



Cyfarfod Ardal Leol - BMC Cymru (North/Gogledd) - Local Area Meeting 19/10/2022 – Beacon Climbing Centre

MINUTES - COFNODION

Attendance – Presenoldeb:

Approx 50 members. Including three paid BMC Officers, one Director and several members from other areas.

1. Croeso - Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau

Pete Johnson, Ian Martin, Anthony Eccles, Calum Muskett, Dave Lyons, Nigel Tuckley, Peter Salenieks.

3. Minutes/Cofnodion (Zoom – 5th July 2022)

The minutes were accepted without corrections.

Proposed: Neal Hockley

Seconded: Elfyn Jones

Matter Arising: - Restoration Fund Grant Applications.

i. Andy Boorman reported that the St. Tudno's Buttress application was successful, but the work is not yet completed.

ii. Subsequent to the July meeting The Chair made an executive decision to apply for a Restoration Grant fund for a path improvement project above Cwm Cywarch, working with SNPA. This application was also successful, but had to be cancelled at the last minute, due to difficulties with the SNPA's contractors.

4. Fixed Gear

Simon Witcher (a BMC member from the NW region) had asked for various concerns relating to the use of Fixed Gear in N Wales (in particular drilled and/or glued pegs) to be added to the meeting's agenda. After discussion with SW, the Chair had agreed to do so, believing that the N Wales region should be prepared to open itself to scrutiny by members from other regions.

The Chair introduced the item by giving a short presentation laying out a few facts, and setting a few boundaries to the debate.

SW summarised his concerns, details of which had been freely available to members on the meeting's webpage, and posed several questions to the meeting

The Chair then conducted a well-informed and respectful debate during which many members contributed a wide variety of viewpoints.

Rather than attempt to present the detail of the debate, or to attribute individual contributions, these minutes only seek to highlight emerging themes, as perceived by the Chair.

Highlighted themes:

a. The BMC Cymru North Fixed Gear document is less than 18 months old and is not up for amendment for 5 years, however there are examples of the guidelines not being followed, including fixed gear appearing on new routes..

b. A variety of strongly-held opinions exists on all issues to do with fixed gear. Those opinions are based on individuals' beliefs, values and preferences, rather than on absolute rights or wrongs. The interacting

criteria which control those opinions are many and complex.

- c. The notion of what constitutes 'like-for-like' replacement is contentious given changing contexts of time and place.
- d. There is a general acceptance of the need to preserve a 'trad.' ethic in North Wales, but the path to that preservation is contested.
- e. Those that believe in reducing and restricting the placement/replacement of fixed gear, also believe in the importance of leaving a legacy for future generations of climbers
- f. Some members believe that consultation and transparency are lacking in the way decisions are made about when and where to place/replace fixed gear, while others believe that decisions have to be made on the spot by local activists.
- g. Trying to make accurate information freely available on a database (or similar) is impractical, as it couldn't be kept up to date, could be misleading, would identify individuals and might compromise landowners' liability.
- h. BMC meetings are a useful forum for debate, but are too slow and not sufficiently representative to be an avenue for wider consultation leading to decision-making. Consultation via email or social media would be cumbersome and potentially open to abuse.
- i. Many trad. climbers climb on-sight, making their own judgements about the safety afforded by any fixed gear as they climb..
- j. There is an acceptance that carefully placed, glued/drilled peg-bolts will generally offer a high level of safe protection over a very long period of time without the need for inspection or replacement, compared to hammered in steel pegs. But it can be argued therefore that such peg-bolts alter the nature of the climb.
- k. Many climbers potentially benefit from climbs being cleaned of loose rock and vegetation. Cleaning is time-consuming hard work, but is not always environmentally desirable. The BMC Cymru fixed gear document recommends that some crags be left to return to a 'natural' state.
- l. The North Wales Bolt Fund (NWBF) operates in a similar way to other UK bolts funds.
- m. The NWBF is not a legal entity; donations come in, materials can then be purchased and handed out to equippers/re-equippers on request.
- n. The BMC is only involved with a bolt fund when covering volunteer expenses in order to meet the requirements of a local access agreement. In reality, volunteers never claim against the NWBF.
- o. Some members present expressed concerns about the unaccountability of the bolt fund's operation, while others felt that keeping records (except where required by an access agreement) should be avoided.
- p. The quality of the Orme rock is deteriorating as vegetation encroaches. Some cleaning and retro-bolting of trad. routes has taken place, always with the first ascensionists' permission.
- q. Cleaning of routes can rightly lead to confrontation with landowners and environmental groups.
- r. Retro-bolting of routes previously climbed in a trad. style is perhaps the most starkly contested issue of all. On the one hand, the argument would be that if we approve of some retro-bolting on the Orme, where does it stop?; on the other hand, the argument is that these routes weren't being climbed and opening more rock to more climbers has to be a good thing.
- s. Moderating the actions of climbers can only be done through discussion. The BMC has no power of enforcement, although it has an important role to play in disseminating information and reminding climbers of their legal and environmental obligations

Outcomes:

There were no actionable outcomes. However, discussion and email exchanges after the meeting indicate that significant relationships were built, channels of communication opened, opposing opinions understood and some misunderstandings cleared up.

