

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Cymru North Wales Meeting Thursday 16 July 2015, The Vaynol Arms, Nant Peris

Attendees:

K C Gordon; Ron Rees Davies; Tirion Rees Davies; Elton Angle-Smith; Tabitha Angle-Smith; Gwyn Jones; Martin Doyle; Nigel Tuckley; Bev Hull; Tim Jepson; Andy Boorman; Will Hardy; Jesse James; Maggie Crane; Mark Dicken; Andy Newton; Mike Raine; Peter Whittaker; Elfyn Jones; Steph Duits; Angus Kille; Conor McKeown; Cathy Woodhead; David Medcalf; Jim Kelly; Julia Kelly; John Redhead; Victoria Foxwell; Anne Vowles; Ray Wood; Calum Muskett; Tom Hutton; Kate Worthington; Ross Worthington.
(Head count of 40, so some names missing).

Apologies:

Helen Pye; Roger Bennion; Chris Parkin; Ian L Jones; Adam Wainwright; Anthony Eccles; Dave Rudkin.

Craig y Forwyn update

Elfyn Jones – Middle section of Craig y Forwyn still owned by Mr Webb and still no access. Forwyn is also still a SSSI so no clearing as it will likely lead to prosecution. Mr Jones who owns and leases either side of the crag is open for climbers to use the crag – ongoing discussions. Also there is an invasive species creeping onto the crag which National Resources Wales may work with the BMC to remove.

Pembroke nesting bird disturbance incident

Elfyn Jones – Make sure you know where and what time of year the restrictions apply – there are no excuses for this! Police are already involved with a case in Pembrokeshire which will almost certainly go to a caution. Please don't ruin the access for everyone else.

Great Orme: NT campsite / LimeFest 2016

Elfyn Jones – National Trust are the new owners of the farm on top of the Great Orme and keen to work with climbers and possibly open a campsite. It could be a fantastic venue to hold a BMC climbing festival and very different to existing festivals; this could be held in early September potentially. The festival could involve crag clean-ups, re-bolting, bolt testing but would require a high level of management. The room was very much in favour of this proposition.

Hydro-electric schemes update

Elfyn Jones – 9 new applications since 1 March; four small ones around Nant Gwynant and surrounding areas. A controversial application has been made for the River Conwy through Fairy Glen, which could have bio-diversity issues, affect climbing at the Tubes and major implications for kayaking and landscape in general. Please, if people are objecting to hydro schemes then come to the BMC with material objections having looked through the planning application. It's down to members to raise awareness and get the BMC moving. Watch out, there are more in the pipeline...

Slate – ethics debate

Mark Dicken – Slate bolting and in particular in Twll Mawr. A look into the ethics of new routing in this diverse area. Mark is a local activist and in particular but not exclusively a trad new route developer. Since 2000 there have been about 67 trad(esque) bolted routes and over 150 sport routes put up in that time. On the back wall of Twll Mawr there has been some retro bolting of belays and bolts clip-able from existing routes. Mark is suggesting that there should be discussion between activists on developing new routes, in particular to the right of the route 'Twll Love'.

Andy Newton - There should be a presumption against any retro-bolting of existing trad routes and a lot of thought and discussion should be put into bolting new routes next to existing trad lines.

Conwy Crag – fencing and access resolved with First Hydro

Elfyn Jones – Conwy Crag (Nant Peris) which lies on open access land has had new fences put in but never with the intention of closing access. Gates have now been put in place.

Glyn Rhonwy pump storage scheme

Elfyn Jones – Ongoing applications to Glyn Rhonwy pump storage scheme. New application is being doubled in size and is due to be submitted to the planning inspectorate in the third quarter of 2015. When the application goes in then the BMC and others will be able to respond and object to this development. An alliance of organisations has been formed to look into this and work in unison. Details are on the BMC website and also on the 'Concerned About Glyn Rhonwy?' Facebook group.

Access Green Paper

Elfyn Jones – No rights of access to the sea cliffs and rivers of Wales – it is to the whim of the landowner whether the public are allowed a right of way. The CROW Act has been a fantastic success for upland areas however. There is now a great opportunity to expand access to the countryside in Wales bringing it more in line with Scotland; the consultation is now open on the government website and a green paper has been published. We NEED people who are interested to go to their local MP and assembly members to make this happen as any landowners and angling groups will be campaigning against this. We need a big push for this. The health side is potentially key for this consultation as well as tourism and outdoor recreation users. Please respond to this consultation. The BMC will soon be

publishing news items and providing links to the correct websites.

Update – link to website:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/environmentandcountryside/improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors/?lang=en>

TremFest report

Jim Kelly – Tremfest a great success and a big thanks to Eric Jones and Wild Country. Going ahead next year and planning has already started. Lots of good work going on. Unfortunately a bit late in the year. Also close to the Tradfest so better for some linked up thinking between festivals. Perhaps around the second week of May in 2016.

Snowdonia Sherpa bus services

Elfyn Jones – The Sherpa buses were supposed to be providing green access to the mountains and between the local communities but following local bus service closures these are getting fewer and fewer. No bus service down the Ogwen valley and it's no longer possible to connect buses from Rhyd Ddu and Beddgelert back to Nant Peris or Llanberis. Very much a case of use it or lose it and one comment made was that the bus to Ogwen was costing approximately £60 a head. – Direct communications with the bus companies possible but subsidies are petering out. National Park have also been communicating with the council.

Gower Climbing Festival 2015

Tom Hutton – Gower Fest is on the weekend of 11-12 September; it would be great to get some outsiders down there!

Rhuthin Escarpment and Pothole Quarry

Elfyn Jones – The insurers (NFU) weren't willing to insure the land owner with climbers using the crag but this was due to an individual assessor and has since been revoked. Local climbers have been doing a great job cleaning up the rubbish from parties and fly tipping. - Lots of partying at Pothole quarry and a big fear of potential deaths by drunk or drugged people falling off cliff edges. There have been two climbing deaths here in the last five years and also a couple of incidents of local kids falling off neighbouring cliffs after parties. The BMC is leasing the crag but may be evicted by Denbighshire council in worst case scenario.

Next meeting

Tom Hutton – Proposal of making the next meeting an AGM and bringing it forward to the last weekend of October at Plas y Brenin if we can be fitted in. Looking at having a fun day and having speakers (hill walking/photography and climbing/mountaineering?) get in touch if you want to volunteer your skills or ideas.

Some positions in the Wales area will be up for vote, such as the chair, and it would be great to get people volunteering for positions. It would also be great to get some fresh faces on board.

Jim Kelly – Looking at attracting new members to meeting from the national council's different areas. How can we incentivise and draw in fresh members to our local area meetings?

Mike Raine – Make it as informal as possible and drop the word 'meeting' as this can put off different groups. Also to try and make it clearer that non-members are also welcome.

Tom Hutton – Lack of hill walking agenda items. We want to represent hill walkers at the BMC but people need to bring items up. There is however a lack of 'flashpoint' issues on hill walking outside general access and hydro etc mainly due to the good upland access in Wales.

Martin Doyle – There needs to be some joined up thinking about the major issue we face in Wales which is the open access campaign. We need to bring this up in a structured approach to the next meeting. This issues does seem to trump all others and we need to think carefully about how we go about this, whether we should keep the CROW Act etc.