

BMC Midlands Area Minutes – 21st November 2012

Redpoint, Birmingham

1 Minutes of last meeting

Low attendance meant that the minutes could not be officially approved, but were agreed to be accurate by those present.

2 Drilled Equipment Policy

The policy/position statement was scrutinised and discussed in tremendous detail. Whilst everyone agreed with it, it was felt that some parts could give the wrong impression, and some parts are ambiguous. Also that care and concern for the crag and mountain environment should be in a more prominent position within the statement.

A re-worked statement was proposed:

- The BMC believes that care and concern for the crag and mountain environment is of paramount importance in discussions about climbing practices and the use of drilled equipment.
- The BMC acknowledges that many forms of climbing take place on British crags. The great majority of England and Wales is considered to be subject to the “trad” ethic (climbing based on leader-placed protection which makes use of natural rock features), where the presumption is clearly against the placement of drilled equipment. This includes, but is by no means limited to, areas like the Pembrokeshire and Cornish sea cliffs, the mountains of Snowdonia, and the gritstone edges of the Peak District and Yorkshire. There are also many climbing areas, individual crags and sections of crags across the country where sport climbing is the agreed and accepted norm.
- British climbing has a rich history and a well-established code of ethics which has evolved over many years through debate amongst climbers, often at BMC Area Meetings. Discussions about the use of drilled equipment (predominantly bolts) have taken place across the country for many years and there is a generally clear understanding amongst climbers about where bolts can and cannot be placed.
- The diversity of climbing styles (sport and traditional) and the existence of ‘bolt free’ areas is an internationally important aspect of British climbing. British climbing is the envy of many other countries where the use of drilled equipment has spread on an ad hoc basis with little regard to the crag environment or the aspirations of future generations of climbers.
- Site specific and regional drilled equipment policies should be debated and agreed at meetings arranged by the BMC. The Area Meetings provide a structure to facilitate such discussions. Drilled equipment policies should be widely discussed and agreed on a consensus basis. The views of landowners and first ascensionists should be respected and given careful consideration in discussions about the future style or equipping of routes.
- It is the responsibility of all climbers to promote and respect agreed drilled equipment policies.

3 Groups use guidelines

A very open discussion identified that:

- “Group” is hard to identify. There is great variation, and may include those who do not consider themselves to be a group.
- Examples of problems experienced by groups (no surprises here) include: impact by large &/or many charity challenge groups; top ropes in situ for lengthy periods; “unacceptable” behaviour caused by ignorance of those in an unfamiliar environment.
- Examples of good practice were typified by courteous, well organised groups. (no surprises here either!)
- Well organised groups often have a responsible person / point of contact to whom issues should be addressed.
- Common courtesy and consideration goes a long way.
- Individuals can greatly assist the learning of others by demonstrating good behaviour themselves.
- Share cars as much as possible. Your impact starts *before* you get there.

4 Access West

Nothing to report.

5 Access East

After the BMC Risk, Liability and Outdoor Adventure Conference on 1st Nov, the first meeting of the Hardrock Quarry Restoration Group was held. The major decision taken was to appoint a full time Project Manager working for the Group and funded by the BMC. The BMC have now got a Brief of the role of the Project Manager and are going out to recruit. This expression of confidence and commitment of resource by the BMC will allow the ideas for quarry restoration to be pursued.

Please can members be reminded to keep their “ear to the ground” re. plans in their local areas and get involved.

Beacon Hill Country Park – Charles Gameson contacted Leicestershire County Council re. biting flies caused by cattle grazing.

6 Climbing Walls

Re-defining BMC Walls Committee: The role of the Walls Committee has changed over the years and there is arguably now less of a need for dedicated Committee than in the past. It has been suggested to re-define Walls as the ‘Climbing Walls Advisory Group’ and making it a sub-group of the Training & Youth Committee. Walls Committee Chair is happy with this change. *(Nb. This does not affect the work actually being done)*

National Academies funding: The BMC National Academies are subsidised using funding secured from Sport England to support talented English climbers. Scottish and Irish children who did well in the YCS National Final were invited to attend in earlier years but not the current round of events. Scottish and Irish children’s places were effectively subsidised by the BMC, in the same way that the BMC continue to subsidise the places for Welsh children. There have been concerns raised by Scottish parents, volunteers and others along the lines of “robbing the Scottish talent pool of opportunities”. This appears to be an issue of funding (rather than logistics/management).

Things to note:

- The national team is GB. However it is not eligible for UK Sport funding because climbing is not an Olympic sport, so Councils (BMC, MCoS, MCoI) have to provide funding.
- Sport England is not permitted to fund national teams (that is the role of UK Sport)
- Sport England is permitted to fund talent (English Talent Pathway)
- “Talent” is just that and the National Academies should not be seen as simply part of a conveyor belt leading up to the GB team.

Could a way forward be for Scottish/Irish to attend but with funding contributed from MCoS & MCoI (who have funding from Sport Scotland & Sport Northern Ireland)? Is there a central/shared (i.e. BMC & MCoS & MCoI) funding that could fund the National Academies? Self-funding could be seen as an option but probably unethical.

Leading Ladder rounds in the Midlands: 17th Nov – 2nd Dec, (Big Rock & Kilnworx), 9th Jan – 3rd Feb (The Pinnacle), 16th Feb – 3rd Mar (Redpoint), 2nd – 17th March (The Tower). See <http://thebmc.co.uk/bmc-leading-ladder-2012> for details.

Midlands Bouldering League: last round this weekend. 24th – 27th Nov (Wolf Mtn)
See <http://midlandsboulderingleague.co.uk/> for details.

7 Youth

No report submitted.

8 Clubs

No new topics on the agenda at the moment. The past year has identified what issues & difficulties were faced by clubs and implemented courses, guidance, useful documentation, access to funding etc. to address these.

9 National Council News

Reps from the GB Ski Mountaineering Team gave a [very good] presentation on the GB team, including the high cost of equipment and difficulties of training for events. They seem to be looking for funding from The BMC to help with these costs or with entry level or lower level training, and pointed out that, despite the relative inaccessibility of the sport, it does encompass much of what The BMC is about. (The BMC currently funds the cost of ISMF membership and competitor licence fees.)

BMC governance: Three independent members to the BMC Executive Committee will be sought, instead of two.

Honorary Treasurer and Specialist Committees Recruitment: The BMC is seeking an Honorary Treasurer for 2013 and there is currently a recruitment drive to encourage new people to get involved with committees, since amongst our 70,000 members there is a wealth of untapped expertise. See the website or articles in Summit.

Cymru: Discussion on wind turbines in mid Wales. SNPA is looking to introduce some new signage to Snowdon.

South West: Cornish Climbing Festival was well-attended.

10 Next Meeting (This will also be the AGM)

Wed 6th Feb 2013

7.30pm

Venue: Wolf Mountain, Wolverhampton (who have kindly agreed to let those attending the meeting climb for FREE beforehand. Thanks Wolf Mtn!)

Meeting followed by Dan and his super duper gear destruction machine. So dig out those retired krabs and furry slings and come and find out just how strong they actually are!

Written by Claudia Sarner