Brecon Beacons Park Society
Cymdeithas Parc Bannau Brycheiniog
www.breconbeaconsparksociety.org

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The Brecon Beacons Park Society

of the 26th Annual General Meeting held at Wood Shed, Carreg Cennen Castle on Saturday, 23rd June, 2018 at 10.30am.

1. Attendance.
The meeting was attended by 24 members of the Society – names on file.
Apologies for absence were received from 19 members – names on file.

The Honorary Secretary, Alan Roberts, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting.
- held on Saturday 24th June, 2016 at Canolfan Cyfarthfa, Merthyr Tydfil at 10.15am.
(Minutes published on the Society Website).

Jim Wilson asked if there were any points arising from the minutes, and when there were none from the audience, Jim stated that the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status, raised last year, would be dealt with later in the agenda.

Approval of the Minutes was proposed by David Thomas and seconded by Wendy Sladen and the Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

3. Annual Report and Chairman's Report for the Year Ended 31st March 2018.
(previously circulated to all members).

Jim Wilson gave a brief summary of the activities over the year:
The Society's 25th anniversary was celebrated by several special walks and a dinner and he gave thanks to Richard for organizing the greatly enjoyed event at the Castle Hotel. Jim reflected on the Society's active and successful year. The Society is on a sound financial footing, membership has been growing year on year and projects and collaborations are prospering. The profile of the Society is rising both locally and nationally and Jim expressed thanks to everyone in the Society for their work over the year. He thanked the members who joined the Executive Committee this year and gave particular thanks to those who are stepping down: Charles Henderson has been on the Executive Committee for many years, both as Chairman and Vice

Chairman and has represented the Society on the Brecon Beacons Trust for distribution of £1m received as compensation for the gas pipeline installation across the Park. William Gibbs has run the Walls of Llangynidr section of the Society over the many years since its inception, maintaining the walls which form part of our mountain landscape.

Jim remembered two key members of the Society who sadly have died:

Malcolm Winney, a much loved friend who, with his family was a strong supporter of the Walks Programme; Jim reminded members of Malcolm leading walks when, someone having sprinted off, he would stop the walk and wait for the person, somewhat sheepishly, to return. There will be a memorial article in The Beacon to mark the anniversary of Malcolm's death.

Nicolas Edwards, Lord Crickhowell, Secretary of State for Wales, although not recently an active member of the Society, was one of the founding members.

All of the roles of Executive Committee were filled, however, the appointed Minutes Secretary found she was unable to continue due to a clash of Committee meeting dates and personal commitments leaving a vacancy which still needs to be filled (see later). Filling the Honorary Secretary role meant that it was not necessary to raise the membership subscription to buy in a secretary and they remained as they have for the past 7 years. Jim complimented the Walks Programme as a Society flagship activity under the stewardship of Wally and Anthea and congratulated them on their wedding. Wally's work, to reduce the time and effort needed to generate the Walks Programme by the implementation of a new on-line system was brought to the meeting's notice, as was the ongoing request for new Walks Leaders. Jim spoke of Events, now organized by Janet Callear who took over from Roger White, their popularity and the implementation of a seat reservation system for members. The Chairman highlighted The Beacon as the Society's flagship publication and enjoyed by all. Nic Groombridge in the new role as Publicity Secretary, has delivered a continually increasing Society's social media presence through Facebook and Twitter and a rising profile for the Society which led to a request for the Chairman to speak on behalf of the Welsh Park Societies at the annual National Park Authority Members Seminar. The future of the National Parks and AONBs has been under review by the Welsh Government for several years and the last review, Future Landscape of Wales, was poorly written and if acted upon the National Parks would have lost their international recognition. Eventually the Welsh Government decided to ignore this review but also the previous reviews including the Marsden Review which had had some positive and clear recommendations. So, after multiple reviews and significant expense there is no change.

Planning – Development applications continue to be monitored. A review of Planning Policy Wales, the top level document with which all planning in Wales has to comply, was out for consultation earlier this year and Martin Buckle took the lead on responding, both for the Brecon Beacons Park Society and the Alliance. The Society have worked in collaboration in opposing the proposed Powys Local Development Plan; there would have been a large visual impact but a much improved Plan has now been passed. The Welsh Government have refused to underwrite the Circuit of Wales and it is now unlikely to go ahead although, had it not been next to the National Park, it may well have been a viable development of benefit to Wales. The Chairman spoke of the good work carried out by the Walls of Llangynidr and the cessation of the project. He commented on the good working relations with CPRW, the Alliance and the Brecon Beacon Park Authority, the latter who have a new Chief Executive, Julian Atkins. The Society sometimes disagree with the Authority but this does not affect the relationship and, with the turnaround of people, the Authority have proposed a meeting with the Executive Committee. Jim expressed his thanks for the work and co-operation of John Cook who has stepped down from Chief Executive and Mel Doel, Chairman of the Park Authority who will be standing down in a few days.

