



Cyfarfod - BMC Cymru North/Gogledd - Meeting held via Zoom, following the local AGM

3/11/2020

Minutes - Cofnodion

Attendance: - A total of 48 were recorded on Zoom's participants list. However, this is not necessarily an accurate record of attendance and includes approx. 10 non-voting BMC members, resident outside the N Wales area.

1. **Croeso/Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair, Tim Jepson, opened the meeting and welcomed members back after the AGM.

2. **Ymddiheuriadau Apologies** were received from:

Pete Johnson, Lun Roberts, Ian Martin, Gwyn Jones

3. **Minutes/Cofnodion** (Zoom: 01/09/2020)

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted without alteration

Proposed: Ross Worthington. Seconded: Jon Ratcliffe

Approved: Yes: 23, No: 0: Abstain 3

Matters arising

- a. Peter Rutherford's statement that the Bwlch Maesgwm path work had been welcomed by the Local Access Forum (LAF) has been disputed by several members of that forum.
- b. Gareth Pierce actually stood down as Chair of the Board of Directors in the late summer.
- c. The Covid pandemic has prevented the organisation of a Tremadog clean-up. Anthony Eccles reported fallen trees across the path at Pant Ifan. Elfyn stated that Gwyn Jones had been contracted to do the necessary work after lockdown.
- d. A warning sign had been erected at Cwm Silyn.
- e. Limited National Trust parking is now available again at Fedw Fawr.
- f. The Castell Helen abseil point has now had the karabiners and the worst of the pegs removed.
- g. Tim Jepson has not organised an on-line N. Wales 'fixed gear' debate, but the idea may arise again as a result of discussion at this meeting.

4. **Path management in the Park**

Neal Hockley presented the draft document 'Principles for Path Works in Eryri' which has been compiled by a group of local members since the last meeting, and which is available on the BMC Community website. The document has been prompted by developments like the new Cwm Idwal bridge and the extensive engineering work which is taking place on the Bwlch Maesgwm bridleway. In the past, the BMC has tended to have to react to developments which had already started; but if the document was approved by members, it could be used at the early consultation stage of future developments such as the Cylchdaith Carneddau and restoration/management work at Bwlch y Moch to represent the BMC's consensus, considered approach to path maintenance and improvement.

Neal H. reassured Peter Salenieks that the document took into account best practice elsewhere and did not contradict engineering standards.

John Roberts (SNPA archeologist and individual BMC member) thought the document was balanced and constructive, but would benefit from some additions to the Background section. John explained that the

Cylchdaith Carneddau is not intended to be a new long-distance foothpath, but a way of connecting local communities re-using existing paths and tracks.

Si Verspeak questioned the timescale of consultations, pointing out that work is now being carried out on the Llanberis path up Yr Wyddfa, including the removal of bedrock.

Eccles (?) said that path work should be to counter the effects of erosion, not to improve accessibility

Elfyn Jones suggested that this document be shared with the BMC's Hillwalking group.

Ray Wood said that he was unaware of the Maesgwm work ever being discussed in the LAF.

Kate and Ross Worthington said that the idea of a Cylchdaith Yr Wyddfa had been around for over a decade and much of the necessary path improvement was already completed. Maesgwm is just part of a bigger project!

A poll was presented, as follows:

"The document, 'Principles for Path Work in the uplands of Eryri', represents the views of BMC Cymru (Gogledd) and should be used to influence the policies of organisations engaged in path work in Eryri." with the result:

Agree, 21 (68%): Disagree, 0: Abstain, 4 (13%): Non-voting member, 6 (19%)

5. Traffic Planning in Eryri

The Chair reported that since Helen Pye (Engagement Officer, SNPA) spoke to our last Local Area meeting, the summary of the consultant's report on Transport and Parking around Yr Wyddfa and Ogwen has been released, although the full document is not yet available. The summary is available on the BMC's Community website.

Tarquin Shipley has read the summary document and summarised its content for the meeting. He felt that the proposed, staged implementation of an integrated, environmentally sustainable infrastructure, involving increased parking in 'gateway villages', an improved bus service and better pre-visit information would be a sensible solution to the identified transport issues in the honey-pot areas of Eryri. Helen Pye had indicated that the recommendations in the consultant's document are NOT a 'done-deal' and BMC should have an input before final decisions are made.

