

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Meeting of the BMC Peak Area Wednesday 20th January 2016 The Maynard, Grindleford

Present:

Meg Slatcher	Don Slatcher	Phil Robins
Pam Storer	Martin Wass	Will Weir
Ross Burnage	Steve Williams	Colin Brown
Norman Rice (Powser MC)	Martyn Smith (Powser MC)	Mick Walsh
David Brown	John Cook	Becky Hammond (secretary)
Rob Greenwood (chair)	Christine Wilkinson	Linda Wariss
Dick Murton	Pete Hammond	Jane Phoenix
Jonny Ashton	Graeme Hammond	Andrew Kirby
Claire Prosser	Mark Warwicker	Rick Gibbon
Phil Cooper	Christina Richards	Lynn Robinson
Steve Clark	Dan Hoyle	Mike Pollitt
Peter Judd	Alan James (UK Climbing)	Toby Archer
Geoff Nichols (Castle Club / S Yorks Scouts)	Rebekah Newman (Stanage / North Lees)	Danny Udall (National Trust / Eastern Moors Partnership)
Richard Wheeldon (Cordee)	Hamish Forbes	Pete Tapping
Jim Slater (Peak Climbing Club)	John Bayliss	Chris Moor
Spencer Ramsey	Ed Douglas (Alpine Club)	Adam Long
Kim Leyland	Hammah Kippax	Neil Foster
Clare Reading (FRCC)	Henry Folkard	Bill Gordon (Stanage / North Lees)
Louise Hawson	Andy Reeve	Simon Lee (UK Bouldering)
Dave Parry	Rob Dyer (BMC Access & Conservation Officer)	Total present and signed in: 59

1. **Apologies** – Gary Gibson, Claire Carter, Tim Grice, Cath lee, Chris Radcliffe, Gill Radcliffe, Andy Hayes, bill Irving, Ted Talbot, Austin Knott, John Fulwood, Glynnis Judd, Kevin Noon

2. **Actions from the last meeting** – None

3. **Update from Stanage-North Lees** – Rebekah Newman

The Stanage Pole had to be removed last year as it was found to be rotten. There has been a pole there since the 1700s, maybe longer, and it marks the boundary between Derbyshire and Yorkshire. The old pole dated from the early 1900s. The replacement pole is being supported by Durham Foundry, Hope Cement Works,

and other individuals. It will be erected on Sunday April 17th and they are looking for volunteers to help: please contact Adam Long (adam@adamlong.co.uk)

4. **Eastern Moors Partnership** – Danny Udall

EMP manage the land from Froggatt to Birchen (or from the Fox House to the Robin Hood Inn). Management involves an ongoing conversation/consultation process which started five years ago. The next management plan document is due November 2016. The current plan is on their website. They have achieved around 70% of what was planned and anything left over will be included in the next plan e.g. Flag stones to reduce erosion on parts of White Edge. The management objectives will be consolidated into 5, along the themes of rich

In wildlife; rich in culture; people connected with nature; people enjoying and involved; and enhancing public benefits (aka ecosystem services). The guiding principles. Will not change, because they have been agreed with the public.

They are collecting ideas/issues with a view to inclusion in the plan. It's all about balance no getting the pace of change right.

Q - Regarding the cattle are there plans to continue having them, have there been any issues? Some people have said they do like to see them.

A - Cattle there because grazing is a natural process to manage vegetation and reduce dominance of Molinia grass and allow other species to grow. They are seeing improvements. After 20 years with no cattle problems there have been three incidents / near misses in two years. All related to the Highland cattle on Big Moor which have been there for four years. Highland cattle have now been removed and swarded with Shorthorns owned by the same tenant grazier. It is important that people feel safe.

Q - What are the thoughts on re-wilding?

A - Re-wilding means different things to different people. They aren't advocating rewilding, but aiming to restore natural processes. There is richness in having a variety of habitats. More vegetation slows runoff. Allow some areas to flood. Increased diversity increases resilience e.g. heather monoculture is susceptible to heather beetle. This isn't a new "thing" in conservation.

