

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA MEETING

Meeting held by zoom call
on Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 19.00

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence - Attendance numbers 30 (maximum)

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

Apologies – Tom Bennett

CS welcomed everyone to the meeting. A poll was taken showing about half the members present were attending their first area meeting. Members were also drawn from different parts of the area.

There were no members of the board or executive attending as a board meeting was also taking place this evening.

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 27 October 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 27 October 2020 were approved (Y10, A14, N0, NVM 2).

CS reported back on a matter raised at the last meeting regarding if the BMC had explored the options of a rebate from the insurers as activities had not taken place during the lockdown and if this would be passed onto the members. The lead director for clubs had responded: the practice with insurers was to discuss a possible rebate 1-2 years later. The potential amounts were not likely to be large and it would be impractical to rebate them to clubs, the cost of administering would outweigh the amount returned.

3. Report from National Council meeting held November 2020 – January 2021

CS reported that there had been eight national council meetings during the period. The key issues were:

- Dave Turnbull has stepped down as CEO and is now head of Access, Conservation and Environmental Sustainability, Paul Davies appointed as Interim CEO. Currently recruiting a new CEO
- Recruitment is also live for a Policy and Campaigns Officer in Wales and Head of Performance for GB Climbing
- National Council have met 8 times since the last area meetings during which time we have covered the reports from the specialist committees, continued to finalise points relating to the reconstitution of National Council (including the Nationally Elected Councillor (NEC) Positions) and held a single topic meeting focusing on the reports from areas.
- Two CND's were appointed on the 29th October to fill the two vacancies - Carl Spencer and Peter Salenieks.
- National Council discussed the mission statement which was presented at the last area meeting and took on board the comments received from members.
 - Our Vision
 - To create a better future for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers.
 - Our Purpose
 - To represent the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers and inspire all generations.
 - Our 2020–2024 Mission
 - We will link the work of all our staff, volunteers, clubs, and partners, to campaign effectively and increase engagement, becoming a stronger voice for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers.
- Continuing from summer of last year, NC now receive regular updates from the Board via the CND's.
- This year's AGM will take place Saturday 15th May and will be virtual.

There were no questions or requests to raise matters with NC.

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

Damon Beail updated the meeting about Southern Sandstone. A poll showed that, in pre-Covid days, about 15% of people present climbed frequently on SS, 35% occasionally and 50% did not climb there.

- A climbing suspension during the November lockdown last year had been implemented because of the risk of further damage to wet rock and higher levels of usage, particularly by people who normally climbed at indoor walls only and were seeking to now climb outdoors because walls were shut.
- The SS code of practice had been amended to make even clearer the risk of damage to the rock if climbed when wet.
- Plans were in hand when the weather permitted for works for drainage, rock repair and bolting;
- An article by Damon about SS climbing was due to appear in Climbing
- There was a need to try and involve climbing walls in educating their clients about climbing on SS
- Sarah Cullen chair of Harrison's Rocks Management Groups (HRMG) had stood down, and Adrian Paisley had been appointed as her successor.
- The Rockfax SS app had been improved so it would open with the key points of the Climbing Code.

Tim, a member who was linked to a climbing wall, explained that his wall had decided not to give information out to its customers about SS climbing in order to protect the rock from inappropriate overuse.

CS thanked DB and all members of the HRMG, and in particular thanked Sarah Cullen for her work as chair, and looked forward to working with Adrian in due course.

5 Area Reps update

5.1 Clubs

Tim Crocker, area clubs rep, gave a report.

- TC presented the results of a survey of area clubs which he had carried out in October 2020. The response rate had not been high. The main approaches taken by LSE clubs under Covid restrictions had been to organise day walks and/or encourage members to self-organise in pairs or small groups where this was within the rules.
- TC went through the four aims of the BMC clubs committee for 2021: (1) pandemic support and recovery by clubs; (2) expanding membership including a new offer; (3) club engagement; and (4) improving club committee effectiveness.

Roger Bowman, representing a walking club, asked about implementing the BMC risk assessment on activities. TC explained that a lot was common sense which all individuals would by now be aware of. A member Stephen Gray suggested that the guidance could be shorter, although it was pointed out it was drafted some time ago and also addressed to volunteer organisers with varying levels of health and safety knowledge.

