



## SOUTHWEST AREA ODINARY MEETING

Meeting held: Online by Zoom

On: 27/08/2020 at 7pm

### MINUTES

#### Attendance:

Mark Kemball (Area Chair), Helen Wilson (National Council), Philip Wilson (National Council & Area Sec), Chris Stone (BMC Board), Jonny Dry (BMC Board), Lynn Robinson (President), Peter Salenieks (Clubs Chair), Ian Butterworth (Area Rep), James Mann, Iain Peters, Colin Knowles (reporting for Avon Gorge), Marti Hallett (Area Rep), John Booth, Imogen Lockyear, Andrew Twemlow, Steve Wollard & Steve Goberman.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence:** The co-opted chair Mark Kemball opened the meeting. The co-opted secretary Philip Wilson took the minutes. Apologies for absence were received from David Hillebrandt, Mark Courtiour & Rick Swards.
2. **Quorum & Conflicts of Interest:** It was noted that a quorum was present in accordance with [Article 28.6.1 of the British Mountaineering Council's articles of association (the "Articles")]. No conflicts of interest were raised.
3. **Minutes:** Previous Meeting 30.05.2020 (these will not be read out verbatim during this meeting. It would be helpful if participating members could read the minutes and actions and note any points for discussion prior to this meeting).
4. **Actions: Previous Meeting (held on the 30.05 2020):** All the action points listed in these minutes were carried out prior to this meeting.
5. **Matters Arising Not Covered Elsewhere:** None were raised.
6. **BMC Board Statement, National Council & Organisational Development Group Updates**
  - 6.1 **Board Statement & National Council:** Feedback was sought on the statements issued on 11<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August by the Board to members, following the resignation of three its directors and the Chair's decision not to go for a second term. The following comments were noted:
    - a) The statement from 11<sup>th</sup> August lacked detail as to what exactly had caused the board resignations. Members want a timeframe and commitment to provide details. (John Booth)
    - b) There has been no statement from the BMC CEO and or the President to members on this matter (John Booth)
    - c) There had been personal and unpleasant comments and much speculation regarding this made on UKC by a small number of individuals, which was unhelpful (John Booth & James Mann)
    - d) The board should be given time and space to regroup following the resignations (James Mann)
    - e) Were the relevant checks and balances in place between the board and National Council? Dave Musgrove writing in Summit that checks & balances are in place was quoted (John Booth)
    - f) The organisation needs to be far more open with its members (general agreement)
    - g) Worried that some individuals were preparing a motion of no confidence in the board (John Booth)

Helen Wilson replied that the draft Members' Council Terms of Reference (MC ToR) were written to ensure that the relevant checks and balances were in place between the Board and National Council. The MC

British Mountaineering Council, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB

Tel: 0161 445 6111; Email: office@thebmc.co.uk

ToR sought a balance between scrutiny of the Board and acting as a Critical Friend. It was emphasised that National Council had held over eight hours of meetings to help the Board move forward and get back to full strength as quickly as possible. National Council had also urgently convened NomCom to appoint the replacement independent Directors. The third CND (to replace Jon Punshon) will not be appointed by Council until the situation is more settled.

Jonny Dry replied that the Board is aware of the seriousness of the situation and working hard to reconcile matters via a facilitated session. He added that a motion of no confidence in the Board would be disastrous and hamper this progress. Some in the room agreed with this statement. Until reconciled, the Board would not present any further details. He was asked about publishing timescales to the members of forward plans and agreed to take this back to the Board Chair to be announced when known.

The President endeavoured to speak but was unintelligible due to a poor internet connection.

Chris Stone acknowledged that the first communication released by the Board had been poor and that they would endeavour to do better moving forward.

#### **6.2 Organisational Development Group** (including discussion of [Members Council Terms of Reference](#)):

Helen Wilson briefed the meeting on the latest update, progress made and what we have achieved so far. She encouraged those on the call to look at the draft MC ToR available online and to feed back comments by 11 September.

