

De Cymru BMC South Wales Area Meeting

17 April 2018, 7.30pm

Boulders, Pengam Road Cardiff

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Numbers present (22) + BMC officer in attendance: Dan Middleton

1.1. Liz Collyer, Eugene Travers-Jones, Matt Dix

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

To be amended following comments from members. Proposed by OB, seconded by Will Kilner (WK)

3. Matters arising

Pete Sheppard is investigating May for Penallta crag clean up as the planned March date did not take place due to weather among other issues.

4. Organisational review group recommendations

WK ran through the short slideshow on the latest organisational review proposals. This and the longer version are available on the ORG mini-site at <https://thebmc.zendesk.com/hc/en-us>

WK told the meeting the following the ORG proposals, the implementation group was formed and has made initial recommendations to be taken forward to the June AGM.

Proposal 1 – update the BMC constitution to fully comply with the companies act

Proposal 2 – make a detailed assessment of the costs and benefits of the other ORG recommendations, with any further recommendations brought to the 2019 AGM.

PS asked for clarification that proposal 2 was to deliver proposals where appropriate

WK outlined the background to proposal 1 and relevance to BMC maintaining its position as an NGB in contact with national government and then outlined the details of proposal 1:

1a. to adopt the good governance proposals of the independent lawyers

1b to allow on line voting for BMC AGMs

1c to increase the number of members required to raise an AGM proposal to 100 from the current 25

1d to implement the changes required by sport England to comply with the code of sports governance.

PS queried whether proxy voting was included in 1b. WK said that proxy voting was already possible under the current articles of association and that this proposal relates to electronic, non-proxy voting.

Discussion took place around 1c and alternative proposals that were made to increase the required number to 1% of membership (currently this would mean around 850).

1c would be tied to a new grievance procedure to try to resolve issues before a resolution was required.

PS: some clubs have raised concerns about the 1% proposal as being too high a number. WK clarified that the current proposal is 100 members, not 1% of the membership. PS also noted that there is mention of those raising a grievance being liable for legal costs. Brief discussion took place on this with questions as to the reason behind the proposal, as well as view that if members were not prepared to accept mediation without needing paid external professional opinions, they should be prepared to bear some of the cost of this.

WK – proposal D will need to be approved at the AGM if sport England funding is to continue. Members asked what changes sport England want making in order to comply with their code of governance.

WK – maximum 30% elected board with 1/3 independent directors and 1/3 staff. Sport England not currently happy about some matters being reserved for national council rather than directors.

WK advised all present that they can feed back on the proposals through the google form, contact form or email address on the ORG mini-site.

Views of the meeting were taken on each of the proposals:

1a (good governance) For 16, against 0, abstained 5 (did not vote, 1)

1b (online voting) For 16, against 0, abstained 6

1c raise number required for motion at AGM to 100: For 15, against 1, abstained 5 (did not vote, 1)

1d Implement changes required by Sport England: For 13, against 0, abstained 9

Dan Middleton (DM), BMC officer, took no part in the discussion or vote

WK also sought view of the meeting on whether 1a-1d should be presented as 4 separate motions or 1 motion at the AGM. Vote on 4 separate motions: For 16, against 0, abstained 5 (did not vote, 1)

5. Sustainable bolting

DM gave an overview of some of the practices of bolt funds and activists in other areas of the country, including latest long lasting glue-ins and reasons for using them (longer lifespan, less wear on rock, so routes last for longer without placements becoming unusable). He stressed that from personal experience he knows how much hard work individual crag developers put in both on new routes and re-gearing and was not here to tell anyone how to do it, just share other practices.

Suggestions made re using social media to increase donations to the bolt fund.

BMC guidelines (<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bolts-guidance-documents>) are currently being updated by DM. New guidelines will include some advice on liability issues.

Questions asked – how often should bolts be inspected?

DM – Workplace regulations would require every 6 months but not necessarily practicable in climbing environment. Modern equipment is to some extent over-engineered, both European and UIAA standards are met by latest 16mm glue ins.

Discussion took place regarding liability issues for those bolting new routes

OB said that the area would like to support sustainable bolting, but the main issue is cost of the bolts. OB wants to find a cost-effective way of managing this that uses the best kit available. Spoke with Up and Under about possibly setting up both a new routes and bolt fund accounts to source kit at favourable prices.

PS – feel this is best practice, support new routers as well as re-gearing

Questions raised about how to determine if people are competent to re-gear crags and whether this scheme would include latest 16mm bolts?

Don't know ins and outs yet but looking for a view from the meeting on whether it's worth looking in to more, possibly including bolt workshops as part of the plan.

Roy Thomas (RT) – Think in general new routers should pay for their own bolts, but it's good if able to buy at a reduced rate. OB clarified that intention is for new routers to pay for own bolts through the U&U account but the bolt fund pay for re-gearing.

