



BMC Cymru

January 2016

IMPORTANT DATES

Notes From the Chair

by Kate Worthington

2016 – here it is. Welcome along to a New Year of challenge, adventure, ethical intrigue, organisational development and political machinations over issues both of interest and affecting BMC members in Wales...and beyond. My name is Kate Worthington and I am delighted (delete as appropriate: apprehensive / excited / intrigued / honoured / humbled) to have taken over the role of Chair for BMC Cymru, from Tom Hutton, last October. I am here to help facilitate positive links between BMC members and potential members, volunteers and staff; Local Areas and respective 'Area Chairs' within Cymru as a whole. I have already been hugely supported by Area Secretary, Calum Muskett and Access and Conservation Officer for Wales, Elfyn Jones, in terms of getting my 'feet under the table' - although the feet would always rather be out on the mountains, hills and crags of this forever inspiring Local Area, in an ideal world. Wouldn't we all?

Bring a friend along to the next Local Area meet (details in this Newsletter) - I would like to continue the concept of making sure BMC Cymru is accessible to a range of people and our Local Area meets create a positive forum to share and discuss local activities,

members' endeavours and interesting events, organisational developments, political insights, opportunities, learning, information and, essentially, drive this membership organisation in a direction that reflects who we all are and where we want the BMC to head in 2016.

The upcoming Local Area meetings have full agendas, which is available on the BMC Community pages – look, comment, get involved and add any further topics as appropriate. Contact me, anytime at info@raw-adventures.co.uk or Will Kilner (South Wales) and Peter Trickey (Mid Wales).



Kate Worthington

Next Area Meetings

Mid Wales

Tuesday 26 January, 7.00pm,
Aberystwyth Park Lodge Hotel,
SY23 3TL

[Details on BMC Local Areas site](#)

North Wales

Thursday 28 January, 8.30pm,
Lodge Dinorwig, LL55 LL55 3EY

[Details on BMC Local Areas site](#)

South Wales

Wednesday 17 February, 7.30pm,
Boulders Climbing Centre,
Cardiff, CF24 2RZ

[Details on BMC Local Areas site](#)

There will be free food, both veggie and non-veggie and plenty of lively discussion. BMC members and non-members are welcome alike.

Access & Conservation News

by Elfyn Jones

Dinorwig slate quarries

There have been reports of climbers being asked to leave the area around the "Trango Tower" by power station security staff. It's thought to be a one-off issue and meetings are being arranged with the new management at First Hydro to discuss general access and climbing issues within the quarry area. The official situation remains unchanged from First Hydro's perspective – access away from the public rights of way is not allowed.



The Range, Holyhead

BMC will be meeting soon with RSPB to agree the location and monitoring of the belay stakes. Please do not add any new belay stakes here without consulting BMC/RSPB first due to concerns over possible damage to rare plants. Also especially remember to check the nesting restriction before climbing here – there are several Chough and Peregrine nests on this stretch of coast.

Rock-falls

A number of rock-falls have affected popular climbing areas over the winter – at Craig Pant Ifan, a largish rock-fall from Pippikin has probably made the upper part of that route (even more!) dangerous and with possibility of more rock-fall here, take care when belaying/approaching Falcon/Vulcan area.

A huge rock-fall has happened in the Lost World area of the slate quarry – the old quarrymen's hut/bothy has completely disappeared under thousands of tons of slate and the whole area is looking pretty unstable – affecting the last sections of the popular Snakes'n Ladders route, which now seems to have the same objective dangers as the approach to a dangerous alpine route! Also on slate, another rock-fall from above the "Conscience slab" has affected routes to the right of the main "Comes the Dervish slab" – more loose material is likely to fall here and while the routes themselves still appear to be intact, some of the bolts are likely to be damaged and it may take a while for the area to consolidate.

Climbing and nesting bird restrictions

It's that time of year again when our feathered friends retake their ownership of some of our crags, so please check the RAD for the most current access restrictions. New restrictions are in place at Gogarth (see above), Clwyd Limestone (especially along the Dinbren/Eglwyseg escarpment) and of course the ever changing North Wales Limestone crags. It's also possible to download an app with the RAD to your smartphone and this will give you instant updated access info for all crags while on the move.

www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/



Access Green paper

Over 6,000 responses have been received by Welsh Government to this consultation. The volume is such that the responses have not yet been published by the Welsh Government but the intention is for all the responses to be available on its website soon and for the Welsh government to make an announcement regarding the next steps on this.

