

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of The Peak Area Meeting Wednesday 31st January 2018, The Maynard, Grindleford

Present:

Rob Greenwood (Chair)	Becky Hammond (secretary)	Spencer Ramsey
Chris Moor	Alan James (UKC / Rockfax)	Mike Pinder
Phil Cooper	Robert Townsend (The Mountain Club, Stafford)	Christina Richards
Andy Reeve	Louise Hawson	Mark McKenzie
Austin Knott	Graham Sutton	Peter Judd
Henry Folkard	David Brown	Neil Foster
John Roberts	Andy Syme (National Council)	John Brown
Mark Warwicker	Rick Gibbon	Steve Clark
Nick Longland	Toby Wilson	Kim Leyland
Will Weir	Dave Parry	Tim Grice
Gary Gibson	Hilary Lawrenson (Climbers Club)	Colin Densell
Andy Cairns	Spenser Gray (Oread MC)	Alison Cairns
Kevin Stephens	Adam Peel (Bassetlaw Hill & Mountain Club)	Lynn Robinson
Pete Hammond	John Barnard (Eagle Ski Club)	Graeme Hammond
Geoff Nichols	John Bayliss	Dawn Biram
Clare Reading (FRCC)	Simon Cundy	47 people signed in, but more present

Also present:

Mark Anderson (Stanage-North Lees warden)
Emily Pitts and Paul Evans (observers from BMC Northwest area)

1. Apologies:

Chris Radcliffe, Gill Radcliffe, Stephen Coughlan, Daniel Hoyle, Simon Lee, Frag Last, James Scott, Bob Pettigrew, Bill Irving, Ian Millward, Pete Lancaster, Pam Storer, Adam Long

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed as correct.

3. Actions from the previous meetings

- Data about proportion of attendees who are hillwalkers – Becky Hammond has provided to Peter Judd
- Letter to National Trust thanking them for assistance and cooperation at Dovedale – Rob has done this. Luke Barley (NT) has seen the Peak Limestone South guidebook and is pleased with it.
- Write to Sarah Fowler asking for updates on some of her specific commitments from the November 2017 meeting – currently on hold, pending progress with the new warden and feedback from Access reps.

4. Introducing Mark Anderson – new warden at Stanage

Mark introduced himself and explained his background in terms of work and his familiarity with Stanage and the Peak.

Been in post less than 4 weeks. Post is guaranteed full time for 12 months, then part time thereafter unless more funding becomes available.

So far his main focus has been on the campsite. He wants to get out on the edge, etc. Excited by the Ring Ouzel project.

The toilets have re-opened and are being cleaned by a contractor three times a week.

Rob Greenwood pointed out that we have a vested interest in Mark being here, as we petitioned for a full time warden. We want to build a continued relationship.

Henry Folkard asked what the situation was with parking enforcement. Mark understands that consultation is underway. There's a notice on the parking payment machine at Hollin Bank (Plantation) car park.

Income from the car park goes direct to the estate, but this needs to be communicated better.

Henry said that it was really good to have Mark here.

5. Access updates

Masson Lees

Ian Milward is following this up. It's important for climbers and cavers. The land has changed ownership. Trees have been chopped down in the bottom of the quarry, and material dumped there. It's not clear what's going on. The access agreement was negotiated with a previous owner. There's a fear that the new owner wants to use it for landfill. Derbyshire County Council are monitoring it from a minerals planning point of view, and Derbyshire Dales District Council (who cover planning for landfill) are also monitoring.

Mottram Moor & Glossop road spur and Woodhead dual carriageway

This is part of the Transport for the North Strategy. The BMC is commenting. Need to respect the real problems in Mottram and Tintwistle, but without digging up the Peak

Midhope track

No further information

Spirit of Kinder anniversary event for the mass trespass will be held on 21st April.

Ravensdale climbing access

Henry Folkard explained the situation: Natural England have introduced a precautionary ban (i.e. no climbing anywhere on the crag). This is because peregrines nested on the crag for the first time last year. In recent years, restrictions have been selective based on the nesting sites of the ravens. The new precautionary ban applies to climbers and also walkers. The implications for future access to all crags could be significant, because it sets a dangerous precedent. Precautionary restrictions on sea-cliffs and mountain crags are generally okay, but the Ravensdale restriction actively restricts enjoyment. Note that we're in favour of protecting wildlife.

