



BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

# TOURISM TIMES

AUTUMN

2021

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INTERACTIVE  
TOURISM  
NEWS



**BRECON  
BEACONS**

OUR NATIONAL PARK

# WELCOME TO THE BRECON BEACONS CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to introduce myself to you as the new Chief Executive of the National Park Authority. I started in late July, and since then I have been getting to know my new organisation and getting myself around the National Park to see as much as I can and meet as many people as I can. Coming to work in this beautiful place feels like winning the lottery! I have also had the opportunity to experience the Park through the lens of a newcomer, which has been helpful in reinforcing some of the issues which visitors face whilst at the same time starting to get to grips with the tricky balance between tourism and positive visitor experiences and looking after the special qualities of the Park.

As I settle in, I have a few immediate priorities. We have been working to put together the next iteration of our National Park Management Plan which will cover the period to 2027. We have been engaging with stakeholders – thank you to those of you who have already been involved – and working with our new Citizen's Assembly to shape the plan. We hope to go out to public consultation shortly as our next step. What is clear having been through the process so far is the scale of the challenge we face, but I am convinced that working together we can rise to those challenges and ensure we are achieving our potential as a Park.

Alongside the work on the plan, I have been looking at how the Authority can build the capacity to deliver on our own role and ensure that we are fit for the future once the final plan has been published.

“I am convinced that working together we can rise to those challenges”



In terms of my ambitions, I plan to build on the excellent work which my colleagues already have in train and to ensure that the Authority as an organisation is making positive impact, showing ambition and bringing people together to get things done. I hope that we will publish, and deliver in partnership on a plan which showcases the Brecon Beacons as a place which has forged a positive future for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond; a National Park which is a vibrant example of sustainability, environmental resilience and economic prosperity and one which welcomes those who come to seek peace, beauty and adventure.

I look forward to meeting you and working with you.

**Catherine Mealing-Jones**

# GROWING MID WALES REGIONAL TOURISM FEASIBILITY STUDY

Growing Mid Wales is a regional partnership arrangement between the private and public sectors (Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council) and with Welsh Government. The initiative seeks to represent the region's interests and priorities for improvements to our local economy.



The partnership is working with UK and Welsh Government to secure a Growth Deal for the Mid Wales region, and to support this work, Growing Mid Wales has secured funding to complete a Tourism Feasibility Study for Mid Wales region to help set the investment priorities to support the growth of the visitor economy in Mid Wales.

Funding for the Mid Wales Tourism Study has been approved by Arwain and Cynnal Y Cardi, the LEADER programmes in Powys and Ceredigion as a regional co-operation project, supported by the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020.

The aim of the tourism study is to undertake a strategic review of tourism assets and activity in Mid Wales and identify a pipeline of both activity, tangible investment opportunities and supporting interventions in order to develop an action plan and vision for tourism in the region. The Covid-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for the tourism and hospitality sector. This study seeks to lay the foundations for sustainable growth as we come out of the pandemic, capitalising on emerging opportunities, and supporting the tourism sector to build resilience into their business models, helping to reduce the negative impacts on businesses and support their long-term recovery.

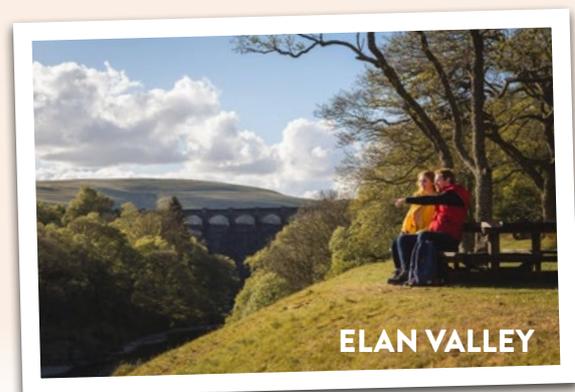


The study will develop a future vision and prioritised action plan to grow the visitor economy in Mid Wales, and the key objectives have been discussed with Welsh Government, Visit Wales and the Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum to ensure these important stakeholders are involved from the outset.

A steering group has been set up to deliver the study and includes key sector representatives. A stakeholder engagement plan will be agreed by the steering group at the start of the project as it is recognised that this is a particularly important component of the study, which will take place in Autumn/Winter 2021. Wide ranging stakeholder engagement will take place to build consensus ensuring that the regional action plan is one that the tourism sector can sign up to and are invested in.