Q - What's the new area taken on by EMP? When will it be integrated? What extra resource will there be?

A - The land owned by Sheffield City Council i.e. Burbage, Hathersage and Houndkirk moors, will be on 25 year lease. The lease hasn't been signed yet, but the area will be included in the new management plan (e.g. Oxstones track, commercial dog-walking at Lady Canning Plantation, 4x4s on Houndkirk).

Q – There was a question about grazing.

A - Sheep were removed from Big Moor because they eat close to the ground and create big grassy areas. This can be good for some species. Sheep were retained in mixed grazing on Totley Moor and they will compare the results. Red deer contribute to grazing, but they are doing very well (to well?) without the sheep as competitors and no natural predators, therefore some are being culled to prevent overgrazing.

Q – What plans are there to deal with very wide footpaths e.g. Burbage, Mothercap, Oxstones?

A - All users have an impact (walkers, mountain bikers, etc). MTBers, through Ride Sheffield, have agreed to refrain from using Oxstones (which isn't a bridleway anyway): the BMC have led the way on this voluntary approach, and other groups are following. Managing wide footpaths etc is a mixture of responsible access to reduce the impact, and some hard measures e.g. flagstones in selected places.

Q – Have you considered having a specified dog zone, free from cattle/sheep, where dogs can run off the lead?

A - There are two areas advocated for free dogs: Shillito Wood and the linear path below Curbar Edge. On public rights of way, dogs must be "under control", and on CROW access land they must be on a lead at bird nesting and lambing times. The tenant grazier has lost livestock due to dogs.

There was a discussion about the fence line at the top of Millstone edge (the fence keeps grazing animals off the road). Should it be moved? Replaced? Belay stakes placed? Views expressed included:

- Just have belay stakes

- Do we need a fence at all? There needs to be a fence *somewhere* between the grazing land and the road, but it could be moved below the edge or back into the woodland (reduce the visual intrusion whilst minimising loss of grazing). But this would lead to landscape changes due to changes in grazing.
- There are only a few locations where stakes/posts are needed for belaying
- It's scary if sheep get the wrong side of the current fence and start knocking rocks down on you at the bottom.
- Families with kids walk along the top, and there is unstable rock. The edge is a potential danger to children. Public safety angle.
- At High Tor there isn't a fence but there are signs warning of the cliff edge
- There shouldn't be a fence and people should be responsible.

Other topics for discussion include fences, nocturnal user, Great Britain plantation, etc. Public dialogue will be in the summer, and EMP would welcome comments via the BMC Access Reps: Henry Folkard, Adam Long, Louise Hawson, or Rob Dyer at the BMC office.

5. **National Council report** – David Brown

It was a long meeting, as they received annual reports from the 11 subcommittees as well as the 8 areas. Headlines:

- Areas to decide whether or not to have a Climbing Wall representative
- Lakes area concerned about the number of memorials and ashes scattered on the hills.
- Request for written reassurance that bolt equippers working under the BMC Better Bolts fund (who have been trained) would be supported in case of issue.
- Reminder that anyone climbing in Cheddar Gorge must be covered by BMC liability insurance (i.e. be a BMC member) – this is a requirement by the landowner.
- There was a short presentation from Dave Turnbull (Chief Exec) about the next 12 months, being more adaptable to a new set of climbers and hillwalkers, and the Sport England funded “rebranding”
- Crookrise purchase – see below.
- After a long discussion about land acquisition, the decision was taken to keep the status quo i.e. make decisions on a case by case basis. The BMC owns seven crags.
- Angela Soper and Gwen Moffat were the first women to be given honorary membership of the BMC.
- The Hillwalking Group is not a subcommittee and weren't asked to give an annual report – but they have now been asked to attend every National Council meeting!
- The Clubs Committee and Huts Committee were asked to consider amalgamating (NB David Brown is also the Peak Area's Clubs Committee rep)

Q – What proportion of BMC funding comes from Sport England (concern re influence over BMC activities/policy)?

