



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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North West Area ORDINARY MEETING

Meeting held online via Zoom
On Tuesday 2nd March 2021 at 19:00

Minutes

Attendance (23 signed in): Les Ainsworth (Lancs Access Rep), Bill Beveridge (NC Rep), Bernie Bradbury, Andy Cairns (CC / FRCC), Steve Charles (Area Hillwalking Rep), Andrew Crompton, Richard Duerden, Roger Dyke, Paul Evans (Area Secretary, KMC), Catherine Flitcroft, John Glynn, Tim Greenhalgh, Andy Holland, Stuart Holmes (Area Youth and Walls Rep), Ed Jones, Alistair Loasby, David Lyon, Dudley Pritchard, Steve Riley, Carl Spencer (NC rep and CND), Wendy Stirrup, Ian Thompson, Richard Toon.

1. Welcome, quorum, apologies for absence

Paul Evans 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, Dominic Oughton, Emily Pitts, Dave Robinson and Roberta Spagnul, Paul explained that as Emily Pitts was unable to attend, he would chair the meeting. As the meeting was being recorded via Zoom, he would be able to write minutes from the Zoom recording.

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

The minutes from the previous meeting on 9th Nov 2020, were approved without amendment.

3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

None noted.

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

Paul Evans summarised the latest BMC advice on lockdown for local members – this can be seen on Rob Dyer's website article dated 23/02 - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/how-does-englands-roadmap-for-easing-covid-restrictions-affect-climbers-and-walkers> . There are no known Covid related access issues in the North West. A number of questions and comments were raised –

- Stuart Holmes commented that there had been groups of climbers congregating in Wilton One. PE to schedule a message on BMC NW area facebook page to remind local climbers to follow restrictions.
- Andy Cairns noted the apparent conflict between the opening of self catering accommodation for family groups on the 12th April and the continuing advice to “stay local”. Andy Holland suggested that travel “out of local area” seemed to be legal in certain circumstances, but people were being advised or requested to stay local. PE to seek clarification from Rob Dyer.
- Update – Rob Dyer responded to confirm that this was unclear in the current published government “roadmap” document. He was hoping it would be clarified when the detailed guidance

and regulations for “step 2” – the 12th April step – were published, and this is one of the questions the BMC is pushing for an answer to. However based on previous experience he is not optimistic, and it is possible that interpretation of guidance and regulations will be left to individual police officers judgement.

5. Area reps reports

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

Les Ainsworth gave an update on Lancs access issues –

- Lockdown has delayed the planned tree planting at Wilton1, which will now take place in Oct / Nov.
- Wilton 3 there are negotiations ongoing as regards fencing (also see AOB)
- Egerton – lots of cleaning has taken place in grooved wall area and lower empty quarter (also see AOB)
- Negotiations re Montcliffe continue – please avoid for now.
- There has been some cleaning at Denham
- Hoghton – Les will shortly write his annual letter to the estate. We need alternative arrangements re the padlock
- Cadshaw – the planned access work has been delayed by lockdown
- Troy – Stuart to review bolts as per previous discussion.
- Pinfold – route 1 (Acid Test) is in a very dangerous state – post on NW Area Facebook and UKC.
- Deeply Vale – cleanup needed.
- CyL – new fencing has been installed. The layby has had some boulders dumped in part of it by the landowner, but there is still plenty of room for parking.
- Warton has now entered its bird ban closed season
- Silverdale crags have had some new 30 ft sport routes put up. Les is arranging a meeting re access – again please avoid until further notice.

On guidebooks, Les reported that work continued on the Lancs section of Wired Northern Rock. Les also has copies spare of “Lancs Further Developments 2020” after resolving his issues with paypal.

Paul Evans gave a brief report on Cheshire on behalf of Mark Hounslea. Members may have seen reports on social media of climbing on the sandstone walls of the deconsecrated graveyard of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. This would be a worthwhile venue if access can be agreed, but negotiations are ongoing and difficult – local climbers are asked to avoid the venue for now.

5.2. Paul Evans presented an update from Dominic Oughton of NW clubs news. The clubs committee has produced 4 sets of goals for 2021, which are described in the slide. Further detail will be provided during the year. A third online meeting of local clubs has been arranged for 8th March. The Liverpool based Anabasis club has ceased operating, and members have been offered membership of the Rucksack club. The BMC has extended its offer of hosting for virtual club AGMs to June 2021. Andy Cairns commented that the Climbers Club had used this for their recent AGM and found it very helpful.

Clubs are urged to contact Dom 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.

On the topic of clubs restarting meets, Paul Evans reported that he had spoken to Jane Thompson (BMC clubs rep) earlier that day. The government guidance issued last week does seem to allow clubs to organise meets of up to 30 people from 29th March. Jane has advised that

she needs to see detailed guidance (not yet produced) from the DCMS and Sport England. In particular, if they do confirm that club meets of up to 30 are allowed, it is currently unclear how much travel would be either recommended or permitted for members attending meets.

