

BMC Cymru Wales Newsletter: Summer 2018

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Firstly I need to apologise for missing another meeting during my first year in post. It was only after accepting the role of Chair of BMC Cymru (Gogledd) last November that I realised how two of my fixed commitments would clash so badly with the recommended time slots for area meetings. It should work out better next year. Thank you to Anthony Eccles for stepping in to take my place.

The AGM Vote

It was pleasing to see that the vote for Option A at June's AGM was closely aligned to the vote taken at the North Wales area meeting in April.

Thanks to all those who took the time to try to understand the issues and cast a vote – whichever option you chose. Although the mandate for option A was decisive, it is important that we continue to take everyone's views into account as we move into Phase 2 of the reorganisation. Anyone who read the Steven Venables article in the Sunday Times (12th August) will know that a decisive vote doesn't mean that the arguments are all over.

[Climber slams British Mountaineering Council 'sell-out'](#) (registration required)

Phase 2 Implementation document – Wales

As part of Phase 2 of the Implementation Group's recommendations, it is proposed that there should be a 'Board-led Workstream' to produce a Strategy and Vision for the BMC. Importantly for us, Wales is specifically listed as one of the five areas to be addressed within that Strategy and Vision. Prior to release of this document, earlier this summer, I tried to bring together key BMC volunteer representatives in Wales in order that we could begin to develop a draft, agreed Strategy and Vision for Wales to take back to our area meetings. Unfortunately that meeting has proved impossible to organise so far, but ought to take place soon after the September area meetings. We need to be able to articulate our priorities for Wales. **No one is going to do it for us!**

Working with Ramblers Cymru

As part of the Eisteddfod, Ramblers Cymru organised an informal, networking boat ride to, and walk around, Bute Park in Cardiff. My wife and I attended, on behalf of BMC Cymru, and I came away not only having made some useful contacts, but more convinced than ever that we must work in concert with Ramblers Cymru in order to efficiently and effectively represent our membership in dealings with the Welsh Government.

Rhoscolyn Bolt

One of the agenda items at the North Wales September meeting is likely to focus on the existence of a bolt at the top of the Sun Walls at Rhoscolyn. I would urge the meeting not to dwell for too long on this topic. While important ethics are at stake, the issues are not new and have been discussed many times in various contexts at BMC meetings.

It would seem to me that the two fundamental, but potentially conflicting, principles at issue are:

1. That we should not do anything which might inconvenience or endanger the public at leisure in the area ... in this case walkers using the coastal path.
2. That we should not compromise the adventure climbing ethic prevailing on the west Anglesey coast cliffs, by placing fixed equipment unnecessarily.

Secretary

The North Wales region is urgently in need of a new Secretary. This is not an onerous role, but it helps take pressure off the rest of the team of area volunteers, especially when organising meetings. If someone could volunteer to take the job on, then it saves me the task of having to ask you. Thanks!

I look forward to seeing you at the November meeting and Area AGM.

Tim Jepson
Chair of BMC Cymru (Gogledd)
August 2018

AREA ACCESS NEWS

Pembrokeshire

Despite the late start to the nesting season, the sea birds along the Pembrokeshire coast departed early, enabling all the restricted cliffs to be accessed early by climbers. The arrangement in Pembrokeshire, with a paid National Park/MoD funded Ranger working with recreational groups on a very sensitive and ecologically important coastline is a really good example of good partnership working. The National Park produces an annual leaflet showing the agreed restrictions and then updates the restrictions (including removing the restriction immediately, once it's known the birds have not nested).

Despite the wealth of information and notice boards that are updated daily at the main car park sites, it's sad to report that on at least two occasions climbers were seen inside the restricted area close to nesting bird sites. As always the most up to date information can be found on the BMC Regional Access Database (RAD) www.thebmc.co.uk/RAD

Gower – Boiler Slab

Local Area Access volunteer Matt Woodfield has been working with the Wildlife Trust who manage this area and he is arranging for some footpath repair work (funded by the BMC Crag Care Fund) to be carried out on the eroded descent gully here. Get in touch with Matt or Elfyn Jones, the BMC Access Officer for Wales if you can help. www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-staff-list

Llandarcy

This very popular newly developed sport climbing venue, close to Swansea, is located slap bang in the middle of a development site. The developers, who are basically in the early stages of building a new urban village have become aware of the climbing and have contacted the BMC asking us to tell climbers that access is not allowed and that climbers seen here will be asked to leave. It seems that the land below the crag is where the site offices and storage yard for this very large building development will be located. The BMC has been in touch with the developers and is trying to arrange a meeting with them to see if there are any options available to allow climbing to continue here. In the

meantime they have erected large fences and signs to keep the public away from the rockface.

