

## BRECKNOCK WILDLIFE TRUST LIMITED

### TRUSTEES' REPORT AND ANNUAL REVIEW April 2005 – March 2006

#### LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

##### Constitution

Brecknock Wildlife Trust Limited is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Trustees, Directors, Officers and Staff at 31 March 2006.

<b>Patron</b>	Lady Birt	
<b>President</b>	Dr EMN Andrews	
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	Mr R Stevens, Mr BJ Wright	
<b>Chairman</b>	Dr J Gibbs	
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	Mr W Sargeant	
<b>Hon. Company Secretary</b>	Mr D Jones Powell	
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mrs M Lewis	
<b>Members of Council (in addition to those above)</b>	Maj. C Allum, Mrs S. Furber, Mr M. Jakes, Mr P Jenkins, Dr N Lowe, Mrs A Payne, Mr W Sargeant, Mrs H Summerfield, Mrs M Young	With the exception of the Patron, the above are directors of the company
<b>Hon. Solicitor</b>	Mr B Beck of Jeffreys & Powell	
<b>Staff</b>	Trust Manager	Mrs Diane Morgan
	Conservation Officer	Mr Charles Morgan
	Reserves Officer	Mr Phil Sutton
	Education Officer	Ms Alexa Farley
	Admin Assistant	Mrs Sheila Cowling
<b>Reporting Accountants</b>	WJ James & Co, Chartered Accountants, Brecon.	
<b>Bankers</b>	Barclays Bank, 9 The Bulwark, Brecon.	
<b>Office</b>	Lion House, Bethel Square, Brecon, LD3 7AY	
<b>Registered Office</b>	C/o WJ James & Co, Wheat Street, Brecon.	
<b>Telephone/fax/e-mail</b>	(01874) 625708 / (01874) 610552 / <a href="mailto:brecknockwt@cix.co.uk">brecknockwt@cix.co.uk</a>	

#### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Policy decisions are taken by the Council which currently comprises 15 members and meets quarterly. Its work is supported by three other committees. The Executive committee and the Conservation committee also meet quarterly: the former supports the Council through preliminary discussion of policy matters, budget preparation etc and the latter evaluates and develops the work of the Trust in meeting its wildlife conservation objectives. The Development committee meets on a more ad hoc basis and is concerned principally with promoting the Trust in the local community through educational and social activity.

Council members are company directors as well as trustees for the purposes of charity law and are elected to serve for three years after which they must be re-elected at the next AGM. New Council members receive informal training sessions with the Trust Manager and are encouraged to participate in special events such as visits to the Trust's reserves. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer are elected by the Council.

At the AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2005, Dr J. Gibbs was re-elected Chairman. Mrs Furber and Mr Jakes were elected to Council and Maj. Allum, Mr Sargeant, Dr Gibbs and Mrs Summerfield were re-elected. Mr Langworthy stood down and was thanked for his contribution to Trust activities.

Council decisions are implemented by the Trust Manager, Mrs D. Morgan and other staff. For guidance on their work programme, the Conservation Officer and the Reserves Officer also report to the Conservation Committee, the Chairman of which is Dr N Lowe.

The Trust benefits greatly from voluntary work by many people. Key roles filled by volunteers include that of membership secretary (Mr M Jakes) and publisher of the Trust's journal 'Breconshire Wildlife' (Mr W Sargeant).

**Related Parties:** The charity is a member of the Wildlife Trusts Partnership (registered as the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, registered charity number 207238) which acts as an umbrella body carrying out lobbying and public relations on behalf of all 47 Wildlife Trusts. Partners have the use of the Wildlife Trusts' logo and benefit from the resources, best practice and speciality experience of other member trusts. Membership gives the charity a national voice and profile, as well as respectability by association for those unfamiliar with its particular work. However, each member of the partnership remains entirely independent in terms of governance.

Special relationships are maintained with the five other Trusts in Wales through the Wales Partnership Management Board.

The Breconshire Wildlife Survival Trust (BWST) was established in 1989, largely through the efforts of the late Prof. L. Crabtree, to provide financial support for Brecknock Wildlife Trust (BWT). Although it had proved useful in identifying and tapping various new sources of funds, circumstances have changed in recent years and the Trustees of BWST – in consultation with BWT Council – concluded that no advantage remained in a separate identity for BWST. It was therefore wound up and, in accordance with its Trust deed, its balance of just under £39,000 was added to BWT's financial reserves in October 2005.

