

action for tourism

Sustainable Tourism in the Brecon Beacons National Park

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Rural Alliances Launches!

Our new European Union funded project, Rural Alliances, was launched on 19th June by John Griffiths, AM, Minister for Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff. Around 150 people were involved in this two day conference which proved a great success.

Rural Alliances will follow on from the highly successful COLLABOR8 project, expanding the scope of the work and involving yet more people. The key concept behind it is that businesses should work closely with their local communities to achieve common ends. In the Brecon Beacons, this will be achieved using tourism as the driving force. As we have the clusters developed under COLLABOR8, we are well placed to take the enthusiasm forward into communities and work ever more closely together.

The sort of work the new project will be doing will be to continue to develop products for visitors as we have with COLLABOR8. However, tourism impacts on local people and their daily lives and there may well be work needed to manage those impacts by such things as good signage, well thought through information or re-organisation of local facilities.

As with COLLABOR8, Rural Alliances is not a grant scheme but has funds to help us all work in partnership to achieve common objectives. We are grateful to the Interreg IVB NWE programme as well as Welsh Government's Targeted Match Fund for supporting the project. BBNPA is the Lead Partner for the project which includes 11 other partners including Trinity Saint Davids University in Lampeter.

Abergavenny Food Walks

Two new food walks will be launched in the autumn by the Abergavenny & District Tourism Association.

One walk starts from The Crown at Pantygelli and leads the walker in a 6 mile circular route to the top of Sugar loaf.

The other walk starts from The Bell at Glangrwyney for the full blown 6mile walk which takes walkers up along the ridge of Mynydd pen-y-fal. There are shorter options of 2 or 3 mile circular walks.

Pick up the leaflets from Abergavenny Tourist Centre.

Eco Travel Network

This summer saw the launch of the Eco Travel Network (ETN). The aim is to enable visitors to the area to explore the National Park in a fun eco vehicle instead of by car. If successful, we can significantly cut the carbon footprint of visitor travel.

With the support of the BBNP Sustainable Development Fund, the ETN has purchased a small fleet of Renault Twizys which it is effectively leasing to local tourist businesses who rent them to their visiting guests. Businesses can join the ETN as either full or affiliate members and they keep the revenue from any visitor rental. In addition, around 25 local businesses have volunteered as top up charge points for visiting Twizys.

The Twizy is a fun-to-drive, low energy vehicle, which can be fully charged from an ordinary 13Amp domestic socket in about 3 hours. It is a 30-50 vehicle - with a range of 50 miles when driven at 30mph, or 30 miles when driven at its top speed of 50mph. Driving a Twizy along the back roads of the park is an exhilarating experience, and creates no atmospheric or noise pollution, but when driven gently, a Twizy can easily cover 8 miles on a single kWh - a regular car manages just 1 mile. The ETN hopes to demonstrate that we can all dramatically reduce our travel carbon footprint but still have fun doing it.

For more information go to www.ecotravelnetwork.co.uk or call Ian Foster on 01497 842935

Rural Alliances Opening Conference

This conference was generally agreed to have been a superb success and we are extremely grateful to everyone who made it happen, particularly those involved in the workshops that took place in the Brecon Beacons.

After an introduction from BBNPA's Chair, Julie James, the Minister kindly launched the project officially, emphasising how important National Parks are in piloting new ways of working. He was followed by a series of eminent authorities from Sir Brian Unwin who encouraged local communities to take hold of their own destiny and work towards sustainability, to Professors Gregory Ashcroft who talked about using cultural heritage for tourism and Terry Marsden who is interested in the development of rural vibrancy - a key aim for the project.

David McNeill from Welsh Government gave us a trip around the various EU funding schemes for rural Wales and what they had achieved. We then we asked 4 key projects to help us learn from their experiences and then, the following day, held a series of workshop-seminars at various locations in the Brecon Beacons, concentrating on subjects as diverse as tourism and community energy production.

