

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of The Peak Area Meeting Wednesday 12th June 2019, The Maynard, Grindleford

Present:

Rob Greenwood (Chair)	Becky Hammond (Secretary)	Kym West
Colin Nave	Hazel Jones (Pinnacle Club)	Deborah Marsh
Clare Reading (FRCC)	David Brown (Area National Council Rep)	Rab Carrington
Joe Mallia	Simon Lee (UK Bouldering)	Judith Brown
Gill Radcliffe (DMC)	Spenser Gray (Oread MC)	Neil Foster
Ian Mateer (ABMSAC)	Richard Wheeldon (Climbers Club)	Andy Cairns
Paul Besley	Rob Dyer (BMC Access Officer)	Graeme Alderson
Gary Gibson	Charles Skeavington (Bassetlaw HMC)	Phil Cooper
Ross Burnage (Buxton MC)	Lester Simmonds (Buxton MC)	Ian Carey
G Bridgens (Buxton MC)	Ted Rodgers (Midland Assoc. Mountaineers)	Martin Wass
Linda McLeish (Castle MC)	Ian Milward (volunteer Access Rep)	Christina Richards
Rachel Briggs	Lynn Robinson (BMC President)	Alan Smith
Kevin Noon	Peter Judd (Area Hillwalking Rep)	Adam Peel
Graeme Hammond	Cath Flitcroft (BMC Access & Conservation Officer)	Nick Stapley
Caroline Fanshawe	David Pendlbury (Castle MC)	Kim Leyland
Lucy Valerio	Rik Payne	Spence Ramsey
Ed Douglas (Alpine Club)	Louise Hawson (volunteer Area Access rep)	John Cook
Tina Wilkinson	Alison Cairns (Area National Council Rep)	Toby Wright
Chris Radcliffe (Oread MC)	Adam Long (volunteer Area Access rep)	
Steve Clark	Henry Folkard (volunteer Area Access rep extraordinaire)	

Non-members in attendance

Marianne Grayson	Thomas Dunne
Marion Nancarrow	Lucy Valerio (BMC Governance & Compliance Officer)
Danny Udall (Eastern Moors Partnership)	Tom Ball
Tim Greenwood	

62 people signed in, 72 people present

1. Apologies:

Mark Warwicker, Martin Kocsis, Austin Knott (Area Hillwalking rep), Lisa Payne, Dave Parry

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed as correct.

3. Actions from previous meetings

- Millsom memorial plaque* – The Milsom family have not engaged after initial approaches. It will be discussed at the next Stanage Steering Group.
- Running Hill Pits notice to clarify access* – Sue Smith at PDNPA is will be visiting the site next week.

4. Access

Also see the latest edition of the Peak Area Newsletter.

a. Aldery Cliff

Rob Dyer described the history of the situation whereby over winter 2016-17 a large amount of unsanctioned work had been done, including placing some bolts. The work was misguided but done with the best to intentions..

A recent discussion online (UKC) has raised again the question of whether bolts are required and what to do. Buxton Mountaineering Club have been looking at the situation. The trees on the crag that used to be used for belays have been chopped and the stumps will not remain reliable. Trees further back are not suitable for use. There is insufficient depth of soil for stakes. There only feasible options: place belay bolts below the grassy slopey top-outs, or leave it alone. Opinion is divided within Buxton MC. The slopey top-outs remain

the same, but can still be protected with pre-placed ropes. The only place where this cannot be done is the top of Carmen.

After some discussion there was a show of hands: Leave as is- 6; Place a select number of bolt lower-offs – 15; Abstentions – 28. This will be fed back to the Land Management Group to help their decision.

b. Coney's Dale

This is on open access land, but hitherto the landowner has declined to allow the most convenient and common sense access across a bit of a field that already has a PROW through it. Sue Smith of PDNPA is trying to address this.

c. Ring Ouzels

Kim Leyland reported that the nesting season so far has been “average” with a 50% success rate. Low numbers on Burbage, but Stanage and Banford have been okay. There was a successful nest on Manchester Buttress – perhaps the busiest spot they could have chosen!

There have been lots of volunteers for nest monitoring. There are no climbing restrictions at the moment: awaiting the second broods.

d. Stanage parking

The situation is getting worse. Lots of parking on verges at Plantation when the carpark is less than half full. The pay & display parking at Plantation is now being enforced. It costs £4.75 for a full day, which is a fiddly amount of cash, and it isn't possible to pay by card or phone.

At Popular End (Hooks Car) some small trees have been planted by person unknown, which prevents parking near the cattle grid so cars are spreading down the road.

