

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 3rd March 2021 7.30pm start ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Present: Andy Potter (Chair), Tim Weller, John Edwards, David Jones, Dan Errington, Kevin Draper (Shropshire MC), Rosi Yule, Tony Mills, Hazel Lewis, Lynn Robinson, Gordon Jackson, Cath Flitcroft, Andy Harper (Access Rep East), Roger Fanner, John Handley, Mike L, Dave H (Wolverhampton MC).

Max 17, of whom 14 were present for 100% of the meeting. As far as can be ascertained this included 4 female attendees & 0 BAME.

1. Welcome and Apologies: Andy Potter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Claudia Sarner.

3. Minutes of the last Meeting: Agreed.

4 Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere: None

5. Reports from Area Representatives:

5.1 Access East: Andy Harper noted it's a quiet time of year. Andy has visited Cademan woods and several other crags. Not good condition for climbing at the moment. However, an increase in litter has been noticed and lots more people out walking. Even obscure walking routes are very muddy and well-trodden. Some bouldering happening at Forest Rock but no issues with local residents noted (there has been issues in the past). A potential film maker has been contacted for some featurettes on local crags. A letter has been sent to Squire de Lisle to introduce BMC regarding crags on his property (in the Whitwick area). Andy planning update all crags in RAD over the coming year. Andy talking to Rob about being able to put topos for local crags onto the BMC RAD.

5.2 Access West: No report

5.3 Youth: Andy noted that the BMC youth climbing series is not running.

5.4 Hill Walking: David Jones having discussions with Peter Judd (Peak District). Hillwalking reps weekend meeting planned, once COVID allows, for discussion about BMC engagement with Hillwalkers. We now have a Hillwalking Rep volunteer description. Lynn noted Wild Horizons podcasts by Niall Grimes (<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/wild-horizons--the-new-hillwalking-podcast-from-the-bmc>), we are also arranging Hillwalking Skills workshops (webinars) due to come out on BMC website soon.

5.5. Club Issues: Andy reported on club's forum success and the need for more communication clubs. Hazel raised the need for of contact with national clubs to allow them to join club forums.

6.1 Reports from National Councillors:

Lynn gave an update starting with staff update. Dave Turnbull is now head of access, conversation and environmental conservation. Paul Davis is acting CEO. Recruitment has closed for permanent CEO. Sport England funded recruitment agency (SE not involved in actual appointment). Financial Director has started working 2 days a week, Paul Mckoen. Three new independent directors have joined and attend recent board meetings. Paul Drew now acting chair until AGM.

Open Forums held every month to discuss governance with members (to avoid bogging down area meetings). Forums very successful and getting valuable feedback. NC and Board have joint meetings to review Specialist Committees. Roger Murray leading on the specialist committee review.

AGM is taking place on 15th May and will be virtual. Board decided already to go virtual (decision predated recent COVID roadmap). Various roles up for election, looking to make membership better represented on National Council.

National Council setup group to look at role of president, being chaired by Roger. Terms of Reference have been agreed, planned to do review by AGM this year but not possible. Lots of work to do to look at models for role of president in organisations like BMC. Consultation with members

expected towards end of this year. Other roles in the BMC reviewed in recent years so president role should be reviewed as a matter of good practice.

6.2 Matters for the next Council Meeting:

7. BMC Office Update:

Cath - Staff are furloughed for Fridays at the moment. Staff very busy.

Membership numbers are down Dec 2020 76K compared with 84K Dec 2019. Mainly due to loss of club members, student members. Renewals this year down 200 membership per month, partly due to Mountain Training membership. Hopefully numbers will pick up when international travel allowed. New under 27 digital membership has been launched. Compared with other membership organisations we haven't fared too badly and there is expectation numbers will pick up again when impact of COVID reduced.

Lynn – Note that financially BMC situation is not great. BMC Shop still open and sales up during lockdown. Thanks to members for staying with BMC.

Cath – Positive feedback about content on website and social media. Both from members and partner organisations.

Kevin (Shropshire MC) – Raised issue of Snowdonia parking changes. Ongoing consultation and querying BMC engagement with the consultation. Cath noted that Elfyn Jones (BMC North Wales access rep) engaged with process. BMC setting up working group on sustainable travel, lots of issues to consider. Andy noted contact with Jane Thomson and advice for clubs with huts to get involved in next phase of consultation. Lynn noted that BMC is recruiting part time Welsh policy and campaigns officer, also in draft format a Welsh manifesto for BMC to go to candidates for Welsh MSs.

7. COVID

Cath - BMC lobbying for more clarity about what is allowed by current roadmap, particularly in terms of travel. Jane is working on updated club guidance for meets and huts. Andy keen to see more details and noted previous details very useful.

Kevin (Shropshire MC) – Question about essential maintenance on hut and is it allowed. Cath noted it should be OK. Andy noted about having letter from chair of the club is what the Bowline club have been doing.

Rosi – Echoed thanks to BMC for guidance from BMC on club meets and huts. Very useful and particularly that it is turned round very timely manner. Cath noted that there was a working group with diverse skills working on this.

Climate project:

Cath explained that part of her role is climate change. Sustainability working group working on this. Cath gave presentation giving an overview of 'The Climate Project'. Climate change impacting our 'playground' and the BMC felt there was a need to step up and do something about it. BMC want to look into meaningful ways to directly reduce climate impact of the BMC itself, BMC members and the wider climbing/walking/etc community. Looked at various projects and decided to align with Peatland restoration in the Peak District. Opportunity for members to donate when members take up travel insurance and membership. Not packaged up as an offsetting scheme deliberately. Articles will be in summit and website about reducing impact through travel particularly flying. Will be hosting lift-share site for climbers/hillwalkers once COVID restrictions top. Team up with Octopus green energy is on the cards. Hard to measure impact directly but will do annual survey to try and look at this. Also planning to try and measure impact of 'average' climber/walker over a year.

Tim – Very keen to see what the BMC is doing. Noted own personal steps to try and reduce/offset impact.

Andy – Very keen to see what BMC is doing. Want clubs to be able to engage with climate project and also support clubs doing things and supporting BMC.

Lynn – When we can volunteers wanted for helping with Peakland restoration project once COVID restrictions lifted. Cath noted that volunteering needed as restoration is manual process.

Cath – Survey to be sent out to members.

Kevin – COVID makes a challenge in terms of car sharing.

8. Any other Business:

- **Trespass law changes** – Cath – Firmly on the radar. A group of organisations including BMC are all working together. Joint letter to Home Office saying don't criminalise trespass. Weak response from Home Office. Bill coming out called Police Powers bill which is where this legalisation will appear. Concern about unintended consequences for walkers, climbers, wild camping. Parliamentary question about governments intention to put forward the Police powers bill and the intention is yes. Once bill emerges then group organisations will be campaigning against it. <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/law-of-trespass-could-change?s=2>
- **Club huts in Wales** – Lynn – Access reform process ongoing in Wales, looking at wild camping, access to coast, etc. BMC very much engaged. A summit article by Alvin will be coming out. Cath noted that countryside code is being refreshed by DEFRA, BMC planning own films to be more inspiring for guidance about using the countryside.
- **John Handley** – Asked question about constitutional viability of Club AGMs being virtual. Andy noted Bowline clubs decision to follow BMC practice during COVID.

9. Date & location of next meeting:

The next area meeting will be held using Zoom again on Wednesday 28th April at 7:30pm

Written by Andy Potter, Area Chair