#### **6.3 Feedback to National Council:** The content of point 6.1.

### **7. BMC 2021 Strategic Plan Review**

This was presented by Jonny Dry. A full version of the presentation given in the meeting can be found at [www.thebmc.co.uk/2021-strategic-review-consultation](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/2021-strategic-review-consultation). Comments were as follows:

It was re-iterated that this was the update plan for 2021 only, due to Covid-19, and was not a replacement for the whole strategy for 2020 to 2025. Lynn Robinson stated that this document once approved would then be used to translate into a concrete strategy with costings and then be presented to the Board for approval.

Peter Salenieks added that a BMC Clubs' voice had been sought through an online form emailed to all club contacts by Jane Thompson.

John Booth asked whether a big tick Mountaineering 1<sup>st</sup> ascent could also be supported as well as the Tokyo Olympics, indoor and Youth Climbing. Hill walking could also be better represented.

Feedback was sought by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and Jonny posted his email in chat for those interested in replying directly.

### **8. Clubs Rep Report**

Peter Salenieks (Club Committee Chair) gave a summary in the absence of the SW Area Club Rep Martin Corfield. The clubs Committee has tried to help BMC Affiliated clubs through the Covid-19 crisis in difficult times by publishing hut guidelines, insurance, advice on club meets, etc.

Andrew Twemlock (Avon MC), outlined that they had cancelled trips (due to camp site bookings for groups not being allowed). To date only unofficial evening sessions have occurred. He highlighted that two people sharing a rope who were not in the same social bubble contravened advice up to now. He also reported that they had not recruited any new members and there was uncertainty about whether members would renew due to the current crisis.

In contrast, John Booth reported that the Adventure Club, that offers canoeing and climbing that he was involved with had seen a rapid increase in membership. They were operating on the 6 people, 3 households. Their membership was increasing by 4 to 5 new members per week.

Peter Salenieks reported that that in Wales up to 40 people can now meet. See <https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/COVID-19/understanding-the-law/Pages/default.aspxce> for full details.

## **9. Views on the South West & Welsh Area Boundaries:**

This discussion was raised as an agenda item by Nigel Barry who was not at the meeting. Participants came to the conclusion (though no vote was taken) that boundaries should remain the same as members in both the South Wales and Southwest areas remained happy with current arrangements.

## **10. Proposal to Address Offensive Route Names:**

James Mann reported that at present offensive route names are being arbitrarily changed in the Rockfax database without consultation. A co-ordinated approach is required so that routes do not end up with several names. The area felt that any new route name proposal should be approved by the 1<sup>st</sup> ascensionist and where not available come through the relevant local area BMC meeting. **Action Point:** It was agreed that the view of National Council and through them other area views should be sought to try to establish a national approach involving all parties. Philip Wilson and Helen Wilson agreed to take this back to National Council.

## **11. Torbay Bolting Breaches:**

James Mann reported that Anstey's Cove has seen clear breaches of the bolting policy agreed by the local area during lockdown. The Mitre and Crook Bruce at Anstey's Cove have both been rendered pointless by new bolts on or very nearly to these routes. Neither of the first ascensionists (who are both very much alive) have been consulted by those who carried out the work. Any bolting of traditional routes should be done with the consensus of the whole climbing community. This contravenes the southwest area bolting policy and might lead to wholesale bolting of more traditional routes in the future. **Action Point:** Mark Kemball agreed to speak to the people concerned and report back.

