

HARRISON'S ROCKS MANAGEMENT GROUP (HRMG)
Tuesday 19th January 2021
Minutes

Present:- Sarah Cullen (Chair), Bob Moulton, Daimon Beail, Emma Harrington, Adrian, Paisey, Michael Phelan, Rob Dyer, Chris Stone, Tim Skinner

1) Welcome & Apologies

SC welcomed everyone to the online meeting. Apologies from Kate Harris and Mark Brewster

2) Minutes of the meeting on 29/9/2020

Nothing to report

3) Matters arising not covered below

There was a discussion on whether or not wording in the Code of Practice relating to wet rock should be changed following the influx of visitors to the rocks after the lock-down restrictions particularly when the indoor climbing gyms have been closed in London. As we move through the winter we need to manage new visitors to the rocks who may not necessarily understand the relevance of our current wording which states 'Sandstone is softer when wet and climbers must exercise caution by avoiding sharp or fragile holds and ensuring good footwork. If it is wet, why not embrace the opportunity to explore the wonderful cracks and chimneys on offer.' And simplify it to 'Avoid climbing on wet rock, it can cause irreversible damage.' The group concluded to change this message on digital formats and social media for the time being but will not include it in a reprint of the Code of Practice unless there is agreement at the next open meeting. RD will change the message on the BMC's RAD.

The group also discussed the importance of cleaning feet as a priority particularly when it is damp or wet underfoot. SC agreed to talk to and offer mats to groups who are not currently using them.

Action RD, SC

4) Harrison's Rocks Work Report

a) Resin Work

Nothing to report on resin work

b) Anchors

Nothing to report on anchors at this stage, although DB said that he's ready to carry out some work as and when the weather improves and the Covid restrictions are lifted.

c) Ground Erosion Maintenance & Woodland Management

SC reported that Reuben had done some strimming on the overgrown paths this summer but only managed about four hours because it was so busy with climbers and children, that he couldn't finish. As far as we are aware we have not yet seen an invoice for this work.

The tree work in section 'I' has been carried out tidily and so there is no urgent voluntary work to be done, although we may use some of the wood for revetments and other repairs once we can organise a volunteer's day (impossible at the moment due to Covid restrictions).

TS said that when he is able he will have a walk round with MP and make a list of jobs to do on the volunteer's day. Some suggestions came up, for example drainage below Slimfinger crack, some more work to do under St Gotthard, the main first path up to the crag by Sliding Corner has collapsed, the fence needs clearing of bracken again, and the drainage at the Vice needs looking at too.

Action TS, MP

d) Signs & Code of Conduct

Nothing to report on signs at the present time and these have been put on hold until we have resolved an issue regarding the 'permissive footpath' signs that have been put up by our neighbours, the Mewetts, incorrectly on our post and gate. We have had correspondence from them indicating that they are against vehicular traffic using the entrance but do not intend to try to make restrictions on pedestrians. Following a Land Management Group meeting in December

attended by AP, RD is drafting a letter to the Mewetts regarding this and will invite them politely to take the signs down.

Action RD

5) Health and Safety

Nothing reported

6) Financial Report

BM reported on the figures that he knows of from a report from Alan Brown dated 7/12/20 (Harrison's 2020 total was £2695 with the possibility of the tree work, £1,400, if invoiced in 2020. He was less sure about Stone Farm due to lack of information; however, he knew of the £440 for the tree work and that the disposal of the burnt-out motorbike had cost a bit less than £100) and mentioned some invoices that might still come in before the end of the year.

7) Stone Farm Rocks Works Report

a) Woodland Management and Ground Erosion Work

MP reported that the current plan for Stone Farm is up to date. He gave a general report and said that he hadn't seen or had reports of anyone climbing there at the moment and that there had been minimal wear on the rocks. The motorbike that had been dumped there had been removed with the help of the East Grinstead Climbing Club and there was a bit of damage to the boulder that it had been set fire next to but it wasn't on the main part of the crag. MP said that he will try to repair it with some resin when the weather is drier. MP also reported that Richard Barlow and Ben Read are looking at bringing newcomers to the rocks from their bouldering centre to teach them good bouldering practice. The group thought this was a good idea in principle although we don't want to encourage too much bouldering on sandstone in general due to the chalk and brushing issues that come with it.

SC reported that Nuts4Climbing have set up a new course called 'Indoors to Out' which is a move in the right direction for helping newcomers understand our Code of Practice, and to teach them how to set up on Sandstone.

BM reported that there is no marker at the point where the west boundary at Stone Farm meets the bridleway and that it would be a good idea to ask Neil Atkinson if he would put in markers at both the north and the south ends of the west boundary (he has done this before at the north end but it was removed when the bridleway was widened).

Action BM

b) Resin Work

Nothing to report on resin work

c) Anchors

Anchors covered in 4b above.

d) Signs

Nothing to report on signs

8) AOB

Isolated Buttress

BM asked for an update on the Isolated Buttress and RD reported that he is waiting for a meeting to be set up with the AONB by the BMC's Planning Consultant to discuss the situation - AP to join the meeting. SC reported that the AONB had not had a site visit and so were not fully aware of the situation nor were familiar with the exact positioning of the proposed bridge and so believes there is scope to move the position forward.

Action RD

Keen volunteers

AP reported that some members of the climbing community are keen to support the HRMG and he wondered how to utilise this enthusiasm. The group agreed that it shouldn't grow too large although their help in reporting to us would be most welcome. RD suggested that we could make them paper members of HRMG – i.e receiving copies of the minutes and being able to raise matters with the Chair to be discussed at HRMG meetings. It was recognised that some were keener to do work for HRMG and others might be more interested in the items being discussed.

Action AP

Signs at the car park

DB has been inspired by signage at American crags and proposed that the car park at Harrison's should have its own prominent climbing board specifically for climbers. A discussion on signs was had and one point raised was that of 'sign-blindness', which is when people do not read signs because there are too many.

DB also reported that he had written an article about Sandstone for Climber Magazine although was not willing to share this with the group prior to its publication.

New Chair

SC reported that she has been chair for almost six years and has decided that it was time to stand down and pass the role on to AP. This had been approved prior to the meeting by the LMG and SC wished him luck in the role. The group thanked SC and the meeting concluded.

9) Date and Venue for the next meeting

Tuesday 18th May, for another online meeting. Following on from 3 above, the need for a Sandstone Open Meeting was discussed; because of the uncertainty about Covid for the rest of this year it was agreed that the planned Sandstone Festival should be deferred to 2022. An online meeting for Tuesday 11th May, 7.00 to 8:30 was agreed. RD to send links.

Action RD