

## Meeting Minutes

BMC NE Area, Thursday 6th February 2014 7:30 pm

Durham Climbing Centre, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Durham DH7 8TZ

### In attendance:

John Punshon (Chair)

Mark Anstiss (Temporary Secretary) (Wanneys CC)

Mark Goodings (NE Walls Officer)

Paul Mitcheson (NE Hillwalking Officer)

Tom Parkin (NE Access Officer; North)

Mike Facchini

John Dalrymple (NMC)

James Higgins (Durham Climbing Centre)

### Apologies:

Peter Hay (NE Access Officer, South) (CMC)

John Herron

Adrian Wilson (NMC)

Richard Alderton

Graeme Armstrong (Wanneys CC)

Ian Walton (NE Youth Officer)

Alan Hinkes (NE National Council Representative)

John Vaughn (NMC)

A BMC national officer was not present at the meeting.

Actions: Jon Punshon John Vaughn

### 1. Welcome; Introductions; Apologies (see above).

John Punshon opened the meeting and welcomed all present. Particular thanks were expressed to the Durham Climbing Centre for hosting the meeting and providing excellent refreshments.

### 2. Declaration of AOB

Mark Goodings expressed disappointment that a national officer from the BMC did not attend the meeting. This sentiment was affirmed by everyone present.

Paul Mitcheson requested that Wooler Outdoor Week (WOW) was added to the agenda.

### 3. Previous minutes

Jon Punshon gave a brief summary of the previous minutes which had already been circulated via email and on the BMC communities webpage. The minutes were accepted by all present as an accurate record.

### 4. Matters arising from previous minutes

All matters arising from the previous minutes formed part of the agenda for this meeting

### 5. Proposed Bowden Wind Farm

This issue was discussed at length at the two previous meetings, at both of those meetings 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.

At this meeting there was no change in the consensus and the feedback from the climbing various NE clubs represented at the meeting sought prior to and since the last meeting was also largely negative.

The feedback John Punshon received from the BMC was that this issue should be dealt with locally and if a consensus was established that we should make representations to the planning authority as appropriate.

John Punshon also received feedback from Northumberland County Council planning department that they were largely unaware of the national significance of the Bowden Crag as rock climbing venues.

Action:JP to draft and submit an objection to Northumberland County Council planning department on behalf of the BMC NE Area.

#### 6. North East Access Officer (North)

Tom Parkin regrettably announced that he is standing down as NE Access Officer for the north of the Area as he very often overseas with work and has insufficient time to dedicate to the post at present. Everyone present thanked Tom for his contribution to the NE area over the last three years.

Mark Anstiss proposed John Vaughn as Tom's successor. Although John was not present at the meeting, he had previously expressed his interest and indicated he would be willing to accept the position if he was proposed. The proposal was seconded by John Dalrymple and was accepted without objection.

#### 7. National Council Representatives

There are typically three representatives of each local area at National Council meetings.

At present the North East area is represented by Alan Hinkes and John Punshon.

Alan attends very regularly and although is an infrequent attendee to local meetings always ensures he is up to date with local issues prior to National Council meets.

John indicated that he often struggles to attend National meetings

Following Tom Parkin's resignation, a vacancy remains for a third NE representative. Volunteers to fill the vacancy are encouraged to make themselves known.

#### 8. National Council Updates

The national council meeting updates from the National council included:

- Summary of the Management accounts
- A position statement on drilled equipment which provides further guidance to the drilled equipment policy from 1992
- Drytooling
- Clubs

Any member requiring more detail on these issues should contact the BMC direct

One key point of interest to members (which was discussed at the last NE meeting) was an increase in subscription rates in 2015 of £1.50 per member.

#### 9. Regional Updates

##### a. Access

North - Tom Parkin had nothing to report.

The issue reported by John Herron at the last meeting was resolved. John reported that a huge sign had appeared at the access gate to Retchough Crag stating that it is a "conservation area". John Dalrymple was able to clarify the situation: there are no problems with access at the crag, permission to climb should be sought at the folly atop the crag. The resident of the folly is enthusiastic about climbers using the crag however appreciates that climbers ask permission. The origin of the sign is most likely a local gamekeeper wishing to deter people from accessing the land but they have no authority to do so assuming permission has been sought from the landowner.