Peter Salenieks, Kate Worthington, Dave Evans, Tim Jepson, Pat Littlejohn all variously highlighted the necessity of considering the needs of walkers and climbers who were not 'one-off' visitors to the park. Any new provision must account for the all-season, off-peak, all-day, all-areas requirements of BMC members. The main thrust of the summary document focuses on peak visitor demand and the benefits for local businesses and communities.

Calum Muskett is now a member of LAF and had attended a presentation the previous evening. He emphasised that consultation with local communities was at a very early stage and there could be huge problems, for example, in siting parking for an improved bus service.

Neal Hockley thought a move towards use of buses, and away from cars would be 'ace', but it should be possible to keep some parking open for non-peak use by locals and visitors.

Mike Raine felt that these were ambitious plans, but we should be supportive and prepared to be open to a change to our current conveniences.

Steve Williams and Tarquin Shipley drew attention to the document's reference to a visitor pass/permit. How would locals, especially those who work daily in the Park, feel about this? There is definitely a need for further consultation on some of these proposals.

Ray Wood raised the issue of a very recent Gwynedd CC proposal to paint double yellow lines near Bus-stop Quarry. This would significantly reduce parking for climbers and walkers and potentially shift any problem further down the road. The proposals for yellow lining this area may have been prompted by local

complaints about over-night stays in vans, and/or problems of buses turning round. The outdoor community may be partly responsible for inappropriate behaviour associated with overnight stays. There are now similar parking problems at Pen Llyn, Brynrefail.

Action: Elfyn Jones will write to Gwynedd Council and try to arrange a site meeting.

John Roberts said that overnight parking was a problem in all UK National Parks. Van-life for a few was jeopardising traditional parking for the many.

John Cousins pointed out that solutions elsewhere (eg. Public toilet maps in Scotland) accepted, rather than demonised, van-life.

Tim Jepson highlighted the complexity of the big, eco-tourism vision for Eryri and noted the contrast with the small-scale problems caused by the closing of a lay-bys. Solutions can't be piecemeal; everything is inter-connected.

Action: It was agreed that the Chair should get a small group together to draw up a consensus set of BMC Cymru guidelines which could be used to represent the views of members during future consultations. The example of the way in which the 'Principles of Path Work' document was produced could provide a suitable model for the group.

NB. Numbered items **6** and **7** were missing from the agenda due to a typo'. ...Apologies

8. Reports

a. Pwyllgor Cymru/ Wales Committee + c. Wales Manifesto

Neal Hockley reported on progress in understanding various possible models of governance through discussions with other similar bodies in Wales, eg. Canoe Wales.

A limited BMC budget (10 -15 days work) has now been made available to pay for a contractor to produce a 'BMC Cymru Manifesto' for climbing and walking in Wales. This is needed to influence the candidates and political parties in the run up to the Welsh elections in May 2021.

b. Access

Elfyn Jones' report is part of the Annual Report and comments/questions were invited. As there were none, Steve Hobdell thanked Elfyn for his thorough and detailed work on Access and Conservation.

9. Chair's Business

i. Progressing the Fixed-Gear Debate

The Chair prefaced this item by saying that 'fixed gear' discussions took up a large proportion of his BMC role, citing the Castell Helen abseil station during the last meeting, and very recently, a UKC on-line thread about 'Bolts at Gogarth', prompted by an article written by Calum Muskett. The BMC has no authority to regulate fixed gear on crags, but it could produce guidelines or a policy which might influence the actions of both local and visiting climbers.

Calum Muskett introduced the debate by describing the historical context of 'pegs' at Gogarth and how a few of the original, now rotting 'pegs' had recently been cleaned out and replaced with drilled, glued stainless steel 'bolts', using the existing crack-lines. Such 'bolts' have also been used to secure anchors at the top of selected climbs eg. The Strand and at Rhoscolyn. While use of these 'bolts' may, arguably, have made routes safer, and allowed neglected routes to become more popular again, the concern is that routes and crags change their very nature when they have an element of bolt protection. The other concern is an apparent lack of consultation before placement.

Dan Lane said that at the end of tonight's discussion there would be an indicative poll on the following statement:

“ The default position at Gogarth should be not to replace pegs with bolts, or other drilled hardware.”

If agreed, this would set an expectation that it wouldn't be normal behaviour to place drilled, fixed equipment at Gogarth without proper consultation and subsequent consensus agreement.

Members at this meeting, but resident outside N Wales, would be invited to vote in this poll.