Concern raised that bolt fund bolts could be used for new routes instead of intended purpose. This would need looking at, access to account could be through some form of approval process.

DM – Positive side would be eventual standardisation of type of bolts used, meaning that end user climbers would be more familiar with the gear and know what to look for in terms of weaknesses etc.

Views of the meeting sought for OB's proposal – general support in the meeting. OB to write proposal and distribute prior to next meeting.

Alan Rosier minuted that current rebolters and new routers in South Wales were unaware of the BMC's good practise guidelines and the regulations of industry standards for bolts and thanked DM for bringing this to their attention.

6. Area reports

Gower: Matt Woodfield (MW) – due to meet national trust soon to discuss their concerns re some old gear and discuss also descent tracks.

National trust are pleased that some climbers are informing them of nesting choughs, showing climbers working together with the landowner.

Bacon hole – NT have some concern about extending the current arrangement due to nesting choughs. MW to follow up again.

Pembroke: Steve Quinton (SQ) – latest range west briefing had a good turnout. Peregrine nesting at Trevallon means that usual abseil line is off limits at the moment. Other bird restrictions are as usual.

South East Wales: OB introduced Beth and Eben as new South East Wales access reps. Coed Ely – new landowners have banned access. RAD has been updates and Elfyn Jones is attempting to discuss with the landowner.

Taffs Well West – some climbers were recently asked to leave. There is no formal access agreement at the site.

7. Clubs

PS updated the meeting: club officer training took place in March
Club seminar scheduled for 16 June, during the AGM weekend

South West area has supported a proposal for a climbing incident reporting service. General support in principle from the meeting for this. Proposals to be attached below.

8. Climbing Walls

Simon Rawlinson (SR) advised he is stepping down as area youth coordinator with Joe Holmes taking over. All present acknowledged with thanks all of the successful hard work Si has put into youth development. Si said that there are currently 5 young people from the area competing in European competitions.

WK suggested that this should be celebrated by SR putting something together for Summit and / or the Wales BMC newsletter.

9. Hill Walking

No business

10. Youth

See 8

11. National Council

All relevant issues covered at item 4

12. Wales area updates

OB informed meeting that N Wales Area has proposed buying Craig y Forwyn crag. Overview given of nature of the crag. Support in principle for this sought from the meeting. Vote – for 13, against, 1, abstained 2.

It was requested that the purchase of Pant Quarry be put onto the agenda of the next meeting.

13. AOB

PS informed meeting that Alan Ward will be giving a talk in aid of Central Beacons MRT

Next meeting is to be held at Manorbier YH at 7pm on Friday 25th May prior to the Pembroke Climbing Festival.

Attachment (Point 7)- British Mountaineering Incident Log

Why is an incident reporting system needed in Britain?

Every year climbers are involved in incidents on crags and mountains across Britain. Some are near-

miss events, with no harm caused. But others are catastrophic accidents resulting in serious injuries or

fatalities. These incidents can have huge consequences for the participants and their families and

friends. Despite this, no one knows exactly how many climbers are being injured or killed in Britain

annually. We believe that until the true scale of the problem is known opportunities to prevent future

tragedies are being lost.

When a climbing accident happens in Britain details of how the incident occurred are rarely shared

beyond a small circle of friends. This restricts learning and denies the vast majority of the community a

chance to improve practice. In a sport where even small errors can have fatal outcomes the opportunity to

learn from the experiences of others should be embraced. Sharing real-life accounts of near-misses and

accidents will help British climbers better understand how to reduce the risks of the sport we love.

What systems are currently in place internationally?

Incident reporting logs are not new to mountaineering and have been used worldwide from the 1940s

onward. We reviewed three different systems currently in use in America, Austria and Western Europe.

Dougald MacDonald, Executive Editor of the American Alpine Club provided details of their reporting

service (<http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/>) via a Skype call.

☐ 'Accidents in North American Mountaineering' was founded in the 1940s following a bad run of

serious incidents and has logged more than 8500 reports, anonymous and otherwise.
reword

☐ One third of reports are self-submitted with the rest coming from S&R teams, National Parks and

other bodies.

☐ All reports are published individually online and compiled into an annual report sent to all AAC

members with the emphasis on education and deriving lessons from incidents.

☐ Costs are low due to third-party and volunteer involvement. Dougald and another AAC employee

edit and analyse reports with help from the AAC's education director.

☐ Annual report drives new best practice policy. Recent learnings include a sharp rise in small cam

failures and significant number of climbers injured in pendulum falls.

Dr Karl Gabl, a director of the Kuratorium Alpine Sicherheit (trans; 'Trustees of Alpine Safety')

(<http://www.alpinesicherheit.at/>) provided details of their system during a phone interview.

