

## **BMC Cymru Mid Wales Out Reach Group Meeting**

**12th April 2017 7.00pm at the White Lion Machynlleth**

**1. Welcome:** From Huw Gilbert the new chair. Thanks to Pete Trickey for chairing previous meetings.

**2. Apologies:** Pete Trickey. **In attendance:** Terry Taylor, Dave Williams, Don Sargeant, Elfyn Jones, Jane Lloyd Francis, Tim Sparrow, Lei Bramich, Mark Bramich, Doug Kerr, Peter Foulkes, Huw Gilbert.

### **3. Matters Arising:**

**a.** The issue of receiving BMC newsletters from the West Midlands rather than from Wales due to having an SY postcode remains unresolved.

**b.** Access to climbing at CAT remains unresolved and unfortunately the access tunnel to Llwyngwern Quarry has now been blocked by a section of heras fence. Meeting with John Challon is required. Pennal access situation also remains unchanged. It was agreed to try again to arrange a meeting at CAT.

### **4. Future Landscape Review**

Regarding an investigation commissioned by the Welsh Assembly which is potentially of serious concern and significance to the future and status of National Parks.

Elfyn gave a brief synopsis of progress so far. Professor Marshen has already led an investigation into the current purpose of National Parks and this was deemed to indicate a fair and accurate appraisal of feedback gathered from various surveys and agencies.

It seems though, that this was not the result being sought by government and a further report has now been commissioned led by Lord Dafydd Ellis Thomas. This new report, timed to be presented on the same day as the triggering of Article 51, advocates hubs for sustainable development rather than an emphasis on protecting landscape. This approach is not compatible with existing legislation and might well work against protection.

It seems that Welsh Government may be seeking greater financial and economic value from the landscape for local people linked to the Future Generations Act, perhaps part of a political agenda linked to loss of European income to the uplands following Brexit?

Very few people have been allowed access to the report and few have been consulted, leading to a general lack of awareness of what is being put forward which is of concern.

The BMC has been lobbying for more information and attracting attention to the proposed White Paper by speaking to the press and raising awareness within the general public. The RSPB, Wildlife Trusts and several other agencies have declined to give their support.

### **5. Corporate Affinity Programme**

Update from Elfyn regarding the BMC's investigation into sourcing more funding as government contributions reduce.

Partly in response to the likely reduction in grant funding from Sport England, the BMC is currently looking at developing its commercial potential, including new income streams and commercial sponsorship to support BMC activities. The BMC currently receives in the region of £500k annually from Sport England, and this is likely to be reduced by 30 to 40% for the next funding period (2017-2021).

Simon lee has been commissioned to produce a feasibility study exploring sympathetic sponsorship of the BMC. The Affinity Partnerships paper is available to view and could be circulated to interested members on request. A random 6,000 members were polled for their opinions and 1,200 responded mainly in favour. The main worry being for the ethical and environmental effect of corporate sponsorship. The concern being, at what cost the loss of independence? Sponsorship brings with it many risks of conflict. It was noted that adventurous walking/ climbing is the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> most popular sporting activity in England so a large potential market exists.

It was generally agreed in the meeting that more information was needed regarding who potential sponsors might be and their fit to the ethos of the BMC. It was further agreed that specific sponsorship tailored to particular projects was acceptable – as is already in existence.

There was concern about the ethical future of companies and about what might be demanded in return for major sponsorship and the risk of inadvertently adversely affecting access to and protection of the landscape.

It was noted that if a vote of no confidence in the BMC Executive Committee is carried at the forthcoming AGM, then this would adversely affect any grant aid as well as not increasing confidence in terms of potential sponsorship. There is already a governance review underway due to the lack of clarity of responsibility between different BMC boards.

## **6. Mend Our Mountains**

£112,000 was raised in 2016 to top up repair budgets in different parks. There is an optimistic aspiration to raise £1,000,000 in 2017.

Two projects have been put forward for Mid Wales both on Cadair Idris. The central part of the path to Mynydd Moel from Cwm Cau and the Minffordd path left of Cwm Cau in Cwm Amarch. These suggestions have been put forward by the National Park and the general feeling of the meeting was that work on the Mynydd Moel path should take priority.

## **7. Improving Access to the Countryside**

The BMC has campaigned for better access to sea cliffs in specific areas. Access to water is also being scrutinised.

The BMC notes that there may be future conflicts of interest as a result of cyclists seeking more access. It is recognised that there is a conflict of interest between mountain bikers and walkers. There is likely to be a white paper issued by Welsh Government within the next three years, consultation is underway but the process is at an early stage.

## **8. Vote of no Confidence**

The catalyst to this issue was the proposed rebranding of the BMC as Climb Britain. The vote of no confidence has been brought against the Executive Committee because it is felt that they had

information about the rebranding that was not put before the membership at the AGM. This led to suspicions about the renaming being linked to Sport Climbing being introduced at the next Olympics. 29 people have proposed the motion, 25 is the minimum number required but this is not many out of the entire membership. It is really up to each individual to draw their own conclusion and to make use of their vote in person or by proxy. The vote will be taken at the next AGM at Plas y Brenin on April 22nd.

There is a real risk that there will be a crisis in management if a vote of no confidence carries which may also put grants and sponsorship in jeopardy. A no confidence vote would involve the whole of the Executive Committee having to step down. The CEO would be employed with no authority and legal advice would need to be sought to address the issue. An Extraordinary General Meeting would then be called to nominate a new committee. All funding would be halted during this process. All very damaging for the organisation and all of its employees.

### **9. Proposed Wind Farm Development - Pumlumon**

Nant y Moch is one of the locations identified under the Welsh Assembly Government's TAN 8 as being suitable for the construction of a wind farm. Development has started at all other sites identified under TAN 8. Organised opposition had halted the proposed development at Nant Moch but recently the rights to develop the site have been passed from SSE to Vattenhall. Whilst Vattenhall appear to have no current plans to reinstate the project it is noted that those in opposition to the scheme should remain vigilant to any change in the status quo.

### **10. Access and Local Issues**

It was noted that walls are being rebuilt in the Cwm Mynach area of the Rhinogau. Although a good thing stiles aren't being placed along traditional access routes without adequate stiles, the route to Upper Craig Y Merched being one of note. The National Park Authority ought to be made aware and asked to assist with provision where required.

### **11. Date of next meeting: October, exact date TBC**