Egg thieves are a problem in the White Peak, and climbers are useful for spotting dodgy activity. Climbers have previously stopped the theft of Ring Ouzel eggs at Stanage.

Kim Leyland explained that Ravensdale isn't a traditional nesting site for Peregrines. If it did become one, then a precautionary restriction would be acceptable because a one-month precautionary ban allows peregrines to scope out the crag.

Gary Gibson asked whether Peregrines had returned to Beeston Tor. Henry said he hadn't heard from the National Trust, but thought that if Peregrines had returned we would have heard about it by now.

Danny Udall (Eastern Moors manager) said that a "just in case" restriction without evidence is very different to placing restrictions on a known nesting site where birds have been seen prospecting.

It was agreed that working together is important.

BMC position and Natural England response available here: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/ravensdale-natural-england-impose-climbing-ban>

Greenfield – Fletchers Mill housing estate

Mark Warwicker explained that the revised plan will be published in June. The map shows that it will cover a smaller area than before, but will still be approximately 200 houses and will be visible from all around the area.

Access to the estate will be difficult.

West Nab

Access for walking and bouldering is still difficult due to boulders being placed in the parking areas. Mark Warwicker has been passed around all the possible agencies, but it doesn't seem to be anyone's responsibility.

Surprise View carpark

Signs on site state that the gates are locked at 9pm. This is "intelligence-led" i.e. it doesn't always happen. Our local Access reps can contact the PDNP if necessary.

6. Hillwalking reps update (Peter Judd)

Progress with the strategic plan for hillwalking has been minimal, mainly due to the disruption and paralysis as a result of the organisational review and withholding of Sport England funding. SE funding has previously been useful for making headway – e.g. it paid for the Hillwalking officer. It offered the best prospect for further funding of other projects in the strategic plan.

More than 50% of BMC members go hillwalking

More than 30% are 'mostly' hillwalkers

11% give hillwalking as their only activity.

A national get-together for area hillwalking reps and those interested in hill walking related volunteering is being planned.

Mend Our Mountains Make One Million / Great Ridge torchlight photo – Peter’s idea has been grabbed by Carey and Inigo at the BMC office, and been expanded. The Camping and Caravanning Club are joining in, and bringing in Julia Bradbury. New date 22nd May.

A MOMMOM fundraising pack is available on the BMC website: <http://mendmountains.thebmc.co.uk/fundraise/>
The Ramblers have donated £10,000.

Achieving the £1million target will be a big flag to wave to legislators about how people care about the environment.

7. Awards and recognition scheme (Lynn Robinson)

The BMC has 85,000 members, and most of the work is done by volunteers. Lynn is keen to increase recognition of this. Other organisations have some really good ideas for this.

The new scheme has three awards to be awarded annually:

- Rehan Siddiqui Award for Exceptional Voluntary Contribution towards promoting Equality and Diversity in the BMC.
- Young Volunteer of the Year Award for exceptional voluntary contribution in climbing, hillwalking or mountaineering and the work of the BMC.
- The George Band Award.

Anyone can nominate people for these awards – see BMC website. Deadline for nominations this year is 13th April.

Lynn is also looking at a volunteering programme, and structure and support for volunteers.

Rob Greenwood pointed out that everyone who attends Area Meetings is volunteering!

8. Organisational Review – Implementation (David Brown and Andy Syme)

The Organisational Review Group issued their final report on 2nd March and have effectively been disbanded. The National Council have created an Implementation Group to take it forward. We are the first Area Meeting to discuss the IG’s proposals.

Important to note that this is being led by National Council (our reps, chosen by Area Meetings).

The IG are proposing a two stage process for updating the BMC’s Articles of Association. The first stage would satisfy the legal requirements to comply with the Companies Act, general principles of good governance, and achieve Tier 3 recognition for Sport England (essential for accessing SE funds). The second stage would be about implementing all the rest of the ORG’s recommendations.

Mike Pinder explained that MTE and MTUK would prefer to support the BMC by receiving SE funding via the all-sport bid, but it isn’t essential to them. He criticised the quality of the proposal documents.

