably supported the Walks Sub-Committee which includes representatives from our walks leaders and other members who are regular walkers. Jenny has now joined the Executive Committee and has taken over as chair of the Sub-Committee, but thanks are also due to Clive, who as the previous chair, had got the Sub-Committee up and running.

Commemorating Thirty Years in 2022

How better could we commemorate those smart souls who got the Society up and running back in 1992 than with a specially extended walks programme? Again, much credit is due to the Walks Sub-Committee for making the running on this. Watch out for publicity about events in September if not already seen!

The Events Programme

This programme has also been affected by the pandemic. A combination of remote and in-person events has maintained its popularity. Janet Callear, who so successfully managed this transition, has now stepped down as Events Secretary. Many thanks are due to her for developing and sustaining this programme so well, but also to Alun Flynn, who has now kindly taken over this mantle. I am sure that I am not alone in enjoying being able to cross the threshold of The Bear in Crickhowell once again with a sense of purpose!

Janet remains very active as a Society member, having co-ordinated our response to the National Park Authority's draft Management Plan. She also has taken on a substantial role in organising the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes, of which the Society currently holds the chair.

The Executive Committee

While we have now held two recent meetings of the Committee at The Bear, the majority of meetings have taken place remotely, and this has enabled us to sustain our six-weekly frequency of meetings. As well as working our way through the ups and downs of the pandemic, the Committee has also been busy in overseeing a number of transitions as existing officers of the Society have changed their roles, and vacancies have needed to be filled. The willingness of Society members to step forward has been particularly welcome.

At this point, I should mention that Ben Sladen, our Treasurer, will be stepping down after the AGM. Having already been a member for a number of years, Ben took on the role of Treasurer, combined with that of Membership Secretary, back in 2006. He has now competently steered our financial management for more than half of the Society's existence! He was also highly instrumental in navigating through the Society's transition in 2019 to becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, one better able to manage the complexity of financial and legal risks which has grown along with the Society itself. He has also been assiduous in ensuring that members' subscriptions have been received in a timely manner! He will be leaving his role at a time when the Society is in particularly good financial health.

Communications

Clearly communications are at the core of what we do as a Society. Keeping in touch with our members is of critical importance, and our developing partnerships with other organisations are dependent on good communications. Many thanks are due to Nic Groombridge who fulfilled the role of Publicity and Communications Officer for several years but has now

stepped down. Nic is however continuing as a Walks Leader and an active volunteer.

It is pleasing to be able to report that we now have in place a new Communications Team. Welcome to Katherine Jordan and Stuart Bain. They are starting to formulate a new Communications Strategy which will enable us to respond to the challenges ahead. In support of this, David Thomas will be continuing to co-ordinate our website, and Chris Barber continues with great skill to edit our twice-yearly magazine *The Beacon*. It's been a good year to learn about the history of the water industry in the Beacons, with the fascinating article on Talybont Reservoir in the Winter edition of *The Beacon*, and the excellent presentation by Zoe Arthurs from the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust in December, as part of our events programme, on the heritage of the water industry.

The Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes

Now into its second year of current Brecon Beacons Park Society administration, the Alliance continues to occupy much of our attention. November saw it hold its AGM and Conference in person for the first time for a couple of years. Contributors included Rose O'Neill, the new Chief Executive of the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) and Chris Lindley from the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) who chairs the new Landscapes Wales organisation, which brings together the national parks and AONB administrations across Wales. Through collaboration between the Alliance and CNP, we were able to respond comprehensively to the recent Welsh Government consultation on second homes, which remain a challenge for many of the communities in our special landscapes. Pressing the case for some form of landscapes designation for the Cambrian Mountains continues to be a priority.

Liaison with the National Park Authority (NPA)

With the continuing turnover of senior management at the NPA, liaison with the authority has remained a challenge. Nonetheless, a good rapport has been established with Catherine Mealing-Jones, who arrived as Chief Executive last July. A new management team is now in place to support her, and we look forward to building on our established collaboration with national park staff.

Established areas of collaboration include the Darks Skies Reserve, under the guidance of Jim Wilson, our Vice-Chair, and the Fforest Fawr Geopark, on which we are represented by Dilys Harlow. The value of these initiatives is underpinned by their recognition internationally, with both having recently been revalidated. We also continue to be involved in the Beacons Historic Environment Partnership, with a new action plan scheduled for wider consultation later this year. Another key interface with the NPA is on Rights

of Way (ROW), where, under the watchful eye of Phil O'Shea, our ROW lead, we continue to share members' concerns with the NPA, and provide feedback on how issues are resolved.

Future Beacons - The National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

Launched in October, the consultation draft of the NPMP is a substantial 108-page document, with policies and proposals spread over 24 topic areas, and covering the period up to 2026. The NPA is to be congratulated for launching a series of "deep dive" public discussions around these topics, with the Society represented at nearly all of them. We then pulled together a comprehensive response, which was submitted to the NPA in March.

There is much to welcome in the document. However, it is dependent on high levels of collaboration from lots of organisations, and we do have concerns about the NPA's capacity to implement this very ambitious plan as it stands. We look forward with interest to learning of the NPA's conclusions from its extensive consultation exercise.

Planning Proposals

While much of our oversight on planning proposals involves the NPA as local planning authority, we do from time to time need to take an interest in proposals in adjoining areas, but close to the NPA boundary. This has particularly been the case over the past year. Under the scrutiny of Liz Gibbs, the Society's planning lead, responding to these consultations remains a key priority for the Society.

The Historic Tramroads of the Brecon Beacons

This further area of collaboration with the NPA continues to gather momentum. The aim is to safeguard the future of the National Park's tramroads, Under the leadership of our Exec Member Richard Chandler, the website-based data collection stage is now largely complete, and very impressive! With continuing funding from Cadw, the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust and the NPA are jointly developing a volunteer training framework for this project. We hope shortly to recruit volunteers, and to move the project forward out on site.

Executive Committee Reports

Membership – Ben Sladen

It is most heartening that members in general have renewed membership in spite of the varying Covid restrictions, resulting to limited opportunities for a led walk, no in-person talks, no in-person AGM.

Over the year total households have increased, from 706 to 724. Aggregate membership fluctuates in a different way; that depends mainly on the balance between single memberships and families; then within families, between 2, 3, 4, and occasionally 5 members. At the year-end total membership was 968.

In the first 4 months of the year (to end-February), households and total members have fallen slightly. This period sees over 50% of the renewal subscriptions for the year falling due, whilst new memberships are typically fewer than non-renewals.

Finally, on this my last report, I wish to thank all members for their continued support with the encouragement that brings. I am remaining a member with my wife Wendy who walks occasionally with BBPS, so I hope to see some of you during the 30th Anniversary events and at AGMs in future years.

Financial – Ben Sladen

Thanks to the resilience and confidence of members the financial statement is showing another healthy surplus. However, when more normal activities resume, expenses will increase.

During the past year, not one in-person meeting of the Executive Committee was possible and as already mentioned no full AGM and no talks. For the last pre-Covid year, these items generated costs of some £5,250.

It will be observed that the costs of The Beacon appear to have increased, partly because the printers now undertake all the mailing, and partly as distribution costs used to be shared with the printed Walks Programme.

The Executive has approved an allocation of £1,000 for a review of the Dark Skies lighting and another £1,000 for the 30th Events.

Guided Walks – Clive & Iau Counsell and Jenny Cann

Statistics

The year has been affected by COVID-19 and the various stages of lockdown and travel restrictions that have been imposed from time to time. For portions of the year, it has not been possible to hold organised walks. When travel and meeting outdoors were permitted, walks were organised but with a booking system that ensured that walk numbers stayed well within those permitted at the time. The number of walkers allowed was capped at 12 then 16 as at present, which is just above the average numbers attending pre-COVID. This was more in line with the general recommendations of the Mountain Training Association. This system also enabled the Walk Leader Support Officer to potentially track and trace any infections should that have been necessary.

Despite all the difficulties of the past year 127 walks were conducted. The total distance was 1,168 miles with a combined mileage walked by our members of 6,294 miles. The average length of the walks was 9 miles with 14 walks being more than 12 miles.

The most frequently offered walks were either classed as Moderate (41) or Energetic (65). Easy walks were offered again this year (4) and Strenuous Walks were offered on 17 occasions.

The walks were spread evenly across our normal walking days (Saturday (27), Sunday (30), Wednesday (27) and Friday (22)), as well as 21 walks on days other than these. Yet again, it was the West of the Park that was sadly underrepresented with 11 walks offered compared with 63 for the East and 24 in the Central Beacons. There were 28 walks outside the Park.

When we look at the number of walkers attending these walks it can be seen that those classed as Moderate are the most popular with an average of 12 walkers on each walk. Energetic walks had 11 and Strenuous 8.

The average number of walkers attending our walks in the various regions showed equally good support across the Park. The West attracted an average of 11 walkers per walk. Central and East Beacons had 10 and 12 respectively. Walks outside the park attracted on average 9 walkers per walk.

