

Meeting Minutes

BMC NE Area, Thursday 28th November 2013 7pm

Newcastle Climbing Centre, St Marks Church, Byker, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

In attendance:

Jon Punshon (Chair)
Mark Anstiss (Temporary Secretary) (Wanneys CC)
Mark Goodings (NE Walls Officer)
Paul Mitcheson (NE Hillwalking Officer)
Peter Hay (NE Access Officer, South) (CMC)
John Herron
Bob Mc Adam
Sarah Hawker (NMC)
Adrian Wilson (NMC)
Richard Alderton
Mike Facchini
Peter Simcock (FRCC)
Peter Dyson (Swaledale OC)

Apologies:

Ben Pearce (CMC)
Graeme Armstrong (Wanneys CC)
Lloyd Murray
Ian Walton (NE Youth Officer)
Liam Dervey
Alan Hinkes

Due to very tight staffing levels at the BMC office, it was not possible for a BMC officer to attend the meeting.

1. Declaration of AOB

Lloyd Murray proposed via email prior to the meeting that Alan Hinkes be nominated for the forthcoming BMC Vice Presidents position. This proposal was considered later in the meeting (see below).

2. Previous minutes

Ian Walton pointed out by email prior to the meeting that the following sentence in the previous minutes shouldn't have been included in isolation:

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

This statement was very much a reference to the past, and no longer is applicable in isolation, as the issue was resolved.

Other than this minor point the minutes were accepted by all present as an accurate record.

Matters arising from previous minutes

The only matter to arise from the previous minutes was the proposed windfarm between the village of Belford and the crags of Bowden Doors / Back Bowden Doors.

At the previous meeting details of the proposed development were outlined by Stephen Wright, a local resident opposed to the development who had attended the meeting specifically to canvas the views of local climbers. Everyone present at the previous meeting (with the exception of one abstention) was opposed to the development. Richard Alderton kindly agreed to take the views expressed at the meeting to the BMC, however other commitments prevented this from happening.

Developments since the last meeting

Bob McAdam attended a public meeting in Belford on 18th November. Bob reported that there was widespread opposition to the development at the meeting, with 447 against and only 8 in favour.

Mark Anstiss canvassed the views of the Wanneys CC membership (48 members) and reported that the general consensus was one of opposition although it was noted that two club members were in favour.

Present position

Everyone present (with the exception of one abstention) was opposed to the development and it was felt by all present that the backing of a national body such as the BMC would add weight to the objections.

It was noted that the BMC do not have a national policy on windfarms and their position is that each application is looked at on its own merits and that most weight is given to the views of the local membership. The BMC have recently published a landscape charter:

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/media/files/access/BMC%20Landscape%20Charter%20final.pdf>

Action: JP to contact Cath Flitcroft (BMC Access & Conservation Officer) and/or the BMC Landscape Working Group expressing the strong local feeling on the proposal. JP also agreed to contact Northumberland County Council planning department to find out more about the proposal

Action: Adrian Wilson to canvass the view of the NMC membership and feed back to JP/BMC.

- Further details of the development can be found at:

<http://publicaccess.northumberland.gov.uk/online-applications>

Search for application reference (13/02050/RENEIA).

Comments on the application can be made on this site.

- More accessible (but not impartial) information can be obtained from the local action group opposed to the development:

<http://www.middletonburnactiongroup.co.uk/>

- Personal representations can be made via email to:
planningcomments@northumberland.gov.uk

3. NE Secretary

John Herron regretfully announced that he is standing down as NE Area Secretary as he does not have sufficient time to dedicate to the post at present. Everyone present thanked John for his contribution to the NE area meetings over the last three years. It is clear that, due in large part to his efforts, the local area meetings are in a much better state than they were a few years ago.

Mark Anstiss was proposed as NE Area Secretary by Paul Mitcheson and seconded by Mark Goodings. As there were no other candidates proposed; MA accepted the position.

However it was decided that should JH's circumstances change then he is most welcome to return to the post in future; as such MA's position can be considered temporary for the time being at least.

4. National Council Updates.

JP gave a brief overview of matters discussed at the previous national council meeting.

After seeking the views of all the local areas the BMC has established a national position on drytooling. It was noteworthy that position taken by the BMC at the national council was almost identical to that taken by the NE area at the last meeting in August (see previous minutes).

One point that was discussed at length was the proposal to increase affiliated club membership fees. It was felt by all present that the proposed increase was very significant in percentage terms. The representatives of some clubs, particularly those with relatively low annual subs, expressed concern that they will have to increase their subs accordingly which may not be popular with their members. However, it was pointed out that there has been no increase in the affiliation fee for a number of years and that the increase represented a correction rather than a step change in the level of contributions.

5. Debrief from second Crag Lough clean up

The second Crag Lough Clean up took place on Saturday 7th September, following much the same format as last year. The turnout was not as substantial as last year possibly due to a rather poor weather forecast, but thankfully the deluge never came. Fifteen volunteers worked hard to return another clutch of excellent routes to their former glory. In contrast to last year, this year's efforts were more focused and a number of trees were removed (permission was sought from The National Trust and Natural England). A few overlooked gems were brought back from obscurity and two previously unrecorded lines were cleaned.

The day was rounded off by a huge and well deserved barbeque courtesy of the BMC followed with plenty of ale in the Twice Brewed Inn. Another contrast to last year was that the weather was fair on Sunday with plenty of people out climbing. Some routes were ascended for the first time in years and two first ascents were made.

The vegetation will not return before next year and the winter weather will finish off the cleaning nicely. The routes will be at their best next spring. At least half of the crag is now restored (all the way from Sycamore Gap to Tarzan Buttress).