Overall the message was that it was people that made rural areas vibrant and that getting the right people in the right place was the key to success. Projects like Rural Alliances and the support they bring could help but ultimately it was the folk involved on the ground that made things happen. We are looking forward to working with businesses and local people to make this happen in the Brecon Beacons.

New Member of the Team

Catrin Parish-Marks recently joined the team as the Sustainable Tourism Officer working on the Rural Alliances project. Previous to joining the team, Catrin worked for the cycling charity Sustrans and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) helping to develop and promote sustainable development policy in Westminster and Cardiff.

Catrin's interest in tourism is both personal and professional, as she and her husband have been managing a self-catering property in Bethlehem, in the very west of the park for the past 18 months. An experience she says is educational and always throws up surprises.

"I am proud to welcome visitors to this part of Wales and am eager for them to discover and experience all that the park has to offer - the landscape and the people. "I know however to never underestimate or assume what questions visitors will ask. To ensure I can answer their questions, I've learnt more in the last year and half about the wildlife, history and geography of the place where I grew up than the all the years before. I've also had to learn a great deal about plumbing and DIY. **Continued >**

The Brecknock History Forum launched their leaflet "Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal history" in July which was extremely well received.

It follows the same design as the Canal food trail and Beacons water trail and was designed by the very talented Lisa Hellier. The leaflet highlights the construction of the canal, Navvies, Tram roads, lime kilns and more. The aim was to help visitors learn about the history of the canal as they walk, cycle, and canoe or take a boat or barge. This is a wonderful legacy to leave in celebration of the 200 years.

"It's only now, after moving back to the area, that I truly appreciate the beauty of the landscape and feel very lucky to live here, Individuals living in rural areas however need more than just fantastic scenery to create and maintain vibrant communities. That's why I believe that Rural Alliances is a fantastic project. Being able to learn and share experiences with rural communities from different cultures will help now doubt create original solutions to issues faced by our rural communities.

Young Explorers are Quizzed

There's a new explorer in town and he goes by the name of Crick the Dragon.

The engaging character is the star of five quiz trails that have been developed for children (and their families) as a way of exploring and learning more about who and what lives in Crickhowell and the surrounding area.

Developed by the Crickhowell and Black Mountains Tourism Group, a cluster that was established with the help of COLLABOR8, the quizzes ask a range of questions about the wildlife, buildings and geography of the area. Part of the quiz is a treasure hunt and local businesses are showing their support by displaying a sticker of Crick in their windows.

There are five quizzes in total and as well as being great fun to complete, they also act as suggested itineraries - from an hour's walk around Crickhowell to an all-day adventure around the Black Mountains.

Emma Corfield-Walters, Chair of CBMT says of the quiz, "It's great that Rural Alliances could help create these resources especially for young explorers. Hopefully they will encourage local and visiting children to follow in the footsteps of another famous Crickhowell son - George Everest.

The quiz sheets are available from CRiC and following the completion of each quiz the child will be awarded a certificate and a badge. There are five different designs to collect. Have you seen Crick yet..?



Light up the Canal

The final celebration for Canal 200 will be a Lantern parade on Saturday 1st December at Brecon canal basin. The aim is to light up the canal with lanterns and fire sculptures to the accompaniment of music, song and dance.

Arts Alive will be organising the event with professional artists who will run workshops to design and construct lanterns and fire sculptures. The workshops will be held at community locations along the canal in Powys from 27th October to the 4th November.

If you would like to get involved please contact Carol Williams 01874 620478 carol.williams@breconbeacons.org

Travel content media specialist Greentraveller has created a series of short videos that showcase 'Sustainable Tourism Champions' - businesses that are at the forefront of sustainable tourism in the Brecon Beacons National Park

Funded by the new Rural Alliances project, the three minute videos highlight 7 'Sustainable Tourism Champions' and how they interconnect with the Brecon Beacons National Park landscape.

