

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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

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

Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 22 November 2017 Old Edwardians' Sports Club, Solihull

Present: Phil Simister (Chair), John Edwards (Sec), John Churcher (Solihull MC), Helen Every (Solihull MC), Ian Wyatt (Solihull MC), D. Rickerby (Solihull MC), Michael Reynolds (Solihull MC), Roger Fanner (Solihull MC), Stuart Webb (M.A.M.), Chris Elliott (M.A.M.), David Jones (WestBrom MC), Zoe Pickering (Bowline Club), Andy Potter (Bowline Club), Michelle Aukland (Bowline Club), Andy Railton (Bowline Club), Richard Lloyd (Coventry MC), John Handley (Coventry MC), Bill Colledge (Coventry MC), Richard Law (Wrekin MC), Steve Wright (Mountain Training W. Mids), Phil Blatch (LMC), Iain Blanch (Youth Rep), Michael Blake, John Bradshaw, Lauren Bean, Hazel Jonas, Hiday Sharon, John Marston, Mike Beaumont, Nick Colton (BMC Deputy CEO), Tim Strong (ORG), Fiona Sanders (ORG) **(32 of whom 5 were female)**

1. Welcome and Apologies:

- a. Welcome: Phil Simister welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- b. Apologies: Apologies received from: Brian Smith, Jason Till (Berwyn MC) & Claudia Sarner.

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

3. **Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere:** All to be covered elsewhere.

4. Reports:

4.1 **Access East:** Andy Railton reported that Leicester County Council had released their 'Minerals & Waste Local Plan', which included some reference to quarries in the area.

4.2 **Access West:** Nil.

4.3 **Climbing Walls:** John Churcher said that "Bare Rock" had consulted about their new climbing wall proposal and have gone back to the manufacturers to see about modifications based on comments made.

4.4 **Youth:** Nil.

4.5 **Club Issues:** Andy Potter said the priority for the next term was to improve communication between Clubs and the Head Office. On being questioned he confirmed that the seminar for Clubs mentioned under 4.6 of last minutes was still going ahead.

4.6 **Hill Walking:** David Jones reported information he'd received from Peter Judd of the Hill Walking Implementation Group. HWIG had received assurance that Hill Walking would feature on 25% of the covers of Summit magazine, the same share as other aspects of climbing & mountaineering. It had been impossible to move forward with some of the more ambitious parts of the strategic plan for hill walking, as Sport England is still withholding funding monies until the changes the BMC have agreed to are actually implemented. HWIG had still sent 3 recommendations to the BMC Executive. One was that the proposed 'Get-Together' for Hill Walking Reps occurs somewhere during the winter period and this has now been approved. Another was to ensure that Mend Our Mountains 2, which was launched in Parliament last week, had maximum exposure to hill walkers in general. Looking further ahead, they urged the BMC to get more involved with Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award scheme. The HWIG meets again in December and hopes to have Dave Turnbull present then.

There was some discussion about the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that comes into force on 25th May 2018. David said he was very concerned about the impact this might have, possibly resulting in Clubs being fined if they breached the code. Andy Potter felt it was not as scary as it first seemed and said that guidance for Clubs would be forthcoming from the BMC.

5. National Council Report from Last Meeting:

Phil Simister went through his report of 22nd Sept which had been photocopied & distributed for attendees at the meeting. Nationally he highlighted that 2/3rds of the identified 'minor' failures of good governance had been addressed by the BMC and the fact that Sport England funding had been made available on a month by month basis since August, but that it was not going to be backdated to the beginning of the year. The impact of the loss of £90,000 had been ameliorated by significant cost savings within the BMC. One local matter discussed was a proposed Zip Wire over Thirlmere, which National Council fully opposed.

He also pointed out there will need to be an extra Midland Area meeting next year in March or April to discuss and approve matters before they go to the AGM.

6. BMC Representation on Mountain Training Boards:

Phil drew attention to the briefings about this that Jon Garside had posted on the BMC website. He mentioned that an acrimonious split that occurred in the 1960's between the BMC and Mountain Training England resulted in the BMC having representatives on various boards. The feeling for the last few years has been that it has too much representation on Training Council but adequate representation on the Board of Directors. The BMC has 4 (out of 17) places for voting representatives on Council and it has struggled to fill these at times, whereas organisations such as Scouts, Guides, Mountaineering Instructors & other outdoor groups had just 1 each. The National Council of the BMC had felt it was appropriate to bring its representation on Mountain Training England down from 4 to 1. Phil asked whether there was anyone in the meeting who was opposed to this. Nobody spoke or raised their hand so it seems there is no objection from the Midland Area for the BMC to drop down to a single representative.

