

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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LONDON & SOUTH EAST AND MIDLANDS AREAS JOINT MEETING

Meeting held via zoom
on Wednesday 19 January 2022 at 19.00 following the AGM

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Chaired Chris Stone (CS) supported by David Jones (DJ). Minutes taken by Robert Dufton (RD)

Apologies – None

CS welcomed everyone to the joint meeting. CS introduced the LSE area reps. DJ introduced himself as Midlands area representative on Members' Council and the area hill walking rep and that there was currently no Midlands area chair. DJ introduced the Midlands area reps including Becky Broadley, Secretary of the Midlands area

In particular, CS welcomed Dave Turnbull (DT), Head of Access and Conservation, BMC, Flavia Alzetta (FA), Non-executive director, BMC and Andy Syme (AS), BMC President

2. Attendance (31 people in attendance)

(Poll taken of breakdown by area: 11 LSE 8 Midlands 2 Other)

3. Minutes of previous meeting held on 19 October 2021

The minutes of the LSE meeting on 19 October 2021 were approved

Matters arising London Meeting 19/10/21

Question asked about membership services online. The Clubs committee has plans to request further support from the BMC board to enable an IT upgrade to improve services.

Question about e-pack for climbing course participants. Would now be reinstated this year.

Midlands Meeting 21/10/21

DJ explained that as the minutes had only been circulated the previous day it would be appropriate if people had comments on them to contact him or BB with their comments.

4. Area Reps update

4.1 Access East (Midlands)

Andy Harper outlined a variety of damaging access issues at Cademan Wood during lockdown. Local climbers rallied round and have now ensured that inappropriate access and use has stopped.

There was a risk that access to Beacon Hill crag would be restricted by Leicestershire County Council's Country Parks to promote its diversity in line with its SSSI status. LCC had made various proposals which would in effect mean local volunteers were managing access. This was not feasible. LCC had suggested that access information be only given via the RAD (Regional Access Database). AS asked about the expectations from LCC about how inclusion in the RAD would work. AH explained that they understood that inclusion in the RAD would not limit access to only BMC members. The area felt strongly, and on the advice of Rob Dyer from BMC, that continued access (for a wide variety of uses not just climbing) was important and in equity should be open to non-members.

4.2 Access West (Midlands)

Richard Law described geographical area covered, running alongside the border with Wales, comprising outcrops and quarries. The main work was managing seasonal bans for nesting birds.

4.3 Southern Sandstone

CS spoke on behalf of the Harrison's Rocks Management Group. There are two BMC owned crags, Harrison's Rocks and Stone Farm Rocks. Important not to climb on SS in the wet as this will cause damage to crag. The Code of Practice must be followed at all times. As it is Winter the HR car park is locked at 5pm each evening and reopens at 8am Climbing at Eridge is still suspended. The RAD is updated frequently and gives important information.

4.4 Youth

Tanya Sage the LSE area Youth climbing series coordinator reported:

Two Youth climbing competition rounds completed. 120-150 participants at each round. All had to be members. 233 children and young people from across the UK took part in grand final in Southampton. LSE South won the team competition. c 60 LSE children selected for talent pathway, 30 for North and 30 for South. 8 selected for Midlands area.

CS thanked Tanya and Claudia Sarner, Midlands Area Youth Climbing Series Coordinator for their work.

4.5 Hillwalking

DJ reported on the presentation given by Peter Judd, chair of the Hill Walking Group given at the annual Specialist Committee review meeting.

Government has published its response to the Glover Landscapes Review. DJ shared BMC comments on the review. DJ referred to the previous discussion which had agreed that there should be a hillwalking festival in the Midlands region to be held in June 2022.

Fabrizio Scaliogne reported on the Environmental Land Management Scheme which would fund farmers based on the public good created on their land. BMC along with other interested sporting governing bodies had made representations to Government about defining public good. FS mentioned the BMC Wider Horizons podcast series. Next would be with Rose Gare-Simmons the Nationally Elected Councillor for Hill Walkers. FS reported on the issues because of ash dieback and the opportunity to advocate for replanting.

