

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 10 September 2020 ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Present: Andy Potter (Chair), John Edwards (Sec), Claudia Sarner (Area Rep), David Jones (Area Rep), Ian Wyatt (Clubs Rep), Jane Thompson (BMC Clubs Officer), Fiona Sanders (BMC Director), Phil Simister (SolihullMC), Catherine Allen (ShrewsburyMC), John Handley (CoventryMC), Hazel Jonas (Fell & RockCC), Tim Weller (Halesowen), Dave Paget (1st meeting), Emma Tipton, Charlotte Whitmore, Andy Harpen.

Max 16, of whom 14 were present for 85% of the meeting. As far as can be ascertained this included 7 female attendees & 0 BAME.

1. Welcome and Apologies: Andy Potter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Richard Law.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting: A link to the Minutes of the June meeting were displayed in Chat so that members could spend 5 minutes or so reading them. Jane T pointed out that Item 4 should say "BMC AGM" and with this amendment the minutes were accepted.

3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere:

- There were general comments that it had been harder to join this meeting than the previous one. People had registered but had not received clear 'click & join' links. This might account for the far lower numbers attending on line compared to our last meeting (42) or it might have been the lack of an online speaker / slide show or less publicity. For the June meeting, I sent emails to contacts from whom I have GDPR permission 1 month before, 1 week before and 1 day before the meeting. This time I just sent one email around 3 weeks ago and left it up to the BMC to do the rest!
- Claudia S reported that the poor state of 22 km of cycle/walkway had been brought to the attention of National Council who were pleased to have been informed. Dave J had been asked to liaise with Tim W to find out as precisely as possible what support from the BMC would involve. Someone suggested Sustrans might be able to help. Tim W said that he had already contacted Sustrans and that requests for cycle/walkway improvement from any national organisation would be helpful in trying to put pressure on the West Midlands Combined Authority to simply finish this strategically important stretch in particular. Any individual that wants to help could email andy.street@wmca.org.uk.

4. Update on COVID-19 and coming out of lockdown:

- Andy commented on the ironic heading seeing as how tougher national measures are about to be re-introduced and maybe local ones next Monday.
- Jane T explained that this should not affect mountaineering clubs as the BMC has been working closely and sharing expertise with The Ramblers and had had clarification that "as long as clubs are following BMC guidelines, organised "outdoor physical activity events" are exempt from the "Rule of Six" and members CAN still go on meets with up to 30 members without fear of prosecution. She said the situation in Wales is unchanged (as of 8pm 10th Sept) but that any changes will be given advanced warning of any changes will be given at the weekly briefing tomorrow lunchtime. Questioned, she confirmed that this also applied to groups affiliated to The Ramblers, The Long Distance Walkers Association and Athletics events such as Park Run. Relevant links were displayed in Chat
- <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/covid19-reopening-huts>
- <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/covid19-restarting-club-meets>
- Claudia S said that the Association of British Climbing Walls announced today that groups of more than 6 should be discouraged from going to walls and reminded the meeting that Leicester had additional restrictions and there you cannot meet anyone outside your household.

- Dave J said that everyone should feel very grateful to the staff in the BMC Office who had been struggling: every time they thought they'd got something covered the guidance would change so they had been working really hard to keep up. He mentioned another organisation they had shared expertise with was the YHA.
- Ian Wyatt pointed out that groups still needed to be mindful of local restrictions that needed to be included in any risk assessment, such as Caerphilly district if heading towards the Gower.
- Fiona S mentioned that the Lakes and South West in particular were suffering from 'new users' leaving litter at beauty spots and said that the BMC had asked the All Party Parliamentary Group to give wider publicity to The Country Code, The BMC's Access Management Group were also campaigning to get the law changed so that it would become illegal to use portable BBQ's in the countryside. <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/disposable-bbq-moorland-ban-no-moor-bbq>
- She said that In the Lakes the BMC are working with Alpkit to clear litter and, in so doing, helping publicize the problem and the BMC. Volunteers had also been out clearing litter in the Peak District.
- Catherine A asked if there was a forum/body where the organisations who represent outdoor users can come together around common issues? If not, why don't the BMC try bringing stakeholders such as Ramblers, MTB users, wildlife trusts, parish councils, etc together?
- Fiona S said that many of the National Parks have user-groups and the BMC also have the Partners' Assembly that brings some of the closer organisations such as ramblers, OS, OIA and quite a few more. They are always looking at potential ways of doing so. ^[P]_[SEP]

5. Reports from Area Representatives:

5.1 Access East: Since the last meeting Andy Harper had taken over from Andy Railton. He mentioned the problem with litter at Cademan Woods and that he had managed to get a note onto RAD about this and had also been in contact with the local parish council.

