



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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AGM & Minutes South West Area Meeting

Meeting held at the Nova Scotia Inn, Nova Scotia Place, Bristol, BS1 6XJ on Thursday the 13th April 2013 at 7.00 pm.

Present:

Matthew Goater (MG) - Chair
Dan Donovan
Martin Crocker
Brian Mullan
Libby Houston
Pradthea Latham
Martin Davies

Philip Wilson (PW) - Sec
Simon Fletcher (Avon Rep)
Alan Howells
David Fisher
James Latham
Rick Sowards - Wye Valley Rep
Alan Bowavan

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

(MG) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Colin Knowles (NC) and Ian Butterworth.

2. AGM Confirmation & Re-election of Local BMC Posts

The following posts were confirmed and seconded in post for the coming year:

- Simon Fletcher - Avon Rep (nominated by Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Jeremy Dyke - West- Penwith Rep (nominated Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Rick Abbott - North Devon Rep (nominated Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Dave Henderson – South Devon (nominated Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Rick Sowards - Wye Valley Rep confirmed that he would leave post if a replacement could be found (nominated Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Neal Hines – Portland Rep (nominated Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Steve Taylor – Swanage Rep is stepping down to be replaced by Martin Hallett (nominated Matthew Goater, sec Philip Wilson).
- Matthew Goater Area Chair (nominated Martin Crocker, sec Dan Donovan).
- Philip Wilson Area Secretary (nominated Martin Crocker, sec Dan Donovan).
- Colin Knowles - NC South West member (confirmed Matthew Goater and seconded as continuing by Philip Wilson).
- Richard Moss - NC South West member (confirmed Matthew Goater and seconded as continuing by Philip Wilson).
- Martin Crocker – BMC Roving Warden Cheddar. It was confirmed that Martin would remain in his roving brief of policing climbing on relevant Bank Holidays.

3. AGM Annual Review

The South West annual area report was read out by Matthew Goater to the meeting (see agenda). Matthew confirmed that this had been forwarded to BMC head office.

Each Area Rep Present was then asked to give a summary:

- Simon Fletcher (Avon rep) – Climb Bristol project, Down Ranger, Council. Issue with Unknown Wall area following the rock fall. Some of this land is privately owned so a meeting with them will be arranged. Martin Crocker added that the council is awaiting consultant reports. Although not officially informed Martin has it on good authority (Phil Lloyd BCC Engineer) that part of the cliff will probably need to be removed with the loss of some climbs. Simon Fletcher also said that as bird restrictions are in place on Main Wall, the usual annual posters have been put up limiting climbing in this area.
- Rick Sowards (Wye Valley Rep) – A big crag clean-up was carried out.

This concluded the Annual General Meeting.

4. Previous South West Area Meeting Wareham

Matthew Goater reported that as only one member attended this meeting the agenda was postponed to this meeting. No minutes were therefore produced.

5. Belay Stakes

Meadfoot Quarry

Philip Wilson reported that he had been contacted through South Devon Mountaineering Club (SDMC) and Phillip Ellis regarding a request for stakes. Nick Donahue SDMC BMC Rep passed more information to us regarding a 1990's by-law banning all climbing on cliffs within the town limits. Specifically Meadfoot Quarry has also had trees removed to enable the regeneration of a particularly rare plant. It was then pointed out that the provision of abseil stakes will point to climbers, climbing on the cliffs, which could potentially put the area under scrutiny and other areas potentially at risk of being lost.

Following the passing of this information to Rob Dyer, he asked me to find out council contacts so he could speak to them formally before sanctioning these stakes.

Action Point: Philip is to email Nick Donahue SDMC BC Rep to canvass SDMC members to see if anyone down there knows anyone in the council that we could approach to test the waters for us unofficially before we make any decisions either way.

Baggy Point

Matthew Goater also reported that Rick Abbot North Devon Rep placed 2 new stakes at top of Midnight Cowboy at Baggy Point (paid out of his own money) 2 years ago. The National Trust asked him to paint these green, which he did. Everybody seems happy with this arrangement. He added that he had only just found out about this yesterday.

6. Climb Bristol Progress Report

Martin Crocker summarised the position (from his report attached to the agenda for this meeting).

Action Plan: Delivery & legacy items will be published to the public in the future by Colin Knowles. This is also a useful document for measuring our progress.

Networking: A key element of the project is to create a good impression and recruit allies that surround and are within Bristol City Council (BCC) e.g. The Downs Committee attended by Colin Knowles and Martin Crocker. Key elements are to open the car park and have regular Sunday closures of the Portway road. This latter idea is now being championed by the new major who is seeking World Heritage Status for the Docks, Harbourside and Suspension Bridge areas. We are trying to include Avon Gorge in this.

Meeting With BCC Sports Development Officers: A meeting was held with the BCC Sports Development Officers (with Rob Dyer and Martin Crocker). Following that meeting our Facebook page had 1200 hits in the following week. These Sports Development officers seemed to already have a lot of empathy towards climbing and are keen to lead our cause with BCC Promising potential ally.

Scrub Clearances: These have also helped our cause. Libby Houston has also been crucial in this role, with her liaison with natural England.

Publicity: wise we are producing two leaflets and ClimbBristol T shirt on sale soon. ClimbBristol festival in Avon Gorge and local climbing Walls next summer. Ideas welcome on this.

Morning Slab: Work carried out. Loose rock was cleared from the lower left hand third.

