

TOURISM TIMES

WINTER
2020

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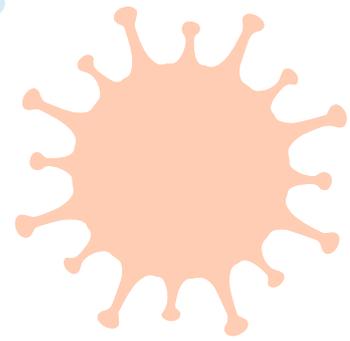


INTERACTIVE TOURISM NEWS





look
towards
a brighter
future



I am sure that you'll all agree with me that 2020 has been one of the most challenging of years ever and here's hoping 2021 will be better.

When we initially learnt about Covid-19, I don't think any of us could ever have predicted just how much disruption it would cause to all of our lives. I can only imagine what it has been like for businesses working in our valued tourism sector and, having spoken to a few of you, I know how tough the year has been. I wish you all the very best in dealing with whatever is coming in 2021 and can only express my sincere wish that we all continue to recover together and that we can look towards a brighter future soon.

As we move forward, the National Park Authority is entering a new chapter in its history. As part of an internal Change Programme we are establishing a new Corporate Leadership Team as we look to a new direction with merged teams working to a new set of priorities. As part of this work we will shortly be recruiting a series of new Heads of Service roles for:

- **People and Communities**
- **Landscape & Nature Recovery**
- **Funding and Business Development**
- **Corporate Services**

Unfortunately, as part of this new direction, the post of Sustainable Tourism Manager has become redundant and Richard Tyler has decided not to apply for any of the new posts. He will therefore be leaving us in January, only slightly earlier than his planned retirement date of later in 2021.

At the same time, Carol Williams has decided to retire, so together it is very much the end of an era. It is hard to believe that time has passed so quickly. Carol will be working on a part time basis for a number of months yet to ensure a smooth hand over of her projects.

I am sure that you will join me in wishing Richard and Carol all the very best for the future. On a personal note I would like to pay tribute to them both for their years of service and the achievements that they have made during their time here – they leave behind a remarkable legacy. It has been an exciting time with many innovative projects, creative ideas and high-quality delivery. I am sure you all have fabulous memories of your work with them as do I.

With all the changes, the Authority is looking at how it engages with tourism but is committed to replacing Carol's post. It will be different (no-one can possibly replace Carol!) but we know we want to work with you to make sure visitors have an excellent experience whilst contributing fully to the local economy and being as green as possible. Our tourism work will sit with the new People and Communities team and I look forward to working with you as we take these ideas forward.

Julian Atkins
CEO





VACANT, ENGAGED-LLANGORSE LOOS

Good news came in early March in the shape of the new toilets on Llangorse common which were completed and opened on 9th March. They were soon to close the following week due to

the covid-19 outbreak. However, this gave the lesser horseshoe bats an opportunity to enjoy the peace and quiet of their new bat hotel located near to the toilets.

The toilets were open in the summer, receiving rave reviews from those who used them. They are free to use, but donations are requested to enable the trustees to manage and maintain them.

TALYBONT STAR PARTY - NICK BUSBY USK ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The original date for a star party was postponed in April, but a new look star party was attended by over 30 guests in November. Making use of technology, a virtual planetarium zoomed into homes expertly run by Nick Busby of the Usk astronomy society. The November & December night sky was the subject of the talk which was shown using planetarium software. The new Brecon Beacons dark sky video was presented and a pod cast of the November & December sky sits on the destination website which can be downloaded onto mobile devices, take a look <https://www.breconbeacons.org/things-to-do/activities/stargazing>

DAY2STAY

Work has continued on the day2stay project with new photography, films, podcasts and fliers which businesses can use to upload on websites or in publicity. A full set of these will be available in early January, information as to how to use these will be explained next year.

The photography will be uploaded onto the Brand bank, make sure that you are registered on the Brand bank and you will be able to download the new photography for free.

DARK SKY POD CASTS

Pod casts have been loaded onto the destination website www.breconbeacons.org/things-to-do/activities/stargazing/monthly-stargazing-podcasts they cover the night sky in: **Jan/Feb, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December.**

These are great for guests especially those from cities who may not have seen the milky way, constellations and planets. The pod casts are in Welsh and English.



