

Welcome and intros, Gareth welcomes everyone and introduce agenda

Update, Feb National Council meeting

Next one in June 2013. SW rep will be reporting to the Council on any issues arising.

Fixed gear position statement

BMC guidelines/views on fixed gear/bolting. This was discussed at last local area meeting. Gareth had brought copies of the latest draft for members to look at and feedback to him individually if there were any further comments. .

Query re Southit (unsure of name)

- this was agreed

Wind turbines

Gareth declared a potential CoI, he works with medium scale wind turbine schemes in Wales and England.

At the last meeting the local area had voted not to support MCoS bid for funding. National council in Feb did vote to support the funding.

Simon Williams has raised very strong concerns against this via email.

Elfyn commented re BMC's struggles re this issue.

He stated that the BMC is the sum of its members.

He raised the concerns re impact on landscapes, but stated this was split with the pro renewable argument.

Concern raised by Nathan Williams that it was the broad stance that the BMC had taken in this issue that was concerning.

Elfyn said that each case would be looked at on merit.

Elfyn stated that the BMC will issue guidance notes on how local areas can get involved. Then it will be up to the local areas to get involved, campaign, etc.

Gareth said that one view many people he'd spoken to was that the BMC shouldn't take a stance, but should provide information to members to allow them to comment on schemes, either for or against.

Elfyn stated that the survey was not definitive. Nathan raised concern over how the results were dealt with this. Elfyn explained that this was only a small sample and it was based on (250 responses).

Elfyn re-emphasised the structure of the BMC and how this impacts on decision making.

Issue raised that BMC apparently doesn't take a stance, but despite this has given Scotland funds to go against wind farms. Gareth gave a summary of the debate which took place in the national council about it in Feb. Gareth said he felt his views counted for less as he worked in the wind industry, which he found frustrating as he felt his knowledge on the subject could be useful to the BMC.

Elfyn explained the background and reason for the connection with Scotland.

Gareth asked the group if there was any feedback to take to the next national council meeting. Comments came back that there was disappointment that the BMC supported the funds for Scotland as in the last regional meeting the group agreed that they disagreed but this message was not acted upon.

Elfyn raised awareness that the BMC is not just about climbing and that a high proportion of its membership stated that hill walking was there first and foremost activity.

Guidelines will be out in the autumn re the BMC's position on wind turbines.

NRW

Gareth explained how CCW, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency Wales have merged and become Natural Resources Wales and invited Elfyn to explain how this might affect BMC members

Elfyn gave the example of Dinas and raised awareness that issues around access etc may change or be affected due to this change.

Elfyn suggested that it's difficult to get the information from them at present due to the merge, but it could mean that access may become more regulated, but we're not sure yet.

He also mentioned that there is a lot of early retirement etc. and therefore the BMC are losing good contacts in the sector.

All SSSI sites could be impacted upon re access. Especially when bolting is involved.

The BMC want to avoid the written consent route.

A question was asked if there were any historical issues re sites. Elfyn stated that the key issues were around conservation.

Once a site has been given SSSI status there is a lot of bureaucracy involved. Potentially very severe repercussions if rules are broken.

Elfyn explained the WG structures re outdoors and landscape re access. Explained that the minister is really keen for Wales to have separate access guidelines to the rest of the UK.

Elfyn is keen for it to be much simpler and egalitarian. He is looking into this. An environment white paper is due out in the autumn and the minister wants this included.

It was expressed by the group that this was a very positive development.

It was suggested that if things go smoothly access will be granted on a good behaviour clause.

It is worded such in the guidance notes that it is about what you can do, rather than what you can't do.

Access issues

Llangattock access

Bolted lower offs or sports climbing has been suggested by some members.

There was an issue with outdoor centres there which is managed.

There was a major access issue re the former farmer in the area. This led to destructive practices by climbers such as driving in and then removing belay stakes.

This has now been dealt with which has led to some climbers requesting bolted routes.

Elfyn clarified that he was there to take our thoughts back to the BMC.

Elfyn explained that there was a lack of knowledge from the owners and therefore they required guidance and info from the climbing community, ie climbers would need to decide on a proposal then put it to the landowner.

Gareth raised the concern that work will go into creating a good proposal and then this be wasted if the landowner turned it down.

Issue raised around this as it is a trad guide and would therefore conflict with sports routes if bolted routes were put in.

Gareth explained that all this would all be discussed at the Llangattock meeting, which would take

place once Martin Crockers mini guide had been published. .

Pembroke

Elfyn gave update.

new guide very good.

27th July for next briefing

Numbers have been dropping in the range west

Elfyn stated that there was a need to raise awareness and keep climbing there or we may lose access to it.

Bacon Hole

A question was raised re access for bouldering at bacon hole.

Elfyn reassured group that this was in hand.

Mount pleasant and edwardsville

Both sites: Elfyn updated on the access issue.

Landowners requested formal agreements.

BMC suggested a lease agreement but they landowners have not yet come back to him so suggested that we continue as we are unless the landowner resumes contact.

Pant quarry

This is currently a working quarry.

Access issues due to this.

Problems with kids vandalising the site.

Climbing access at present not possible due to it being a working quarry, but the BMC are working with the developers to develop access and the area as a leisure area once quarrying activity stops in the future.

There is hope for a long term agreement re access in the future but not yet.

Neath Abby buttress

Large rock fall.

Elfyn hasn't been but members had heard stories that climbers had been asked to leave by a local magistrate.

A request was made for Elfyn to look into this.

Voluntary access reps

Elfyn raised awareness to that volunteers for local access reps were needed. Two reps for s wales, one west, one east. .

John Constance has stated that he will stand down soon.

