

Minutes of BMC North Wales Area Meeting

Held at The Vaynol, Nant Peris on Tuesday 3 February 2015.

Attendees:

Will Hardy, Dave Turnbull, Kasia Osipiwizz, Mark Dicken, Kate Worthington, Pete Harrison, Anthony Eccles, Emma Street, Dewi Davies, Nigel Tuckley, Ben Hull, Martin Doyle, Carol Gruffydd, Grug Jones, K C Gordon, Alun Pugh, Richard Bale, Calum Muskett, Tom Hutton, Elfyn Jones, Peter Whittaker, Myfyr Tomos, Helen Pye, John Barber, Harry Marshall, Ron Rees Davies, Jim Kelly, Julia Kelly, Andy Newton, Sian Shakespere (Clwb Mynyddu Cymru)

Apologies:

Ray Wood, Simon Panton, Chris Parkin, Mike Pycroft, Andy Boorman, Barbra Jones

Issues arising from previous meeting/minutes - None

Tremfest – To be arranged for the weekend of the 29th-31st of May. This is the weekend at the end of the school holidays and should guarantee plenty of growth of vegetation and longer sunlight hours to previous meets. Aim to arrange a talk by one of the BMC ambassadors. Wild Country, Petzl and Scarpa and DMM have offered support. Aim to attract more clubs to this year's event.

Mid Wales Group – Fourteen attendees to the last meeting and good debate on some important issues. Still seems to be bridging the gap between north and south Wales well.

BMC National Council Meeting – To take place at Plas y Brenin on the 25th of April. On the Saturday there will be an open forum and opportunity to speak to the BMC directors. The AGM will take place after. There will also be an evening buffet open to BMC members (places need to be booked first)

Ruthin Escarpment – Elfyn Jones: The landowners of this private estate have raised concern for the access for climbers following pictures showing a boulder pulled off the crag. Blog posts showing this damage hasn't helped. Elfyn has a meeting with the landowners and Natural Resources Wales coming up.

Green Climbing Guide – The BMC and Conwy Council are working on producing a green climbing guide for North Wales limestone in the pipeline to show rare plants and areas that may be out of bounds for climbers.

Off-road Motor Cycles – The debate continues over off-road motor cycling. Motorbikes have been seen along the Penmachno bike trails, Cnicht area, the Berwynion and Moelwynion and have caused perceptible damage to paths and vegetation. There has been a debate in the Welsh Assembly concerning the issue but it is currently of low priority with the police. The police also struggle over what a legitimate complaint is and how to deal with it. The police will however act and investigate on any possible offences. Reporting these offences will push illegal off-road biking up the priority list of police complaints. Elfyn agreed to issue guidance on this via BMC website.

BMC Benefits Package – Jim Kelly raised the point that the BMC benefits package is relatively poor compared to that of the Austrian Alpine Club of which he is also a member. The AAC membership package includes basic alpine cover (rescue and repatriation) and reciprocal rights for the use of huts in the Alps. Jim suggested that the BMC raise their game and improve the benefits package or perhaps even create a larger, all inclusive benefits package on top of this. Jim thought that doing this could potentially raise the BMCs current membership number. He asked for the area's consent to raise this issue at National Council which the meeting voted in favour of.

Dave Turnbull raised the point that BMC insurance is more comprehensive than that of the AAC and the membership of the AAC is much larger than that of the BMC and historically has had a much smaller number of claims due to the main clientele.

Welsh Open Access Campaign – Elfyn Jones is looking at raising this issue once again with the new Welsh Deputy Minister for sport, Ken Skates to get this key issue into the manifesto for 2016. With the general election coming up now could be an opportune moment for awareness of this issue. Elfyn mentioned a compromise over the water access but the room was in agreement that compromise could lead to a slippery slope; it would also reduce the number of campaigners in favour of any potential manifesto. Elfyn thought that bringing this up with politicians was the key to the issue and with 26% of Welsh children currently classed as clinically obese there was a good reason to open access to enable greater opportunity for Welsh people to access the outdoors.