Laura Thomas, Brecon Beacons Tourism and Carol Williams, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will be organising a virtual tourism conference on 3rd March. Information about the programme and how to join will be sent out in the New year. We hope that you will be able to join us.



ATLANTIC CULTURESCAPE

A SPOTLIGHT ON LIVING HERITAGE IN THE BRECON BEACONS

The Brecon Beacons National Park is taking part in an Interreg Atlantic Area Project that will bring a focus to the Park's Welsh intangible cultural heritage. Funding via the Atlantic CultureScape Project will be used to celebrate and highlight living cultural heritage linked to the landscape of the Brecon Beacons.

The National Park Authority are one of seven partners from across the Atlantic Area who are collaborating on the Atlantic CultureScape Project. The main objective of Atlantic CultureScape is to celebrate intangible cultural heritage by working with local businesses to boost the cultural tourism offer and create sellable ICH experiences.

WHAT IS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH)?

ICH, also known as living culture or living heritage, are the traditions, skills and customs a community or county practice that give it a sense of place. Unlike tangible cultural heritage such as artefacts, buildings and monuments, ICH are things that can be recorded but cannot be touched or stored in physical form. For example, the spoken words of poetry and folklore, customs and beliefs, traditional crafts that are practised and passed down through generations and festive events and practices.

Examples of ICH identified in the Brecon Beacons include Welsh textiles and the spinning and weaving of fibres from the sheep that graze our hills. Storytelling is another, and the many myths and legends that are linked to our landscape, been passed down through generations. We have our Welsh food including Welsh rarebit, a recipe from the 18th century that is still enjoyed today. And there are Welsh folk customs such as the Mari Lwyd; read more about that in the accompanying article.

CALL OUT TO TOURISM BUSINESSES

A group of local ICH related businesses met in October to share knowledge and ideas and look at ways Atlantic CultureScape funding could benefit and support businesses in the Brecon Beacons. Emerging ideas include building resources, training guides and wider marketing of the Brecon Beacons ICH offer. We will be meeting again soon to plan for 2021 and welcome other ICH businesses to join us.

Want to get involved or know more? Or could you point me in the direction of people I could talk to that have businesses or are connected to ICH in the Park?

Contact Clarissa Price, Sustainable Tourism Officer;
clarissa.price@beacons-npa.gov.uk

MAPPING THE ICH OF THE BRECON BEACONS

We are currently working on mapping all ICH businesses within in the Park to and inform the Project and create a culture trail for visitors. Do you have an ICH business that we need to know about? Please contact Clarissa.

Follow Atlantic CultureScape:
www.atlanticculturescape.eu
On Facebook & Twitter - @ACulturescape

The project is co-financed by the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme through the European Regional Development Fund.



MARI LWYD

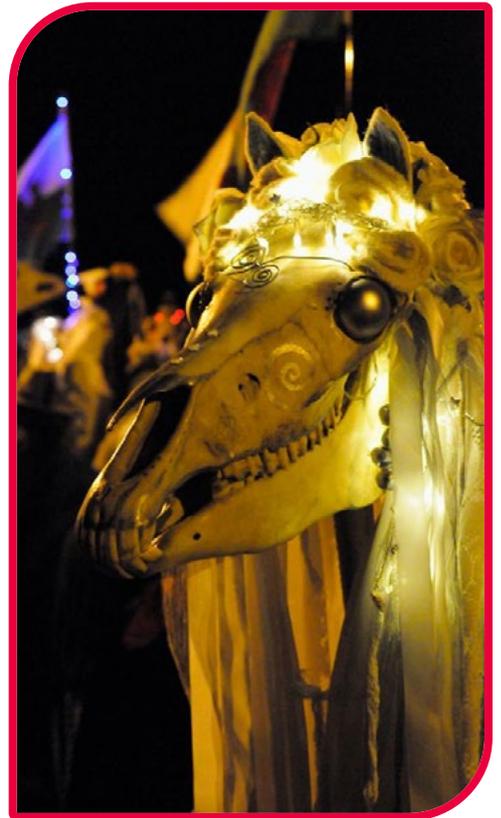
Over Christmas and New Year a strange sight can be seen in south and mid Wales. A horse's skull, mounted on a pole, decorated with bells and ribbons and whose 'rider' is hidden under a sheet goes with a band of revellers from pub to pub, trying to gain entry with verse (pwnco) and song. It is the Mari Lwyd (the grey mare) scaring off bad luck and ushering in good for the new year.

