



## BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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### MINUTES OF THE SOUTH WEST AREA

Meeting held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm @ The Nova Scotia Inn, 1 Nova Scotia Place, Harbourside, Bristol BS1 6XJ.

#### Present & Signed In:

Matthew Goater (MG) - Chair  
Gareth Palmer (GP) - National Council  
Simon Fletcher (Avon Rep)  
Martin Bazley  
Richard Nadin  
David Fisher  
Martin Crocker (MC)  
Evan Hall  
Frank Cannings (FC)  
Mark Davies  
Richard Rogers  
Brian Mullan

Philip Wilson (PW) - Sec  
Dave Turnbull (BMC)  
Ian Butterworth (Mendips Rep)  
Libby Houston (LH)  
Mark Courtiour (National Trust)  
Jonathon Mallard  
Torran Elson  
Jay Jackson  
Iain Peters  
Allan Howells  
Tom Hinchliffe

One additional person unknown attended the meeting but did not sign the register.

1. **Welcome & Apologies for Absence.** (MG) welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked members whether they minded the secretary recording the minutes electronically for later paper transcription. There were no objections to this. Apologies for absence were accepted from John Willson, Rick Sowards, Barney Carver, Gareth Greaves & Mark Kemball.
2. **The Previous Meetings Minutes:** These were reviewed for accuracy & completeness and signed off.
3. **Feedback from National Council Feb Meeting:** (GP) outlined the progress of this meeting, as follows:
  - I. Change In Subscriptions: Proposed increase of individual membership by £1.50, £1 for students, unwaged & U18's; other rates increased pro rata. Increases to be voted on at the BMC AGM (26 April).
  - II. Drilled Equipment & Dry Tooling Position Statements: These were adopted.
  - III. BMC 70th Anniversary Celebrations: 6-8 events held nationally to be announced by the BMC.
  - IV. Glen Brittle Hut Refurbishment: To be refurbished at a £97k cost, with BMC contribution (approx £40k).
  - V. Cost Of Summit Magazine: Income from advertising met the printing costs, with the cost to the BMC being £75p per copy for mailing. This was in reply to a question raised from a previous southwest meeting.
  - VI. Awards: John Innerdale (Mountain Heritage Trust) to receive the George Band Award at the 2014 AGM.
  - VII. Insurance: The BMC has changed this with no problems. All travel policies remain the same.

The BMC Area Briefing notes were also read out by (MG).

4. **Update On The Avon Gorge Regeneration Project:** Progress was outlined by the Project Officer (MC), as follows:

- I. Planned Scrub Clearance Operations: These were carried out on Lower Amphitheatre Wall (8<sup>th</sup> December 2013) and Main Wall (Maltravers and Magic Theatre areas) on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014). This work was further co-ordinated with BMC SW Area who burned the removed vegetation and further cleared the closed car park in the Main Area (16<sup>th</sup> February 2014).
- II. Fixed Gear Renewal: Progress here is slow with too few volunteers (pegs and advice can be sought from Dick's Climbing). So far most work has been done by a small handful of activists.
- III. Decision Makers: The next priority will be to continue the campaign to influence 'movers & shakers' in Bristol's civic and business world. A ClimbBristol leaflet is to be mailshot to a well-researched list of parties and follow-up discussions held.
- IV. There appears to be momentum amongst key stakeholders to now proceed with developing proposals for regenerating the base of Main Area (Great Quarry car park etc). Various groups are campaigning for same.
- V. Approval and funding is being sought for a 6-month project extension principally due to unforeseen constraints of working in an SSSI (which has meant complex and labour-intensive applications have to be made for any scale of cliff-based works). All work has to be done within a strict narrow winter period so as not to disturb the flora and fauna.

5. **The Bristol Climbing Festival (Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2014):** Again progress was outlined by the Project Officer (MC) as follows:

A comprehensive licence application (60 pages in total) has been submitted to Bristol City Council (minimum 3-month notice is required). The proposed event has been moved from Main Area to Sea Walls (for conservation and road safety reasons). This application included the following key ingredients:

- I. The festival is to be held under Sea Walls.
- II. Parking strictly on The Downs (Circular Road); pedestrian access via The Gully.
- III. A marquee to be set up to act as a central focus for meeting, greeting, eating, and sounds.
- IV. Provision of a catering van, toilets, and festival management & first aid point.
- V. Exhibits and stalls including those of supporting retailers Dick's Climbing and Taunton Leisure.
- VI. Main partners include Avon & Somerset Search and Rescue (stewards), Undercover Rock (free climbing taster sessions, Speed Climb), and Redpoint (bouldering – on rock and Roktagons).
- VII. Affable local hosts to show climbers around, plus a charming Master of Ceremonies.
- VIII. Special invitations to pioneers from Avon climbing history (1950s – present day).
- IX. Wet weather alternatives on site, such as slack lining and competitions on mobile boulders.

