

HARRISON'S ROCKS MANAGEMENT GROUP (HRMG)
Tuesday 26th May 2020
Minutes

Present:- Sarah Cullen (Chair), Bob Moulton, Daimon Beail, Emma Harrington, Adrian, Paisey, Mark Brewster, Michael Phelan, Rob Dyer, Kate Harris, Jadie Baker, Chris Stone

1) Welcome & Apologies

SC welcomed everyone to the online meeting. TS attended initially however lost connection after a few minutes and was unable to attend the rest of the meeting.

2) Minutes of the meeting on 20/1/2020

3) Matters arising not covered below

4) Harrison's Rocks Work Report

a) Resin Work

SC reported that she had put Mike Parks in touch with Graham Adcock as a volunteer to help with the resin work. We now have a log filed in our HRMG shared Dropbox of the resin work that needs to be done. Many thanks to DB for putting it on a spreadsheet for us. SC will review this to make sure it is up to date as it hasn't been looked at for some time.

Action SC

b) Anchors

DB reported that the bolting drill needs to be serviced and that he needs to order some resin along with PPE. The bolting list is also in a shared HRMG Dropbox file.

c) Ground Erosion Maintenance & Woodland Management

SC reported that she had removed some ground maintenance 'logs' that had been placed at the bottom of The Sewer by volunteers to help with the boggy ground in the winter. The logs were becoming loose and potentially someone may have fallen and injured themselves.

There was a short discussion about the replacement of the degrading ground-level bridge at the bottom of Spider Wall which MB was preparing a quote for and gave a ball-park figure of £1,300. RD agreed to his going ahead with the work.

Action MB

A short discussion was had on how the channel at the bottom of Slim Finger Crack is doing as BM felt that it might need a bit more work. AP agreed.

Action HRMG at next SVG day

MB reported that he had put some more thought into the replacement trees that we will be put in at the bottom of the crag and had sent an email to the group

with ideas on where to put them. He thinks that he can source the plants for around £100 and will get them in time for volunteers to help plant at the next SVG day in the autumn. KH recommended perhaps using a chicken wire around the trees instead of tubes, given that we have a deer population locally who might nibble at the trees and that the tubes tend to be unstable and can go astray.

Action MB

d) Signs & Code of Conduct

There was some discussion about more birds nesting this year on the crags due to the fact that no climbing has been going on for the last two months. RD explained that only certain types of birds have to be protected although it's probably not a good idea to disturb the nests in any case.

RD said that the new signs for the entrance were ready to be made up, but see item 7)

AP asked if we could reinstate the no-fires message at the top of the rocks by explaining on a sign why fires are a problem and how they can damage the rock's surface. A particular problem area is on top of Moonlight Arete. This was discussed inconclusively and the group agreed that people can become sign-blind and therefore the signs become ineffective, although KH has a contact in the Fire Brigade who may be able to help with educating people re. fires and will pass this information on to RD. Social media may be another way to reach people with this message and AP noted and thanked DB & EH for their excellent job on communications.

Action KH, RD

RD said that he knew a film maker who would be able to help with the videos that we'd like to do with a well-known climber giving out code of practice messages, so that we can put them on social media. A discussion was had about having a maximum of 7 points so that the message is punchy, quick and catchy. These can be taken from the code of conduct.

Action RD

5) Covid-19

DB reported that he and EH were at the rocks this weekend and noted around 20 people making serious breaches of the code of practice and Covid social distancing breaches too. Hopefully the BMC videos will go some way to reaching newcomers to the rocks and the HRMG will do their best to patrol and talk to people when at all possible – primarily to advise on good practice.

Action HRMG

RD also suggested that following some live FB Q&A sessions that he and Dave Turnbull had been carrying out since the Covid crisis, it could be a good idea for us to have one for Southern Sandstone. People can watch it live and ask questions that

can be answered at the time. The group thought it was a good idea and a discussion was had on where it should be held – Stone Farm may be a good option as the phone signal is better there than at Harrison's. CS said that he could send out an email to all south east area members to inform them of the livestream.

The group discussed the ongoing problem of the car park overflowing particularly at the weekends as the rocks are currently so busy and that the rocks are so crowded people are not keeping to social distancing rules. KH said that the police have been patrolling primarily at weekends and that she will get back in contact with them regarding concerns of social distancing.

