

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

177-179 Burton Road
Manchester M20 2BB
www.thebmc.co.uk

Tel: 0161 445 6111
Fax: 0161 445 4500
office@thebmc.co.uk

Lakes Area Meeting

Minutes

Held at Kong Adventure, Keswick - Wednesday 6th September 2017 - 7.30pm

1: Welcome and apologies for absence: Welcome from Ron Kenyon, who stepped in as chair. Apologies from: Mike Parsons (Chair), Dan Robinson, Fiona Sanders, Steve Scott, Pete Gunn, Chris Bonington (Chris had written to the BMC supporting the proposed cycleway development, but strongly opposed the zip wires proposal due to their potential environmental impact), Richard Graham and Jenny Graham. Thanks to Ron for standing in.

We moved the Thirlmere zip wires proposal to the top of the agenda as some people had attended the meeting specifically to discuss this matter.

2: Proposed Zip Wires at Thirlmere:

- We were joined by Mike Turner, director of Treetops and Vicki Blanco the manager of their development at Brockhole. Treetops are the company proposing the zip wires development at Thirlmere.
- Laura Fiske from the Friends of the Lake District (FOLD) also attended. The FOLD are a charity whose main purpose is to conserve the landscape of the area.
- As well as BMC members we were joined by some local residents from Thirlmere and Keswick.
- There were no formal presentations, only a discussion. Mike Turner started by checking that we were all aware of the proposed development and what the discussion was about. As well as the proposed zip wires there is also a proposed cycleway development that would link cycle paths around the reservoir. This has been proposed for several years, and is basically in need of funding (£800K). United Utilities, who are the main land owner in the valley, would fund this to allow the development to happen. The meeting was in approval of the cycleway proposal.
- The more controversial topic was the proposed zip wires. They would be based at Swirls car park, using the toilet block as a reception and kit store. No cafe, cycle hire or visitor centre is proposed. A launch site would be sited in the trees above here. Access would be by vehicle on a forest track. In the long term electric vehicles might be used, but diesel vehicles were indicated to be used initially.
- Four wires would run across the road and reservoir to the western shore. Transport would be available to the Fisher Crag launch site, just below the summit, to a further four wires returning across the lake. Final access to Fisher Crag would be via a raised walkway. It transpired later in the meeting that a new track had recently been bulldozed towards Fisher Crag by UU. Mike T indicated he had no knowledge as to why this had been done.
- There would be no netting over the roads, with participants wearing oversuits and pockets being emptied to prevent dropped objects. A robust protocol would be followed. The many agencies involved have been consulted: Civil Aviation, Highways etc. He indicated that there is a strong demand for this type of attraction. Anticipated visitors would be a mixture of old and new visitors to the National Park. We now have a different type of visitor entering the

Park wanting a quick fix adventure. The zip wires in Wales have been very successful and have a three month waiting list to participate. It was pointed out that these are in an industrial setting.

- Whilst it sounds like a great proposal many people are concerned about its visual impact and increased visitors within the valley. Mike T stated that a lot of research had been done into this impact. They have based projections on 50,000 visitors per year, and paying £50 each for the experience. (136 participants per day and £2,500,000 of annual income).
- Mike T expressed his concern over some prejudice that had been shown in some of the consultation process so far. It was evident in this meeting that emotions were running high and people feel very passionately about protecting the landscape or their home valley. It was stated more than once that we have a world class attraction here already: the landscape, which has recently been awarded World Heritage Status.
- Laura Fiske spoke from The Friends of the Lake District (FOLD). She thanked us for the invitation to attend our meeting and asked for civil responses during the consultation process. She stated that we all have a responsibility to respect and manage the landscape of the Park. This included the many bodies involved as well as individuals. She stated the aims of FOLD which are to conserve and enhance park, its landscape and increase understanding. Conservation must be given a priority. They have visited the site and undertaken their own research. They support the cycleway proposal and had done prior to Treetops involvement.
- Their main concern is about where the proposed development is sited, and the future precedent for building such structures elsewhere in the Park. We already have wires at Brockhole and Grizedale.
- FOLD feel that the proposed zip wires development does not match the ethos of the Park's aims. A question was asked as to whether the World Heritage Status would provide greater environmental protection. The legislation involved with the National Park would already far outweigh any influence from the WHS.
- A concern was expressed over noise. Mike T responded by saying that they were experimenting with nylon wheels on the zip wire trolleys, and considering electric vehicles for the future. He conceded that they couldn't do anything about screaming participants.
- Thirlmere is noted as a birthplace of the conservation movement in the UK. The battle against Manchester Corporation and the building of the reservoir raised awareness of protecting landscapes and the founding of the National Trust.
- It was reported that the opening hours for the wires are likely to be from 9-5. They would not be lit for low flying aircraft. Two open events have been organised to share plans. No proposed date has been set yet for the application to be submitted. There is a section on the Treetops website for the public to provide feedback.
- Concern was expressed over aviation and road safety. Mike T stated that it has been cleared with the Aviation and Highways Authorities. The wires would be 30m above the road and visible from some distance away, so it should not distract drivers.