Richard Tyler, Sustainable Tourism Manager for Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, said: "This is one of the first projects that Rural Alliances has funded. We are extremely proud that it features the hard work behind many of our sustainable businesses and rural enterprises."

"The businesses featured on these videos which we locally call 'Champions' have been recognised for their efforts by the Europarc Federation under the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. We wanted to work with Greentraveller to promote what they do and why in a way that resonates with potential visitors. We are very pleased with the result."

Dr Xavier Font, international expert in responsible tourism marketing at Leeds Metropolitan University and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism, said: "The Greentraveller films I have seen profiling individual businesses really reflect what sustainability has to add to sense of place. They come across really very well and I find the videos credible and meaningful."

The videos can be viewed on

Greentraveller's website:

<http://www.greentraveller.co.uk/videos>

-local-ambassadors or on

Greentraveller's Youtube Channel:

www.youtube.com/user/greentravellers

Dark Skies Accreditation getting closer

After a Spring and Summer of continued work, we are delighted to say we are progressing well to making the Brecon Beacons National Park the first International Dark Sky Reserve in Wales and the second for the UK!

Five astronomers have surveyed the night skies of our National Park and have demonstrated what we really knew already- we have some of the finest night skies in Britain! Some of the readings were equal to areas of Sark and Galloway and when you consider the larger populations we have here compared to those areas this is incredible.

We have also been lucky enough to work with two expert lighting engineers who carried out an audit of commercial and residential properties in the National Park to look at how compliant our current lighting is - which had mixed results. Although in the commercial areas we were as low as 40% compliant with what our accreditors say we need to achieve the status, overall we are 67% compliant which is enough to secure the status. We have to demonstrate to the International Dark Skies Association we will work to make that percentage higher in future years, but we feel this is going to be achievable - we're already in talks with larger organisations about making adjustments to large scale lighting and we've received a lot of enquiries from members of the public wanting to make their homes more dark sky friendly. If you would like to learn more about how you can make adjustments to enhance the quality of the dark skies near you contact us at the details below.

We have also been busy publicising our night skies! Our remarkable promotional video has already received national and international attention - it was the video of the month on Visit Britain's main website and has also attracted interest from the New York Times. We attended the Royal Welsh Show and the Queen's Jubilee Event at Glanusk and hope to arrange four other key events in the coming months. Again, if you are interested in helping be a part of these events, please do contact us - we would like these events to be of benefit to everyone.

All being well, we are hoping to submit our application for the award in late Autumn and hope to hear whether we are successful for the end of the year - so here's hoping that 2013 will become the year of the stars for the National Park!

Continued >

Working with Visit Wales, we've developed Smart Travel for Tourism training and we're on the hunt for some local champions.

The idea is to encourage individuals and businesses large and small to become local experts on the public transport in their area, so they can best advise visitors and residents on how to get around without a car.

Depending on the size and type of business, the training will be offered in several different ways:

- Become a Travel Champion
 - This is a one day course for smaller businesses and includes a presentation from Traveline Cymru, advice regarding Sustrans walking and cycling routes, along with tips on the best ways to get travel messages across to your guests.
- For attractions and larger businesses, we are offering individual on site visits by a Travel Plan Co-ordinator and our Visitor Transport Officer to help manage visitor transport and advise on how to give visitors the information they need.
- For local business clusters, individual visits will be arranged for a Travel Plan Co-ordinator to meet the group in order to create a Travel Plan for the local area and develop travel champions.

The first session Become a Travel Champion has been arranged for 18th October and will be taking place in an unusual location – so look out for the Autumn training course leaflet for more details. Larger attractions and local business clusters will be contacted direct by the Visitor Transport Officer to see how we can help.

Our next event is on Saturday 20 Oct, 7pm at the National Park Visitor Centre where Cardiff Astronomical Society will once again be hosting an evening of stargazing. If skies are clear their telescopes will be focused on interesting phenomena in the night sky, or if cloudy there will be lectures indoors.

