

## Minutes of the SW Area of the BMC Open Meeting 25/01/2012

**Present:** Jerzy Wieczorek (Chair), Dave Turnbull, Martin Crocker and about 100 members and others  
*Minutes compiled from notes taken by Colin Knowles*

Open meeting started 1924

Jerzy (JW) explained the process of the meeting. There would be a presentation, and a discussion then those present would be asked to vote on the three proposals; then volunteers would be requested for the Project Steering Group.

Martin Crocker (MC) gave a presentation – summarised below:

The aim of the project is to significantly improve climbing in the Avon Gorge, and to ensure that climbing comes onto the agenda whenever the Gorge is discussed by the council and other bodies

The project will require the approval of Natural England

We (climbers) are not understood by officialdom

There is a new Avon Gorge guidebook in preparation, which also amounts to a survey of current crag condition, but the truth is that there are not enough people climbing here  
The guidebook provides a relaunch opportunity for the Gorge

We need to respond to Council plans and ownership changes

The Gorge is a geological SSSI covering the entire carboniferous succession.

Some of the fixed gear is in poor condition. There are 870 pegs in the Gorge (1.3 pegs per route) and 192 bolts (65 in New Quarry). These have been funded mostly by collections and donations. Currently about half the pegs need replacing; replacement has been rather random in the past. As for the bolts, the majority need replacing. The Avon bolt policy is like for like as amended 30/01/2011. New Quarry will need to be re-equipped and that will happen soon.

Group use of Seawalls is an important usage

Majority of the Gorge owned by Merchant Venturers charity (Clifton Downs Trust)

Downs Committee looks after the Council-owned northern section

The Clifton Downs Trust wishes to donate their section to the City Council; however the donation may not be accepted.

There is a Management Plan for Avon Gorge 2010-2015 (on council website  
<http://bit.ly/xXR4HG>)

It is a top-five site in the UK for rare plants including 2 Whitebeams.

Need to manage invasive and non-native species, whether by conservationists, climbers or goats and to support peregrine ringing.

Rock safety – much (but not all) rockfall lies out of range of traffic or pedestrians – and not much of what falls is created by climbers. It may be possible to tackle the few problem areas during annual maintenance.

As far as parking is concerned there is an informal agreement for two cars in the Amphitheatre pull-ins (i.e. one car per pull-in) – others will be ticketed. The Main Wall

parking area is sadly unused. We need an active role in consultation re the renewal of the Main Wall area.

There is a need for a new vision for The Gorge

The meeting was then opened for discussion, and contributors' points paraphrased below:

John Smith (Klingons): Should polished routes have extra protection

Barry Donovan (Cliff Rescue): Long run outs can catch out visitors

Richard Scofield (1974 climber): Extra protection takes judgement away from the climber

Peter Wells (1964 climber): Concurred with Richard Scofield but maybe we need improved belays on polished routes

Gareth Hughes: The new guide will show which routes are polished

MC: Some routes are now less polished than they were in the past

Julian Noble: Historically haven't the council been hostile to climbers?

MC: It's not the case – we're in the Management plan

Matt Goater: Asked for clarification on peg replacement – if I can do, should I?

MC: Yes

Ian Harriman: What's the policy on new route gear placement

JW: It's a traditional climbing area so no bolts

MC: As for new pegs on new routes, that is up to the new router

Nick Eaton: Questioned Steering Group's right to decide on new bolts

JW: The three proposals will be taken as a whole and are not amendable at the meeting

MC: Some trees are critical for protection, the location may need to have bolt replacement when the tree has died

Nick Heswood: Replacement of drilled pegs with bolts is sensible.

?: What's the purpose of the Project – crag cleanup or mass revival

JW: Attitudes might change

?: Questioned age profile and young attitude – asked for a show of hands (substantial; number of under-30 attendees)

*Outcome of the above request supportive of like for like*

Dan Perrett: Like for like doesn't bring new climbers (but then he contradicted himself)

Phillip Hello: We created a new route this year where we put in new pegs; missing/poor pegs would make a big difference

Matt Ward: Anyone can put pegs in routes

Phillip Hello: Sometimes you can't replace pegs

Dick Hall: People should be encouraged to replace pegs

Richard Scofield: The car park is not a good experience for visitors; we need good links with the crag owners and with Natural England

Tim Good: What's happening about the North Somerset side?

JW: ruled that the issue might be taken later

Dave Turnbull: Reopening car park optimistic

Colin Knowles: We need to know (count) the usage of the Gorge by climbers to help council planners

?: Why don't people climb here

Jedd Deforge: Surely parking doesn't turn people away – also we need bike hoops

Alex Harrison: We need to measure usage

Barry Donovan: Spontaneous rockfalls In the New Quarry; new visiting climbers may lead to difficulties and incidents; may backfire due to bad media coverage

Colin Knowles: commented on how climbers could keep routes open i.e. North Wall following the clearance by the Bridge Engineer

Libby Houston: reported that the Bridge Engineer may need to clear all the soil just the North Wall

Dan Donovan : No one knows about Steve Findlay's new routes on the North Wall (!)

Two volunteers appointed for counting the votes and the proposals were paraphrased by the Chair  
As it was an Open Meeting, all present were allowed to vote

**Vote 1**

Approve the Proposal as published

For Almost Nem Con

Against 0

Abstain 2

**Vote 2**

Approve the Project Steering Group

For Almost Nem Con

Against 1

Abstain 1

**Vote 3**

Approve the Requirements for the Project

For Almost Nem Con

Against 0

Abstain 1

<b>Project Steering Group volunteers</b>			
Dick Hall	Libby Houston	Simon Fletcher	Phillip Beddow
Dan Donovan	Martin Crocker	Simon Tappin	Keith Marsden
Colin Knowles	Barry Donovan	Ben West	Jedd Deforge

Alan Hans: pointed out that we will also need volunteers to carry out much of the work

JW: As you leave there will a collection for the gear fund and a piece of paper to volunteer

<b>Other volunteers</b>			
Ian Butterworth	Pete Clarke	Richard Nadin	J Pedgington
Mark Bessell	Luke Briant	Tony Cox	Alan Howells
Evan Hall	Andrew Holden	Deniel Perrott	Stephen Venables
M Lamb	M Demenis	G Mcarthur	C Woodburn
Von Bentley	Jerzy Wieczorek	Tim Good	James Hadley
Philip Wilson	Pippa Froggatt	Katherine Sydney	Emily Cropton
Dean Russell	Jon Ridley	Simon Rogers	Jay Lewin
Matt Cox	Tom Rogers	Alex Harrison	Charlie Bessell

Scott Titt: We can set up a group/forum on the BMC community pages

Libby Houston: Volunteers day is February 12<sup>th</sup> to clear vegetation in the Gorge – meet at Main Wall.  
10 a.m. start. Bring tools.

The meeting closed 21:35