For further information, please contact [tourism@powys.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@powys.gov.uk)

*This scheme has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.*



# STEAM FIGURES FOR 2020

Each year we pay to have our own visitor numbers analysed using the Scarborough Tourism Economic Measurement, (STEAM).

We received these in early September and as expected they make dismal but not unexpected reading.

These match the all Wales average which was a 65% drop in economic impact and 66% drop in visitor days.



## STEAM SUMMARY 2020 BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

Total economic impact of tourism £M	129.65
% change on 2019 (£'s 2020)	-61.3%

Total visitor days (Millions)	2.09
% change on 2019	-63.1%

Staying visitor days (Millions)	0.76
% change on 2019	-57.8%

Total visitor numbers (Millions)	1.50
% change on 2019	-65.1%

Number of staying visitors (Millions)	0.17
% change on 2019	-60.8%

Number of day visitors (Millions)	1.33
% change on 2019	-65.5%

Number of FTE jobs supported by tourism spend	2,694
% change on 2019	-37.0%

Prepared by Cathy James, GTS (UK) Ltd



# BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AMBASSADOR ONLINE COURSE

Due to Covid-19 the Ambassador course has not proceeded due to the interactive nature of the course. Research into how we can proceed and convert the course into an on-line course has led to a conclusion to follow the Snowdonia National Park online Ambassador course format which is part of a North Wales collaboration.

[www.ambassador.wales/ambassador-courses/snowdonia-national-park-tourism-ambassador-course](http://www.ambassador.wales/ambassador-courses/snowdonia-national-park-tourism-ambassador-course)

The Scheme can be achieved online in just a few easy modules. Learning at one's own pace, at home or at a place of work. By reading each module and then answering a short quiz on the content and gaining at least 80% ensures a pass.

Two modules will be compulsory- unit 1 Brecon Beacons National Park and unit 2 Sense of Place.

If these two units are passed a bronze certificate will be awarded, the aim is to have these up and running by December 2021.

Eight further units which will be theme based such as Geopark & Dark Skies will be developed next year which will carry with them silver and gold certificates.

The course sits on its own platform with a CMS design this has already been designed and developed by Artychoke.com, link below:

[artychoke.com/wales-ambassador](http://artychoke.com/wales-ambassador)

Other Authorities which are using this are Denbighshire and Conwy others are in the process of developing theirs, Gwynedd, Ceredigion, Carmarthen, and Flintshire.



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BANNAU  
BRYCHEINIOG | BRECON  
BEACONS  
AMBASSADOR



BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

TOURISM TIMES





# CRICKHOWELL WALKING FESTIVAL 2022

The 2021 Crickhowell Walking festival was cancelled due to COVID, but it will be back for 2022! Planning is already underway for the usual 9 days of guided walks which will take place from 5th to 13th March 2022.

Each day there will be a variety of walks on offer, ranging from all day hikes across the Black Mountains or the Brecon Beacons, for those that wish to have a challenge, through to easier strolls along river or canal bank for those wishing a more leisurely time. Crickhowell's wonderful walking guides will again be on hand to ensure that your walk is both safe and informative and that you can relax in the knowledge that you are in the capable hands of an expert with good local knowledge.

One of the features of the festival is the provision of linear walks, which are difficult to accomplish without the use of multiple car journeys. But a minibus ride to the start give you the opportunity to explore new routes to explore this beautiful area.

As usual, booking will open on 1st December 2021, and booking is essential for all walks. Many of the popular routes get fully booked before Christmas, so don't leave it too long to make your bookings.

To keep you entertained in the evenings there will be a range of talks and other events included in the programme.

You can find out more about the festival and how to book at

[www.crickhowellfestival.com](http://www.crickhowellfestival.com)

**So clear a space in your diaries for CWF  
2022 – 5th to 13th March 2022!**



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# DARK SKY FESTIVAL

Hailed as a resounding success, starting with over 2000 school children tuning in to a talk about the Milky Way and how to find it by Nick Busby from the Usk astronomical society and member of the Brecon Beacons National Park dark sky board.

A welcome from our Chief Executive Officer, Catherine Meaning-Jones who introduced Lord Martin Rees, astronomer Royal to launch the festival.

The weekend was action packed with Paul Davies an award-winning physicist discussing the probability or not of other intelligent life forms in the universe.

Colin Burgess who zoomed in from Australia with a spine-tingling talk about the space race and how he, as a boy was inspired as he saw Sputnik 1 fly across the sky.

A mesmerising presentation about meteorites and the explanation of why we are made of stardust from Nick Busby.

