

Summary of the 40th meeting of National Council

Date: Saturday 20 September 2014

Venue: Kendal Climbing Wall

In attendance:

Voting members: Rupert Davies, Mina Leslie-Wujastyk & Mike Watson (Vice-Presidents); John Simpson (Treasurer); Will Kilner (Cymru South); Ted Rogers & Steve Scott (Lakes); Ralph Ranford (London & SE); Charles Gameson & Claudia Sarnier (Midlands); Alan Hinkes (North East); Neil Foster & Simon Lee (Peak); Gareth Palmer & Iain Peters (South West); Deirdre Collier & James Rowe (Yorkshire); and Dave Turnbull (CEO).

Specialist Committee chairs: Nick Kurth (Access Management Group); Fiona Sanders (Clubs Committee).

Observers & staff: Brian Smith (Independent Director); Andy Say (MTE); Nick Colton & Kate Anwyl (staff).

Summary:

1. Introduction: Mike Watson chaired the meeting and began by noting the valuable contribution of Craig Harwood (Chair, Huts Advisory Group) to the BMC; Craig had tragically been killed in a climbing accident at Compass Point in Cornwall on 4 September.

2. Area news & reports:

- Area reps reported on a series of successful climbing / walking festivals at Stanage, Wilton, Tremadog, the Gower, Avon Gorge, Lancashire and Northumberland, which had been held as part of the BMC 70th anniversary celebrations.
- Visitor pressure on Snowdon is an increasingly prominent issue. In South Wales it was reported that an amicable agreement had been reached in the Llangattock fixed equipment debate. The Peak Area noted that access to certain limestone crags is becoming increasingly difficult due to the position of key landowners.
- The Lakes Area raised the issue of bracken encroachment on the fells which is making access to certain crags increasingly difficult. Similar problems were reported elsewhere in the country e.g. the Peak District, Yorkshire and Dartmoor. It was agreed that the Access Management Group would consider the BMC's national position on the issue and how best to address this via the statutory agencies and major landowners.

- The South West Area raised the issue of in-situ pegs on sea cliffs. After discussion it was agreed that the BMC should produce a position statement to advise climbers on the use of pegs. Draft to be presented at the December meeting.
- The Midlands Area expressed concern at the closure of Ogwen Cottage (a Birmingham City Council outdoor centre) and other Local Education Authority facilities in England.

3. Finance & membership: The BMC is currently forecasting a £86k deficit for 2014. Current BMC membership is 77,972 (856 up on the previous 12 months ago) of which 53,079 are individual members and 24,893 club members. 86.52% of individual members are on direct debit. BMC policy on future subscriptions increases (e.g. whether to have an annual RPI linked increase or occasional larger increases) was discussed; the December meeting will consider this in more detail.

4. Review of the BMC's 2013-17 Strategic Plan: This discussion focused on the BMC's work for young people. A range of options were debated including: measures to encourage clubs to accept u18s; the benefit of closer working with the NUS; the possible re-introduction of a youth newsletter and; the establishment of BMC affiliated youth climbing clubs at climbing walls.

5. Hill Walking Strategy: National Council agreed that the BMC must do more to meet the needs of walkers. It was agreed to establish a Hill Walking Working Group to consider the development and implementation of a hill walking strategy within the BMC.