



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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North West Area Ordinary Meeting

Meeting held in hybrid format - at BMC Head Office (address as above) and online via Zoom.

Wednesday 29th June 2022, 19:00.

Minutes

Attendance:

Not all attendees were present for the whole meeting): Les Ainsworth (Lancashire Access Rep), Bill Beveridge (Members' Council Rep), Katie Coffield (Secretary), Tim Dobson, Richard Eden, Paul Evans, Rick Ginns, Tim Greenhalgh, Tom Greenham, Agustin Guardiola (Area Co-Chair and Chair for this meeting), Andy Holland, Stuart Holmes (Area Youth & Walls Rep), Mark Hounslea (Cheshire Access Rep), Phil Kelly, Carl Spencer (Members' Council Rep and Council Nominated Director), Matthew Thompson, Gaz Parry, Dudley Pritchard and Mike (surname unknown).

1. Welcome, Quorum and Apologies

Agustin Guardiola welcomed members to the meeting. The meeting was quorate in accordance with Article 28.6.1 of the BMC's articles of association. Apologies were received from Katie Allen, Dominic Oughton, and Steve Charles.

2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting held on 27th April 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without comments.

3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

None reported.

4. Reports from area representatives

4.1 Access

Les Ainsworth provided a summary for Lancashire as follows:

- a) Concerns about recent work at Summit which has impacted some routes. Conversations with the landowner are ongoing, to see what can be done about remaining aggregate.
- b) Epicoff and Th'way have been destroyed by rockfall.
- c) Edgerton - bolts installed on Mental Mantel and Corner Jam, and cleaning has taken place on Ceremony and Cherry Bomb.

- d) Witches Quarry - fire directly below the rock. No complaint from landowner but the BMC has ordered a replacement for the sign that has been damaged. Les requested for anyone with information on who was responsible to come forward.
- e) Hoghton - following the breaking of the lock in 2021 and subsequent loss of that climbing season, we have also lost the 2022 season. There is a possibility for a season next year, and proposals for how this can happen are under discussion. One suggestion from the landowner is a ticketing system - it was widely agreed at the meeting that such a system will not work. Les will continue discussion with the landowner, and will explain why a ticketing system would be unsuccessful.

Mark Hounslea provided a summary for Cheshire as follows:

- f) The only issue has been Earby Quarry - some climbers took down some gorse, which unfortunately others (assumed non-climbers) then set fire to, resulting in a serious fire. This in turn led to climbing being banned at this location. Local climbing clubs wrote to the local councillor and eventually access was restored. However, the local council has concerns around bolting - i.e. the qualifications and competency of the people who placed the bolts etc. The council had wanted Mark to arrange for BMC to remove and replace bolts in a more monitored way. The consensus was that no further action should be taken at this time.

Stuart Holmes provided an additional update on access as follows:

- g) Worsley Delph - It has now been accepted that this area will not become accessible as a climbing venue. It's now fenced off because of a gas vent from old mines, and exposure to the gas is very harmful.

4.2 Clubs

Clubs rep Dom Oughton sent apologies for this meeting but provided slides which gave an update focussed on what has happened in the Find Your Adventure campaign in the last 12 months:

- 21 Phase 1 Clubs are signed up (5 active in NW)
- Student focussed campaign – 'Find Your NEXT Adventure'
- Ten Webinars (available on 'catch up')
- 'How open is your Club' checklist
- Branding & Merchandise
- Social Media Campaign
- Print Media
- #FYA Sign-Up
- 1,000 New Club Members

4.3 Hill Walking

Hillwalking rep Steve Charles sent apologies and Andy Holland provided an update on his behalf as follows:

- a) Wealthy landowners have filed a court case to 'clarify' law and public access to Dartmoor, which allows for responsible backpack camping. Dartmoor Parks CEO has defended the existing position of Dartmoor NPA defending the right to wild camp. The BMC has supported Dartmoor Parks in writing. Updates to follow in due course.
- b) Mariella Sullivan has been appointed as BMC Hill walking and volunteer co-ordinator. It is hoped that this will help with publishing events.
- c) The Ramblers Scotland social media channels (TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram) were recommended as a source of humorous but effective viral videos concerning use of stoves rather than fires or disposable BBQs, leaving no trace and preparing for busyness: have a plan B.

