

BMC North Wales Local Area Meeting Minutes

Venue: Vaynol, Nant Peris

Date: 9th September 2014

Apologies: Jim Kelly, Julia Kelly, James McHaffie and Andy Godber

Attendance: 42

Attendees: Dave Rudkin, Dave Evans, Simon Panton, Andy Newton, Will Kilner, Simon Shaw, Tom Gray, Andrew Richardson, Daniel Woodthorpe, Sue Leyland, Norman Clacher, Andy Boorman, Mike Pycroft, Nathan Pycroft, Mike Raine, Ron Rees Davies, Peter Whittaker, Martin Doyle, Steve Long, Tom Hutton, Calum Muskett, Ray Wood, Dave Prendergast, Jill Plummer, Kate Worthington, Si Verspeak, Ian Martin, Colin Goodey, Gabriel Lees, Sue Goodey, Rebecca Coles, Ross Worthington, Anthony Eccles, Stuart Lade, Chris Parkin, Myfyr Tomos, Pete Johnson, Anne Robertson-Vowles, Anita Grey, Cath Luke, Geoff Bennett, Elfyn Jones

Meeting:

Minutes of previous meeting:

Nothing arising

North Wales Limestone Guidebook:

The North Wales Limestone guidebook was due to be launched at the meeting. Guidebook writer Andy Boorman updated the room on the situation - unfortunately there have been problems with the printers delaying the guidebook arrival however it should be in shops imminently.

Ormes update by Elfyn Jones:

Following concerns from National Resources Wales and wardens for the Great Ormes over new routing activities in delicate ecological areas the wardens have proposed a date for Tuesday the 23rd of September to walk around the Ormes with local activists highlighting sensitive spots with the hope of preventing future accidental damage to flora. Interested parties should contact Elfyn Jones for further info. Intention is to meet at 17.30 at Parisella's Cave and meet with the conservation staff to look at the practicalities for new route development on the Ormes.

Gogarth – issues at the Range by Elfyn Jones:

Historically the BMC and RSPB have had very good relations at Gogarth. The Range area has seen extensive new route development recently and the inadvertent placing of abseil stakes in and around patches of South Stack or Spathulate Fleawort plant – an endemic flower that only grows on this section of coast. To quote the RSPB, this issue “seriously undermines the historically good relations between climbers and the RSPB”. So a plea for now – no more belay stakes here please. The BMC will arrange for the worst stakes to be removed and for new more discreetly placed stakes to replace them and to have a process of having them annually checked by competent persons.

BMC Wales newsletter:

An effort has been made in the most recent newsletters to increase the number of hill-walking stories. The newsletter content is generated by the contributions of readers so if anybody has any good news stories please send them in to Calum Muskett by emailing: calum_muskett@hotmail.co.uk

Snowdon issues:

Following Coroner Nicola Jones' report, quoted as saying that false paths on Snowdon have left "people in peril" there has been a media storm surrounding the mountain with ambiguous press releases fuelling news stories. The National Park is legally obliged to take steps to answer the coroner's concerns, which has left many regular hill users concerned about the over 'sanitising' of Snowdon.

Simon Panton raised concerns about further path development work both on Snowdon and in the Llanberis Pass questioning where the planning permission was coming from.

Ray Wood, having attended a local access meeting where members of National Park management were present, said that they were unaware of how and why there were these new paths and improvement works.

Kate Worthington has recently spoken to some northern Snowdonia wardens and seemed to think that they had been instrumental in new footpath work raising the question that there seemed to be a lack of communication both internally and externally with the National Park.

Ross Worthington and Elfyn Jones both agreed that more joined up thinking was necessary between the BMC and bodies such as the NP and that new lines of communications need to be opened up to ascertain this.

Ray Wood defended the National Park saying that they had been coming to local area meetings and haven't been operating in total isolation – an obvious case being the marker stones which were agreed to be placed on Snowdon between multiple bodies, the BMC included.

Mike Raine raised concerns about the way press releases of mountain incidents are handed to the press and was joined in sentiment by another suggesting that press releases given by the BMC or National Park need to be meticulous in their wording to avoid any potential misinterpretations by the press.

Concerns were raised over the judgement of Coroner Nicola Jones in releasing a report stating that false trails need to be removed. Is she aware in practice how impractical/improbable this is? Questions were raised about the possibility of getting this statement retracted. Elfyn Jones will try and get hold of the full coroner's report before entering dialogue with her.

Myfyr Tomos raised the issue that reactions to incident on Snowdon were being blown out of proportion. Snowdon is now one of the most popular peaks in the world and Elfyn, having done some research, found that the percentage of all incidents reported to Mountain Rescue was below 0.028% of all visitors to Snowdon (basically about one in 4,000 needs MR assistance, mostly uninjured, long term average fatality rate from falls/trauma is about one death in 140,000 visitors). That figure, alongside the approximate 200 callouts on Snowdon for the Llanberis mountain rescue

team per year suggest that the number of incidents are in fact very low compared to the number of people walking on Snowdon.

Mike Raine put in a strong word over increased lobbying for support from the Welsh government over Snowdon. As one of the most popular mountains in the world and a major tourism draw in Wales there should be a management committee set up for Snowdon either paid for or subsidised by the Welsh government, adding that free leaflets and screens giving dynamic conditions reports would be welcome for mountain safety and education. There was also a call that for this to happen there would be a greater need to shout about the issue – perhaps by working with magazines, newspapers, Visit Wales and even Countryfile?

Real 3 Peaks:

The Real 3 Peaks clean-up is happening on the 3rd and 4th of October this year so if anyone is interested in helping out can they please contact Ross Worthington of RAW adventures.

BMC Access conference:

The BMC access conference is taking place on the 9th of October at Rheged. There is a £30 entry fee for BMC members to cover venue hire, food and lecture costs.

Hydro and wind turbines going through planning:

Elfyn Jones noted that there are still many plans going in for small scale hydro electric and wind turbines in Snowdonia. If anybody has any real issues with any can they please contact Elfyn Jones as there are too many for him to be able to look into individually.

Welsh AGM:

This year's AGM will be on the 29th of November and most likely at Plas y Brenin (as yet unconfirmed). There will be an aim to plan a fun evening with a lecture and perhaps even some Purple Moose alongside the AGM!

LLAMFF:

LLAMFF will be returning in March next year. To contribute or find out more information please contact Ross Worthington or Jason Rawles.

Development officer for Wales:

Mike Raine raised the idea of a regional BMC development officer for Wales to get more people, in particular schools and youth groups, into mountaineering and climbing. There is a lack of Welsh instructors and local climbing activists and the outdoor partnership has found it difficult to arrange events to introduce people to climbing whilst having no trouble getting people involved with kayaking and mountain biking due to better integration. Should the BMC put ideas together about applying for funding with the Welsh government or Sport Wales? Similar positions already exist that are funded by Sport England in the BMC.