



Society News.

Edition 9 March 2025

Welcome to the ninth edition of Society News, our online quarterly newsletter aimed at keeping members informed about what the Society has been doing and plans to do. If you have any articles you would like us to consider for publication or any comments on what you have read, please send them to mailbox@breconbeaconsparkociety.org

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AGM - 28th June at St Michael's Centre, Abergavenny.

The AGM will start at 11am with coffee available from 10.30. All members are welcome and may bring a guest if they wish. Registration forms will be sent nearer the time. As usual, we will begin with AGM business and then Roisin Normanly from the National Park Authority's Curlew Project will talk about the project's work. A buffet lunch will be available followed by two short walks in the Abergavenny area. Tea and coffee will also be available, and offers of help to serve this on the day would be gratefully received. Please let Sue Hoddell our Hon. Secretary know if you are willing to help. We look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Talks Programme

See the [website](#) for more details and on how to book a place at one of our **free talks** held at The Bear Hotel in Crickhowell. Forthcoming talks:

9th April - A465 Dualling – Completing the Puzzle – Mike Cummine, Director of Future Valleys Construction will talk on this complex project.

21st May – My Part in the Development of UHAMBO (The Walk) over 14 years – Philip Grant, mountain guide with a South African school will present this talk.

2nd July – BBPS Mayor Tramroads Project – our own Roy Manning will talk on progress with this exciting project.

NEW EXHIBITION - Until 1st June 2025 – new exhibition at Y Gaer, the Museum & Library in Brecon called “Championing Artists in Wales, 25 Years of the Brecknock Art Trust”. Don’t miss this exhibition of over 100 artworks drawn from the Trust’s collection.

BRECON BEACONS TOURISM MEMBERSHIP

The Society has joined Brecon Beacons Tourism at an annual cost of £155 for 2025 with a view to raising our profile and informing local residents and tourists about the work we do and the programme of activities on offer. Membership will also help us network with other groups in and around the National Park. We will review the benefits of membership before rejoining for 2026.

CONSULTATION ON RIGHT OF RESPONSIBLE ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

The BBPS Executive Committee (EC) has been considering for some time, whether to pursue a Right to Roam policy, a “**right of responsible access**” to the countryside, allowing everyone to be on land for recreational purposes whilst doing so responsibly. There will need to be exceptions around the 'right to roam' - boundaries for the use of private land with the 'right to roam' not extending to land that is adjacent to houses, farm buildings, compounds, schools and other similar features.

The EC is split on the issue as there are powerful arguments both for and against pursuing such a policy. Further debate took place amongst our Walk Leaders at the Leader's Day recently and they too were split. The suggestion was made to put the question to our members, an idea which the EC supports. One way of doing this would be to take a proposal to the next AGM in June '25 but as traditionally only 5% of the membership attend our AGMs it was felt that a more representative view would be obtained by asking all members to contribute to the debate. We will then be better mandated to decide how to proceed. **Please email me at philoshea51@hotmail.com by 1st April 2025. and say whether or not you support the right to Roam and add any comments you might have.**

Here are some points in favour of pursuing a right of responsible access

- An expanded freedom to roam will enhance the aims of The Society by giving more people the chance to walk in nature close to home - not necessarily in the hills or distant wilderness
- *The right to roam is not only a matter of personal freedom and enjoyment, but also of economic, social and environmental benefits.*
- *The outdoor recreation sector contributes significantly to the Welsh economy and supports 206,000 jobs.*
- *A recent study by the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum highlighted the positive impacts of outdoor activities on people's health, wellbeing, education and social inclusion. We feel more connected to nature and are more environmentally aware. However, these benefits are currently limited by the restrictive and inconsistent access laws in Wales, which create confusion, frustration and conflict among landowners, users and managers.*
- *A right to roam bill would simplify and clarify the access rights and responsibilities for everyone, creating a culture of respect and cooperation.*
- In Wales, we have faced years of delay on meaningful access reform, despite repeated promises and a substantial consultation recommending extending the right to roam. All at a time when outdoor activity has never been more important for our health and well-being.
- Presently, the freedom to roam is not equal. Residents of the most deprived areas of Wales must travel further to enjoy the freedom to

roam, and people from the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods must travel further still (British Mountaineering Council research).