So, all things considered, and thanks to our leaders, back markers and administrators we had another successful walking year, and it is good to see an increase in the number of walks offered in the West of the Brecon Beacons National Park, but it is still an area that is under-represented in our walking calendar.

Walks Report

After a second suspension of walks because of lockdown in December 2020, walks resumed on 28 April 2021 with the same system of booking as in 2020 and with many leaders generously giving their time to devise, recce and lead them. Our spring quarter ends with May, and we offered 15 walks before its end.

Our first festival, from 28 June – 4 July 2021, was suggested by Stuart Campbell as a way of welcoming members back to walking and celebrating the end of lockdown. A walks subcommittee had recently been formed as a way of ensuring the wishes and views of walkers were met and acted upon, and one of the subcommittee's first tasks was to organise the festival. There were 14 walks planned, two for each of the seven days. Efforts were made to spread the walks throughout the Park and to offer all grades of walk. The walks were well received and well attended, and we hope that some local businesses benefited. There was also a photographic competition. We are very pleased that pretty much everyone was able to attend the walks of their choice.

Stuart had sourced funding for the printing of some commemorative festival programmes for the festival leaders, back markers and executive committee. He also organised the production of some ceramic mugs bearing the BBPS logo to be given to the leaders and back markers of festival walks. Some were presented at the end of Dilys Harlow's walk on 1 July when refreshments - supplied and made by walks subcommittee members - were offered to all present.

Another action by the subcommittee was to design and distribute the high visibility armbands to all leaders. The reasoning, apart from being useful in poor light, was to help identify our leaders at walk starts.

Our summer quarter, June - August saw us offer 50 walks, and in the middle of September, the new walks secretary, Jenny Cann took up her post and took over the booking system from Iau. A very successful weekend in Ceredigion was organised by Stuart and Phil in September, the first since lockdown. The review of the website and introduction of the new booking system on 1st April 2022 should make it easier for members to book onto walks and events.

Walk Leader Support

As mentioned in the 2021 annual report, Allan Gibbs had devised an Induction Course for the training and assessment of prospective leaders. It is a qualification just for Society Leaders. We were delighted that enough (14)

came forward for us to run two such courses, with the Society covering the cost.

In October 2021 Allan ran a course for leaders every weekend - two Induction, one First Aid and a two-weekend HML Training Courses for which the Society offers a conditional subsidy. We are, as always, immensely grateful to Allan.

All new leaders were lent any first aid kits and group shelters they needed.

I am very pleased to have all these new leaders on-board and also pleased that two very experienced leaders came forward and offered to lead some walks for us. This is the case in particular because some of our leaders have still not been able to return to lead since before COVID. We wish them all well.

We ran another First Aid Course in February 2022 in conjunction with the Crickhowell Walking Festival and have one planned for October 2022.

We held the annual “Day for Leaders” on 4th December 2021 at Llangynidr Village Hall when we were extremely pleased that 32 leaders came to talk to each other, and hear interesting talks by Allan Gibbs, Dilys Harlow and David Thomas. The day was beautifully rounded off with a walk led by Phil O’Shea and Stuart Campbell in the area around Llangynidr.

Events Programme – Janet Callear

The “Illustrated Talks” have always been a fundamental part of “Events” for the Brecon Beacons Park Society; a talk at the end of the day to rest the legs from miles of walking or to rest the mind from work, whatever it be. So, what have we provided to ease our body and mind over the past year? I look at the list of talks and think that my comments above are wrong – our members do not wish to sit back and merely rest, they want to find out about more hills and more mountains that they can walk, and to learn about the magic they can see, hear and feel along the way, to explore further into where they have already walked and to see a future for themselves, their children and grandchildren in these hills. In response to members interests we have had talks ranging from geology to foraging, from heritage of the water industry to pilgrimages and onto the future for our National Park. Then there was last night’s Breconshire Stones talk and the reminder that humans, also part of nature, bring their own beauty in stone walls, stone markers and monuments, sculptures and engravings; the Society’s purpose to protect and enhance the Park for everyone is no mean task!

I have now handed over the Events Secretary responsibility to Alun Flynn who already has many ideas coming to fruition for the next year’s programme.

And for me . . . , it is time to step back and say thank you to all the members of the Society - you taught me so much about the Brecon Beacons National Park and opened my eyes to subjects and ideas I had never even considered before!

. . . but you are not rid of me; I now hope to be able to help out in other areas of the Society's work so that we are truly Friends of the Brecon Beacons.

Rights of Way – Phil O'Shea

	2022	2021	2020
Members reports to me	55	29	7
NPA notices to me	11	7	17
TOTAL	66	36	24

Issues reported in the last year have almost doubled. Some have been quite contentious. My role is to liaise between the Society and National Park Authority (NPA), keeping both sides informed of matters which come my way. I report to each Executive Committee meeting keeping them apprised of issues affecting Rights of Way (ROW) and have begun to use Leaders' WhatsApp group to inform them, if it seems relevant to their work.

I appreciate members continued reporting of these issues both to me and the police (illegal off-roading and dangerous dogs). Your reports, which I refer to NPA, help to keep the ROW network navigable. Those of you, who encounter problems but don't report them, please consider doing so. It's a 2 minute job! Follow the guidelines on our website and use the report form. If you have difficulty, please email me your phone number and I will gladly help.

It can be frustrating getting some issues addressed quickly, due to NPA's priorities, but the problem is usually placed on a Warden's work schedule immediately. Thanks to both Eifion Jones and Lisa Lloyd of NPA who have been prompt and informative in my dealings with them. Though, this year, I've not had to use those who have volunteered to assist with site visits, thanks, but "I know where you are!!"

Some members have expressed frustration at the length of time it takes to rectify ROW problems. It might help to be reminded of how NPA prioritise their work. All ROWs in the National Park's rights of way network are categorised 1 to 5. A fuller explanation of the system is set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan ('ROWIP'), pages 84-89:-

<https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/BBNP-ROWIP-2019-2029.pdf>.

Category 1 – proactive (reaction time within 1 month if complaint received from public)

Category 2 – reactive within 3 months

Category 3 – reactive within 6 months

Category 4 – reactive within 9 months

Category 5 – reactive within 12 (but discretionary according to individual circumstances)

NPA adheres to these completion dates unless the issue raised is an emergency or is more complicated than just a repair/maintenance. For example, if a contractor or legal work is required it is generally going to take much longer. For the sake of efficiency NPA may also deal with reports which are near each other but are of different categories and have different target dates.

Issues reported by members have included the state of ROWs, undergrowth, poor and removed signage, illegal off-roading by motorcycles, damaged furniture and increasingly, barriers in a variety of forms, some due to nature and some apparently erected by landowners. There has also been an increase in reports of landowners' nuisance dogs, dog bites, dog fouling; aggressive behaviour scaring walkers, with some dogs chained leaving a metre gap for people to squeeze by.

NPA also advises me of applications affecting ROWs. Those reports are précised, reported on our website and members are invited to contact me for full reports. Please access the new website, regularly to see current ROW issues and other news.

OS and other maps become outdated and what is on the ground is not always reflected on the map. To confirm the existence of a ROW, you can check on the NPA (or Council if ex-area) definitive map to be sure. <https://rightsofway.beacons-npa.gov.uk>.

I continue to encourage you to include the less used ROWs in your walks as this helps to keep them open and to identify issues which can be reported to me.

Development and Planning – Elizabeth Gibbs

The aim of the Society with respect to Development and Planning is to try to ensure that the Statutory Purposes of the National Park are upheld, in particular the first purpose: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.

This year not only has the pandemic affected Development and Planning but also the problems caused by excessive phosphate levels on water catchments has had a major effect. All planning applications which would increase phosphate loading within affected catchments have had to be refused. Also, the National Park made the decision at the end of May 2021, to pause preparation of the replacement Local Development Plan (known as LDP2) for 12 months pending further understanding of the scope for future development to be accommodated in the National Park. In addition, we have responded to consultations on the Monmouthshire Replacement Development Plan (which does not include areas within the National Park) because of the way developments in and around Abergavenny can affect the Park. However, the Welsh Government has objected to the plan's proposed increase in housing in Monmouthshire which they suggest is contrary to the higher-level plan, Future Wales. We await further news of how these issues will be resolved.

We have continued to comment on or object to proposals large and small.

- We objected to the application for the Ciner Glass Factory. This would be a massive building with two 75 metre high chimneys, on the Rassau Industrial Estate only 400m from the boundary with the National Park. The statutory protection of National Parks extends to all developments affecting them even if they lie outside the designated areas.
- The redevelopment of Crickhowell Conservative Club as a Co-op convenience store was given permission despite continued local concerns about the safety of the access: we have since responded to the application for illuminated advertising signs.
- We have responded to the recent application for the siting of a brewery (non-alcoholic), as a farm diversification, in barns on the south facing slopes of the Sugar Loaf. Among other objections, the access off the A40, besides being sub-standard, is up a track which also serves as a bridleway and public footpath.
- Another application to which we objected was for proposed farm buildings near Cwmyoy, which we considered would have an adverse effect on both the landscape and the heritage of the National Park. Covering farmyards can be helpful in reducing phosphate rich run off, but in this case we felt there were ways in which the problems could be addressed without the deleterious effects.

