



# Chair's Annual Report

London & South East Area AGM

19th October 2021

I ended the 2020 report with 'let's make 2021 the best year ever'. I of course did not know at time of writing that a complete lockdown would be imposed over Christmas followed by tight restrictions for half of 2021. Whilst COVID remains a threat which must not be underestimated it is great to see life returning back to "normal" and I am delighted after 18 months to be able to see you all in-person again. As restrictions eased it was great that events could start operating again including the London Mountain Film Festival, a first aid course for club members and the restart of the Youth Climbing Series. On a national level the British Bouldering Championships were able to take place and of course not forgetting the debut of competition climbing at the Olympics.

Whilst this year has continued to have many challenges there have also been lots of positive things happening within the BMC, particularly at an organisational level. At the May AGM the National Council evolved into the Members' Council following the approval of the Terms of Reference. Members' Council which as well as the area representatives now includes four Nationally Elected Councillors, two elected Constituency Councillors and six Specialist Councillors has a clearer set of objectives and all councillors have been working hard to ensure these are met whilst continuing to always represent the best interests of members.

Whilst restrictions continued to be in place and then more so as they started to lift there was never a dull moment for our local access reps who worked tirelessly to protect Southern Sandstone including the two BMC owned crags of Harrison's Rocks and Stone Farm Rocks. I want to thank the members of the Harrison's Rocks Management Group; Daimon Beail, Mark Brewster, Sarah Cullen, Emma Harrington, Bob Moulton, Adrian Paisey, Michael Phelan and Tim Skinner supported by Rob Dyer the BMC Access & Conservation Officer as well as Graham Adcock of the Sandstone Volunteers Group for all the work they do including conservation work to the crag and surrounding landscape, bolt replacement and educating those who climb there on the Code of Practice. I would also like to acknowledge the swift action taken by members of this group to remove the wires and publish updated belay setup information following a recent review of the way the anchors were used on Southern Sandstone.

After chairing the Harrison's Rocks Management Group for over 5 years, Sarah Cullen stepped down earlier this year and Adrian Paisey, a long-standing member of HRMG was appointed as the new chair. I would like to thank Sarah for all her hard work and dedication to Southern Sandstone and for her work chairing the committee.

Clubs are very much at the heart of the BMC. Unfortunately, Tim Croker your Area Clubs Co-ordinator is stepping down from the role and I would like to thank him for all the work he has done over the past two years in bringing clubs in the area together and continuing to improve the communication links between local clubs as well as organising the first Club Networking event.

There are many affiliated clubs situated in the London & South East Area and I would also like to acknowledge the work carried out by hundreds of volunteer club officers, without whom it would not be possible for clubs to operate.



Due to restrictions, it has been difficult to organise in person events but I know Fabrizio Scaglione has plans for more walks next year including one with our good friends at the Chilterns Conservation Board. As well as sitting on the Hill Walking Group and representing the interests of hill walkers at a national level, earlier this year Fabrizio was interviewed by Niall Grimes for the *Wild Horizons* podcast series speaking about the wonderful South Downs Way. I highly recommend you go and check it out! Due to moving out of the area, Tom Bennett is stepping down as our second hill walking rep. I would like to thank Tom for his work and wish him all the very best.

As I said at the start, it is fantastic that following its suspension last year the Youth Climbing Series has restarted with rounds taking place in London, Milton Keynes, Norwich and Southampton. A massive thank you to Tanya Sage and the other Area Youth Climbing Series Co-ordinators, without which the competition would not be able to take place. Thanks, must also go to all the volunteers that support the competition days registering competitors, belaying and judging.

As you will gather, running an area takes a team and I am incredibly grateful to Robert Dufton for everything he has done both as area secretary and as one of your Members' Council reps. Robert has also continued to provide his invaluable expertise to support the Nominations Committee as well as other Specialist Committees and task and finish groups.

Although I have singled out some volunteers there are hundreds that support the organisation and they all should be recognised for their dedication and support to make the BMC what it is ensuring representing the members is at the heart of it.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the hard work and dedication of the BMC staff and to thank them for everything they have done. The past two years have been very tough but throughout the pandemic BMC staff have worked incredibly hard to ensure that as far as possible the services of the BMC remain unaffected.

On Facebook we currently have 1,170 likes, up 7% putting us in 7<sup>th</sup> place out of the other BMC area pages.

Finally, I can't end without saying thank you to you, for being members and supporting the BMC. The BMC is only as strong as its members and by supporting the BMC you are ensuring it has a loud voice when it comes to representing your interests whether you are a hill walker, climber or mountaineer.

**Chris Stone**  
*October 2021*