



Cymdeithas Parc Bannau Brycheiniog Brecon Beacons Park Society

www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org

BBPS News

Autumn 2011

From BBPS News editor

A big thank you to each of the members and others who have contributed to this newsletter. The more people do, the more relevance and interest it has for us all so keep up the input! The next paper BBPS News will be in April 2012 but, in the meantime, items of general interest can be put on the Society web site.

If there are any fluent welsh speakers in the Society who would be happy to do a little translating, I would be delighted to hear from them.

In mid-September Ben Sladen e-mailed Society membership re the on-line Assessment of Rights of Way Network survey, from the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast NPAs (consultation extended until mid-November). Are you happy we e-mail you regarding relevant third party items of potential interest? Please let me or other Executive Committee members know your feelings.

Please also ensure Ben (ben.sladen@aulden.plus.com) knows if you are happy to receive all Society material (except The Beacon) by e-mail and use of the web site. Sending out paper is expensive for the Society so it is beneficial if we use digital communication whenever possible – thanks!

My contact address is ceridwencoulson@yahoo.co.uk , tel 07912 849079

Ceridwen

Talgarth Mill

Following the Society AGM in June 2011, attendees toured the Talgarth Mill Restoration Project. Many of you will have seen this project televised in August on *Village SOS*. This programme has followed the progress of six rural businesses run by locals and backed by the Big Lottery Fund. Talgarth was the first to be shown. The mill has been revitalised and the wood-fired Bakers Table bakery and café opened. Worth a visit (*closed on Mondays through the winter*).

Anne Pritchard, who coordinates the Guided Walks and Events programme writes:

FRIDAY WALKS ARE BACK!

By popular demand the Friday walks are returning in the Winter programme. Some of you may remember that we introduced Friday walks some years ago, originally for visitors coming to the Brecon Beacons for the weekend. But then we found that, in the winter months, we were getting huge numbers on Sunday walks, so we started having two walks on Sundays instead of the Friday walks during the Autumn and Winter programmes. This pattern carried on without comment for several years then, suddenly, this autumn, several people have said that they missed the Friday walks for various reasons, and have asked for them to be reinstated.

We have had a look at the statistics we keep of walk numbers and found that the Friday walks have indeed grown in popularity over the years.

So, in response to demand, we have decided to revert to the format of one walk each on Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the Winter programme beginning in December. If this proves popular we will stick with this format all year round.

WEDNESDAY WANDERS ARE A BIG HIT

Kevin's (McAnulty) Wednesday Wanders have got off to a good start, with plenty of participants enjoying the relaxed pace and friendly atmosphere, and they have attracted some new members for the Society.

As planned, Kevin's series of Wednesday Wanders will take a break over the winter months. But they will be replaced by a new series devised and led by Roger Austin.

In the springtime, we plan to merge the two series so that we will have Wednesday walks four times each month.

CNP 75th ANNIVERSARY

As part of its 75th Anniversary celebrations in Wales the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) held a "Party in the Park" at the National Park Visitor Centre on the afternoon of Sunday 25th September.

Anne writes: The Park Society was invited to organise a selection of guided walks for people of varying ability, which ranged from an Energetic 7.5 miles to an Easy 2 miles. Attendance on the walks was rather disappointing, but those who did join us had an enjoyable time, and we were extremely lucky to have a fine, dry day to make the most of the superb setting and views. The Society also had a stall in one of the tents where our publicity boards were displayed with information about the various activities in which we are involved, which aroused considerable interest.

Party in the Park
Norma Barry
Head of Welsh Affairs, the Campaign for National Parks

This year is a special year for National Parks in England and Wales as it marks the 75th Anniversary of the Campaign for National Parks. Without the work and dedication of the original campaigners during the 1930s, which was aimed at protecting our most precious landscapes and ensuring that everyone is able to access them, the environment and society may well have lost out on the advantages of preservation of the natural beauty and tranquillity of these magnificent areas of countryside.

In Wales, we are very fortunate to be able to benefit from three National Parks, so the year could not be allowed to pass without some event in celebration of the Campaign for National Parks' 75th Birthday.

We chose the Brecon Beacons National Park as the location for a Party primarily because of its accessibility to the more urban areas of Wales. Both the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the Brecon Beacons Park Society were very supportive of our proposals and helped partner us with the arrangements.

It was a fun family day and luckily the weather was kind to us. The chosen venue of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Visitor Centre in Libanus was ideal because of its accessibility, car parking facilities, refreshments, and open space for stall holders and activity providers. There were a range of amusements for everyone. These included Park Society guided walks for people of all abilities, owl petting, cycle skills course, bouncy castle, pottery and jewellery workshops, wood turning and archery. For those less active, there was a bar selling local beers and the usual, excellent refreshments at the Visitor Centre restaurant where you could sit outside and watch those participating in the various outdoor pursuits and simply take in the fresh, clean air and magnificent scenery.

As well as giving all those who came along an enjoyable day out in one of Wales's most spectacular areas of countryside, the event was used to remind people of the valuable work of the Campaign for National Parks and its continuing relevance. It also provided the Brecon Beacons Park Society with an opportunity to promote its work and illustrate the physical and spiritual benefits of joining its popular walks programme.

