



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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North West Area ORDINARY MEETING

Meeting held online via Zoom
On Monday 9th Nov 2020 at 19:00

Minutes

Attendance (29 signed in): Les Ainsworth (Lancs Access Rep), Mike Appleton, Stephen Benson, Bill Beveridge (NC Rep), Paula Brough-Heinzmann, James Buckley, Andy Cairns (CC / FRCC), Jonathan Carter, Steve Charles (Area Hillwalking Rep), Paul Evans (Area Secretary, KMC), Nick Galpin, Joe Green, Tim Greenhalgh, Andy Holland, Stuart Holmes (Area Youth and Walls Rep), Anthony Jackson, Paul Justin, Colin Knowles, Dominic Oughton (Area Clubs Coordinator, Rucksack Club), Emily Pitts (Area Chair, KMC), Steve Riley, Fiona Sanders (Lakes Area and Board Member), Roberta Spagnul, Carl Spencer (NC rep and CND), Wendy Stirrup, David Symonds, Richard Toon, Gareth Williams, Jemma Wolstencroft.

1. Welcome, quorum, apologies for absence

The chair Emily Pitts opened the meeting. A quorum was present in accordance with Article 28.6.1 of the British Mountaineering Council's articles of association. Apologies were received from Mark Hounslea and Dave Robinson.

2. Minutes & Actions from the previous meeting held on 18/05/20

The minutes from the previous meeting on 8th Sept 2020, were approved without amendment.

3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

Emily Pitts stated that it was likely that online meetings would continue for some time; at the next area meeting, we will trial opening the meeting at 19:00 but not starting the formal business until 19:15, so that members have some time for general / social chat.

Les Ainsworth asked why there was no BMC staff member present at the meeting. Suspect likely due to furlough staff shortages. Fiona clarified that she, Colin Knowles and Carl Spencer were able to represent the Board. PE to check with Tony Ryan, so that we can have a Board member and staff member at future meetings.

As he was only available for the first part of the meeting, Emily Pitts invited Colin Knowles to update members on his role and latest developments. Colin has extensive background in UK competition climbing, and has recently joined the board in a temporary advisory capacity. The BMC has submitted a bid to UK Sport for funding for elite level competition climbing. The money is for staffing and performance / coaching / event support. The BMC will continue to contribute around £170k but the funding bid is for 8 times that amount. Nick Colton, Zoe Spriggins, Rab Carrington and Paul Drew are all working in this area. Les Ainsworth questioned whether this was England only or UK wide; Colin confirmed that this was a "whole UK" activity.

The normal area meeting business was then suspended while the area AGM took place – see separate minutes.

Emily Pitts has an outstanding action to complete re an equity survey ‘What more do members feel the BMC could be doing on equity?’ – this would be scheduled before the next meeting.

Emily Pitts said that we would like a volunteer (perhaps 1 hr effort per week) to update RAD for NW crags. One meeting attendee may be able to help – discuss offline.

4. **BMC Response to COVID-19, coming out of lockdown.**

Emily Pitts summarised the latest BMC advice on lockdown for local climbers and clubs. There remain very low levels of Covid related access issues in the North West.

5. **Area reps reports**

5.1. Access – several topics were covered under this heading –

- Les Ainsworth gave an update on Lancs access issues; access negotiations are continuing at Lower Montcliffe, Les has a proposed solution involving loweroffs, and asked climbers to stay away for now. Stuart said that he has large numbers of loweroffs which could be used. An incorrect land sales plan had caused alarm as it appeared to show Wilton quarries for sale, this was an error and has now been corrected. Les reported that the season at Hoghton had now ended but that he was hoping to agree access for a cleanup in Feb next year. He will notify EP when a date is agreed for this so that it can be advertised. One of the parking laybys for Craig Y Longridge has been blocked, please use others. Relations with the owners of nearby houses are good. Relations with householders near Troy are likewise good. There was discussion about the belay bolts at Troy, which are in flat rock and being expansion bolts may be at risk of corrosion. Action - SH will inspect and consider use of resin where bolts look suspect. , particularly Troy, Relations with the owner at Winewall are good.
- There was some discussion about the Wilton Management Group. Carl Spencer said that the BMC Governance Working Group were reviewing BMC specialist committees, of which the WMG is one. Carl has asked to attend a WMG meeting as an observer, as there were covid issues around climbers access to BMC owned crags. He wanted to understand who was in the group and what it was doing. CS reported that this request has not so far happened. CS said that we needed a written report from the WMG as to what they are doing, who is in the group, what issues and risks they are dealing with, Stuart asked what the scope of WMG was – Wilton 1, or all of them. Les replied that it only really focused on W1. Note that W1 is a BMC owned crag with formal responsibility being vested in the Land Management Group. Emily asked what the responsibilities of the WMG were? Les stated that they were basically an advisory group of local activists who were not necessarily BMC members. Les has the initial articles for setup of the group. PE and EP will work with CS and LA to gain more clarity.
- Paul Evans said there were no issues noted in Cheshire. One of the attendees (sorry I did not get a name) reported that local climbers had been asked to seek permission from the owners before climbing at Manley Knoll. More work needed as we don't have contact details for the owners.

