

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

177-179 Burton Road
Manchester M20 2BB
www.thebmc.co.uk

Tel: 0161 445 6111
Fax: 0161 445 4500
Email: office@thebmc.co.uk

LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA MEETING

Meeting held by zoom call
on Thursday 27 October 2020 at 19.45 following the AGM

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence - Attendance numbers 25 (maximum)

Chaired Chris Stone (CS) Minutes taken by Robert Dufton (RD)

Apologies – Tim Crocker,

CS welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone present agreed to the meeting being recorded. CS welcomed in particular Lynn Robinson (LR), BMC President, Louise Stewart, Adviser to the Board and Damon Beail (DB) member of the Harrison's Rocks Management Group to the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 10 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 10 September 2020 were approved (Y8, A7, N0, NVM 5).

3. Report from National Council meeting held on 19 September 2020

CS reported:

- CS had stood down as a director of the BMC on grounds of time pressure and health.
- Gareth Peirce had resigned as chair and director with effect from 30 September. Paul Drew, senior independent director was currently Acting Chair.
- Rosie Yule had been co-opted onto the board of directors in order to strengthen the board, particularly in financial matters. Rosie is a member of the Finance & Audit Committee.
- Odgers Berndtson, recruitment advisers, were supporting the board through the Nominations Committee in recruiting a permanent chair and two replacement independent non-executive directors.
- Robert Dufton, LSE Area Secretary and National Council member had been temporarily appointed to the nominations committee
- A National Council meeting would be held on 29 October to consider appointing two new Council Nominated Directors to the Board.
- Andy Syme had been re-elected as Vice-President.
- There had been discussion of the strategic plan and the role of nationally elected councillors.

LR thanked CS on behalf of the board for his excellent work as a director and that he was continuing his voluntary work for the BMC as the LSE area chair and area NC representative. LR noted that the board was committed to diversity in new board appointments and she encouraged LSE members to make known to her or Odgers any individuals who they thought who met the criteria and who might be interested in serving on the board. There was to be an online Members' Forum on 5 November 2020.

4. Southern Sandstone/Harrison's Rocks Management Group Update

Damon Beail updated the meeting about activity at Southern Sandstone:

- Bowles had reopened.
- There were proposals to create more wetland at Bulls Hollow. This might be positive for climbing as it meant the trees near the rock might be removed and thus mean the rock becoming drier.
- Eridge remained closed.
- Birchden Car Park is now operating on winter hours and is locked at 5pm.
- Campsite at Harrisons Rocks remains closed with the following statement from Forestry England -

"Unfortunately, the camp site at Birchden will remain closed for 2020 but we hope to welcome you back in 2021. The decision to keep the campsite closed has been a difficult one, and we understand how disappointing this news has been. It is important to us that when you stay at Birchden, you can do so safely and enjoyably and this is something we feel we would be unable to deliver this year. Please note that camping is not permitted within the wider woodland due to the negative impact it poses for wildlife"

- Revisions to the Sandstone code of conduct would be considered over the next few weeks covering footwear and climbing when the rock was wet.
- A new Sandstone climbing starter kit is being proposed.

CS thanked DB and all members of the HRMG.

5 Area Reps update

5.1 Clubs

CS reported on behalf of Tim Crocker. TC was aiming to build a network of LSE area club contacts based on the Midlands area model. He had sent a survey to all LSE area club contacts and had received 15 responses. A few members present thought that their club had not responded because it might not have reached the right person. Carol Watts (CW) asked that a description of the club network and an indication of the time commitment would be helpful. CW also asked if the BMC could do more to negotiate a reduced insurance premium given that less climbing was taking place and if successful could the reduction apply to BMC membership. This would be helpful as clubs like hers had less income from hut usage and members who were furloughed or not working. CS agreed to take this up with the BMC.

Jim Robinson reported that his club had held camping climbing meets when this was possible however this has now stopped again.