A number of local businesses supported the event with donations and a raffle helped raise additional funds as a contribution to the overall costs. The Campaign for National Parks is particularly grateful for the support it received from these companies together with that from the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the Brecon Beacons Park Society.

(Some photos of activities are viewable via the Society web site Photograph Gallery)

New Edition of "The Beacons Way"

A new, updated edition of this very informative guide is now available from local shops, the Crickhowell Resource & Information Centre, or contact Chris Barber direct (cbarber010@aol.com).

Alun Davies has kindly sent some pertinent notes following his walk along much of the Beacons Way this "summer!":

"BEACONS WAY - ACCOMMODATION NOTES"

I had the great pleasure of walking a modified version of the Beacons Way in June from Abergavenny to Carreg Cennen. We spent six days walking and five nights in accommodation en route. I was surprised to find that there was no special accommodation guide available at any of the places listed in the two books on the route. The Tourist Information offices really only gave me long lists with every single bed listed, and no website carried any special advice. The Youth Hostels were not particularly obliging as the Llwyn y Celyn was block booked during the summer, and another hostel pointed out the problem of men sharing accommodation with children. So it may be worth listing here the accommodation that we found particularly good:

- Day 1 Walked to Llanthony and chose to stay at the very comfortable Half Moon pub with rooms. 01873 890611. Comfortable rooms and lashings of pub style food.
- Day 2 We stayed in Crickhowell with friends! But there is plenty of accommodation for walkers in the area.
- Day 3 We stayed in the Tai'r Bull pub with accommodation at Libanus. Excellent rooms and really good food. The very helpful host Terry Lucy collected us from Storey Arms and dropped us back there after a great breakfast the following day - Telephone 01874 620105.
- Day 4 We arrived at Craig y Nos and took a taxi to the Abercrave Inn 01639 731002 - just five minutes away. Remarkably good value with Dinner B&B for about £45 - good rooms and fine menu.
- Day 5 Chose to stay just beyond Llanddeusant at Pont Aber. High quality rooms provided by Mrs Micheline Denton 01550 740202. She even booked a taxi to take us to Llangadog for supper.

We did need the odd taxi and I can highly recommend Towy Taxis based in Llandovery on 07544 624411. They easily cover any moves West of Brecon.

I hope some walkers may find this useful. For further information call Alun Davies on 07802 767877, or contact via alun@alunjdavies.co.uk.

.....Two packets of crisps were walking along a country lane at the end of a hard day's walk in the mountains, when a passing car slowed down and the driver wound down his window. "You look tired, can I give you a lift?" he said. "No thanks" replied the crisps "We're Walkers".

(thanks to Anne Pritchard)

Another Society member, **Patti Morgan** writes regarding the Monmouth Way walks led by Jim Kear:

"I'd like to say how much I enjoyed the Jim Kear Monmouth Way walks - fascinating fungi - not often do you get to smell and see the stinkhorn – even if it meant sliding down a muddy bank to get the photo....cat's back without the climb - wild flower meadows and the undisturbed countryside sometimes overgrown with ferns but making up for any challenges with samples of the local brews at the hostelrys en route an added treat. Highly recommended!"

Patti Morgan

(Two photos Patti took are viewable on the Society web site in the Photograph Gallery)

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Mrs Julie James, Chairman of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, has written the following article for BBPS News readers:

Summer is over but the National Park faces busier times ahead...

You might think that the role of Chairman for a beautiful protected landscape would be best suited for someone wanting to ease off a little and enjoy life's special quieter moments. But for those of you who know me and those who I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, I can assure you this is very far from the truth. The privilege of having this job is something that I am truly passionate about and it takes up a great percentage of my time.

First and foremost we have to protect the environment but with that come objectives to be met, staff to be managed, planning issues to deal with, land issues to be resolved, communities to listen to and help, millions of visitors to look after and a budget to spend wisely and effectively.

As the last few months of 2011 approach, the Brecon Beacons National Park promises to be busier than ever and, although our main visitor season is over, we remain focussed on looking after our communities and visitors alongside our important conservation and development work.

Firstly, in view of the interest shown by the public, the National Park Authority has decided to extend the consultation period of its scrutiny of its Rights of Way until the middle of November 2011. We hope this will give many more people the chance to have their say and will be of particular interest to members of the Brecon Beacons Park Society, many of whom are keen users of the network, and we hope that you will give your views. In particular, the questionnaire seeks to review the current network of footpaths and bridleways which walkers, wheelchair users, horse riders and cyclists use to access and enjoy the countryside. Your feedback will provide us with valuable information on the current management, resources and delivery of the Public Rights of Way network, if these meet the needs of the people using them and what priorities need to be addressed in the future. The final report is expected to be delivered by mid February 2012 and, if people are interested in giving further evidence to the committee, there will be two hearing dates in November and December. Please visit www.breconbeacons.org/the-authority/planning-access-and-row/your-chance-to-have-a-say and let us know what you think!