The National Park is a large area to cover, and we would appreciate help particularly for following up applications in the west of the Park. We can be

contacted via the Society website should you become aware of an application of concern

Publicity and Communication

Nic Groombridge resigned from the role of Communications Officer in July 2021.

Stuart Bain and Katherine Jordan have now jointly taken up the role as a Communications Team.

The Beacon – Chris Barber

The Society Journal is produced in full colour twice a year (in January and July) and contains a wide range of articles on topics mainly relating to the Brecon Beacons National Park.

A steady flow of material is needed for inclusion in future issues and Chris Barber, the editor would be very pleased to receive contributions from our Members. Articles should be between 500 and 1,000 words in length. Make sure any pictures you send on a CD or e-mail are high quality JPEGs.

Please send your articles, poems, letters etc by email to: cbarber010@aol.com or by post to Chris Barber, Bloreng Cottage, Church Lane, Llanfoist, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 9NG. (Telephone: 018733 85918).

Friends of the Brecon Beacons – David Thomas

You may have noticed a change to the Society's logo on the cover of the Annual Report and wondered what lies behind it.

For many years people outside the Society have confused us with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. In fact, only recently Liz Gibbs received an email clearly intended for BBNPA but addressed to us!

We have conducted a survey into all the other national park societies in England and Wales and how they style themselves. The Friends of the Lake District is the only society to actually have the word "Friend" as the official name of the society, every other society brands itself "Friends of...", with the sole exception of the Snowdonia Society.

A further possible source of confusion for our society is that we are the only one to have the word “Park” in our title.

When we became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2019 we applied to the Charities Commission to use the strapline “Friends of the Brecon Beacons” and so the Executive Committee has decided to promote the strapline more visibly on our logo. It does not change who we are or imply any change in our status, but, hopefully, will explain to the general public our role in supporting the aims and objectives of the National Park.

Project Reports

Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark – Dilys Harlow

The big news this year is that the Geopark was revalidated in November &, once again, gained a green card to continue as a member of the UNESCO Geopark Network. Some advice was given, especially that we should continue to enhance the Geopark Hub facilities at Craig-y-nos Country Park. To this end a disused room on the site has been fitted out as a Learning Lab with displays about the history and geodiversity of the Geopark. Plans are advanced for this to be staffed by volunteers and open on peak visitor days. The displays on the terrace at Craig-y-nos are popular and much viewed. They are well worth a visit.

The Geofest should be held again this year, from 21st May to 5th June. Some events are already advertised on:

<https://www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk/geofest/2022>.

More may be added, including in partnership with BBPS, watch this space!

Elsewhere, plans and negotiations continue to explore the feasibility of extending the Geopark to include some of the southern, post-industrial fringe. This is a long-term project which would allow us to complete some of the geological stories of the area.

The Dark Sky Project – Jim Wilson

Summary

It has been a good year for Brecon Beacons International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR). There have of course been up and downs but overall, we are pleased with progress in both protecting our dark skies and gaining the benefits from doing so.

Partnership Working

Partnership Working on Dark Skies is primarily between the members of the Dark Sky Board (DSB), which endeavours to protect our Dark Skies and retain our IDSR status. It is currently chaired by the Park Society and includes the National Park Authority.

In the early part of the reporting period the Partnership Working with the Park was not great as, once again, there was no member of staff capable of writing the Annual Report to the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA). Submission of this report is a mandatory condition for the retention of the

International Dark Sky Reserve status. As was the case last year our Reserve was rescued by the voluntary sector with members of the Dark Sky Board (DSB) writing and submitting the Annual Report to the IDA on behalf of the NPA.

The Park's representative on the DSB (a Member of the Authority) has been extremely helpful, the problem lies with the resourcing for the support of the IDSR which is the responsibility of the management team.

The collaboration with the Park markedly improved in the later part of the reporting period with the development of a good working relationship with the Park's new chief Executive (see below).

Additionally, a good relationship has been developed with the IDA's new Director of Conservation who is responsible for monitoring and encouraging activities of their Dark Sky Places (including our IDSR).

Public Engagement

With restrictions being lifted in August last year the Greenman Music Festival was permitted to proceed. A stargazing event, led by members of the DSB, was held as part of the Festival and attracted hundreds of visitors.

The Brecon Beacons Dark Sky Festival took place on the weekend of the 24th, 25th and 26th of September. The festival was virtual this year and had an emphasis on reaching young people. It was promoted through multiple channels including by an article in the BBC's magazine "The Sky at Night" (circulation around 20,000). The main sessions for the public began on the Friday evening and had a great introduction from the Park's Chief Executive and the Astronomer Royal.

All in all it was well worthwhile event even though the numbers in general were a little lower than we had hoped for. However, the special session for schools (and other young people) on Friday morning was very well attended with about 3,000 children taking part which was fantastic and bodes well for the future of our IDSR!

Marketing of our Dark Skies

The marketing focus has been on digital channels due to pandemic constraints. A bi-lingual podcast for all year DIY stargazing has been developed and put on-line:-

<https://www.breconbeacons.org/things-to-do/activities/stargazing/monthly-stargazing-podcasts>

The Brecon Beacons National Park website section that deals with Dark Skies has again been updated. It gives information on the best sites for visitors to go to for star gazing and some basic tips on observing:-

<https://www.breconbeacons.org/things-to-do/activities/stargazing>

A new promotional video for the Park has been prepared featuring the Dark Sky Reserve, it may be seen on YouTube at the link below:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXQdHs-4Dk>

Additionally, Martin Griffith (a member of the Dark Sky Board) gave a presentation on the Dark Skies of the Brecon Beacons at the National Astronomy Meeting (the major annual event of the Royal Astronomical Society).

Collaboration

The DSB, as the local dark sky experts, were invited by the NPA to develop a Dark Sky Policy for its new National Park Management Plan (NPMP) the top-level plan for the National Park for the next 5 years. This has been done and the policy is now part of the draft NPMP. We are very pleased with the level of collaboration with the NPA on this matter and that the importance of our Dark Skies is recognised in this key document.

In parallel with the NPMP work the DSB have developed a draft 5 Year Plan for the IDSR which we hope will inform the development of the implementation plan for the NPMP.

The Society have been working closely with the NPA's new Chief Executive who is a former senior executive with the UK Space Agency and has asked to be personally involved in the Dark Sky Board.

A new collaboration is being developed with the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park, who also have an observatory within their boundaries and have been successful in gaining funding from industry. We are also in discussion with Northumberland on gaining access to the light pollution data from new micro satellites built and launched by a Scottish company which are sensitive to the full spectrum. Many LED streetlights emit at this wavelength and so the current assessments of the status of light pollution (including NRW's Tranquillity and Place – Dark Skies report) are underestimates of the light pollution problem.

We have also been sharing experiences of how best to work with local government with Professor James Lowenthal of Massachusetts, USA.

In collaboration with other Dark Sky places in Wales the NPA gained £53K for Dark Sky work in the Brecon Beacons. This has been used to purchase a new all singing and dancing planetarium which will greatly enhance our Dark Sky events and for the initial development work for a Responsible External Lighting (REL) campaign.

Night Sky Quality

The quality of the night sky in the Brecon Beacons is still very good though there is a continuing threat especially from south of the boundary of the IDSR. This has been confirmed by the annual night sky quality survey made by members of the DSB. The maintenance of this high level of night sky quality is primarily due to the work of the Park's planning department in ensuring any new external lighting is Dark Sky friendly.

However, we also need to move from solely preventing further deterioration to actually improve the quality of our night skies. This will necessitate the replacement of poor quality existing lighting. The NPA has no powers in this area so we will need to be done through a campaign to gain support for this aim (the Responsible External Lighting campaign above) which is our preferred approach in any case.

Gunpowder Works – Jim Wilson

The objectives of the overall Gunpowder Works programme are to secure the long-term future of the Glyn-Neath gunpowder works structures in the Mellte gorge, and to protect and re-establish the ancient woodland and hence improve the bio-diversity of this part of the National Park. The Society took ownership of the Bio-Diversity Improvement project within the overall Programme and raised £77K funding for its financial support.

Unfortunately for several years there has been a breakdown of management and governance in this programme which is summarised below.

As highlighted the 2020 Annual Report, there was a major breakdown in communication between the NPA and the Society on progress of the programme. This was due to the NPA's unilateral decision not to renew the Programme Manager's contract even though the programme was far from completed and there was nobody qualified within the NPA to take up the reins. Despite many attempts at communication by the Society this resulted in a period of many months when the Society had no information on what was happening with the programme or even if the funding we had raised was being used appropriately.

