

BMC South West Area Meeting

Venue: The Nova Scotia, Bristol, BS1 6XJ

Date: Thursday 31st May 2018 7:00pm

MINUTES

Present and signed in:

James Mann (Chair), Mark Kemball (Secretary), Helen Wilson (National Council), Philip Wilson (Clubs rep), Colin Knowles, Rob Dyer (BMC Access Officer), Nigel Barry, Tracy Rodard, Simon Fletcher (Avon access rep), Barry Donovan, A Tall, Martin Hallet, Debbie Roberts, Frank Cannings, Wheatcroft, Scott Halsey, Tim Burrow (17 in total).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

James Mann welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Pete Callaghan, Mark Courtiour, Trevor Smith, Ian Butterworth, Iain Peters, David Hillebrandt, Will Hornby, Libby Houston.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14.4.18 – James Mann summarised these.

3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere – none.

4. National Council rep

Gareth Palmer's term as National Council rep ends in September, James Mann asked anyone who would like to take on this role to let him or the secretary know.

5. Climbing Wall rep

As reported last meeting, Nikki Clargo is no longer working at "The Life Centre", so has stood down as Climbing Wall rep. We are still looking for someone to replace her.

6. Communications

As reported last meeting, instructions from the BMC office, we should no longer keep email lists – group emails should be sent via the office. All members should have received notification of this meeting from the office. A show of hands indicated that most attendees had received an email. Those who had not were urged to check their junk email folders etc. Details of future meetings and events will be publicised on BMC SW Facebook page.

7. BMC AGM motions

Helen Wilson (National Council Rep) led a short discussion and question and answer session on the various motions before the upcoming AGM. Following the discussion, members were urged to vote as to implement either of the proposals to change the Articles of Association requires 75% of the votes cast.

8. Cliff Rescue and Coastguard Issues

James Mann reported that filming for the planned film on sea cliff climbing, safety etc. had gone ahead successfully. It is now at the editing stage and will hopefully be completed by early autumn.

An incident at Sennen has been reported, where a doctor (also a climber), who had been sent by the emergency services to assist with a casualty (a fisherman who had taken a big fall) was denied access to the casualty. The Coastguard has not taken up an offer of copies of the new West Cornwall guidebooks, and does not seem to be answering emails or telephone calls. In short, communications have broken down.

10. Incident reporting system

Pete Callaghan sent in the following update on the incident reporting system:

Youth Training and Walls Committee Meeting

I attended the BMC Youth Training and Walls Committee meeting last night (Tuesday May 15th).

The committee were very generous with their time and it was interesting for me to see the breadth of activities that they oversee.

I was encouraged by the enthusiastic discussion and pleased to gain the support of everyone present.

We now have a working group agreed, which will put together a costed plan for consideration by the BMC National Council. The working group will need to define the service in enough detail to identify the resources and costs required. Participants will not be just from the BMC, but will include representatives from AMI, Mountain Rescue and Plas y Brenin.

The discussion was pretty wide ranging, covering a number of concerns such as the processes needed to manage issues of privacy, anonymity, fatalities and reliable identification of lessons.

I think it is fair to say that there was a distinct preference amongst the committee for an editorial approach over a moderator approach. My own preference is for a moderator approach, but this is one of the areas that the working group will examine in detail.

The next step then is to get a date for a Skype meeting with everyone on the working group, to start the process of defining a plan. The date is yet to be confirmed but is likely to be sometime in June.

Online Reports

We can now publish incident reports online, a small but important step on the journey.

New incident reports are submitted online and added to our incident log database.

We then review the reports, link them to the UKC route database if appropriate, and mark them as published, which automatically displays them on the website.

We don't make any changes to the reports, so the review process is pretty quick and simple, checking that the reports are suitable for sharing online.

Sadly, related to this, a fatality was reported at The Quay Climbing Centre last week. The details of what happened have not yet been made public.

