

## FFOREST FAWR UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK (WALES, UK) ANNUAL REPORT 2016



Gorge walking at Bwa Maen, a major Geosite in Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark.

### Major achievements in 2016

- **Fforest Fawr Geopark Revalidation 2016:** The Geopark was the subject of a Revalidation Mission by the EGN delegates Mr Vesa Kroki and Dr Manfred Kupitz who visited the Geopark between 18 - 21 June. They were introduced to its landscape, geology and activities involving communities and training programmes and met with members of the Geopark's management team, the management teams of community centres and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The Revalidation Mission was successful and the Geopark has been designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark for the next four years.
- **Fforest Fawr Geopark Festival:** the Festival delivers European Geoparks Week locally as a 16 day programme and included a variety of activities in 2016 (18 in all) from 21st May to the 4th June including talks, field trips and activities for children. This event attracted over 1000 visitors to the Geopark.

- **35th International Geological Congress, 27 August – 4 September, Cape Town 2016:** The presentation *Intracontinental Deformation and reactivation, South Wales Coalfield, UK*, by T. Blenkinsop<sup>1</sup>, T. Ramsay and A. Abu Sharib was delivered as a Keynote Address at the Conference by T. Blenkinsop. The presentation, based on research in Fforest Fawr Geopark is the product of the collaboration between the Geopark and the School of Earth and Ocean Science, Cardiff University ( Geopark Partner) and Beni-Suef University, Egypt.
- **7th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks, 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016.**The presentation - *Anomalous Faults and Folds in Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark*, by T. Ramsay, T. Blenkinsop and A. Abu Sharib.

### Contribution towards the work of the EGN

- Participation in the 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> European Geoparks Network Advisory and Coordination Committee Meetings in the Basque Coast Geopark, March 2016, and English Riviera Geopark, September 2016.
- Contributions to the EGN Magazine, issue 13 and the EGN Newsletter, issue 7.
- Editing EGN Magazine 14
- Editing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of European Geoparks
- Editing the EGN Newsletter.
- Julian Atkins acted as the catalyst for the Mining Thematic Group.

### Management structure and financial status

Fforest Fawr Geopark is managed by members of its partnership organizations including: the Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority; the British Geological Survey; Natural Resources Wales; Dyfed Archaeological Trust; the Brecon Beacons Park Society; Cardiff and Swansea Universities and local businesses and tourism providers. The Geopark continues to be funded by the Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority.

### Engaging with Businesses

- **National Park Ambassador scheme:** the Geopark contributed to this well-established scheme on 30 April and 27<sup>th</sup> September. Participants, mainly tourism providers were introduced to the geopark concept, and to the Geopark's holistic approach in using its geology, cultural history and industrial history for geotourism and education.
- **Business Improvement Days:** the Geopark organized and delivered 'Caves and Kilns' - a Geopark orientation day for local businesses on 23<sup>rd</sup> February at Ystradfellte Church Hall. This event focussed on the local lime-working industry set amidst a karstic landscape. A further event took place at Penderyn on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and another ('Coffee and Coal') at Ystradowen on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

- **“National Park Knowledge”**: this initiative focussed on introducing taxi drivers to aspects of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Fforest Fawr Geopark in order for them to act as ‘ambassadors’ and story-tellers. An event on 10 March equipped taxi drivers with stories about numerous locations associated with the long military history of the area which extends from the Roman conquest of the Celtic Silures tribe in AD 77 to the present day.
- **Fforest Fawr Geopark Ambassador scheme**: this successful training programme for local businesses and tourism providers was delivered to two groups in February and again in October/November 2016. Participants were introduced to the Geopark concept, to the requirements of the charters of the European and Global Geoparks Networks and the rigorous evaluation and revalidation procedures which ensure that the Geopark designation stands for quality.
- **Local Ambassador scheme**: events were held at Abercrave in Cwm Tawe (26 January) at Ystradowen (10<sup>th</sup> February), at Pontsticill in the Taf Fechan valley (17<sup>th</sup> March) and at Defynnog in the Usk valley (21<sup>st</sup> March) and in Brecon on 13<sup>th</sup> September. Upland Ambassadors received Geopark training on 15<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May at Gilwern Hill. Waterfall Country volunteers were trained on 19<sup>th</sup> October
- **Tailored training for activity providers**: a Geopark training day with sixteen local adventure activity providers was held in the Swansea Valley on 29 January. Extreme weather caused a change of venue from that planned but was nevertheless very well received. A further ‘Dinas History’ day was provided for members of the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group at Pontneddfechan in the Vale of Neath on 19<sup>th</sup> February
- **Talks**: to Pontypool ramblers (15<sup>th</sup> April), Llanfoist Historical Society (12<sup>th</sup> April), Abergavenny Rotary Club (9<sup>th</sup> August), Llandovery (7<sup>th</sup> September), Llangorse (26<sup>th</sup> October).

## Partnership Activities

The Geopark was represented at several meetings of the South East Wales Group for **Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (SEWRIGS)**. The group is involved in designing a geoconservation and interpretation programme for the Geopark and the wider region. Conservation work in the Geopark is also included in the activities of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales and other Geopark partners.

## Marketing and promotional activities

Marketing activities have continued within the context of the National Park as a whole. Fforest Fawr features as a sub-brand within that work and features within the destination’s website, visitor guide and related material. There is a Marketing Co-ordination Group made up of public and private sector bodies involved in marketing the area. This has invested further in the destination website, has commissioned a PR Agency and has developed a strong social media campaign.

## Sustainable economic development

Sustainable Economic Development underlies much of what the Geopark is engaged in and which is reported elsewhere – particularly in working with businesses and communities. Over the past year a number of projects have contributed specifically to that goal, including:

- Rural Alliances Interreg IVB NWE project
- Beacons Way Development
- Route 49 Long Distance Road Cycle Route
- Underground project promoting safe access to caves
- Visitor Transport Initiative

Equally over the year the following major programmes (worth at least €50,000 pa) have been under development:

- LAND Interreg V project under development for Atlantic Area in 2016
- Food & Tourism
- Literature & Story Telling

## Educational Activities

- **University of the Third Age – Crickhowell U3A Chapter:** the Geopark provided a presentation to the group on 2nd March
- **Geological Field Mapping Training Programme:** The School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, Cardiff University uses Fforest Fawr Geopark in the following training programmes:

a) First Year Students from the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, Cardiff University, were trained in the principals of geological mapping at Moel Penderyn – a significant exposure in which a folded sequence of limestone and siliciclastic rocks is associated with a major fault, the Vale of Neath Disturbance.

b) Environmental Geoscience Students (Year 2) are trained in geological mapping on the faulted and folded rocks associated with the Cribarth Disturbance in the Upper Swansea Valley.

## Research in the Geopark

- **Sediment DNA and pollen stratigraphy at Traeth Mawr Geosite:** This research involves scientists from Cardiff University's Schools of Biosciences, Earth and Ocean Sciences, and School of History, Archaeology and Religion, and Fforest Fawr Geopark.
- **The structural Geology of the Cribarth Geosite and the Vale of Neath Disturbance:** A collaborative project involving the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, Cardiff University, and Beni-Suef University, Egypt and Fforest Fawr Geopark.

## **New Projects In the Geopark**

- Explosive Times Project, The Glynneath Gunpowder Works: Within the Geopark, the National Park Authority has secured Stage one project development funding from the National Lottery 'Your Heritage' Fund to progress the conservation and interpretation of South Wales' only gunpowder works.

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