

Minutes of South Wales Area Meeting 3/09/2013

Boulders climbing wall, Cardiff

Present: 37

Chair: Gareth Tucker

BMC Officer: Elfyn Jones

1. Apologies

Will Kilner, Roy Thomas, Monty Attwood

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted after a clarification by Goi Ashmore, that he had originally said that his routes at Deep Cut Zawn could be bolted in the context of the whole zawn being bolted, rather than just his and roys routes being bolted.

3. Actions from the last meeting

All matters arising from last meeting are covered elsewhere

4. National Council

Gareth and Elfyn delivered some news from the National Council regarding the failed bid to include climbing as an Olympic sport and also summarised the purpose of the National Council and how it relates to individual areas.

5. Access

5.1 Tirpentwys

Elfyn related that negotiations with Llanover Estate are proceeding well, regarding climbing at Tirpentwys. It is expected that a licence and flat fee arrangement is likely and should be finalised soon. It was noted that the BMC is not keen to pursue too many similar arrangements.

A question from the floor was made regarding Tyle-y-Coch, which is also owned by Llanover Estate, and whether the agreement could be widened to include this venue. Elfyn indicated that he was looking into this, and for Sirhowy as well.

5.2 Changes to access legislation

Elfyn introduced the possibility of changes to Welsh legislation, which may lead to the opening up of access by 2015 under a system similar to that currently used in Scotland. A draft document for discussion will be produced in government by Spring 2014. The magnitude of the change could be very significant and the BMC is playing a role.

5.3 Stanage

Elfyn brought the meeting up to speed on the proposed sale of Stanage Plantation and suggested we all sign the e-petition linked from the BMC homepage.

5.4 Worm's Head

Goi asked what progress had been made in access arrangements at Worm's Head, and we were told that Gower authorities have ruled this out because of wildlife concerns.

5.5 Llangattock

Goi asked when the new Llangattock mini guide is due out. Gareth had recently emailed Martin Crocker to find out but had not had a response. Gareth will continue to chase Martin and will give an update at the next meeting in November at Aber Rocks., which is closer Llangattock.

6 BMC Dry Tooling position statement

The BMC wishes to move towards a position statement on this issue following controversy in the Lakes and North Wales. Copies of a BMC discussion document were available at the meeting.

Those present at the meeting generally felt that dry tooling has a place in climbing, that venues should be discussed on a case by case basis at local area meetings. It was noted that dry tooling will be an Olympic demonstration sport in the near future and widely agreed that the main point of restricting dry tooling was to protect existing lines.

7 BMC Fixed Gear position statement

The BMC south west area had prepared a document with suggested changes to the BMC fixed gear position statement. Copies of this were available at the meeting and Gareth summarised the proposal highlighting two key proposed changes, namely A) that crags under consideration for fixed gear should be put to two BMC local area meetings, one for introduction and the other for voting, and B) the proposal should then go to the BMC National Council for approval or veto.

W.r.t taking proposals to the National Council, Those present at the meeting agreed that taking all bolting proposals to the National Council this would be too bureaucratic and would rely too much on the feelings of the National Council rather than local climbers.

W.r.t taking each proposal to two area meetings, it was suggested and agreed that the current process was working, ie putting a detailed proposal on the Wiki in advance of local area meetings so that a discussion and vote could take the place in the same meeting. It was pointed out that controversial proposals usually saw at least a second meeting anyway.

No one spoke in favour of the changes suggested, and the feedback to the National Council is not to accept to proposed changes to the position statement.

8 Bolting Proposals

8.1 Navigation Quarry

Al Rosier asked if bolting Black Magic at Navigation Quarry was acceptable. The current fixed gear on the route was described, as was the effect bolting may have on nearby routes. Andy Sharp said that the FA was unlikely to mind. There were no objections.

8.2 Gravesend

John Bullock offered a recap of the proposed bolting at Gravesend. This would cover two crags, the Helter Skelter to cave area, and the routes crossing the Baboon Traverse. The presence of nearby good trad lines was noted and there was some discussion around quality of the rock in question and the need for more easy sport lines.