7. Election of Officers and Committee for 2017/18: See separate minutes

8. Report on the Organisational Review: Fiona Sanders gave a brief review of the history and growth of the BMC from its formation in 1944, it becoming a Limited Company in 1993 and its growth since then which, amongst other things, had necessitated the Independent Organisational Review. Tim Strong distributed copies of the 2 page Synopsis or the 16 page Summary Report to attendees as requested. Fiona continued, explaining there were 8 people on ORG, all volunteers apart from the Chairman who was a QC who had climbed but was never a member of the BMC. It was 12 years since the last strategic review so ORG was much needed. They took specialist guidance on the BMC's Memorandum & Articles of Association and the legal advice was that *"the M&AA as currently drafted do not reflect best practice, do not reflect good governance, create legal uncertainty and risk for the BMC and those involved in its governance."* ORG also arranged for an outside agency to conduct a Member Research Survey (5002 responses) and held focus group meetings with other relevant individuals and linked organisations. ORG also looked at the Codes of Governance of 130 other sports & membership organisations. As a result of this data collection, ORG came up with 51 recommendations:- 5 Headline Recommendations; 15 concerning Strategy & Policy; 5 relating to Corporate Structure; 15 to do with Governance; and 11 on Culture, Leadership & Management. *'Taken together these are designed to create a grassroots BMC, driven by its members, volunteers & staff, which is fit to serve the present & future needs of all climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers.'* Points she highlighted from their findings were:- BMC members broadly participate in 3 or 4 of rock climbing, indoor climbing, hill walking & mountaineering. 72% of members do some indoor climbing and most young people & females becoming members do so via climbing walls. Of hill walkers, 11% said this was their only activity. 70% felt BMC should increase participation & membership. 33% of present membership is through clubs. Most felt that Access & Conservation was the highest priority for the BMC. Most felt that membership was value for money & that the BMC was doing a good job but that it needed more democracy and clearer aims / mission statement. ORG looked at the BMC becoming a charity but decided it *should remain a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee*. Its 3 charitable subsidiaries (Mountain Heritage Trust, Access & Conservation Trust and Land & Property Trust) should remain but 3 new additional subsidiaries needed to be created to deal with Commercial Activities, Wales/Cymru and Competitive Activities (including support of Team GB). It recognised that the BMC needs to be driven by its members but that other bodies had an interest. Therefore it was suggesting that National Council be replaced by a Members' Assembly and that a Partners' Assembly (for organisations such as Mountain Rescue, Mountaineering Scotland, Coastguards, National Parks etc) be set up to advise / mandate the Board of Directors (which would be a revamped National Executive). Possible appointments to the Board would come via a Nominations Committee but be voted on by the membership at the AGM. Recommendation 28 states *"The BMC should ensure the Board of Directors has clear primacy, to ensure compliance with the Companies Act 2006"*. This provoked some questioning and we were told accountability would be ensured by Recommendation 19, *"there should be an Annual Member Survey"*. Also that some things would be "reserved items" that the Directors would have to send to the Members' Assembly for approval. Recommendation 34 was that *"The BMC should retain the role of President, who chairs the Members' Assembly, however the role should be separate from the Chair of the Board of Directors."*

An online survey for members on the ORG Recommendations launches soon & will run until 22 December.

9. Any Other Business: None. Meeting closed at 10.35 pm

10. Date & location of next meeting: Wed 7th February 2018 at Old Edwardians Sports Club, Solihull. This will be Any Potter's first meeting as Chairman. The speaker after the meeting will be Dr Suzie Imber from the University of Leicester's Department of Physics & Astronomy, who has climbed Denali and who became famous in September by winning BBC2's "Astronauts: Have You Got What It Takes?" programme. She was one of 12 candidates put through a series of gruelling tests by former astronaut Chris Hadfield to find out who had the qualities to be an astronaut. Winner Suzie has now received a recommendation to join the European Space Agency.

Written by John Edwards (*parts in italics are direct quotes from the Independent Organisational Review*)