John Dalrymple expressed that the access restrictions imposed due to ground nesting birds at the Simonside crags is not clear. Under CRow rules the Land Manager can apply for discretionary restrictions for up to 28 days a year, but not on these days:

- Bank Holidays, Christmas Day or Good Friday;
- Saturdays between 1st June and 11th August;

- Sundays between 1st June and 30th September;
- More than 4 weekend days (Saturdays or Sundays or both) in any calendar year.

In previous years climbers have been challenged but the exact restrictions being enforced and the rights of climbers to access the crags are not clear. The fear is that access maybe restricted this year in the run up to August 12th.

Action: John Vaughn to ascertain what the situation is or is likely to be for this year and how definitive information can be found in future.

South – Peter Hay was not present but had no issues to report via email prior to the meeting. However Peter did email John Punshon prior to the meeting informing him that after 30 years in the position he has resigned as NE Access Officer for the South of the region.

Peter proposed Jim Adler as his replacement. The proposal was seconded by Mark Anstiss and was accepted without objection.

Everyone present expressed their gratitude and admiration for the enormous contribution Peter has made to reaching constructive agreements and securing access to crags and moorland in the South of the region over the last three decades.

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

Since the last meeting, we have held the first round of the Youth Climbing Series, at Kendal. A much healthier entry than in recent years - 51, so thanks to those walls encouraging their young climbers to get involved!

The next round is at Newcastle Climbing Centre on 1st March.

Congrats to Sidonie Graham from Whitley Bay on her results in the Junior Bouldering Team – Sid is ranked 9th in the world in her age group.

Congrats also to Reece Patterson on his inclusion in the GB squad for 2014.

c. Walls – Mark Goodings reported that additional climbing surfaces have been installed at Sunderland Wall.

Sunderland Climbing Centre will be celebrating its 1st Birthday with a "Birthday Bash" on 15th February

The BMC leading Ladder will start on 8th February and run until the 23rd at the Newcastle Climbing centre.

The NCC will also be hosting the second round of the BMC Para Climbing Series on 15th April.

The NCC intends to provide courses in moving outdoors this summer

d. Hillwalking – Paul Mitcheson had nothing to report

#### 10. 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.

After much discussion it was decided that the logical approach is to have a single page for the NE. The single page is to be the 'official' page set up by the BMC and the old festival page is to be wound down.

Concerns over the fact that Facebook is essentially an open forum and that views expressed by others on the page could be taken to represent the views of the NE area committee were allayed

by agreeing that the page could be effectively moderated by key members of the NE area committee and Tony Ryan et al at BMC head office.

#### 11. Forthcoming events

##### 2014 NE Climbing festival

Since the last meeting an informal organising committee has met and the following has been confirmed:

Date: 12-13th July

Venue: Wooler, Northumberland.

Highburn house campsite for Sat evening barbeque and principal accommodation

Angel Inn Friday evening for initial get together and pub quiz

Back to Angel on Saturday evening after the Barbeque for talk given by Dave Turnbull entitled "From Bowden to Patagonia" followed by a ceilidh.

Further details will appear on the NE BMC Facebook page as they are confirmed.

##### Crag Lough Restoration

Date confirmed as 13-14th September. Format to be the same as previous years

Wooler Outdoor Week (WOW), see below

#### 12. AOB

Paul Mitcheson requested that Wooler Outdoor Week (WOW) was added to the agenda.

WOW will take place 18th-25th May to encourage both locals as well as tourists, to come and try some outdoor activities that are available in the area, including downhill mountain biking, archery, and guided walks. Over the 8 days there will be outdoor themed films showing and top outdoor and adventurous personalities giving talks during the evening.

Climbing doesn't seem to appear in the literature so far, however the organisers have said that they have been in touch with the BMC and the BMC are very keen for members to be involved. It therefore seems very odd that the BMC have not been in touch with the NE area committee about the event!

WOW appears to be excellent place to raise the profile of the NE climbing festival and we the festival organisers will be ensuring that posters and other such material is visible and available during WOW.

#### 13. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be at the Newcastle Climbing Centre, St Marks Church, Byker, Newcastle Upon Tyne Date and time TBC

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