There are still a number of lines that could do with some attention. It is proposed to 'finish the job' next September in a third round. If the turnout is exceptional, additional volunteers can be directed to Peel Crag!

Action: MA to set a date for next clean up by February 2014

6. Regional Updates

a. Access

North – Tom Parkin was not present to provide any details or updates (See AOB below)

John Herron reported that a huge sign had appeared at the access gate to Retchough Crag stating that it is a "conservation area". Whether there is any impact on climbing at this venue is not clear.

South – Peter Hay reported the following:

The issues with the gamekeeper at Esklets Crag reported at the previous meeting have been resolved.

Crag Hill: each year, permission must be sought from the farmer - usually by email. An email has been sent but no reply received. However there have been no reported problems this year so the assumption is that access is granted for another year.

b. Youth – Ian Walton's report was submitted by email prior to the meeting and is reproduced below:

Regional Academies – the first 3 sessions have now taken place at various walls across the region, and are settling down well. It is the first year of 4 for which the BMC has funding for this vital part of the talent pathway being used to coach the top climbers of tomorrow – and not just competition climbers, although the results will become more immediately obvious in this arena.

Despite the above, the existing regional youth climbing squad "Rock Solid", the green hoodie gang, continues. For those young climbers who have aspirations beyond the kids clubs within climbing walls and climbing clubs, this is an opportunity to be coached at a higher level, and be given the tools to take with you as you improve.

From the other side of the same coin, I am always interested in coaches who would like to become involved. So anyone who knows a coach willing to be involved on a regular basis, let me know (idwalton@hotmail.co.uk, 07917 891144). And don't worry all you aspiring coaches – there's payment involved.

Competitions

We are traditionally reluctant to get involved in this in the north east, with some notable exceptions, so here's a recruitment drive.

The BMC youth climbing series 2014 kicks off in Kendal on Jan 25th, following rounds being in Newcastle Climbing Centre on 1st Feb and Sunderland Wall on 1st Mar.

If you know of anyone born between 1997 and 2006 who would like to take part, posters will be going up at hopefully all local walls, and details are always available on the BMC website, or from me, contact details above. For those unsure of what the competition entails, Rock Solid coaching will cover this at some point.

On a general point, GB Climbing has had some international success! Highlights Fran Brown being number 1 ranked in the world in her category, Nathan Phillips winning a round of the European bouldering cup, and ending the season ranked number 2 in the world, and William Bosi achieving several podium positions, and also being ranked number 2 in his age category. Overall, 40 climbers represented GB Climbing in 2014, and the season has ended with 20 of them – 50%- being ranked in the world's top 10!!

- c. **Walls** – Mark Goodings reported that there are plenty of programmes at the various NE walls being publicised (check the websites) and encouraged all to get involved.

MG also reported that local lad Tom Perry has just made it onto the National Para climbing team. Congratulations to Tom!

- d. **Hillwalking** – Paul Mitcheson had nothing to report

7. NE Facebook page

A Facebook page was set up to publicise the 2013 NE Climbing festival. After the festival Sarah Follman began the process of adapting the page to become a general, informal NE climbing page which could be used to publicise events, clubs or spread the word about anything else climbing related in the NE.

In addition to this effort, Tony Ryan at the BMC was keen for the NE area to have an 'official' Facebook page in line with other areas and a page was set up by BMC head office. During the autumn there has been very little activity on either page. Although it would seem logical to have a single page for the NE, there is concern that since Facebook is essentially an open forum, views expressed by others on the page could be taken to represent the views of the NE area committee. One option could be to keep the formal and informal pages running side by side and link between them when appropriate.

In any case administrators for the page, or pages, are required and volunteers are encouraged to step forward!

8. Forthcoming events

The Reel Rock film festival returns to the Tyneside cinema on 27th December.

Various events have been organised in the coming months at the Newcastle Climbing Centre – check the website:

<http://www.newcastleclimbingcentre.co.uk/index.php/news/current-events>

2014 NE Climbing festival

Ben Pearce (CMC) had emailed prior to meeting, offering to host the festival in the south of the region suggesting the new campsite / restaurant at Lordstones and the campsite / bunkhouse, which was the YHA at Osmotherley, as suitable venues.

However it was decided the best option would be to locate next year's festival in Northumberland to build on the lessons learnt at this year's event and to fine tune the format.

Accommodation was identified as perhaps the biggest issue and many suggestions for a venue were made. In addition the purpose of the festival was also discussed i.e. whether to specifically reach out to newcomers - at this year's festival a great deal of effort was made in provision for beginners with relatively little uptake.

It was clear that the details of next year's event were not going to be finalised at the meeting and it was agreed that the main protagonists should meet ASAP to make plans for the festival.

Action: JP / Mark Anstiss / Paul Mitcheson / Adrian Wilson to organise meeting.

9. AOB

Lloyd Murray's proposal that Alan Hinkes be nominated for the forthcoming BMC Vice Presidents position was discussed.

The meeting decided not to nominate AH for the following reasons:

- LM was not present to make the case for AH's nomination and he had not elaborated on his reasons in his email.
- AH was not at the meeting and no one present was sure that AH was interested in taking the position.
- No one at the meeting was familiar with the details of what the position entailed and were therefore not in a position to decide whether AH was a suitable nominee.

Tom Parkin has indicated that due to other commitments he is unable to continue as NE Access Officer (North). Tom's resignation leaves the position open.

Volunteers to fill the vacancy are encouraged to make themselves known.

In addition, Tom's departure leaves a vacancy for a NE representative at National Council Meetings.

10. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be at the Durham Climbing Centre, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Durham DH7 8TZ.

Date and time 6th February 2014 at 7.30pm (provisional – awaiting confirmation)

Action: Jon Punshon to confirm date and time for next meeting.