

# BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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## Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 6 September 2017 Old Edwardians' Sports Club, Solihull

**Present:** Phil Simister (Chair), John Edwards (Sec), John Churcher (Solihull MC), Sheila Wyatt (Solihull MC), Ian Wyatt (Solihull MC), D. Rickerby (Solihull MC), Tamsin Mayberry (Solihull MC), Stuart Webb (M.A.M.), Roger High (M.A.M.), David Jones (West Brom MC), Zoe Pickering (Bowline Club), Sally Ann Northcliffe (Bowline Club), Richard Lloyd (Coventry MC), John Handley (Coventry MC), Richard Greaves (Ceunant MC), Michelle Aukland (Bowline Club), Nessa Saniee (Warwick Mountains), Maryam Sharifzadeh (Warwick Mountains), Roger Gallier (Saltley Hillwalkers), Michael McSheffrey (Saltley Hillwalkers), Jason Till (Berwyn Mountaineering), David Garner (Extreme Sports Central, Birmingham), Jane Thompson (BMC Clubs Officer), Shirin Shabestari (speaker), Andy Railton, Dom Jay, Kerry Elford, Neil Currie, Brian Smith, Michael Blake, Siandana Maryam & Shukoorr@yahoo.com **(32, of whom 11 were female)**

### 1. Welcome and Apologies:

- a. **Welcome:** Phil Simister welcomed everyone to the meeting
- b. **Apologies:** Apologies had been received from: Richard Law, Claudia Sarner, Roger Fanner & Andy Potter.

2. **Minutes of the last Meeting:** The circulated minutes were agreed as accurate. (proposed: Tamsin Mayberry, seconded: Andy Railton).

3. **Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere:** None.

### 4. Reports:

4.1 **Access East:** Andy Railton said the sale of Granitehorpe Quarry had not formally gone through yet.

4.2 **Access West:** Nil

4.3 **Climbing Walls:** Nil

4.4 **Youth:** Nil

4.5 **Hill Walking:** David Jones reported that the Hill Walking Implementation Group (HWIG) - a group with a different composition to the Hill Walking Working Party (HWWP) - had met and a further meeting will take place later in September. The HWIG is tasked with helping the BMC Executive & Officers turn the Strategic Plan for Hill Walking into action and change. Peter Judd is on the HWIG to represent the interests of all the Area Hill Walking reps and he has said that the cover of the next Summit magazine is hill walking themed; an early attempt to address the 'image problem' of the BMC.

However, the "Mend our Mountains – Make a Million" (Mom-MaM) project (which feeds into the Plan's "Doing more for the upland environment" strand) was taking up around 90% of Carey Davies's time and what with the AGM motion of no confidence and Sport England funding occupying many in the BMC, progress has been slow in implementing.

All Hill Walking reps have been asked to fill in Peter's questionnaire with a view to a big get-together next year and told to keep looking at the "BMC Hill Walking Representatives" private Facebook group for news. David said that so far very little information had been posted there.

Brian Smith, ex Chair of the HWWP commented that after two years of hard work it was disappointing to find that very little progress had been made on their recommendations in almost six months and he was concerned that MoM2 might take the focus off the strategic aims proposed by the working party. However there were two Directors on the Implementation Group so he hoped this would not happen. There was general agreement that progress needed to be made in making hill walking feature more prominently in the

BMC, especially as the Ramblers are now aiming to represent hill walkers.

**4.6. Club Issues:** Jane Thompson said that the BMC were looking to put on a seminar for Clubs just before the 2018 AGM, probably 28<sup>th</sup> April, so that people could attend both and that any topics of interest should be sent to her or Andy Potter.

### **5. National Council report from last meeting:**

Phil Simister reported that the Governance Review was now being presented as a full organisational review in the aftermath of events at the AGM; and he reminded everyone that this review, whilst initiated by National Council, was now being watched closely by Sport England before they released long term funding. Because a new constitution is likely to be proposed in late January 2018 there will be five Midland area meetings next year, with one in April just prior to the BMC AGM as well as the one in February. He mentioned that gender balance within the various BMC committees was a real concern, as the 25% of women in the BMC were inadequately represented on its Council. This did not seem too much of a problem within the Midland region.