Price includes parking, soup and a roll. Booking is essential. Adults: £6.00 Children: £4.00. For more information and to book a place call 01874 623366.

In the meantime you may like to visit www.breconbeacons.org to see our videos, latest news and events as well as the suggestions for top places to view night skies.

If you would like any more information or would like discuss how you can be involved please contact Ruth Coulthard at ruth.coulthard@breconbeacons.org

Bestselling Author Becomes Patron for National Park Ambassadors

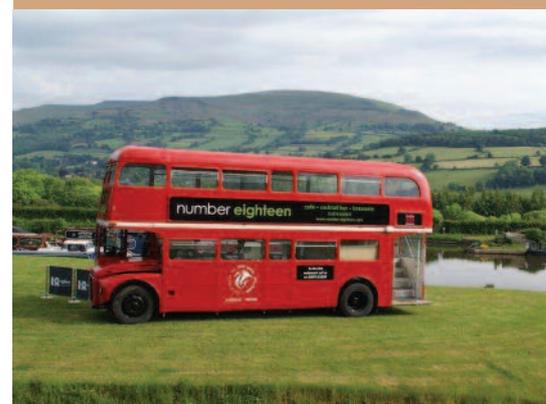
Award winning Welsh author and journalist Horatio Clare, the author of novels such as 'Running for the Hills', 'A Single Swallow' and 'The Prince's Pen', has accepted an invitation to become the official patron of the Brecon Beacons National Park Ambassadors' Scheme.

Raised in Cwmdru near Crickhowell, penman Horatio is no stranger to the Brecon Beacons National Park and knows exactly what it is that makes the area such a special place to live, so much so that earlier this year he gave a speech about his love for the area to a conference of National Park Authority Ambassadors.

New official patron of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's Ambassador Scheme, Horatio Clare, said: "I was extremely humbled and flattered to have been considered for this role. Having seen the fantastic work this initiative undertakes in helping promote such a beautiful landscape and putting the National Park on the forefront of Welsh tourism I was delighted to accept, and I'm excited to take on the challenges associated with this important responsibility."

Last month Horatio fulfilled his first official engagement as patron of the Ambassador scheme by meeting with National Park Ambassadors at Tretower Court and Castle, captivating them with the inspiring tale of his journey following swallows from Africa to the Brecon Beacons, featured in his book 'A Single Swallow'.

With more courses scheduled for the autumn, there's never been a better time to become a Brecon Beacons National Park Ambassador. To sign up and see the benefits of the Ambassador Scheme for yourself, contact our Tourism Growth Area Project Officer Carol Williams on 01874 620478 or email carol.williams@breconbeacons.org



Does your group need funding for a tourism project?

Sustainable Tourism Powys may be able to help...

If you are a constituted organisation (town council, tourism association, heritage society, wildlife group etc) and have a tourism project you would like to develop, Sustainable Tourism Powys has a "Sense of Place" fund which may be able to help.

The grant can cover up to 70% of project costs, to a maximum of £5,000 and can be used for the following types of projects:

Events, local food promotions, trails, culture and heritage related projects, marketing initiatives, projects that involve the Welsh language or anything else that would attract tourism to your local community.

If you are unsure if your project fits within the scheme, please give us a call and we would be more than happy to help and discuss the proposal.

Contact our Sustainable Tourism Powys Team now for friendly and professional advice on the Grant scheme Tel: 01874 612281 or Email: tourism.trade@powys.gov.uk

or go to our web site

www.tourismpowys.org to register your interest for one of the schemes. You can also find information on case studies and dates for the programme of free events we are running throughout the year.

The project is part-funded through the Rural Development Plan for 2007-2013 which is financed by the European Union and the Welsh Government.

Sustainable Tourism Champions

At the Tourism in Action Conference in March, 9 businesses were awarded the new Sustainable Tourism Champions status by Richard Partington of Europarc. Champions are also qualify for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas Part 2 run by Europarc and so are now recognised on a European level as partners to the National Park Authority in delivering Sustainable Tourism in the area.