Mike, Vicki and Laura were thanked for their time and input.

We voted: For or against the Zip Wires Proposal. Due to several guests from the local community being present this vote was taken twice, once for everyone present, and a second time for BMC members only.

	Against	For	Abstentions
Everyone Present:	18	2	6
BMC Members Only:	13	2	2

3: Minutes of the previous meeting: Approved

4: Matters arising from those minutes not included in the Agenda: None

5: Action Points:

- Priest Hole Cave rescues and bolts. There have been two further rescues at this cave over the summer. Bolt anchors have been placed by Patterdale MRT. They are well away from climbing routes and the cave itself. No suitable natural anchors were available in the exact location. Frustration was expressed that we had been consulted about the potential placement of bolts and replied. The area had not supported their placement. This was ignored, perhaps with valid reason. It would have been polite if they had contacted us to inform us of the development. It was proposed that we write to the team and express concern over the process. Ron Kenyon will action. For:10, Against 2, Abstention 1.
- The tree felling at Armathwaite has gone well. It has been well received by the climbing community. The crags are much drier. The BMC has kindly donated money to this project.
- Castle Rock: the crack is widening at a quicker rate than before. It will collapse at some stage. Dave Bodecott was thanked for his input into the recordings over the years. There is now more loose rock inside the fissure. Geoff Warburton from Durham University wants to put further monitoring equipment into the crack to monitor, as part of a research project.
- Seathwaite Parking: no update.
- Tree clearance at Shepherds Crag. Ron is in the process of contacting the land owner about this. There is a lot of oak on this crag which needs to be conserved. It was suggested that we take appropriate advice before any felling is undertaken.
- Composting Toilets: no progress.
- Bolting Murton crag. Ron has contacted the military, but had no response.

6. National Council Review:

- The BMC has still to write its policy on challenge events. This is going to be considered at national level.
- The subject of Bracken was discussed. Nick Kurth is going to look into the matter. It was mentioned that bracken spraying may be more limited due to tighter controls on the chemicals used.
- Composting toilets at key crags would be supported if the area decided to proceed. This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting.
- We have a new post at the BMC looking at Commercial Partnerships: Simon Lee. Simon has set up a great partnership with Cotswold Outdoor/Snow+Rock. This allows members a great discount whilst benefitting the retailer and the BMC.. Look out for some more exciting developments from Simon's work.

7. Organisational Review:

- Over 5,000 people responded giving a good picture of members' views.
- A clear direction has been gained informed by what members want.
- Sub groups and working parties are now looking at specialist areas.
- Recommendations will be launched by mid-November for the Area AGMs.

8. Access:

- Access to Launchy Ghyll is closed. James Bumby to write to UU for an update.
- Bolts have been placed near Swarthgill Beck, Arthurs Pike. The bolts have been chopped. Rob Dyer was going to contact Ben Bryant, who we believed placed them, to share current practise and thinking about placing bolts within the Lakes. James Bumby to chase.

- Events in the National Park: Charlie Sprowston also attended the meeting – he is a local runner and climber and navigation coach. Charlie had recently been involved in organising a Sky Race around Glenridding. He had £400 of climbing kit stolen off Pinnacle ridge on St. Sunday Crag. Charlie has not been able to find out who has stolen the kit. It was placed the evening before the race. These events are marked courses and don't involve navigational skills like traditional fell races. Lots of races now involve marked courses. Responsible organisers collect in flags and tape afterwards by retracing the routes used. Sky Races are organised by the UIAA and the International Skyrunning Federation in partnership. He wanted to know how we can share good practice. There are now lots of events all over the country with many different organisers. There was concern at the increase in these such events .

9. Landscape issues:

- Ron informed us that a plaque had been unveiled to Norman Birkett, a local barrister and judge. Norman played a pivotal role in opposing the proposal to raise the level of Ullswater in 1961.

10. Cumbria Bolt Fund: No update from representative.

11. Hillwalking:

- No update from representative, but lots of other meeting content relevant.

12. Any Other Business.

- Ron Kenyon expressed his displeasure at the cost of car parks around the Lakes. He will write to the National Park personally: they sell an annual pass for £460.

13. Next Meeting – 29th November 2017