



Cyfarfod Ardal Leol - BMC Cymru (North/Gogledd) - Local Area Meeting

23/01/2023 – On-line - Zoom

MINUTES - COFNODION

Attendance – Presenoldeb:

Max. 30 members. Including two paid BMC Officers, two Directors and one member from outside the N Wales area.

1. Croeso - Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that this meeting was being run as an 'Open Forum', without any set agenda, or specific slot for volunteer and officer reports. Written reports had been invited, but none received, either prior to or after the meeting.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau

Gwyn Jones, Will Miller, Pete Johnson

3. Minutes/Cofnodion (Beacon – 19 October 2022)

The minutes were accepted without corrections.

Proposed: Owen Burgess

Seconded: Tarquin Shipley

Matter Arising: - None.

Open Forum - The Chair invited questions and comments from the 'floor', after introducing the volunteers and officers present, as follows:

Tim Jepson -Chair

Neal Hockley – Secretary, Chair of Pwyllgor Cymru and Nominated Director.

Stephen Hobdell – Secretary

Tarquin Shipley – Area Rep.

Owen Burgess – Clubs Rep.

Andy Boorman – Access Rep. N Wales Limestone.

Sophie Nunn – Access Rep. NE Wales

Danny Griffiths – Access Rep. NE Wales

Geoff Bennett – Climbers' Club Rep.

Tom Carrick – A&C Officer for Wales

Eben Muse – Policy and Campaigns Officer in Wales

Peter Salenieks – Council Nominated Director

4. Sophie and Danny introduced themselves.

Some sports routes/venues in **NE Wales** are in a poor condition.

Pandy Quarry has some access issues.

5. Neal and Eben have met with Lorraine Brown (BMC Head of Performance) to discuss the problems surrounding accessing grants and coaching for **Welsh Youth Competition** climbers. A working group is being formed; contact Eben/Neal if interested in helping. These issues highlight the need for BMC Cymru to be recognised by Sport Wales as a legitimate channel for funding young climbers.

6. The **Temperature sensors in Cwm Idwal** have been mended, upgraded and recalibrated. They should now be more accurate, longer lasting and less prone to damage. Here is the link:

www.thebmc.co.uk/idwal

7. Tarquin sits on the Finance and Audit Committee. If members have ideas for Wales-specific spending he can promote those ideas at future meetings.

8. Owen, in his role as Clubs Rep., has emailed all **north Wales-based clubs**, but has not had a single reply. Peter S. promised to raise the issue with Jane Thompson asap. Peter said that the changing contact details for clubs, especially college clubs, was a constant problem. There were no suggestions from members by which Owen could improve the engagement of clubs.

9. Anthony Eccles asked Tom Carrick to summarise current **Access Issues**.

Tom reported:

- * Things had been generally quiet recently, but this was his first winter so he had nothing to compare it with.

- * There has been some rockfall on the Ormes, and at Tremadog. Tom, Gwyn and the newly-appointed BMC Property Manager need to meet to review Bwlch y Moch.

- * Struggling to get a discussion going at Pandy Quarry.

- * Poorly installed bolts at Minera need attention.

- * Following concern over unauthorised vegetation clearance, the Maes Hafn farmer/owner requires climbers to call before going to the crag.

Action: Danny to ask if the Maes Hafn farmer's contact details can be published on the RAD

- * The lock on the gate at Craig y Forwyn will not be replaced.

- * Foreigners' Wall at Llanymynech may be opened again after a change in SSSI status.

Andy Boorman reported fly-tipping of a large number of heavy tyres, dumped off the Marine Drive. It will be difficult and dangerous to haul them back to the road, but climbers can only enhance their reputation by organising/helping with the clear-up.

Andy has instigated a consultation to help inform the work of local activists when cleaning and maintaining/replacing fixed gear on sport and trad routes on the Ormes. He has received 12 replies out of 70+ invitations to contribute. Most replies were supportive of a sensible, balanced approach to installing lower-offs to protect vegetation, retaining worthwhile trad routes and developing good sport routes.

Anyone else who is interested in getting involved can contact Andy.

Si Witcher said that while UKC was good for airing opinions, but this consultation should allow crag maintenance on the Ormes to move forward. SW hoped climbers would respond to Andy with constructive views.

10. Neal asked for members' opinions on **Wild Camping**, particularly regarding how the BMC should develop its strategy in Wales following the recent events on Dartmoor.

