



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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North West Area ORDINARY MEETING

Meeting held online via Zoom
On Tuesday 8th Sept 2020 at 19:00

Minutes

Attendance (21 signed in): Les Ainsworth (Lancs Access Rep), Mike Appleton, Bill Beveridge (for last part of meeting), Alison Cairns (CC / Pinnacle + Peak NC Rep), Andy Cairns (CC / FRCC), Steve Charles (Area Hillwalking Rep), Ben Christie, Peter Cloran, Paul Evans (Area Secretary, KMC), Nick Galpin, Lyndon Gill, John Glynn, Anthony Jackson, David Pickering, Emily Pitts (Area Chair, KMC), Dudley Pritchard, Lynn Robinson (BMC President), Roberta Spagnul, Carl Spencer, Wendy Stirrup, Chris Stone (London & SE Chair, Council Nominated Director).

1. Welcome, quorum, apologies for absence

The chair Emily Pitts opened the meeting. A quorum was present in accordance with Article 28.6.1 of the British Mountaineering Council's articles of association. Apologies were received from Stuart Holmes, Mark Hounslea, Dominic Oughton and Dave Robinson.

2. Minutes & Actions from the previous meeting held on 18/05/20

The minutes from the previous meeting on 18th May 2020, were approved without amendment.

3. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

Emily Pitts reported that –

1. The question 'What more do members feel the BMC could be doing on equity?' for distribution on FB and area survey – this was still outstanding but would be scheduled before the next meeting.

2. The NW area team had contacted BMC office to update RAD with recent changes & identify process for updating RAD. We would like a volunteer (perhaps 1 hr effort per week) to update RAD. We had approached possible candidates but with no success. We will now advertise for applicants.

3. SH to replace bolt at Troy like-for-like with a resin bolt. PE visited Troy on Sat 5th Sept and can't find a loose bolt, however they are expansion bolts in horizontal rock so glue-ins might be more suitable as they will corrode. Discuss at next meeting.

4. LA to find out about Wilton Management Group (action complete - it still exists, met up and produced minutes over summer, members to be confirmed at next AGM? Action closed.

5. For hillwalking events, it was agreed that a combination of clubs hosting "open" events and events created by area was a good way forward, with all groups working collaboratively. At the meeting several club members said that their clubs were accepting non-members on meets. The area will promote club meets on FB if clubs request this. Action closed.

6. Social media analysis. ACTION: EP to a) schedule meeting with JG & DO b) add to the Facebook page c) Add to Google Drive for scheduling. Meeting held, action closed.

7. EP & PE to organise member survey including days of meetings. To complete before next meeting.

4. **BMC Response to COVID-19, coming out of lockdown.**

Emily Pitts summarised the latest BMC advice on coming out of lockdown for local climbers and clubs. It was gratifying to note that there were very low levels of Covid related access issues in the North West.

5. **Area reps reports**

5.1. Access – several topics were covered under this heading –

- Paul Evans noted that the Facebook posts on access (both for NW and surrounding areas used by NW based climbers and walkers) were very popular and he intended to continue providing this service. Lynn Robinson commented that other outdoor bodies had been highly complimentary about the work done in lockdown by the BMC access reps and their weekly covid online meetings.
- Paul Evans summarised the latest status on guidebooks both recently published and in preparation
- Les Ainsworth gave an update on Lancs access issues; there were low numbers of crags with access issues in Lancs, particularly Troy, Lower Montcliffe, Witches, Noggarth, Winewall and Warton Main. The belay bolts at Troy still require review and possible replacement like for like with glue-ins.
- Paul Evans said there were no issues noted in Cheshire, other than the ongoing need to take care with parking at Harmers Wood. He then briefly summarised access news for Chew Valley, Peak Grit and Lime, Lakes, North Wales and Yorkshire.

5.2. As Dominic Oughton was not able to attend the meeting, Paul Evans presented his slides. Dominic had organised a first Zoom meet for NW area club reps. This had been well attended and produced a list of topics which club reps agreed needed review and attention going forward. See slide pack for details. Anthony Jackson said that the meeting had been very useful but that the gap until the next meeting (pencilled in for Dec) was too long and that he thought the group should meet more frequently. Wendy Stirrup asked where national clubs fitted? Alison Cairns said that a separate group was proposed for National clubs, but invited anyone who had alternative suggestions to feed them in through Dominic or Mike Spooner.

5.3. Steve Charles reported that we had 3 hillwalking conservation projects arranged for the year, but all had been cancelled due to Covid, and that he was currently unable to reach key contacts he had made, e.g. NT staff and rangers - due to many staff having been furloughed. He was continuing to monitor the situation and remained keen to organise some upland conservation projects for the area as soon as circumstances allow. He urged members to support the “no moor barbecues” campaign.

5.4. Stuart Holmes was unable to attend the meeting, so Emily reported on his behalf – see slide for detail. Most walls are now open, with restrictions, although West View leisure centre in Preston has closed. Stuart will send wall profiles to Emily for publication. Carl Spencer asked what was happening with the Academy – it seemed that it was accepting new members? Carl also raised concerns that the ABC Walls advice might conflict in some particulars with government guidance.

ACTION: Stuart will investigate getting “walls profiles” published on facebook, to help get people back to local walls when they re-open.