And some against

- Over the vast majority of England and Wales we already have good access, a Rights of Way network envied by many across the world.
- A right to roam across England and Wales based on a Scottish style access to everywhere could have negative consequences for our existing Rights of Way network.
- If we could wander 'at will' anywhere that isn't in the curtilage of someone's property, then where is the incentive to maintain the existing Rights of Way?
- There is also the issue of responsible access. The wider public are not well drilled in the countryside code. There is often a disrespect for the country by many people. The greatest fear for many farmers is dogs out of control and the chasing of livestock. Second to this is gates being left open.
- A right to roam will be a nightmare scenario for many of our farmers. For landowners, it has become a major issue, with many members of the public mistakenly believing there is already a general 'right to roam'. Such 'trespassing' can cause significant damage to crops and boundaries, risking the welfare of livestock and threatening sensitive wildlife areas. In the current climate, farmers may well see this as a further encroachment on their land.
- It would be difficult enforcing a new law.

Thank you for participating.

Phil O'Shea

Rights of Way Lead

GIFT MEMBERSHIP

If you would be interested in making a gift of membership of the Society for a friend or relative please contact our Treasurer David Burden by email at hontreasurer@breconbeaconsparkociety.org to make the necessary arrangements.

MILTON MOUNTAINEERS- Can you help?

A group of blind and partially sighted walkers (Milton Mountaineers) is coming to Brecon 17th & 18th May 2025. We would love to offer them volunteer companions/helpers who could walk with them. No training needed, merely empathy. Their walkers are pretty experienced, but I think each needs a personal guide. On Sat 17th, Pen y Fan, and on Sun 18th waterfalls are planned. If you can offer your help, please contact lau on walkssec@breconbeaconsparkociety.org as soon as possible. Obviously, one cannot commit this early, but it would be really helpful to the Milton Mountaineers to know how many of us might be able to help. Thank you.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS REGARDING ROW MATTERS

This is a general reminder to members experiencing any obstacles/difficulties using Rights of Way to report the problem to the ROW Lead using the form on our website. Should you have any difficulty doing so, Phil O'Shea is happy for you to contact him directly philoshea51@hotmail.com (07912943881).

More specifically, there have been reports that some members attempting to follow certain Rights of Way have been challenged and turned away by landowners. NPA have asked, if you are challenged, to make a note of the location and description of the person challenging you, what was said, date, time etc.. Please then refer the matter to Phil as above, who will liaise with NPA. Your help in keeping ROWs accessible is appreciated.

AGGRESSIVE DOGS

The issue of managing an encounter with aggressive dogs has engendered some debate amongst members, including the use of 'Biteback'. I've sought advice from RSPCA which does not advise the use of sprays to deter dog attacks. This is because if directed towards the dog they can increase aggression, particularly in some types of dogs and in others may be completely ignored as they don't seem to notice the sudden sound/feeling of the air release. In the USA human strength Pepper Spray (illegal here) has been used but even full-face blasts are reported NOT to stop dogs

attacking. Carrying spray deterrents may give a false confidence to the owner and so we don't recommend their use.

Instead, RSPCA invites people to take a look at the advice on their website and download their leaflet about what to do when meeting an unfamiliar dog. Please have a look, it's interesting.

NEWSLETTER CIRCULATION LIST. If you have a family membership and would like this online newsletter emailed to others in your family , please contact memsec@breconbeaconsparkociety.org and provide additional email addresses to be added to our list.

Write engaging and informative content that will help your readers understand your message.

Brecon Beacons Park Society

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