Some significant landmarks have been achieved over the past few months for the Park. Firstly, we have had the incredible news that we secured €10million of European funding for rural communities through the new Rural Alliances project, to spend in the next four years. We will be working with twelve other European and local partners over the coming four years to ensure that our rural communities work together to form new alliances to generate new business and tourism opportunities, which will ensure they remain vibrant and self-supporting for generations to come.

As you may already know, Exmoor National Park pipped us at the post for International Dark Sky Reserve Status but, thanks to the wonderful support of the Brecon Beacons Park Society and the recent good news that the International Dark-Skies Association have approved our proposals for the core area boundary, we're quickly moving forward to designating the whole of the Brecon Beacons National Park as an International Dark Sky Reserve. As part of this work we're commissioning a lighting survey, which will commence shortly. Throughout this process, the invaluable help and expertise of the University of Glamorgan, the Brecon Beacons Park Society and Dark Sky Wales continue to drive this project forward – so a very big thank you to you all!

Meanwhile after extensive consultation with our local communities, Members unanimously approved the submission documents of the Local Development Plan which has taken more than four years to prepare. Throughout this time we have worked extremely hard to make sure we have consulted and engaged with our communities, partner organisations, landowners, agents and developers so that this development framework for the National Park for the next 15 years is a true representation of what people in the Park want to see. Our efforts have been described as exemplary by the independent body Planning Aid Wales. "The Focused Changes" are now open for a further six weeks consultation and will then be submitted for examination by an Independent Inspector appointed by the Welsh Government. The process of

examination by the Inspector is expected to take place in January / February 2012 with a decision on the final form of the plan anticipated towards the Autumn of 2012.

Finally, what visit to the Park would be complete without a trip on the beautiful Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal? Most of you may already know that the Canal celebrates its 200th Anniversary in 2012 so we're working very hard with British Waterways and a team of other partners to organise a series of events to take place along the canal throughout 2012.

The early part of any New Year is always a time for hope, anticipation and excitement at what lies ahead. It is no different here at the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority as we prepare for the New Year of 2012. Our resolutions for this very special part of the world are all aimed at ensuring that this National Park remains an iconic and wonderful place to live, work and visit. We are dedicated to conserving the high quality of the natural environment and preserving this for generations to come. But we also recognise the need to ensure that the Park's rural communities thrive – particularly during the trying economic times we continue to experience.

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Elizabeth Gibbs, Planning Officer for the Park Society writes:

Development and Planning Update:

Two chances to make your opinion heard!

On 10th October Members of the National Park Authority approved the changes to the Deposit Local Development Plan (LDP) enabling it to be submitted to the Welsh Government for examination. As mentioned in the article from Julie James, there will be a six-week period (running from October 31st) for you to comment on these changes. The main body of the plan has been the subject of extensive consultation over the last four years so it is only changes made in response to previous comments that are the subject of this consultation. It will be possible to view the LDP at the NP offices, at local libraries and on the NP website.

Much of my recent work has concerned fringe applications. I have sent in a written representation, on behalf of the Society, to the Infrastructure Planning Commission, objecting to the proposed Covanta Energy from Waste Plant at Brig y Cwm. The building, stack and plume from this vast incinerator, near Merthyr and only about 5 km from the Park, would be visible from the Park. Outfall from the emissions would affect the ecology of the Park as well as its people. We have also expressed concern at the likely light pollution and at the increase of traffic on the A465. The plant is so large it would have to draw waste from well outside South Wales and to place such an activity so close to a National Park seems to defy logic.

I recently attended a Public Exhibition about Section 3 of the A465 dualling, between Brynmawr and Tredgar, where work is expected to start in 2012. I will be sending in comments, but the next stage, Section 2, Gilwern to Brynmawr is of more concern (as it runs through the Clydach Gorge in the

National Park) and is at an earlier stage in the consultation process. Comments are therefore more likely to have some effect. Public Information Exhibitions will run from 25th October to 1st November at various centres and will also be available for viewing on the website: www.a465gilwern2brynmawr.co.uk.

Changes to the Guided Walks Programme

Occasionally leaders may change or cancel a guided walk, usually because of severe weather which may affect the walk itself or the roads to the start of the walk. Whenever possible, any changes will be added to the Guided Walks programme on the website www.breconbeaconsparkociety.org .

You are strongly advised to check the Mountain weather forecast for the Brecon Beacons National Park before setting out for walks, on the Met Office website: www.metoffice.gov.uk or use the Metcheck website which allows you to check the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons separately: www.metcheck.com.

If in doubt consult the leader whose name and telephone number are given in the Guided Walks programme.

Members paying their subscription by standing order

You will by now be aware that an increase in the annual subs was passed at the last AGM. The new rates are: Sole £15, Family £22. Please advise your bank about this increase. You can do this by:

1. Going to the bank branch in person
2. Writing a letter to the bank
3. Internet access
4. Requesting a form from me (by e-mail preferably)

Ben Sladen (ben.sladen@aulden.plus.com)

Executive Committee Minutes

A few members on walks have asked about the availability of these. The Committee meets approximately six-weekly. The minutes are readily available for view on the Society web site via the drop down from **About Us**.

Please note that, while factual information is as correct as possible, any views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Executive Committee or the wider membership of the Brecon Beacons Park Society.