Action KH

6) Isolated Buttress Access

SC reported on the planning application for the bridge access to the Isolated Buttress. The Parish Council have objected to the application on grounds of public safety and impact on the environment, as have the AONB. If Wealden District Council decide to reject the application when they make their decision, the BMC can to put in an appeal.

DB thought it might be a good idea to put some small notices on the bolts on the IB that are located in line with the current rope access techniques, to remind climbers that they are for top roping only. AP agreed to put some small signs around those bolts.

Action AP

Ongoing problems with people lowering off and abseiling were also reported.

7) Access – South Entrance

AP reported that there may be some potential issues with the neighbours at the south entrance after the discovery that they have put up some signs on our 'squeeze' post and gate that say 'LICENSED PATH this is not a public right of way but the land owner allows the public to use it for the time being'. AP is seeking to formalise the access as a public right of way on the basis that it has been in use for as far back as anyone can remember. Martin Wragg at the BMC is assisting with this on the legal side. RD said that he would call the neighbours the day after the meeting as a courtesy call, given that they had emailed the BMC in 2018 regarding the issue although that email was never received. RD said that the BMC might have to buy a copy of the relevant deeds to enable Martin Wragg to resolve the matter. KH said that she has some boxes of deeds that include Harrison's and will send copies to AP.

It was agreed that we should put the new signs for the entrances to the Rocks on hold until this matter has been resolved.

Action RD, KH

8) Emergency Contact Arrangements

KH had previously emailed HRMG to ask who she could call in case of emergency re. directions etc. DB said that he would send KH a guidebook. The group discussed this and agreed that people are using tracking apps so that the emergency service should be able to pin point exactly where they are. SC said she was happy to be contacted in the case of an emergency although did not want her phone number advertised on the signs.

Action DB

AP asked if we could have a combination lock on the FC gate so that if there was an emergency access would be easier. KH said she will look into it.

Action KH

9) Health and Safety

SC reported one accident where a 20 year old woman had been scrambling on the rocks and jumped off awkwardly and broken her ankle. She had recognised that she should not have been climbing at all while the lock-down rules were in place and the crag was closed for climbing.

10) Financial Report

BM had some technical issues with the online meeting at this point and so was unable to report on the finances. He sent the following to the group regarding this by email the next day.

“1) Finances. At the January meeting, I could only report on the finances up to October 2019, as Alan Brown hadn't the later information for me. I still don't have this information but will ask Alan for it and will email a final report round. However, as far as I know there wasn't much activity on the account as the tree felling wasn't done till January. Taking this into account for a realistic comparison between 2019 and 2019, our total net expenditure for 2019 would have been of the order of £5,000 which compares to £2,267 for £2,018. The amount left in the Harrison's Restricted (Ring-fenced) Fund would reduce to approx £50K.

It is fairly clear that we are now going to be spending more annually than we have in previous years. Quite apart from the bridge, we will be spending more in some areas to make up for work that wasn't done so much recently on bolting, resin work and new signage and all these costs seemed to have increased.”

11) Stone Farm Rocks Works Report

a) Woodland Management and Ground Erosion Work

MP reported that the work days have been fantastic and that Stone Farm is looking great.

b) Resin Work

He has done all the low-level resin work while the rocks were not in use during the lock-down and said that he'd like to spend about £180 on some more resin, which was agreed.

c) Signs

The new sign at the south entrance to the Rocks was put up during the work days. It had been repositioned because the approach had been altered by the location of the gate from the vineyard below the Rocks.

d) Anchors

RD reported that he had forwarded an email from a climber who said that there was a loose bolt on top of Undercut Wall. SC will email Robin Mazinke to check.

Action MP, SC

12) Covid-19

Despite the increase in visitors to Stone Farm as a result of the covid crisis, MP reported that he felt people were doing very well with social distancing rules. There have however been issues with parking and RD has updated the RAD to reflect this. MP sought permission to contact the council to ask if they would trim back a bush to make it easier for traffic, in particular trailers and canoes to get around the corner. RD told him to go ahead.

13) AOB

DB reported that he had replaced swaging on seven bolts at Bulls Hollow – many thanks DB. There was discussion on BMC insurance for bolts at Bulls Hollow and the group agreed to include these bolts into our recording system on the shared Dropbox file.

14) Date and Venue for the next meeting

14th September was agreed as the date for the next meeting although the venue was not decided as it will depend on whether or not it will need to be an online meeting in-line with government Covid guidelines.