Loose Rock Removal Discussions: were made with natural England and the application is to be reworked. Libby Houston has re-assured them that this is unlikely to damage rare plants. Work is highlighted to them on photo topos (Sea Walls and Main Wall). City Engineers will deal with areas near to the road.

Fixed Gear Fund: As managed by Dicks Climbing, another 100 pegs have just been ordered and activity is recorded via this spread sheet. This will be published eventually. BMC not involved with peg removal. Any competent climber can replace these pegs and should talk to Dick if they wish to do this.

Work Gear: Consisting of high visibility vests, goggles, ropes, etc is held by ClimbBristol.

Summer barbeque For Volunteers: Steering Group members have offered to go climbing with gorge volunteers in the summer. A barbeque is also to be held (no date is to be fixed yet as it might rain, this event will probably be a last minute thing).

7. Access & Local Issues

- i. Wood lane Quarry: (Weston-Super-Mare): Ian Butterworth reported on the closure of Wood Lane Quarry. This was prompted by a visit from Martin Crocker who encountered fencing and signage forbidding entry. On investigation it transpired that the quarry was fenced off 5 years ago, as it was deemed unsafe for children (following consultant a survey). Previously it had been used by geology students). As climbers are not children it was felt that they should not be restricted in the same way. Martin Crocker commented that the routes here are quite good and that the quarry could be an acceptable winter venue.

Action Point: Ian is trying to negotiate an access arrangement similar to that in place for Fairy Cave Quarry (combination gate padlock). Martin Crocker is to pursue contacts in North Somerset Council and has contacted the new BMC Quarries

Development Officer (he added that this is a potentially good case study for the BMC to see how North Somerset County Council handle our access request).

- ii. Fairy Caves Quarry: Ian Butterworth re-iterated that he requires 3 days turn around to provide climbers with the gate combination (although he has provided this at short notice he cannot guarantee to always do so).

Action Point: Philip Wilson agreed to talk to Tony Ryan (BMC) to ask him to add the combination lock key added to the RAD database (and possibly UKC).

- iii. Access Update On Black Rocks Quarry (Velvet Bottom Cheddar): Martin Crocker, reported on a meeting he had held with the (NT) who owned this esoteric winter venue quarry, located in Velvet Bottom Cheddar, regarding fence removal to allow climbing to re-commence, following the ban and rock descaling work.

Action Point: Martin Crocker & Ian Butterworth to give date reporting when climbing has re-commenced, we then need to alert Tony Ryan (BMC) so the Regional Access Database can be updated (current status is banned).

- iv. Cheddar Gorge:
 - BMC funding the warden again on a number of half day sessions including Bank Holidays to support Cheddar Gorge & Caves.
 - There have been management changes at Cheddar Gorge & Caves with the appointment of a new chief exec. Hugh Cornwall has moved jobs. He is now project officer for the cable car proposal.
 - The 5 Year no bolt moratorium (implemented in Sept 2009), needs re-negotiating in 2014 (this includes straight replacements and is not just new bolts) with the land owners.
 - Amphitheatre Buttress right wall has been rock cleared, destroying the rock catch fence in the process. Take care if climbing on Roman Wall (summer season crag). **Action Point:** Philip Wilson to talk to Tony Ryan to amend the Regional Access database to reflect this.
 - There is a cheese rolling event down the gorge road on the 16th June, organised by the Cheddar Gorge Cheese company if climbers wish to put together a team.
- v. Wintours Leap: Peregrines nesting low down near the path down between Fly Wall and Go Wall. A site meeting was held which Rick Sowards attended, where there was pressure to close the whole of Fly Wall (as this might contain potential roosting sites). Rick reported that there may be pressure to close this path, which is currently open. Climbing is currently banned in the quarry and on Pedestal wall due to this.
- vi. Wintours Leap Rock Fall: The Perfumed Garden has fallen down.

8. Any Other Business:

- i. Emails from Head Office: Matthew Goater asked for a show of hands of people received an email publicising this meeting. Only 5 attendees had

received this (according to a show of hands). Philip Wilson pointed out that the BMC wanted to push back the responsibility of sending out these emails publicising meetings back onto to us, although we have not got the facility to mass email 2000+ South West BMC members. Philip Wilson said that if people gave him their emails he could publicise this on a smaller circulation list. **Action Point:** Matthew Goater to speak to Tony Ryan.

- ii. BMC Drilled Gear Policy: Martin Crocker said that Bristol climbers wanted a say in this document due for final ratification by the National Council in June 2013. He added that this had been debated in other areas of the South West e.g. the Devon meeting last year at Bovey Tracey). Matthew Goater pointed out that this had been the first draft only and that the second draft was to be debated at the Wareham meeting (which was cancelled due to insufficient numbers attending it). Martin Crocker and Dan Donovan (among others) pointed out that policy will differ in different areas of the South West. **Action Point:** It was agreed that a further Bristol based (special) meeting is to be held on Thursday the 9th May 2013 at the Nova Scotia Inn, with this matter as the main agenda item. This is for feed back to the National Council for consideration before their meeting on the 15th June 2013.

9. Next Two Meeting Dates:

- i. Thursday the 9th May 2013 at the Nova Scotia Inn to debate the BMC Drilled Gear Policy and the impact of the Cheddar Gorge Cable Car Proposal.
- ii. Saturday 1st June The Radjel Inn Cornwall @ 7pm (venue still to be confirmed).