**Risk Management:** the Trust's main areas of activity and their associated risks have been assessed. This review process has led to the establishment or amending of control systems in order to manage risk at an acceptable level in the Trust's day to day operations.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Established in 1964, the Trust aims to conserve and enhance wildlife habitats, and protect threatened species in the old county of Breconshire. There are three main areas of activity:

- Managing nature reserves, currently 21 in number, of which 13 are owned freehold.
- Working for nature conservation and biodiversity across the county.
- Inspiring an appreciation of natural history and the environment among people of all ages.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS & PERFORMANCE**

### **Chairman's introduction - Dr John Gibbs**

This has been a year of stability in terms of staff and, as is clear from the information presented below, of much hard and enthusiastic work by everyone. I would like to make special mention of our first Mary Gwen Williams outing. (This is to be a biennial event and is designed to commemorate the legacy that the Trust received in 2003). A party of 25 went to Denmark Farm near Lampeter in early July to see the remarkable wildlife renaissance that can follow the 'de-intensification' of farming and the restitution of hedgerows and ponds. Demonstration projects such as this provide clear evidence of the benefit that can flow from the adoption of programmes such as Tir Gofal in the wider countryside and provide us, in the Trust, with a valuable stimulus to action. Our own Reserves can also act as demonstration areas and I would like to draw attention to the purchase of our new reserve, Cae Eglwys, which is characterised by many of the meadow plants that were once common in Breconshire, and which, we hope, will become so again. Over the last 6 years many of our reserves have benefited greatly from the investment of time and money that came from the Heritage Lottery and although this programme came to an end during the year, we are confident that there will be long term conservation gains.

We have been much concerned during the year over the ecological damage that would be likely to result if the projected National Grid gas pipeline were to be constructed through the county. We are not convinced that a case has been made for need for this pipeline and have raised concerns in particular over the damage that would occur to the upland grasslands on the proposed route through the west of the county.

Finally we welcome the fact that new Biological Action Plan (BAP) officers have been appointed to the two local planning authorities and say that we look forward to working with them in the future. We also very much value our relationships with the staff and members of the other Welsh Trusts and with key partners including the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).

### **Managing nature reserves**

The reserves section had a busy year managing the suite of nature reserves, now numbering 21. The regular mowing, monitoring, bracken and scrub control, general management and maintenance work, assisted by cattle and pony grazing on several sites, continued effectively. In addition, coppice work and otter holt construction was carried out, along with the provision of access improvements including the installation of a handrail, path clearance and path creation. A new mower was purchased to enable the continued hay cutting on several Trust nature reserves.

The Trust's successful Reserves Enhancement Project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund came to an end in May 2005 with the completion of the last items of work, namely the installation of interpretation panels, path way-markers, new fencing and gates and the publication of a reserves handbook.

In October 2005 a new reserve of 6.72 acres near Sarnau north of Brecon, was purchased at auction. It is an unimproved pasture with an interesting assemblage of less common plants and has been named Cae Eglwys. The Trust undertook discussions with the British Institute for Geological Conservation for the lease of Capel Horeb Quarry and entered an agreement with the Forestry Commission Wales to evaluate biodiversity and propose conservation enhancements for the site of Dyffryn Crawnon. Trust staff led guided walks at nature reserves and in the surrounding countryside for a party of the trustees and other organisations including the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Brecon Beacons Park Society.

The Volunteer Work Party team continued to be a highly valued resource for the Trust, without whom, much of the regular site maintenance and improvements would not have been completed, to the detriment of the Trust's nature reserves. Regular work days were advertised to a wide audience in a published programme of activities. Valuable assistance for specific management tasks was provided by the Brecon Loft Group and Duke of Edinburgh students from Coleg Powys. The Trust has recruited several new Reserve Wardens to assist with site management.

### **Action for nature conservation and biodiversity**

The Trust continued to be heavily involved in delivering a CCW Species Challenge Project investigating nightjar foraging habitats and breeding success. For this particular period it was centred on Crychan and Halfway Forests in the west of the county. Also in Crychan Forest, the Trust is working in partnership with the Forestry Commission Wales over a long term dormouse monitoring scheme. During the year, the Brecknock Wildlife Trust took over from the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales as the lead wildlife trust involved with the Mid Wales Red Squirrel project. A second and short phase of live trapping was carried out between October 2005 and January 2006 which confirmed the presence of red squirrels in the Ceredigion part of the study area. Previous phases of live trapping had confirmed their presence in Nant y Hwch forest in Brecknock. Trust staff continued to pioneer the development of Pori, Natur a Threftadaeth, which was launched at the Royal Welsh Show by Caerwyn Jones, the Minister for the Environment, Planning and Countryside. This is the Welsh component of the UK Grazing Animals Project and its aim is to promote appropriate grazing regimes on sites with nature conservation interest.

