



Cyfarfod - BMC Cymru North/Gogledd - Meeting Bragdy Conwy Brewery

4 - 6 - 2019

Minutes

1. **Croeso – Welcome.** 27 members present, including Tim Jepson (Area Chair), Elfyn Jones (BMC A&C Officer for Wales), Gareth Pierce (Chair BoD), Dave Stanley (Project Manager for ORG Implementation), Dave Turnbull (BMC CEO)

TJ stated that he would deal with Local Issues (agenda items 5 – 8) and the Options Paper (agenda item 10) as priorities. If necessary, Matters of Report would be held over until the next meeting.

2. **Ymddiheuriadau – Apologies** Simon Paton, Ron Rees-Davies, Pete Johnson, Lun Roberts, Mike Pycroft, Ross Worthington, Miker Rosser, Andy Newton.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting.** 12 March 2019, Pen y Pass.

a. There were no **Corrections**

b. **Matters Arising:**

Welsh Climbing Championships As requested by Geoff Bennett, TJ has written to Nick Colton to express the meeting's concerns about the issues arising from this event, as minuted. Nick Colton has promised to discuss the letter with Zoe Spriggins, the BMC officer with responsibility for competitions.

Cynllun Iaith Cymraeg. EJ's work on a Welsh Language Scheme for the BMC is still in progress.

SNPA Weather and Conditions reports/warnings. Steve Jones has contacted TJ perturbed by the critical tone of this minute. Members confirmed that no criticism of the observers/reporters was intended or implied. Anne Vowles explained how errors enter the reporting/translating process and explained that a sub-group was set up at the April MountainSafe meeting to address the problems.

Dave Evans said that Plas y Brenin has offered to compile and publish ground condition reports and will offer to become involved in future developments.

EJ pointed out that the ground conditions reports were originally intended to inform inexperienced, rather than established, hill-walkers.

BMC Accident and Near-Miss Reporting System. This is now fully operational and has been generally well-received. Postings have been received from trad climbers, sport climbers and hill-walkers.

4. **Additional agenda items for AOB.** None

5. **Way-marking for Ultra Events** Mike Raine asked for members' thoughts concerning the intrusion of way-markers in the hills. These are often set out days before an event, and sometimes not properly cleared immediately an event is complete. There are guidelines available for organisers, but these are frequently ignored. The discussion recognised the reasons for, and against, various methods of way-marking and understood that organised events are becoming an increasingly popular way of experiencing the hills. Should the BMC involve itself in minimising the effect of way-markers, or simply accept evolving trends? MR offered to organise a conference to bring together event organisers, SNPA, Cymdeithas Eryri, BMC and other interested parties. Members supported this idea; EJ agreed to help. **Action MR and EJ**

6. **Descent from Idwal Slabs** Cliff Rhys Matthews had emailed requesting improved marking and anchors to signal and safeguard the 'walk-off' from the top of the Idwal Slabs (Rhiwiau Caws). The range of the ensuing discussion covered the importance of established traditions/ethics, how to best meet the needs of beginners and the frequency of accidents on that descent. No definitive solution emerged, and in any case the BMC could only present its advice to the National Trust (as landowners) and the National Park.

Action: EJ to report the discussion to CRM

7. **Grampians (Australia) Access** Andy Boorman outlined the access problems being experienced in Australia's Grampian Mountains due to restrictions introduced by the National Park.

Details of the campaign to restore access and the opportunity to sign a petition are available on-line:

https://www.change.org/p/stop-climbing-from-being-banned-in-the-grampians?use_react=false

The BMC will support the campaign by writing to the relevant authorities in Australia.

8. **Access and Conservation – EJ – Mynediad a Chadwraeth** (also see Newsletter) -

a. Choughs are doing well on the Orme. Thanks to climbers respecting the voluntary restrictions.

b. The Llyn Geirionydd and Llyn Crafnant areas are suffering from parking and consequent litter problems.

Please only use designated parking spaces, and take all litter home. NRW has agreed to remove bins from car parks in an attempt to mitigate the problem.

c. Tremadog highlights the problem of BMC crag-ownership, given the potential for a massive rockfall from 'Shadrach'. Discussion about what action needs to be taken is on-going.

d. Mike Doyle reported a number of incidents of groups belaying/lowering through the fixed anchors at Sports Climbing venues such as Castle Inn Quarry, rather than through the climbers' own equipment. The information in guidebooks is clearly not sufficient to persuade some climbers to adopt accepted best practice.

It was proposed that discreet signage and practise lower-off bolts be installed at venues with low-grade beginner sports climbs. This is an initiative which the BMC is looking to roll out at identified, specific locations (i.e. low-grade sports venues) across England and Wales.

It was pointed out that signage would seemingly contradict much of this meeting's earlier discussion about way-marking! The suggestion was made to explore solutions used in other areas, as this won't be a problem peculiar to N Wales.

9. **BMC Values Survey** This item was not presented/discussed due to lack of time.

The survey results are available online: <http://community.thebmc.co.uk/GetFile.ashx?did=3042>

10. **Options Paper – The Way Forward in Wales**

Neal Hockley presented the background to the Options Paper submitted by Gareth Pierce following his recent meetings with representatives of Sport Wales.

The Options Paper is available online: <http://community.thebmc.co.uk/GetFile.ashx?did=3029>

The pros and cons of the various options for increasing the influence of BMC Cymru in Wales have been rehearsed in several previous N. Wales area meetings, but the discussion has now been given extra impetus by the new governance arrangements of the BMC, and the timetable for implementing the recommendations of the ORG. In the past, BMC Cymru has 'punched above its weight' in many respects, but it needs to establish a distinct Welsh identity and a presence in Cardiff if it is to continue to influence the Welsh Government on important devolved matters, such as Health and Well-Being.

Concern was expressed that the pressure on volunteers' time could become excessive. There are already problems organising all-Wales meetings.

If BMC Cymru wants to receive Sport Wales funding at some future date, it would need to register through a partnership arrangement. The next funding application round finishes in November. But funding is not guaranteed and could end up siphoning money away from other associated organisations, such as Mountain Training Cymru. Increased influence would be a more realistic motivation for change than funding.

Dafydd Elis Thomas is a keen hill-walker and could be a useful ally at Welsh Government level.

The meeting was clear that BMC Cymru could not be truly independent.

A newly constituted BMC Cymru, with dedicated funding and officers, able to fully benefit from the staff and office resource in Manchester, was, in principle, supported by members in a vote, as follows: 17 For; 0 Against; 3 Abstentions.

Given all the uncertainties of future funding, resource, influence and membership, BMC officers need to propose a new structure for BMC Cymru which area chairs can then put to members.

Action: Dave Stanley to try again to arrange a meeting of Wales area chairs and officers.

11. **Reports**– All reports were held over to the next meeting due to lack of time.

12. **AOB** - Notice was given of a benefit evening to be held at Plas y Brenin in support of a BMG Guide seriously injured in a skiing accident last year.

Cyfarfod Nesa'

Mis Medi 3 September 2019

Next Meeting

Venue to be decided