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Cyfarfod - BMC Cymru North/Gogledd - Meeting via ZOOM

26 May 2020

Minutes - Cofnodion

1. Croeso/Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the area's first on-line (Zoom) meeting, especially those attending their first area meeting, or joining the meeting from outside N. Wales. The chair introduced the BMC officials present:

Lynn Robinson (President)

Dave Turnbull (CEO)

James McHaffie (Youth and Equity Officer)

Elfyn Jones (Access and Conservation Officer for Wales)

Peter Salenieks (Chair of the Clubs Committee)

Chris Stone (Council Nominated Director) spoke about his role in developing the BMC's digital strategy and promoting 'Membership Engagement'. He ran a short polling exercise, with the following results:

36% of those joining this meeting had not previously attended a BMC area meeting;

50% of those joining this meeting were from Gwynedd;

14% of those joining this meeting came from outside N Wales.

For most of the meeting 47 members were on-line, including Tim Jepson TJ (Chair), Dan Lane (Area Rep, organising the Zoom support) and Steve Hobdell (Minute-taking)

The following members are recorded as having joined the meeting for the purposes of proving the presence of a quorum: Ann Vowles, Neal Hockley, Anthony Eccles, Glyn Davies, Ian Bryant, Will Miller, Andy Boorman, Martin Doyle, Myfyr Tomos, Tarquin Shipley

TJ asked contributors to be respectful and brief, in order that business could be concluded efficiently.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau

Mike Raine, Gareth Pierce, Gwyn Jones

3. Minutes/Cofnodion (The Beacon, 29/11/19)

Dave Turnbull confirmed that we should disregard the cancellation of the March meeting and continue with the rest of the scheduled meetings for 2020, as planned.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted without objection.

Proposer: Neal Hockley. Seconder: Anthony Eccles.

Matters Arising

- i. Outside speakers from the 'Partneriaeth Yr Wyddfa' and 'Cymdeithas Eryri' had been arranged for the March meeting. Invitations will be reissued for a future post-Covid meeting.
- ii. The Ordnance Survey has now removed from their website the suggestion that children could paint

stones and leave them in the environment to be found by others.

iii. EJ did take the three questions about the SNPA's Ground Conditions Reports to the next MountainSafe meeting, but he hasn't seen any updates. AV (MTC) and Snowdonia Active had also attended the meeting. The lack of a real winter and the Covid crisis have taken the focus off this issue; it needs to be followed up before winter 2020/2021. **Action EJ.**

4. BMC Covid 19 Response and Strategy

Chair's note: The BMC Covid response and strategy is fully documented on the BMC website, and it necessarily changes as new regulations and guidance are published, in both England and Wales.

EJ reported:

- a Covid Response Group, including legal and health experts, has been set up to consider, weekly, the BMC response and advice.
- in Wales, there is a legal duty on bodies such as Councils, NRW, and National Parks to put closure orders on anywhere which could become a focus for virus transmission. Hence the restrictions in Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire.
- anyone driving from England to Wales is subject to Welsh regulations
- there is a four-colour traffic light system in place in Wales to control the easing of restrictions. Not all sports and venues will ease at the same rate.
- when lobbying on behalf of walkers and climbers, the BMC needs to remember that it is a representative body, not a governing body
- advice has been issued to clubs with respect to huts and meets.
- return to full access to all hill and crag activities and venues will be a slow process.

DT reported:

- this has been the main focus of the BMC during lockdown.
- everyone working very hard (especially EJ in Wales), communicating via website, webinars, facebook q and a, etc. Feedback has been generally positive.
- some outdoor venues in England are now very busy, as climbing walls remain closed. Wales should expect similar issues when travel is permitted again.

PS reported:

- The Clubs Committee has been working hard to support clubs and huts. Grant aid has been available; some authorities have been very responsive, others not.
- working on a protocol for re-opening huts safely.