The Trust was heavily involved in the Powys Environmental Partnership (PEP) with the Conservation Officer chairing the partnership for a year. On behalf of the PEP, the Trust administered grant funding of approximately £6,000 to a range of environmental projects in the county which contributed to the Powys Community Strategy. The Trust also played an active role in monitoring the development of various community projects: in Priory Groves, Brecon staff provided guidance to minimise adverse influences on wildlife associated with the introduction of new pathways and lighting systems. The Trust maintained pressure for conservation in organisations such as the Penlan Pond Management Group and the Llangorse Lake Advisory Group. The Conservation Officer represented the three Powys Wildlife Trusts in the consultation process for the Powys Unitary Development Plan.

The Transco Gas pipeline proposals have demanded significant study from staff and county experts to evaluate and comment on the potential ecological impacts of the proposed development. There has also been consideration and comment to the Environment Agency Wales on the Usk Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy process. Planning lists of both Powys County Council and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have been screened and comments have been made for developments which are considered to have a possible important impact on wildlife.

Finally, Trust staff were involved with two matters involving suspected breaches of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, one involving a lesser horseshoe bat roost and the other a marsh fritillary breeding site.

## **Wildlife and People**

### **Working with the membership.**

The Trust closed the year with 819 members, including 22 corporate and schools members. Voluntary Membership Secretary Mr Jakes reports on a challenging year with the database, Raiser's Edge which is used by all the Welsh Trusts. The software is very powerful but continues to have teething troubles. In particular the conversion of the data from the old database to Raiser's Edge corrupted all the information on the Gift Aid donations, and distorted historical payment records.

There was a full programme of lectures. A particularly well-attended talk on owls, with live examples, was given by Council member Mrs Summerfield. Social events included a late autumn dinner and ceilidh at Penpont House and a talk, with supper, on the art of botanical illustration.

The new handbook to the reserves, produced in conjunction with the new reserve interpretation panels, was published and distributed to all members. The magazine, Breconshire Wildlife, with its three issues a year, provides topical and relevant information to the membership. As an example, it was used to communicate the results of the members' survey of garden weeds (see notes on the botanical group later in this report).

### **Working with the wider community**

The Trust's programme of talks and other events are open to non-members and are seen as a valuable means of promoting the cause of nature conservation. Several training events were organised enabling interested people to develop the skills necessary to make a useful contribution to conservation work. Thus, with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, training was provided on survey techniques for great crested newts, and with the Forestry Commission, training was organised to learn about dormice ecology as well as dormouse survey and monitoring techniques. A course on moss identification was organised by the Trust.

As a new initiative, there has been a Trust presence at the Brecon Farmers' Markets and trustees and staff have worked together on the development of a new web site.

Visits by the Education Officer to six Wildlife Watch clubs and an Eco club continued, covering topics such as identifying wildflowers and lichens, planting tree seeds, feeding winter birds and studying frogs and toads. Two more schools and a youth club are in the process of signing up, with a school teacher registering as a leader. Holiday events continued with the addition of a Pavement Art competition, an Owl Trail at BBNP's Christmas Fair and an afternoon of activities on a woodland reserve during the Christmas holiday.

## **Special Interest Group Reports**

### **Ornithology Group – leader Mr Andrew King**

The Ornithological Committee of BWT continues to meet on an ad-hoc basis to consider the status of bird species within the County, assess reports of rarities, and to approve the format and content of the annual County Bird Report. The 2004 Report (published in July 2005) was the first to be edited by Andrew King, Breconshire County Bird Recorder and included a description of a Paddyfield Warbler seen at Llangorse, a first for Wales. An increase in requests for information on birds within Brecknock was noted, particularly as part of the Environmental Statement for the proposed Transco pipeline across Brecknock.

### **The Otter Care Unit – Mrs Jane Jones and Mr Gareth Jones**

Two otters received treatment during the year. Unfortunately one was a cub which came to the unit from North Wales in a very poor condition and it did not live. Funds received for the otter unit meet a range of expenses including veterinary treatment, medicines, equipment, otter food and travel costs.

### **Mammal Group – leader Mr Phil Morgan.**

Monitoring for dormice continued at three Trust reserves, Glasbury Cutting, Drostre Wood and Pwll y Wrach. A training programme was provided by the group leader in order for volunteers to acquire practical skills and knowledge to meet the standards for a CCW licence to disturb protected species for the purposes of conservation research. This has led to the establishment of the monitoring scheme in Crychan and Halfway forests. Water voles continue to be a species for special concern, on the verge of extinction in the county. Surveys of recent known sites proved negative for recent signs. There was no Otter Group activity during the year.

