

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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BMC Cymru/Wales Mid Wales Outreach Group Meeting

The White Lion, Machynlleth 5th September 2013

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting.
3. Matters arising.
4. BMC discussions on
5. Dry tooling.
6. Fixed gear review proposal.
7. Is water the new wind? (Proliferation of hydro schemes in Wales.)
8. Snowdon litter.
9. Access issues.
 - a. WAG review of land access laws and land protection issues.
 - b. Individual site access updates.
10. CC Mid Wales guidebook update
11. Mid Wales Climbing Club.
12. AOB.

MINUTES

Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Meeting commences at 20.00

Thanks to all those attending (13 persons):

Dan Harris, Don Sargeant, Elfyn Jones, Glenn Kirkham, Huw Gilbert, Merfyn Tomos, Pete Cooper, Sam Tolhurst, Sophie Wynne-Jones, Terry Taylor, Tim Sparrow, Tom Hutton, Trevor Thorndyke,

Apologies were received from (1 persons):

Doug Kerr

Minutes from last meeting (5th June 2013) agreed with one amendment:

Pete Cooper's apologies were missing and are now added to the record.

Dr-tooling

Dry-tooling is a form of climbing which takes place on outdoor crags and indoor climbing walls using ice axes and crampons.

Dry-tooling has increased in popularity over the last 5-10 years and currently (2013) there are at least 10 established outdoor dry-tooling venues in the UK and 10 or so climbing walls with bespoke dry-tooling facilities.

Dry-tooling typically occurs on overhanging quarried rock (or other rock faces generally unsuitable for conventional rock climbing) and usually involves the use of fixed equipment and drilled / manufactured axe and crampon placements.

Examples of 'summer' dry-tooling venues include White Goods (North Wales), Telscombe beach cliffs (Brighton) and Newtyle Quarry (Scotland).

In April 2013 a group of climbers in the Lake District removed the bolts from a newly developed dry-tooling venue (the Works) due to a range of concerns related to the spread of the activity and its impact. 'The Works' received substantial media attention at the time and highlighted the fact that the BMC does not have a formal position or policy on dry-tooling as an activity. The BMC National Council considered this at its meeting of 15 June and agreed that a discussion paper should be produced for consideration by the Areas; it was felt that this should take the form of a series of questions.

Points for consideration by Areas:

- Does dry-tooling on outdoor crags have a place in British climbing?
- Is it acceptable for dry-tooling to take place on established rock climbs?
- What should be the criteria for defining whether a venue is suitable for dry-tooling or not?

The Mid Wales group felt that the BMC as a representative body should represent all climbers and not just those who are interested in traditional climbing. The Mid Wales group consider that there is a place for dry-tooling in Wales.

The question was raised as to why a policy was needed?

Elfyn Jones stated that dry-tooling can be quite destructive.

The Royal Marines used to dry-tool on the Dewerstone, but stopped for environmental reasons.

Currently it is mostly carried out on crags that are exclusively for dry-tooling and unsuitable for other forms of climbing.

There are crags in Europe with drilled placements specifically for the sport.

The perception of the Mid Wales group is that the vast majority of dry-tooling activity does not affect crags in Wales.

Policy should be based on a case by case basis assessing who is affected, where is affected and at what frequency are activities carried out at a location.

The opinion was voiced that dry tooling should be kept away from established routes and kept to new crags. However, this could be reviewed if the established routes are poor and rarely used, and perhaps better suited to dry-tooling than more traditional forms of climbing.

Consensus should be gained, perhaps through the BMCs regional area meetings. The internet could also be used as a means of holding discussions, for example through the South Wales Mountaineering Club's Wiki.

It was felt that appropriate venues for dry-tooling venues to be advertised so those who would like to partake in the sport are directed to areas where it is appropriate.

Drilled Gear

The BMC have a draft policy on drilled gear.

For the purposes of the policy drilled equipment refers to bolts and drilled pegs (i.e. pegs placed in drill holes), and retro-bolting refers to the re-equipping of naturally protected routes with drilled equipment.

National Council felt that it should be discussed by the BMC's area groups.

