



## SOUTHWEST AREA ODINARY MEETING

Meeting held: **Online by Zoom**

On: **03/11/2020 at 7pm**

**Attendance (via Zoom):** Mark Kemball, Simon Wooster, Helen Wilson, Philip Wilson, Mark Courtier, James Mann, Veronica Cooperman, Rik Meek, Adam Lowe, Barry Donovan, Charlotte Rivers, Colin Knowles, Dave Turrell, Dave Hillebrandt, Ian Lee, James Evans, John Booth, Charlotte Rivers, Jonny Dry, Joshua Stewart, Matthew Bowell, Nigel Barry, Paul Roberts, Peter Greening, Rick Swards, Robert Lewington, Steve Henderson, Tim Meehan, Tony Bird, Grant Edwards, Ian Butterworth, Rick Swards, Steve Menadue, Mark Courtier, Mark Harrison, Alan Dovey, & Tori Taylor-Roberts.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence:** The co-opted chair Mark Kemball opened the meeting. The co-opted secretary Philip Wilson took the minutes. No apologies for absence were received.

**Quorum & Conflicts of Interest:** It was noted that a quorum was present in accordance with [Article 28.6.1 of the British Mountaineering Council's articles of association (the "Articles")]. No conflicts of interest were raised.

2. **Minutes Previous Meeting (held on the 27.08.2020):** The minutes for the meeting held on the 27.08.2020 were signed off as present and correct by Mark Kemball.

3. **Actions from the Previous Meeting (held on the 27.08.2020):**

4. **Matters Arising Not Covered Elsewhere:** None were raised.

5. **SW AGM Election of Chair & Secretary & Existing Post Confirmations (see separate AGM minutes for full details):** The changes in people were:

- a) Mark Kemball was elected as SW Area Chair & Alan Dovey was elected as SW Area Secretary.
- b) Rick Swards is to stand down as our Wye Valley rep in December 2020 and proposed Hulio Sanchez a Chepstow resident as the new rep. No objections to this were raised. Colin Knowles thanked Rick on behalf of the meeting for his tireless work in this post for a long time, in which he has successfully covered many tricky local access issues on behalf of the BMC with great diplomacy and tact.

6. **Approval / Feedback of The Following BMC Mission Statement (that has been developed as part of the strategic plan review):** 'Create an organisation that links the work of all our staff, volunteers and partners; so that we can campaign effectively, drive our engagement, and become a stronger voice in representing the interests of climbers, hillwalkers and mountaineers.'

Jonny Dry outlined how the statement was arrived at, explaining that it was based on and derived from the 'BMC Values' strategy document. It was noted that this statement (compared to the old) one was quite a strengthening of the BMC Mission Statement, towards speaking with one voice to both internal and external audiences. He also emphasised that the purpose of

releasing it was to enable consultation with the different BMC regions and that it is work in progress. A debate followed. It was thought by some that it is vague and perhaps needs to be more specific as to who our main partners, members and external audiences are. Jonny thanked everyone for their comments and agreed to take these back.

**7. BMC Board, Organisational Development Group & General Update: Helen summarised as follows:**

- a) Apologies over the lateness of the minutes.
- b) 2 Directors appointed to the board from National Council Carl Spenser (Northwest region) and Peter Salieniaks (South Wales region).

**Local Issues:**

**8. South Devon Fixed Gear Policy Discussion for Ansteys Cove:**

The meeting reviewed the 'Ansteys-Cove-Bolting-Proposal-Nov\_2020.pdf' document authored by Tori Taylor Roberts. A copy of this can be found on the BMC Community Site page for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2020 meeting (<https://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?view=report&id=4237>). In debate the following comments were noted:

- a) We need to engage with all active participants not just sport or trad climbers. We do not want a retro-bolting free for all of trad routes
- b) Re-Equipping Sports Routes: With lower offs and existing bolts on sports climbs is uncontentious and broadly accepted by everyone at the meeting.
- c) Retro Bolting: Turning a trad route into a sports route by placing bolts and lower offs must have the 1st ascentionists approval before retro bolting. If the first ascentionist is deceased or unavailable to take a view, then a consensus needs to be reached. The BMC South West Area meetings would seem a good forum for this.
- d) Retro Bolting: We do not want a retro-bolting free for all of trad routes, or bolts placed on adjacent routes too near to them.
- e) Small Change Wall & Moonshot Are should remain as trad sectors (full meeting agreement for this by all parties).

**Specific Proposal to Bolt St Gregorys The Wonder Worker (1st pitch only):**

- f) Debate then centred around this near completely unprotected pitch where the first ascentionist Pete Biven is deceased and cannot therefore give his approval for this to happen or not.
- g) Pat Littlejohn suggested by email that this could be bolted as it is not a line of strong historic interest and gave his blessing for this to happen.
- h) In trad form it is a good introduction to mountaineering requiring good judgement calls when ascending e.g. operating in a no fall zone. Why compromise the route by bolting / will spoil this experience.
- i) Already compromised by the adjacent sports route Sunshine.
- j) Even if bolted can be climbed as a trad route solo (albeit with reduced commitment)
- k) Would be good to have 2 easy sports routes side by side (a rarity at Ansteys Cove).