As stated in the 2021 Annual Report, matters are now much improved due to the re-instatement of the original Programme Manager (on a very part time basis).

Current situation

Due to the lack of engagement of NPA staff with the Programme Manager matters did not improve as had been hoped, and subsequently deteriorated even further. The NPA made yet another unilateral decision (which was not even communicated to the Society), to put the whole programme on hold and to pause the Programme Manager's contract. This situation has triggered the decision by the Society stated at the end of this report.

Bio-Diversity

The only outstanding work is the installation of the interpretive signage on the bio-diversity improvement aims of the project and to finalise on the ongoing monitoring and re-assessment of the bio-diversity of the site.

Industrial Archaeology

There is considerable outstanding work to be done which includes storm damage repair to some of the restored structures, repairs to the collapsed forestry track which provides vehicular access to the site, and the legal dispute with a land over on the use of this track.

Decision

There is a complete breakdown of partnership working on this programme.

However, the Bio-Diversity Improvement sub project that the Society led was more or less completed before this breakdown occurred and we are confident that the funds we raised have been spent appropriately.

The Society have decided to disengage from this Programme and have written to the Chief Executive of the NPA to that effect and to require the NPA to complete its one outstanding action on the bio-diversity sub project and confirm its commitment to appropriate long term monitoring of the bio-diversity of the site.

Brecon Beacons Tramroads – Richard Chandler

The purpose of the Tramroads Project is to identify, map and survey as many as possible of the still existing historical tramroad sites in the Brecon Beacons National Park. Despite their roles as important parts of our heritage and as walking routes, most of the Park's tramroads lack any statutory protection and are continuing to deteriorate. Our aim is to present evidence of their history, condition and vulnerability to CADW in the hope that they will agree

to give Scheduled Status to some of them and thus to safeguard them for the future. It is expected, also, that our endeavours will contribute to the enhancement of the overall Historic Environment Record (HER).

We are partnered with the Brecon Beacons Park Authority and the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in this project.

The first phase of the project has identified some 160 named tramroads, together with many more associated structures, from the existing HERs via the internet. The Brinore (Bryn Oer) Tramroad will be studied first and the next phase of the project, which will commence shortly, will involve the physical surveying of the tramroad by volunteers, whom we will be seeking from our Society membership. In this respect, we are planning also to continue this work into the future by ongoing condition-monitoring of the Brinore Tramroad on behalf of the Park Authority.

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org
Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1180841

Brecon Beacons Park Society, registered charity 1180841

Statement of Affairs at 31 October 2021

	Notes	£	2020 £
Bank balances		33,414	27,019
Less: creditor		(550)	0
		-----	-----
		32,864	27,019
		=====	=====
Represented by:			
Unrestricted Funds			
General Fund		25,891	19,800
Designated Funds	1	5,623	5,869
		-----	-----
		31,514	25,669
		-----	-----
Restricted Funds	2	1,350	1,350
		-----	-----
Total Funds		32,864	27,019
		=====	=====

The CIO has no other assets and no liabilities except as disclosed above

The Receipts and Payments Account and the Statement of Affairs were approved by the Executive Committee of the CIO on 25 April 2022 and signed on its behalf

Martin Buckle, Chairman & trustee

Ben Sladen, Treasurer and trustee

Brecon Beacons Park Society, a CIO

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 October 2021.

		General Fund Unrestricted £	Designated Funds Unrestricted £	Restricted Funds £ Note 6	Total for year £	Year 2020 £
	Notes					
RECEIPTS						
Membership income						
Members' subscriptions		11,111			11,111	10,779
New Life Memberships		0	150		150	480
Transfer from Life Fund		396	(396)		0	0
		<u>11,507</u>	<u>(246)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>11,261</u>	<u>11,259</u>
Other income						
Gift Aid receipts		2,434			2,434	2,022
Interest		3			3	33
Navigation training	2	160			160	170
Donations		253			253	1,634
		<u>2,850</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,850</u>	<u>3,859</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS		<u><u>14,357</u></u>	<u><u>(246)</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u>14,111</u></u>	<u><u>15,118</u></u>
PAYMENTS						
Services for Members						
Guided walks programme	2	0			0	1,529
The Beacon magazine		2,466			2,466	2,182
Talks and Events	2	0			0	380
Walks Leaders, training & equipment		4,731			4,731	1,375
		<u>7,197</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7,197</u>	<u>5,466</u>
Collaborations with						
AfWDL and CNP	3	0			0	1,067
BBNPA	4	46			46	0
		<u>46</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>1,067</u>
Oversight on Projects	5	0			0	54
Payments from Restricted funds				0	0	0
Total Payments on Charitable Activities		<u><u>7,243</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u>7,243</u></u>	<u><u>6,587</u></u>
Administration						
Annual General Meeting	2	0			0	179
Executive Committee expenses		159			159	1,181
General expenses		864			864	915
		<u>1,023</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1,023</u>	<u>2,275</u>
TOTAL PAYMENTS		<u><u>8,266</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u>8,266</u></u>	<u><u>8,862</u></u>
SURPLUS FOR YEAR		<u><u>6,091</u></u>	<u><u>(246)</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u>5,845</u></u>	<u><u>6,256</u></u>
Bank balances as at 31 October 2020		<u><u>19,800</u></u>	<u><u>5,869</u></u>	<u><u>1,350</u></u>	<u><u>27,019</u></u>	<u><u>20,763</u></u>
Bank balances as at 31 October 2021		<u><u>25,891</u></u>	<u><u>5,623</u></u>	<u><u>1,350</u></u>	<u><u>32,864</u></u>	<u><u>27,019</u></u>

This statement should be read in conjunction with the Notes on page 3.

Brecon Beacons Park Society, a CIO

NOTES to the Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 October 2021.

- 1(a) This statement has been prepared according to the date on which monies were received and payments made.
- 1(b) The cost of items of equipment for £500 or less is expensed on purchase; there were no such purchases in the period.
- 2 Navigation courses, Guided Walks and Events are provided primarily for members; all are open to non-members subject to limits on numbers attending.
The Annual General Meeting is open to anybody. The 2021 AGM was held via Zoom.
- 3 AfWDL - Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes, CNP - Campaign for National Parks (CNP)
- 4 BBNPA - Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.
- 5 The CIO is represented on the Management Boards for the Brecon Beacons Dark Sky Reserve and for the Forest Fawr GeoPark.
- 6 Restricted Funds are balances remaining from donations and grants for specific purposes, less amounts expended on those purposes.

NOTES to the Statement of Affairs as at 31 October 2021

1. **Designated Funds** represent amounts set aside for certain purposes but which can be returned to the General Fund at any time.
2. **Restricted Funds** are balances remaining from donations and grants for specific purposes, less amounts expended on those purposes.

The balance comprises:

	£
Gunpowder Works scheme	1,350
	====

BRECON BEACONS PARK SOCIETY

England & Wales - Charity number 1180841

Accounts

Brecon Beacons Park Society, registered charity 1180841

Statement of Affairs at 31 October 2020

	Notes	£	2019 £
Bank balances		27,019 =====	20,763 =====
Represented by:			
Unrestricted Funds			
General Fund		19,800	14,420
Designated Funds	1	5,869 -----	4,993 -----
		25,669 -----	19,413 -----
Restricted Funds	2	1,350	1,350
Total Funds		----- 27,019 =====	----- 20,763 =====

The CIO has no other assets and no liabilities.

The Receipts and Payments Account and the Statement of Affairs were approved by the Executive Committee of the CIO on 7 April 2021 and signed on its behalf

Martin Buckle, Chairman & trustee

Ben Sladen, Treasurer and trustee

Independent reviewer's report to the trustees of Brecon Beacons Park Society

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Society you are responsible for the preparation of the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

Independent reviewer's statement

I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the review giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Society as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the Accounts (on this and on 2 other pages) do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have across no other matters in connection with the review to which attention should be drawn in this report in order that a proper understanding of the Accounts may be reached.

Signed: J. Goreing
Qualification: ACCA MBA
Address: Llanfair, Crickhowell, NP8 1RB
Date: 7 April 2021

Brecon Beacons Park Society, a CIO

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 October 2020.

