

## BMC Sandstone Open Meeting – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**Present:** Sarah Cullen (Chair), Adrian Paisey, Martin Walker, Michael Phelan, Steve Jackson, Chris Stone, Rik Payne, Martin Wragg, Rob Dyer, Elfyn Jones, Ian Nettleton, James Codd, James Bouchard, Robin Mazinke, Sarah Goodman, Duncan Codd, Malcolm McPherson, Graham Adcock, Tim Daniels, Tim Skinner, Emma Harrington, Daimon Beail

### 1. **Welcome and Apologies**

SC welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from: Bob Moulton, Ruth Spiller, Tim Birch, Nick Warren, Lee Simmonds, Mark Holden, Mark Hazel, Colin Woollard, Kate Cheyne, Gerry Gilmartin, Nigel Malleon, Alice Di Sacco, Oliver Hill, Tony Flint, Guy Atkinson, Brian Mead, Andre Hedger, Edwin Jenkins, Steven Waters, Andy Newton, Gemma Blackbeard, Nick Blackbeard.

**Introduction** This meeting will be a 10 minute overview from HRMG/SVG followed by 50 minutes of general discussion. Minutes are being taken of this meeting and will be available online from the usual websites but they won't be on the agenda for the next meeting.

This will be followed by a special meeting hosted by Martin Wragg on behalf of the BMC Land Management Group (LMG) to discuss details for access to the Harrisons Isolated Buttress. This is reported independently of these minutes, available via the link below.

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/future-access-to-harrisons-rocks-isolated-buttress>

**HRMG/SVG Overview** Please save any questions or comments on this for the general discussion part of the meeting. This is particularly important today as it's a long report with a second meeting to follow!

### **Harrison's**

- **The Woodland Plan.** The next stage, to be worked on this autumn is the area, below *Sliding Corner*. The tree surgeon has been booked, and the weekend of November 10/11th is planned for the SVG work.
- Mark Brewster has taken on the job of identifying suitable species of small trees to plant in the areas that have been felled. Mark has identified some species and sent us some images.
- The Fallen tree by The Sewer is now dead and we are looking at quotes to have it removed along with the silver birch at the top of The Sewer – they could both become dangerous if they are not dealt with soon.
- **The Isolated Buttress** To be discussed after this part of the meeting
- **Anchor Placements.** Bolting replacement and installation work is ongoing and a 2019/2020 bolting program is in development.

- **Resin work** Sarah met with Steve on Friday to have a look at the ground level resin work that needs to be done. The working at height draft method statement has now been drawn up, so just as soon as it is finalised we can start work on the higher resin work.
- **Strimming** Strimming work was done along the bottom of the rocks, nearest to north boulder to make the paths clearer and to attempt to reduce the Himalayan balsam. This is now looking good in that area as the work over the last couple of years, strimming and pulling up young plants before they flower has been successful. It will be impossible to eliminate completely as there is a lot on the other side of the fence and in the bottom field as well as the adjacent lane. A start was made on clearing a picnic area by the oak tree near north boulder. We hope to clear some more next year.

### **Stone Farm**

- Michael Phelan, who has now been co-opted by the chair onto HRMG, together with Theo Parr have done the resin work that could be done while standing on the ground all along the Rocks. Michael reports that there were large patches of chronic damage that have now all been treated, and that on recent inspection all that work is holding well. He is waiting for clarification on the working at height rules before doing the higher level work, some of which is now urgent Michael has also reported on very poor rock at the foot of the climbs that has become exposed by ground erosion.

**Bowles** Loz Reading reports on bolt testing : “With regards to the bolt testing we got this done at the same time as our ropes course inspections. We used a company called Outdoor Technical Solutions for this as they can do everything we have on site. A bolt puller was used which is a tripod that sits above the bolt. It is then attached to the head of the bolt and pulled in a upward direction. There are a number of different strengths that a bolt can be pulled at. A sport climbing/caving bolt should be able to hold a 15kn pull in a upward direction and 25kn sideways. We can't test sideways but there is a strong correlation between upward and sideways so a 15kn upwards is deemed ok. We tested a couple of bolts in some 'crap' rock on the low ropes course and found they could hold up to 20kn upwards!. We had to stop at this point as the machine could not handle any more. When installing new bolts they only need to be pulled to either 6 or 7 kn. This is called an installation check. We therefore tested all the bolts I have put in the past to 6kn. This is about 10 or so. We then tested one of the older bolts still in use to 6kn and this held too. We also tested a batch of bolts that have been put in over the years by different people and they all held 6kn with ease. We have now decided that any new bolts placed will be tested to 6kn when we have our yearly inspection but we won't be testing all bolts on a yearly basis as this may place too much strain on them over time. All Bolts still get inspected every 6 months for damage, cracks in rocks, movement etc (as required by law)”.

