

NE Region BMC Meeting, 29 August 2013

Durham Climbing Centre

1. Welcome and Introduction

In the absence of Jon Punshon and John Herron, Mark Anstiss offered to chair the meeting, with Rich Alderton acting as secretary.

In attendance:

Rich Alderton
Paul Mitchinson
Mike Facchini
Susan Rose
Stephen Wright
Mark Anstiss
Ian Walton
Peter Hay

2. Apologies for Absence

Jon Punshon
John Herron
John Dal
Alan Hinkes
Liam Dervev
Mark Goodings

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Peter Hay pointed out that he has been misidentified as Peter Dyson for the last two meetings!

Other than that, the minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

Mark Anstiss noted that Adventure Northumberland had also been approached about possible bolting in Walltown Quarry. They were not interested.

Disappointment was expressed that the child protection seminar had only two attendees, however Mark Anstiss noted that the seminar had been positive for the Wanneys, who would now have a more relaxed policy toward under 18s.

4. North East Climbing & Walking Festival

Following the festival, a debrief was held in the Ship Inn on 31 July. Rich Alderton agreed to circulate minutes alongside these minutes.

Paul Mitchinson has heard from the Area Manager for Cotswold, Mark Johnson, who were keen to support next year's event. We wondered whether 2014 should build on the success of the 2013 festival, by staying in Belford, or whether the South would make a better

venue. Peter Hay agreed to take the idea of a South festival back.

All agreed that we should decide a venue and date for 2014 by the next Area Meeting.

5. Potash Mine, North Yorkshire

Peter Hay reported on the proposed Potash Mine in North Yorkshire. He felt that the visual impact of the mine would be minimal, and no climbing areas would be affected. The area would benefit from investment and it is possible the Coast to Coast cycle path would be routed on a better alignment as a result of the works.

The broad feeling of the meeting was that we were neutral/ supportive of the mine.

6. Proposed Wind Farm at Bowden Doors

Steven Wright came to the meeting to discuss the proposed wind farm at Bowden Doors. The farm would consist of 9 turbines above Back Bowden. They will be 40m above the top of the crag and with an expected lifetime of 25 years.

Steven asked if the BMC had a position on wind farms, and it was noted that it would have been helpful to have a BMC representative at the meeting. Once again, there wasn't.

Mark Anstiss pointed out that Bowden is a nationally significant crag, and there should be support from the BMC nationally.

Objections to the wind farm can be raised via the Planning Officer, Phillip McCartney at Northumberland County Council.

Rich Alderton agreed to take our findings back to the BMC.

7. BMC Position on Drytooling

Mark Anstiss read the BMC discussion paper that had been provided by the BMC, and we discussed questions asked.

Q Does dry-tooling have a place in British climbing?

A Yes. It was felt that dry-tooling is an inevitable aspect of British climbing and that, by its very existence, it has a position and must have a voice. The general feeling was that dry tooling is 'lower down the pecking order' than trad climbing.

Q Is it acceptable for dry-tooling to take place on established rock climbs?

A The general feeling was no.

Q What should be the criteria for deciding whether a venue is suitable for dry-tooling or not?

Mark Anstiss raised the question of how 'little or no value' could be judged. It was felt that local consensus should be the judge.

Other observations:

There is a possibility that rock which is unsuitable for climbing today might become popular in the future.

Most dry tooling currently takes place on crags/ quarries with little appeal to the trad climber. Nobody in the meeting was aware of any dry tooling conflicts in our area, and it was felt that a policy of self-policing appears to be working.

8. Crag Lough Second Restoration

The second restoration will be on the weekend of 7/8 September, with support from the BMC.

Mark Anstiss, Rich Alderton and Liam Dervej had visited the crag earlier this month on a reccy, in order to better target the restoration. Several routes were identified as high priority, while others could be cleaned on lead. Unfortunately, we were unable to get to the routes beyond Main Wall, and it was decided to leave these to any keen volunteers on the day.

Several trees were identified as candidates for removal (one in front of Woodentops, and another obscuring Sinister Grooves). Both Natural England and the National Trust gave their blessing to this and offered assistance.

It's believed that the Raven's nest on Grad's Groove can be removed without undue disturbance to the bird.

9. Coordinators' Reports

– Access

Peter Hay reported a party had been to Esklets and been confronted by the Gamekeeper. They left in order to avoid a confrontation. The landowner has been approached by the National Park to clarify the access situation.

A lot of climbers have been spotted with dogs at crags, despite 'no dogs' notices. It was felt that this causes unnecessary problems at sensitive sites.

Many landowners have ceased using the Open Access Land website to log closures because it is difficult to use.

– Youth

Ian Walton gave a report on Regional Academies, and a competition to be held in September, pitched at a similar level to the existing Youth Series.

The talent Development Programme is progressing well, and resulted in taking 6 people to the World Youth Championship in Canada.

He reported that differing rules at climbing walls over belaying were causing problems with competition climbers finding qualified belayers.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be at Newcastle Climbing Centre in late November, to in time for the BMC National Council Meeting. Date to be confirmed by Jon Punshon.