**Wales Region report, September 2020.**

The Committee completed reporting on its main event for 2019, *Building a Relationship with your Donkeys*, a full day’s training with Ben Hart on 5 October in Carmarthenshire. The Committee was most grateful for the award of a grant from the DBS Education Committee towards the cost of running this event and disseminating the learning points. A full report is still available on the DBS website. Feedback was very positive on the day and further learning activities were under consideration before Covid lockdown.

It has always been an issue for the Region to find accessible and suitable training venues and numbers able and willing to participate can make the viability of events marginal. Even without Covid it may be more realistic to look at smaller events and the dissemination of learning resources, support and advice by more flexible means in the future. One Wales member, Ruth Stronge of Snowdonia Donkeys, has been very successful in 2020 in sustaining her organisation’s profile and support-base by a combination of online activities and old-fashioned mailouts. There are opportunities to learn from this success for the Region as a whole – a copy of an item for the next issue of *Bray Talk* is appended.

Future activities may include the delivery of planned events, such as a Tellington Touch learning day; an activity in association with the Donkey Sanctuary Welfare Officers; and a session on risk assessment and minimisation for donkey owners. Further discussions within the Regional Committee will take place as soon as practicable.

Ann Slater, Wales Regional Delegate.

Appendix: Extract from a report by Snowdonia Donkeys re. the challenges of maintaining stakeholder contact during Covid lockdown; to be published in *Bray Talk*, Autumn 2020.

“ The challenges of the pandemic made us rethink how we connected with people, if they could not physically come and meet the donkeys. How could we share our lovely donkeys and the work we do with people who couldn’t visit? As a small organisation, we also had to ensure we prioritised work with and the welfare of the donkeys.

Lockdown also had implications for our programme of volunteer recruitment and activities. Our original plan was focused on providing outdoor and conservation-based volunteer opportunities. None of that was possible, so we considered what other ways we could utilise volunteer time and skills.

We also had to keep in contact with the young people we work with in new ways. In consultation with some families we decided against online activities. Our families didn’t want their young people online any more than they had to be and some didn’t have Internet access. In response to this we sent them letters and parcels in the post, along with photographs of their favourite donkey; photos of them with the donkeys and craft or art activities with a donkey focus. We received the following positive feedback from the young people and their families:

“Thank you for the letter and activities, they made me happy to have contact with the donkeys.”

“Thank you for sending XXX the parcels. She is missing Clwb and the donkeys a lot. Your contact helps her to feel connected”.

We provided resources for activities that could be completed at home and brought to the donkeys once lockdown is over, such as bunting and artwork featuring the donkeys. For our regular supporters, for whom we would have held open days so they could meet the donkeys, we produced a newsletter to keep them updated with the donkey news.

And last of all, again in consultation with supporters, we reshaped our presence on social media. This involved daily posts to Facebook and Instagram, holding live events - Norman’s birthday party was great fun - and sharing more of our day to day routines with people, so that they could feel involved with what we do. “