Environment & Sustainability Committee of the Welsh Assembly

BMC has been invited to give evidence and views to the Environment & Sustainability Committee of the Welsh Assembly on issues to do with access to land and nature conservation. This is the first time the BMC has been directly invited to give evidence to this full committee of the Welsh Assembly that's set up to scrutinise the Welsh Government's work in this area.

BMC Manifesto for Wales

With Welsh Assembly elections in May 2016 and the possibility of a new government for Wales it's important for the BMC to ensure that all political parties in Wales are aware of the importance of climbing, hill walking and mountaineering, both for the economy of Wales and for the health and well-being of its citizens. BMC will be producing a manifesto for mountaineering in Wales to send to every political party and prospective Assembly Members.

Other News

BMC Cymru South Wales Area Hill Walking Afternoon - Saturday 6 Feb

Members and non-members of the BMC are welcome to join us on a winter walk around Pen Y Fan and Corn Du in the Brecon Beacons on Saturday 6 February.

In addition to having a great day in the hills, we hope that it will be a good opportunity for you to meet other like-minded people, and for us to learn from you how the BMC might better meet your hill walking needs.

The walk will be led by BMC South Wales Area Hill Walking Reps Cari Evans and Richard Jones.

Where is Penyfan?

Penyfan lies in the heart of the Brecon Beacons and is the highest peak in south Wales, we will take the popular circular route up onto Penyfan and its neighbouring peak of Corn Du. If it is a

clear day there will be stunning views across the Brecon Beacons National Park and beyond.

How long is the walk?

The walk will be about 8km and involve some fairly steep ascents and descents. The ground can be quite wet underfoot in places.

We will meet in the Pont Ar Daf car park on the A470 at 1.30pm with a view to setting off by 2pm.

There is plenty of free off road parking here and slightly further up the road at Storey Arms.

Post-walk drink

After the walk you would be most welcome to join us for a drink and a warm by the fire in The Tai'r Bull in nearby Libanus who have very kindly offered to provide a hot bowl of stew with bread roll for just £4 each. The country inn also has their normal menu available, though booking may be advisable, see their website at www.tairbull.com

What to wear and what to bring with you

Please wear your normal walking gear for a hill walk at that time of year and bring a snack and a drink. Due to the fact that the ground is likely to be wet in places, gaiters are recommended. If you are new to hill walking and require advice regarding suitable clothing, footwear and kit, please contact Cari Evans on the email address below.

Booking

It would be helpful if we had an idea regarding how many people to expect and so if you are thinking of joining us, could you drop a quick e-mail to Cari Evans at: carievans67@yahoo.co.uk please make sure to let me know if you'd like the stew at the pub as I'll need to let them know how many to cater for.

Stop the Damming of the River Conwy



The German company RWE NPower, in association with Dulas (North Wales renewable energy consultants) are planning to dam and divert up to 75% of the flow of the Afon Conwy above Conwy Falls for the purposes of small scale hydroelectric power generation.

The most seriously affected area of the Afon Conwy is also one of Wales' most pristine and wild sections of river. Whilst other areas of the National Park are heavily managed, the "Fairy Glen" gorge remains wild and almost untouched. Modification of the river's flow would mean an end to this wilderness status with a largely unknown impact on many indigenous species.

Snowdonia National Park is the planning authority that will be making the planning decision. Following a dedicated campaign, the Park has now put off making the decision on two separate occasions. Its next meeting is on Wednesday 2 March.



Kayakers enjoying the delights of the River Conwy

This shows that the National Park is feeling the pressure. Nearly 5,000 people have signed this petition:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/top-the-damming-of-the-river-conwy>

National Parks were put in place to protect special places. Designations such as a Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are supposed to make it easy for planning authorities to reject potentially damaging developments.

If this scheme is approved in such a special place, how much more of the Park will be lost to energy schemes and other damaging developments?

Even Yvon Chouinard the legendary environmental campaigner, founder and owner of Patagonia, has heard about the threat to the River Conwy and has written his own letter of objection all the way from Ventura, California!.