Elfyn asked the group to think about this and suggested that it would maybe need two people to cover the south east area.

Stu added that Andy Sharp had expressed an interest, and will check with Andy to confirm if he is happy to take on the role

Bolting proposals

Gareth explained that bolting proposals are put on the wiki site in advance of the meeting so that members can look at the list, and visit the crag if needed in order to form a view when the proposal is voted on next meeting the list on the wiki site and then brings this to the group to vote on.

Port eynon area

A vote has already taken place on these crags.

Deep cut and foxhole

Danny was keen to assess this for lead learners as it's a good resource.

It was suggested that there was a good mix of grades from 6+.

Danny raised that there had been an argument to suggest that if one route is bolted, therefore all the routes should be bolted.

Stu raised the point that there was a lot of good bolted routes on gower for low grade climbs that could be used for and by learners. So therefore we should leave these routes un bolted.

Danny raised the issue of making valuable resources for the local community that could be safe for learners and offer a good sports climbing routes.

Concern raised that there would be a trend of reactionary bolting if this was opened up.

It was also suggested that we were not safeguarding rock just for the present, but mainly for the future generations of climbers.

Elfyn raised awareness to the fact that the South Wales region is one of the only areas addressing these issue in such a democratic and fair way with robust discussion.

Elfyn did raise the point that there were some very good points raised in the last national council re sports climbing. That the BMC was very pro sports climbing but was also keen to raise awareness that there was a need to maintain trad routes for the future.

Gareth proposed a vote on bolting any routes that Roy or Goy hold the first ascent on with a emphasis on foxhole, as they had already given premission for their routes to be retrobolted.

It was agreed by the group that we should vote.

In favour of bolting 12

Against bolting 3

Abstaining 3

It was agreed that we should go through the formal process of contacting first ascensionist re any other routes proposed to be bolted .

Abbey buttress

Abbey buttress Bolt or job and hack path through gorse (extract from Roy's email)

Roy not at meeting, agreed to go back to Roy for clarification and bring up again next meeting

Navigation quarry

Issue of replacing pegs with bolt on black magic Proposed by Al Rosier.

Gareth suggested we waited for Al before voting.

Gravesend

Clarified where it was. East of pennard.

John Proposed for the crag to be bolted.

It was suggested that there are good areas for it to be retro bolted but the rock quality was a bit suspect.

Stu said that he was concerned that it would all be turned into sport and retro bolted and related this to what happened at paviland.

This was seconded by another member of the group.

John explained that he was interested in bolting it because it was very rarely visited and the rock was pretty poor quality and therefore could be bolted to good effect.

This was countered by a comment re cyclical climbing trends and the concern over retro bolting now as a way forward.

Chris raised a point around generating interest in the area. He said that bolting this could damage the trad climbs in the area and turn it into a sports area.

This was countered by the statement that there actually was a lot of other trad climbing in the area. Gareth read out Tim hoddy's comment against it re an increase in traffic due to the yellow witland grass. John said he looked into it and that it was more prevalent. Elfyn said it was protected and had caused issues re access in Germany due to its protected nature. He said it usually grows on the top of cliff and could be damaged by trampling but the biggest risk was other species such as gorse that could take over areas.

It was asked if bolting could happen without affecting the popular trad routes such as at gravesend.

Gareth asked if the group would like to vote for the lot or individually.

Stu said he thought we'd need to come back with specific proposals.

It was agreed that we would leave the vote until the next meeting when more specific proposals are provided

Request for volunteers:

Volunteers for access reps.

Volunteer to be a secretary for the meetings

Volunteer as a stand in for Gareth at the next national council meeting in the lake district as he can't make it (meeting next week), and future Ncs he can't make

Volunteers to organise the gower festival (this year and future years)

Gareth requested expressions of interest.

Stu was interested in the gower festival if he is still here.

AOB

Query re Bolt fund in Wales

Elfyn raised awareness to the BMC better Bolts campaign.

Elfyn explained that the Bolt funds were not funded by the BMC. It is mostly donation driven or fund raising through bids.

Stu has worked to set up a Bolt fund for South Wales. They fund raised for the fund to replace existing sports routes. He suggested that the fund could be used for new routes if the region were happy to do this.

Simon Rawlinson raised the issue that he and others had spent a lot of money on bolting and was there/would there be recognition and support for this.

There is a considerable cost involved and Elfyn raised awareness to this and that people need to and should contribute to this.

It was suggested that a culture change was needed so people were aware of the cost and effort of bolting.

Stu pointed out that a new website had been set up and a PayPal account set up for donations. There are also tins in Swansea and Cardiff and at previous gower festivals.

It was suggested that the first point of call should be the BMC and then the local bolt fund.

The suggestion of fund raising events was made.

The need for publicity was also made and Elfyn said he would look into it.

There is a duty of care issue as well re unsafe or poor quality bolts.

Danny asked if anyone had climbed at Bantam bay as he couldn't find it.

Several members had climbed it recently.

Andrew raised a point re the recent absale points had been put in at the crag by the car park at Dinas

He was keen for the wall to be cleaned up and the trad routes opened up again.

He suggested that Paul Dan from the forestry comm was open to it.

Andrew and Simon volunteered to clean it but asked for help.

It was raised that the stakes had been put in to tackle the erosion zone but this was not a sustainable approach.

Elfyn raised the point that Wales was one area in the BMC despite the regions and explained the mechanisms suggested to count national votes.

Suggestion is that all the votes are counted up and the results taken forward to the national council.

It was asked why there was not separate regions in Wales as there are in other areas. It was stated that this was historical and that it could be taken to and voted on at the AGM.

It would give us more national council reps if it went through.

Date of the next meeting 03.09.13