

# BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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## Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 23 January 2019 Old Edwardians' Sports Club, Solihull

**Present:** Andy Potter (Chair & Bowline Club), John Edwards (Sec & West Brom MC), Roger Fanner (SolihullMC), Andy Railton (Bowline Club), Claudia Sarnar (Bowline Club), David Jones (WestBromMC), Phil Simister (SolihullMC), Mike Reynolds (SolihullMC), Richard Lloyd (CoventryMC), Jane Thompson (BMC Clubs & Volunteers Officer), Lynn Robinson (BMC President & individual), Gareth Pierce (BMC Chairman & Clwb Mynydda Cymru), Brian Smith, Steve Wright, Stuart Jamieson, Rebecca Husband, Steve Clark, Paul Caine, Steven Johnson **(19, 5 of whom were female)**

**1. Welcome & Apologies:** Andy Potter apologised that the venue had not been ready for the advertised start time & that there was no food or alcohol available as the Rugby Club seemed unaware of our planned meeting, in spite of them being included in the notification email. However, Phil Simister was serving coffee at the bar having been promoted from previous Chairman to Barista. Apologies were received from Iain Blanch & Zoe Pickering

### **2. Minutes of the last Meeting:**

Item 6. Claudia Sarnar said that 4<sup>th</sup> sentence from end should read "There was strong feeling from the floor that if ODG wanted....." rather than suggest complete agreement. The Secretary also apologised for the Agenda error: the guest speaker tonight, was BMC President Lynn Robinson (not vice president)! With these amendments the circulated minutes for the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018 Midland Area Meeting are accepted as accurate'  
Proposed: Phil Simister Seconded: David Jones Carried nem con

**3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere:** Roger Fanner asked what had happened regarding publicity for this meeting after the GDPR changes discussed last time (item 4.6) as attendance was markedly down on previous meetings in spite of a 'big name' speaker. The Secretary replied that he had been in contact with Jon Chittenden and agreed that the latter should send out publicity to 'interested / actively involved' members in the Midlands Area. To this end he had forwarded all the email addresses of all Midlands attendees who had agreed to receive information on to Jon (in the body of an email) and asked these to be added to Jon's list. Later he asked Jon to send out an email to publicize this meeting, which appears to have happened. However, the reminder went out later than usual and didn't have the colourful poster to attract attention. The very cold weather may also have reduced attendance.

Phil Simister commented that when he was Chair there were always several emails sent out and he, or Tony at BMC, produced a poster which he felt helped. The Secretary said that he always used to do a separate emailing to Climbing Walls asking them to display the poster. Jane said this was still in order as Walls were not on the BMC membership database but that direct emails to members from Areas were no longer allowed.

Lynn Robinson said that the information send out by the BMC to members was linked to relevant postcode, although Jane Thompson said that members will soon be given the chance to personalize what information they feel is relevant to them & tick to receive emails relating to several regions or different activities. A comment was made from the floor that GDPR had proved ineffective in reducing the amount of junk mail received.

It was agreed that in future the Secretary contacts Jon Chittenden to ask publicity about Midland Area meetings be sent out 1 month prior to the meeting, with reminders 2 weeks and 1 week before, but that he contacts local climbing walls directly to ask them to publicize.

### **4. Reports from Area Representatives:**

**4.1 Access East:** Andy Railton said things had gone quiet re Charnwood quarry. Nothing

to report

**4.2 Access West:** No report

**4.3 Climbing Walls:** No representative & no comments from the floor

**4.4 Youth:** Claudia Sarner reported that around 100 youngsters competed in Round 1 (Midland & Peak Area) of the BMC Youth Climbing Series on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan at Birmingham's Depot wall.

- Round 2 is this coming Saturday at The Foundry in Sheffield; Rnd 3 is on 2<sup>nd</sup> March in Nottingham & Rnd 4 on 23<sup>rd</sup> March in Hereford. She asked for volunteers to help belay and judge at these venues. Lynn R commented that it was an excellent chance to watch some amazing climbing as well as help by BMC. The Chairman reminded the meeting that Claudia was supposed to be sharing the Youth Rep role with the Peak Area but that as they hadn't got a rep, she was having to do it all, with some help from himself and Iain Blanch. There is a new bouldering format this year to be in line with the European Youth Series, namely 10 problems to do in any order within 3 hours with max 5 attempts per problem.
- Brian Smith commented that it was great to see so many young people participating in climbing and out on the hills and that the BMC should really be trying to ensure that they sign up as members. Claudia pointed out that there was also a Midland Youth Climbing Series that had been running for a number of years, that wasn't organised by the BMC. This now seems to be even more popular than the BMC series, in spite of only a £2 difference in entry fee. She wondered if the BMC series was perhaps too daunting and seen as something for the elite young climbers.
- Claudia's final point was that she would like to see a Midlands Youth Day later in the season, not necessarily held in the Midlands, which would encompass hill walking and climbing. Suggestions and offers of help required.

**4.5. Hill Walking:** David Jones said the Hill Walking Implementation Group are still trying to get more mention and images of mountain walking in BMC publications and trying to make their voices heard above all the ODG discussion to ensure the 2015-19 strategic plan for hill walking is implemented. The President assured him she had read it 3 times.