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £ Note 6	Total for year £	Period ended 31 October 2019 £ Note 1(c)
RECEIPTS					
Membership income					
Members' subscriptions		11,259	0	11,259	10,894
Other income					
Gift Aid receipts		1,882		1,882	2,278
Interest		33		33	133
Navigation training	2	170		170	200
Donations		1,774		1,774	1,353
		<u>3,859</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,859</u>	<u>3,764</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS		<u>15,118</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>15,118</u>	<u>14,858</u>
PAYMENTS					
Services for Members					
Guided walks programme	2	1,529		1,529	3,235
The Beacon magazine		2,182		2,182	1,689
Talks and Events	2	380		380	971
Walks Leaders, training & equipment		1,375		1,375	1,483
		<u>5,466</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5,466</u>	<u>7,378</u>
Collaborations with					
AfWDL and CNP	3	1,067		1,067	2,055
BBNPA	4	0		0	119
		<u>1,067</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1,067</u>	<u>2,174</u>
Oversight on Projects	5	54		54	280
Payments from Restricted funds			0	0	77,226
Total Payments on Charitable Activities		<u>6,587</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6,587</u>	<u>87,058</u>
Administration					
Annual General Meeting	2	179		179	574
Executive Committee expenses		1,181		1,181	2,110
General expenses		915		915	1,697
		<u>2,275</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,275</u>	<u>4,381</u>
TOTAL PAYMENTS		<u>8,862</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,862</u>	<u>91,439</u>
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR YEAR		<u>6,256</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6,256</u>	<u>(76,581)</u>
Bank balances as at 31 October 2019		<u>19,413</u>	<u>1,350</u>	<u>20,763</u>	<u>97,344</u>
Bank balances as at 31 October 2020		<u>25,669</u>	<u>1,350</u>	<u>27,019</u>	<u>20,763</u>

The CIO has no other assets and no liabilities.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the Notes on the following page.

Brecon Beacons Park Society, a CIO

Notes to the Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 October 2020.

- 1(a) This statement has been prepared according to the date on which monies were received and payments made.
- 1(b) The cost of items of equipment for £500 or less is expensed on purchase; there were no such purchases in the period.
- 1(c) The amounts shown for the period ended 31 October 2019 are for the period from 26 November 2018 (the date the CIO was formed).
- 2 Navigation courses, Guided Walks and Events are provided primarily for members; all are open to non-members subject to limits on numbers attending.

The Annual General Meeting is open to anybody.
- 3 Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes (AfWDL) and Campaign for National Parks (CNP)
- 4 Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA)
- 5 The CIO is represented on the Management Boards for the Brecon Beacons Dark Sky Reserve and for the Forest Fawr GeoPark.
- 6 Restricted Funds are balances remaining from donations and grants for specific purposes, less amounts expended on those purposes.

NOTES to the Statement of Affairs as at 31 October 2021

1. **Designated Funds** represent amounts set aside for certain purposes but which can be returned to the General Fund at any time, including the Life Fund - £3,809.

During the year, The Society received £1,060 in memory of Steve Horner 'who loved the Beacons'. This sum will be allocated to a project.

2. **Restricted Funds** are balances remaining from donations and grants for specific purposes, less amounts expended on those purposes.

The balance comprises:

	£
Gunpowder Works scheme	1,350
	=====

Brecon Beacons Park Society

Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cymdeithas Parc Bannau Brycheiniog

Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Photo Lee Major

Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1180841
www.breconbeaconsparkSociety.org

Trustees

The persons who served as Trustees during the period from 1st January 2020 to the 31st December 2020 are :-

Martin Buckle	Hon. Chairman
Ben Sladen	Hon. Treasurer
David Thomas	Hon. Secretary
James Wilson	Vice Chair
Janet Callear	
Richard Chandler	
Elizabeth Gibbs	
Nicholas Groombridge	

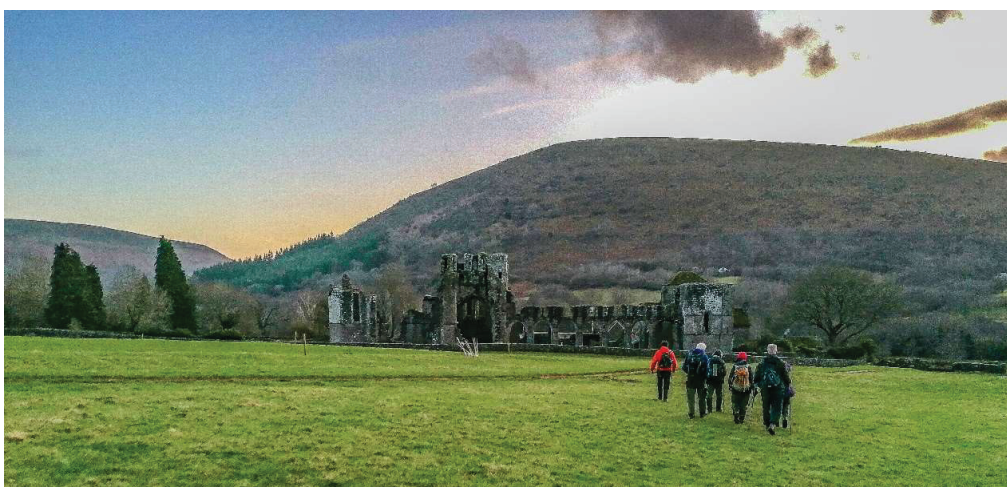
At the General Meeting held on 8th June 2019 the above were elected Trustees and Chris Barber stood down as a Trustee.

Due to the COVID epidemic there was no General Meeting in 2020 and the Trustees remained in post.

Elizabeth Gibbs, Ben Sladen and Jim Wilson retire by rotation at the General Meeting and, being eligible, stand for re-election.

Executive Committee

The Committee comprises the Trustees plus Clive and Iau Counsell, Phil O'Shea and Sue Hoddell, who will be proposed as Trustees at the General Meeting in June 2021.



Chairman's Report – Martin Buckle

This is now the fifteenth Annual Report of the Society. It was disappointing last year, due to the pandemic, that we were unable to hold the AGM as planned and to present the fourteenth report to the meeting. The hard work of our Hon. Sec., David Thomas in making all the arrangements proved to be in vain, although of course we were able to publish our annual report and accounts on our website as usual.

With the uncertainty over the progression out of lockdown this year, we have opted to hold this year's AGM remotely, and are hoping that this will not prejudice attendance by our members.

We are of course now hopeful that we are all back on the road to normality, even if it's a new normality, and that the activities of our Society are able to restart in full. We look forward to being able to hold our AGM next year in a rather more conventional setting.

The Walks Programme

A lot of credit is due to those members of the Committee and of the wider Society who have made every effort to get our walks programme running again. This has been a major challenge with the need for constant adjustments as restrictions have changed.

Many thanks are due to all those involved for their tireless efforts to get things going again while keeping wholly on board with current regulations and advice. Nic and Hilary Groombridge as our Walks Secretaries have played a key role, as have Iau and Clive Counsell in co-ordinating and supporting our walks leaders.

The Walks Sub-Committee

In recognition of the workload generated by the Walks Programme, the Executive Committee took the decision early in 2021 to establish a Walks Sub-Committee. This has been meeting with great frequency in recent weeks, with representation from walks leaders and regular walkers as well as the Executive Committee. Many thanks to all involved, including, in particular Clive Counsell for agreeing to chair the Sub-Committee.

The Events Programme

Like the Walks Programme, the Events Programme has been badly affected by the pandemic. Nonetheless, restarting the programme remotely has been popular, and a good programme continues to generate a lot of interest. Much credit is due to Janet Callear, our Events Secretary, for managing this successful transition. Being able to offer some events remotely has the potential to enable those who might find it difficult to get to events to continue to participate. Nevertheless, I am sure there are many like me who will enjoy the opportunity to get together again, and who miss the conviviality of The Bear in Crickhowell.

The Executive Committee

The Committee has continued to meet remotely, generally on a six-weekly basis throughout the pandemic, with lots to discuss as the restrictions have been continuously adjusted. It has inevitably been another busy year for Committee members. We are again indebted to Ben Sladen our Treasurer for our financial management, a particularly critical role at a time of great uncertainty.

Along with all of the trustees, Phil O'Shea our Rights of Way Officer and Sue Hoddell our Minutes Secretary have regularly attended meetings of the Executive Committee over the past year. I am delighted that both Phil and Sue are now willing to also take on the role of trustees. That will make four new trustees in two years, bringing extra confidence in our ability to manage our way through whatever challenges we may face in the years ahead.

The Beacons Way

Sue Hoddell has now also taken on the role of being our Exec Member for The Beacons Way. In doing so, she is following in the footsteps of Anne Pritchard, who represented the Society on the Beacons Way Steering Group with the National Park Authority for a number of years. In handing over this role, Anne joined us for an Exec meeting in September. Anne had been on the Steering Group since its inception in 2005, and also spent several years as our Walks Secretary. Many thanks Anne for all your contributions to our efforts!

Communications

At times when face to face meetings have been few and far between, communications activity takes on a greater significance. Moving to on-line communications and social media clearly has its advantages. Many thanks to David Thomas who co-ordinates our website, and to Nic Groombridge, our Publicity and Communications Officer for keeping members informed through Twitter and Facebook. Nic has also launched a newsletter which members will receive from time-to-time.

We do nonetheless remain committed to sending material by post for those members who prefer this. And I do look forward to receiving in hard copy our colourful twice-yearly magazine - The Beacon - edited by Chris Barber. I particularly enjoyed the item about Adelina Patti and Craig-y-Nos Castle in the last edition.

The Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes

Through the Alliance, we meet regularly with the other Welsh National Parks Societies and other organisations with a landscape focus. In preparation for the recent Senedd elections, the Alliance collaborated with the Campaign for National Parks in drafting a document to share with the political parties, in order to influence their manifestos. We did succeed in raising the profile of national parks and were pleased see references to them in several manifestos. Nonetheless, the inclusion within the Labour Party manifesto of a proposal to create a new National Park in Wales by upgrading the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty took us by surprise. It is interesting that the addition of further areas to our designated

landscapes is recognised as a live issue, and we remain hopeful that at some point the case for the Cambrian Mountains will be accepted.

Each of the three National Parks Societies in Wales takes it in turn to administer the Alliance. The Brecon Beacons Park Society is now taking over this role from the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. We will pass it on to the Snowdonia Society in two years' time.

Liaison with the National Park Authority (NPA)

Inevitably much of the work of the Society involves liaison with the NPA. There have been lots of changes in the management of the NPA over the past year, and these have represented a challenge for us. We were sorry to see the departure in March this year of Julian Atkins, the former Chief Executive, with whom we had a good working relationship. He has been replaced temporarily by Stephanie Evans in the role of Transition Director, and it's good to report that, with her support, collaborative working is being maintained. She will in turn be replaced by Catherine Mealing-Jones, the new Chief Executive, in July. We look forward to building on our established collaboration with national park staff with Catherine and her management team.

The Historic Environment Partnership

In deepening our collaboration with the NPA, we were recently invited, along with a number of other organisations, to discussions about establishing a Historic Environment Partnership for the Brecon Beacons. Along with a number of stakeholders, we have agreed to support this, and have become members of the Core Group of the Partnership. A wider forum is also proposed. A key task will be the preparation of a Historic Environment Action Plan.

Planning Proposals

Maintaining an oversight on planning proposals will always need to be a key priority for the Society, and we are grateful to Liz Gibbs, the Society's planning lead, for her work in this respect. The NPA's Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy Revisited has given us some cause for concern, and has led us to respond to the consultation at length. We will be looking very carefully at the next stage of proposals.

The National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

The NPA launched its Issues, Vision and Objectives document for NPMP21 in January. It covers the period up to 2026. It's an interesting document with lots that we would endorse, but nonetheless does suggest some changes in direction that are not without concerns. Another comprehensive response is under preparation, and many thanks to Janet Callear for co-ordinating this.

Rights of Way

Concerns about established Rights of Way (ROW) and proposals to amend routes mean that Phil O'Shea, our ROW lead, is always busy. The pandemic has been a powerful reminder to us all about how important the ROW network is. There are currently a number of initiatives and consultations around ROWs that are adding to Phil's workload. Having put considerable effort into responding to the consultation on the NPA's ROW Improvement Plan last year, it is particularly pleasing now that the

Welsh Government has made some significant money available to carry out improvements.

Projects

It is also pleasing to be able to report that, after some hiccups, progress on the established Dark Skies and Gunpowder Works projects, on which we work with the NPA and other partners, has been resurrected over the past year. Much credit for this is due to Jim Wilson our Vice-Chair. The Fforest Fawr Geopark, continues to progress well, and many thanks again to Dilys Harlow for representing the Society on this project.

The Historic Tramroads of the Brecon Beacons

As with many other activities during the pandemic, our project to survey the National Park's tramroads has experienced some delays. The aim, in collaboration with the NPA and other partners, is to get the more important ones scheduled as ancient monuments, as well as addressing any rights of way issues. We have made a lot of progress assembling website based information, with Exec Member Richard Chandler taking the lead.

The discussions with Cadw and the three archaeological trusts that cover the National Park have now borne fruit. Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, acting on behalf of the three, have now secured some funding from Cadw to augment the tramroad data held in the statutory Historic Environment Record, drawing on the data assembled by the Society. There will be a need to move the project forward out on site in due course, and volunteers to help with this are likely to be needed.



Membership – Ben Sladen

What a year that was. It started well enough, but the change in bank in January led to a number of standing order members, who had been members from our start in 1992, to realise that their contact with the Society had become tenuous and so resign. Then, of course COVID-19 struck, reducing our activities to those that could be carried on without direct personal contact.

Nevertheless, new members continued to arrive, more than cancelling out subsequent leavers, right through to the end of October, and membership numbers over the year did not fall as much as feared initially. Some 60 households resigned or failed to pay the sub up to the end of April, but by the year-end new members had made up most of that reduction, to 707 households for 936 members.

One matter on membership. Please always add your membership number or at least your post code when contacting us. Some family names occur several times – Williams for example 17 times.

Financial – Ben Sladen

The financial impact of COVID-19 was evident more in a sharp reduction in costs than in membership income. Your Exec switched to Zoom meetings (so no room hire or travel costs), Events came to a halt and Walks programmes were no longer necessary. This resulted in a large surplus for the year against a near breakeven previously.

The current year has seen more of the same; membership numbers are holding up well, with some leavers expressing the possibility of re-joining when our activities return to normal. Expenses continue to be low, with the prospect that the current year will show another surplus.

As a result, our financial position is healthy. The General Fund amounted to £19,800 at the year-end. Trustees have resolved that we should regard 75% of normal annual expenditure as a prudent reserve to start the new financial period – this equates to about £9,500. The principal risk to the financial future of the Society is seen as an event adverse to our reputation leading to a substantial drop in membership income. However, the scale of activities could be cut back quickly in such an event. Your committee intends to apply the excess reserves to support specific projects, yet to be identified.

Declaration

In accordance with Charity Commission requirements, the Trustees of the CIO confirm that the activities of the Society have been and are being delivered for the public benefit.



Guided Walks – Nic & Hilary Groombridge, Clive & Iau Counsell

Fortunately, the walk-leaders' annual training day took place on 2 Feb 2020 just before the COVID-19 lockdowns. Twenty-two leaders attended.

From 23 March until 16 July 2020 all walks were cancelled because of COVID-19. During that time, plans for restarting were made, and a booking system set up in to enable the walks to resume in a way that was safe for everybody. All leaders were given a Zoom talk by Allan Gibbs on changes to first aid and leading during a pandemic. They were also issued with instructions on Personal Protective Equipment and managing walks during the pandemic. All walkers were supplied with the same safety information as the leaders and walkers' contact details were kept for 14 days following walks in case anybody needed to be traced. None of our walkers informed us of any COVID-19 symptoms following walks.

Despite lots of complications with local lockdowns, a first aid course was arranged in November and eight leaders whose certificates had expired were able to renew theirs. It was limited to 8 because of COVID-19, and a bigger space than normal was used. This still leaves several leaders who need to renew, and they have been offered a course due to take place in October 2021 or earlier, COVID-19 allowing.

In the meantime, leaders with expired first aid certificates are encouraged to continue to lead if they have someone with an up to date first aid certificate with them on all their walks. This will be straightforward to organise with the present booking system.

Between 17 July and 19 December 2020, we were able to offer over 60 walks and we are very grateful to all those leaders who were able to help. In the first month, July, only 5 leaders came forward, followed over the months by a further 16. Some of these people led many walks, in particular those first five who led between them a total of 32 walks during the year. Local lockdowns caused disruption, too and we are grateful to a new leader and a returning leader who helped in their areas. Many leaders were unable to offer walks during this period because of shielding, etc.

In January 2021 a Handbook for walk leaders was compiled, which included available material and that devised especially for our leaders. The leaders will receive their copy in the post by the end of March 2021.

Also in January, all people who have been involved in leading and backmarking in the last few years were polled to check their intentions, and, considering the effect of COVID-19, it was very pleasing to find that we still have 41 active and willing leaders and 8 backmarkers looking forward to returning to the hills. In addition, we have 6 prospective leaders, and these have been invited to a free, outdoor, two-day introduction session in October 2021 led by Allan Gibbs.

For our existing leaders, night navigation training is being brought back. Together with the leaders training days, we hope that all will attend both of these at least once in every three-year period. Night navigation is intended to improve navigation whenever visibility is poor, such as fog, low cloud and white-outs. The next leaders training day is planned for December 2021. The next training course for people wishing to gain a Hill and Moorland Leader (HML) is planned for the autumn. An assessment course is expected to be held early in 2022. These are kindly subsidised by the BBPS.

Events Programme – Janet Callear

Our last Illustrated Talk In Crickhowell was more than a year ago on March 4th 2020 and as I write we are still uncertain when we will be able to meet together again at such a venue. As COVID-19 took over our lives we had to cancel a number of illustrated talks that we had planned and also a walk and talk to Tyn y Lwyn that we were all looking forward to. Initially we felt that a Zoom talk could not replace meeting together and listening to a speaker at a “proper” venue. Eventually, however, it became apparent that such was the desert we were having to live through, a Zoom talk at least provided something in the way of contact and took our minds away from the endless stream of COVID-19 news.