- X. Evening party hosted by Redpoint, Bedminster, with talks by climbing celebrities.
  - XI. Tying in to the BMC's celebrations of its 70th anniversary.
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- 6. **BMC SW Main Wall Scrub Clearance Day:** (MG) thanked the volunteers that helped clear and burn invasive vegetation from the left hand side \car park and toilet area on the 16th February 2014. He reported that this was done to encourage rarer plants and stimulate additional biodiversity. (LH) reported that this was a significant work (results are on the SW Area Facebook page). (PW) apologised for missing this item from the agenda.
  - 7. **Cheddar Gorge Sub Committee – for the re-negotiation of the current climbing five-year moratorium (expires late 2014):** The meeting heard representations from Mark Courtiour (National Trust), who is also representing the corresponding views of Cheddar Gorge & Caves who did not attend. Mark reported that there had been no major issues (apart from the latest bolting transgressions). Their joint opinion was that they would like climbers to adhere to and follow the 2009 Draft Cheddar Gorge Bolt Policy when the current moratorium expires. Therefore anyone new routing in Cheddar should contact the crag owners to gain permission to do so first. Permission would be based on whether new routing and subsequent climbing ascents would pose a risk to the non-climbing Cheddar Gorge visitor(s) and conservation interests. He added that initial contacts could be made by phone to either the Cheddar Caves & Gorge Offices (for south side new routes) or the National Trust Offices (for north side new routes) for any such projects. He added that an on-site meeting might be requested/required if further project discussions were required. (MG) and (PW) agreed to speak to Gordon Jenkin in order to formulate the BMC SW Area response to this, now that we know the landowners' positions. It is hoped that this will be presented at a future Bristol meeting.
  - 8. **Access & Any Local Issues.**
    - a) **Lion Rock Cheddar Recent Bolting Without Landowner's Permission.**

The present position was explained e.g. new bolts appeared on National Trust Land (mainly link-ups and finishes at Lion Rock). The November 2013 BMC SW Area Meeting therefore asked (DT) to ask the individual concerned to apologise for their actions and remove/disable these bolts.

      - I. (DT) confirmed that he had spoken to and received a sincere verbal apology from the individual concerned. He added regretfully that he had however not instructed the person to remove/disable these bolts and thought it unlikely that they would be removed by the person concerned if he was asked to do this.
      - II. This apology was accepted by Mark, Courtiour (National Trust). Mark remained neutral on whether these bolts should be removed, but remained impressed that we were policing this issue as they did not have the resources to do this themselves.
      - III. (DT) was asked to speak again to the bolter which he agreed to do now that he knew he had to ask for the bolts to be removed.
      - IV. If the bolter does not remove/disable the bolts by the date of the next local Bristol meeting, then this item can again be tabled and their removal by a third party considered in line with what was originally voted for at the previous Bristol BMC SW Area Meeting held in Bristol (November 2013).
    - b) **Fairy Cave Quarry Update (ownership change):** A group of local caving clubs in collaboration with the BMC area access rep are in negotiation regarding the future of the quarry.

**c) Proposed Extended Bolting of the Periphery Entrance Routes – Cheese wring Quarry Cornwall:** The following points were aired:

- I. (PW) apologised for the confusion surrounding this and confirmed that this had been raised in the last BMC SW Area minutes under 'Any Other Business', but had unfortunately been moved to another section of the minutes by him without thinking through the consequences. He added that it was only intended to add this item to the agenda in order to start the debate as to whether this is a good or bad idea on behalf of the proposer and not vote through any changes.
- II. (IP) made the point that potentially more non-local climbers climbed at Cheese wring Quarry than locals.
- III. The email from Barney Carver was also read out to voice local Cornish climbers' concerns e.g. they are generally opposed to bolting these routes, but wish to see further crag development elsewhere. He suggested that Kit Hill Quarry would be a good candidate for such a project as it had been agreed in principle and a report drawn up in 2010 by Chris Full for any interested parties. See <http://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?id=239>.
- IV. (MG) added that any such further discussions/decisions would be taken in a local meeting in Cornwall. Presently there are no plans to raise this issue.
- V. IP) raised the point that the South West Area is very large to manage effectively (Cornish climbers find it hard to attend Bristol meetings due to the distance and perhaps feel alienated). (PW) said that we aimed to hold meetings local to climbers in Bristol, Dorset & Cornwall on rotation, unless important issues come up in any of these sub areas that need discussion. It was agreed to table this as an agenda item for further discussion at the next meeting held in Cornwall.

**d) Proposal: More Abseil Chains on The North Culm Coast (in addition to the installed chain at Lower Sharpnose):** The successful installation of abseil chains was completed and reported by (IP). It is proposed to install further chains for high marine grade stainless steel abseil points at popular locations in the area to try to discourage the huge amounts of unsafe and unsightly 'tat' that is currently being used.

**e) Anticipated Deterioration of the Path Along Bosigran Seaward Cliff (Black Slab area):** Des Hannigan may report on the situation here following the recent storms as he is holding a watching brief on this. The steel rod on 'the step' has also gone missing.

**f) Unknown Buttress Avon Main Wall:** The Bristol City Council Stabilisation Works following rock fall last year is scheduled to take place soon. (SF) to publish dates as soon as they are known.

**g) BMC Angle Grinder:** The whereabouts of the BMC angle grinder is being investigated by (MG).

**9. Any Other Business.**

- BMC AGM 26<sup>th</sup> April @ Portland, all welcome.
- Sandford Quarry: The BMC area access rep has negotiated a formal access agreement with the owners. Full details will be available on the Regional Access Database.
- Walking Rep & Walking Representation: The BMC SW area meeting reiterated that walkers were welcome and could table items of interest for discussion via the agenda.
- The sad death of the long standing BMC member Mike Penny was sadly reported by (FC).

10. **Date of Next Meeting:** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm @ The Hawkins Arms, Zelah.  
See [www.hawkinsarms.co.uk/where-are-we/](http://www.hawkinsarms.co.uk/where-are-we/).