☐ KAS was set up 50 years ago after 20 people died in two avalanches. Covers all mountain activities but majority of incidents are ski-related.

☐ Anonymous reports are provided daily by Alpine police. As a result near-miss and minor incidents

are rarely reported.

☐ KAS, which began recording digitally 11 years ago, recently recorded its 100,000th report.

☐ Some reports are published online in brief but the main focus is on an annual report analysing

accident trends and learnings.

☐ KAS is state funded with a budget of £140,000 a year covering one full-time and two part-time

employees and an office, supported by many volunteers.

☐ Their statistics show fatal accidents are generally decreasing in Austria despite a rise in the number of people visiting the mountains. KAS believe this is due to their work. Data analysis has

led to several new safety policies, i.e. anyone skinning up-piste in Austria will be on the right-hand

side. Figures show this has led to less collisions.

Community website CamptoCamp.org runs the Serac incidents and accidents database (<https://www.camptocamp.org/serac>) with sponsorship from the Petzl Foundation.

☒ The service was founded in 2015 and receives mostly self-submitted reports from users of Camptocamp.org (continental version of UKclimbing.com).

☒ They logged 184 reports in the first 11 months of operation.

☒ All reports are published online in full, very few anonymous.

☒ Originally charity funded, it is now run privately and funded by adverts. It is low cost with just a

web form and community moderators.

☒ Serac issues regular reports analysing learnings from accidents (eg

https://www.petzl.com/fondation/Fondation-analyse-SERAC_EN-web.pdf?v=1).

How will the service best be implemented to suit Britain?

Our proposal combines the best features from these existing models to create a service tailored for British

climbing.

Reports will be submitted via an easy to use online incident reporting form (<https://bit.ly/2HrQqBr>) that

encourages comprehensive and unambiguous self-reporting of near-misses and accidents.

Reports can

be anonymous or named. The form will be used both by the climbing community and organisations

including Mountain Rescue groups.

Following consultation with the AAC, Association of Mountaineering Instructors and others we have

created a form which minimises ambiguity, avoids judgemental questions and respects privacy. The form

has been subjected to focus group testing and a wider trial is currently ongoing.

Each report will be analysed independently by an expert reviewer. This peer review panel will be formed

by volunteers from bodies including the BMC and community. The panel will be chosen carefully to

ensure trust in the service.

Reviewers will analyse reports, request interviews with participants of pertinent incidents and compile

extended reports for publication.

Subject to moderator approval, all reports will be published immediately on a free to access website. Peer

reviews will be added to each report as and when they are conducted. Reviewers will have the power to

add links to other training resources, such as the excellent BMC TV videos or AMI workshops. We will

also provide a simple and robust process for withdrawing reports if requested by participants.

In-depth analyses of these reports will be published monthly throughout the year in a variety of forms.

These publications will be non-judgemental, objective and unambiguous. The focus will be on telling a

story in order to share lessons.

The service will mainly be run by volunteers with funding from a variety of sources. Mammut and Petzl

sponsor similar services, as do smaller businesses. Domestic brands such as UKClimbing, DMM and

Lowe Alpine may also be potential sponsors or partners. Other potential partners included professional

mountaineering associations (BMG, AMI, BAIML, MLA, CWA) and universities. An example of a publicly

funded model is the Scottish Avalanche Information Service, which is funded by Sport Scotland.

In the very long term, we envisage the service receiving incident reports from all UK emergency services

who deal with incidents involving climbers. This would enable our community to emulate the success of

the Austrian model (KAS).

Who should provide the service?

The BMC is the organisation best placed to provide a trusted incident reporting service for UK climbers. It

enjoys an unrivalled position of support and engagement within the community and safety is already a

key element of BMC core policies:

The BMC encourages and promotes safety and good practice in all aspects of climbing, hill walking and mountaineering. (<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-core-policies>)

Thanks to a boom in indoor climbing and with Tokyo 2020 on the horizon, the climbing community is

growing rapidly. While this is undoubtedly a success for our sport it also brings an increasing obligation to

ensure the safety of new participants. Consequently the lack of an effective UK-wide incident reporting

service is a serious deficiency in achieving this goal.

We want to assemble a BMC Working Group that will deliver a plan by the end of 2018 detailing how the

service is to be built, launched, funded and run. This plan will define concrete objectives, timescales and

identify the personnel and resources to be used. The group will also engage with partner organisations

and volunteers.

The group will be comprised of BMC committee members, volunteers, representatives of professional

bodies or partners. It should include a BMC 'big hitter' who is widely respected in the community. This will

help raise the profile of the service, establish credibility and drive greater engagement from partner

organisations.

Dr Gabl (KAS): "Our purpose is to learn from accidents because you learn much more from real

incidents than theoretical events. We know we are saving lives."

Authors

Pete Callaghan and Louie Smith