To become a Sustainable Tourism Champion, businesses have to have a Brecon Beacons Ambassador on their staff, be a member of the Green Tourism Business Scheme and be a member of one of the COLLABOR8 clusters. The award was created to acknowledge the amount of time and effort that goes into these schemes and hopefully to reward those businesses making that special effort.

Champions will be able to use the especially designed logo for the scheme as well as the Europarc Charter logo and will be given a preferential opportunity to bid for appropriate NPA procured services. In addition they will be favoured in publicity and marketing. For instance we have been able to fund a series of videos by Green Traveller highlighting these businesses' green credentials. Have a look at them on the Green Traveller You Tube channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/greentravellers>

The businesses qualifying are:

- Aberyddnant Farm Cottages
- Brecon Beacons Holiday Cottages
- Brynhonddu B&B
- Cantref House
- Coity Bach Cottages
- Glynmeddig Bunkhouse & Stay @Number 10
- Old Rectory Farmhouse
- The Barn at Hall Farm
- Brynich Play Barn, Restaurant and Cottage

Check out Talybont on Usk

Talybont on Usk has always been a thriving hub for tourism with walkers, cyclists, kayakers and holidaymakers coming to enjoy the fantastic scenery.

Now visitors can clearly see the huge range of routes, activities and places to explore which are available in and around Talybont on Usk on the new Visitor Map Panel which has been integrated in to a beautifully built stone plinth.

The Map Board is situated close to the Talybont Stores and Café who have also had a new leaflet display unit installed to help visitors with leaflets and information.

They can choose a leisurely walk along the canal, to visit the waterfalls or do more of a challenging walk or bike ride. There is so much to do and no shortage of watering holes in the village with four pubs and a great new café.

Why not take a trip to Talybont on Usk and see for yourselves!



Talgarth is on the right path

Talgarth's reputation as being a walker friendly town could soon get official recognition by acquiring the "Walkers are Welcome" status. Talgarth is aiming to be one of the first in the Brecon Beacons, which will bring a number of benefits. It will help strengthen the town's reputation as a place for visitors to come to enjoy the outdoors and our facilities. It will bring positive benefits to the local economy. It will help to ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are maintained in good condition, benefitting local people as well as visitors.

To be eligible for the prestigious status, Talgarth needs to show that it meets certain criteria, including demonstration of popular local support for the concept, the formation of a community led steering group, action to ensure local footpaths are maintained in good condition, and be able to demonstrate active promotion of the Walkers are Welcome status and local offer through websites, social media, publications and press releases.

The Talgarth Walkers are Welcome community initiative is going from strength to strength and the word is spreading, with over 200 local signatures supporting the application and over 55 "Likes" on Facebook.

By the time you read this they should (hopefully) have been awarded full status of the national network and will have celebrated this at the Talgarth Festival of the Black Mountains at the end of August.

If you would like to show your support or find out more information please go to our Facebook page - Talgarth WAW or call Nicola Willis on 01874 713166 or email monstercottage@aol.com

The communities of Talgarth, Crickhowell and Hay-on-Wye are being supported by the Offa's Country Partnership and Walking with Offa project to help them achieve Walkers are Welcome status. This partnership project has received funding through the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013, which is supported by the Welsh Government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and match funded by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.



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This newsletter is grant aided through
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co-funded by Visit Wales, Wales Assembly Government,
TPMW, Powys County Council and the National Park
Authority.

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

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Brecon Beacons Tourism

Brecon Beacons Tourism (BBT) is the tourism trade association for The Brecon Beacons National Park. The group holds bi-monthly meetings with broad ranging agendas which highlight opportunities and help for tourism businesses as well as the chance to network. BBT members qualify for discounts on advertising in area marketing guides and the association has a range of other member benefits. Businesses who are already members of other local groups such as Crickhowell & Black Mountains Tourism or ADTG qualify for discounts on BBT's joining fees.