Andy Syme explained that the IG’s work has been pressured. We are already under an extended deadline for SE. There are deadlines to meet to have resolutions presented in time for the AGM in June.

The main sticking point with SE currently is ‘reserved matters’. SE doesn’t want National Council to be able to veto anything the board want to do. However discussions are ongoing, and whatever the structure it wouldn’t reduce the importance of the National Council.

The code of governance for sport is widely recognised, and isn’t just a Sport England thing.

Acknowledged that much of the current rush is because National Council spent two years procrastinating before commissioning the ORG.

The revised Articles of Association must be passed by 75% of votes at the AGM.

Gary Gibson emphasised the importance of ‘selling’ this change to the membership in order to achieve 75%.

Chris Moore asked for a summary of the updates, as it wasn’t clear.

Andy Syme explained that the Board of Directors would have 11 members, 8 of whom would be approved at the AGM (i.e. members retain control over the board) including the President who would be directly elected by the members.

John Barnard asked whether the current definition of ‘mountaineering’ would carry through. *David Brown* said that it would. *Andy Syme* recommended looking at the comparison document which explains the differences between the current and proposed Articles of Association.

Spenser Gray asked what the definition of an ‘independent’ director would be. *Andy Syme* explained that this is someone who has not been on the Board, staff, or National Council in the previous 4 years, or related to anyone.

Martin Wass said that most people join the BMC because they want to, rather than because they have to, and asked if this will change. *David Brown* said he doesn’t fear that at all. *Andy Syme* didn’t feel that the BMC will go the way of the British Canoe Union, because the BMC doesn’t ‘own’ any qualifications therefore membership is not essential to participate.

Andy Syme said that members will still have control of the organisation. The proposals include the introduction of a grievance procedure. The Board of Directors will only be able to act within the Objects of the company, and the Board will be subject to ratification at the AGM (if the membership don’t like them, they can say so).

Henry Folkard expressed his thanks to the members of National Council for their efforts in finding a pragmatic way through. He trusts our NC reps because we elected them.

Andy Syme acknowledged the errors in the proposal documents. He recommended looking at the special website that's been set up. People can ask questions on the website.

The Implementation Group need feedback. On 28th April National Council will collate all the feedback that's been received and make a decision about the final proposals, which will be put to the AGM in June.

Mike Pinder expressed concern that it still isn't clear what the proposal is.

Neil Foster said that the proposal may be reasonable, but communication is an issue. Need to emphasise the influence that the BMC has nationally, and could lose.

Louise Hawson expressed that the danger is apathy.

Mike Pinder said that we have a moral duty to govern ourselves properly.

Someone said that everything is not going to stay the same. Things will change either because we change them, or because the law imposes it.

Rob Greenwood said that there seems to be excessive emphasis on Sport England, but that actually general governance needs to be the priority.

The room agreed in principle with Proposal 1 (the first stage of the updates).

Thanks were expressed to Andy Syme for coming and to the ORG for their work (Rob Greenwood to send a letter of thanks to the ORG).

9. National Council report (David Brown)

Subscriptions may need to increase for 2019 – a Finance Committee paper was circulated.

Mark Vallance is to be made an honorary member. He was President from 2003 to 2006 and has provided incredible support to the BMC. He is in poor health. Henry saw Mark recently and said that Mark was visibly pleased when he mentioned the honorary membership.

10. BMC Officers (Cath Flitcroft – Access & Conservation Officer)

Lots has been going on. Cath has been looking at the implications of Brexit on access to agricultural land, payments to landowners for access to land, etc. The BMC is working with other organisations on this.

11. Peak Area Newsletter

People were asked to note the latest edition of the newsletter. Many thanks to Dave Parry and John Coefield for this latest edition. As always contribution and photographs welcome: Please send to: peakarea@gmail.com.

12. Date, time and venue of the next meeting

Wednesday 23rd May 2018, 7.30pm at The Maynard Arms, Grindleford, S32 2HE. After the meeting, Carl Bedson will be talking about grizzly bears.

It may be necessary to change the date of the November meeting to accommodate the possible BMC EGM.