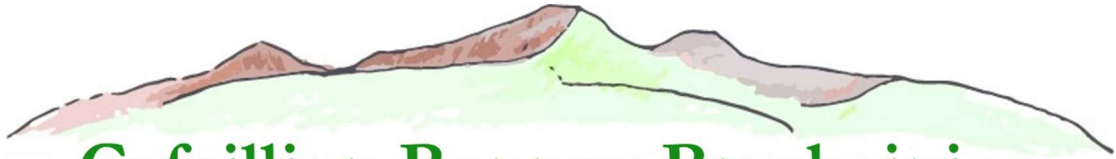


Friends of the Brecon Beacons



Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org

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, Bloreng 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	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.
2	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.
3	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.
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	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.
6	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.
7	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.
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 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.

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

Report to the trustees/members of	Brecon Beacons Park Society
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On accounts for the year ended	31 October 2023	Charity Number	1180841
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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
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Name	Michael Davies
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Relevant Qualifications	Retired Bank Manager - ACIB
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Address	Crickhowell, Powys, Wales
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