Snowdon Management Plan – Helen Pye, the Snowdon National Park Warden is in the process of creating a management plan for Snowdon with the help of user groups, land ownership and business managers with an input to Snowdon. There will be an open forum over the coming months with opportunities to talk to the core management and generate ideas to be implemented in a management plan.

Jim Kelly put out his view that the BMC should be in this core management team as he thinks the BMC have a serious obligation to all mountain users and the wider public, not just its membership.

Alun Pugh the local Labour candidate and past Director of Snowdonia Society said that this is a visitor management issue as well as a statutory duty for the National Park. Snowdon has been crying

out for a management plan for years and he said that the elected members of the National Park authority haven't taken an interest in the issue despite the local warden's and officer's advice.

Andy Newton said that the BMC should have a philosophical and ethical role in the management of the mountain but not a role in the commercial running of it.

Elfyn Jones and Tom Hutton have suggested a panel discussion and open forum at the Llanberis Adventure Film Festival to open up the debate. This is now agreed for 4pm on the Sunday March 8th. Free admission at Electric Mountain centre.

Dewi Davies from Snowdonia National Park Authority has left his email for further info or anybody that wants to raise issues over this debate: dewi.davies@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Local Sherpa Buses – Following the closure of a key local bus company, then another following allegations of corruption the new contract for local bus services issued by Gwynedd County Council has been much reduced. The Sherpa buses run on a use it or lose it basis and the Ogwen to Capel Curig bus has suffered due to this. There is also a greater call for linking Snowdonia tourist villages such as Betws, Capel, Beddgelert and Llanberis.

Range West – There will be more briefings this year for those who wish to gain access to Range West. Briefings will be generic for all user groups. You will not be able to enter Range West unless you have been to a briefing. The first briefing is on February the 21st and there will be 15 in total until the final one in May. These briefings will allow a year's access. These briefings are provided on a use it or lose it basis.

LLAMFF – The Llanberis Adventure Film Festival is returning for the weekend of the 6th-8th March. Lots of great speakers and events. More info and booking information at: www.llamff.co.uk

Cwm Idwal Winter Climbing Project – The temperature gauges so far seem to be very accurate. The project is after feedback so please provide it. Details to be found on the BMC website.

Met Office Weather Reports and National Park Ground conditions reports – There have been problems with inaccuracies due to communication issues between the MET office and SNPA. SNPA are looking at providing the weather in a different format or on a separate website.

Cairns on Cadair Idris – Myfyr Tomos, the SNPA Cadair warden is looking at rationalising the cairns of the mountain and asked if the room was in favour of this, which it was. He was also calling for support from members to help remove them.

International Meet – Will be in the Llanberis Pass at Ynnys Ettws this year. Give something back to the area and introduce some foreigners to the great climbing! Details to be found on the BMC website.

Glyn Rhonwy – There will be new consultation at the end of February on a radically changed plan for the hydro scheme. They're looking to double its size and output. They have not asked for planning permission for pylons yet but these are likely to be granted if the hydro scheme gets planning permission. The BMC will look into this issue; thanks to Mark Dicken for bringing it up. Peregrines have just started nesting in the main quarry hole as well. As the output is now nearly 100M, this is being handled by the Planning Inspectorate not Gwynedd Council.
<http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/projects/wales/glyn-rhonwy-pumped-storage/>

BMC Travel Insurance – Dave Turnbull updated the room about the new underwriters for BMC travel insurance. There have been improvements in wording for mountain injuries and rescues as well as a removal of age loading for the elderly as well as snow boarders.

4 Year Strategic Plan – There will be an increased focus on hill walking issues and youth issues in this plan. Dave is after views and opinions on what hill walkers want out of the BMC. Please contact: dave@thebmc.co.uk if you have any ideas or opinions on this.