

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 7 February 2018 Old Edwardians' Sports Club, Solihull

Present: Andy Potter (Chair), John Edwards (Sec), Jane Thompson (BMC Clubs Officer), Roger Fanner (SolihullMC), Phil Simister (SolihullMC), Mark Hodson (SolihullMC), Ian Wyatt (SolihullMC), Andy Railton (Bowline Club), Zoe Pickering (Bowline Club), Richard Law (WrekinMC), Martyn Smith (WrekinMC), David Jones (WestBromMC), Lesley Jones (WestBromMC), Andy Brown (WestBromMC), Rob Cox (West BromMC), Richard Cooksey (WestBromMC), Richard Lloyd (CoventryMC), Rob Tipper (Yeti Club), Harry Wilson (Yeti Club), Tim Higginson (Yeti Club), Victoria Rogers (Yeti Club), Phil Blatch (LichfieldMC), Stuart Webb (MAM), Chris Elliott (MAM), Hazel Lewis (Pinnacle Club), Brian Smith, Stephen Wright, Phil Laverick, Matt Ramsey, Sarah Ramsey & 2 others. **(32)**

1. Apologies: Apologies had been received from: John Handley (CoventryMC), Mike Beaumont, John Marston, Michael Blake & Claudia Sarner.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting:

'The circulated minutes for the February Midland Area Meeting are accepted as accurate' Proposed: Andy Brown Seconded: Phil Simister Carried Nem con

3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere: None

4. Reports from Area Representatives:

4.1 Access West: Richard Law reported that Wrexham council had sold Pandy Rocks on the west side of the Ceiriog Valley and he is trying to find out who is now responsible for it. Also the car park for Pontesbury Rocks on Earls Hill nr Shrewsbury is now being closed at 8pm due to 'antisocial behaviour'.

4.2 Access East: Andy Railton had nothing to report. Mark Hodson queried how one could find out about any access problems to crags in neighbouring areas such as the Peak District. Richard suggested looking on the minutes on the BMC website as the Access Reps reports should be recorded there. Alternatively, climbers could try contacting the relevant Access Representative direct via the details on the BMC site.

4.3 Climbing Walls: No report

4.4 Youth: No report

4.5. Club Issues: Andy Potter mentioned that most of the committee had met for an informal evening recently, at which time it was agreed that we should try and arrange an evening to enable local youths in the Midlands to try rock climbing. He also reminded club reps that there was a lot of advice concerning the new GDPR regulations available on the BMC website.

4.6. Hill Walking: David Jones said that there had been little progress on Hill Walking issues as most things were 'on hold' until Sports England funding has been resolved. A Hill walking get-together has been proposed in the Peak District in November. MOM2 seemed to be going well so far. Roger Fanner mentioned that there would be a HWIG meeting in a few weeks time.

5. National Council:

5.1 Report from last meeting: Roger Fanner stated there was little to report from the February or March meetings, apart from things relating to the ORG recommendations and their implementation. Jane Thompson pointed out that a summary of key BMC activities for Feb-Apr 2018 was available in the documents set out on the chairs and drew attention to the fact that there will be a Club Seminar in Kendal on the morning of 16th June, intended for secretaries and other club officials, prior to the AGM in the afternoon. She urged people intending to attend to sort out their accommodation asap.

5.2 Matters for the next Council Meeting: There were no matters from the floor.

6. Issues and Motions relating to the Organisational Review: Those attending each had access to a copy of *“ORG Review Implementation Proposal Briefing Paper”* issued 9/4/18. Andy said that the ORG Implementation Group had produced a presentation of 40+ slides, some of which were heavy going, so he proposed showing around half of these, more if they were relevant to discussions. He and Roger Fanner added a commentary to these slides, with contributions as and when necessary by Phil Simister. Andy explained the background to the *“Overview”* and *“What do we need today?”* slides before Roger amplified *“The Story So Far (1) & (2)”* slides. i.e. BMC's origins back in 1944 when there was no mountain rescue or training, its expansion from around 10,000 members in 1980's when '1 member:1 vote' was introduced and it becoming a Limited Company in 1994. He pointed out that the Articles of Governance that Martin Wragg then put together had worked well for the last 20 years but their deliberate vagueness meant they no longer complied with UK Company law. He then moved on to *“What is Good Governance & why should you care?”*, *“How can the governance arrangements be changed?”* and *“Why are people bothered about Sport England? (1) & (2)”* pointing out that there will need to be a vote of 75% or more in favour of changing the Memoranda & Articles of Association (M&AA) at the June AGM for this to happen. Roger recalled that some members, including one or two at our last meeting, had felt we were being rushed into change by Sport England but he pointed out that back in 2015 SE had told the organisations they gave funds to that things needed to change and that they needed to become compliant by April 2018. Apparently all other SE-funded bodies (55 of them) had met this deadline, only the BMC failed to do so and had now been given an extension to August 2018. The meeting heard that only part of the arguments were about finance. SE provides around 10% of current BMC spending (equivalent to £3.40 per member) but, in so doing, gives kudos to the BMC – receiving some funding from government helps ensure the BMC is recognised as the umbrella organisation for mountaineering & climbing in the UK. If such funding ceases we risk another organisation taking over the mantle of national representative body. After looking at *“Are we ceding control to Sport England?”* and *“What are the time constraints?”* discussion started on *“Proposal 1 - 4 parts”* After comments and questions, plus some other slides, Andy asked if we would give a show of hands on the proposal to allow electronic proxy voting at future AGMs (**Proposal 1b**) **Result:- For 29 Against 2 Abstentions 1** There was more discussion about the proposals to increase the number of members required to raise a resolution (**Proposal 1c**) with concern expressed that it should not become impossibly difficult to do so. The proposal to increase the signature requirement from 25 to 100 to bring it in line with the number of members required to call a General Meeting was preferred to the alternative proposal to increase signature requirement to motions to at least 1% membership or 25 members if a mediation process was involved. **Result:- For 16 Against 7 Abstentions 6** **Alternative Proposal 1c Result:- For 0 Against 22 Abstentions 6** It now being after 9 pm the meeting adjourned for refreshments.