5. Developments at Bwlch y Moch, Tremadog.

- i. Open Access paperwork is now with the Council. It could take 6 months for them to approve the application. Open Access designation will ensure access to the crag in perpetuity
- ii Rachel Pierce and Gee Sanderson have approached Tom Carrick offering to organise a 'Tremfest' in Spring 2023. Suggestions for such an event to Tom, please.
Questions were asked about how Tremfest would work in respect of the unfavourable arrangements with the Cafe/Camping owners. Other farmers will be approached as necessary, but it is hoped that the event could prompt improving relationships with the site owners.

6i. Visitor Levy in Wales: Eben Muse has attended meetings at which the Welsh Government's 'Visitor Levy' proposals were discussed. BMC members' interest in the proposals include whether the levy would apply to Club Huts or low-cost options such as camping. He will keep a watchful eye on this issue, but is optimistic about the outcome..

6ii, Working with the Urdd Urban Games in Cardiff: The Urdd has approached BMC Cymru to help organise a climbing competition in central Cardiff, as part of their Urban Games 2023. Eben Muse felt this would be an excellent way of promoting BMC Cymru, but would require considerable volunteer help from

members. Further discussion required.

7. Tidal Generation off South Stack (Morlais): The Chair had attended a meeting organised by Morlais. The scheme is now underway and will involve some floating devices, all several kilometres offshore. Generation won't start until 2026. The main impact on climbers will be on-going travel and parking disruption, due to construction of land-based infrastructure. The road closure timetable is available on the Morlais website. Resources are available from Morlais to provide better facilities for impacted parties; the only suggestion was for improved parking. The BMC needs to support projects in line with its Declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Action: Tim Jepson to take 'Improved Parking and Public Transport Options' as suggestions to the next Morlais meeting.

8. Tim Jepson, Elfyn Jones and Tom Carrick were all pleased to report recent, very positive interactions with SNPA, following:

i. a site visit to a path restoration project above Cwm Cywarch, which will hopefully be reinstated as a jointly-run volunteer event in 2023

and

ii. various discussions with Park officers.

It is clear that Helen Pye and Adam Daniels (both key SNPA Officers) value BMC Cymru's contributions and ideas, and meetings with Tom Carrick will now take place regularly. They would be happy to attend any future BMC Cymru (Gogledd) meeting.

The SNPA have developed a new consultation process which will be presented to the next Access Forum.

9. Reports:

9.1 Pwyllgor Cymru: Neal Hockley

Neal was congratulated on being co-opted to the Board of Directors for one year. This should help to ensure a higher profile for Welsh identity and issues within the BMC organisation.

The BMC is currently running at a deficit, and subs will increase.

Sport England provides funding for athletes (ie competition climbers) but this funding stream won't support young Welsh climbers in the future. BMC Cymru needs to secure similar funding through Sport Wales. Wales 'punches above its weight' in competition climbing at the moment, and requires specific funding in order to develop that young talent pool.

9.2 Access and Conservation:

Tom Carrick presented a report of A&C headlines, appended to these minutes.

9.3 Policy and Campaigns: Eben Muse

Eben Muse presented a report of P&C headlines, appended to these minutes.

9.4 Members' Council Rep: Tarquin Shipley

Please contact TS if you want to comment on the proposed 6% increase in subs.

The intention is to increase BMC membership to 100,000 (from ~70,000); future plans will depend on that growth for funding.

9.5 Director/Board Updates:

See Pwyllgor Cymru, above.

9.6 Clubs: Peter Salenieks

I wish to highlight the positive way in which members of the Area Committee, Pwyllgor Cymru, Clubs' Committee and Huts Group are increasingly working together and finding common cause for the benefit of those whom we represent and the wider mountaineering community. I look forward to us gaining a stronger voice as BMC Cymru acts in consort with a range of partners.