Ian Bryant believed that there should be no differentiation between types of climbing (eg Trad and Sport). Civil servants might be able to assess the transmission risk, but not the relative activity risks.

TJ questioned the notion that the restrictions on led groups might be eased before the restrictions on individuals. EJ felt this was very unlikely and in any case would not be supported by the BMC. AV, Chair MTCymru, confirmed that MTC's view co-incided with the BMC view.

The Chair thanked the BMC team for their hard work balancing and representing the varied, long-term interests of all hill-walkers and climbers in complex circumstances.

5. BMC Equity

JMcH presented the work of the BMC's Equity Steering Group, (ESG) which involves developing, enacting and monitoring a planned strategy for positive improvement in the areas of gender, disability, BAME, mental health and membership engagement. The success of this work has been recognised recently by the award of the Intermediate Level of the Equality Standard for Sport.

Members are encouraged to get involved with a range of targeted walks and events, to set up a club, develop resources, or come up with their own ideas which can then be supported by the Equity Steering Group

Goals for 3-5 year's time are:

- to have better membership understanding of the areas of work of the ESG,
- better data collection,
- growing engagement of volunteers,
- improved pathways and resources,

- more opportunities for under-represented groups to access the hills and crags.

Cressida Allwood, Chair of the ESG, introduced herself and expressed appreciation to the volunteers who were contributing to their work.

Peter Salenieks asked what was being done to mitigate the effects on mental health of the current pandemic. JmCH replied that he would be talking to the Mental Health sub-group to come up with ideas and a plan.

DT emphasised that the work of the ESG is funded through Sport England, but applies equally to England and Wales.

TJ congratulated the group on their work and for bringing the hills to a wider group of people.

6. The All-Wales group

Neal Hockley took over the chair of this group, which was considering what should happen in Wales as part of the Organisational Review. Having realised that agreeing a suitable resolution to present to the June AGM was no longer possible, a pragmatic decision was taken to create a Wales Committee (Pwyllgor Cymru) approved by the Board and the National Council. The first meeting of the Wales Committee will take place virtually on 27th May. The Terms of Reference are more or less finalised, and after an official launch, adverts will go out to recruit members with specific skills to complete the committee. Covid has forced some other parts of the ODG's recommendations to be delayed beyond June's AGM too. but at least the new Wales Committee can now make a start and ensure some progress in Wales.

7. Resolutions and other AGM matters.

1. The Chair asked the BMC officials present to summarise the progress of the various workstreams of the ODG, highlighting areas now complete, and areas having difficulty.

Lynn Robinson: Good progress had been made generally. We are looking at how the National Council can be more representative of the membership. Some matters, eg. elections, cannot happen virtually and will need to go forward to 2021. Fiona Sanders will give a presentation at June's AGM about the progress of the ODG

Dave Turnbull stated that the work on clubs was pretty much finished.

2. The Chair asked what the arrangements were for the June AGM and how the move to a virtual meeting would affect outcomes:

Lynn Robinson explained that the AGM weekend should have been a celebration of being in the hills, based at Plas y Brenin. An on-screen meeting would be a poor substitute. Members should have received invites; pre-registration was required; 3000 max. Civica will independently organise and verify voting on a limited set of resolutions to include the 2019 minutes, the 2019 report, the accounts and approval of appointment of some independent and nominated directors. There would also be a presentation of the volunteer awards. Further details of the AGM and voting procedures are on the relevant websites.

3. The Chair pointed out the two, 20-minute Q and A sessions scheduled as part of the AGM and asked if questions needed to be submitted prior to the meeting. LR said that Lucy Valero was organising this and would be in contact with the membership. DT pointed to a webinar scheduled for 4th June which would be another opportunity to ask questions of the Board. (Chair's note: This webinar was cancelled due to lack of registrations)

8. Wales access (EJ, Andy Boorman, Will Miller)

In addition to the Wales Government Covid restrictions:

- Great Orme – access on foot only. Marine Drive closed to traffic.
- Castle Inn. Rockfall, car-park closed. See RAD for details.
- Nesting may be more extensive this year due to lack of climbers, Mayfair Wall restriction extended to end of June (Chough and Peregrine)
- Castle Martin and St Govans closed. Briefings cancelled for Range West
- SNPA is being lobbied to open specific areas for walking and climbing, to allow locals to exercise within the national restrictions.
- as restrictions ease, all walkers and climbers will need to be low-key and sensible; mindful and respectful of the sensitivity felt by land and property owners when visitors start to return. Acting responsibly will minimise the chance of longer-term access problems.