Elfyn: Need to carefully define Wild Camping to differentiate it from fly or feral camping.

Eben: Access reform in Wales has stalled, but the cross-party group will propose trialling wild camping on government land. Labour party policy is generally supportive of widening access.

Peter S. explained the legal situation wrt Dartmoor, reminded the meeting of the difference between England and Wales, and he reported lively debate on Members' Council.

Tarquin: This is an opportunity to highlight the weak rights to access in England and Wales compared to Scotland. While there should be a right for 'the common man' to wild camp, commercial wild campers (eg ML courses) should expect to pay.

Anthony: There should be a distinction between educational wild camping and purely commercial wild camping.

Steve Long: Worried that payment for wild camping could lead to payment for climbing and other activities on hills and moors.

Anne Robertson: Mountain Training is placed in an awkward position if wild camping is considered to be unlawful. MT would like to see a Scottish/Scandinavian right to access for campers who don't damage land, or landowners' interests.

Tom: The D of E scheme also relies to a large extent on sustainable wild camping.

11. The BMC (via Tom C.) has been consulted by Eryri NPA about a **proposed fence on the SE slope of Foel Fras**. The fence would keep out livestock with the intention of preserving the rare **Montane Heath**. Two further fences on the Carneddau are proposed. It was agreed that this first fence, with gates, stiles and information boards, would not impinge unfavourably on walkers.

Neal welcomed the fact that the Park was consulting the BMC about such issues and suggested that BMC Cymru could volunteer to help remove derelict fences to 'offset' the erection of new fences. However, offsetting could be a complex issue, and needs further thought and research to avoid unintended, additional fences!

Dan Lane reported on similar fencing work in the Peak District, where the result had been excellent.

Neal said that the bigger the scheme the bigger the impact on the environment. Schemes which control

livestock selection and stocking densities would be far more effective than fencing.

Action: Tom to respond positively to ENPA.

12. Hongian Ffest, the Blaenau Ffestiniog-based climbing festival, has applied for, and been accepted for, BMC festival funding again in 2023. Dates 19-21 May. Festival funding no longer needs area approval. The Chair expressed some surprise that the BMC could approve funding through an individual member, without wider oversight, especially as he had some reservations about how the festival funding had been spent in 2022 and would have wanted to make some changes for 2023.

Few volunteers had participated in 2022, and greater efforts need to be made to recruit volunteers, especially Welsh-speaking volunteers, in 2023.

Action: Tom will contact Rhys CellB to enquire about the organisation of the festival and find out how area members can help contribute to its success.

NB. Unfortunately the Chair is away on the weekend of 19-21 May.

13. Despite the efforts of Rachel Pierce and others, organising **Tremfest** has run into unsurmountable difficulties due to the unavailability of camping and cafe facilities at Bwlch y Moch. As a consequence, the event has been scaled right down to a **crag clean-up day, on 23rd April**, for local activists only. It is hoped to obtain BMC funding for volunteers' refreshments and parking.

A facebook group has been set up to gather members' ideas for crag and path maintenance, focusing mainly on Bwlch y Moch, but possibly extending to Pant Ifan.

Action: Tom to liaise with Rachel to make the facebook group open to members.

As Bwlch y Moch is BMC-owned, it needs to be a model of best practice in respect of fixed gear etc. Steve Long is updating the Tremadog guidebook, so please pass any information about changes to crags/routes to him.

Elfyfyn reported that Gwyn Jones has recently cleared fallen trees from the Pant Ifan access paths, with the permission of the landowner.

14. Steve Charles (BMC North West region) has organised three more volunteer conservation events in Eryri, working under the guidance of the path improvement team of the National Trust, based in Nant Gwynant, and he invites north Wales members to volunteer, in order to make this a joint venture. There was one such, very successful, event in 2022, although only two north Wales volunteers were able to attend. The 2023 dates are as follows:

16-18 April

18-20 September

16-18 August

Volunteers can attend on single or multiple days and National Trust accommodation is available free-of-charge for anyone who needs it.

Action: Tim Jepson to post information on facebook and actively recruit volunteers.

15. Dave Turnbull sent a message of thanks to members for their best wishes and support following his illness. Members reiterated their hope for a full and speedy recovery.

16. Date of next meeting to be decided (mid to late April 2023)

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

TJ 29/01/2023