

BMC Sandstone Open Meeting - 5th October 2014

Present: Tim Skinner, Sarah Cullen, Malcolm McPherson, Chris Gibson, Graham Adcock, Edwin Jenkins, Martin Walker, Emma Harrington, Daimon Beail, Steve Jackson, Karen Vaughan, E Jenkins, Mark Brewster, Phil Loasby, Richard Handy, Neil Atkinson, Oliver Hill, Simon Wilson, Bob Moulton (Chair)

1 Welcome and Apologies

BM welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from: Mike Vetterlein and Richard Fox.

2 Minutes of the 18.5.14 Meeting

Approved for accuracy as far as anyone could remember.

3 Harrison's Rocks

a. *The Rocks*

i TS reported that no cement work had been done this year and there were a number of areas where it was now needed.

ii TS reported that the front bolt above Grant's Groove had failed, probably because it was too close to the edge. He had removed the back bolt and would put in a new pair of bolts further back, along with a small number of bolts that also needed to be put in.

iii BM report on the resin work: unfortunately it had not restarted this year as MV and Mick Canning had not been able to meet up. SJ, who along with five others and MC, had volunteered to do the work undertook to contact MV so that he could be briefed by MV so that work could restart as early as possible next year. BM also reported (as noted in a footnote to the minutes of the 18.5.14 meeting) that MV had told him that Mike Eden, a geologist, had done a study of the various types of surface-treatment and had concluded that what MV was doing was among the best and cheaper than other methods. BM had been unable to contact ME (*after the meeting OH spoke to ME and OH has offered to do further work on the subject*). **Action SJ**

b. *Access to the top of Isolated Buttress*

i TS reported that following reports of movement in the point where people stepped across to and from the mainland, he had inspected it with Chris Tullis and AP and had concluded that it was unsafe and that there was no way that it could have been made safe. He had therefore broken it off so that it could not be used. MB made clear his strong view that this had been a mistake and that climbers should have been left to make their own decision as to its use, and that at the very least an expert should have been called in to advice. MMcP quoted from the BMC's 'Climbing & Occupiers' Liability leaflet with reference to the *Volenti non fit*

injuria principle. MB's and MMcP's views were noted and would be reported to the BMC.

ii There was a wide discussion on the best way for the top of the buttress to be accessed as it was thought that a significant number of climbers would not bother to descend the easiest route (2b), and would instead lower-off. The obvious solution was a bridge, but this could encourage members of the public to go onto the buttress, with a real danger of people lighting barbeques. The ideal solution was thought to be to recreate the step-across block in some way, but there would be considerable difficulties in doing this. The general view was that having ladders going down and then up from the jammed boulder was preferable to a bridge. In the short term, NA undertook to put up a knotted rope tied at both ends, and this method would be monitored to inform the final decision by HRMG and the BMC. **Action NA,HRMG**

c. ***Woodland Plan***

i TS report on the next area to be felled (from Vulture Crack to the fallen tree). Tony Flint will be cutting the area in the week commencing 24th November, and there will be SVG work days on the weekend of 29th/30th.

ii MMcP reported that the invasive Himalayan Balsam was encroaching onto the BMC-owned land and that action should be taken to take it out. The best time to do this would be in March. TS commented that action was also going to be taken to control the bracken and rhodies at the Rocks. **Action TS/HRMG**

4 ***Harrison's Car Park, Toilet Block and Campsite***

a. ***Up to November*** SC had taken over the remainder of the Soft Rock contract work. Things were going well and car park donations and camp site fees had been very good.

b. ***After November***

i TS reported on a meeting that he had attended with Dave Turnbull (BMC) and Neil Kellett and Victoria Tustain from the Forestry Commission. The FC were not keen on the CIC proposal for using number-plate recognition for collecting car-park dues but they are prepared to put in Pay-and-Display equipment to pay for keeping the toilet block open, and are looking for partners, DT had said that the BMC were prepared to make a contribution to the start-up costs. The question of payment for camping would need to be sorted out, possibly by using the Pay-and-Display machines. It was accepted there may be problems, but the FC were prepared to 'see how it goes' and to make changes as necessary. There was a suggestion that if the income was lower than expected the toilet block would be closed for the less busy periods.

ii The FC proposed to close the toilet block this winter for the work to be to upgrade the toilet block and do repairs on the toilet block (paid for by Sport England under the terms of the lease) The FC would also be resurfacing the

approach road. MMcP suggested that BMC should pay to keep the toilet block open during this period.

iii A meeting had been arranged by the FC for 13th October, neither TS nor Dave Turnbull could attend and BM was representing the BMC.