David Thomas has been helping out as the Zoom host – I like to imagine his home office to be more of a control centre with huge screens to be able to see the audience,

lots of meters and output gauges with their needles swinging to and fro . . .but I suspect in these days of nano-technology, it is much the same as mine – he just does it so much better! Over the year speakers have become more relaxed with the Zoom technology– as have we all – and we now have a programme of talks again to take us forward.

We are told that every cloud has a silver lining and although the atmosphere and conviviality of a cosy hotel could not be replicated, with Zoom we are able to reach many more of our members, many of whom have expressed their appreciation. We hope, then, to be able to continue with occasional Zoom talks after the COVID-19 restrictions are fully relaxed and we are meeting together again, and for as long as we get a good sized audience that properly reflects our speaker's time and efforts.

By the time you read this we hope to have been able to organise a walk to Waun Ddu, following up on the informative talk that Jake White and Dana Thomas from Natural Resources Wales gave on the restoration of this Welsh Raised Bog. Alan Bowring (National Park Authority), and Dilys Harlow will have given an associated and equally informative talk on the geomorphology of the area so that, when we are finally able to visit Waun Ddu, it is with knowledge and interest that brings it all to life.

Alun and Isobel Davies' talk made us yearn yet more for the freedom of walking the mountains, but it was a timely reminder that a satisfying walking holiday needs good planning and careful execution.

Next year then, we look forward to eventually catching up with talks and events we missed due to COVID-19 and exploring subjects and places that will be new to some of us and bring good memories back to others.

Rights of Way – Phil O'Shea

COVID-19 impacted on applications to amend ROW received from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (NPA), reducing the number of applications to 7, compared with 17 last year. Conversely, members' reports of issues affecting ROW increased to 29, from 16 last year - perhaps due to members undertaking more local walks, finding less used paths and making the time to report problems. All these issues are posted on BBPS website.

Thanks for following the new procedures (details available from me) to report issues. Please continue to follow this practice. Receiving reports in that preferred format, I can simply relay the information to NPA, but other reports require further investigation.

Living 40+ miles from most of areas of Beacons, it's not viable for me to visit all locations of proposed variations to ROW to inspect the plans. I am grateful to those volunteering to help:-

West: -Robert Pritchard, Robin Barlow.

Central: -Nic Groombridge, Helen Fletcher.

East: - Jill Taylor, Roger White, Frank Scott. Ros Grant and Chris Playford.

Last year also saw several damaged roads, bridges and footpaths which were posted on the website. Wardens have been limited in what they have been able to do, hindered by some of the public abusing COVID-19 regulations, and either working from home or having to focus on day-to-day issues rather than ROW.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

NPA is no further forward with the Plan but will be able to provide a list of projects intended to undertake in the new financial year following the receipt of a grant from the Welsh Government. The grant of nearly £100,000 will allow NPA a range of bridge refurbishments/replacements to be undertaken. Other works are also included.

Local delivery plan

COVID-19 has delayed implementation of the plan.

Beacons Way

The Beacons Way is the NPA's flagship route albeit a creation of the Society. It is hoped that during the summer of 2021, there will be sufficient volunteers from the membership to walk the route and survey the Way's furniture and possibly renew waymarkers. Sue Hoddell has assumed the rôle of liaising with NPA. Sue reports:-

"After discussion with Lisa Lloyd ROW officer at the BBNPA it is hoped that our volunteers will get involved in the Beacons Way project. Members will be asked to join the volunteer register of the NPA so that they can receive any needed training and they can be given ID to show the validity of what they are doing. It is hoped that there will be an annual survey of the way and a report on each year's findings".

Local Access Forum

These were established by the BBNP as statutory advisory bodies and were set up as a result of the (CROW) Act 2000 to advise the National Park Authority on the improvement of public access to the land in the National Park for the purpose of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area. The Society has recently renewed its representation on the forum.

Don't Lose Your Way

Having identified over 49,000 miles (361 in Brecon Beacons) of potentially lost paths, Ramblers are now looking to prioritise those to save and develop tools that allow volunteers to do this. To support volunteers, they are working with people who have spent years saving lost paths to develop training and resources to guide their members in this process. Ramblers is keen to work with highway authorities and the national parks on trying to save the most important paths.

Welsh Government Proposals to reform access legislation.

Members know from my e-mail earlier in the year that The Government proposes to reform legislation to allow cyclists and equestrians by right to use all footpaths, rather

than look at on a case-by-case basis. 690 Members were invited to email me their experiences, eliciting a disappointing 18 responses (2.6%), covering 10 A4 pages which I have referred to Ramblers to include with their evidence. 17 members opposed the idea of joint usage.

Development and Planning – Elizabeth Gibbs

The aim of the society with respect to Development and Planning is to try to ensure that the Statutory Purposes of the National Park are upheld, in particular the first purpose: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. We respond to proposed developments which are likely to have a detrimental visual impact and affect the tranquillity of the Park.

The pandemic has affected Development and Planning as with all other aspects of normal life. Periods of lock-down have restricted access to view sites. We have continued to object to the proposals for telecommunications masts. Of necessity they have to be sited on high points to get coverage but their impact on the landscape can be minimised by careful siting and suitable plantings to screen them, which our responses try to ensure. The statutory protection of National Parks extends to all developments affecting them even if they lie outside the designated areas. This year we responded to an application to double the height of a stack on Hirwaun Industrial Estate because of the effect on the landscape of the Park. Other applications over which we have made representations include the proposed redevelopment of Crickhowell Conservative Club as a convenience store, two applications for polytunnels, the redevelopment of barns for use as holiday cottages (where the access along narrow lanes would be a problem), and an application for seven houses outside the settlement boundary of Crickhowell.

Work continues on the new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the National Park which will be the basis for development control from 2022-2033. However, the timetable had to be revised because of the difficulties that the pandemic imposed on carrying out the community involvement strategy and consultations. In addition it was decided that the changes in socio-economic conditions meant that the new LDP would need to be amended to ensure it would be fit to guide the National Park in the post-COVID-19 world. We made formal responses to the consultations on the 'Delivery Agreement Amendment' and on the revised strategy and planning priorities set out in the document 'LDP2 Preferred Strategy Revisited'. We await the publication of the Preferred Strategy which will be followed by an 8 week period for public consultation. The Society will submit a response but it is important for anyone living in the NP to make sure they are aware of this and how their community might be affected. Monmouthshire County Council is also preparing a Replacement LDP (excluding the area within the Brecon Beacons National Park). We have sent in a response to their 'Growth and Spatial Options Paper' focusing particularly on the areas affecting the National Park. The Monmouthshire Preferred Strategy Consultation and Second call for candidate sites is due in June - July.

The National Park is a large area to cover, and we would appreciate help particularly for following up applications in the west of the Park. We can be contacted via the society website if you become aware of an application of concern.



Photo Rubin Eynon

Fforest Fawr Geopark – Dilys Harlow

Geological time, which considers millions of years, is not unduly bothered by a missing year or two, so most projects have continued slowly.

The Geopark Discovery Point, on the terrace at Craig y Nos Country Park, is now completed and open. This consists of a magnificent 3D circular bronze relief map of the surrounding area, three handsome information steles and 3 new geologically decorated circular table tops.

The Geotours smartphone app, featuring excursions to Penwyllt, Cribarth, Mynydd Illtud and Garn Goch, should be launched in June.

The original Geotrails have been revised, are awaiting their Welsh versions, and will be available later this year.

Needless to say, the Geopark has not been revalidated and there are no current plans to do so until travel restrictions allow. The Geopark Festivals in 2020 and 2021 were obviously cancelled. We hope that the next 12 months will allow more activities. There is more information on the website:- <https://www.forestfawrgeopark.org.uk/>



The Dark Sky Project – Jim Wilson

Partnership Working

Last year's report highlighted an existential threat to our International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR). Namely the National Park Authority's (NPA) inability to develop the mandatory Annual Report for the International Dark Skies Authority (the status awarding body). This was due to the only member of staff with the knowledge to be able to write this report not having her contract renewed by the NPA. This decision having been made with no consultation with partners who would be affected.

Our IDSR was rescued by the voluntary sector, with members of the Dark Sky Board (DSB) writing and submitting the Annual Report to the IDA on behalf of the NPA. This involved several meetings with supportive members of the NPA Board and with its Chair to ensure that necessary information was provided by the Park. The IDA were happy with the report and the Society have subsequently had a meeting with the acting Chief executive of the Park to ensure that this situation does not recur. The Society's Vice Chair is now Chair of the Dark Sky Board and considerable bridge building with the Park has been carried out. The result of this is that the relationship with the Park on dark skies is now more or less back to the previous level of good

partnership working. We now have a full member of the NPA Board on the DSB and have strong support from other members.