- d) Feedback was given on recent successful walks and details of upcoming walks and events - details of these are as per the meeting slides.
- e) In particular, it was noted that United Utilities have been impressed by the conservation work carried out by BMC members.
- f) As ever, and suggestions for walks or volunteers to lead walks are welcome to contact Steve Charles (stevecharles25@gmail.com).

4.4 Youth and Walls

Stuart Holmes provided an update as follows:

- a) The Youth Climbing Series is up and running - dates and location as per meeting slides. Dates have been shifted slightly to take account of school holidays, and some new climbing centres have been included.
- b) Rock Over has two new walls planned, at Middlebrook near Bolton and at Wythenshawe.
- c) Youth Climbing Courses are currently being run. There are courses for sport and trad, including some subsidised places. Ready to Rock courses are also currently available. The BMC Student Safety Seminar is returning to Plas y Brenin for 2022 and this was flagged as a good opportunity to get university clubs involved with the BMC.

5. Fixed Gear Policy feedback

The main points put forward/discussed in the lengthy discussion are summarised as follows:

- a) First ascensionists should be able to make recommendations on bolting.
- b) Landowners may have particular requirements with regards to bolting.
- c) Decisions made at BMC meetings under the fixed gear policy should have a grace/cooling off period during which the decision is publicised and the local climbing community has the opportunity to provide feedback, objections and such like.
- d) Such a process should have a time limit, e.g. 6 weeks, thus helping avoid scenarios where decisions repeatedly get delayed until a further BMC meeting.
- e) Legal considerations i.e. implications for the BMC and individuals in the event of an accident on a route where bolting activity has taken place under the fixed gear policy.
- f) The value/necessity for any such policy to work across the whole North West area, taking into account local difference e.g. Cheshire and Merseyside are much more open to bolting.
- g) Bolting quality assurance
- h) A draft of a revised policy will be circulated in advance of WiltonFest, with the aim of approving it at WiltonFest.

Following on from this discussion the following points around bolting activity were discussed:

- i) Jimmy Nip (Wilton 1) - a proposal was made by Stuart Holmes for a new lower-off on Jimmy Nip - no objections were made.
- j) Shivers Arete (Wilton 3) - Stuart Holmes reported that a broken peg which snapped under testing (at 1.5kN) has been replaced with a bolt, a few inches lower as it could then be placed in solid rock. There was some objection to this, but the majority of those who spoke up agreed that this was the closest like for like replacement.
- k) Mental Mantel (Egerton Quarry) - there was a lengthy discussion about the bolt that had been placed on this route under the new Fixed Gear Policy, and subsequently removed by local climbers without prior notice. The solution agreed was as per the discussion on the amendments to the fixed gear policy as outlined above, i.e. the matter will be revisited once the policy has been revised and re-approved.

6. New BMC NW Instagram page

Agustin Guardiola highlighted that we now have an instagram page (@bmc_northwest) to try and engage with a wider audience. It will be used to advertise area meetings, general area updates and local projects. Suggestions and/or involvement are welcome.

7. BMC and social media

Stuart Holmes explained that the BMC wants to do a better job of reaching the members we have via social media, with a view to increasing engagement, and requested ideas/feedback. The main suggestions were:

- a) Cross pollination with groups aligned with BMC interests.
- b) Nature of content is important - look at examples that have received high levels of engagement.
- c) There was a lot of discussion around sharing individual's posts - this would require volunteers, perhaps a dedicated social media volunteer, to identify suitable posts and make them BMC-relevant.
- d) Need to get a grasp on new and upcoming platforms while they're big, rather than playing catch up.

