

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

177-179 Burton Road
Manchester M20 2BB
www.thebmc.co.uk

Tel: 0161 445 6111
Fax: 0161 445 4500
Email: office@thebmc.co.uk

Minutes of The Peak Area Meeting Wednesday 5th April 2017, The Maynard, Grindleford

Present:

Rob Greenwood (Chair)	Becky Hammond (secretary)	Frances Coles
Graeme Hammond	Greg Bristol (Peak CC)	John Cook
James Jacobs	Mike Cheque	Pete Tapping
Hamish Forbes	Clarke Boulter	Duncan Campbell
Dave Parry	Henry Folkard	Austin Knott
Mark McKenzie	Peter Judd	Glynis Judd
David Pendlebury (Castle MC)	Kasia Osip....??	Alan James (UK Climbing)
Chri Moor	Martin Kocsis	Rob Adie
Spencer Ramsey	Jeremy Leong	Kym West
Colin Nave	James Scott (Chamois Club)	Dan Middleton
Mick Walsh	David Brown	Sean Orchard
Robert Townsend (The Mountain Club, Stafford)	Meg Slatcher	Mark Vallance
Jim Walton	Nat McMullan	Ted Rodgers
Neil Foster	Clare Reading (FRCC)	Ben Kelsey
Cameron Anderson	Alan Smith (Buxton MC)	Spenser Gray
Jamie Sparkes	Felicity Freeman	James Oswald
Mary Edwards	Adam Long	Ben Bransby
John Coefield	Shaun Humphreys	Wil Treasure
James Scholes	Hannah Kippax	Kim Leyland
Fran Hammond	Coel Hellier	Stephen Coughlan
Richard Wheeldon	John Gresty	John Bayliss
John Baily	Clare Sam...??	Phil Robins (CC)
Sean Jennings	Ian Smith	Daniel Joyle

69 people signed in

Over 70 seats filled, and more standing.

1. Apologies:

Cath Lee, Luke Barley, Dave Garnett, Simon Jacques, Michael Kent, Ian Milward, Bill Irving, Lynn Robinson, Steve Clar, Louise Hawson, Mark Warwicker, Malcom Baxter, Chris Jones

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed as correct.

3. Actions from the previous meetings

- Ask that the FA information be put on the agenda of the next Guidebook Committee meeting and to raise the points above from this meeting: see later discussion
- Write to Rebekah Newman and Bill Gordon, and copy the letter to the PDNPA Chief Executive Sarah Fowler – in progress

4. Update from Peak Area Hill Walking Representatives (Peter Judd & Austin Knott)

The Hill Walking Strategy which was proposed by the Hill Walking Working Group has been approved and will be implemented. The Hill Walking Working Group has come to the end of its term.

Peak Mountaineering's "Pick and Play" event on 14th May will include BMC representation. This is an opportunity to participate for free in various activities in return for litter picking.

Moors for the Future are planning an evening walk on 27th June.

Austin will be leading a walk on Axe Edge on 6th August. Look out for more details.

Mend Our Mountains 2 will be launched in the next few months. The fundraising target will be £1million. The Peak District National Park Authority have bid for money to work on the the footpath on Great Ridge (Hollins Cross to Back Tor).

There was a tree planting event in the Burbage Valley by the packhorse bridge. The old tree was shot to pieces by Canadian troops during WW2.

Austin is keen to contact clubs that have a hill walking element. Please contact him on austinjknott@gmail.com

5. Area Youth Coordinator

Beth Walton has moved to the northeast and has been replaced by a team of Zoe Spriggins (Awesome Walls), Penny Watkin and Rob ???.

Beth sent her thanks to all the volunteers who had come forward at the AGM to help at competitions.

6. Peak Limestone South Guidebook

Since the last Peak Area meeting the Guidebook Committee have met and considered our feedback and requests.

First ascents information and the Fixed Gear Policy will be included in Peak Limestone South.

Pleasley Vale

There was a long discussion about whether it should be included in PLS.

It is not in the Peak District National Park, but it was included in the old Chatsworth guidebook.

The script has been prepared and will be made available online – this is not a zero-cost option for the BMC.

Hopefully it will be included in a Midlands guidebook. Scepticism was expressed about how soon that would actually happen.

In its nature and grades it fits in well with Harborough and Brassington.

It is a good wet-weather option and could be good to include in the guidebook for anyone travelling north from other parts of the country.

Paul Mitchell felt that members of the Guidebook Committee should go to Pleasley Vale and discover how good it is.

A vote was taken:

For inclusion in PLS: 25

Against inclusion: 2

“Where’s Pleasley Vale”? 18

Action: Graeme Hammond & Richard Wheeldon to take this back to the Guidebook Committee for consideration.