The origins of the Mari Lwyd are lost in the mists of time, but as far back as Celtic times horses were important due to the status they gave people and their use in agriculture and transport. The Celtic horse goddess Epona conferred fertility and abundance.

In the Welsh medieval stories of the Mabinogion, animals and people who were freely able to travel from the Otherworld into ours, were either white or grey. Is she an animal of the Otherworld come to visit us at this dark time of the year?

By the 1970s the tradition of the Mari Lwyd had dwindled in South Wales, hanging on in only a few places. From the early 2000's there has been a resurgence in this tradition happening across south and mid Wales. The Chepstow Wassail and Mari Lwyd celebration, held to mark the old New Year on the 14th January 2019 saw over 30 Mari Lwyds attending, making this a world record.

We may not see the Mari in pubs this year due to the pandemic, but she will be out in the dark streets over the festive season bringing a bit of mystery and otherworldliness to our communities.





BRECON BEACONS TOURISM

It may be a complete understatement to say it's been a difficult and stressful year for most businesses in Mid Wales, but Brecon Beacons Tourism have been actively supporting our members through the crisis. We have been sitting on strategic panels that have been offering Industry advice to Welsh Government, ensuring our members get updates on funding packages as soon as they are announced as well as compiling and interpreting information to help tourism businesses adapt and change to the new standards. As we have been unable to meet up, we have held several virtual meetings this year, including two sessions with Fay Jones, MP for Brecon and Radnor and we have one planned with Kirsty Williams AM later this month allowing members to express any concerns they have.

We are now looking towards Spring 2021 and are preparing the popular Brecon Beacons Map and Guide leaflet for a bumper distribution and easy to read downloadable version. Visitors will be able to download the guide from www.BreconBeacons.org as well as www.VisitWales.com

This is an exclusive Brecon Beacons Tourism membership benefit with no additional advertising fee to feature and is now the only official guide to the area as the National Park Visitor Guide is no longer being produced.

Alongside member listings on the destination website

www.breconbeacons.org and social media posts to over 21k followers, we will be starting day2stay social marketing campaign soon to promote 2021 staycation advance bookings so if you are not yet a member and would like to join in at this crucial stage, please email

info@breconbeaconstourism.co.uk or visit

www.breconbeaconstourism.org for more details.

Here is some news from some of our members:

WINGS OF WALES

WINGS OF WALES

www.wingsofwales.com

Since covid struck it has caused all of us huge issues from business to wellbeing, but positives have come out of this for us. I have been able to use the team to educate people on social media about birds especially vultures. During this period different media platforms including ITV contacted us to find out what we were doing and to plan an episode for Coast and Country and Around Britain. We were lucky enough to have a break in lockdowns where we could film and get the episode out for the new series,

During this time it also allowed us to concentrate on a very large project we are leading. WCCOE is a conservation visitor experience that may set new benchmarks for animal visitor experiences. We aim to look at re wilding, education, culture and very importantly job creation. We are currently having a study undertaken by the international zoo veterinary group who are world renowned for their skills. Part of the study will show the feasibility of the project.

This is very exciting times and could really put Wales on the map in relation to a visitor attraction and conservation. If any businesses are interested in joining our journey please feel free to contact me, Lewis Phillips, and I would be happy to discuss the project outline with you.



OUT OF ADVERSITY COMES COLLABORATION

Businesses in Brecon along with some members of the community have come together over the summer of 2020 to try and help the town survive and thrive as it navigates its way beyond the impacts of Covid19.

First meeting outdoors in the cathedral close over the Summer people with a common goal of helping their town met to discuss what was needed immediately and what they hoped they could do in the longer term to ensure footfall, engagement and spend. Most importantly businesses needed a common voice to talk to the town council and Powys County Council and to have a mechanism to communicate with each other.