Time travelling was tackled from a geologist perspective by our very own Alan Bowring.

Henry Schofield from the Vincent trust spoke about our beautiful bats and why we must make every effort to ensure they have darkness to ensure their survival.

D.J.Thomas, from the Usk astronomical society, provided a spectacular presentation about the myths & legends in the sky.

Keith Mosely blinded us with figures and equations to explain how stars work.

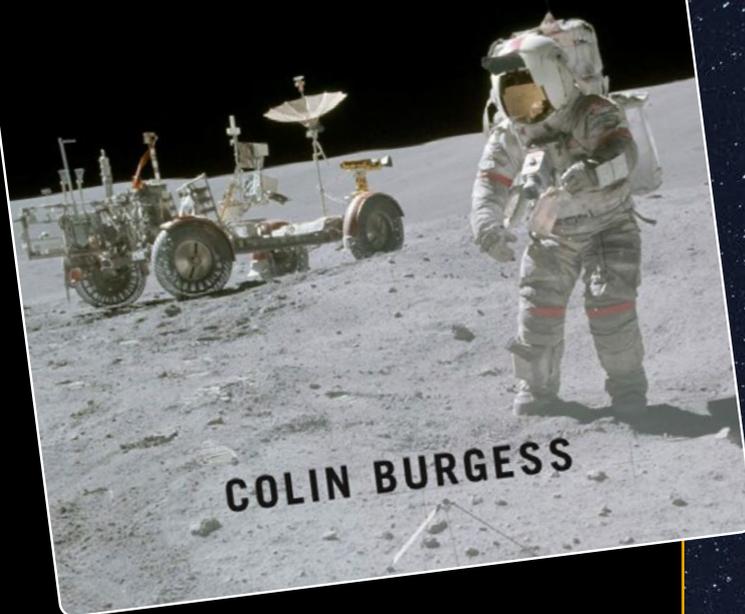
The finale was beamed live from the Brecon Beacons National Park Visitor Centre, via Facebook live, with over 3000, people tuning in.

Click the link to watch it now:

[www.facebook.com/breconbeaconsnationalpark/videos/409905530545753](https://www.facebook.com/breconbeaconsnationalpark/videos/409905530545753)

## THE GREATEST ADVENTURE

A History of Human Space Exploration



Sue Holden, one of our National Park Committee members, who is also on the dark sky board interviewed a variety of guests, starting with Wayne Lewis, centre Manager, Usk astronomical society members, Ian Cooper and the amazing mesmerising Uskelele band, Emma Price who has just started a mobile coffee truck, Moon and Back, Helen Dunne who launched her new chutney, "Dark Sky Reserve" at the event and of course Hayley Sharp one of our education officers who talked about our bats.

We will be organising another festival for 2022, hopefully some events will be live and we hope that if you missed this one you will come along to the next.



## BRECON BUZZ SUPPORTING NEW INITIATIVES IN BRECON

Brecon Buzz has begun to grasp some positive projects for Brecon – they encouraged over 15 businesses in Brecon to take part in the national Totally Locally Fiver Fest in June encouraging people to shop on the high street by offering something for just £5.

The team have published an Indie Guide for the town featuring independent businesses, places to visit and town walks. This was produced by the group for free with creative work by Wise Monkey Design and the print costs covered by Powys County Council. The guide will be updated and redone this autumn with business contributions requested.

The group have been successful with a Sustainable Development Fund grant to contract someone to undertake a Review of Brecon Signage and Visitor Information. The report coming out of this initiative will inform a series of applications and projects the town will be then be able to implement in 2022 to help visitors and locals navigate the town better and know more about what is on their doorstep,

Brecon Buzz is working with a steering group looking to bring a Choir Festival to Brecon over the weekend of July 22nd 2022. This event will include local and visiting choirs singing at the cathedral, Christ College and in venues around the town – including Afterglow events in some local hostelries on the Friday and Saturday nights!



# ATLANTIC CULTURESCAPE - A SPOTLIGHT ON LIVING HERITAGE IN THE BRECON BEACONS DROVING IN THE BRECON BEACONS

By Mark Davis, National Park Ambassador,  
[www.glanpant.com](http://www.glanpant.com)



**Droving is the ancient practice of driving cattle to market by foot. Droving livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs, turkeys and geese) from the Welsh hills to the English markets is a practice that has gone on for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The Normans were responsible for establishing the first important meat and cattle markets, the most famous of these being Smithfield in London a market over 800 years ago.**

The journey from Wales to London and other important markets such as Hereford and Banbury was long and could take several weeks. Routes from west, south and mid Wales (even from Ireland) may have used routes through the Brecon Beacons. Welsh livestock reared on coarse mountain grass were hardy and strong to endure the long journey and make good prices at market.