Photographs are required – action shots, particularly of low to mid-grade routes. Please email to niall@thebmc.co.uk

7. Motion of No Confidence at forthcoming BMC AGM

Bob Pettigrew who put forward the motion was invited to attend this meeting (his local area) but did not attend.

Dave Turnbull explained that since the announcement of the MoNC the last 7 to 8 weeks of BMC activity had been taken over by it. He stressed that it’s a very serious matter. The Board are largely volunteers, and the MoNC presents a personal affront on their integrity. It became apparent that a number of the initial list of “signatories” had not agreed to add their names to it. The final version has 25 names. Various reasons have been given for supporting it, including the Olympics impact on the BMC and/or climbing, Climb Britain, transparency, Harrison’s toilets, and a general protest vote.

It is not an Alpine Club initiative, despite the suggestion in the draft motion that the Aline Club should undertake a governance review.

The current structure was established when the constitution was last reviewed (1990-93) to include the necessary corporate structure and the membership/representative structure. Dave acknowledged that it is now creaky.

National Council make high level decisions – the Executive Board act on National Council's instructions.

What happens if the motion is passed?

There are different opinions, but the Executive Board would feel undermined and would probably all resign. It would be very difficult to recruit volunteers and would look bad externally e.g. the Sport England funding would be in jeopardy and the BMC's position as a representative body.

Will there be a review process?

Yes, - National Council had already agreed to start a governance review at their February meeting. The governance review will be chaired by Ray Wrigglesworth QC.

Who are the Executive?

BMC President, 3 Vice-presidents, 3 National Council representatives, 2 independent directors, Treasurer.

Are the initiators of the MoNC offering an alternative of just a list of complaints?

It seems to be the latter. Dave has asked Bob Pettigrew twice for further information and had no response – from information circulated elsewhere it appears to mainly be to do with the re-branding.

Henry Folkard – the motion does not reflect the significant achievements made in recent years. The BMC is not perfect but it's the envy of many other organisations. We owe a huge vote of confidence to the Exec. The positives should weigh as heavily as the negatives. There were lots of inaccuracies in the draft MoNC.
(This met with resounding applause from the room)

Neil Foster – Bob Pettigrew was invited to come to this meeting. It's disappointing that he hasn't come to defend his motion in his own local area. Neil feels the motion is irresponsible and ill thought out, with potential for long term damage.

Small numbers of people contribute to the online debate. There are 85000 members. Votes can go strangely: it's not a done deal. It's essential that everyone votes.

Ian Smith – fully supports what Neil Foster said. There were numerous factual errors in the draft motion. He is disappointed by some of the named supporters of the motion. He feels it's unclear why they're supporting it, and questions whether they understand whether they realise how serious it is? If a motion was required, it should be a motion of censure instead and should contain correct information. He repeated the urge to vote against the motion.

Mark Vallance – one of the 25 signatories. Feels the financial damage need not be very great at all. He doesn't care about whether the BMC is involved in competition climbing. He said that all the signatories believe in the BMC.

Mike Pinder – former BMC director. Feels that Bob Pettigrew is aware of the potential impact of the motion. It contains factually inaccurate information and is the "nuclear option" when there are other ways for the membership to express dissatisfaction. This does not offer an alternative/positive way forward. It would leave the BMC with no leadership (for members or for external organisations to deal with) and would be divisive.

Jim ??? – It appears that Bob Pettigrew has an issue with the timing of the Climb Britain re-branding announcement.

Dave Turnbull -emphasised that at last year's AGM the Executive had not yet decided to recommend the re-branding to National Council. It couldn't be taken to the AGM before National Council met. Various website URLs were purchased between March and July 2016 to ensure that they were available should a particular name/brand be chosen: this is standard practice.. Someone else in the room who knows about these things expressed surprise that the URLs had been purchased so late in the process.

Paul Mitchell – suggested that the BMC Executive should make an effort to explain its structure and how it intends to move positively in the future. Dave Turnbull acknowledged that a new way of engaging with members is needed, as Area Meeting attendance is less than 1% of the membership.

Rob Greenwood – reminded everyone that proxy voting forms were provided in the Spring edition of Summit magazine (sent to all members) and is also available online and can be sent by email. Forms were also available at the meeting.

8. Aldery Cliff

Aldery Cliff is owned and managed by the BMC. An individual has recently undertaken a significant amount of work at Aldery Cliff: felling trees on the crag top and drilling them, descaling rock, and installing bolted lower-offs to replace the abseils from trees. The work has been done thoroughly. Some people thought the site was overall in good shape, and had no problem with what had been done, believing that when the immediate effect had weathered it would be felt the site had been improved. However others felt very strongly that the character of the place had been destroyed, with tree removal and scaling being vastly in excess of anything necessary. They also felt no regard had been given to the flora or to roosting bats.

