

Meeting Minutes

BMC NE Area, Wednesday 4th June 2014 7:30 pm

Newcastle Climbing Centre, St Marks Church, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne

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

In attendance:

John Punshon (Chair)
Mark Anstiss (Temporary Secretary) (Wanneys CC)
Mark Goodings (NE Walls Officer)
Paul Mitcheson (NE Hillwalking Officer)
Rob Dyer (National Access and Conservation Officer)
Mike Facchini
Sarah Johnson (NMC)
James Higgins
Richard Alderton
Liam Dervey
Bob McAdam
Graham Harkness
Gordon Hull

2. Apologies for Absence:

Alan Hinkes (NE National Council Representative)
John Vaughn (NE Access Officer, North) (CMC NMC)
Jim Adler (NE Access Officer, South)
Peter Simcock
Calumn Adam
Bill RenShaw
John Herron
Adrian Wilson (NMC)
Graeme Armstrong (Wanneys CC)

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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.

3a Matters Arising From Previous Minutes

With the exception of the proposed Bowden Wind Farm matters arising from the previous minutes formed part of the agenda for this meeting. The Wind Farm Development was discussed prior to matters already on the agenda.

Proposed Bowden Wind Farm

This issue was discussed at length at the three previous meetings, at all of those meetings everyone present (with the exception of one abstention) was opposed to the development.

At the last meeting it was agreed that John Punshon would draft and submit an objection to Northumberland County Council planning department on behalf of the BMC NE Area. This objection was submitted in February.

Ron McAdam reported that the consultation phase was drawing to a close and that comments on the proposal (made online) must be received by 7th June.

N.B. Mark Goodings publicised this impending deadline by posting a link to the planning page on the NE Area Facebook page the morning after the meeting.

4. 2014 NE Climbing and Walking Festival – Wooler, Northumberland

It was reported by the organising committee that the following has been confirmed:

Date: 12-13th July

Accommodation: Highburn house **campsite will be free for BMC members** – don't forget your membership card!

Nominated charity: Northumberland Mountain Rescue

Things will get going at the Angel Inn in Wooler on Friday evening from around 8:00 pm (TBC) for an initial get together, a pub quiz (with general knowledge questions as well as topics on outdoor recreation) and a talk given by the NE Mountain Rescue Service.

There are no formally organised activities for Saturday daytime, although local climbers and walkers will be on hand to offer advice on suitable venues for these activities and no doubt, there will be a significant gathering at a local crag as well walks in the nearby Cheviot Hills.

James Higgins (trainee SPA) volunteered his services on an informal basis.

The focus will shift back to The Angel on Saturday evening for a **free buffet** and a talk given by Dave Turnbull entitled "**From Bowden to Patagonia**". There will be further entertainment throughout the evening from a local folk singer.

Again on Sunday there will be no formally organised activities but it is anticipated that festival goers will again be out and about and enjoying the best that the County has to offer benefiting from the knowledge of local activists.

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

5. Crag Lough Restoration

Date confirmed as 13-14th September. Format to be the same as previous years; meet on Saturday morning clean routes all day followed by a free barbeque laid on by the BMC. Enjoy the newly restored climbs on Sunday. Publicity and further finer details will be forthcoming over the summer.

6. National Council Updates

Rob Dyer ran through a summary of the BMC's activities over the last three month (appended to these minutes).

Rob remarked that there have been a number of potential access issues arising lately at various venues across the country and encouraged everyone to make themselves aware of locally agreed access arrangements when visiting climbing venues by using the Regional Access Database

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/>

Also available as an App.

7. Forthcoming Events

NE Climbing and Walking Festival and Crag Lough Restoration detailed above.

A number of climbing and general outdoor films continue to be shown at Tyneside cinema in association with the Newcastle Climbing Centre.