The routes the drovers took often followed ancient ways established in Roman times, the Iron Age or even the Bronze

Age. Some of these routes were upland ridges that provided good visibility and less risk of ambush from robbers and cattle rustlers. The knowledge of droving routes was passed from drover to drover or drover to son. Drovers in the Beacons adopted the practice, used by Scottish drovers, of planting groups of Scots pines (usually three) as way markers. Easily recognisable all year round and in poor light, clusters of pines could simply indicate the best route through difficult terrain, maybe a river crossing or a droving inn that would provide overnight shelter.

The most evocative features of droving that can be seen today are paths called 'hollow ways', often hidden away running between field boundaries. They are distinctive by their rocky, stony beds and the ancient trees that line them, magical sunken ways carved passage of livestock over centuries.

Welsh place names tell the story of droving, for example in the Beacons the village of Pengenfford (where there is an old droving inn) is contraction of Pen (top) Cefn (ridge) Ffordd (road) - a welcome stop for the drover. At a farm above Brecon named Tir (ground) Ciw (shoe) there is evidence of a "gore" (a small triangular field used to isolate a head of cattle for shoeing). It's believed that this place may have been where cattle were shod for with special shoes (ciws - thin metal plates for each bit of the cow's cloven hoof) that would protect the cattle's hooves on the long journey.

The Welsh banking system also has its origins in droving - carrying cash was a risky business for the drovers who were often robbed so finding ways to avoid this was important. In Llandovery the Bank of the Black Ox was established in the Kings Head Inn by drover David Jones. In Brecon Wilkins' Bank was established to "... finance the activities of the drovers..." (now Lloyds Bank).

The drovers' days were numbered though. From their peak in the late 18th century activities were affected by the advent of the railways and later larger motorised lorries. The last recorded drove in the Beacons was from Tregaron to Brecon in 1953. However, droving has left its mark in our landscape, customs and culture. The routes they trod are still with us buried under our main roads, in sunken hidden lanes between fields and high up on upland ridges.

Follow Atlantic CultureScope: [www.atlanticculturescape.eu](http://www.atlanticculturescape.eu)

On Facebook & Twitter - @ACulturescape

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



# UNDERGROUND TALES OF BLACK GOLD IN WALES

**The Rhondda is famed the world over for its coal mining, which sparked the global Industrial Revolution and inspired the minds of greats like Sir Isambard Kingdom Brunel.**

That epic story comes to life at A Welsh Coal Mining Experience at Rhondda Heritage Park. Set in the footprint of the former Lewis Merthyr Colliery, men who once worked in the mines of the Rhondda will guide you on the Black Gold Experience Underground Tour.

Visitors of all ages will love meeting the friendly guides, who add personal stories and memories to the experience.

Ride DRAM! the cinematic experience as the last wagon of coal races to the mine surface and enjoy free interactive displays and exhibitions. Caffè Bracchi serves a delicious range of hot and cold food and drinks, plus cakes and treats.

Book on to a chocolate-making workshop at the Chocolate House. Visit the award-winning Craft of Hearts, an independent craft shop which also runs workshops you can join.

Events are also a big part of the annual calendar here. The ever-popular Santa's Toy Mine is returning for 2021. Santa's Toy Miners transform the entire venue into a magical Christmas wonderland and take you underground on a hunt for Santa – with a few surprises along the way before you meet the big man himself in his gorgeous grotto.

A Welsh Coal Mining Experience is just a 10 minute drive from the Pontypridd junction of the A470. For directions and info on how to book:

[www.rhonddaheritagepark.com](http://www.rhonddaheritagepark.com)

Find us on facebook and twitter for updates.



# WATCHING NATURE RECOVER

Maria Golightly, the Park's Local Nature Partnership Officer has been busy supporting a number of local projects across the National Park.

Working with local communities on the Park's fringes, 5 Local Nature Recovery Sites have been established. The sites have all been surveyed to establish existing wildlife interest and each has a plan in place for works to enhance them. In Pontneddfechan works kickstarted with a community get together, to plant native wildflowers (plug plants).

Our Watching Nature Recover volunteers are still busy; using the project's loanable trail cameras to record wildlife around the Park. There have been some great sightings.