DT outlined the considerable amount of work being done by BMC access staff and the Access Conservation Trust's work on Mend our Mountains which was focussed on hill-walking. Also BMC work on Police Powers Bill. Also the Dartmoor Bylaws consultation where the National Park is analysing the 2000+ responses to the consultation.

Tim Weller asked DT about example of conflict between different users of paths. DT explained that BMC did not have the same relationship with the hill walking reps as it does with the network of access reps which typically do not get involve with footpath issues. Historically these issues would often get deferred to the Ramblers as they are the technical experts on rights of way legislation. There is nothing stopping the BMC getting involved with these issues but they need to be brought to the attention of the staff.

Tim Weller suggested Ordnance Survey could be asked to include access points to the open access lands on maps. CS agreed to communicate this to Peter Judd.

4.6 Clubs

Ian Wyatt reported on the success of the Find Your Adventure initiative to build membership of clubs, though social media promotion and webinars for club representatives. Success of initiative has led the BMC to deciding to continue with a second phase. The Midlands area network of clubs is facilitated by IW.

5 Members' Council and Organisational Updates

DJ summarised the specialist committee review meeting which took place on Saturday 15th January. Because the AGM will again be virtual the Board may move the AGM date from a Saturday to a

midweek evening. AS commented that most areas preferred midweek evenings. No one from the LSE and Midlands meeting was against this proposal.

FA thanked the meeting for the opportunity to attend. The BMC was in better financial shape at the end of the year than had initially been forecast. Potential for increased financial support from Sport England and the BMC is through to second round of securing this. Without SE funding, forecast deficit for 2022 would be c £350k. Gavin Finch had joined BMC as Chief Commercial Officer. A focus for his work would be to develop new propositions for different sorts of membership reflecting changing interests with emphasis on the younger people and indoor climbing. Increased emphasis on diversity and inclusion including the additional insights to be gained from the findings of the joint Your Movement Matters survey.

DT reported on the National Access Survey (45 pages) which will be published tomorrow. Considers views from 43 of the 79 BMC active volunteers (who took an average of 50 minutes to respond) about big issues relating to access to mountains and hills. Key points are environmental changes, over use and the need for environmental education particularly for new climbers/hill-walkers. Call for more financial and staff support for local conservation issues. New budget line of £10,000 to fund local activity and hopes that it could be matched funded by companies. Plans will be developed by BMC together with its partners.

6 Area Volunteer Vacancies

CS and DJ encouraged people to apply or refer the vacancies to others:

Midlands chair
LSE Youth climbing series co-ordinator – LSE (North) region

CS explained that Will Green (WG) was interested in becoming the LSE area club co-ordinator. WG introduced himself and his outdoor experience in climbing, hill walking and alpinism, and summarised his aims in the role. Sherry Macliver asked WG about his personal club membership. WG said he was a member of ICAS Climbing Club (which is a BMC affiliated). WG co-opted by LSE members.

AS thanked WG for standing and thanked all people who volunteer for BMC. BMC was providing additional training for volunteers.

7 Southern Sandstone event

CS explained that in consultation with the HRMG, SS volunteers and in the open funding, it had been decided not to apply for BMC funding to run a SS festival but instead look for other way to engage with the climbers that already use SS. If anyone would like to run an area festival, of any sort, across any of the BMC's activities, they were asked to contact CS

8 Date of next Area Meetings

LSE Thursday 21 April 2022 The Alpine Club (hybrid)
Midlands Thursday 21 April 2022, venue to be decided

9 CS declared the joint area meeting closed at 20.30

Presentation by Percy Bishton

RD introduced Percy Bishton who gave a presentation about his experience as the head route setter for bouldering at the Tokyo Olympic games. CS thanked Percy for his presentation.

Minutes written by Robert Duffton