Rosemary Scott reported that the Pinnacle Club had reopened its hut following all safety and hygiene guidelines.

LR said the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut will not open before the end of March.

5.2 Hillwalking

Fabrizio Scaliogne reported on the LSE area and The Chilterns Society joint walk which had been held recently, which had sold out quickly was very successful and took place in a Covid secure way. In addition FS had attended a Zoom meeting with other area hill-walking reps where social media and the website was discussed.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the CROW Act.

5.3 Youth

Tanya Sage the area Youth coordinator said that there was nothing to report.

6 Organisational Updates

CS reported the following:

Organisational Development Group – November update will be published by the end of this week on the ODG website

Strategic Plan – CS thanked everyone for their feedback during the strategic plan consultation review. Taking the feedback on board Paul Davies (interim executive) has updated the 2020 - 2024 strategic plan to reflect the priorities for 2021 and revised some of the wording where it was felt necessary. Paul is currently working with staff on the development of an operations plans as part of the budgeting process. There is some more work going on with the foundation activities identified in the plan, once this has been complete the revised plan will be published for the membership.

Mission Statement – Members were asked to provide feedback on the following proposed mission statement that would underpin the plans for 2021: *"Create an organisation that links the work of all our staff, volunteers and partners; so that we can campaign effectively, drive our engagement, and become a stronger voice in representing the interests of climbers, hillwalkers and mountaineers."*

The following feedback was provided:

- Those present at the meeting agreed with the sentiment of the statement and just feel the words need tightening up for clarity.
- It is felt the beginning is missing and the statement starts in the middle of a sentence. What is going to create the organisation. Not clear what/who is doing the creating.

- What is meant by 'drive our engagement'? At the meeting I explained this in the context of the priorities for next year but might need some refining in the statement for clarity.
- We already have an organisation, our mission is to link the work of volunteers etc.
- The BMC already exists, we don't need to create the organisation. Suggested the statement starts with – *To link the work of all our staff, volunteers and partners; so that we can campaign effectively...*

Climbing competition performance group – an application had been made to UK Sport for substantial funding for the progression pathway.

Change from National Council to Members Council – proposal was still being considered including proposed terms of reference for the members council. A governance webinar was being organised for January 2021 and this would be a further opportunity for members to comment.

Voting Procedures – further amendments concerning STV were being considered. When finalised these would be sent out to members for consultation.

Specialist Committees Review – The report from the Specialist Committee Review undertaken by Roger Murray, David Brown and Jon Garside has been completed and a presentation to accompany the report was provided to National Council and the Board. The reconstitution of National Council working group has been reviewing the report in the context of the changes to the Members' Council and updating constitution and procedural documents accordingly. The Board is continuing to review the report and is developing a process for implementing the recommendations on how the Board interfaces with each committee.

Consultation on Terms of Reference for area meetings – these were being prepared by Lucy Valerio, the BMC governance officer and company secretary ahead of revised articles being presented at next years AGM. They would be a separate document rather than part of the formal articles of association and will be shared with members shortly for consultation.

7 Area "Noticeboard"

- This year's Winter Skills Lecture Series presented by Sam Leary and Mick Jones will be held on Zoom on Thursday 3 December starting at 7:30pm. Tickets cost £5.99 for BMC members and £7.99 for non-members.
- LR spoke about the three volunteers awards and that nomination submissions for the 2021 awards will be opening shortly.

8. Date of next Area Meetings

The 2021 area meeting dates would set after the National Council meeting dates had been fixed.

9 Any Other Business

CW asked how many members in the area belonged to clubs. CS reported the figure currently stands at 3,733 across 62 clubs however student clubs are still going through their renewal process so student club members may not be reflected in this figure.

One member asked for the total membership figure which currently stands at 76,000 however there are still renewals going through at the moment and the number does fluctuate due to when the renewals are due.

CS declared the meeting closed at 20.55