

BMC South West Area Gathering

MINUTES

Meeting held at The Moorland Hotel, Haytor, Dartmoor,
Saturday 9th September 2017, starting at 7:00pm.

Present and Signed in:

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| James Mann (Chair) | Mark Kemball (Secretary) |
| Helen Wilson (National Committee) | Dan Middleton (BMC Office) |
| Philip Wilson | Simon Fletcher (Avon access) |
| Trevor Smith (Clubs rep) | Martin Hallett (Swanage and Dorset access) |
| Guy Van Greuning | Will Hornby |
| Mark Courtiour | Mike Virtue |
| John Dixon | Russell Blackaller |
| Freddie Naish (A.Y.C) | Iain Peters |
| Robin Moon | |

1. Welcome and apologies for absence – James Mann welcomed everyone to the meeting, apologies were received from Colin Knowles, Patrick Moore, Frank Cannings, Bill Sharpe, Oliver Warren, Ian Butterworth, Gareth Palmer, Dave Fisher and Bob Peters.
2. The previous meeting's minutes were reviewed.
3. BMC area briefing notes – these were summarised by James Mann.
4. Feedback from National Council - Helen Wilson briefly summarised the last national council meeting.
5. Organisational Review – it was not possible for the review group to produce an interim report for the current area meetings, it is hoped that a report will be available for the next National Council meeting. The review was discussed, concern was expressed that the BMC should remain a representative body rather than a governing body, while it was recognised that there is a need for some sort of governing body within the BMC for competition climbing.
6. Cotswold Outdoor – This is now the BMC's "Recognised Retail Partner", Dan Middleton explained what this means and how we benefit from this, particularly that it helps us financially as at the moment we are not receiving financial support from Sport England.
7. The Lundy Climbing Festival 2017 report – Iain Peters reported on the Lundy Festival. He started by expressing gratitude for the hard work done in organising the event by Gareth Palmer and Corinne Share and to the Landmark Trust in facilitating the event. It was a fantastic festival, blessed by very good weather attended by

climbers of all ages and abilities – a proper “grass roots” event. Iain expressed concern at the poor support from the BMC offices with participants having to wait for up to 3 months for an acknowledgement of their deposits and a delay in paying the initial deposit, which threatened to jeopardise the festival, Scott Titt offered to cover this from his own funds, that he did not need to in the end was a great relief.

8. Area Youth Co-ordinator’s report – Freddie Naish (AYC) attended the meeting following the Youth Climbing Series finals at Ratho, proposals he had put forward to change the way the event is run, of particular benefit to the South West with our limited range of suitable venues, were not accepted. He is planning to re-work the proposals to re-submit next year. Dates for the 2018 competition in the South West are 27th January, 3rd March and 24th March. Venues have yet to be decided. Freddie is keen to organise events to get the youths climbing outdoors and Will Hornby and James Mann, who were already hoping to organise such an event will work with him.
9. Access and local issues
 - a) Dan Middleton had run a bolting workshop earlier in the day. Participants were keen to improve the sport climbing in the area – it was pointed out that any bolting needs to be in line with the agreed fixed gear policy for the area. They are planning to re-bolt Torbryan then Ansteys – the bolts at these venues are now more than 20 years old and of dubious provenance. This is being supported by Martin Hallett and the Dorset Bolt Fund.
 - b) Report to BMC Area regarding Avon Gorge/Bristol City Council interactions
 1. I have submitted a request on our behalf to BCC/Natural England to undertake a scrub clearance/rock scaling day on Suspension Bridge Buttress (west face i.e. Hells Gate etc.) during November. This has the support of the Bridgemaster. Libby Houston is preparing a botanist’s report and will oversee the activity in a botanical capacity once the permit is granted. A volunteer team will be needed to undertake the work.
 2. BCC are working with the Emergency Services, NHS Mental Health, Samaritans regarding reducing the suicide risk in the Avon Gorge. There are three ‘hot spots’ – Sea Walls south, the ‘peregrine watchers area’ above Main Wall and the fence above Giant’s Cave Arete. The gate above Sea Walls (currently padlocked) is likely to be fitted with a keypad for climber access – code to be on the RAD). There will be improved signage and padlock removal above Giant’s Cave Arete. There is no defined proposal for the Main Wall section currently.
 3. We need to be alert to the impact of the huge income reduction the BCC has experienced from central government, in terms of its impact on Estates/Parks. This section of BCC has to become ‘cost-neutral’ by 2021. It is plausible to assume that some ‘parks’ may be spun off as separate Trusts, and if that happens to the Avon Gorge we will absolutely need to be amongst the Trustees to guarantee that the climbing interest is not sidelined.

10. Club Issues – Trevor Smith reported that there is to a Students’ Clubs seminar in 2 weeks’ time.
11. Hill Walking Issues – Trevor Smith and Dan Middleton reported that Carey Davis is making good progress towards launching “Mend our Mountains 2” a crowd funding campaign aiming to raise £1million for footpath maintenance and conservation.
12. Coastguard Callouts – James Mann reported that over the summer there have been a number of unnecessary callouts made by members of the public for DWS climbers in the Torbay area and also for a team climbing in the South Hams. Martin Hallett reported that there have been problems on Portland where coastguards have not called in support from local climbers and have had difficulty evacuating casualties. (Similar problems were reported in West Cornwall at the previous meeting.) Following this discussion, James showed his “Moonraker” film, which he is entering for the Kendal Film Festival. Appropriately, coastguards turned up for the first ascent of Moonraker and the making of the film!
13. SW events – Will Hornby reported that he and James had not made progress with organising an outdoors event for young climbers in the South West (see item 8 above).
14. Any other business
 - a) Martin Hallett reported that he has been actively fundraising for the Dorset Bolt Fund and that there is a great need for the Portland bolts to be renewed – many of the staples are now 20 years or more old. During the summer there have been 3 reported bolt failures on Portland including one lower-off bolt, fortunately without too serious consequences. There is a need to make climbers aware of these risks and how to mitigate against them, Martin is using social media to spread this information as far as possible.
 - b) At present there is a fixed rope across "The Cauldron" on the Rainbow Bridge Traverse, this allows easier access to the DWS routes in The Cauldron. This is usually removed at the end of the DWS season and replaced at the start of the season when the bird ban is lifted. Unfortunately the thread at the east end has worn out and it is suggested that this should be replaced by a bolt or drilled thread. The meeting was in favour of this, but as this does not comply with the present fixed gear policy, a proposal will be tabled at the next SW area meeting in Devon.
15. Date of next meeting – provisionally 25th November at The Nova Scotia in Bristol