5.2 Hillwalking

Fabrizio Scaliogne reported on the LSE area and hill-walking. FS circulated in chat a link to the latest BMC guidance. He drew members attention to the public appeal to support the volunteer mountain rescue team member who had recently suffered life-changing injuries as a result of an accident on call-out. FS said consultation was going on about trespass issues.

CS encouraged members to listen to the new podcast [Wild Horizon](#) in which FS featured talking about the South Downs Way.

5.3 Youth

Tanya Sage the Area Youth coordinator said that there was nothing to report, other than that the BMC had set very tentative dates for a youth climbing competition with rounds starting in September and culminating with national finals on 27 and 28 November.

5.4 Indoor Climbing Walls

No report.

[A volunteer to assist with this area would be welcome. If interested please contact Chris Stone]

6 Organisational Updates

CS reported that the next members Open Forum was being held on 25 February 2021 where the issues of changes to the organisational governance could be discussed in greater detail. Also there was a Governance email list for those members who were particularly interested.

6.1 Change from National Council to Members Council – The proposal to replace National Council with a Members' Council would be considered at the 2021 AGM. If approved, the MC would comprise: president, 20 areas reps with ten votes; 6 Specialist Representative; 6 constituency reps including 1 to represent Mountain Training candidates; 1 to represent club members; and 4 Nationally Elected reps, one each for hill-walking, indoor climbing, rock climbing and mountaineering. Details would be published on 4 March and he encouraged those who felt qualified and motivated to consider standing to do so.

6.2 Terms of Reference for area meetings – In the light of consultation the AGM would also consider a revised set of Articles which will see the majority of points relating to areas moving into a Terms of Reference.

The Terms of Reference, together with Article 30 of the revised Articles of Association will set out how areas and area meetings are to be governed. The intent of the Terms of Reference is to provide a framework within which Area Officers are free to operate their local meetings and Area engagements as they, and the Area Members, deem most appropriate.

At the moment, the Articles contain many operational points which makes it difficult for Area Officers to tailor their meetings so they are appropriate to their local members. The ToR comprises of two sections, the main ToR along with a set of appendices which are there to provide operational guidance to Area Officers and Area Representatives. In relation to areas and area meetings, Article 30 will cover the following matters: approval process for updates to the ToR, purpose of area meetings (unchanged from current Articles), voting eligibility and the election and removal of officers and representatives. Any changes to the ToR (excluding appendices) requires approval of at least 75% of Area Officers, a majority of Council and a majority of the Board. Where the changes can't be agreed by the three bodies, the changes will be taken to the members for approval at the next AGM. The appendices can be updated with support of the majority of Area Officers in consultation with the staff.

Area Officers and Representatives have been consulted on the content of the ToR and their feedback incorporated.

Questions on matters of governance relating to the article changes can be addressed to agm@thebmc.co.uk

7 Area "Noticeboard"

- Stephen Gray asked for more information about how to set up a club and to volunteer to speak at area meetings. CS agreed to respond.

8. Date of next Area Meetings

The next area meeting would be on Wednesday 28 April 2021 at 19.00 on zoom.

CS said that he hoped that there would be a presentation from Andy Gattiker, National Trails and Rights of Way Lead at the South Downs National Park Authority. Andy would be speaking about the South Downs, including the impact of the grant to the South Downs National Park for footpath repairs which had been made from the BMC's Mend Our Mountains fundraising campaign.

9 Any Other Business

James B asked about recent BMC marketing of membership. He felt that it might confuse people that there were different types of membership e.g. hillwalking, indoor climbing etc. CS explained that there was only one unified BMC membership and that the advertisements James had seen were targeted to different groups eg because of the Covid interest in hillwalking and the Olympics and climbing walls. CS offered to relay James' thoughts to the BMC marketing team.

10. BMC Climate Change Emergency Project

Tim Crocker gave a short presentation (attached) summarising the BMC's climate change emergency project. The meeting broke into groups to consider what they could do as members/clubs and what they wanted the BMC to do. Feedback would be emailed to CS who would pass it on to Cath Flitcroft. TC and CS thanked everyone for their contributions in the workshops.

CS declared the meeting closed at 20.55

Minutes written by Robert Dufton