8. Intro to National Elected Councillors

Stuart Holmes provided an introduction to the National Elected Councillors, who are:

- **Aaron Hodgson** (Nationally Elected Councillor for Mountaineers)
- **Oli Lewis** (Constituency Councillor for Mountain Training candidates)
- **Stuart Holmes** (Nationally Elected Councillor for Indoor Climbers)
- **Rose Gare-Simmons** (Nationally Elected Councillor for Hill Walkers)
- **Steve Clark** (Nationally Elected Councillor for Rock Climbers)

9. Report from most recent Members Council

Carl Spencer gave a verbal summary of the relevant meeting slides, which covered the following topics:

- a) *The 2022 AGM* - This was held on the evening of Wednesday 18th May. 673 members voted, all resolutions were passed and in all cases with over 90% of votes for "cast for the resolution"
- b) *Vision Events for Hill Walking, Rock Climbing, Indoor Climbing, Mountaineering* - Over the past 9 months Members' Council have run a half day session on each of these core activities, focussed on the current state and direction of travel for these Activities and Sports.
- c) *Access and Conservation* - The National Access Survey and subsequent engagement and meetings is believed to have been very successful in engaging access volunteers and our partners across the sector. The intent is that the key messages around our activities and sports are brought into the planning and resourcing of the BMC over the next 2.5 years.
- d) *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)* - 2 new staff members are to be recruited to help integrate EDI into the BMC.
- e) *IFSC speed and lead world cup competition at Ratho in September 2022* - The UK has been requested by IFSC to host the speed and lead world cup competition at Ratho in September 2022. This is after these competitions were pulled from China due to the current outbreak of CoVid in China.
- f) *EUMA and UIAA coming to Yorkshire in 2023* - The Board has agreed that it supports bringing the Annual General Meeting of the EU Mountaineering Association (EUMA) and the UIAA General Assembly to Yorkshire in 2023.
- g) *Supporting the Outdoor Sector of our activities* - Whilst the successful bid with Sport England is very welcome, it has left the outdoor sector, which is where most of our existing and future members are active, with little support from Sport England. The BMC is working with Mountain Training England,

Mountain Training UK and Ireland and with Plas y Brenin and we are planning on making a joint approach to Sport England which will emphasise the need to support this hugely important sector.

- h) *A new Environmental Policy* - Under the leadership of Cath Flitcroft, a new environmental policy has been developed, presented to Members' Council and approved by the Board.
- i) *Staff changes and support* - Recently there have been several departures of staff from the BMC. Paul Davies is exploring how best to support staff through the cost of living crisis and is expected to report to the next meeting of the Board.
- j) *Finances* - At the end July meeting of the Board, there will be a full report on current expenditure against budget and how we may best utilise remaining funds.
- k) *Sport England (SE) Funding* - We are continuing to work with our Partners, the Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC) and the National Indoor Climbing Awards Scheme (NICAS) on the delivery plan and resourcing requirements. Challenges still exist around how both a National Coaching Scheme and Wall Accreditation will be delivered but progress is being made.
- l) *Safeguarding and Health and Safety* - The BMC is recruiting a full time Safeguarding officer who will support the sector in this regard.

10. North West events calendar – recap of upcoming events

Agustin Guardiola referred back to slides 23 and 25 in the Hill Walking report section, which details all known planned events.

11. Proposals invited for location for autumn area meeting and AGM

Agustin Guardiola requested suggestions for locations for the next meeting, which is planned to be hybrid format. The main points of discussion were:

- a) Budget per meeting is likely to be low.
- b) Previously used venues may not be suitable because of lack of good wifi.
- c) BMC office had worked really well because of the space and the kit, but it was still felt that the geographical location should move around.
- d) It may be possible to borrow kit from the BMC to ensure a positive experience for online attendees.
- e) Members to let chairs or secretary know of any venue suggestions.

12. Any other business

Financial support is currently available for local projects. The consensus was that the NW area should apply for crag cleaning kit or other equipment such as stakes that will definitely be of use at some point. Tim Greenhalgh agreed to prepare an application.

13. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the scheduled date for the next meeting is Monday 24th October, to be run as a hybrid session.