The South West group proposed an amendment to the policy, giving more power to the First Ascensionist in the decision on whether or not something should be bolted. The proposal for bolting to be taken to two regional meetings with a BMC officer present at both.

There is a growing demand for easy sport climbing, however most easy routes in Britain are purely traditional in nature. Therefore the need for a policy on drilled gear is also growing.

For example, on Gower, there were many cliffs that were not climbed for years which have now been bolted and are getting some use.

The broader issue therefore is where should bolting be allowed?

The Mid Wales Group feel that strong traditional lines should be protected.

However, there is a desire not to alienate others through an overly restrictive stance, and therefore certain cases should be considered.

There needs to be a discussion about the quality and value of the route and a test could be whether people aspire to climb them by traditional means.

In cases where established trad lines are of limited value efforts should be made to convince the FAist of their benefit as sport routes.

The Mid Wales group wished to emphasise that if bolting was going to occur then it should be to a high standard.

Is water the new wind? (Proliferation of hydro schemes in Wales)

A number of small hydroelectric schemes have been granted permission in North Wales.

Glyn Rhonwy hydroelectric scheme was granted planning permission by Gwynedd County Council at the beginning of September.

It will affect a number of routes and access to the whole site will be restricted during construction.

It will not affect Gideon Quarry, which is outside of the development boundary.

There remain some issues with delivery as the top of the site is classed as common land, which requires Welsh Government Permission to develop and the provision of alternative land in mitigation to its loss.

BMC will consider objecting to future schemes if it is deemed that there is likely to be a significantly negative effect on landscape quality or access.

The Mid Wales group consider that owing to the small scale of the majority of the schemes that objections probably not required for most applications, particularly considering that most of the negative landscape effects will be temporary.

Snowdon Litter

There will be a litter clear-up on the 12th October 2013.

Aim of the day will be to raise awareness of the litter issue and to clear the more inaccessible parts of the mountain.

All are welcome to join.

Mid Wales group would like to raise the issue of litter at the Cromlech Boulders and that these could benefit from a clear up day too.

Access

Welsh Government are currently in the process of reviewing open access legislation as they are keen to encourage greater access to the outdoors.

Elfyn is in the process of attending a number of workshops to discuss options.

He reports that current proposals could lead to the reduction to the status of rights of way but could also lead to better access to open access land, particularly in relation to the coast.

Questions asked about the status of access to Ponterwyd Quarry.

Elfyn states that bolts have already been placed with no objection and that therefore there is little benefits in creating a dialogue.

Elfyn emphasises that one is only trespassing if they are asked to leave and refuse.

With winter on its way the topic of Maesglasau Falls was also raised.

The farmer is happy with people climbing on the falls but is concerned over potential accidents. He asks that people stop off at the farm and let them know that they are going to climb. The farmer has great knowledge on whether or not the falls are in condition and so visiting him before approaching the crag would in any case be extremely prudent.

The access to the falls is mostly on a right of way with only a small section through the farmer's land. There is no issue with this arrangement. It should however be noted that access is sometimes affected by pheasant shooting.

AGM

BMC Cymru's AGM will be held on the 23rd November 2013 somewhere in North Wales.

Venue and time still to be confirmed.

You are all encouraged to attend, click on the following link to keep up to date with info:

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?id=2882>

Mid Wales Guidebooks

Progress has been steady and, in some areas, very good, particularly in Elenydd and the Berwyns.

The Climbers' Club have discussed the format, timing, shape and direction of their new guides (inc. Mid Wales) and the outcome of these discussions is not yet known although it's very much full steam ahead for the Mid Wales team!

There are some issues with cash flow with 8 guides on the books, however given the timescales this should not be an issue for the Mid Wales guide.

Other publishing options are also being looked at including collaboration with other organisations.

It is possible that the guide could be part print part digital.

AOB

Issue of cairns on hills raised.

It was asked whether it was possible to encourage people not to add to them?

Could a clear up be organised?

Issue needs publicity.

Also, £63 was collected for the bolt fund.

Meeting closes at 22.00

Next Meeting

Wednesday 20th November at the Druid in Goginan starting at 7.30