

BMC Cymru Mid Wales Area Meeting
19th November 2018 at 7.30 at the White Lion, Machylleth

1. Welcome: From the Chairman Huw Gilbert

2. Apologies: Dave Williams, Don Sargeant, Terry Taylor

3. In Attendance: Huw Gilbert (Mid-Wales Working Group Chairman), Gareth Pierce (Chair of the Board of Directors), Elfyn Jones (BMC Access Officer), Myfyr Tomos, Matt Young

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes:

a) Fixed anchor at Craig Cywarch: At the previous meeting no objections were raised to the Mountain Club proposal to place a fixed anchor at the top of NNE Tower. As far as is known the anchor has not yet been placed.

5. BMC Update:

a) Strategic Planning Process and the work of the Organisation

Development Group (ODG): Summarised from information sent from the ODG to the Local Areas the ODG have established 8x workstreams within which they are working. These workstreams are: 1) Strategy and Vision, 2) Operations and Finance, 3) Culture, Leadership and Management, 4) Corporate Structure, 5) Governance, 6) Policy, 7) Partnerships and 8) Membership Engagement.

The ODG has asked for feedback from the Local Areas on draft documents produced so far. Despite having copies of draft documents at the meeting the content proved difficult to understand (I'll admit that I didn't really understand it as Working Group Chair) and so the discussion soon turned to a much broader critique of the BMC.

The following unattributed points were made:

i) There is a perceived focus on climbers rather than hill-walkers with regard to the content of Summit magazine, the web-site and representation at Local Area meetings.

ii) It is acknowledged that it is a challenge to gain wider engagement with BMC members. It was also suggested that a number of people become BMC

members because they have to eg when registering for Mountain Training award schemes or for competition climbing. Whilst this itself presents no problems it could be difficult to engage these members who may have little understanding or current interest in the work of the BMC.

iii) That there is a perceived North West England bias to the work of the BMC.

iv) That the BMC should be doing more to promote participation in mountaineering, hillwalking and climbing (and as a consequence also benefiting the local economies of mountain regions within England and Wales). Elfyn Jones did at this point note that among the wording of the original purpose of the BMC is a line that refers to the organisation as 'not being for the promotion of mountaineering'. If this is the case shouldn't there be a wider scope to the purpose of the BMC?

v) That there should be more 'joined up thinking' with other national outdoor organisations ie Ramblers, Outdoor Partnership, National Trust. Many members belong (and pay membership) to a number of organisations who all do similar work.

vi) If Local Area groups feed back to the National Council on 'local matters' is anyone looking at a bigger (national) picture? Also, do Local Area groups ever look at and discuss issues outside of their own area. There are for example almost certainly more hillwalkers/climbers visiting Snowdonia than actually live there. What happens in 'an area' is therefore relevant to many more people than just those who live there.

vii) A thought was raised that the BMC website is too cluttered and busy to be effective as a source of information.

viii) Well published schemes which are clearly visibly connected to the BMC such as 'Mend our Mountains' are important in selling an understanding of what the BMC does. Such schemes should continue to be championed and more made of them.

ix) Corporate affiliations (retail discounts etc.) could be more of a distraction rather than offering any real value to members.

b) Ensuring effective delivery of BMC operations within Wales – With reference to the Organisational Review Group (ORG) report recommendation 25 ('The BMC should consider a clearly defined subgroup, or...a wholly-owned subsidiary for effective delivery of the BMC's operations and support in and for Wales')

The Mid-Wales working group has in previous meetings agreed with recommendation 25. Recent progress has seen a BMC working group set up with regard to implementing recommendation 25. The working group has asked for BMC members thoughts as to how the BMC's operations in Wales should be structured and work. The following unattributed points were made:

i) That to be effective the BMC needs to understand the nature and extent of devolved politics in Wales.

ii) That 'influence' within Wales should be what is sought to be achieved and that other outdoor organisations are working much better with Welsh Government than the BMC.

iii) That a presence (not necessarily full time) is required in Cardiff in order to engage properly with Welsh Government and other 'Welsh' organisations e.g. Natural Resources Wales.

iv) That an Officer for Wales is required to work across all areas of the BMC's work in Wales.

v) That there will be implications in the use of Sport England funding for operations in Wales and that alternative funding streams will need to be established.

vi) That post Brexit threats (purpose of low productivity agricultural land perhaps) will require different solutions within either England or Wales.

vii) That the BMC does require a Welsh language policy.

c) Huw Gilbert informed the meeting that in compliance with General Data Protection Regulations the chair of Local Area groups are not permitted to hold members personal data (including contact information). Email correspondence regarding Local Area issues can however be sent via the BMC offices. In order

to receive this members must complete the short form which can be found at bit.ly/bmc-areas

6. Access and Local Issues:

a) Myfyr Tomos informed the meeting that there is a proposal from Snowdonia National Park Authority to replace the planking that leads across the boggy ground on the southern approach to Aran Fawddwy. The new planking would probably be made from recycled farm plastic. An alternative is to re-route the path on the Rhyd y Main side of the ridge. In either case the rotting wooden planks currently there are to be removed. Views or suggestions on this can be made to SNPA via the BMC Mid-Wales Working Group chairman and will be an agenda item for the next BMC Mid-Wales Working Group meeting.

b) Elfyn Jones informed the meeting that an application has been made to SNPA to install a pipe line and hydro electric generator on the Afon Cynfal near Llan Ffestiniog. This would include installation of a 24 metre long steel gantry. The assembled meeting raised the concern that the upper gorge of Afon Cynfal is renowned for its isolation and scenic value. The proposed development may detract from both of those qualities. The ecological sensitivity of the gorge was also raised as a concern.

c) Elfyn Jones informed the meeting that the Snowdon Weather Information Project which will provide accessible real time weather information from the summit of Snowdon will go live in Spring 2019. The project is funded by the BMC Access and Conservation Trust.

d) Although not present at the meeting himself Dave Williams (Mid-Wales Access Volunteer) asked for the following information to be passed on to those at the meeting:

i) Ten or so redundant 1980s belay stakes above Craig Cnwch will be removed sometime during the coming winter in partnership with the Elan Ranger service.

ii) The Elynnydd guidebook has been selling well. It is supported by a website where further new route information is being collated <https://steepstoneclimbing.co.uk/>.

e) There is still an issue with all 'SY' postcodes receiving Midlands area email shots instead of being grouped with the Wales area. Huw Gilbert will identify which 'SY' postcodes are in Wales and pass on that information for correct grouping.

7. Matters Arising from local BMC affiliate clubs:

a) Myfyr Tomos informed the meeting that Clwb Mynydda Cymru are to have a stand at the National Eisteddfod to be held in Llanrwst in August 2019. Clwb Mynydda Cymru are already in discussion with the BMC about a BMC presence on the stand. A logical question rose from this as to whether the BMC should have a presence at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show? Natural Resources Wales, Farmers Union Wales, Sport Wales, National Trust etc all have stands at the show.

8. Any Other Business:

a) With inspiration from the previous meetings discussion on the proposed fixed gear anchor at Craig Cywarch Myfyr Tomos brought with him a map produced by SNPA showing Craig Cywarch listing the 'proper' names of all the crags and buttresses.

9. Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting was not fixed but it was unanimously decided that a greater 'attract item' is required to improve attendance of future meetings.