Brecon Beacons Tourism will be managing the business pages on the new destination website for the Brecon Beacons Marketing Coordination Group from the autumn. There will be much work to be done to ensure that businesses have the opportunity to update their current marketing profile if they are BBT members or to add their business to the new website when it goes live. Keep an eye out for more information on this in September and October. Currently businesses can advertise on www.breconbeaconstourism.co.uk which is the main destination website featuring businesses such as accommodation, activities and places to visit as well as events and feature pages on the area.

Brecon Beacons Tourism is in the process of completing a case study on Partnership working and will be spending more time in the autumn with the in - area groups making sure that everyone understands and gains from the hierarchy of support available to them as a business in The Brecon Beacons.

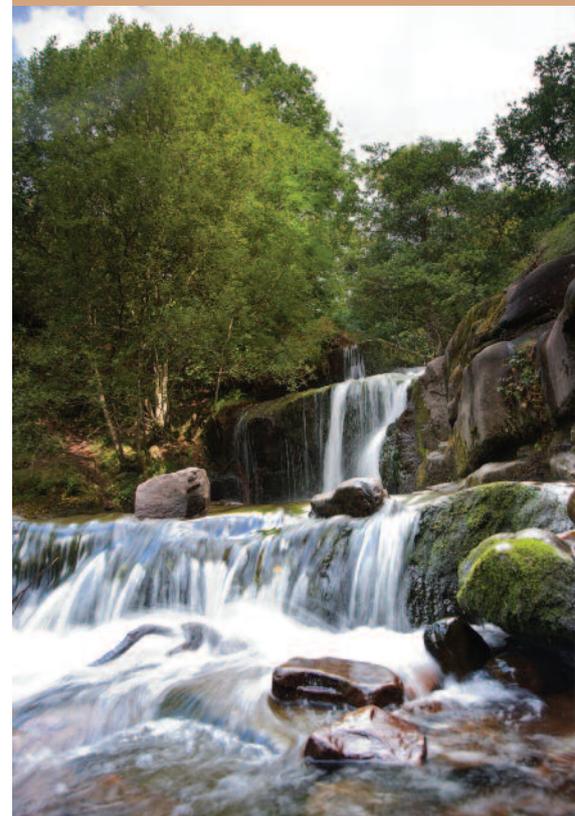
Brecon Beacons Tourism offers an 'in area' monthly leaflet drop. Businesses can pay a small annual charge to have their leaflets delivered to all the area's tourist offices as well as some key visitor points, the service goes out monthly and ensures that all places are topped up with the 'in area' business literature. Deliveries are also going to the Cardiff tourist offices three times a year. The service is also available for event organisers and promoters who want to do once off circulation of promotional literature.

Brecon Beacons Tourism also manages the contact for Alexandra Marr who is responsible for press and PR about the area. Alexandra is constantly looking for good stories and offers to send to the press or to post on the blog <http://breconbeacons.wordpress.com>. The team are constantly looking for businesses that are happy to help with journalist trips - many of those that do have had significant coverage over the past year. Please send all submissions for Alexandra to breconnews@gmail.com.

BBT works in partnership with the BBNPA, Capitol Region Tourism, Tourism Partnership Mid Wales, Visit Wales and neighbouring tourism associations and authorities to find ways of collaborative working and a better profile for the Brecon Beacons in the marketing of Wales. BBT also represents trade interests to Welsh Government both directly and through the Wales Tourism Alliance.

BBT meetings are held every two months in different parts of The National Park. The autumn meetings are on Tuesday, 25th September and on 27th November in the morning, venues to be confirmed - all tourism businesses are welcome to attend. Please keep an eye on www.getactive-beacons.co.uk for updates and news.

For more information on any of the above please contact Punch Maughan on 01874 638835 or email info@breconbeaconstourism.co.uk



Brecon Beacons
NATIONAL PARK
One of Britain's breathing spaces