

BMC Cymru North Wales meeting notes

Meeting held on Tuesday 10 June 2014 at Lilly's Hotel, West Shore, Llandudno.

Apologies received from Calum Muskett, Gwyn Jones.

Attendance 29 inc. Tom Gravitt and Sally Pidcock from Conwy Council Countryside Service.

- 1) There were no matters arising from previous minutes/notes
- 2) Bolted belay inspections Gt Orme
From Chris Parkin: Two training sessions had been carried out and a number of people trained up to carry out the inspections. Bolt belay inspections are a condition of the agreement to climb above the Marine Drive and North Wales Bolt Fund volunteers carry out the work in return for expenses from the BMC which is donated to the Bolt Fund. To date some 20 belay bolts have been inspected mainly by a couple of people but much more need to be done.
- 3) Slate Bolts – a big thanks to Mark Reeves for replacing many of the loose bolts and carrying out a considerable number of checks on the bolted lower offs. No bolts have actually failed and even the lowest measured pull tests exceeded the equivalent of 400kg direct outward force. However advice is that on heavily used routes and lower offs that resin bolts would be a better and more sustainable solution. The bolts that have pulled out with low forces are only those that have been extensively weighted, such as on the very popular easier sports routes that are top roped by very many people (i.e hundreds) in a season.
- 4) North Wales Bolt fund – financially is just about doing ok - more donations would be welcome as would more volunteers as the bolt fairies are now getting fewer and older!
- 5) From Jim Kelly – some of the bolts on the wings at Castle Inn appear to be loose – another job for the mythical bolt fairies (or maybe more realistically a few of the more regular users can get together to replace the loose bolts?). Also a lot of glass and other debris remains at the base of the crag following a fly-tipping incident. Jim would liaise with Elfyn to organise an evening crag-clean-up/ fun climbing session.
- 6) TremFest – over 60 participants and a great success– full report on BMC website. Many thanks to Jim & Julia for organising a great event. Some debate about whether this should be a paid for event but general feeling was that the current format works well and that charging participants would be counter-productive. More effort maybe to get participants to contribute to BMC's ACT charity or the NW Bolt Fund in return for free beer, prize draws, etc.
- 7) North Wales Limestone –Sally Pidcock and Tom Gravitt gave a presentation about the conservation designations and the Great Orme's position as an environmentally sensitive and legally protected area. They outlined the legal situation, ownership and protection that the area has, which even goes as far the country park staff having to apply for formal consent to National Resources Wales for putting up their own sign posts and information boards. They

explained that climbing as an activity was welcomed but that certain species and areas have significant conservation interest and that this interest (especially flora) may not be obvious to climbers at first sight. One such area is the crags along the West Shore which contain several protected and nationally scarce plants, where the Council cannot give consent for climbing as NRW as the enforcing/consenting body would not be willing to allow it. It was emphasised that that in many years of climbing on the Ormes that there had been very few infringements of any of the agreements. They were very keen to emphasise that climbers were not being singled out for special attention over other recreational groups, except to point out that as climbers we have access to and can get to some of the more remote and sensitive parts of the Orme where many of the rarest and most protected plants and birds are also found.

Tom Gravitt mentioned that he had worked on the Orme for over 30 yrs and it was acknowledged that without his influence there would be many more restrictions and possibly a total ban on climbing on many parts of the Orme.

Council staff want to work closer with climbers to avoid incidents that have occurred in last two years – such as the removal of vegetation from protected sites without any consultation, staples for access to Pigeon's Cave, developments of new routes on particularly sensitive conservation sites.

Concern that increasingly repeated issues such as these can be seen by NRW and Police as environmental crimes with consequent actions by enforcing authorities. Council staff and NRW happy to discuss any climbing proposals – main concern is that they do not know what is happening and often only find out after the fact. They state they will always try to accommodate climbing but that legal issues and consents have to be followed due to the designations and legal protection that exists.

It was suggested that an on-site walk and discussion with a group of the main activists and route developers would be useful to look at actual sites and issues and for BMC and council/NRW to produce a Green Guide to climbing on the Orme to advise both climbers and conservation bodies of the special interest in the location.

8. AOB

Cromlech path progress – BMC has monies set aside for this but it's not sufficient and offers of grant aid from public bodies had dried up due to financial cut backs. Elfyn would look into possibility of having a reduced project with the available funding.

Slate – Temporary closures for a maximum of three days during June for filming work. First Hydro position on climbing unchanged (i.e. no formal permission to climb on their land) but a change in personnel may lead to more positive relationships between climbers and the security staff.