Although most of the BMC's income comes from membership, up to 27% has been from Sport England and this could suddenly disappear in part or in whole. A working group has been set up to consider a financial strategy in the event of this happening, although so far this seems largely a set of aspirations. As part of this attempt to find other sources of income, Cotswold Outdoor has recently become the BMC's recommended retail partner and Simon Lee is now in place as a Commercial Partnerships Officer. Some in the BMC would like the organisation to become fully independent of government funding as their top-down Directors / Companies Act approach is effectively non-democratic and historically does not fit well with BMC member-led system. Phil wondered what percentage of the membership felt the same way? He felt that several of the issues that had been floating around in the BMC in the last couple of years needed to be better understood by the membership.

Jane Thompson pointed out the BMC had received nothing from Sport England since April and it now seemed that any funding from this source will only be backdated to 15<sup>th</sup> August, leaving a £90,000 hole in the accounts, and will only run up to end of December. Hers was one of four posts created as a result of Sport England funding and she was awaiting news of new contract. John Handley said he wanted to feedback the funding issues to Coventry MC members but he would require more details on this in the minutes than had previously been forthcoming.

Other things discussed at Council were whether Rehan Siddiqui should be made an honorary member and whether a 'diversity' award in his name should be considered. BMC is also considering whether its representation on various Mountain Training Associations is sufficient or appropriate, cognisant that such training came under the BMC's umbrella in the 1970s. AGM voting procedures are also to be reviewed with the aim of increasing membership participation in the organisation's decision making. As a result of several prominent members being involved in the AGM motion BMC patrons are to be asked to reaffirm that they agree to the BMC's aims and expectations.

Brian Smith stated that he had made his position clear and considered the BMC should remain a member-led organisation, with its main aims being to serve the membership and help them to enjoy the mountains in the various ways they do. He felt it should attempt to become totally self-funded. The meeting seemed to be in general agreement with this but there was a comment of discontent regarding the membership questionnaire that was sent out to all members by the organisational review group in July, which had now closed. They had tried to complete this survey but had found the format of the questionnaire quite confusing, as had many fellow club members, very few of whom had got through to the end. Jane stated that none of the staff members of the BMC had been involved in producing the questions for this survey, which was being handled by an independent group. Even staff at head office including Dave Turnbull knew very little because of this. She believed the feedback from the focus groups and the results of the survey would come through at the November meeting.

**6. Any Other Business:** Jane Thompson stated she had a list of the "Mend our Mountains" projects that would be happening in the different area that she was happy to share on request. It will involve all national parks across the UK.

Richard Greaves wondered if we should be writing to our MPs as taxpayers if Sport England was not prepared to give mountaineering its fair share of funding. Phil Simister pointed out that it was an MP who was pressing for greater clarity regarding the governance of various sports through Sport England funding.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm

## 7. Date & location of next meeting:

- Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 at Old Edwardians Sports Club, Solihull. This will include the AGM and will be Phil Simister's last meeting as Chairman. The speaker after the meeting will be BMC vice-president Emma Flaherty.
- Following the meeting refreshments were taken and then attendees enjoyed an illustrated talk by Shirin Shabestari, founder of "Persian Pursuits", which opened their eyes to the amazing tourism, trekking and mountaineering possibilities in Iran (over 240 4,000 m peaks!) Shirin was fortunate that she was taken up the mountains by her father as a young girl and was often the only female in the climbing group. Sadly she never got to summit Damavand (5610m) with her father but has since made spring & summer ascents of this spectacular peak, which is only a 2-hour drive from Tehran, with clients. She detailed the problems for UK citizens obtaining visas but made the country seem a very safe and interesting destination for climbers & mountaineers.

Written by John Edwards