- More than 50 people attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Hill walking Symposium at Castleton in November. With many workshops & a walk, this pilot event was a great success.
- MOM2, which will end in March, has now reached over £600,000.
- HWIG had decided not to take up a position on wild camping in England & Wales & were not going to promote it. However, they felt that working with other national organisations on hill walking matters such as footpath maintenance would be of great advantage to the BMC.
- There was discussion on how much progress had been made in the 5 years since the Midland area raised the issue of promoting hill-walking and David said that their report says 'made modest progress in 2018'. He said that his club's monthly coach meets were open to all members of the public and he was grateful to Tony in Manchester for advertising them on the BMC website. Maybe other clubs would like to do the same and try and get more people involved in mountain walking.
- David finished off by informing the meeting that he had now been elected as the Huts Group Chair.

**4.6. Club Issues:** Andy Potter reported that the committee met last week and that an update, including a Winter Newsletter, should be going out by email to clubs & be on the BMC website. Communication with Clubs is perceived as a weakness within BMC so the clubs committee has proposed a quarterly and annual cycle to try and improve communications with clubs.

## **5. National Council:**

**5.1 Report from last meeting:** Claudia Sarner said that council were keen that people be kept up to date with organisational developments and hoped that many would go to the website and sign up to get updates. It had been decided to collect gender tally information for Sport England on equality.

**5.2 Matters for the next Council Meeting:** Andy Potter asked if members at this meeting had any matters to raise but none was forthcoming. Brian Smith suggested that BMC should be asking the 11,000 individual members in the Midland area and not just the small number that attend meetings.

## **6. Organisational Development Group Matters**

An update from the ODG had been emailed round and is on the BMC website. It was stressed that ODG does want feedback on their proposals and it was hoped that all members would take the opportunity to get involved. There is an email specifically for ODG queries : [odg@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:odg@thebmc.co.uk)

## **7. Proposal for an Interim BMC Deputy President**

Lynn explained that the proposed position was not a role on the Board of Directors but someone mandated by the membership who could take over her role as President if this was needed mid-term, due to ill health or some other circumstance. It was not envisaged that the person appointed would stay in the role for years but would almost certainly be needed at some time during her tenure as President. There were 3 options:-

- a) Do nothing – such a role is unnecessary.
- b) Agree to someone from National Council should serve as Deputy and be voted into post by National Council.
- c) Agree that an interim Deputy President role is required and be voted on, by the members, at the 2019 AGM.

Phil Simister wondered how the person would be selected: via the Nominations committee or by the time-honoured ‘tap on the shoulder’ suggestion? If the latter he was concerned the post would be reserved for just 1 or 2 people.

Lynn said it wasn't going to be someone put forward but someone who volunteered. It was essentially a politically expedient appointment interim to the 2020 AGM.

After further discussion the meeting moved to a vote, with each individual being allowed 2 votes if desired.

Option a) No votes, Option b) 4 votes, Option c) 8 votes, Abstentions 4 votes

## **8. Any Other Business, including news from HQ & proposed Membership Fee increase.**

Jane reminded the meeting that the deadline for nominations for the BMC Volunteer Awards was the end of the month and there were 3 categories (1) Young – less than 25 years old (2) The Rehan Siddiqui Award for Exceptional Voluntary Contribution towards promoting Equality and Diversity and (3) The George Band Award for Exceptional Voluntary Contribution to Mountaineering recognises people who have played a significant role in the BMC's work over an extended period of time. 2 people are needed to nominate an individual.

Lynn mentioned that the AGM was to be held at The Dome, Buxton on 31<sup>st</sup> March and there would be online proxy voting available.

She said the proposed subscription increase (£6 individual & £3.00 Club) would not come into effect until 2020 but needed to be agreed in the March AGM. The main reason for the increase was a huge claim (many ££ millions) on the Club's insurance due to a belaying mistake resulting in life-changing injuries. This has resulted in the premium the BMC pays its insurers going up by £175,000 per year for at least 3 years and regrettably this has to be passed on to the membership. A Finance & Audit Committee document (21/1/19) showed that generally BMC fees are lower than other UK outdoor organisations & those of mountaineering associations of other countries. There have only been 2 subscription increases since 2009.

Brian Smith reiterated his belief that the BMC should be looking for more members rather than raising fees. Andy Railton said that, although the present proposal was better than previous ones, it was again a greater percentage increase for clubs than individuals and to make the increase pro-rata it should be £6.00 individual & £2.50 club. However, he had worked out that £2.07 of everyone's sub increase was going to fund the insurance premium

hike, so that if club members were to pay £2.50 extra they were, in effect, only giving the BMC an extra 43p for activities.

Roger Fanner pointed out that some clubs were already considering disaffiliating to the BMC and that an increase could make it very hard to sell to their members.

John Edwards felt that it might be easy to get clubs to stay affiliated if it was stressed how expensive an accident could be to clubs or individuals without the BMC insurance cover: your house could be at risk if you climbed uninsured. He also pointed out that, contrary to what had been said previously, the date of the 2019 AGM did not appear to have been publicised yet on the BMC website.

Footnote: The BMC was formed in December 1944 so celebrates 75 years later this year.

#### **9. Date & location of next meeting:**

The next meeting is likely to be on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at a venue with walking & climbing possibilities, hopefully in the west of the region, unless one is needed on 13<sup>th</sup> March. Any meeting in March would be held at Old Edwardians Sports Club, Streetsbrook Road, Solihull, B90 3PE starting at 7.30pm,

The meeting closed at 9.40pm

The title of Lynn Robinson's talk after the meeting was "The BMC and Me" which focussed on the various mountaineering activities she was interested in and the voluntary work she had done for the organisation which led to the George Band award in 2017. Her slide highlights featured El Cap, which she climbed over 12 days with her husband to celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. These included some very 'basic' photos of wee jugs (not the holds!) and bodily functions. A quote we all took away with us was "you chuck your pee on the face but take your poo with you!"

Written by John Edwards