Suggestions from the meeting, which will be passed on:

Free parking after 5pm.

Reintroduce the Stanage Sticker.

Push for increase in integrated transport options.

Education of travelling climbers (who are the main users of Popular End at weekends).

Make it harder for people to park, and fewer people will park.

e. Stanage options appraisal for future of estate's property assets

PDNPA have appointed a consultant. In August they will present 3-4 options. In September the Stanage Forum will be invited to comment. The Forum are pushing for involvement earlier than this.

f. Climate change – what the BMC is doing

Cath Flitcroft explained that a BMC Climate Emergency Declaration has been drafted. BMC operations will be carbon neutral by the end of the year. Travel insurance sales will have the option to support a climate change project. We are members of Fit For The Future and the Climate Coalition.

At the end of the day it comes down to everyone's personal behaviour.

It was pointed out that what BMC staff do is probably dwarfed by the effect of events such as area meetings.

Should we choose locations which are more accessible by public transport eg city centres?

What about other options eg live streaming meetings, and using Skype?

g. Butterflies at Horseshoe Quarry

Rob Greenwood has been told (by his Dad) that Horseshoe is a great location for butterflies! Hoping to organise a survey and a talk.

h. Other updates:

Sheffield Moors Partnership are having more discussions about re-wilding, although not branding it as such.

Gardoms – Henry Folkard has spoken to the Chatsworth estate's Rural Surveyor and offered BMC help, but had no response.

The “new bolts” at High Tor (reported recently) were not new!

Redmires mountain bike track – BMC continue to support Ride Sheffield's bid.

Rushey Flat Dyke track – the Planning Inspector upheld the PDNPA's planning decision that the track should be removed. This has implications for other similar tracks that are currently being formed.

Blatant Buttress at Cheedale – this land is owned by the railways. It is a criminal offence to climb there.

Blackwell – do not cross the railway to access the crag.

Lost Ways Project – the 2026 deadline has been removed for Wales. Pushing for similar in England.

5. Concerns re proxy voting at the BMC AGM

Simon Lee wished to raise his concerns about the process of proxy voting at the AGM. He had set out his concerns in a paper that was circulated with the agenda. He summarised three questions he wanted the meeting to address:

*“Firstly is it right that the BMC hides the number of proxy votes entrusted to the Chair by its members?
Secondly do you think the way the votes were applied should be disclosed?
Finally should we expect that the rationale behind those decisions are explained?”*

Lucy Valerio was appointed as Governance and Compliance Officer in March 2019. She said that this indicates that the BMC are taking this seriously. The Board have decided not to release the number of discretionary proxy votes, and there is no requirement in law to do so.

Discussion points included:

The Chair of the meeting is the default proxy-holding option: it is easy, and there will always be someone chairing the meeting. People have various reasons for appointing a discretionary proxy, including that it's the easiest option, or that they genuinely cannot decide how to vote and think that someone physically at the meeting may be able to decide during the discussion.

The proxy holder has to inform the member how they voted, if they are asked.

Directed proxy votes are a legal requirement.

The large number of discretionary proxies outweighs the number of individually cast votes. It indicates that we need to increase members' engagement in the process.

There are technological options to address this, but they cost money.

Other organisations do not release the number of proxies held by the chair.

Need to draw a line and move on at some point. Someone will be unhappy with everything. If numbers are released, what will you do with the information? It has been accepted that mistakes have been made. You cannot change which Directors were appointed at the last AGM.

Governance will look into making a better system.

It is a question of trust – if you don't trust the chair, don't give them your discretionary proxy.

There was a show of hands on 2 questions:

1 – asking for the AGM Chair's discretionary proxy voting information retrospectively:

For – 9; Against – 25; Abstain – 20

2 – Disclosure of AGM Chair's discretionary proxy votes at future AGMs:

For – 36; Against – 1; Abstain - 17

6. Hillwalking

Congratulations to Lynn Robinson for completing the TGO Challenge walk across Scotland.

Hillwalking Implementation Group have written to the Board to urge them to consider development of hillwalking as unfinished business. The Board have assured them that it remains significant.

Carey Davies has resigned as Hillwalking Officer and will be leaving at the end of June to become editor of TGO magazine. There are questions about how various functions will be carried out now: hillwalking input on the website, hillwalking volunteers support, Mend Our Mountains legacy, etc etc.

Peter Judd said he feels like we're back where we were 5 years ago. Hillwalking is purportedly one of the top three aims of the 2015-19 strategy, but we're losing our Hillwalking Officer and moving on to a new strategy & vision.