This year's Seasonal Nature Training Sessions (organised by BIS) have proved popular and it's great that sessions are once again possible in person. Summer courses included Limestone Plants and Marsh Fritillary Butterflies. Keep a look-out on their website for future events **BIS: Events**. All sessions are free.

There is also still time to apply for a Community Nature Recovery Grant. Grants of up to £500 are available to community projects which do something to give nature a helping hand within the National Park. Perhaps you would like to create a mini-orchard, provide homes for nature, plant some trees or even create a pond. If so, why not contact Maria on [naturerecovery@beacons-npa.gov.uk](mailto:naturerecovery@beacons-npa.gov.uk) to discuss your ideas.

For more information on the Local Nature Partnership see: Wales Biodiversity Partnership - Brecon Beacons National Park ([biodiversitywales.org.uk](http://biodiversitywales.org.uk))

Maria Golightly, BBNP Local Nature Partnership Officer



Planting day with volunteers at Pontneddfechan

## SURVEY TO HELP US IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL PARK

One of the objectives of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is to help diverse groups of people access and enjoy the heritage, places and special qualities of the Brecon Beacons.

We know it is not always easy for everyone to access the Brecon Beacons- that there are barriers. We already try to address issues where we can, but would like to try and do more.

It would be really helpful if you, visitors or anyone else who would like to give feedback could complete this short survey. It takes about 5 minutes. This will help us gain a better understanding of:

- A) Any difficulties people have in getting out and about in the National Park and**
- B) how the National Park Authority can help address these issues.**

The survey is available in English and Welsh via Microsoft Forms on the National Park Authority website. Feedback is welcome at any time but ideally, please return as soon as possible.

[www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/communities/survey/](http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/communities/survey/)

[www.bannaubrycheiniog.org/cymunedau/arolwg-rhwyrstrau-rhag-mynediad-i-barc-cenedlaethol-bannau-brycheiniog/](http://www.bannaubrycheiniog.org/cymunedau/arolwg-rhwyrstrau-rhag-mynediad-i-barc-cenedlaethol-bannau-brycheiniog/)

Any queries on the survey, please do get in touch with Francesca Bell, Community Development Officer, [francesca.bell@beacons-npa.gov.uk](mailto:francesca.bell@beacons-npa.gov.uk)  
Tel: 07854 997 530



# CRIC CELEBRATES ITS 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The past fifteen years have been marked by many highlights and more recently by a few challenges for CRiC. The construction of a new building in the heart of Crickhowell 15 years ago resulted in what is now a vibrant community hub and visitor attraction in its own right and through September CRiC's staff have been celebrating 15 years in the community with volunteers, friends and supporters.

As well as welcoming visitors to the region who are seeking information and advice about what to do or where to go, eat or shop CRiC supports and promotes local businesses and artists and the recently re-vamped [visitcrickhowell.wales](http://visitcrickhowell.wales) website also boasts online shopping facilities for books, maps, gifts and art. CRiC's first floor meeting rooms, provision of Wi-Fi, office services, copying and printing facilities all support local small businesses and provide access for adult education. Together with the support agencies located within CRiC these facilities all add to the vibrancy of the centre which is currently open to the public 6 days a week.

Centre manager Jan Morgan expressed her belief that "CRiC's growth and success is down to the staff and volunteer team's continued enthusiasm in embracing CRiC's objectives of supporting small businesses and individuals and promoting our area within the Brecon Beacons National Park to visitors who come from far and wide. We can, not only look back and celebrate our successes, we can also look forward to celebrating future success and be positive about the charity's future sustainability thanks to the resilience and loyalty shown by the team. We appreciate the support and help from the local community and many friends during and since the Covid-19 pandemic which has helped to secure the future of the Centre as a much valued facility for the town and the area."

The oriel CRiC gallery has gone from strength to strength during the past fifteen years with a core of established and supportive artists who have contributed hugely to its success. The autumn exhibition will run until early November and will include paintings in oil by Patricia Kenny, the winner of the Visitors' Choice Prize in the 2019 Open Art exhibition. The celebratory and varied exhibition also includes powerful sculptures in wood by Abergavenny based, Harry Iles making this yet another exhibition which should not be missed.

Current opening hours for CRiC are Monday to Saturday 9.30 to 4.30 Crickhowell Resource & Information Centre, Beaufort Street, Crickhowell, NP8 1BN

[www.visitcrickhowell.wales](http://www.visitcrickhowell.wales)

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