5.2 Access West: No report

5.3 Youth: Claudia S said that there was not much to report with the Youth Climbing Series.

5.4 Hill Walking: David J mentioned there had been at least one organised walk to help tidy up litter.

5.5. Club Issues: Ian W was pleased to announce that the Midlands area would be the first to hold a meeting of the Regional Clubs Forum. This would be on Monday 19th October via Zoom and is aimed at Clubs rather than individual members. Andy P said it will be advertised on the Midland Area Facebook page and posted the link on Chat <https://www.facebook.com/BMCMidlandsArea> Ian W wondered if the BMC could send an email to all club members and Jane T said that they could do this.

5.6. Climbing Issues: ^[P]_[SEP]Hazel J reported that the FRCC had decided to cancel the Remembrance service on Great Gable this November, the first time it has been cancelled since 1924. She asked that if anyone knows someone who normally attends or, who may be thinking of heading there, could they please try and dissuade them.

6. National Council:

6.1 Report from last meeting: Dave J said that Lyn Robertson had been off ill and had only just returned to her post as President. He asked that a 'thank you' to Andy Syme for standing in as deputy president during Lynne's time off be included in the minutes. He mentioned that there had been a couple of resignations from the Board, including the Chair and a new member. Fiona S said there was a feeling that the Board had probably been trying to do too much too quickly. The Board is 11 volunteers plus the CEO and they now realise the way forward is to work more closely with BMC staff, but this has been tricky as many have been on furlow. They've had one meeting with the staff and another is planned. The Board sends weekly updates to the National Council and has a Discussion Group meeting every Thursday night via Zoom to check people are tackling the jobs they are supposed to be doing. The priority now is the budget for next year.

Claudia S said that it was difficult to understand the various articles and memos relating to the organisation of the BMC and various Performance Groups. She and David want to understand things so they can pass the information on to members but this is difficult and she felt a little disgruntled that members will not get the correct impression of the value of the BMC. They are truly looking for improvements and information sharing. Fiona S said that there were sometimes things that the Board can't share because of confidentiality.

Ian W felt the BMC uses too much 'management speak' on its website. Everyone agreed that bad news seems to travel faster than good news and that disgruntled people tend to have louder voices

than those who are contented with things.

6.2 Matters for the next Council Meeting: There were no matters from the floor.

7. News from HQ / ODG:

Fiona S reported that the Specialist Review Committee hopes to share its views with the ODG next week. She then went on to give a short presentation of slides detailing developments relating to the Strategic Plan 2020-24 which was signed off last February just before the COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. She said that for each strategic theme the Board have identified what needs to be Consolidated, Focussed on or Reviewed in order to move forward this year. The review schedule is tight in order for it to feed into the planning of the 2021 budget, They are asking for feedback from members and the deadline is now Tuesday 15 th September. Claudia S posted the link to the documents and the 9 Question survey on chat. <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/2021-strategic-review-consultation>

The context for the review has 4 main focuses. One of course is COVID-19 which has hit travel and the BMC's travel insurance income hard. One third of the BMC's income generally comes from this source and because it is down they recognise they need to grow the membership instead, through greater retention and attracting many of the new participants in hill-walking and climbing.

One benefit of COVID is that it has made various National organisation bodies come together to share expertise and become more effective and 'joined up'.

Other priorities are seen as the Tokyo 2021 Olympics, the effects of leaving the EU and getting greater involvement with under-represented groups, taking on board for example the Black lives Matter movement

The other slides focussed on the BMC's desire to consolidate initiatives that have already begun on Access, Conservation & Environmental sustainability and further develop the relationship with ACT. Another strand concerned Membership engagement, services and support. Another concerned Organisational development with a focus on sector leadership, extending this into the BMC's charitable trusts to reinforce public profile. The final 2 areas were Education, Inspiration & Skills and GB Climbing, Climbing & Talented athletes.

The Board would like members to look at the strategic review consultation paper and comment under 3 main headings but the deadline is now VERY tight.

8. Any other Business:

- John E asked about next year's BMC fees. Jane T said they were remaining the same.
- John E reminded the meeting that his 6 year term as Secretary would come to an end after the next meeting and asked if some publicity could be given to finding a successor.

9. Date & location of next meeting:

The next area meeting will include the AGM and will be held on Wednesday 4th November, in all probability using ZOOM again.

Written by John Edwards