There's nothing else on Bowles to report at this time

**High Rocks** Climbing remains 'suspended' at High Rocks. The situation recently became worse by some unfortunate misunderstanding regarding wording on the BMC, Southern sandstone climbs and UK Climbing websites.

**Eridge Green** Nothing to report

**Bulls Hollow** Graham Adcock has done the bolt testing. Bolts and placements are OK, interconnecting cables should be replaced as a matter of urgency.

**Happy Valley** Graham reported that we have tacit agreement with the BMC to cover the Cheesewring bolts under the BMC scheme. TWCC have considered this and at present seem to be happy for the bolts to stay subject to the insurance cover being in place. A decision on the bolt above Red Snapper and on the mainland opposite the Cheesewring needs to be made and agreed.

**Steve Durkin Sandstone Trust** A committee meeting is planned for the near future.

*RDM - 21/10/18 – added to by SC 5/10/18*

## 2. General Discussion

### 2.1. High Rocks

There was a query on the reported High Rocks access update, it's important to note that currently climbing is Suspended, rather than banned and the reasons should remain private to High Rocks.

TD intends to visit High Rocks Management to discuss options and work to maintain our good relations.

### 2.2. Happy Valley Bolts

GA expanded on the details as follows: The 6 bolts were initially reported on the 1<sup>st</sup> April and shortly after the BMC were contacted by "John" who had details on the installation, but did not install them himself. John maintains permission was sought and agreed from Target Follow, however they now dispute this. Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators have agreed they are "Happy" for the bolts to remain on the proviso that they are covered by the same liability insurance as the Bulls Hollow bolts by the BMC. This has now been agreed by Rob Dyer (BMC).

Actions:

- We need to remove the Red Snapper single bolt as all are in agreement it has no place on an established bouldering highball. - Complete
- We need to clarify if it is necessary to back up the 4 bolts on the Cheesewring Buttress or whether they are close enough to provide backup for each other enabling climbers to rig routes off a combination of bolts.

### 2.3. BMC Accounts

There were queries on the BMC accounts which led to a brief overview by Martin Wragg of the BMC Land Management Group (LMG).

- There was an anonymous donation from last year to the value of £188k which has been placed into the BMC Charitable Trust. This has provided the money which enabled the BMC to buy Crookrise and the remaining money can be used toward managing any property owned by the Land and Property Trust (which includes Harrisons and now Crookrise). Note that Stone Farm is owned under Land Holdings along with 8 or 9 other crags. The reason the BMC has two land management bodies is that during the acquisition of Harrisons it was stipulated that the property was held in Charitable Status which required the new creation of the Land and Property Trust.

#### **2.4. Eridge Tree Growth**

It was reported that some tree growth at Eridge is compromising the climbing e.g. on Stirling Moss area. Tim Daniels has offered to contact the Sussex Wildlife Trust to review the situation and request action as appropriate.

#### **2.5. Stone Farm Tree Stump Belays**

The tree stump belays at Stone Farm have been continually monitored and were inspected during a site visit today. An alternative solution will be needed imminently and Rob Dyer to request permission for new bolt belays to replace them at the November LMG meeting.

#### **2.6. High Rocks Annex**

It was reported that the Water Board had been conducting works in HR Annex and had even caused some minor damage to the rocks with a vehicle. A request was made to investigate if we could commission some tree work to open up the rocks a little. GA to follow up with the owners. If permission is granted funding may be requested via the Steve Durkin Trust.

#### **2.7. Steve Durkin Trust**

SC gave a short overview of the Steve Durkin Trust and asked the audience to consider making a donation.

#### **2.8. High Rocks Continuation**

It was requested that we repeat our request to the Woodland Trust for permission to conduct tree work to create space around the rocks in HR Continuation. It was noted that the area is a Geological SSSI and therefore it could be favourable to enable more airflow to the rocks.