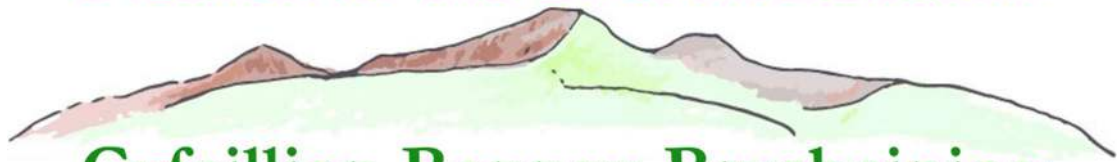


**Friends of the Brecon Beacons**



**Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog**

[www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org](http://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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to the 31<sup>st</sup> 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 Claugan 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.breconbeaconsparkssociety.org](http://www.breconbeaconsparkssociety.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**

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

The following pages provide a detailed summary of the financial transactions of the Society for the Financial Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> 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 - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024

	<u><b>31st October 2024</b></u>	<u><b>31st October 2023</b></u>
<b><u>Reserves</u></b>		
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
	=====	=====
	=	=
<b><u>Funds</u></b>		
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 **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025** and signed on its behalf by:

Martin Buckle, Chairman & Trustee

\_\_\_\_\_ 

David Burden, Treasurer and Trustee

\_\_\_\_\_ 

# Beacons Park Society

## Receipts

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 - 31<sup>st</sup> 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
		-----	-----
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>£19,288</b>	<b>£17,288</b>
		=====	=====

# Brecon Beacons Park Society

## Payments

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2022-23</u>
<b><u>Core Administration Costs</u></b>			
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
		-----	-----
<b><u>Total - Core Administration Costs</u></b>		<b><u>£5,877</u></b>	<b><u>£6,921</u></b>
<b><u>Services Direct to Members</u></b>			
Walks Leaders Expenses, Training & Equip		£3,703	£2,788
Beacons Way Walks	4	£2,250	£0
Talks and Events	7	£862	£107
		-----	-----
<b><u>Total - Services Direct to Members</u></b>		<b><u>£6,815</u></b>	<b><u>£2,895</u></b>
<b><u>Collaboration</u></b>			
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
		-----	-----
<b><u>Total - Collaboration</u></b>		<b><u>£2,170</u></b>	<b><u>£1,485</u></b>
<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>£14,862</b>	<b>£11,302</b>
<b>SURPLUS FOR YEAR</b>		<b>£4,426</b>	<b>£5,986</b>



# **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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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**