The name Brecon Buzz came about as people wanted their town to be buzzing – buzzing with ideas and talking to each other, finding solutions and for everyone all to have a good work ethic and a sense of collaboration

Inspired by the Totally Locally movement which is UK wide but which has also proved a great success in Crickhowell it is a model the group are planning to adopt in early 2021.

In the last few weeks of the year businesses are going to be offering people a free draw for a Bumper Christmas Stocking full of gifts donated by the town's independents shops, cafes and bars. People can enter the draw having spent a minimum of £3 in any of the collaborating businesses. 15 businesses have offered contributions

to the stocking and these range from a £10 voucher to spend at Llanfaes Dairy, to a book from The Hours, a Christmas gift from Ty Cariad and locally made piece of pottery from Found Gallery.



Brecon Buzz are working closely with the town council on Covid recovery actions and are liaising with them about the Visit Brecon website. Different people will be taking an active part in looking at how best to deliver Brecon's Twenty

Twenty Town Plan with the various public sector bodies responsible for this. Others work with the Brecon Cultural and Heritage Network responsible for

 www.breconstory.wales and they will be supporting 2021 applications to the Arts Council for Wales 'Connect & Flourish' National Lottery Arts Funding Programme.



LIZ DANIEL AN AMAZING LEGACY

Liz always says she is an accidental Business woman, she started the business in the Mid Seventies when her two daughters were very young. By letting out the annexe of her cottage in Llanfrynach and helping local farmer Donald Jones renovate a property and marketing it with an ad in The Times.

Over the next 40 years it has grown into a portfolio of some 375 properties with the Brand, Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages well respected with owners and customers alike. Liz's drive has never been about profit but about providing employment and business opportunities for the area. She always says it has been a lifestyle choice rather than a job (there are so many stories to be told of the different scenarios over the years, lots of laughs and a few tears but I will leave that for the book she promises to write!) Hopefully in her retirement Liz will maintain her involvement in the various Tourism bodies sharing her valuable knowledge that she has gained in the business.



NEW GEOPARK DISCOVERY POINT AT CRAIG Y NOS COUNTRY PARK

Craig y nos Country Park is a good place to start your exploration of Fforest Fawr Geopark and if you are not sure what a Geopark is, or why the western half of the National Park has been designated as one, then make sure you visit the new discovery point to find out more.

The three eye catching monoliths were designed by local artist Rubin Eynon to raise awareness and celebrate this prestigious UNESCO designation. The interpretation introduces the Geopark, its geology and helps you plan your discovery of the big stories that shaped this area: the ice, the industry and the people.

News & alerts



Make sure you stay up to date with the very latest news direct from Visit Wales by subscribing to receive regular Visit Wales Tourism Industry bulletins

👉 public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/subscriber/new

and following 🐦 @VisitWalesBiz and 🐦 @CroesoCymruBus on twitter.

Visit Wales has produced over 80 news bulletins, providing Covid-19 information to the tourism industry which includes Welsh Government guidance and regulations. Should you have missed any, all newsletters and bulletins can be viewed on the Business Wales Tourism Zone 🐦 businesswales.gov.wales/tourism/coronavirus-covid-19-bulletins

STONES AND A RED KITE

FRUITS OF THE WALES WAY PROJECT

In 2018 the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority was delighted to receive funding from Visit Wales to undertake a series of exciting and ambitious interventions along the A470 in order to improve the visitor experience along this strategically important corridor. The A470 bisects the Brecon Beacons between Brecon and Cefn Coed y Cymer and passes through some of the most dramatic and memorable scenery in the National Park. For some people it simply is a journey but if they stop and explore they will be amply rewarded.



