

BMC Cymru Mid Wales Area Meeting
5th June 2019 at 7.30 at the White Lion, Machylleth

MINUTES

1. Welcome: From the Chairman Huw Gilbert

2. Apologies: Terry Taylor, Steve Culverhouse, Joe Doherty, Myfyr Tomos, Gary Morgan

3. In Attendance: Huw Gilbert (Mid-Wales Working Group Chairman), Elfyn Jones (BMC Access Officer), Dave Williams (BMC Access Volunteer), Mark Bramich, Sian Campion, Don Sargeant, Tom Gilbert, Peter Cooper

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes:

a) During the last meeting Myfyr Tomos had informed the group that the Snowdonia National Park Authority were proposing to replace the old planking that leads across the boggy ground on the Southern approach to Aran Fawddwy. Any new planks would probably be made from recycled farm plastic. This was put to the group in this meeting with the consensus being that the planks do need replacing and are necessary.

5. BMC Update:

a) **Welsh Government (WG) extension of access rights to coast and countryside:** Elfyn Jones explained the background of this and that WG have confirmed that these extensions of access rights will take place. There has not yet been a timetable issued for the implementation of this and the required 'Access Reform Group' is yet to be formed. The BMC will continue to press for the implementation of the extension of access rights.

b) **BMC H2O (Hills to Oceans) Campaign:** Elfyn Jones explained to the group that the H2O Campaign has the broad purpose of cleaning up litter and rubbish from mountain and climbing areas. Clean up events will be added onto existing BMC events (eg Pembrokeshire Climbing Festival) and BMC affiliate clubs are encouraged to add H2O clean up events to their own club calendars. BMC staff are available to assist with the co-ordination of clean up events (eg providing rubbish bags and even the provision of skips if required).

c) BMC Sign up to Welsh Language Scheme: Elfyn Jones explained that currently the BMC has no policy on the use of the Welsh language within its business and publications. Some posters have been translated into Welsh but almost all of the BMC publications are in English only. As well as not providing the desired service to Welsh speaking BMC members a lack of translated material fails to meet a number of local language laws (eg posters displayed in schools, colleges, universities and other public places within Wales must be written in Welsh as well as English). Elfyn Jones noted that the BMC is not itself legally required to provide a Welsh language service and that a full translation of all BMC literature and correspondence would be impractical to achieve.

There was a strong feeling within the meeting that the BMC could and should do much better in providing services in the medium of Welsh not just for the benefit of Welsh speaking BMC members but in acknowledging the cultural significance of Wales as regard to climbing, hill-walking and mountaineering (eg the correct use of Welsh place names rather than English adaptations). There was also the acknowledgement from the meeting that a pragmatic approach to use the Welsh language where appropriate and possible should be taken.

d) BMC Cymru Options Paper: The requirement for the BMC to have greater representation and authority within Wales is something that has been much discussed in previous meetings. The Mid-Wales Working Group is agreed that in order to carry out its operations in Wales effectively as well as engaging with WG and other 'Welsh' organisations such as Sport Wales the BMC must have a clearly defined Welsh Sub-Group or Subsidiary.

Elfyn Jones introduced the meeting to the Options Paper written by Gareth Pierce (BMC Chair of the Board of Directors). The paper was well received and the consensus of the meeting was that this process must be moved forward swiftly. As to the exact structure to be put in place the meeting was content for those decisions to be made on members behalf and made with the intent of providing a functional and efficient body that can effectively carry out the BMC's work in Wales.

e) BMC Clubs Committee Quarterly Update: No club members were in attendance at the meeting but Huw Gilbert did make reference to the Clubs Committee quarterly update that can be found on the BMC website.

f) General Access and Conservation Update:

i) Craig yr Merched: Dave Williams informed the meeting that the posts marking the path to Craig yr Merched are in place. The BMC is to provide the funding for the Woodland Trust (land owner) to clear the path up to the crag. Once the path is re-established it is envisaged that the marker posts will be removed.

ii) Mynydd Moel Path Repairs: The Mynydd Moel path repairs earmarked as part of the BMC Mend our Mountains campaign may not now take place. This would appear to be through a short fall in target money raised and lack of priority from SNPA. Any money left within the Mend our Mountains fund will most likely be diverted to other Mend our Mountains projects. Huw Gilbert raised the opinion that the upper reaches of the Mynydd Moel path (from Cwm Cau) is very much in need of repair. It should be noted that repair work has been carried out on the lower section of the path already.

iii) Stabilising/Removal of Shadrach Pinnacle: Elfyn Jones informed the group of the inherently unstable nature of the supporting blocks beneath the pinnacle of the Craig Bwlch y Moch rock climb Shadrach. Shadrach and surrounding routes are currently not safe to climb. As the BMC owns Craig Bwlch y Moch stabilisation work will be carried out by a specialised contractor within the next week or so. This will probably require removal of the pinnacle as well as other large blocks beneath it.

6. Access and Local Issues: Replacement of Belay Stakes and placing of Belay Bolts at Barmouth Slabs:

a) Huw Gilbert informed the group of the proposal from Outward Bound (OB) Aberdyfi to replace belay stakes and place belay bolts at Barmouth Slabs in order to continue to facilitate group use of the crag. Huw Gilbert visited Barmouth Slabs with Joe Doherty from OB and was able to brief the meeting on the intention. In outline the intention is:

i) To replace old belay stakes, like for like, with some relocation of stakes to put them in a better place (eg in better ground and where they can't be tripped over).

ii) Where not practical to use stakes or natural protection bolts would be used. The most likely areas where bolts would be required are on the left hand side on the lower tier and the left hand side of the middle tier.

b) The following comments were offered during the discussion:

i) Dave Williams offered the observation that group use of the crag could at times seem a 'bit of a free for all' and was the established 'Barmouth Slabs User Committee' still functioning? Dave Williams also noted that group users at the crag weren't always sympathetic to the interests of 'ordinary' climbers.

ii) Dave Williams raised the expression that Barmouth Slabs is not just a 'group use crag' and that a look at UKC logbooks would show that the crag is popular with many 'ordinary' climbers.

iii) Elfyn Jones suggested that given the popularity and significance of the crag there should be wider (geographically speaking) consultation about the proposal. A suggestion here was to put the matter for discussion at a BMC North Wales Area meeting.

iv) Elfyn Jones also raised the question as to whether this would fit with the BMC Fixed Gear Policy. In his opinion it doesn't appear to.

v) Don Sargeant raised a concern about the precedent that this might set at the crag. Could bolts 'creep' on to the routes themselves? Retro-bolting routes (or part of) at Barmouth Slabs was deemed as strongly undesired by all in the meeting.

vi) A couple of voices in the meeting asked whether this was a 'dumbing down' of instructors' skill in requiring the bolts. All agreed that a reason of convenience alone was not enough justification to place bolts.

vii) No objection was raised to the 'like for like' replacement of old belay stakes including replacing them in more practical places.

viii) It was the consensus of the meeting that the placing of a bolt may have less environmental impact than the placing of a stake or a fixed rope/wire/chain anchor (a thread or some such thing and not

necessarily applicable to Barmouth Slabs). In such instances the placing of a bolt may be the best option.

ix) It was also the consensus of the meeting that if bolts are placed then there should be a closer inspection and specific agreement with other crag users (both commercial and 'ordinary') and the land owner.

7. Any Other Business: No other items were raised.

8. Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting wasn't fixed but through conversation with regular meeting attenders a date will be selected in the Autumn.