

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 1 Feb 2017 Old Edwardians' Sports Club, Solihull

Present: Phil Simister (Chair), John Edwards (Sec), John Churcher (SolihullMC), David Jones (WestBromMC), Andy Railton (Bowline Club), Helen Every (SolihullMC), Ghanshyam Chauda (SolihullMC), Ian Wyatt (SolihullMC), Dave Rickerby (SolihullMC), Pete Lubrano (SolihullMC), Ashley Price (SolihullMC), John Handley (CoventryMC), Richard Lloyd (CoventryMC), David Williams (WolverhamptonMC), Steven Bowater (WolverhamptonMC), Geoff Taylor (MercianMC), Michelle Aukland (Bowline Club), Richard Greaves (CeunantMC), Stuart Webb (MAM), Michael Reynolds (MAM), David Garner (ESC), Steve Wright, Jo Rowbottom, Michaela Tracy, Madeleine Cope, Stuart Jamieson, Rebecca Husband, Michael Blake, Alun Hughes. **(29)**

1. Welcome and Apologies:

- a. **Welcome:** Phil Simister welcomed everyone to the area meeting.
- b. **Apologies:** Apologies had been received from: Brian Smith, Roger Fanner, Ian Cornish (Youth Rep), Richard Law (Access West), Andy Potter (Clubs Rep), Jane Campbell (Shrewsbury MC) & Phil Mullington (Fell & Rock CC) **(7)**

2. **Minutes of the last Meeting:** The Secretary apologised that John Handley's apology for absence had been omitted from the minutes. With that amendment the circulated minutes were agreed as accurate (proposed: Ian Wyatt, seconded: Pete Lubrano). AGM minutes to be considered at the next AGM.

3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere:

Nil

4. Reports:

4.1 **Access East:** Andy Railton reported that he had met briefly with someone from the National Forest who told him they had some funding for tracks and footpaths

4.2 **Access West:** No report.

4.3 **Climbing Walls:** John Churcher reported that 2 new walls had opened in the region. "Climbing the Walls" was a new purpose built centre at Battlefields, just N of Shrewsbury while in Solihull "Flash Climbing" had converted an industrial unit on Vulcan Road into a wall and bouldering centre.

4.4 **Youth:** No report.

4.5 **Club Issues:** No report.

4.6 **Hill Walking:** David Jones reported that the Hill Walking Working Group had produced a strategic plan for Hill Walking called "The Seven Steps" but, although the HWWG had been set up by, and given its mandate by the National Council, the report had not yet been released by the executive so he couldn't say much about it and he regretted that the area meeting was not able to discuss its contents. He mentioned that the HWWG was due to come to an end later this year in June or July but he felt that some sort of Hill Walking Committee or a representative on Council or the Executive would be needed to carry on the work of the HWWG and ensure that hill walking was not neglected by the BMC Executive.

Someone from the floor asked why we couldn't be told even in broad outline what the plan involved? Phil gave an overview of how the BMC had developed over the last 50 years from a small organisation with just one national officer and their PA into a much larger body, a limited company in fact, with an Executive, who had taken on the role of a Board of Directors. The latter were keen to stay onside with their main funding organisation Sport England, although the latter will be reducing their financial input by around a half in the next funding round, and Sport England seem to prefer to deal with the Board. However, the National Council sets the policy for the BMC and, according to the articles of association, is there to oversee the actions of the executive. None of this is helped by the fact the members of council and most of the members of the executive only have 3 year terms.

5. National Council:

5.1 Report from last meeting: Phil, as the only National Counsellor present, drew attention to the Roger's report that had been circulated to the meeting. He pointed out that although the "Mend our Mountains" was a great publicity campaign for the BMC and raised a great total it did cost the BMC £30k. The Club's committee was asking for 2 events to be promoted and Phil read out the email we had received from Jane Thompson mentioning that, following requests from members, the BMC were offering a free training day to new officers or members of clubs that will be held on 26th February at Lee Valley YHA. He mentioned that more details and a booking link were to be found online www.thebmc.co.uk/training-for-club-committee-members There were going to be 4 free BMC roadshows for club committee members in Feb & March. These would include an update on new initiatives, discussion of future plans & an open forum to raise issues and comments. The nearest to the Midlands would be at Redpoint, Worcester on 11th March and again places could be reserved online via the BMC website.

5.2 Matters for the next Council Meeting: The fate of the Hill Walking Working Group and its strategic plan need to be followed up.

6. Any Other Business, including news from HQ:

- The notes from HQ had been circulated to the meeting.
- Helen Every mentioned that Solihull's club hut was in a quite remote location and their insurers requirement that it should be inspected internally and externally once a week was problematic. She wondered how other clubs dealt with this problem. It transpired the insurance mentioned was not with the BMC. Members offered their comments and Jo offered to speak to Jane Thompson about it whilst Dave Jones offered to take the issue up with the Huts Committee.
- Jo Rowbottom, the Equity & Partnerships Officer, was then invited to say a little about her role in promoting hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering to under-represented groups. She mentioned that there were now disability fact sheets to help clubs who have enquirers with such problems and that she was doing an audit of how accommodating climbing walls were to the disabled. She had set up partnerships between the BMC and SENSE (dual sensory impairment charity) and Limb Power (a charity for amputees). She mentioned that the Mental Health Working Group is to

be reconvened and the Women's Development Group had been set up as a 2 year project and urged members to bring their female partners to events. Phil pointed out Midlands area was doing their bit with most of the 2017 speakers being female. Jo said was also trying to find role models for those from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic communities, who seem to participate less in climbing, hill walking and mountaineering.

- John Handley mentioned that Warwick University was spending a lot of money building a new climbing wall. He gave them credit for asking what potential users really wanted but felt that the meeting he attended only gave them the views of the "middle aged, white males with beards" group who wanted realistic walls with climbs 6a and below. He felt that the wrong generation had been consulted and urged younger people who wanted harder routes to attend the next consultation meeting. It was pointed out that the routes provided might start off at lower grades and be made harder as the academic year progressed.
- Flyers advertising the forthcoming BANFF film festival were available for members to take.

7. Date & location of next meeting:

The next meeting will be held at Old Edwardians Sports Club, Streetsbrook Road, Solihull, B90 3PE on Wednesday 7th Jun 2017 starting at 8pm. Afterwards the speaker will be Emma Flaherty.

Following the meeting, refreshments were taken and the attendees enjoyed an illustrated talk from Madeleine Cope of the progression from her first climbs as a 17 year old at the Warrington climbing wall, through trips to the Alps and the American Route on the Dru to big wall climbing and the completion of major multi-day routes in Yosemite just 8 years later. Most memorable quote? "I found the level of suffering I enjoyed".

Written by John Edwards