A - Rob Dyer wasn't sure of the amount, but the BMC's core work is funded by the membership. Sport England fund “extras” e.g. equity. They do not dictate BMC policy. The rebranding ideas are coming from members. Sport England did require an independent director, which subsequently led to the increased prominence of hillwalking.

6. **Hillwalking update** – Peter Judd

The BMC AGM will be at Castleton this year (16th/17th April), and we want to show off the great hillwalking that's available in the Peak. Will be offering a half day walk on the Saturday, and a longer walk on Sunday. Need help leading/looking after people (do not need to have a qualification if have appropriate experience) and would like a variety of people i.e. not just white middle-aged men!

There was a suggestion of also mapping out suggestions for other walks for anyone who doesn't want to join in an organised group. Peter will try to do this.

Please contact Peter (peak10roam-bmc@yahoo.co.uk) if you can help with walk leading or have ideas for other walks

7. **BMC officer update** – Rob Dyer

- Crookrise purchase – negotiations ongoing. It will be a thin strip of land the full length of the crag. Access will still be covered by the existing restrictions on the voluntary access land around the crag (Devonshire estate).
- Regional Access Database (RAD) – being updated, and now included on UKClimbing.
- Coastal Path – survived the budget cuts and now being rolled out around England by Natural England. It will give a right of access to land on the seaward side of the path.

8. **Access updates** – Henry Folkard and others

- Longstone Edge - Henry attended the two day hearing for the final public enquiry. Await official response, but it looks like there will be no further quarrying allowed. The barrister acting for the Peak District National Park gave special mention of the BMC & Henry, and Andy Tickle of Friends of the Peak (who normally comes to this meeting). It was nice to have this public acknowledgement.
- Standing Stones – the “private land” signs on CRoW access land are legal as it is factually correct. The PDNP met with the landowner. A new access point has been created. The BMC have been permitted to put up extra signs saying that it is CRoW access land: unfortunately the maximum permitted size for these is significantly smaller than the “private land” signs.

Action point: RAD to be updated with access information (Rob Dyer)

- Brassington – one of the two co-owners is objecting to climbing. The access reps are working on it.
- Please see the Peak Area Newsletter for other access updates.

9. **Peak Area Newsletter**

Items for the next newsletter should be sent by 30th March– email peakarea@gmail.com.

After the meeting, Martin Wass informed the chair of his resignation as newsletter editor. Many thanks to Martin for his work over the last eight years, producing such a high quality newsletter.

Please contact Rob Greenwood or Becky Hammond if you would like to volunteer for the role.

10. **Any other business**

ShAFF (Sheffield Adventure Film Festival) 11th – 13th March will include two sessions supported by the BMC on Saturday 12th March: a session on climate change (in memory of Ben Winston) and a session on Women in Climbing.

11. **Date, time and venue of the next meeting**

Wednesday 13th April 2016, 7.30pm at The Maynard, Grindleford. To be followed by a screening of Operation Moffat with a talk by Claire Carter.

The meeting was followed by an interesting talk by Bill Gordon, the Stanage warden, which covered topics as varied as the history of the land over the last 200 years as traced on old maps, apotropaic carvings, North Lees Hall, the changes that have occurred over the last 30 years, and Bill's wood carvings.

AS ALWAYS:

- Chair of the Peak Area is Rob Greenwood – robgreenwood@bmcvolunteers.org.uk
- Access issues/access volunteer work please contact Henry Folkard – henry.folkard@bmcvolunteers.org.uk

- With regard to the meetings, agenda items or any other issues please contact Becky Hammond, Peak Area Secretary – becky@bmcvolunteers.org.uk
- Check out the Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/bmcpeakarea> and 'like' us if you can
- Articles for the newsletter are always welcome: please send them to peakarea@gmail.com