

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA MEETING

held at the Alpine Club, 55 Charlotte Street, London EC2 and online on Tuesday 19 October 2021 at 19.45 following the AGM

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Chaired Chris Stone (CS) Minutes taken by Robert Dufton (RD)

Apologies – Tim Crocker and Ria Tibawi

CS welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Total attendance was 35 (24 people present in person and 11 people online).

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 July 2021

The minutes of the meeting on 14 July 2021 were approved (Y9, A7, N0, NVM 0).

3. Update from Southern Sandstone

Adrian Paisley, Chair Harrison's Rocks Management Group, reported on recent open meeting (report available on the area section of the BMC website - <https://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?view=report&id=4287>).

- Looking to hold an event/"festival" in 2022. Questions were raised at the Sandstone Open Meeting held the night before regarding how should this be promoted given concerns about use by too many people without appropriate knowledge? Event proposal was to emphasize best practice. Intention to do this in May/June i.e. at start of summer season.
- Wire swaging between bolts removed. Now asking climbers to rig their own anchors. Need to update BMC information films. Further information can be found here: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/changes-to-southern-sandstone-bolted-anchors>
- Parking still a problem. Encouragement to members to check the Regional Access Database.
- There is a need to update Sandstone code of practice. A working group has been established who are looking at this.
- Next HRMG meeting on 25 October.
- Harrison's tree felling/maintenance – next work will be carried out below *The Niblick* area. HRMG will schedule a volunteers work day following this work. Adrian asked members to consider volunteering.
- Ongoing repair of resin work by Graham Adcock.
- Stone Farm – 5 new pairs of bolts have been installed.
- Bowles – open again. Bowles considering work to repair ground erosion.
- Eridge – currently voluntary suspension of climbing because of overuse. Eridge is a SSSI. HRMG invited Sussex Wildlife Trust to discuss and inspect repairs elsewhere. SWT is now in consultation with Natural England about possible repairs.

- High Rocks - £12.50 per visit for day ticket.
- Tunbridge Wells DC have asked for help from HRMG at the Happy Valley site.

CS thanked Adrian for his report (copy of report on BMC website). No questions.

CS added National Trust has suspended access to Skeleton Ridge at the Needles. Marti Hallett (South West Access Rep) is working to resolve this and is hopeful the suspension will be lifted at the start of the new season.

CS reported on BMC access seminar. Key points: increase in numbers using National Parks however there has been an increase in the diversity of those enjoying the outdoors; challenges of poor parking and fly-camping; more climbers; people getting too close to and disturbing seal pups; Ash dieback will mean a 50%-80% loss of Ash trees; BMC access and conservation team are proposing ways to increase support to access area volunteers.

4. Area Reps update

4.1 Clubs

No report (Tim Croker was stepping down as area clubs rep). No questions about clubs.

4.2 Hillwalking

Fabrizio Scaglione invited members to complete BMC hill walking survey – explanatory article on BMC website. FS reported that Dartmoor is the only place in England where wild camping is currently permitted. Because of inappropriate use there was a proposal to introduce bye-laws to regulate this. The bye-laws were amended following discussion with BMC SW area representatives.

FS reported on the upcoming Chilterns walking festival.

4.3 Youth

Tanya Sage the Area Youth Climbing Series Coordinator reported:

Two Youth climbing competition rounds completed. Average of 90-150 participants at each round. BMC Covid protocol applies (so youth have to submit selfies with LFT results). Measures to reduce crowding welcome. Huge enthusiasm of participants. C 15 volunteers needed at each round. TS thanked the volunteers.

No questions.

5. Find Your Adventure

CS reported on “Find Your Adventure” campaign (<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/its-time-to-find-your-adventure-climbing-walking-mountaineering>). Six web articles (e.g. joining a club, what to expect etc). People who sign up get weekly emails signposting to the articles. Promoting clubs to individual members.

National stats about the campaign - 17 clubs signed up, 40 more interested. 3 webinars have been held to date. Student focussed campaign underway to capture those leaving student clubs and encourage them to join senior clubs. The campaign has had a great reach on social media

Clubs can get personalised merchandise combining BMC branding and your own club branding.

A self-evaluation tool is available for clubs to assess how welcoming they are to new members.

Case study about the Tunbridge Wells Mountaineering Club about benefits of the FYA campaign to the club including increased web traffic directed from the BMC website.

6. Organisational update

- 6.1 Paul Davies – nothing to report. Daimon Beail asked whether the BMC had plans to update its website. PD said that there were plans to do this and they were working out process to consult with members about what they wanted from the site.

James B (TWMC) asked about progress on resolving previous queries about support for and admin of club returns to BMC for membership returns and payments. CS said he would enquire of the BMC

6.2 CS reported on the upcoming subscription rises. Future sub increases will occur in line with RPI as stated in the Articles of Association.

https://www.thebmc.co.uk/media/files/BMC_Membership_Fee_RPI_Statement_Sept2021.pdf

7. Members Council update

CS outlined the vision event series. These would be quarterly on each of the four BMC activity areas (rock climbing, indoor climbing, hill walking and mountaineering). The intention is that following the vision event, the outcomes would explore further in open-forums for all members.

Since National Council evolved to Members' Council, councillors led by Andy Syme (chair) have been implementing ways and strategies for the council to operate more effectively ensuring it is meeting the objectives in its Terms of Reference.

Amongst other things, MC was considering how best to increase youth representation in BMC, possibly via a youth panel.

8. Area "Noticeboard"

- Pinnacle Club and Alpine Club exhibition at the Alpine Club as part of the Pinnacle Club centenary. Opening 8 November 2022.
<http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/events/past-future-exhibitions/878-women-with-altitude-100-years-of-female-alpinism-in-the-pc-ac>

9. Any Other Business

- Mike Penny gave a presentation about Tyn y Berth Outdoor Education Centre and the current plans to reopen it. More information was at <https://tynyberth.org.uk>. The centre had a 50 year history providing training for young people aged 10-18 in outdoors. Lewisham Council, the owner was happy to work with Friends of Tyn y Berth to try and reopen it as an outdoor education centre. (A wider concern was that other local authorities are contemplating closing their outdoor education centres.) MP encouraged members to join the Friends of Tyn y Berth. The National Mountaineering Centre (Plas y Brenin) has agreed to work in partnership to reopen the centre.
- Elliot Hodges, BMC member living in North London said that he had attended a training course last year with BMC introduction to climbing. Thanked BMC for the training. Question about the e-pack course materials. Discussion with Amii Wilkes. E-pack not yet produced. CS invited question to PD via CS email LondonSE.area@thebmc.co.uk

10. Date of next Area Meetings

The 2022 area meetings would be a mix of in person and virtual meetings. The dates were:

19 Jan online
21 April hybrid
22 Jun online
20 October hybrid

CS declared the meeting closed at 20.55

Minutes written by Robert Dufton