Gower – Trial Wall

The National Trust Ranger has thanked climbers for observing the restrictions here and is pleased to say that the kestrels successfully fledged a number of young chicks. We are hopeful that next year they will again be happy with the limited agreed restriction, allowing most of the left-hand side to be climbed on.

Craig y Forwyn update

The BMC National Council has agreed that BMC staff can formally start negotiating a possible purchase/lease of the central section with the new owners. However the owners (Hogans Ltd) have requested we do not pursue this for a couple of months as they are in the process of submitting a planning application to redevelop the caravan park. These plans will not affect the cliff or the woodland but while the plans are being prepared and the planning application is being scrutinised by the local council, they have asked us not to push too hard on this for now and are asking climbers to stay away from the central section until the planning issues are resolved.

In the meantime access to the left-hand and right-hand sides appears to be tolerated.

However, PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THE GATE AT THE PARKING IS FIRMLY SHUT AND LATCHED EVERY TIME!

There have now been two occasions when the gate has been left open by climbers, allowing Mr Jones' sheep to escape and creating a real issue. He is very supportive and accommodating of climbers, allowing us free access to both climb and park on his land. Without his support it would be impossible to get any sort of access to Craig y Forwyn, so please go out of your way to be respectful and treat him well and close the bloody gate!

Tremfest report and Tremadog update

As always (!) the sun was shining and over 60 climbers turned up for this event. A great deal of work was carried out, clearing paths, cleaning routes,

protecting the rare Rock Stonecrop that grows next to the approach paths on Craig Pant Ifan, and a myriad of other tasks that keep Tremadog as the premier BMC-owned crag. A great many thanks to all who turned out to volunteer but especially to Mike Raine and Sally Raine who did a lot of the organising and supervising on the day. Great support was also given by Gareth and Jo, the new owners of Eric Jones Café, and Crag Jones gave a brilliant talk about his exploits climbing on remote Southern Ocean islands.

Welsh Government access consultation response

Last year the Welsh Government consulted on a wide range of issues affecting the environment and access in Wales, called *Taking Forward the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*. A major part of this consultation included recommendations to improve and simplify the arrangements for getting access to the Welsh countryside and coast. This part of the consultation alone attracted over 16,000 responses with over 13,000 responses supporting extending and improving access. It is disappointing therefore that the Minister for the Environment issued a statement stating *“There were strong but differing views on how best to reform access legislation. We therefore believe that now is not the right time for substantive reform. But we are committed to exploring selected aspects of change where there was greater consensus, including on some of the administrative arrangements and multi-use paths. We will continue to facilitate further discussions through established groups such as the National Access Forum”*.

The BMC and other recreational groups in Wales are continuing to press the government to address this issue more realistically and to actually listen to the overwhelming support given by the consultees to extending access rights in Wales, especially access to the coast.

AREA EVENTS

Gower Climbing Festival

The 10th Gower Climbing Festival is the place to be on the weekend of 7th & 8th September – a great chance to enjoy the best climbing Gower has to offer, be that sports or trad. Supported by the BMC and organised by local volunteer Stuart McDowell, there will be bacon butties, free topos, climbing workshops, and a free evening talk by Barry Gray, an ex-royal marine, talking about his planned solo expedition across the Antarctic.

All the info is on the festival website - www.gowerclimbingfestival.co.uk

AREA MEETINGS

Venues and dates of next meetings:

BMC Cymru North Wales

Vaynol Arms, Nant Peris

Tuesday 4th September, starting at 7.30pm (food from 7.00pm)

[More information on the BMC Local Areas site](#)

BMC Cymru South Wales

Monksland Country Bar & Grill in Scurlage on the Gower peninsula

Friday 7th September 2018, starting at 7.30pm (food from 7.00pm)

[More information on the BMC Local Areas site](#)