It was felt that more clarification was needed as to the exact proposal before a vote was held. John agreed to add detailed information to the wiki with a vote to be held at the next meeting.

A comment was made that perhaps this could form a template for future proposals to go on the wiki.

There was some discussion over whether this process should apply to all potential new crags, with several members raising objections. Currently proposals for new sports crags go on the wiki unless they are in an area where bolting is already permitted by existing bolt policy.

8.3 Tenby South Beach

Elfyn raised questions over whether members would object to the bolting of a small quarry near South Beach, Tenby. Tenby south beach quarry is already a bolted venue and the proposal is to re-bolt the exiting routes and place lower-offs. It was felt that existing trad lines should remain but the feeling was generally of approval.

9. Shipwreck Cove

Simon Rawlinson gave a detailed presentation about the development of Shipwreck Cove and the resulting controversy.

It was generally felt by those present that the initial bolting was acceptable, and had been done with the full permission of the landowner. Topping out in this area is not recommended for both safety and environmental reasons. The crag is tidal.

Requests were made to Simon and others for easier routes at the venue, which became popular rapidly. Funds were sought from the public and approximately £2000 raised to cover bolts. Funds had previously been sought unsuccessfully from the Bolt Fund for this purpose. It was noted that Simon was not taking a wage from this money.

Negative comments on UKC and other online services were made, and it appears that some misinformation was spread and personal comments made to Simon and others. This led to some difficulties with the landowner, which have now been resolved.

A BMC newsletter item that appeared not to be in full possession of the facts w.r.t landowner permission was noted.

Simon sought the meeting's approval to go ahead with the bolting project. The vote to bolt further routes at Shipwreck cover as described by Simon was carried with 32 for, 5 abstentions, and none against. Simon was commended by a number of those present.

Elfyn also noted that the methods used in raising bolt funding may be useful elsewhere.

There was further discussion on the matter of whether or not all new crags should be brought to a meeting before bolting. Several voices were heard firmly against this idea.

The consensus was that the current system works reasonably well but better use could be made of the wiki.

10. Changes to area committee

The possibility of South Wales becoming its own area had come up at the previous meeting and was raised again by Gareth for further discussion.

In order to do this the current South Wales group would need to increase both attendance at meetings and number of volunteers involved in the Area. Volunteers were sought to help with any tasks such as organising crag clean-ups and publicising meetings, or to become potential office holders, anyone interested to contact Gareth or Elfyn. Will Kilner has volunteered to be the National Council representative, and will be present at the next area meeting to be voted in. Gareth will stand down as National Council rep but will continue to chair the local area meetings. .

John Custance is retiring as access rep for South Wales East, with Andy Sharp to take over.

Questions were raised as to whether Pembrokeshire is included in the South Wales area. Gareth said that currently it is and is discussing with Will re holding an area meeting in Pembrokeshire next year.

There were no objections to the idea of South Wales becoming an independent area. Gareth will put together a written clarification of the issues involved.

11. Gower climbing festival

Details were given on the upcoming Gower climbing festival 6th -8th September, and it was noted that topos and breakfasts would be available, and entertainment would be on in the Countryman pub on Saturday night. A minibus between the pub and campsite will be arranged.

12 AOB

12.1 Blue Pool

Simon asked about the possibility of bolting Blue Pool. It was noted that bolting in that area in was already permitted within the existing bolt policy.

12.2 Llanbradach

Jess Spate raised the desire for a Llanbradach clean-up. It was suggested that this happen after the next meeting when brambles will have died down. Jess will suggest a date after 21 November.

13 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday 21st Nov, 7.30 at Aber Rocks

To volunteer to get involved locally or for more information please contact

Gareth Tucker: Tuckergd@hotmail.com

or

Elfyn Jones: elfyn@thebmc.co.uk

Jess Spate 060913