### **Bat Group – leader Mr Phil Morgan**

The group continued its monitoring of important bat sites and the long running ringing project of Daubenton's bat. Visits were made to householders and advice given on a wide range of enquiries. In this way an important new roost of lesser horseshoe bats was discovered. Training continued for group members towards acquiring a CCW roost visitor licence. Small scale consultancy services were provided by the Trust Manager to assist with the enormous number of barn conversion developments which require assessments for bats.

### **Moth Group – leader Dr Norman Lowe**

The moth group continues to grow and now has 25 volunteer members, all of whom contribute moth records on a regular basis. During the year 18 species of moth were added to the county list including large species such as the Currant Clearwing, Tawny Pinion and Vapourer, micro-moths such as the continental species *Duponchelia fovealis* (probably imported on a pot plant), and leaf-miners such as the tiny *Stigmella speciosa*. Most of the volunteers carry out moth-trapping in their own gardens and the group was supported in this by grants from the Brecon Beacons National Park and Butterfly Conservation, who each contributed £250 to enable the purchase of essential equipment and reference books. Software for recording the moths we found was also provided free of charge by the Biodiversity Information Service. For the 2006 season the group is expanding its activities into regular survey work at key sites to provide information on key species and to assist in site management.

### **Herpetile Group – leader Mrs Val Bradley**

The records have been transferred to Mrs Bradley as new leader and spring 2006 saw the announcement of a new programme of activity.

### **Botany Group - leader Mr Mike Porter**

With encouragement from the conservation officer, there has been a resurgence of interest in the group under a new name: Botanegwyr Brycheiniog. There were two field meetings at Dyffryn Cwannon to collect data in support of the management plan and to help new group members improve their identification skills. Of special interest was our participation in a UK-wide investigation into the distribution of some garden weeds. An illustrated survey form in May had an excellent response with over 50 returns being submitted to Mr Porter. Preliminary results were presented in the winter issue of Breconshire Wildlife.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The final outcome showed a surplus of £26,028. The principal funding sources were investment income and grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Countryside Council for Wales. In addition there was a donation received following the winding up of the Breconshire Wildlife Survival Trust. This beneficial situation enabled the Trust to move quickly to acquire the new reserve, now named Cae Eglwys, in September 2005.

Acknowledgements and thanks are sincerely given to partners and supporters, notably the Countryside Council for Wales, Heritage Lottery Fund, Sustainability Challenge Fund, Species Challenge Fund, Environment Wales, Environment Agency Wales, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Butterfly Conservation, Powys County Council and the Welsh Assembly Government.

### **Investment policy**

The Trust's funds are held with COIF. The Investment policy contains a medium risk strategy to avoid erosion from inflation, which seeks a balanced return between income and growth. The performance of its investments is reviewed by a small sub-committee that meets every six months.

### **Reserves policy**

The Financial Reserves policy relates to two funds: a Real Property Fund for the acquisition of land and buildings to further the Trust's objectives; and a Number 2 Endowment Fund which aims to build up and provide a reliable source of income for core activities. The balance between these 2 funds is on a ratio of 1:4. The first phase of investment in these 2 funds from a deposit account was made in September 2004.

### **Plans for future periods**

During the period since the receipt of the Mary Gwen Williams legacy in 2003, staff, trustees and members of the special interest groups have worked together to produce a Development Plan. This document helps to chart the future of the Trust, together with the aims and priorities contained in the Wildlife Trusts Wales Conservation Plan 2006-11.

## **All Wales Activity**

Regular meetings continued to direct close partnership working with the 5 other wildlife trusts in Wales. A Welsh Conservation plan document was finalised, and collaborative events such as the Royal Welsh Show were organised. Materials to support all Wales working were produced and three issues of the Welsh Natural World magazine were published. Senior staff and conservation officers continued to hold collaborative meetings for special issues including large area nature reserves and the re-introduction of beaver into Wales. The All Wales database, Raiser's Edge, accessed via a virtual private network, has continued to present problems relating to both hardware and software and efforts to rectify the situation are continuing. A new corporate membership scheme was launched by Mr Iolo Williams in March 2006 at the new Welsh Assembly Government building in Cardiff.

As is made clear above, the Brecknock Wildlife Trust relies upon the dedication and commitment of many individuals - members, supporters, staff and trustees. Their expertise, enthusiasm, imagination and action make the Brecknock Wildlife Trust a successful and active force for local nature conservation and I thank them all for their hard work.

## **STATEMENT AS TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO AUDITORS**

So far as the trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information (as defined by Section 234ZA of the Companies Act 1985) of which the company's auditors are unaware, and each trustee has taken all the steps that he or she ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make himself or herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.

Chairman:     **Dr John Gibbs**

Date : 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006