There were some concerns expressed:

- The placing of any bolts on a trad crag was contentious, and the location and type of lower-offs was questioned.
- The individual had not contacted the BMC prior to doing the work to seek consent or consult about the work.
- One person described it as “a scene of devastation”. Others felt that this was a bit strong and that the raw appearance would weather in.
- Concern was expressed about the way some of the work was done – it was suggested that a chainsaw had been used above a group of climbers. Chainsaw dust covered the crag. Mitre Cracks (a known bat roost) had been left full of soil.
- Some felt that the individual should be prosecuted.

The person doing the work had already been told not to do anything more, not least because it was the bird nesting season, though a bonfire to burn up the debris would be alright.

It was agreed that irrespective of the views about the quality of the work, it should have been discussed with the BMC first. The meeting agreed that the individual should be censured for undertaking the work, and the matter should be referred to the Land Management Group to decide what to do next. In addition Dan Middleton will inspect the bolts to establish their safety.

9. Stanage update

Enforced charging for parking at Stanage (and other PDNPA car parks) was due to have been imposed from 1 April, but though the policy decision to implement it stands no date has been announced. It may just appear with no warning..

The Stanage Sticker ended on 31st March. A park-wide sticker is available for £40/year but the income is not ringfenced. There are concerns about the environmental impact, traffic flow, etc as a consequence. Even if white edge lines are painted on the road, it isn't illegal to park on them.

Today was Rebekah Newman's last day in post as Stanage/North Lees estate manager. Bill Gordon is about to leave his post as warden. Management will be transferred to seven different people with various responsibilities, and there will be no overview by one person.

At the last Area Meeting Dave Turnbull was asked to write to the CEO of the National Park to ask her to reconsider her decision to effectively do away with the Stanage Sticker. BMC members had vested a lot of effort into making it work, and it had delivered good results. He had written, and received a response which was less than satisfactory. He was therefore asked to send a further letter, which he agreed to do. He has still not received a response.

If necessary, the BMC will mount a press campaign. We are Still Standing Up For Stanage.

10. Other access updates

The lease has been signed for Burbage, Houndkirk and Hathersage Moors to be managed by the Eastern Moors Partnership. The BMC had written setting out some priorities for the management plan, when it was drawn up. The current Eastern Moors Stakeholder Forum would also cover Burbage.

Peregrines & ravens: There have been some inaccurate assertions made by ornithologists etc about climbers. Lots of peregrine eggs and chicks were stolen in the White Peak last year.

Lots of people have volunteered to help Kim Leyland monitor Ring Ouzels.

The ravens that were nesting at Curbar have abandoned the nest. A nest was signed at Millstone but unfortunately they were disturbed by people climbing in the area anyway.

11. National Council report

Wales - South Wales is now its own BMC area. Various hydro electric schemes will not be installed on various significant rivers.

Lake District - The National Trust and FRCC have started to clamp down on memorials on Great Gable. The John Muir Trust are acquiring Glen Rhydding Common (east face of Hellvelyn).

National Council have been discussing governance issues (pre-dating the proposed MONC).

12. Update from BMC Officers – Simon Lee

Simon Lee presented his proposals for Commercial Partnerships. Simon has been Commercial Partnerships Manager since January in a 12 month post. The aim is to increase revenue to compensate for the anticipated funding cuts from Sport England.

Lots of organisations have commercial partnerships (e.g. Ramblers recommend Cotswold) which helps generate income through cross-marketing products, services and membership.

Simon is looking at "BMC recommended" mapping, clothing, gear and retailers. The proposal requires mandate and approval from National Council.

Criteria: products and services need to be high quality, ideally UK-based companies, and products that members already use.

Points raised during the discussion:

- That other shops might withdraw their BMC discounts, and the potential effect on smaller businesses.
- That partners are ethically sound and supportive of outdoor environmental issues.
- That money generated is best targeted at a specific area of funding rather than going into a general pot.
- Assurance given that the membership email and other contact details aren't passed on (Dave Turnbull confirmed that this would not happen).

Commercial partners would not have any influence on BMC policy.

There was a suggestion that BMC membership fees should be increased as the current fees are very low.

There was a question about whether the BMC had considered any cutbacks. Dave Turnbull explained that it's difficult to find anything to cut. Office efficiencies can be made but anything else is difficult as there's no slack.

There was a show of hands:

In favour of commercial partnerships: 30

Against: 5

Undecided: 19

13. Peak Area Newsletter

People were asked to note the latest edition of the newsletter. Many thanks to Dave Parry and John Coefield for this latest edition. As always contribution and photographs welcome. Please send to: peakarea@gmail.com.

14. Any other business

None

15. Date, time and venue of the next meeting

Wednesday 7th June 2017, 7.30pm at The Maynard Arms, Grindleford, S32 2HE

After the break Maddy Cope told us about her climbing exploits, which ranged from her roots trad climbing in Pembroke, through to big routes in the Alps, then on to an impressive free ascent of Freerider on El Cap.