5.3. Steve Charles reported significant developments on local conservation projects. He had managed to contact Nick Taylor, the NT ranger for Holcombe Moor, a central urban moor in the NW area. Steve met Nick last Sunday, did some moss planting and discussed opportunities for joint working. There has been extensive regeneration work happening on Holcombe moor, including flattening of peat hags; there is much work still to do. Steve showed pictures of the gully blocking and sphagnum moss planting work. Nick is very keen to work with BMC volunteers – he appreciates our abilities to operate safely in wild landscapes. There is more moss planting, footpath repair, drystone wall repair etc work to be done. Steve reported that there may be an opportunity for further moss planting under the rule of 6 at the very end of March or early April – he would keep us informed. Steve finished with a summary of the events planned this year by himself and Dave Robinson, all of which were clearly dependant on government restrictions. Bill Beveridge suggested that the NT on Holcombe Moor could improve comms with the community, as most locals had no idea what the diggers were doing on the moor. Paul suggested that Steve write a brief article with the images for the NW area Facebook page to raise general awareness amongst members as to the great conservation work happening in the NW.

5.4. Stuart Holmes reported that it is hoped to start the YCS in Sept this year, but this is obviously dependent on good progress being made on the pandemic. Continue to monitor. New walls are opening in East Manchester (Blochouse) – snippets still emerging on social media - and Oldham – where the build is planned to start in 1-2 months. There is also a big extension being developed at Depot Manchester. Stuart reported that the ABC had done a lot of posters for covid safety in climbing walls. Richard Emerson who does a lot of work for the ABC is proposing a “work out to help out” scheme for climbing walls as the lockdown eases. Carl Spencer commented on the Walls committee presentation to NC last year. Also at the next BMC AGM, there will be 4 nationally elected council reps, for hillwalking, mountaineering, rock climbing and walls.

5.5. Roberta Spagnul was not able to attend the meeting, so the social media analysis will be presented at the next scheduled meeting.

6. NW Events Calendar 2020

Tim Greenhalgh reported that the next Wiltonfest is scheduled for 4th Sept 2021. We also need a cleanup at Deeply Vale, and there are several hillwalking events to be scheduled during 2021. Paul Evans asked Les to check with the Wilton management group whether there is work needed in Wilton 1 which the wider membership can assist with. Tim commented that he had been adding bird nesting notices to Wilton one recently. There are plans to remove Himalayan Balsam and Japanese knotweed. Understood that Rob Dyer is involved / aware, Paul requested Les to keep Rob in the loop.

7. BMC Climate Project

Cath Flitcroft attended to give an update on the BMC Climate project – this covered not only what the BMC is doing as an organisation, including support of peat bog restoration in the UK, both financially and in terms of volunteer support. Cath also discussed what the BMC is proposing in terms of influencing members on climate issues, for example on low carbon travel, lift sharing and recycling. This was received with much interest by the attendees, and significant discussion followed. Les asked how things had gone with the No Moors Barbecues campaign. Brexit and Covid had interrupted progress with MPs, but alternatives were being considered. Paul Evans said he would distribute Cath's slides more widely. Stuart and Les asked about guidebook printing. Paul Evans reported that

the last Peak Gritstone guide was printed by Cambrian in Wales on FSC paper. John Glynn commented that having meetings in this format was obviously very good for the climate, as well as saving travel time. Paul commented that online meetings had created a noticeable and welcome trend for new faces to turn up who might not have been able to travel to a physical meeting. In the future it may be we restrict physical meets to occasions where we have to be present, for example crag clean-ups or moorland restoration. Les suggested that another option for online meetings might be to make them “topic related” where more in-depth conversation can take place. Steve Charles suggested that this could be done via “zoom rooms”. Cath asked whether training for area volunteers in topics such as “hybrid meetings” might help. Paul commented that Chris Stone is intending to pilot this, and it would be good to review this following Chris’s pilots. Carl Spencer said that once the current BMC focus on governance completes, area meetings may be re-invigorated.

Cath asked what the meeting thought about the BMC going “stronger and harder” on climate action. There were several members present who thought that the BMC should take more of a lead, not just in encouraging / educating members but also the wider outdoor industry. The BMC is setting up a sustainable transport working group. Cath volunteered to return to the meeting for future updates and discussions, perhaps annually.

8. Feedback from National Council (NC) meetings

Carl Spencer (NW area NC Rep and CND) reported that there had been around 10 extensive NC regular and ad-hoc meetings in the last 3 months, and a similar number of Board meetings, to complete the organisational changes which had been ongoing for the past 3 years. This work is planned to complete with the next set of changes to the articles which are planned for the AGM. Dave Turnbull had moved from the CEO role to the ACES (access, conservation, environmental and sustainability) role. Paul Davies has been appointed to the interim CEO role. Paul Drew has been elected to be interim chair of the board until next AGM. Carl and Pete Salenieks have been appointed as Council Nominated Directors. In the last few weeks 3 new independent directors, all female, have been appointed. A complete review of technical committees has been completed and has reported to NC and Board. A small working group has reviewed at NomCom and recent related controversies. Board has recruited a part time (1 day / week) financial officer. Also planning to recruit a performance director for elite competitions. BMC is also helping out with MHT.

There have been 3 open forums which have been very helpful, and have avoided area meetings being swamped with ODG / governance issues.

4 new national NC roles will shortly be advertised – Bill advised that they are with Tony Ryan for issue.

Steve Riley asked whether there was any update on the BMC and guidebooks. Carl and Paul both gave their views of status - basically proposals are still under review.

The BMC finances are under review. Staff have been re-furloughed on Fridays.

9. Any other business

Tim Greenhalgh asked a couple of detailed questions about Egerton. He had also been working in Wilton 4 and had questions for Les about the age of some fixed gear. Tim also said that he was intending to repair the stile and reposition the sign in Wilton 3.

10. Date of next Area Meeting

The scheduled date of the next area meeting is Monday 26th April 2021, to be held via Zoom.