Questions on the Chairman's report
Roger White remarked upon the phrase in the report, "The Society has taken ownership of . . the Gunpowder", but, more seriously, suggested that the Pontneddfechan village hall could be a suitable future AGM venue since the Society was closely involved in the project. Roger also suggested an article on the Brecon Beacons Trust for The Beacon. The Chairman supported this suggestion and recommended asking Charles Henderson since he had represented the Society on the Trust. Jim also mentioned that the £200 remaining in the Trust when it was closed down had been given to the Society conditional on placing a plaque in the Mountain Centre.

Acceptance of the Chairman's report was proposed by Richard Chandler and seconded by Roger White and unanimously agreed.

Jim Wilson, who is stepping down after seven years in the role as Chairman and four as Walks Secretary, welcomed his successor Martin Buckle who has been Vice-Chairman this past year; Jim will now take up the Vice-Chairman role to support Martin. Jim expressed his confidence that the Society would continue its success under Martin's chairmanship and thanked everyone for their support during his term of office.

4. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2018.
(Printed Financial Sheet sheets presented at the meeting)

The Treasurer, Ben Sladen, presented the Accounts:
He clarified a sentence in the Annual Report, namely that the increase in subscription income had been offset by the costs associated with the on-line Walks Programme system and website improvements. This, the 12th year that Ben has been Treasurer showed an increasing membership reaching 858. A reserve of £8,000 is held as contingency against a membership reduction. November to January is the main period of renewal. Ben had a copy of the full version of the Accounts available for viewing after the meeting.

Questions on the Treasurer's Report:
Ann-Marie Barber asked the purpose of the Restricted Funds. Ben clarified that majority of the money had been allocated by the Brecon Beacons Trust for the Gunpowder Works. This work had not been carried out last Autumn due to the weather but it was anticipated that the monies

would be used this year. Jim Wilson explained a large proportion would go on the forestry work.
Gary Bowen asked how membership subscriptions were managed part way through the year. Ben replied that renewal is on the anniversary of the start of a membership.

Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Jim Wilson, seconded by Richard Chandler and unanimously agreed.

Ben Sladen reported on the status of the work to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). He spoke of both the advantage that it gives the Executive Committee, protecting them against liability, and the process of achieving that status. He mentioned the template-led fifteen page constitution which will replace the Society's existing four page one and highlighted one of the changes to the Constitution whereby only 1/3rd of the Executive Committee can stand down each year, ensuring continuity of responsibilities. The Charity Commission are likely to take 4-5 months to review the application and, once approved, they will allow six months for the Charity to transfer across. Once transferred, the existing charity ceases completely; Ben emphasized the importance of timing this to co-incide with a membership renewal quiet time of year, minimising complications around Gift Aid. The Society is likely to submit the application this Autumn with approval perhaps in January/February. Once approved by the Charities Commission, a summarised review of the new Constitution would be put on the website and sent to the Membership in readiness for next year's AGM. Jim Wilson expressed his support for the move to a CIO since at present the Society cannot legally place contracts without the person who places the contract picking up all the liabilities.

5. Election of Officers.
The following Officers, having been proposed and seconded and there being no other nominations, were elected *nem con* with no abstentions:

Honorary Chairman	– Martin Buckle
Honorary Vice-Chairman	– Jim Wilson
Honorary Treasurer	– Ben Sladen
Honorary Secretary	- Alan Roberts

Following his election Martin Buckle thanked everyone for their vote of support and for Jim's kind words in the handover. Martin then took over the proceedings.

Martin expressed the Society's appreciation for the work Jim Wilson has carried out over the years: Jim joined the Society in 2005 taking up his first role as back marker on a walk and became Walks Secretary in 2006. Described by a Committee member as a very energetic Scottish leader, Martin agreed this was an apt portrayal that everyone would endorse. In 2007

Jim took on the role of Vice Chairman and then Chairman in 2010 replacing Charles Hendersen. Martin, who had been working as a Member of the Park Authority during this period, said he was a pleasure to work with, having a clear sense of purpose and always proactive, as demonstrated in the dark skies project, the gunpowder works project and leading the Alliance through the Future of Designated Landscapes review, and bringing in other organisations such as AONBs. The latter providing a strong basis for engaging with the Welsh Government. Relations with the Park Authority were difficult in 2006 and Jim's energy and commitment have seen the establishment of good working relations. Martin finished by saying that Jim would be a hard act to follow but he committed to do his best.
Anne Pritchard proposed a vote of thanks to Jim.

