

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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HARRISONS ROCKS MANAGEMENT GROUP (HRMG)

Minutes of the meeting held on January 17th 2011 at Evolution Climbing Wall, Plumyfeather Farm, Lye Green at 19:00.

Present:	Tim Skinner	Chair
	Bob Moulton	BMC
	Geoff Pearson	BMC
	Chris Tullis	Site Contractor
	Charlie Pickin	BMC
	Sarah Cullen	BMC
	Tim Daniells	BMC
	Malcolm McPherson	Guest
	Chris Gibson	Guest

Action

1 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Johanna Howells and Nigel Head. TS said that Jim Clarkson had stepped down as local rep, and welcomed Charlie Pickin to the group.

2 Minutes of the Last Meeting (05/10/10)

These were agreed, with one correction in 4b where Barnaby Bentham should have read Barnaby Ventham.

3 Matters Arising not covered in other items below

3a Forms from the BMC TS said he and CT were still waiting for risk assessment and timesheet forms to be sent from head office. TS will contact Elfyn Jones to remind him. **TS**

4 Harrison's Rocks Work and Site Manager's Report

4a Cement Work Work is still needed on Wailing Wall, Blackeye Wall, The Flakes, Archers Wall and Right Circle. SC said that she had spoken to Laurence Reading again and he had said that he was willing to do the work at a rate of £80 a day plus materials, as long as he could get vehicular access to the top of the rocks. BM was of the opinion that some of the work was so urgent we should take Laurence up on the offer as soon as possible. The group felt the price was reasonable and it was agreed that CT would liaise with him once the weather improved to arrange dates and access. **CT**

4b Resin Work Work is still needed on North Boulder, Bow Window (both high priority), The Flakes, Foresters Wall, Birchden Wall, Southwest Corner, ZigZag, Rift (all medium priority), Carrera, Coronation Crack, Moonlight Arete, The Mank, Piecemeal Wall, Isolated Buttress Climb and Birchden Corner (all low priority). TS said that he had spoken to Barnaby Ventham and that he was still keen to do the training. GP will contact Mike Vetterlein to discuss resin training for Matthew Tullis, Barnaby Ventham and Chris Searle, then contact CT and TS to agree dates. **GP, TS, CT**

- 4c Bolts** CT reported that the dangerous bolt on The Vice had been removed in October, with very little damage to the rock. He suggested that at some point the bolt above Bow Window should also be removed as the vertical placements were not as safe as those at the top of the crag. TS also said that the old bolt above Unclimbed Wall needed to be removed. **CT**
- 4d Woodland Management & Ground Erosion Work** Malcolm McPherson said he had sent the latest draft of the woodland plan (E, although the version published on the SVG site is D) to the forest agent Jonathan Webb before Christmas for comment but had still not had any response, although he had now promised to contact Malcolm on Tuesday 18th. **TS**
- TS and SC reported on their meeting with local residents that took place on Saturday 15th of January. The residents present were from the houses below the south end of the rocks (the Smiths, The McDougalls and Mrs Treptie), from Old Birchden Farm (The Pucketts), from Leyswood (the Hulberts) and from Glen Andred (the Wolfleys and David ?). The majority of the residents were strongly against the plan because of concerns about increased noise from the rocks once the trees are coppiced and the overall height of the canopy is lowered (this was particularly true of the Pucketts and David ?) and because they didn't want the woodland to be cut down (particularly Mr Smith). They wanted alternative options to be explored to improve the rock condition and TS agreed to speak to Steve McCarthy about re-digging the ditch by the ride above the southern and central parts of the rocks. They also wanted a much smaller area to be cut initially as a trial, which TS agreed to consider, but only if it was feasible within the wider context of the management plan. TD felt that none of the objections were strong enough to affect the plan or to stop it being approved by the Forestry Commission, and that we should proceed as planned, with another appendix to the plan detailing our responses to the residents' points. BM asked CT to explain the reservations he had voiced about the plan. CT said that all he had meant is that we shouldn't expect an immediate change in the rock condition or the woods, otherwise he approved of the plans. Malcolm McPherson will draft a response to the points raised by the residents and send it to TS for final approval. TS thanked Malcolm on behalf of HRMG for the enormous amount of work he had put into the plan.
- TS reported that Mrs Treptie had told him that there were dormice present in the hazel trees near her property (but on our land). TS will contact Sussex Wildlife Trust to have an expert visit to confirm this, as it will affect our cutting plans in that compartment.
- During an inspection of the woodland, the forest agent commented on a large beech tree that is close to the railway line. The beech has a bifurcated trunk, with the split starting at about 5m and the agent felt that there was a significant risk of it falling on the railway line if it was blown down. He suggested wiring the two trunks together, but subsequent advice from other experts and a site meeting including a representative from Network Rail led us to decide on a partial felling of the trunk that leans towards the line. There was opposition to this from the local residents, and in fact HRMG are reluctant to cut such a magnificent tree, but we are the landowner and would be liable if anything happened. We have verbal agreement to the work from Network Rail but will get

something in writing before the work proceeds. Tony Flint, a local tree surgeon, will do the work and has scheduled it for 27th/28th January, subject to Network Rail and also Wealden DC Tree Preservation Officer approval – Malcolm will contact both of them, and also send the site meeting report to the local residents, letting them know the planned dates.

