



Cyfarfod - BMC Cymru North/Gogledd - Meeting held via Zoom.

2/3/2021

1. Croeso Welcome

The Chair welcomed 32 'screens' to the meeting.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau

None

3. Minutes/Cofnodion* (Zoom – 3 November 2020)

Accepted. Proposer: Pete Johnson. Seconder: Neal Hockley

Matters Arising (not on the agenda) - Materion yn codi

i. **Action:** The finalised BMC Cymru Path Management document to be posted on BMC Cymru area of the BMC website.

Similar, destructive 'management' work to that done on the Bwlch Maesgwm path has now been done on the Llanberis path to Halfway House, again without apparent consultation.

A meeting requested, to speak with a highly-placed SNPA Officer to discuss path management in the Park, has still not taken place, despite chasing by EJ.

Action: Our BMC Cymru Path Management document to be shared with the Hillwalking Group.

ii The GCC proposal for double yellow lines at Bus Stop Quarry has been withdrawn after numerous objections. A successful campaign!

4. Access Reform Programme for Wales (EJ)

Access reform is being pushed through by Welsh Govt.; it is now a matter of what the reforms will look like when they happen, not if they happen. BMC has been involved in the group consultations. Ministerial decisions, due in June, will be based on the final report. The draft report will be emailed out 26th March, and the absolute final date for comments will be 16th April.

There will be a need to lobby Senedd members, after the elections in May.

BMC is optimistic that access to the coast will become a right.

Access to water is still being considered.

In answer to questions. EJ said:

~ There is a similar campaign in England, but Wales wants to go its own way.

~ Access reform is a priority, and furlough arrangements haven't impacted EJ's work in this area.

~ The intention is that Local Access Forums become more involved and effective, eg, advising on diversion of footpaths. Currently, LAFs are hardly used outside National Parks.

~ The public element of consultation is now over, but clubs and area members can lobby Senedd members once the Access Reform report is published. The proposals will be posted on the BMC website.

Peter S.: Concern that there are well-organised groups (eg. Landowners) with opposing views on access.

~ Wild camping was never on the Access Reform agenda, so it wasn't up for discussion.

5. Traffic and Parking Planning in Eryri - The Consultation and the BMC Cymru response.

A small working group met to discuss the consultant's report, noting that there were still no definite proposals during this consultation phase. The group produced a response which expressed support for the report's sustainable transport vision, but then posed many concerns in the form of questions needing to be resolved.

At the time of this meeting, two Gateway Village community consultations (Llanberis and Betws y Coed) had already taken place, two more (Beddgelert and Bethesda) are due.

Comments from members who had attended the two completed community consultations included:

- ~ Approx 60 attendees at each, including facilitators.
- ~ You needed to be tech-savvy to make the most of the opportunity to participate.
- ~ Some people attending struggled with translation.
- ~ Attendance not representative of the local community, mainly existing activists.
- ~ Meetings were full, excluding some members.
- ~ Restricted opportunity to express opinions.
- ~ Surprise that the consultants said there was (only) a requirement for an extra 200 car parking spaces in Llanberis. The meeting felt the number would be far higher. Chair's note: The requirement for Bethesda was stated as 100!
- ~ The 'Elephant in the Room' is the need for four huge car-parks.
- ~ Impression that there was limited money available to implement the 'vision'.
- ~ Other sources say that the Nat. Park is cash-rich at present.
- ~ Funding requires significant annual funding as well as substantial initial investment.
- ~ Clwb Mynydda Cymru are meeting this week to formulate a response.

ACTION: TJ and NH to prepare a final version for posting on the BMC Cymru section of the BMC website.

ACTION: Stephen Williams to share the outcome from CMC's discussion.

Chair's Note: In the week following the area meeting, the BMC Cymru document was tidied-up and sent to Catrin Glyn (SNPA Officer) as a joint BMC Cymru and Clwb Mynydda Cymru response.

6. BMC Cymru Manifesto

With Welsh Gov. Elections due in May, BMC Cymru needed a document with which to present its position to ministers. A hard copy of the manifesto, with its five key 'asks' will be sent to all Senedd members and officials. BMC issues do not fall neatly into a single departmental portfolio. We need a cross-departmental campaign to work with government to achieve a thriving, active nation to include:

- ~ Improving access (especially to the coast; it is nearly there, but not yet guaranteed.)
- ~ Sustainable landscape management.
- ~ Public health benefits of access and outdoor activity.
- ~ Economic importance of access to open spaces.

There will be a launch in Caerdydd soon.

Pete J. Congratulated everyone involved in producing such a good document, and asked his appreciation to be passed on to Snowdonia Active who had won the short contract to research, write and design the manifesto. Agreed by the meeting.

Pete S: Was it intentional to use 'walking' rather than 'hill-walking'.

EJ: Yes! In order to include coastal walking/climbing.

The manifesto, once signed-off will be available to all members and clubs in hard copy and on-line.

ACTION: EJ to pass on our thanks to Snowdonia Active et al.

ACTION: EJ will sign it off tomorrow, then start distribution.

7. Strwythur staff BMC yng Nghymru yn y dyfydol. Future BMC staff structure in Wales

EJ currently devotes much work time to policy issues in Wales (despite the A&C job title), hence the need for a new officer, preferably based in Caerdydd. Money has been allocated by the BMC board to fund a part-time policy post in Wales and the advert is now out – applications invited. Once the new officer is appointed, EJ will overlap/mentor for a while, then drop back into a shortened A&C role.

The Chair emphasised just what an important development this represents for Wales. Congratulations to everyone concerned with successfully arguing the case and realising the post.