THE POETRY STONES

Four poetry stones have been erected at locations along the route. Poems, composed by Owen Sheers and Ifor ap Glyn celebrating the place where each stone resides, have been carved into chunks of Blue Pennant Sandstone. They stand at Craig y Fro layby - otherwise known as 'bikers' corner' -, at the head of the old coach road at Storey Arms and the laybys at Cantref and Llwyn-onn Reservoirs. Many of you will know of Talgarth based writer Owen Sheers who is a novelist, poet and playwright. The Welsh poems were composed by Ifor ap Glyn, who is the National Poet of Wales. The two 'standing stones' have peepholes drilled through them for children of all ages to look at the view. The stone, Blue Pennant Sandstone is the thick sequence of rocks which tops the Coal Measures of South Wales into which 'The Valleys' were carved.



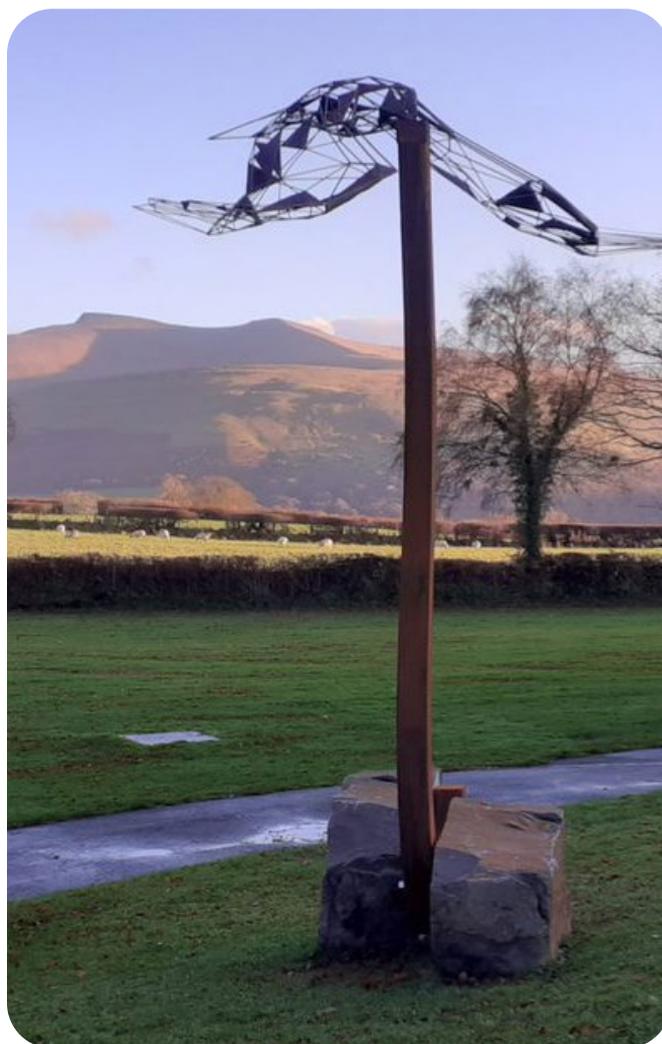
THE STONE SEAT

This beautiful curved seat also resides at Craig y Fro (biker's corner) layby and takes in the view down Glyn Tarell. Cardiff based artist David Mackie designed the seat to reflect the many drystone walls which criss-cross the local landscape. There is a strip of stones arranged in a herring-bone pattern snaking along the back to represent the glacier which carved the valley 20,000 years ago. Within the seat there are stunning bronze inlays of a brown hairstreak butterfly and purple saxifrage. Both species are extremely rare in the UK but are to be found at nearby Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad National Nature Reserve. The seat was built by master stonewaller Alan Jones and his son Ifan.

THE RED KITE

The Visitor Centre above Libanus now has a new resident – a 3m wide sculpture of a Red Kite gazing down on visitors from the top of a 4m tall stalk. The creation of Glyn-neath based artist Rubin Eynon this depiction of a Red Kite has been designed to be light enough to balance and 'float' in the wind. It represents the fragile state of much of the wildlife of the National Park, which is in a perilous state but itself is a success story. Once near extinction, with a small population hanging on in mid Wales, the fact that red kites are now widespread throughout the National Park demonstrates what can be done when everyone pulls together.

Why not check them out the next time you're travelling that way? Nothing can beat reading the poems in situ, sitting on the seat to study the scene or being mesmerised by the Red Kite bobbing and tilting in the wind.



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