## **12. Rubbish, Littering & Human Waste Left in Car Parks & Beauty Spots in The Southwest:**

James Mann reported that throughout the summer there has been a vast increase in all of the above in the southwest as follows: 'I have cleared many bags of rubbish from the parking at the Dewerstone. I know that others have been doing the same at a selection of crags and areas in which they walk. The National Trust have installed signs at Carn Galva (parking for Bosigran), Welcombe Mouth and a number of other sites used by the climbing community to state that no overnight parking is permitted. These are being largely ignored (not just by climbers). Climbers need to ensure that they are not part of the problem as access to the places that they wish to visit has the potential to be disrupted...perhaps the BMC could get the message out to the membership that climbers need to adhere to the permissions put in place by landowners and that shitting all over anywhere convenient to them is unacceptable'. During the debate there was a view held by some members that the 'Hills to Ocean' was not visible or applicable to the South West. Helen Wilson pointed out that the Hills to Ocean branded rubbish sacks were available from the BMC for litter picks. **Action Point:** Philip Wilson & Helen Wilson to talk to Cath Flitcroft who is organising the campaign to see how we can make it more relevant to our area in this regard – perhaps a, "bag it out" campaign, to stop despoiling the landscape with human waste? Especially following the recent BMC success of the "No Moors Barbeques" campaign.

### 13. Reports from Area Representatives:

Ian Butterworth highlighted that Area Access Reps have had to “police” access arrangements due to Covid-19 social distancing and travel restrictions. This has been onerous and has put additional pressure on reps, particularly when dealing with climbers who have disregarded the new arrangements. Cheddar and Woodcroft Quarry have both been particularly troublesome during fine weather.

- 13.1 **Access issues – Woodcroft Quarry & Ban y Gor Parking for Sports Climbers:** Rick Sowards reported prior to the meeting that there had been complaints and some sharp comments from climbers to Woodcroft residents regarding parking along the B4428 in Woodcroft village. This blocked drives and passing places and moved cones placed by residents. This has become an issue when the Lancaut Lane parking filled up due to the increase in popularity of these venues. These Covid 19 issues due to wall closures and ban on car sharing has seen a steep rise in popularity of these climbs, as well as access by other non-climbing users to the area for recreational purposes. It is hoped that this problem will decrease as we progress into Autumn / Winter. BMC Southwest will continue to hold a watching brief. A post has gone out on UKC making climbers aware of this problem, asking them to park and behave sensibly so as not to jeopardise access.
- 13.2 **Cheddar:** Mark Courtier reported prior to the meeting that 43 transgressions were reported with climbers climbing in seasonally restricted areas. This was for July and the first few days of August 2020. This situation has eased after rainy weather.
- 13.3 **Fairy Cave Quarry:** Iain Butterworth raised the topic of stakes or a bolt belay needed to replace an unsafe tree belay lower off shared by 3 climbs in the quarry. As the ground above the climbs is an unstable slope making top outs and the placing of stakes unfeasible, he thought that this would require a bolt lower off. He also pointed out that the tree on question was a fruit and not a victim of Ash tree die-back. This was debated and his conclusion fully supported. He also reported that the parking in the road outside the quarry had been so heavy that it blocked lorry access to the haulage firm located further up the road. He has emailed all combination key holders to alert them to this problem.
- 13.4 **Avon Gorge:** Colin Knowles reported that similar problems to Fairy Cave Quarry regarding tree belays would have to be taken here in the future. He also reported that the top of Suspension Bridge buttress has been deemed unstable and would require ‘geo pinning’ of discovered deep vertical fissures during a survey to make the cliff and bridge safe. He added that he is in liaison with the Bridge Master as how this will affect climbing. He was hopeful that we may benefit from this work and will report back once the full picture emerges.
- 13.5 **Wyndcliff Crag & Quarry:** It was reported that this car park and overspill parking was unusually full due to Covid 19, but no incidents reported to date.
- 13.6 **Culm Coast Stakes:** Iain Peters reported that the supply of belay stakes for equipping the Culm Coast climbs were to be held at the Barn climbing wall.
- 13.7 **Durdle Door:** Marti Hallett reported on the success of social media used to highlight and stop tomb-stoning at Durdle Door following an accident had been effective.
- 14. **Any Other Business:** John booth asked whether the members categories for furloughed and unemployed members publicised by the BMC was near implementation. Peter Salenieks said that this is being considered following the work on club membership. **Action Point:** Jonny Dry agreed to investigate.
- 15. **Date of next Area Ordinary Meeting:** This was set for the 31st October 2020. It was due to be held at Exeter Quays at 7pm. It was agreed that this will probably now proceed via Zoom.