It will be important not to ask too much of this new post in Wales – the priority now must be to convince all BMC officers to contribute to the Welsh agenda, rather than to assume that all-things-Wales can now be left in the hands of the new officer.

The new officer in Wales will report to Dave Turnbull, who has stepped down from his CEO role to become Head of Access, Conservation & Environmental Sustainability.

8. Outcomes of the 'Fixed gear' open debate.

The on-line Open Debate about Fixed Gear on Rock Climbs in North Wales has been a long time coming, but eventually took place on 23 Feb. There were approx. 50 participants, most from N. Wales, but including some members from outside Wales, and a few non-BMC members.

The discussion was civilised, despite divided opinion, and structured around a series of poll questions.

A full report, with polling results, is available on the area's community web page. Andy Boorman had also produced a factual, technical paper to support discussion.

TJ and AB were thanked for their hard work in preparing for and conducting the debate.

The question now is how to move forward from here. Should there be a working group to formulate some recommendations for an area meeting to ratify? If so, how should the membership be determined?

Points raised in discussion:

- ~ There seemed to be considerable support for sustainable anchors on stances and abseil points.
- ~ Polls are difficult to construct. They cannot be definitive; they offer indicative results only.
- ~ Vocal people in debates are not necessarily representative of the poll results, or of the climbing community's opinions.
- ~ Any working group needs to be representative, but it is the area's responsibility to make final decisions.
- ~ Whatever recommendations a working group makes, we will have no authority to enforce them.
- ~ All the points/concerns raised tonight were discussed during the debate and are included in the debate report.
- ~ There have been similar discussions in South Wales. Their work and our work should join up if possible.

ACTION: The Chair and Andy B to bring together a representative working group and provide a brief for their work.

9. The BMC Climate Project

EJ: The BMC is looking at the environmental impact of the organisation itself and of the activities of its members. The BMC is signed up to the UIAA Declaration of Climate Emergency.

Led by Cath Flitcroft, the BMC Climate Project asks the membership to contribute ideas for minimising those impacts. Perversely, the sale of travel insurance is a key revenue generator for the BMC.

The north, south and mid- Wales areas are joining forces to have a single-issue Zoom meeting to debate this issue at 7.30pm on 22nd March.

The Manchester office will circulate the meeting details, but we all need to promote the event to the membership in Wales. It is an important topic, with a particular Welsh context, and it is an important 'All-Wales' opportunity to meet together.

Suggestions for promotion:

- ~ To contact student and club reps.
- ~ To use social media channels.

10. Reports:

Pwyllgor Cymru – Neal Hockley

Most issues pertaining to the Wales Committee have been covered elsewhere on the agenda.

A robust letter, and a Freedom of Information request, were sent to the Brecon Beacons NP Authority to ask for a justification of the temporary closures of areas of open access land, under Covid regulations. The letter drew considerable positive feedback from members. A cursory response has been received from the Park, but not an explanation of the basis of the decision.

NH has received an assurance that similar measures are not being considered for Eryri.

Access and Conservation – Elfyn Jones

Llanddulas Caves and Escarpment:

Rumours that this area may be fenced off. Owned by Gwyrch Castle Trust, but some land leased to NRW. No access issues as yet but needs watching carefully. Trying to establish historic Rights of Way through the woods, there is a big campaign involving local politicians. If you hear of problems, please report to EJ.

Nesting Birds:

Seasonal bird restrictions have begun. Less human activity than usual, due to Covid, may have led to nesting in 'new' places.

Be aware: Disturbing birds is illegal.

National Council Rep. - Tarquin Shipley

Everyone at NC is still wrapped up in governance fall-out from the Organisational Review.

The latest issue is to decide the term of the next President – one or three years?

TS said that he was still finding his feet in the role of area rep.

PS said that TS was in fact already making constructive observations in the council.

Election procedures, to be used at the AGM, have caused considerable discussion. Details will go out to the membership.

We will be seeking a new President from the membership for 3 years, although the role may change at the end of Year 1.

Other

Lynn Robinson (current President) really values being able to attend the local meetings. Listening to all the work that's being done in Wales is phenomenal.

There is much work being done around Recommendation 33 – the new National Council membership is intended to make the BMC more representative.

There are new voluntary roles now being recruited from the membership – closing date 31st March.

Details here: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/agm-volunteers>

Paul McKoen has been recruited to the new (part-time) senior management position of Chief Financial Officer, and will lead the existing finance team.

Applications for the CEO role have now closed.

The new President will be elected at the **AGM**, to be held virtually on **15th May**.

Some of these roles are funded by Sport England.

11. Chair's Business; Manchester Office Matters.

TJ, TS, and Peter S. attended the BMC Open Forum last week. Other Open forums to be held, the next on 18th March.

Three main issues were discussed:

- ~ Election procedures
- ~ Terms of Reference of Area Meetings
- ~ The status of Open Forums within the BMC governance structures.

The amount of time and passion spent discussing the details of these issues on the membership's behalf is extra-ordinary.

Peter S raised our awareness of the fact that members in Wales could choose which Welsh area they were registered to.

None of the membership in England have this choice.

Action: TJ to check up on this anomaly.

12. AOB – UFA

Ross Worthington alerted the meeting to Gwynedd CC piloting a system for registration of all 'events' that are taking place on 'Snowdon'. As yet 'event' is not clearly defined, but would definitely include charity walks, challenge events and fell races.

Not sure how this might impact BMC meets which use Snowdon as a venue. (eg Staying at Ynys Ettws)

ACTION: RAW to keep an eye on the plan and to report back.

**13. Date of the Next Meeting: Dyddiad y Cyfarfod Nesa':
April 27 Ebrill 2021**