

BMC National Council
16 September 2017
Item 6.1

BMC REPRESENTATION ON MOUNTAIN TRAINING BOARDS

Timing: For consideration at the 16 September 2017 National Council Meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that National Council members **Agree**:
 - a) That the BMC reduces its number of voting members from four to one at Mountain Training England, achieving voting parity with their other member organisations.
 - b) That the observer status of Mountain Training England and Mountain Training Cymru be replaced with Mountain Training having observer status (a reduction of attendees from two to one). Additionally, Mountain Training UK, Mountain Training England and Mountain Training Cymru become National Council paper members; situations may arise where a representative of one of these paper members may wish to attend in person.

BACKGROUND

2. **Definitions.** Mountain Training is a network of separate national mountain training organisations. In partnership, they oversee the delivery of walking, climbing and mountaineering schemes in Britain and Ireland, as well as one international scheme. Just as term 'the (British Mountaineering et al) Councils' is used to describe three separate organisations, so 'Mountain Training' encapsulates all of the training bodies. An important distinction however, is that the term is also used as the public face to communicate their work - www.mountain-training.org. Unlike the councils, this reflects the federalist nature of how the boards operate collectively, necessitated by the Britain and Ireland remit of the awards
3. **History.** The structure of Mountain Training has evolved greatly since the creation of the Mountain Leader Training Board and the Scottish Mountain Leader Training Board in 1964. Training boards for Wales, N Ireland and Ireland were created in subsequent years. Mountain Training UK, created in 1991, coordinates their shared objectives, working on their behalf in areas including the production of handbooks and liaising with external bodies. Mountain Training UK is also the forum where significant policy decisions are made. Distinct from the Mountaineering Councils, the national mountain training organisations do not make unilateral decisions about specific schemes. Such agreements are made collectively at Mountain Training UK meetings, where the councils and the training organisations are the sole voting members.
4. **Board Voting.** The BMC and BMC Cymru are members of Mountain Training UK, Mountain Training England and Mountain Training Cymru, with voting rights outlined below.

	MTUK	MTE	MTC
Voting Members	8*	14	12
Total voting rights	12*	17	12
BMC	1	4	0
BMC Cymru	1	0	1
<i>Mountaineering Ireland</i>	1		
<i>Mountaineering Scotland</i>	1		

**MTUK currently has nine members with fourteen voting rights, as the two training boards for Ireland are both members with two votes each. (The three British home nation training boards also have two votes each). With the formation of the new all-Ireland board, the number of members will reduce to eight and voting rights will reduce to twelve.*

The BMC was a co-founder of the Mountain Leader Training Board, now known as Mountain Training England. This historical connection is one reason for the BMC having almost a quarter of that organisation's voting rights. Much has changed in the intervening 53 years, especially the way in which important policy decisions are made. Now is the time to review the BMC's Mountain Training England voting arrangements to reflect these changes.

The block vote on Mountain Training England looks like a very historic need to control what was once talked about as 'the training wing of the BMC'. The reality is now that the training function is delivered to BMC members by at least four Mountain Training organisations in Wales – Mountain Training Cymru, England – Mountain Training England, UK – Mountain Training UK, and Scotland – Mountain Training Scotland (the majority of winter mountain leaders will be English).

The BMC was asked to consider voting parity with other member organisations when Mountain Training England's Mems and Arts were reviewed last year, but did not appear to consider the issue fully at that time.

If the BMC wishes to retain four voting reps at Mountain Training England, then it would be useful for the BMC to reflect upon this and consider (1) why it feels the need to extend such a major influence over the working of Mountain Training England in comparison to other member organisations, and (2) reflect upon why it does not feel the need to have the same influence at the two other Mountain Training organisations of which the BMC and BMC Cymru are members.