5.5. Roberta Spagnul gave a presentation on the analysis she is currently doing on area facebook posts; she has analysed two quarters of data looking at what makes posts popular, demographics of those reached, any differences pre and post lockdown, type of posts (text, images, videos). With assistance from Dominic and Joe Green, we are now posting much more frequently, and “reach” numbers for the most popular posts (which tend to be access related) are over 1000. Steve Charles asked why we were not using more channels, particularly more “youth oriented” channels. Emily said this needed a volunteer with the right skills. Nick Galpin asked whether we had considered using social media aggregator tools, for example to cross post onto Instagram from facebook. Emily said that this could be done technically, but she had reservations over facebook content being “right” for Instagram. Emily said that we could get engagement figures for HQ email to members (open rates, click through rates) and she would obtain these for the next meeting. **ACTION:** Emily to get NW area email engagement data from HQ Marcomms.

6. **NW Events Calendar 2020**

Nothing to report. Wiltonfest was not able to be held this year due to Covid restrictions.

7. **BMC Strategic Plan review**

Chris Stone gave a presentation on the review which he had been involved in of the BMCs Strategic plan, to re-focus the strategic plan in light of the impact of COVID-19. He asked for any input by the end of this week, details can be found using the link –

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/2021-strategic-review-consultation>, from which you can access the paper and a survey to provide feedback.

Les Ainsworth asked whether responses could only be submitted via facebook? Chris confirmed that responses can be submitted via any internet browser using the link above.

8. **Feedback from National Council (NC) meetings / Recent Board Resignations**

Carl Spencer (NW area NC Rep) reported that the NC held 2 “normal” meetings during the lockdown, in March and June, with a focus on ODG papers. However since the announcements about Board Resignations, the NC had held a number of interim meetings to review and discuss developments. In summary there have been 4 director resignations (Matthew Bradbury and Amanda Parshall as independants, John Punshon as a council nominated director, plus Huw Jones as a member elected director), plus a chair (Gareth Pierce) who will not be seeking re-election.

The NC has been reviewing these developments and the Board plans for addressing them. This has required a number of online meetings. NC is aware that the general reason behind most of these resignations is “behavioural issues”, whilst not being aware of the detail. NC is happy with the board plans for addressing the issues, which include co-opting 3 advisors (Rab Carrington, Colin Knowles and Louise Stewart) to attend Board meetings and provide facilitation and support during this period of time until the new directors are appointed and in place. The Board is also having facilitated sessions to iron out problems. NomCom (the BMC Nominations Committee) is proceeding to recruit independent directors and requesting NC to nominate a council nominated director. Replacement of the member nominated director will have to wait until the next AGM. Also an interim exec has been recruited.

Nick Galpin asked whether NomCom and their procedures are all published – he said that it was important to avoid criticism, and that transparency was important.

Chris Stone said that NomCom operates in accordance with the articles. Lynn Robinson confirmed that NomCom would be operating in compliance with the articles. She said that 3 HR companies had been asked for quotes to assist in locating candidates. Sport England were also involved, to provide advice on board gender balance. NomCom have also co-opted an additional non-voting member from NC to assist with heavy workload during this period.

Emily Pitts read out some specific questions, relating to publication of minutes from NC and Board. Paul Evans will forward these to Carl Spencer, Chris Stone and Lynn Robinson to ensure they are answered as fully as possible. Lynn did express some concern about the turnaround time requested for minutes, as the member of staff who does the minutes is currently working 2 days per week.

There was discussion as to whether any new communication was to be issued. Carl Spencer said that he thought an update from Andy Syme was imminent. Chris Stone confirmed that this was to be issued shortly, as part of an overall comms plan.

Nick Galpin asked whether there was any plan to improve communications. As a BMC volunteer he was concerned that the threads on UKC and on Facebook are damaging to the organisation, and although 2 people are responding in defence of the BMC, it would be good to get more timely and fuller communications in order to redress the balance. Also he had concerns about recruiting new directors into a Board which still had issues to fix.

Chris Stone responded that the facilitated workshop sessions, plus an external board evaluation being carried out by Sport England, gave him confidence that new directors would be moving into a better environment. He also said that the need to improve communications had been recognised and was a priority going forward. Concise and regular updates was a priority.

ODG Update - Members council terms of reference, BMC AGM Voting Procedures.

Emily Pitts introduced two recent papers from the ODG on which members feedback would be welcomed. They are the draft terms of reference for the Members Council (new name for National Council) <https://odg.thebmc.co.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/360010939378-Draft-Members-Council-Terms-of-Reference>

And draft new Voting Procedures for BMC AGMs: <https://odg.thebmc.co.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/360011283917-Proposed-Voting-Procedures>

Members are encouraged to review both documents, and feedback is welcomed.

9. Any other business

9.1. Carl Spencer noted that it had not been possible to hold WiltonFest in its normal format this year due to Covid restrictions. However before the cancellation was announced, Tim Greenhalgh had done an enormous amount of work in preparation. This is also against a background of many successful previous WiltonFest events, where Tim has been “the main man” for each event. Carl suggested that the area record a vote of thanks to Tim for all his efforts over the years, and all present agreed that this was richly deserved.

9.2. Emily Pitts also noted that our area National Council reps had been doing a huge amount of work during the last 2 months, and expressed thanks to Carl and Bill for all their efforts in support of Area members.

10. **Date of next Area Meeting**

The scheduled date of the next area meeting (which is also the area AGM) is Tues 28th Oct. This may need to be held online due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Watch the BMC NW area Facebook page for further updates.