Peter asked the meeting to support him in urging National Council and the Board to take it seriously. There was unanimous support for this.

7. National Council report

See written summary from Alison and David (attached)

8. Clubs

David Brown is our rep on the BMC Clubs Committee. They have asked to be a standing item on area meeting agendas, but there was nothing specific to discuss.

9. BMC Officers

Nothing to add that hasn't already been discussed.

10. Peak Area Newsletter

June 2019 edition available at <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/peak-area-newsletter-june-2019>

Please email articles and photos to peakarea@gmail.com.

Deadline for contributions is usually a couple of weeks before the next meeting.

11. Any other business

None

12. Date, time and venue of the next meeting

Wednesday 11th September 2019, 7.30pm at The Maynard Arms, Grindleford, S32 2HE.

The meeting was followed by a presentation by Tim Birch of Derbyshire Wildlife trust, on the subject of re-wilding, which generated a lot of interest.

BMC Peak Area Meeting 12th June 2019 – National Council update

This is an unusual report as we haven't had a National Council meeting since February i.e. before the last Area meeting. However things have still been happening over in BMCland and we thought it worth giving a brief update on that.

1. BMC AGM

A few of you will have been at the AGM at the end of March, this year held locally in Buxton, but for those of you who weren't here's a quick summary:

- a. 2019 Volunteer Awards presentation on the Saturday night
- b. A constructive Open Forum discussion on the BMC's vision, mission & core values
- c. Annual reports from the President & CEO, including an introduction to the BMC's latest environmental campaign Hills2Oceans
- d. Treasurer's report including the rationale behind the proposed subs increase (helped by the presence of a representative from BMC's insurance broker Howden to give more insight into the insurance claim which has largely necessitated this increase)
- e. Ratification of the election to the Board of Directors of the Chair (Gareth Pierce), and a new National Council appointed Director to replace Rik Payne (Fiona Sanders), plus the elections of three new Nominated Director positions (Huw Jones – Accounting & Finance, Jonathan White - Clubs and Jonny Dry – Fundraising & Grants)
- f. After some debate the increase in membership subscriptions was approved.

2. Governance Working Group

This has been set up following the AGM, to address some issues arising from it including future AGM processes & communications, member engagement through voting, and Nominations Committee membership & processes. This to run alongside the work of the new Governance & Compliance Officer, Lucy Valerio, and the Nominations Committee review of existing Board member skills and roles.

3. Values & Strategy

- a. Values Workshop & Survey – defining the key values underpinning the BMC's work is an important part of producing the new five year Strategy. Some initial suggestions were fine-tuned at the pre-AGM open forum session, and these were then used as the basis of a membership survey sent out in May. Using the results of this, currently the main ones identified are Community, Sustainability, Adventure & Heritage, along with two more possibilities encompassing education/skills and excellence/performance. A proposal will be presented to National Council for discussion at the next meeting.
- b. Five year Strategic Plan (2020-25) – this was further developed at a full day meeting held last month, attended by most of the Board. Again a summary of their output will go to the next National Council meeting.

4. ODG

Good progress has been made in most of the Workstreams including:

- a. WS1 Strategy – see above
- b. WS2 Ops & Finance – work ongoing on a new digital membership package and the formation of a Digital Strategy workgroup
- c. WS4 Corporate Structure – Rab Carrington is leading a Competitions workgroup looking into possible options for future structures, and a discussion paper on the BMC in Wales was presented to both Welsh Area meetings in the past week. Another group is being set up to start looking into the Charitable Subsidiaries.
- d. WS6 Policy – current Olympics position paper has been published on the website, and the policy on growth, participation and diversity is now being developed as part of the overall strategy.
- e. WS5 Governance (National Council Reconstitution), WS7 Partners & WS8 Membership Engagement – it has been recognised that these three areas are so linked that they are best considered together. Papers on all three will therefore be presented at the next National Council meeting.
- f. WS5 Governance (Specialist Committee Review) – on hold awaiting a lead for the workgroup.

The next National Council meeting is on 22nd June, and as you might gather from the above I predict it's going to be a marathon – at the very least we will be looking at issues arising from the AGM, proposals re Values & Strategy and papers from the ODG workstreams on top of the usual standing agenda items! The aim is to put together summarised versions of all these to be issued to members for feedback in time for the September area meetings.

Further information on the issues above can be found on either main BMC website (look in the 'BMC Organisation' category) or on the ODG site odg.thebmc.co.uk.

Alison Cairns & David Brown (National Council Peak Area Representatives)