Please sign the petition:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/top-the-damming-of-the-river-conwy#>

For more info and updates on progress please visit:

<http://savetheconwy.com>

Or follow on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/savetheconwy/>

Or If twitter is your thing:

<https://twitter.com/savetheconwy>

Chris Wright

LLAMFF



After successfully reviving the Llanberis Mountain Film Festival in 2015 the Director team, due to popular demand, is bringing it back in 2016 and IT WILL BE EPIC. Clear your diaries for 4 - 6 March and our main venue will be The Electric Mountain on the shores of Llyn Padarn with Caffi Caban and The Beacon Climbing Centre completing a range of awesome arenas for our amazing films and speakers.

Friday night is VIP Night with tales of Himalayan adventure from Kenton Cool followed by an exclusive showing of the Sherpa Film thanks to support from Discovery UK. The VIP ticket cost also includes goodies from our sponsors and a buffet...so you'll be fed, watered, given gifts AND inspired!

We are delighted that headline sponsors have followed us to 2016 and include Sherpa Adventure Gear, DMM, Ordnance Survey and many more.

Our films are guaranteed to thrill and our speakers to inspire. We are delighted that John Cleare, Heather Geluk, Neil Gresham, Ian Parnell, Sophie Radcliffe, amongst many others, will be talking and running workshops that will get the dogs of adventure turning.

To buy tickets, or find out more, please visit www.llamff.co.uk and check often as the festival is moving at pace! Also find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) as competitions could see you winning superb kit or even free tickets.

Jason Rawles

Opinion Piece - Who put the fox in charge of the hen coop?

Eyebrows are being raised at the recent appointment of RWE's Business Development Manager for Wales to the Future Landscapes Wales working group. Further concerns have been raised on learning who has not been appointed to the same group.

Future Landscapes Wales is the new name for Welsh Government's review of designated landscapes - National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

RWE is one of the 'big six' energy companies. RWE is also by some distance the biggest windfarm developer in Wales. No problem there as we need the renewables, provided they are in the right places.

But in making this appointment Carl Sargeant, Minister for Natural Resources, is handing RWE the chance

to open up new markets in our protected landscapes, and to do so behind the closed doors of a ministerially-appointed group.

There are a range of voices on the panel, but why appoint someone whose commercial interests are so clearly at odds with the interests of designated landscapes?

Of equal concern is the question of who was not appointed.

Mr Sargeant chose not to endorse the nomination of the Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance to sit on the same body – which would have provided a balancing 'trade' voice, and one which represents a greater spread of interests in Wales. Similarly there is no proper representation of the outdoor activities sector on the panel, nor indeed of the historic environment.

This is just the latest from a Minister who, by his own admission, came into post knowing nothing about the environment. But his ignorance and savage budget cuts for National Parks are now combining to pose a monumental threat to our so-called 'protected' landscapes.

BMC members could do worse than writing to Carwyn Jones and asking two questions:

Is he comfortable with the appointment of inappropriate business interests to Future Landscapes Wales, and can he find a Minister who values the landscapes of Wales?

John Harold

Snowdonia National Park Update - Winter is Coming!

Autumn and winter brings a very different feel to Snowdon. By the time November arrives many of the things that add to the hustle and bustle of Spring and summer have gone: the train and Hafod Eryri (summit building) have closed, most of the mountain birds are either gone or quiet and the number of hill walkers is now much less. However work continues on Snowdon throughout

the year and late autumn gives the Wardens and Estate workers a timely window, between the busyness of summer and the snow of winter, to do some much needed repair work to the paths.

November marks the start of our Ground Conditions Reporting which report on the winter conditions on Snowdon throughout the winter. The wardens head up Snowdon to assess the snow conditions with the aim of compiling a simple report, for the public, of what the conditions are like. In addition, the wardens will give some basic advice on what sort of equipment the conditions dictate. These reports are compiled three to four times a week and are submitted to the Met Office to display on their Mountain Forecasts.

The mountains are very different places in winter, the weather conditions and



short days combine to make a hike a much more serious undertaking. Taking a look at the forecasts is essential for an enjoyable day in the mountains, as is the appropriate kit.

For information on the latest mountain weather forecasts you can visit: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/mountain-forecasts/snowdonia#?tab=mountainWeather>

Or follow the Ground Conditions Reports on Twitter: [@snowdonweather](#), [@MountainSafe](#)

For guidance on winter walking see: <http://www.ukhillwalking.com/articles/page.php?id=4261>

Rhys Wheldon-Roberts, Assistant Area Warden (Snowdon), Snowdonia National Park Authority