- 4e Car Park and Toilet** CT reported things had been very quiet due to the bad weather, and that the carpark had been closed during the snowy period. He also said that the contractors Strange had been back to fix the external lighting on the toilet block but that one of the PIR sensors still wasn't working. The contractors also fixed two burst pipes, one inside and one outside, but the external one (on the sinks) had burst again and consequently the only source of water in the whole block was one of the handwasher units in the Ladies' toilet. TS will contact Sport England about both these matters and suggest that the handwasher units be replaced by a single sink and electric hand dryer in each toilet. **TS**

- 4f Signs** BM reported that he had met with Steve McCarthy (FC) and James Sharpe (AONB) regarding their plans for Birchden Woods and more specifically the carpark noticeboard (see attached reports). They suggested a collaboration between all three bodies to renovate and use the noticeboard. BM felt this was a good way for us to maintain a presence in the carpark post-lease (2014) and therefore to perhaps have some influence, and that it showed the likelihood of the carpark remaining after that date. James Sharpe had also inquired about the possibility of catering on the site, such as an icecream van. The group was generally in favour of the ideas. BM to take this forward, sorting out the new text and map showing a detailed plan of the crag (inset in a new combined map of the woods and rocks) – the new signs at the approaches to the rocks will have a map, so the large noticeboard map is no longer needed. GP raised the issue of the Forestry Commission land being sold off, but the group felt there was no point worrying about that at present. **BM**

5 Health and Safety

- 5a Notes of any Accidents in the Accident Book** There were no accidents to report. TS has still to contact the BMC and also consult with Graham Adcock about getting hold of a first aid kit for SVG days. **TS**

6 Financial Report

- 6a HRMG Budget** The changes the group had asked for had been made by Alan Brown, and the queries from the last meeting had been answered in his notes (see financial report attached). The group wondered why the Cesspit Expenses showed £290 of money in. Alan Brown had asked for more details about the bequest of £1000 from Mr Buist as Dave Turnbull had asked him to arrange to have it paid to the new Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust. BM suggested that once Alan had confirmed that the money was in the Harrisons Repair Fund, he should pay it to the trust and record it as 'Transfer from HRMG' in the accounts. TS will contact Alan Brown to ask him about both these points. **TS**

7 Stone Farm Rocks

7a Woodland Management & Ground Erosion work TS reported that the work had taken place on November 20th/21st and that it had been a great success. In the end, Simon, a tree surgeon from Eagle Trees had volunteered to fell the sycamore, and great thanks were due to him. There was a good turnout of volunteers from the SVG on both days and all the clearance and revetment work was done as planned. TS noted that more areas had been identified as needing ground erosion work, but that this would probably take a back seat to the work at Harrisons.

7b Resin Work See 4b above.

**GP, TS,
CT
BM**

7c Signs BM will continue to liaise with Don Sargeant about producing a map of the site similar to the one of Harrison's.

7d Bolts TS reported that Rob Dyer from the BMC had contacted him as he had had an enquiry about placing a bolt above Stone Farm Crack. When the pine tree above the route died, HRMG inspected the area to see if a bolt placement was feasible and concluded that it wasn't, but CT will take a look and see if this is still the case. BM pointed out that the current CC guidebook encourages people to make their own judgement when using the tree stump above this climb.

CT

8 AOB

8a Birchden Wood Development BM has produced a position statement for the Land Management Group (attached) which describes the current situation as regards the carpark, campsite and toilet block and looks forward to the end of the leases in 2014. TD said that we needed some certainty about the future of the carpark and that we should be proactive and put forward a proposal to the Forestry Commission that they manage the site in a similar way to other local sites and suggesting a charge of £2 per car. It is likely however that if the carpark becomes pay & display, the charge will be nearer to commercial rates. SC said there was a danger of local climbers avoiding the charge by parking elsewhere, which could lead to problems with residents as it did in the 70s. TS thought we should suggest that the charges only be enforced at the weekend. CP thought that many dog walkers would stop using the carpark if the charge was too high, as most of them don't pay at present. GP said the noticeboard collaboration (see 4f above) should be seen as the start of a dialogue with the Forestry Commission over the future of the carpark and campsite, but BM wasn't so sure.

8b Sandstone Charter Mark Chris Gibson did a short presentation on his ideas for a Sandstone Charter Mark, which would be awarded to Outdoor Organisations that demonstrate a commitment to education about and conservation of the sandstone environment. The group agreed, with certain reservations, to endorse the award once it was up and running.

TS

9 Date of Next Meeting The next meeting will be held at Evolution climbing wall on Monday May 16th 2011, at 19.00, preceded by a site inspection at 17:00.