

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA MEETING

Meeting held online
on Tuesday 25 July 2023

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

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

CS welcomed everyone to the meeting which was attended by 13 members virtually.

Apologies were received from: Fabrizio Scaglione, former Hill-walking rep and Olly Hicks-Pattinson Social Media Rep.

CS welcomed Flavia Alzetta, Independent Director, Paul Davies, CEO and Dr Cath Flitcroft, Access and Conservation Officer, to the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 27 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting on 27 April 2023 were approved. There were no matters arising.

3. Area volunteer vacancies

CS said that there were the following volunteer vacancies:

Two area reps on Members Council. One person had contacted CS to express a possible interest.
Hill walking rep

The area chair role would also become vacant when CS stands down at the end of the October AGM and area meeting.

RD said that he was willing to continue as Secretary and support a future chair but that he did not have the capacity to be acting chair.

CS encouraged anyone who was interested in any role, or who knew someone who they thought might be suitable, to contact CS to discuss the role further.

4. Extending Access Rights

CS introduced this item. He noted that it was positive to see that the BMC was supporting the Dartmoor National Park Authority's appeal against the judgement preventing wild camping there.

Dr Cath Flitcroft summarised the current position about access rights in England and Wales. The BMC was asking area meetings to discuss potential manifesto asks, and was inviting members to complete an online survey.

The meeting discussed a paper "Extending the right to roam" and responded to the three questions. The meeting was in favour of extending CROW to different types of land parcels. A mapped approach might be necessary initially, but ideally this would become a general right based on an agreed code of behaviour. The meeting was also in favour of wild camping being included in future access legislation. It would be best to adopt an incremental approach and test the developments at each stage.

5. Reports from area representatives

5.1 Update from Southern Sandstone (Harrison's Rocks Management Group)

CS reported the following on behalf of the Harrison's Rocks Management Group:

- A Sandstone open meeting was being held at 4pm on 30 July by the Isolated Buttress [the meeting was subsequently deferred because of a poor weather forecast].
- The Sandstone Rockfax app had been updated.
- Members were encouraged to use the BMC RAD to obtain the latest information about access and restrictions.

5.2 Clubs

A written report from Will Green would be circulated after the meeting.

5.3 Hillwalking

FS had stepped down as WH rep. CS read out a report from FS.:

- FS thanked the area for giving him the opportunity to be the hill-walking rep. He was obliged to stand down because of other demands on his time.
- Only one of the area walks had taken place. CS said he planned to lead one early next year.
- The BMC's HW microsite contained good information about walks being lead.
- Steve Charles, Yorkshire area HW rep was leading some voluntary Mend our Mountains weekends.
- The YHA Festival of Walking was again taking place and was seeking volunteer walk leaders. Members were asked to contact Mariella Sullivan, Hill-walking and Volunteers Coordinator at the BMC if they wished to volunteer mariella@thebmc.co.uk

5.4 Youth

CS reported on behalf of Tanya Sage the Area Youth Climbing Series Coordinator. The Youth Climbing competition series would start on 16 September 2023.

No questions.

5.5 Social media

Olly reported on social media activity and the metrics used to see how this was progressing.

A member present asked if any analysis had been carried out regarding who engages with social media. CS was unsure and will forward this request to Olly.

6. Members Council and Organisational update

As there were no area reps on Members' Council no report was available.

CS invited Paul Davies and Flavia Alzetta to report on organisational developments.

PD summarised the BMC's current financial situation. The BMC's income included grants from Sport England which funded specific activity and posts, and membership, insurance and commercial partnerships. There had been a growth in membership but not at the level assumed in the 2023 financial plan. Over the past two years the staffing had expanded in a planned way. The board had decided to take corrective action now to ensure financial stability.

A consultation had been carried out with affected staff about a restructuring, The BMC had been able to implement the preferred future structure through a mix of voluntary redundancy and the non-renewal of a fixed term contract. No member of staff was facing compulsory redundancy.

Simon Powell asked about decision-making and how members' priorities were reflected in the BMC's business plans. PD said that the BMC consulted members about its strategic plan and then the annual business plan was produced to implement the agreed strategy.

SP asked PD whether a single organisation best served members or whether the performance climbing side, Climb GB should be separate. PD said the board and he felt that the single organisation model was very desirable in terms of relationships with Sport England and the higher profile it gave to BMC.

Stephen Waters asked about the communication with members about the restructuring. PD said it had been a difficult issue because news of the consultation with staff had been published on UKC. The BMC had felt it necessary to issue a public statement but had been limited in what it could say because of the ongoing consultation with staff. The BMC had issued a second statement now that the situation had become clear. SW agreed that the second statement was a much more helpful communication.

Martin Hore asked about the attendance at area meetings. He was surprised not to see more people attending this evening's meeting. CS explained that we planned hybrid and virtual meetings to give flexibility. RD noted that the BMC had also organised topic-specific online forum meetings which had been well attended and might be a more attractive model for members than area meetings.

FA added that the BMC was building the infrastructure of the organisation in terms of communication, particularly via social media.

CS thanked PA for attending the meeting from the airport shortly before boarding a flight.

7. Area noticeboard

There were no notices.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Date of next Area Meeting

19 October 2023 and AGM (Alpine Club and via Teams)

Meeting finished at 20.15. Minutes written by Robert Dufton