

Minutes

BMC North East Area Meeting 3 September 2015 Durham Climbing Centre

In Attendance

Mark Anstiss
Dan Middleton (BMC)
Stephen Heiniger
Mike Conlon
Steve Jenkins
Rich Alderton
Martin Ballantine
Jessica Wortley
Mary Johnson
Georgina Keyte
Greg Ashby
Phillip Powell
Graham Harkness
Bob McAdam
Jon Punshon
Paul Michinson

1. Welcome and introduction

As Jon Punshon was running late, Mark Anstiss got the meeting underway, with Rich Alderton acting as secretary. Jon Punshon chaired from item 4.

2. Apologies for absence

- Mark Goodings
- Alan Hinkes
- John Vaughan
- Peter Simcock
- Martin Shaw
- John Herron
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3. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting held at Newcastle Climbing Centre on 11 June were discussed and were found to be accurate.

4. Report of Climbing / Hillwalking Festival – Wooler, Northumberland

The festival was held on the weekend of 3-5 July and was reasonably well-attended (70 people), although it was noted that the Friday night had been very quiet - in particular lacking in any of the organisers to provide a welcome. The venues (Angel Pub and Highburn House campsite - free to BMC members) were excellent, and the talk by Neil Gresham was well-received.

Some of the families who came to the festival are now BMC members, which is very encouraging.

It was felt by some that though the event was well-publicised, there had been very little concrete information put out before the festival. It was suggested that, in the future, a loose 'framework' be circulated in advance so that festivalgoers had something to focus on, although it was noted that weather and plans can change.

Jon Punshon noted the work put in by a small number of volunteers in organising the festival, and thought that the strong criticism seen on the Facebook page of a local club was insensitive and inappropriate. It was noted that the area's clubs had been largely absent from any planning or promotion, and was felt that to make future festivals successful, clubs would need to become much more involved.

Mark Goodings was thanked for his efforts in securing some excellent prizes, with an estimated value in excess of £1000. As a result of the Nepal Earthquake, it was decided to turn the event into a fundraiser, and over £300 was raised.

5. Festival 2016

Discussion turned to whether to run the event in future years. It was suggested that the festival still didn't have a clear 'identity' or aim, and this might have led to its disjointed nature. A clear identity would help future festivals.

Dan Middleton (BMC) pointed out that successful events elsewhere in the country have focussed on local climbers coming together to showcase their backyard to visiting climbers, as they would if a friend came to stay, and that it was this social aspect

which made them a success. He also noted that some festivals simply run out of steam after a few years.

Georgina Keyte (NUMC) pointed out that July is not likely to appeal to the student clubs, who would be on holiday by then. She also noted that transport would be a problem for students.

It was suggested that, after three 'North' festivals in three years, the South of the region take the lead in 2016, but there was very little appetite for this.

A vote was held on whether to run the festival in 2016.

- For: 10
- Against: 0
- Abstentions: 7

Volunteers were sought to organise a 2016 festival. Paul Mitchinson offered, and Martin Ballantine indicated that he might be available, but it was clear that more manpower would be needed.

6. Regional Clean up event at Peel Crag 4/5 Sept 2015.

Jon Punshon introduced the recent history of crag restorations at Crag Lough and thanked Mark Anstiss for his work in driving this initiative. It was agreed that they had been very successful and that it was well worth moving on to Peel Crag

Mark Anstiss outlined the plan for the weekend, which would once again be supported by the BMC and a report will follow at the next meeting.

7. Forthcoming events

None.

8. Co-ordinators Reports

8.1 Access

North - no report available. (Action: Jon Punshon to contact John Vaughan re: Shitlington.)

South - Mike Conlon reported that a new access route for Esklets has been agreed and this has been well-received. At Ravenswick Quarry, there have been reports that the landowner has been asking climbers for money.

8.2 Youth

No report available

8.3 Climbing Walls (Mark Goodings)

Rock Antics have opened their new wall in Newton Aycliffe, which has a 20m lead wall with 13m overhang, 20m vertical wall, a 20m constant overhang, and 15 top-ropes at 9-15m. A bouldering wall is to follow.

Sunderland Wall have extended their bouldering area, which includes a children's section. This makes the venue a much more rounded facility.

Rock works have sold the Sunderland Climbing Centre site, and are looking for new premises for a larger facility in the North East.

We have a good range of indoor events and competitions over the winter months, including the BMC Youth Climbing Series. Newcastle Climbing Centre is hosting round two of the BMC Paraclimbing competition on 7 November 2015.

The meeting expressed disappointment at the closure of Sunderland Climbing Centre and Ferryhill, and noted the need to 'use it or lose it'.

8.4 Hillwalking (Paul Mitcheson)

The North Pennines AONB Walking Festival is to be held from 26 September to 4 October, and the organisers are keen to promote walking in the North Pennines.

An airlift is planned to bring stones up to improve the path on Simonside.

Summit Magazine is to include more hillwalking content in the future, as is BMC TV.

9. AOB

9.1 Clubs

Mark Anstiss has been nominated to be the area's Clubs representative, a position which is currently vacant. There were no objections. Mark requested that 'Clubs' be a standing item on future agendas, which was accepted.

9.2 National Council

Mark Anstiss reported back on the most recent National Council meeting, the full minutes of which are available on the BMC website. Briefly, the items discussed by the Council:

Rehan Siddiqui was welcomed as the BMC's new President. Tremfest (Tremadog clean-up). The increase in small hydroelectric schemes in Snowdonia. Refurbishment of the Whillans hut at The Roaches. Lake District Climbing Festival 2016 (after a break in 2015). Threat of wind-turbines at Almscliffe. Threat of funding cuts from Sport England due to perceived reduction in participation of 14-25 year-olds. Restructuring at BMC HQ.

Mark offered to take any concerns from the area to the next National Council meeting, which is to be in the Peak District. No concerns were raised.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the current practice of alternating between Newcastle Climbing Centre and Durham Climbing Centre works well. The next meeting to be held on Wednesday 11 November 2015 in Newcastle.