Nationally there are a number of climbing festivals taking place this summer;

28-29 June: Stanage Festival

4-6 July: Cornish Climbing Festival

26 July: Bristol Climbing Festival

6 September: WiltonFest

8. Coordinators Reports

a. Access

North

Simonside Hills – In past years climbers have occasionally been challenged when approaching and climbing on Simonside crag, signs are occasionally posted on the footpaths although not necessarily on the forestry tracks leading up the hill. Since the last meeting John Vaughn has investigated the situation on Simonside to ascertain what the current access situation is or is likely to be for this year and where this information can be found in future. John's findings (communicated by email prior to the meeting) are summarised below.

The area in question covers the Simonside Hills above the main forestry track that runs below Simonside crag; it also appears to include the area around Selby's Cove but does not extend to Ravensheugh. A map delineating the exact area can be found on Natural England's Open Access website <http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk> which is the central point for information on all access closures.

There are two long term dog exclusion restrictions (Case Nos. 2010035328 until May 2015 and 2011015795 until February 2016).

In addition, under CRow rules the landowner can apply for discretionary general access restrictions for up to 28 days per calendar year, with the exception of:

- 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.

The Landowner does not need to 'apply' for such temporary closures, however they are required to notify Natural England at least 5 days in advance to enable them to publish details on their Open Access website (address above).

This year the land owner proposed the following closure dates (Case No. 2014047195):

May 6th – 23rd and 27th – 30th.

June 2nd – 6th and the 9th.

These appear to have been legal closures within CRow legislation and will have formally barred access to the crags during the closed periods. The landowner (or their representative) will have been within their rights challenge anyone on the land and asked them to leave. The landowner obviously has the discretion as to whether the closures are enforced, for example they may have informally allowed access if no shooting was taking place on certain days.

Additional closures are anticipated during the shooting season (after August 12th) but at the time of writing (26/6/14) there are no proposals on Natural England's Open Access Website.

To the best of the knowledge of those present at the meeting there have been no confrontations at Simonside during May and the beginning of June, however it seemed inconceivable to those present that no one (climbers or walkers - with or without dogs) had visited the closed area during the restricted days. Since the closures do not appear to be well publicised, people breaching the closures are unlikely to have done so knowingly.

Since the landowner only needs to give 5 days notice to Natural England of a proposed closure, keeping climbers informed will be very challenging. Unfortunately the format of Natural England's Open Access Website does not enable a direct hyperlink to any future proposed closures at a particular site to be made from the BMC's Regional Access Database (RAD). RAD is well publicised by the BMC and is typically the easiest source of definitive access information pertaining to crags.

Rob Dyer described similar situations in other areas of the country where there is a good relationship between landowners and the BMC and the dates of proposed closures are communicated to the BMC well in advance thus allowing RAD to be kept up to date and definitive.

Action: Rob Dyer / John Vaughn to consider approaching the Land Manager at Simonside to see if in future the dates of proposed closures can be communicated to the BMC sufficiently in advance to allow RAD to be updated accordingly.

Action: Rob Dyer to ensure that the long term restrictions on dogs are added to the BMC'S Regional Access Database (RAD).

Access South – Jim Adler was not present

b. Youth – Ian Walton was not present

c. Walls – Mark Goodings reported that the second round of the BMC Para Climbing Series was held at the Newcastle Climbing Centre on 15th April. The event was huge success – thanks to all involved. The NCC intends to provide courses in moving outdoors this summer. Local girl Sidomie Graham is now on the juniors GB bouldering Team.