6. Re-Election of Other Members of the Executive Committee.
The following Executive Committee Members, having been proposed and seconded, were re-elected *nem con* with no abstentions:

David Thomas
Chris Barber
Elizabeth Gibbs
Richard Chandler
Janet Callear (Events Secretary)
Nic Groombridge (Publicity Officer)

7. Election of Walks Secretaries
Anthea Scott and Wally James, having been proposed and seconded, were elected *nem con* with no abstentions.

8. To Appoint Members of the Executive Committee as Bank Signatories.
The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were approved as signatories to the Society Account.

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner.
The appointment of Peter Beynon as Independent Examiner (**NOT** as Honorary Auditor), having been proposed and seconded, was approved *nem con* with no abstentions.

10. Vacant position of Minutes Secretary.
The Vice-Chairman, Jim Wilson, explained that it was not sustainable for the Committee to continue taking the minutes at the 6 weekly meetings as well as doing their own role; anyone from the membership who could help should contact a member of the Executive Committee.

11. Any Other Business.

(i) Circulation of papers

The Secretary outlined the problems associated with posting out the AGM papers to the members – at present 660 households. The time and cost of printing, putting into envelopes and then posting out is considerable. Alan proposed that papers would be printed and laid out at the AGM for the attendees but otherwise members would obtain the information from the website and by email. The advantages and disadvantages of the options were discussed and it was agreed that Alan's proposal should be implemented subject to members having appropriate reminders such as emails with website links and information in the Walks Programme. Also, those members without an email address (approximately 60 members) or if a member specifically requested, would continue to receive information by post.

The discussion included issues such as notifying the Society of email address changes, checking spam and junk mailboxes, and requesting the Society to send information to more than one household email address.

(ii) The Chairman informed the meeting of:

Black Mountain Land Use Partnership – The Society has been taking an active interest and has received notice of a consultation event on 28th June 11am to 8pm at Llanbedr village hall. The event is being held to update the local community with how the partnership is evolving and plans for the future.

Brecknock History Forum – festival during September/October series of events similar to last year

Executive Committee meeting - 3rd July

(iii) The Chairman thanked Alan for organizing **AGM** – an excellent venue, view and superb weather!

(iv) Illustrated Talks:

Anne-Marie Barber raised the question of whether over-attendance of Talks at The Bear Hotel could be resolved by ceasing the social media publicity given to them. Janet Callear responded that numbers attending the talks fluctuated unpredictably and there appeared to be other factors than just publicity. In the ensuing discussion, the increasing membership, communications generally, venue costs, facilities and locations as well as the new seat reservation system were all mentioned. Richard Chandler reminded members that the Publicity Officer had been appointed for the good of the Society as was reflected in the increasing membership and rising profile of the Society. A number of members subscribed to the view that Talks did not have to take place at The Bear Hotel and if there was a better arrangement so that seats did not have to be reserved, and anyone could arrive on the night, that would only be to the good. Roger White emphasized over-attendance at the talks reflected the success of the Society and the increase in membership. Roger also recommended that the instructions for reserving a seat using Eventbrite should be reduced to a line or two to reflect the simplicity of the system. Gary Bowen suggested using other venues in the west of the Park, particularly the Ystradfelte Village Hall. It was agreed that the options for alternative venues would be investigated including Pontneddfechan Village hall.

(v) Collaboration with Search & Rescue Dogs Society

Clive Counsell asked if the Society would collaborate with the Search and Rescue Dogs Society training exercise. It would involve a number of people out in all weathers, waiting to be rescued three or four times. It was agreed that an exercise would be arranged for, say, a Society walk day.

(vi) AGM venue & date notification

Wendy Sladen suggested more AGM venues should be in the east of the Park eg Abergavenny. Alan Roberts explained that he had a list of all the previous AGM venues and that he had investigated 11 venues for this AGM, noting that it was difficult to get catering at the village halls. Roger White asked if more notice could be given of the AGM date, location and speaker, preferably in the Autumn, so that members could plan accordingly. Martin Buckle said that this discussion would be taken account of for future AGMs.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 11.48am.