10. Chair's Business & Any other Business:

i. **Supporting young Welsh climbers** (HH and NH):

In addition to the funding issues above, because Wales is considered to be a single region, parents in Wales face substantial costs when their children have to travel to the other end of the country to compete. Suggestions for ideas (eg how to share accommodation) in order to keep costs down were needed. PB suggested that Holyhead Sea Cadets might be able to help with cheap accommodation.

ii. There is a proposal to house a **Small Modular (Nuclear) Reactor** in the building shell of Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station. Whatever the energy implications of such an initiative, the transmission cables and infrastructure could have a significant environmental impact. BMC needs to watch developments.

iii. A question was asked about the problems and consequent dangers of **Parking at Bwlch y Moch**. It was confirmed that the pay carpark is now open 8am to 8pm. Although the BMC does own the crag itself, it doesn't own all the land between the crag and the edge of the road, and is therefore not in a position to increase parking provision at the base of the crag. In response to a suggestion that parking could be the discussion topic at a future meeting, the Chair stated that the BMC frequently discussed parking and transport with SNPA.
Chair's Note: If an SNPA officer were to join one of our meetings, parking could be raised again then.

iv. Piers Beeland queried the high cost of BMC insurance for older members. Dave Turnbull said that the BMC has always argued that BMC members were fitter than the average traveller, but the insurers didn't agree that older climbers were a lesser risk.
Chair's Note: Following the meeting, NH sought clarification from the BMC Insurance team and was again told that insurers took into account many factors before determining premiums, which are always proportionate to risk.

11. Date of AGM 2023: Dyddiad y CCB 2023: (and local area meeting) to be decided

The format, timing and venues for meetings will be notified at least two weeks in advance of scheduled dates.

TJ 29/10/2022

BMC Cymru
Access and Conservation Updates
October 2022
Tom Carrick

North Wales Headlines:

1. All Bwlch y Moch paperwork relating to the land being redesignated as Open Access is now with the Council.
2. Interest from Rachel Pearce and Gee Sanderson to help with organising a crag clean up for Tremadog - unsure what this will look like yet.
3. Sign for Castle Inn should be up imminently.
4. I'll be doing some winter talks on access, based in several Climbing Walls in Wales- Dates and details to be confirmed.
5. Two new access reps for North East Wales- Danny G and Sophie Nunn. They will be helping with access at Pandy Outcrop/ Llanymynech Bolting and general bolting concerns in the North East.
6. New 'Respect the Orme' video will be ready soon, Filming has been done.
7. S4C filming at Tremadog; I will find out what date it will be broadcast.
8. Discussions about access to Vivian Quarry (Llanberis) will be re-starting.
9. More meetings with SNPA about their consultation process.
10. Access concerns with Fisherman's Ladders (Afon Lledr) will be discussed soon. I've been informed by the NT and more details will follow.

BMC Cymru
Policy Updates in Wales
October 2022
Eben Muse

1. **Access reform:** Working on a campaign to produce a bilingual video to target inaction by the Welsh government in making the promised changes to access. Still in early stages but work is very much underway.
2. **Visitor Levy Consultation:** Brought members' concerns to the Welsh Gov. consultation in Portmeirion emphasising the need for it to be proportional (so as to avoid pricing those on the low end of the income scale out), the importance of benefits filtering back to the community in a way that also is visible to tourists (e.g. green transport infrastructure), concerns about an overcomplicated tax burden, the opportunity to address, and put resources towards, overtourism, particularly in honeypot areas.
3. **Agriculture Reform Wales:** Continuing to link up with the co-design process which is ongoing. Access is currently part of the legislation but could be more central to it, and my goal is to ensure that it is not watered down further or removed.
4. **Represented BMC Cymru** at conferences such as the Cymdeithas Eryri Conference at Plas y Brenin, learning lots about the challenges and opportunities facing designated landscapes – much discussion around proposed Dee and Clwydian Range national park. Also attended the Sport Positive summit with Cath Flitcroft, a forum for sports organisations to share their journey towards sustainability. We are signed up to the UN Sustainability in Sport framework and there was a meeting there to discuss the status and ongoing challenges of the framework.
5. Held **discussions with the Urdd** around a national competition for Welsh climbers at their Urban Games in June, with the possibility of funding to make it happen – internal meetings in the BMC are lined-up to explore this option. It would require a volunteer working group. This would be an important step

towards showing that we are a capable governing body for climbing as a sport in Wales, as we try and develop this aspect of our work.

6. **Filmed and produced** a Welsh installation of an upcoming BMC video series with Niall Grimes (won't give it away but it was fun) prominently featuring the Welsh language.

7. **Aspirations** for the New Year (if time and energy allow):

- a. Welsh carbon sequestration project
- b. Establishing BMC Cymru status for Sport Wales funding for Welsh competition climbers.
- c. Adoption of a fit-for-work internal Welsh language scheme.