5. **BMC Reps – Current Practice.** Alongside four voting reps, the BMC has the right to nominate one of Mountain Training England's seven directors, a role currently undertaken by Mick Johnson. The BMC's CEO has also observer status at Director's meetings. Neither the BMC nor BMC Cymru has a similar relationship with Mountain Training UK or Mountain Training Cymru, nor have they sought to achieve such influence. As such, the BMC is Mountain Training England's member body with the greatest potential to influence that organisation's work. The BMC also employs a joint Training Officer for the BMC & Mountain Training England; a long-established role whose previous post holders have included Iain Peter and Adge Last.

Whilst the BMC has the right to appoint four Mountain Training England reps, historically, this opportunity has not been taken. The current voting reps are Claudia Sarnier, Mick Johnson and Nick Colton, who also provides a BMC report. Will Kilner has recently been identified as another rep, but it is not clear if all four BMC reps will attend meetings regularly.

The BMC may wish to reflect upon the potential conflict of interest placed upon a BMC appointed Mountain Training England director, who is responsible for making decisions in the best interests of Mountain Training England, also acting as a BMC rep, and so responsible for acting in the best interests of the BMC.

Mountain Training England's last six meetings have seen one or two BMC reps attending with the exception of the June 2016 meeting, when it was essential that four BMC reps attended. Mountain Training England voted on amendments to their Mems and Arts in June 2016, necessitating all voting reps to attend or vote by proxy. This resulted in a member of BMC staff, who had not attended any previous meetings, being asked to attend for the vote only.

Engineering such ad-hoc arrangements to achieve quorum for important votes is not the most satisfactory way to operate, and did not necessarily reflect well upon the BMC in the eyes of Mountain Training England's other member organisations.

	Dec 2015	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	Oct 2016	Mar 2017	Jun 2017
Nick	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Claudia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mick	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Dave	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
(Tony Ryan)			Yes			
Total	1	2	4	1	2	2

6. **BMC Reps – Discussion.** Organisations, not individuals, are members of the training organisations, and different reps do occasionally represent the same organisation at consecutive meetings. Either Nick Colton or Dave Turnbull represent the BMC at Mountain Training UK meeting, for example. As such, the BMC can make internal decisions about who may be best placed to represent the organisation at a Mountain Training England meeting.

Having one voting rep would not preclude Nick Colton or another BMC member of staff attending board meetings and presenting a report. On the contrary, this input is of great importance and made easy with board meetings held at the BMC. Three other Officers already report at meetings: Mountain Training England’s Executive Officer and Development Officer and the joint Training Officer for the BMC & Mountain Training England.

The BMC has a similar observer status with Mountain Training Cymru. A BMC Officer attends its meetings to provide a report, alongside BMC Cymru, the member organisation. This relationship has many positive benefits for the BMC and MTC.

Having one voting rep at Mountain Training England would reflect the BMC’s voting rights at Mountain Training UK, and in respect to Mountain Training Cymru, would also reduce suggestions of the BMC being overly England centric. (The BMC’s joint Training Officer post has historically only ever had an Mountain Training England remit, for example. Including a Welsh remit in any formal capacity has never been explored). The BMC’s attendance at Mountain Training England’s last six meetings would suggest a reduction from four to one voting reps having no change on who is present, with Nick Colton and Claudia Sarner being the BMC’s reps who have attended most regularly in recent years.

If the BMC wishes to retain four voting representatives, then does the BMC intend to identify four people who are able to attend meetings on a regular basis? History would suggest that the BMC has never managed to achieve this.

7. **Mountain Training Representation at National Council Meetings.** Both Mountain Training England and Mountain Training Cymru have observer status on National Council, yet in recent years, one representative at the most has attended. It has previously been suggested to the BMC that a single person attends who formally advises the BMC on behalf of Mountain Training, this being a better use of volunteer time, with Mountain Training UK, Mountain Training England and Mountain Training Cymru being paper members.

There is no wish to dilute the important relationship between the BMC and Mountain Training and there may be times when National Council’s discussions would benefit from having more than one Mountain Training organisation attend. Issues arising from the devolution of powers to Wales may be one situation, for example, where National Council might wish to receive advice in person from more than one Mountain Training organisation.