d. Hillwalking – Paul Mitcheson had nothing to report

9. AOB - Proposed Bowden Wind Farm (see above)

10. Next Meeting

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

Date and time TBC

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

A summary of some of the key BMC activities for the period March – May 2014

Access & Conservation

- Agreed and publicised formal position statements on drilled equipment and dry tooling.
- Arranged and publicised 2014 Range West Briefing dates.
- Updated and re-printed the BMC guide to climbing and occupier's liability; it is also available as a free download on the BMC website.
- Published seasonal nesting restrictions advice on the BMC website.
- Organised and led a walk in Wharfedale with Greg Mulholland MP, the BMC's Parliamentary Sports Fellow, to promote hill walking and help to raise money for the local Mountain Rescue Team.
- Publicised the re-opening of the Harrison's Rocks Campsite following repairs to the toilet block.
- Publicised a Stanage Forum open meeting, to encourage interested members to attend and give their views on the management of the North Lees Estate.
- Attended the annual Spirit of Kinder Day, this year held in Sheffield, to mark the 1932 Kinder Scout Mass Trespass.
- Publicised the work being undertaken in the Dark Peak Nature Improvement Area and encouraged interested BMC members to volunteer for a range of projects within the initiative.
- Published a reminder on the BMC website about access arrangements for climbing in Cheddar Gorge, including the need for third party liability insurance cover, following a number of incidents in which climbers have recently been caught climbing in areas outside of the access agreement, or climbing without insurance.
- Ran the annual TremFest clean-up event, with volunteers helping to give Craig Bwlch y Moch at Tremadog a spring clean.

Clubs & Huts

- Published Essential Club Know-how article on BMC website as a holding page for all important club-related articles and information.
- Supported the University of Manchester Hiking Club in the running of a new outdoor club safety seminar.
- 2014 Clubs Survey launched and publicised to all members in BMC monthly newsletter.
- Ran the annual Training Novice Club Members workshop at Plas y Brenin.

Competition Climbing (& Ski Mountaineering)

- Held Grand Final of the BMC Leading Ladder at the Beacon Climbing Centre, Caernarfon.
- Held the third round of the BMC Youth Climbing Series at climbing walls around the country.
- Held the second round of the BMC Paraclimbing Series at Newcastle Climbing Centre.
- Held the second round of the BMC/MCofS Junior British Bouldering Championships at The Climbing Academy in Glasgow
- Publicised Shauna Coxsey's win at the IFSC Bouldering World Cup event in Grindelwald, which took her to the top of the 2014 series rankings.

International

- Publicised the American Alpine Club's invitation for climbers to attend its annual International Climbers' Meet in Yosemite Valley in October.
- Publicised expeditions awarded a Mount Everest Foundation grant in 2014.
- Publicised Chamonix Mountain Festival discounted ticket offer for BMC members.

Safety & Skills

- Publicised the 2014 BMC Coaching Symposium, to be held in September in North Wales.
- Publicised the 2014 BMC FUNDamentals of Climbing workshop programme; three different one-day workshops hosted by numerous climbing walls around the country.
- Publicised the 2014 BMC Regional Academy programme; 32 one-day events covering five themes to support emerging young climbing talent.
- Ran the annual BMC Climbing Movement Masterclasses at seven venues around the country.
- Ran the annual BMC Alpine Lecture Series at six venues around the country.
- Commenced delivery of Rock Out subsidised local outdoor climbing courses for the 2014 outdoor climbing season.
- Publicised Mountain Training's free hill walking skills taster sessions being offered at the Keswick Mountain Festival.
- Published information and opened online booking for the annual BMC Student Safety & Good Practice Seminar at Plas y Brenin in October.

Technical

- Published a warning on the BMC website about potential bolt failures in the slate quarries of North Wales.

Youth & Equity

- Publicised the Climb Out challenge organised by BMC member Jake McManus in support of Mental Health Awareness Week.

BMC Organisation

- 2014 BMC AGM held on Portland; Rupert Davies and Mina Leslie-Wujastyk elected as BMC Vice-Presidents; Eric Jones made an Honorary Member; John Innerdale OBE awarded the George Band Award for exceptional voluntary service; Neil Foster elected as a Director on the Executive Committee, and Brian Smith as an Independent Director; quorum of the Executive Committee increased from four to five persons; Individual and Club Member subscriptions to be increased by £1.50 from 1 January 2015.

Membership

- Supported the Keswick Mountain Festival with publicity of the event to members; organised a themed guided walk to celebrate the BMC's 70th anniversary and exhibited in the festival marquee, promoting BMC membership and selling merchandise including the new BMC Lake District T-shirts.

Medical

- Updated and publicised advice on the BMC website about ticks and tick-borne diseases.