

**To: British Mountaineering Council South West Area (13 March 2014)
& British Mountaineering Council Access and Conservation Trust
From: Martin Crocker, Project Officer, ClimbBristol**

ClimbBristol (Avon Gorge Climbing Regeneration) Project Report

A detailed report on ClimbBristol was made at BMCSW at its last Bristol-based meeting on 14 November 2013; the following is a summary of the matters requiring an update (to be read in conjunction with that substantive report).

More Positive Action on the Rocks

The planned scrub clearance operations on the Lower Amphitheatre Wall were carried out by the ClimbBristol team on 8 December 2013, following the acquisition of the necessary consents from Natural England and Bristol City Council. Typically the heavens opened for the ensuing three months, delaying a renewed lease of life on the cliff until spring. Now, with the sun shining again, little stands in the way of climbers engaging their wits on classic Avon test-pieces like *Little Red Rodney* and *Spinor*. Natural England was pleased with the work and acknowledged that - as well as helping climbing - it proved of conservation benefit to the site.

We have assessed and prioritized the cliff-based scrub and loose rock work that remains to be executed (ideally while the momentum, working relationships and procedures secured and proved by ClimbBristol are intact). Of these we managed to slip in works on Main Wall (*Maltravers* and *Magic Theatre* areas) before the end of the scrub-cutting season (28 February). The work was carried out in collaboration with that of a broader collective from BMCSW on the weekend of Feb 15 & 16. (Organisers Matt Goater, BMCSW Chair, and Libby Houston, botanist and ClimbBristol member, will no doubt wish to report the significant improvements in the Main Area that were achieved.) Clearly there remains a substantial amount of work across the cliffs; as a result we have proposed a six-month extension to the ClimbBristol project in order to complete the job (see **Outlook**).

Fixed Gear Renewal

The story is the same. We have had very few people stepping forward to assist, and only 'two or three' diehards are making serious inroads into the glut of skilled voluntary fixed gear renewal work remaining (both pegs and bolts) – e.g. the recent regearing on New Quarry and Sea Walls. Nonetheless both competent and willing-to-learn pegging recruits are always very welcome (they can check in via ClimbBristol's Facebook page or go see Dick at Dick's Climbing).

Outlook

As stated above ClimbBristol is seeking approval of a six-month extension to the project (application made to the BMC's Access & Conservation Trust on 26 January 2014). This is due to unforeseeably exacting and labour-intensive constraints on restoration works but also the new or greater opportunities that have now developed in the two-year project. The additional resource will, we believe, ensure we achieve the following core aims within the project's lifetime:

- Complete the programme of improvement of conditions on the cliff face, each operation being subject to a detailed assessment and application for consents. (See **Appendix 1**.)
- Be positioned to engage with key decision makers in our ever-strengthening civic and city network, when our second ClimbBristol leaflet is sent out this spring.

- Contribute to discussions and consultations on various influential initiatives that seem poised to embrace the regeneration of the Great Quarry (Main Area) including the closed car park.
- Help BMCSW to play a strong role in the creation of the successor to the Avon Gorge (Bristol Side) Management Plan 2010 – 2015 and, moreover, a new holistic Avon Gorge management philosophy where cultural, recreational, and access considerations are valued highly.

The Bristol Climbing Festival, Saturday 26 July 2014

Our plans have been revised and sharpened up, and a licence application to Bristol City Council submitted (min. three months' notice required). We have had to move the proposed event from the Main Area to Sea Walls, mostly for conservation reasons. Members of the CBSG will be available tonight to talk more about festival proposals; the following is a list of the updated key ingredients:

- Festival to be held under Sea Walls
- Parking strictly on The Downs (Circular Road); pedestrian access via The Gulley
- A marquee to be set up to act as a central focus for meeting, greeting, eating, and sounds
- Provision of a catering van, toilets, and festival management & first aid point
- Exhibits and stalls including those of supporting retailers Dick's Climbing and Taunton Leisure
- Main partners include Avon & Somerset Search and Rescue (stewards), Undercover Rock (free climbing taster sessions, Speed Climb), and Redpoint (bouldering – on rock and Roktagons)
- Affable local hosts to show climbers around, plus a charming Master of Ceremonies
- Special invitations to pioneers from Avon's climbing history (1950s – present day)
- Wet weather alternatives on site, such as slacklining and comps on mobile boulders
- Evening party hosted by Redpoint, Bedminster, with unmissable talks by climbing celebrities
- Tying in to the BMC's celebrations of its 70th anniversary

Martin Crocker
ClimbBristol Project Officer (p.t.)
March 2014



Appendix 1

Avon Gorge is one of Britain's most important sites for rare plants. Natural England requires ClimbBristol to produce academic-standard evidence that any proposed operations will not cause harm to Avon Gorge's botany or indeed more widely or collectively to its SSSI or Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status. Additionally, scrub removal is only permitted during a narrow winter window because of the risk of disturbing birdlife and interfering with the food chain.