



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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BMC South West Area Gathering

Meeting held at the Radjel Inn, Pendeen, Penzance, Cornwall. TR19 7DS @ 7pm on Saturday 1st June 2013.

Present:

Matthew Goater (MG) - Chair	Philip Wilson (PW) - Sec
Colin Knowles – (CK) – National Council	Gareth Palmer (GP)
Tracey Haynes (TH)	Jeremy Dyke (JD)
Kevin Lowry (KL)	Dave Fisher (DF)

1. **Welcome & Apologies for Absence.**

(MG) welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies for absence. He also asked members whether they minded the secretary recording the minutes electronically for later paper transcription. There were no objections to this.

2. **The Previous Meetings Minutes & Any Matters Arising**

Progress since the last meeting in Cornwall was discussed:

1. AGM: The (re) elected officials for the South West Area AGM took place at the last meeting in Bristol.
2. AGM: The Annual Review (which briefly summarised the activity for the last 12 months) was read out and its contents agreed. It was then officially submitted by (MG) to BMC Head Office.
3. The failed Wareham February 2013 meeting was mentioned (due to insufficient numbers attending).
4. Stakes for Meadfoot Quarry (awaiting go ahead from SDMC) regarding this.
5. Stakes at Baggy Point were placed by the local rep at his expense and painted green as required by the National Trust.
6. Fairy Cave Quarry: It was re-iterated that 3 days turn around is required for the combination lock gate code.
7. Wye Valley has had a clear up and Peregrines are nesting there. The path down between GO Wall and Fly Wall has therefore been temporally closed.
8. Interim May meeting was held to discuss the proposed BMC fixed gear policy.
9. The Cheddar Cable Car proposal was discussed, following a presentation by Cheddar Caves and Gorge. The present BMC position is to wait for the full proposal to be published. (CK) made the point that whatever the BMC decided to do, individuals could themselves question the application as they see fit. (CK) added that our support could perhaps be made on the basis of allowing year round climbing and shutting the road at the bottom as a trade-off position.

3. **Catch Up / Feedback From The Previous Cornish Meeting**

1. The Cornish Climbing Festival (Sept 2012). This was reviewed and deemed a success, although it was acknowledged that there had been some mistakes in the planning and execution of this event.
2. Fixed Gear Removal: Nobody from the meeting last year was present to report progress, although the Cornish fixed gear removal team is still in possession of a BMC angle grinder. **Action Point:** (PW) to speak to Richard Moss regarding progress.
3. Path erosion below Raven Wall Bosigran: Ongoing watching brief by Des Hannigan who is in communication with the National Trust over this. No action taken as yet. It was felt that attention to the path would encourage more climbers to regularly use the bottom part of the crag. It was noted that a metal stake had been placed on the treacherous polished step, three quarters of the way along the bottom of the crag. This initiative was welcomed by those present.
4. Roche Rock Clean-up: It is unclear whether this event occurred. It was felt that accumulated rubbish had been deposited by locals using the area. **Action Point:** (PW) to speak to Richard Moss regarding progress.

4. **Cheddar Gorge Cable Car Proposal (Feedback)**

The meeting was updated on the route of the cable car and sky bridge, by the project architect and a Cheddar Caves and Gorge representative. Year round climbing and possible road closure were mentioned as future possibilities. A statement not to oppose the proposal at this time (until the full plan is submitted) was read out. The South West Area BMC meeting was designated as the official point of contact. Martin Crocker is to liaise between the BMC and Cheddar Caves and Gorge.

5. **BMC Drilled Gear Policy (Feedback Bristol Review)**

It was explained that the Bristol area contained Sports and Traditional climbs on the same crags. Bristol climbers felt that this situation (or how to manage it) was not reflected in the latest draft of this policy. Worries were expressed about these traditional routes being retro-bolted as was happening in South Wales by a strong pro bolt lobby that has taken charge of the local BMC group. The members opinion was then sought. Points were made as follows:

1. Land Ownership is key to whether routes could be bolted (as the land owner permission should be sought). The activity in South Wales could be stopped or controlled by the BMC access rep approaching land owners and asking them either not to or support retro bolting. Unauthorised bolting could then be treated as criminal damage.
2. (CK) mentioned 4 bolted lines at Portishead Quarry on the short red wall (3 or 4 bolts placed per line), which he did not recall being discussed at any previous Southwest Area meeting. **Action Point:** (PW) to make Bristol area climbers aware of this via Martin Crocker and the next Bristol area meeting.
3. In the past bolts placed in quarries were accepted by the climbing community. A hybrid situation now exists where sports climbs exist next to trad climbs e.g. the Slate Quarries in Wales and routes in the Wye valley.
4. (CK) said that he would be representing South West member views on this document, offering suitable amendments as best he could. For him the nub of the question was where should the power lie in this decision making process. Should it lie with BMC head office or elsewhere at national level or at local level through the local area meetings?
5. (GP) said that education is the key to inform people where bolting can and cannot take place and why.
6. (CN) then made the argument that in the old days when the club system predominated, the clubs served as an education system for climbers to provide them with the required ethics, history and crag behaviour etiquette. Today

individual membership far outstrips club membership, where climbing education is more haphazard and results in climbers not understanding our ethics and climbing history. The split is now something like 33% club and 73% individual members. (CK) asked who persuades, engages and moderates these individuals behaviour? He went on to say that most young climbers now learn about climbing via their local climbing wall and now embrace climbing via sports climbing with which they are familiar. Throw the current position of the BMC into the mix, where it is an advisory and not a governing body and where rules are not imposed, then we should not be surprised at results like south east Wales. (GP) made the point that nobody is actually imposing the rules anymore onto individual members. A clear system is therefore required to educate and police this.

6. Proposed 2013 Cornish Climbing Festival.

After discussion it was proposed that this should be held again this year, perhaps on the Culm Coast to tie in with the new CC guide book launch. (MG) and (PW) agreed to look at tide times and liaise with (GP) and contact Iain Peters & Mark Kemball (Culm Coast Guide book authors). (PW) said that he had discussed with Scott Titt BMC President, the possibility of the BMC contributing towards funding activities (breakfast bacon and egg butties, a speaker and work-shops). **Action Point:** (PW) agreed to talk to the BMC to confirm this. (GP) agreed to investigate Culm coast venue with (MG). It was agreed that we should try to confirm numbers before the event perhaps via a Facebook page.

7. The ClimbBristol Project Summary

(CK) summarised the project, to bring climbers back to the Avon Gorge. Progress has been good with Natural England (guardians of the triple SSI) allowing us to remove loose rock under the expert guidance of Libby Houston our environmental consultant. We have successfully forged links with Bristol City Council, Sport Development and the Downs committee. Pegs and abseil points are also being updated using volunteers. A festival will also be held on conclusion of the project. Access (parking, buses and toilets will also be addressed).

8. Access & Any Local Issues.

None were raised.

9. Any Other Business.

1. The last National Council meeting details were highlighted by (CK). Details included a request from Scottish Mountaineering Council for £45K per annum for 3 years to oppose wind farms. Some members were not happy as the details were unclear as to how the money was being spent. Concern was also voiced as to the BMC position on wind farms (which remains unclear).
2. (CK) said that the National Council had also discussed funding to renovate the Glen Brittle hut, which is in a poor state.
3. The BMC Fixed Gear policy was also discussed by the National Council.

10. Date of the Next Meeting.

- Saturday 14th September 2013 & 7pm in The Dolphin Inn, Dolphin Square, Bovey Tracey, Devon. TQ13 9AL.