Despite the contentious topic, there followed a good-natured and balanced discussion with many, varied

opinions expressed. Contributions were received verbally, in the chat room and via email. Although these minutes do not attribute all contributions, the main points emerging were:

- Gogarth is a jewel of world adventure climbing. Locals need to be careful that its character is not lost (Dave Brown)
- Locals are very aware of Gogarth's importance for adventure climbing, as indicated by this discussion. We are not talking about a proliferation of pegs/bolts. It should be possible to compile criteria for limited, appropriate use of glue-in pegs/bolts. (Jon Ratcliffe)
- Any bolts on Gogarth represent the 'thin end of a wedge'. (Ian McNeill)
- Calum's proposal is constructive. At the moment it is a free-for-all, a mess. Important to get all sides of the argument on board before proceeding. Consensus, taking into account a host of factors, will be difficult to achieve, but some sort of guidelines are necessary. (Steve Long)
- We should differentiate between peg/bolts on stances and pegs/bolts as protection? (Geoff Bennett)
- Why just Gogarth? There are lots of other trad. crags in North Wales. (Mike Pycroft)
- Use of sustainable, SS, glue-in pegs/bolts on a 'like-for-like' basis is a sensible compromise. (Pete Johnson).
- Several expressions of support for 'like-for-like' replacement. (Dave Lyon)
- Problems with defining 'like-for-like', given modern equipment and rising standards.
- Much support for 'case-by-case' consideration of all replacements.
- Much support for fuller consultation before any replacements.
- Should decisions about fixed-gear be made by local climbers, familiar with the routes, or by climbers more generally? (Andy Boorman).
- How would consultation be achieved and how would decisions be policed?
- Any principles should apply to climbs of all grades – not just the hard ones.
- Only a few of these peg/bolts have been placed; it's not a big deal.
- Castell Helen abseil station is a complex and 'special case' – it needs a sustainable solution.
- Surely if you can climb at Castell Helen you can rig a safe anchor.
- There is an education element to all this – i.e. for those new to climbing and unfamiliar with the tradition and ethics of UK climbing. (Peter Salenieks)

The discussion concluded with an agreement that a single-issue, open meeting would be arranged in order to clarify the arguments and attempt to draw up consensus guidelines for placing fixed gear in North Wales. Ian McNeill and 'Eccles Cake' asked to be invited to any such meeting

The indicative vote was then conducted with the following result:

33 voted on the proposition that:

"The default position at Gogarth should be not to replace pegs with bolts (or other drilled hardware)"

Agree (26)

Disagree (4)

Don't care (0)

Abstain (5)

Lynn Robinson provided a link to the Peak Area Limestone Bolting Policy and reminded us that S Wales has arranged a bolting debate for the 24th November.

ii. New membership option for under-27s

Peter Salenieks drew attention to some 'wrinkles' in the new membership package and asked when there would be an opportunity for clubs and specialist committees to discuss membership 'in the round' to attract new and different types of members. Lynn responded that there was a need to be agile; if new membership packages didn't work they would have to be adapted.

iii. Governance – Open Forum

The meeting was reminded of the BMC Open Forum on 'Governance' to take place on Thursday (5.11.2020).

iii. Updates – Board, ODG, Campaigns, Mission Statement.

Following Gareth Pierce standing down as Chair of the Board, Paul Drew is Acting Chair and a recruiting consultancy is being used to fill Board vacancies and ensure increased diversity of representation on the Board.

Campaigns are going well. Note in particular the #SaveOutdoorCentres; please email your MS (in Wales)

or your MP (in England)

Lynn Robinson explained that having developed a strategy and a plan for 2021, it was noted that there was no Mission Statement. This Mission Statement which has been produced will be reviewed each year, along with the strategy. Feedback on it is welcomed.

Dave Turnbull told the meeting of falling membership and lost insurance income due to the Covid pandemic. The new under-27 membership package and a drive to exploit the potential of the indoor membership market, will hopefully help in 2021.

The Manchester office has been working with a skeleton staff of 3-6, while others work from home. There was a recent long, but constructive Board meeting. The strategy and its themes are being broken down into specific, detailed objectives.

Facebook live session on Mountain Training coming up soon.

This year's budget will be in deficit, but furlough and other savings should turn that into a surplus.

10. Any Other Business

Lynn Robinson congratulated Steve Long on his new role within the UIAA.

The date of the next meeting to be confirmed

The Chair closed the meeting at 21,30.