However, we still have work to do in raising the profile of Dark Skies and the benefits of controlling light pollution in the minds of all the members of the NPA Board. To that end the DSB have been invited to present to the Park's Strategy Forum. Additionally the DSB have given a well-considered and evidenced response to the Park's consultation on the developing National Park Management Plan, arguing the case for recognition of the light pollution issue and the multiple benefits of controlling it. The evidence included references to multiple recent research reports and papers which identified light pollution as a major contributor to the global collapse of the insect population. As insects are the base of the food chain their loss has a large negative impact on bio-diversity which is in major decline globally and here in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Public Engagement

We have been very active in Public Engagement both prior to the arrival of, and during the Covid pandemic in Wales.

Immediately before and early in the reporting period public engagement and outreach activities continued as normal. In the period from September 2019 up to March 2020 there were the 1180 participants at dark sky events at the Brecon Beacons Observatory. This is typical of numbers at this time of the year, but unfortunately due to the necessary government Covid 19 prohibitions on gatherings of people and restrictions on access to the Park/IDSR, it has not been possible to hold any further stargazing events at the observatory.

This required cancellation of most of the programme of events planned for the year including a two day stargazing session at a large music festival (25,000 visitors), a themed weekend at a CADW site, two large annual star parties at Cwmdru and a further 25 public events. In total only 17 events with (around 720 attendees in total) could take place.

It is hoped that following potential easing of restrictions that some limited events can restart in the late Autumn. Risk assessments have been prepared to ensure the safety of attendees and two events are being planned at the time of the writing of this report. Although direct engagement activities have not been possible, work has continued apace preparing businesses in the park with training programmes and also support materials. A bi-lingual podcast-style do-it-yourself stargazing session was developed for a group of young people that would normally have had a live session with an astronomer. This appears to work quite well and has potential for use in more normal times to allow visitors to have a commentary of the night sky on-demand. A series of podcasts is now in preparation.

We continue to run our Dark Sky Ambassador Course with businesses and now have over 80 qualified ambassadors with an additional 20 due to take the training session in the near future.

Finally on Public Engagement - we are very pleased to be able to inform you that Martin Griffiths, a current and founder member of the Dark Sky Board, former University lecturer in Astronomy, public speaker, author, and “astronomy youth champion” has been awarded the Dark Sky Advocate Award by the Astronomical League. The Astronomical League is a US based body for the promotion of the science of astronomy with more than 240 member organisations. The award is given for raising awareness of the problems of light pollution and working positively to confront and prevent further spread. It particularly recognises Martin's work with various non-governmental organisations, local government councils and other administrative bodies across Wales over the last decade.

Marketing of our night sky

In order to increase the profile of our dark skies a number of promotional / marketing activities have been completed:-

- The Brecon Beacons National Park website area that deals with the dark sky has been extensively revised and updated. It gives information on the best sites for visitors to go to for star gazing and some basic tips on observing, this is receiving around 13,000 hits per annum.
- The 10 best observing sites have also now been added to the tourist map, along with the best places to observe sunsets.
- Stargazing introductory leaflets have also been revised by including new star charts and updating the text. These will be distributed to tourist venues in the park to help visitors familiarise themselves with the night sky. The Elan Valley Dark Sky Park and Cambrian Mountains are to use the same format for their areas.

Collaboration

The award of the IDSR status to the Brecon Beacons National Park was the catalyst for the growth of the Dark Sky movement in Wales and we have been extremely active in improving the protection of our Dark Skies since (and indeed prior) to gaining the status.

There has been Dark Skies collaboration between the Brecon Beacons National Park and a number of neighbouring parks, areas and organisations including the Cambrian Mountains (a wilderness area in mid Wales), the Elan Valley Trust (an International Dark Sky Park), Welsh Water (national water supplier and owner of a large area of the BBNP/IDSR), Brecon Beacons Tourism (local tourism business association) and Powys County Council (Local Government body with extensive overlap of the Park/IDSR).

It has been identified that many visitors to these areas only stay for the day and that the dark skies, nocturnal wildlife and scenic sunsets are important local assets to encourage overnight stays.

A promotional programme was developed for the areas which includes for example three promotional videos for the Brecon Beacons National park and three for the Cambrian Mountains, plus an additional general video. The objective is to enable more people to experience and learn to enjoy dark skies, the mysteries of the wider universe, the constellations and their heritage and the Milky Way in all its splendour. The project is funded by Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and Welsh Government. Powys County Council are also contributing funding towards this project. The Park/IDSR's allocation of the funding is £57,000 and various promotional materials and events have been developed including videos, as well as nocturnal wildlife experiences, stargazing and astro-photography.

The UK Government in Westminster has formed an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Dark Skies and our local MP is Vice Chair of this group. The Dark Sky Board have had several very positive (virtual) meetings with her, and she will be attending one of our meetings in the near future.

The APPG has developed and launched ten policies for Dark Skies, many of these are applicable in Wales in general, and in our National Park in particular. We intend to explore how they could be adapted to circumstances here in Wales.

Night Sky Quality

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Special Planning Guidance document on dark sky protection has now been operational for several years. All potential building developments and many building modifications must satisfy these rules in order to gain permission to proceed within the National Park/IDSR. The Authority processed 270 planning applications during the period Sept 2019 to Sept 2020, all were determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan's Policy 12-Light Pollution, and the above-mentioned local planning guide on lighting. We are therefore confident that no new developments within the IDSR boundaries have detracted from the quality of the night sky of the Reserve.

This has been confirmed by the annual night sky quality survey carried out by a Dark Sky Board member and also by the findings of Natural Resources Wales recent "Tranquillity and Place - Dark Skies" report. The NRW report contains dramatic satellite images of a tsunami of light pollution from the south being held in check by the IDSR/NP.

The Chair of the DSB took part in a worldwide webinar on the IDA's new lighting guidelines on external lighting in dark sky places (including IDSRs). These may need to be reflected into the Park's Supplementary Planning Guide on obtrusive lighting.



Photo Neil Mansfield Photography

Gunpowder Works – Jim Wilson

The objectives of the overall Gunpowder Works programme, appropriately called “Explosive Times”, are to secure the long term future of the Glyn-Neath gunpowder works structures in the Mellte gorge, and to protect and re-establish the ancient woodland and hence improve the bio-diversity of this part of the National Park. The Brecon Beacons Park Society took ownership of the Bio-Diversity Improvement project within the overall Programme and raised £77K funding for its financial support.

As highlighted in last year’s Annual Report there was a major breakdown in communication between the Park and the Society on progress of the programme. This was due to the Park’s unilateral decision not to renew the Programme Manager’s contract even though the programme was far from completed and there was nobody qualified within the Park to take up the reins. Despite many attempts at communication by the Society this resulted in a period of many months when the Society had no information on what was happening with the programme or even if the funding we had raised was being used appropriately. Happily, matters are now much improved due to the re-instatement of the original Programme Manager (on a very part time basis).

Bio-Diversity

The woodland around the gunpowder works structures contains some of the few remaining fragments of ancient woodland in Wales. The Society's Bio-Diversity Improvement project (part of the overall programme) will achieve its bio-diversity improvement aim by removing invasive tree species and replanting and/or re-generating native species. This will help to re-establish a greater extent of ancient woodland which has a far higher bio-diversity than woodland comprising of invasive species.

The felling of the invasive tree species has been completed and the native species trees which we have planted are flourishing. The Area Warden will monitor the development of the native species trees and will watch for any re-seeding of non-native tree species. The only outstanding work is on interpretive signage on the bio-diversity improvement aims of the project and to finalise on the ongoing monitoring and re-assessment of the bio-diversity of the site.

Archaeology

As reported in the last Annal Report the archaeological restoration had been completed. However severe weather caused a tree fall which damaged the Stove House, one of the important structures on the site. Work to repair this damage is progressing and does not look likely to be a problem (costs covered by Insurance).

However, there was a subsequent collapse of the forestry track into the site which is serious, with a repair cost of the order of £20K. It is not clear at the moment whether this cost needs to be covered by the project or will be met by the NPA.

The access dispute over the Parks entitlement to vehicular use the above mentioned forestry track continues, and despite many attempts to resolve the issue with the landowner, is likely to go to court. The Park is quietly confident of a positive outcome.

Publicity and Communication – Nic Groombridge

Our communications to members are necessarily increasingly online. Information about walks and events is regularly emailed and Twitter and Facebook is used to persuade people to join or at least know of our work. We have 829 followers on Twitter and 828 members on the Facebook group.

The Beacon – Chris Barber

The Society Journal is produced in full colour twice a year (in January and July) and contains a wide range of articles on topics mainly relating to the Brecon Beacons National Park.

A steady flow of material is needed for inclusion in future issues and Chris Barber, the editor would be very pleased to receive contributions from our Members. Articles should be between 500 and 1,000 words in length. Make sure any pictures you send on a CD or e-mail) are high quality JPEGs.

Please send your articles, poems, letters etc by email to: cbarber010@aol.com or by post to Chris Barber, Blorenge Cottage, Church Lane, Llanfoist, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 9NG. (Telephone: 018733 85918).

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