Resuming, attention turned to the New Articles of Association and Phil Simister went through the *“What's governance and in Proposal 1 (Part 1) & (Parts 2)”* slides and the *“Latest Update from SE negotiations (Part 1) & (Part 2)”*. Members were re-assured that any new Directors were not going to be in it for the money and that there would be an appropriate 'skills matrix' drawn up when deciding on who should be invited to become Directors. The meeting then agreed to vote on these issues.

Proposal 1a was carried nem con **Result:- For 28 Against 0 Abstentions 0.** **Proposal 1d** to implement the changes required by Sport England was also passed. **Result:- For 28 Against 2 Abstentions 1**

The meeting then turned its attention to the Finance and Audit Committee paper and proposals on 2019 subscriptions. Andy highlighted that the 2018 budget has been prepared without SE income and is forecasting a surplus of £6,000. However this is

would be achieved by curtailing all grant funded activity in the Specialist Programmes such as; Clubs, Talent, Hillwalking and Equity development. He stressed that if Proposal 1 - updating the BMC's constitution (Memorandum & Articles of Association) so the BMC fully comply with the Companies Act – was passed at the AGM there would be no motion to increase subscription rates. However, if Proposal 1 did not get the required 75% approval at the AGM, then the FAC was recommending the AGM should consider an agenda item to increase subscriptions by 10% the following year. There was concern from the floor that such a subscription rate increase might be counterproductive if it resulted in members not renewing. "Brian Smith felt that as well as looking at fees, Finance & Audit should be considering the significant financial income advantages accruing from an ongoing targeted member recruitment program. For example a membership drive to increase the number of members from 84,000 to 100,00, plus an annual 2% fee increase, would bring in another £600,000 per annum in a full year, when achieved. The meeting moved to a vote:

Proposal to give authority to increase subscriptions should Proposal 1 fail at the AGM Result:- For 0 Against 18 Abstentions 12

A comment that "there was a whiff of blackmail about all this" was heard from the floor and someone then queried if BMC Insurance could help meet any budget shortfall. It was pointed out that BMC Insurance brings in several £k each year. A consensus seemed to be arriving that we would like the Board to come up with more creative ways of replacing Sport England funding should this be necessary, or cutting some activities, and not just consider a subscription increase. A revote was taken.

Result:- For 0 Against 9 Abstentions 16

7. Any other Business, including News from HQ:

- Andy drew attention to the imminence of the deadline for nominations for the BMC Awards and recognition Scheme. If any Midlands member wanted to nominate someone for the George Band Award for exceptional voluntary contribution to mountaineering, the Rehan Siddiqui Award for exceptional voluntary contribution towards promoting equality & diversity in the BMC, or the Young Volunteer Award for exceptional voluntary contribution of someone under the age 25 to the BMC they should do so via the website before Monday next (23rd April)
- Brian Smith stated he had 2 other proposals, relevant to ORG, which he hoped the meeting would vote on. The current board meets 4 times a year for approximately 4 hours each meeting and he felt this was inadequate for a body with this size membership and budget. He wondered what, if any, arrangements were in hand to ensure that the new executive board meet more frequently. When pressed to suggest what this might mean he suggested perhaps meeting 8 times a year for around 6 hours each time – a threefold increase.

Proposal from the floor that new Board of Directors meet more frequently and for longer (48 hours per year more appropriate than present 16 hrs)

Result:- For 29 Against 0 Abstentions 0

- He also felt that as the BMC deems itself to be a 'membership organisation' the new board should consider holding a regular survey of members – their preferences / priorities / needs / likes / dislikes etc – so that they might better run the organisation.

Proposal from the floor for the new board to conduct a biennial survey of members' needs. Result:- For 29 Against 0 Abstentions 1

8. Date & location of next meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Wed 6th June 2018 at a venue to be decided, possibly out of doors so that some climbing &/or a walk can take place before it starts. It is hoped that after the meeting there will be a barbeque and a chance to socialise.

As the Area Meeting had lasted 2½ hours, the Toubkal mountaineering talk was held over for a later date.

Written by John Edwards