5 **High Rocks**

- a. BM had received an email from the owner that there was a problem with people climbing without paying and with climbers causing problems when wedding photos were being taken. GA reported that he BM, OH and AP had met with the owner. The owner did not want to stop climbing at High Rocks, but he was also concerned about increasing numbers of climbers exacerbating these problems. He has stopped issuing new tickets and had set the day rate at £5 while he thought about what to do next, and he was thinking about setting up some sort of club, and he had said that he would consult further with the group who had met him.
- b. Meanwhile all climbers are encouraged to pay, sign in, and not to get in the way of wedding photos.
- c. It was not considered that there was a need for a further SVG workday at High.

6 **Bowles**

DB reported that the tree above Birch Tree Corner was rotten, and was about to be taken down.

7 **Bulls Hollow**

- a. GA reported that the bolt inspection had been carried out.
- b. It was agreed that we should have an SVG workday to cut back the vegetation that had grown up over the summer. **Action GA**

8 **Eridge Green Rocks**

BM reported

- a. The BMC's Access and Conservation Trust had made a donation towards the cost of the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) buying a new piece of land adjoining the existing site. Although of no direct interest to climbers, this was seen as a gesture of goodwill.
- b. The BMC had declined request form the land agents involved to contribute to the cost of resurfacing the access track, due to the fact that the numbers of climbers using the Rocks is small, the Rocks can be approached by footpaths,

the request had only been made two weeks before the work was due to start and the SWT had not requested a contribution.

- c. It was reported that the no-chalk sign below *Sandstorm* had fallen down. BM to email SWT on this. The SDST would be prepared to make a donation to the cost of doing this. **Action BM**

9 **Stone Farm**

- a. MMcP proposed that we should cut back some of the trees in front of the Cat Wall area. He had someone lined up who'd do the work for us for free. BM asked him to provide details of the work to be done so that he could apply to Natural England for a consent. **Action MMcP, BM**
- b. It had also been agreed at the last meeting that we should coppice some of the trees on the lower slopes, and this could be included in the above application. TS and BM to progress. **Action TS, BM**

10 **The Sandstone Code of Practice**

BM reported that this was due for revision to incorporate minor changes and to give due emphasis to the main points as now printed on the postcode (namely the need to wipe footwear carefully before each climb and to avoid 'dogging'). BM referred to the recent UKC thread titled 'Sandstone Erosion' and although some of the suggestions were impractical. During the discussion a number of points were made:

- i. The need to clean footwear before each climb was crucial, and more important that insisting that only rockshoes should be worn. The term rockboots in the code should be replaced by rockshoes,
- ii. Chalk was discussed at some length with some in favour of a complete ban and others thinking that this would be unrealistic, There was a general agreement that the message should be that 'The preferred ethic is not to use chalk.
- iii. There was a similar discussion as to 'dogging' and/or working moves, which some saw as being different. **Action HRMG**

11 **The SVG Website**

(<http://www.sandstonevolunteers.org.uk/www.Sandstonevolunteers.org.uk>)

SJ reported that the site was running well, but nothing particular to report. DB's website (www.southernsandstoneclimbs.co.uk) also provides information on Southern Sandstone.

12 **The Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust** (<http://www.sdast.org.uk/www.sdast.org.uk>)

GA reported:

- i. The book mark had been printed
- ii. Twenty four users have been identified that give instruction on Southern Sandstone, and will be contacted to offer the SDST charter mark;

iii. The SDST now has charitable trust status

13 **Date of the Next Meeting**

Sunday 17th May 2015 in the same venue. It was suggested that the next October meeting should be started at an earlier time.