**The Way Forward:** It was agreed a vote should be taken at the next southwest area meeting to agree this proposal. This will give all parties time to reflect on matters and would give due notice to anyone wanting to attend this meeting to vote. This was agreed with a show of hands as follows:

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56% in favour of the proposal, 15% against the proposal and 4% not sure (Zoom poll vote). Anyone wanting to attend the meeting to vote or air any comments can contact the British Mountaineering Council, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB Tel: 0161 445 6111; Email: office@thebmc.co.uk.

#### **9. Culm Pegs:**

Mark Kemball the Culm Guide book author re-iterated that no drilled fixed gear is allowed, but pegs can be used on new routes (it is suggested that the first ascensionist document their placements and type of peg used in the route description(s), with an option to then remove them after the first ascent. This is because pegs corrode and degrade quickly in this sea crag environment. Those wishing to repeat the route can then replace these, ascend the route and remove them after their ascent. He noted that some pegs were in an awful state on some lower medium grade popular routes and should / could be replaced by any willing parties.

**10. Offensive Route Names Chudleigh:** 'Wogs' to be renamed as 'Jollies Route' in honour of the probable Royal marines 1st ascensionists. Proposed and seconded by James Mann & Simon Wooster and agreed unanimously. Rockfax to be informed. As an aside 'Tar Baby' is to be renamed as 'Briar Patch' with 1st ascensionists approval. It was agreed that this meeting should be the forum for resolving such matters in the future on a case by case basis.

**11. Rubbish & Littering Southwest Progress Report:** Tony Bird highlighted that he had helped organise these (Dartmoor & North Devon) using the Hills to Oceans branded bags. He added that progress was more difficult due to Covid 19 restrictions (limited to groups of 6 people only). Charlotte Rivers and John Booth have also organised this in Lulworth Cove area with their Adventure Club. Helen Wilson highlighted that free Hills to Oceans litter sacks were available from the BMC (although Tony Bird also has a supply). David Hillebrandt also said that he was happy to advise on 'poo' matters.

#### **12. Reports from Area Representatives & Access Issues:**

- a) Cheddar: Cheddar caves & Gorge is effectively closing down and only 2 staff remained. He stated that it is crucial that abide by our access agreements to maintain access. Ash dieback is also causing issues with most ash trees growing on limestone cliffs now affected. He highlighted that affected trees are hard to identify, especially in winter with leaf loss. Climbers should beware of belaying and abseiling from ash trees and treat all as diseased even if they look ok. James Mann offered to help with a short educational film. Tony Bird highlighted that the Woodlands Trust web site contained useful information on how to recognise this tree disease. Rick Swards reported dead Ash trees at the top of north wall that will compromise abseil descents.
- b) Wintours Leap: Some fixed gear on belays (cemented in pegs) here needs replacing. Some may be replaced with bolts if no alternative options are available.
- c) Avon Gorge: Consulting Botanist Libby Houston reports that in recent years persistent damage has been caused to trees and other vegetation in a plumb line above Fir Tree slab in the Avon Gorge. The damage to these trees, which includes a type of rare whitebeam unique to the Avon Gorge, is of course illegal in the Avon Gorge SSSI. Bristol City Council had posted notices this summer at the base of the cliff and at the top, but these three notices were removed. Very recently (18th October) new damage has been reported by Martin Crocker, including a further assault on the rare whitebeam. It is clear that this is persistent and

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deliberate behaviour by the culprit, so all climbers are requested to be vigilant when climbing in this area and if observing any concerning behaviour, remain mindful of their own personal safety, gather what evidence they can of these behaviours and report them to the BMC Access Rep Simon Fletcher (fletch73@msn.com 07795 217847) and Bristol City Council Downs Manager Ben Skuse (ben.skuse@bristol.gov.uk 07557 202844).

- d) Youth: No points raised The YCS competition for 2021 is planned to go ahead in the autumn. Julian Wills has reported that a number of youths from last year's youth meet at the Count House are now climbing together outside regularly.
- e) Climbing Walls: No points raised.
- f) Hillwalking: No Points raised.
- g) Clubs: Mark Kemball reported that the Clubs Rep Martin Corfield (not present) had emailed all clubs in the southwest asking for feedback. Only 2 responded to. Charlotte Rivers also offered to help with engaging clubs.

**13. Any Other Business:** None Reported.

**14. Date, Time & Location (next area meeting):** This will probably be by Zoom and a date and time will be circulated in due course.