5.2. Dominic Oughton reported that progress continued on rolling out the clubs strategy working with NW based clubs. A second online meeting of local clubs has been arranged for 30th Nov. Dominic pointed out that the BMC clubs committee and huts committee had provided much valuable input to clubs and their members in terms of re-opening club huts and restarting meets. Dom urged clubs to contact him if they wanted to be featured on BMC NW page, and for individuals to

contact the BMC if they wish to be a nominated club contact for their club. Finally Dom urged members to purchase the 2021 Rucksack club calendar which this year is supporting the charity Urban Uprising. Stuart Holmes asked whether there was a master list of clubs and other groups on the NW area facebook page. Dom will investigate. Stuart asked whether all groups featured needed to be BMC affiliated – believe they do.

5.3. Steve Charles reported he had sent through a video for the BMC FB page. We are intending to show this. With ongoing restrictions and a second lockdown, it is still the case that there is no progress on re-arranging hillwalking conservation projects, and since the previous meeting Steve has still been unable to reach key contacts he had made, e.g. NT staff and rangers. This continues to be a concern. Steve will continue to monitor the situation and does intend to restart work on conservation projects when matters improve. With the funding challenges likely to intensify after the pandemic, volunteers doing work is going to become even more important. Steve asked anyone interested in the area to get in touch with him. - due to many staff having been furloughed. He was continuing to monitor the situation and remained keen to organise some upland conservation projects for the area as soon as circumstances allow. He urged members to support the “no moor barbecues” campaign. Finally Steve urged members to vote for Cath Flitcroft and her “no moor barbecues” campaign in the TGO awards. Tony Jackson asked whether clubs posting walks or other suggestions on their websites, might create a third party liability issue. Tony has already asked Jane Thompson this question, so we will track any response.

5.4. Stuart Holmes reported on that walls are now closed, Preston Westview may be closing permanently, although there is a potential buyer. New walls are opening in East Manchester (blochouse) and Oldham. There are proposals to run the YCS next year, but this will be dependent on how the pandemic is progressing.

5.5. Roberta Spagnul gave a presentation on her latest analysis on area facebook posts, which has now reached 3 quarters worth of data and has started to pull in data on emails from the BMC to members. Area social media reach continues to improve, we are learning more about the people we are reaching and what topics get the most interest. Our demographic split is very similar to the overall BMC demographic. We need to both continue to play to our existing audience’s interests, but also seek new audiences to broaden our member base. Emily said that she had met with Joe Green & Dominic and discussed how we align our posts with the BMC objectives. Stuart asked whether we knew what social media channels our different member types used? Fiona responded that Alex Messenger has very detailed mapping of which social media channels are used by which demographics, and often advises which channel(s) would be most appropriate for a given target demographic.

6. **NW Events Calendar 2020**

Nothing to report. We will continue to arrange online events while the lockdown continues, and are very keen to restart physical meetings in the real world as soon as restrictions are relaxed sufficiently to allow this.

7. Feedback from National Council (NC) meetings

Carl Spencer (NW area NC Rep) on the 19th Sept meeting, NC reviewed the GWG (Governance Working Group) reports, which had been out for review including inviting views from members. These covered the proposed changes from National Council to Members Council and also the work around the Specialist Committees. They will be reviewed at the next meeting and also at a second “open forum” event, after which the changes are planned to be implemented at the next BMC National AGM – pencilled in for mid May 2021. Other topics discussed included staff returning from furlough, director resignations, preparation for the Board open forum, funding for CCTBG, MHT funding issues, the re-election of Andy Syme as Deputy President and the election of two replacement council nominated directors, who are Carl himself and Peter Saleniaks. Carl noted that Bill was involved in one of the recent investigations and is also now a member of the Finance and Audit Committee.

Paul presented the main points of a paper from Alex Messengers group, which contained a number of initiatives and news items.

Fiona mentioned that Chris Stone was leading a group looking at consolidating systems which support volunteers.

Fiona presented the recent BMC mission statement. As this is a “reserved topic” it requires presentation to, and debate by the members. There was an extensive discussion on this, leading to a lot of feedback being provided both verbally and via Zoom chat. Paul took an action to capture all these points and feed them through to Fiona and Carl for a meeting the following day. This has now been completed, and the document is available for any members who wish to view it.

Finally Carl provided a brief summary of the recent “open forum”. This had provided an (online) opportunity for members who were concerned by recent board resignations and related matters to discuss them with the board directly. There had been robust discussion but the meeting was held to have been generally positive and there are proposals to repeat it in January.

8. Any other business

- 8.1. Roberta said that when appealing for volunteers, it might be more productive to ask for volunteers to do a task rather than to take on a role. It might provide an easier, more understandable and gentler “way in”. Also we need to advertise roles much more widely than in minutes and on facebook. Can we break down volunteer roles into tasks to make them seem less onerous? Can we
- 8.2. Les raised 2 points on guidebooks – firstly he, Dave Cronshaw and Gordon Mason had produced a “lancs recent developments” guide which will be available soon for a small charge. Secondly Les questioned what was happening going forward with the BMCs involvement in guidebooks; he had heard statements that this was ceasing. Les has been trying to get clarity but has had conflicting views. He is particularly concerned about the future of the Lancs definitives. There is a group of local Lancs volunteers who wish to produce future Lancs definitive regardless of the BMC decision. Carl said that he will investigate, including consideration of topics of copyright. Stuart asked for the area to get an update on this topic (including costs and income), and Fiona asked that this is discussed at National Council
- 8.3. Emily Pitts congratulated Carl on being appointed as Council Nominated Director.

9. **Date of next Area Meeting**

The scheduled date of the next area meeting is xxxxx.