Glyn Davies pointed out that, if you lived local to the slate quarries, Covid had not really altered access to the climbs, which is technically not allowed by First Hydro anyway, Ian Bryant asked if the SNPA had a review schedule in respect of their closure notices? EJ responded that the Park does discuss the closures regularly, but the BMC, although keen to influence the outcomes, can only do so indirectly. The Park is nervous about re-opening and Snowdon in particular could be closed for a long time. Re-opening will be in small steps to avoid mobbing of honey-pot areas.

9 Pumlumon Wind Turbines – Lluest y Gwynt

Huw Gilbert (Chair of BMC Mid-Wales outreach group) presented a summary of a 'scoping' report which considers the commercial installation of 24 large turbines at Pumlumon, the highest part of the Cambrian Mountains, between Aberystwyth and Llangurig. Huw also listed the concerns that such a project would have on the landscape, environment, heritage, archeology and economy of the area.

Huw asked the meeting to complete a Yes/No poll on whether the BMC should object to these proposals.

However, Elfyn Jones and Ray Wood pointed out that this was not actually a planning application, it was part of a very early stage consultation, which would take years to come to fruition, and only after lengthy environmental impact assessments and investigations. As such, they felt that a vote on whether to object or not was meaningless at this stage; the issues were too complex to put to a simple binary vote. Despite the obvious concerns, the BMC would have to carefully consider any objection with respect to its policies and the specific effects on hill-users. The BMC is not opposed to wind farm developments per se.

Steve Hobdell cited evidence that off-shore wind generation has net positive contributions, whereas on-shore has net negative contributions.

Lynn Robinson thought that it was too early to bring the issue to the National Council, but should be kept alive locally

In the light of the discussion, the Chair decided not to run the poll, but to:

1. Ask EJ to investigate further, in order that the BMC were well-placed to make an intervention as and when required. Also, that EJ brings the issue to the attention of the Access Management Group, in order that it can review the BMC upland development policy
2. Ask the Wales Committee to decide whether this was an appropriate topic for their future consideration.

9. Reps. Reports – Adroddiadau

These had been available in the form of a summary report, compiled by the Chair, prior to the meeting. The following additions were voiced during the meeting:

Lynn Robinson:

1. There is a Facebook Live session tomorrow discussing the opening of climbing walls.
2. Lynn is a member of a group looking at starting international sport climbing competitions again. But it will be at least 8 weeks after walls open before the final round of the Youth Competition can take place. Young athletes need time to build strength and flexibility.

The Chair noted the vacancy for a Clubs rep, a gap which needs to be urgently addressed. Peter Salenieks agreed and can offer a point of contact in the meantime.

10. Any Other Business - Unrhyw Fusnes Arall

1. Tarquin set a quiz to reward those who had stayed until the end of the meeting with the chance to win a BMC T-shirt. The winners were Myfyr Tomos and Peter Salenieks, Llongyfarchiadau!
2. The link to a short, Steve McClure video, exclusive to attendees, was shared.

The Chair was thanked by Dave Turnbull who then highlighted the financial difficulties that faced the BMC as a result of the Covid crisis and he urged everyone to renew their membership and to encourage others to join, as a way of mitigating the problems faced by us all.

11. Date of future meetings:

Mis Medi 1 September Local Area
Mis Tachwedd 3 November Local Area + Local AGM

The meeting closed at 9.00pm after two hours.