11. Access:

a. South Devon

A proposal (below) to amend the South Devon fixed gear policy has been put forward:

Motion to amend S. Devon Fixed Gear Policy 29.5.18

The Current Situation

Monitoring of available tree belays and stakes has shown a decrease in secure options over the last four years. Stakes have been removed and lost in dense vegetation and ongoing environmental works have led to a significant decrease in the number of tree belays in Torbay.

On site observations by Pete Saunders (S. Devon guidebook author) suggest that **belay bolts set back from the crag top** should be allowable where other belay solutions are failing. Bolts in bare rock will provide a long terms solution and will be easy to find. This will apply to natural sea cliffs in a change to existing policy.

The Proposed Changes

This proposal comes with the following safeguards:

1. Bolts must be set back from the cliff top so as not to encourage top roping or a 'lower-off mentality'.
2. Bolts should not be used where adequate natural protection is available. This protection includes threads, good quality pegs, nuts, cams and good quality stakes.
3. Only high quality glue-in P bolts are used with no staples or expansion bolts being used.
4. The fixed gear policy remains unchanged with regard to bolts for protection or belays on rock climbs.

Where?

So far it has been observed that Durl Head may need one or two bolt belays, Telegraph Hole may require a similar number and as cut trees decay there may be a need at Daddyhole and Meadfoot.

The meeting supported this and it will go onto the agenda for the next area meeting.

b. Cheddar

Mark Courtiour sent in the following report:

I received a report of ravens nesting at Goblin Combe on the route Necromancer - Owl Rock. The route should best be avoided till the young have fledged, mid-July perhaps. I've noted it on the RAD.

Cheddar: mostly good so far with every one spoken to on the South side having insurance.

However I have seen two parties on Stone Cold Fever which is a winter-only multi-pitch sport route. I was unable to speak to one party, however on the 13th I happened to be working nearby in pinnacle bay placing monitoring studs on bits of horrible rock. I was able to speak to them; after protesting that it was a summer season route they agreed to ab off from the stance end of pitch 2; possibly convinced by the fact that they were being filmed by drone!

Climbers on these routes are very visible and should CC&G staff see them it may once again jeopardise our access. Perhaps a reminder could be put out that climbers should read the access descriptions in the sections where they intend to climb, and not just look at the topo.

c. Avon:

i. The tree on Nightmare – This was used as a belay and abseil station, it had been reported as in a dangerous condition. Simon Fletcher and Colin Knowles inspected the tree and considered it to be safe; however sometime during the night following the inspection, the tree was cut down (almost certainly with a chain saw). No one has yet admitted responsibility. A 3-peg belay station has been installed, but Simon and Colin would like to replace this with a bolted belay and abseil station. The meeting was unanimously in favour of this.

ii. The Downs management plan. Colin Knowles has seen a copy of the yet to be published consultation document. It is heavily biased towards conservation with much less emphasis on access, and the word “climb” only appears once. It does nothing for the problem of access along the base of the cliff, where a path away from the very busy road is needed. Colin is to negotiate on this.

iii. Snuff Mills bolting - Nigel Barry expressed concern that bolts have appeared on Snuff Mills crags which have not been agreed in the bolting policy. Unfortunately, it is not clear what the bolting policy is, or if it was amended following the November 2015 meeting which considered this. – **Action MK to find out what the policy is.**

iv. North Devon and Cornwall - Will Hornby has reported that he now has 30+ stakes suitable for cliff top belays – contact him if you know of anywhere that needs them.

v. West Cornwall – Rob Dyer reported that Gareth Palmer is standing down as access rep.

12. Climbing Walls

A new bouldering venue, The Hangar, has opened in Plymouth.

13. Clubs

Phillip Wilson gave a brief report on the last meeting of the Clubs Committee.

14. Youth

Freddie Naish has stood down as Area Youth Co-ordinator. Julian Wills has said he is willing to take over.

15. Date and Venue of next meeting

Provisionally 1st September, Dorset – venue to be decided.